



1602 Spring Street, Paso Robles, CA 93446  
(805) 237-9626 • Fax (805) 237-9181 • [www.althouseandmeade.com](http://www.althouseandmeade.com)

February 23, 2018

1119.01

David Foster  
Executive Director  
Habitat for Humanity Monterey Bay  
1007 Cedar Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060  
(831) 469-4663  
[david@habitatmontereybay.org](mailto:david@habitatmontereybay.org)

Re: Habitat Assessment for 2340 Harper Street, Santa Cruz, CA

Dear Mr. Foster:

This letter provides a preliminary habitat assessment for construction of low income housing at 2340 Harper Street, Santa Cruz, in Santa Cruz County, California (APN 029-171-05). The purpose of this habitat assessment is to provide the County of Santa Cruz with baseline biological information regarding the project site and adjacent habitats in advance of tree trimming and cabling activities which may precede construction.

### *Methods*

I visited the property on January 31, 2017 to examine the project site and assess potential impacts of the proposed project to biological resources. Prior to the site visit I reviewed the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB February 2018 data) and the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) On-line Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California for special status species known to occur within a five mile radius of the property.

### *Project Description*

Affordable housing consisting of multiple 2 and 3 bedroom units would be constructed. The proposed project would also include parking areas and a courtyard or community garden. The project would not extend into the dripline of the eucalyptus woodland in the southern portion of the property and would not impact the drainage to the south.

### *Existing Conditions*

The property is approximately 1.57 acres, and is bordered by Harper Street to the north, residential lots to the east and west, and an unnamed drainage to the south. This drainage is approximately a quarter mile long, and flows into Rodeo Gulch, located approximately 0.17

miles east of the property, which in turn flows into Corcoran Lagoon. There is an occupied single-story house and storage shed on the northern end of the property. A row of Monterey cypress (*Hesperocyparis macrocarpa*) borders Harper Street. Surrounding the house are Bailey acacias (*Acacia baileyana*) and coast live oaks. Southeast of the house is an old garden, which is now overgrown with non-native forbs such as cape ivy (*Delairea odorata*), wild radish (*Raphanus sativus*), and mustard (*Brassica* sp.)

The majority of the property is comprised of an open field mowed at least once a year by Santa Cruz County. The field is dominated by non-native annual grasses including ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*) and non-native forbs including Bermuda buttercup (*Oxalis pes-caprae*) and wild radish. Within the field are patches of Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*) and coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*). To the south, coyote brush is more abundant, interspersed with small coast live oaks.

The drainage which forms the southern boundary of the property is bordered by woodland comprised of tall mature blue gum eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*) and smaller coast live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*) approximately 10 to 15 feet tall. This eucalyptus-oak woodland covers the southern portion of the property. The woodland has a dense understory comprised primarily of non-native shrubs and forbs including cape ivy, English ivy (*Hedera helix*), and Himalayan blackberry. Native shrubs such as California blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*) and poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*) are present in patches. The drainage contained water a few inches deep in January 2018. Large amounts of woody debris, including entire downed eucalyptus trees, lay in the drainage, potentially blocking storm flows.

### *Special Status Species*

Rare plants are unlikely to occur due to the disturbed nature of the habitat and the mowing which occurs at least annually. However, the project site is located less than one mile from designated Critical Habitat for the Federally Threatened Santa Cruz tarplant (*Holocarpha macradenia*), which occurs in grassland in similar soil types. A properly timed botanical survey for Santa Cruz tarplant should be conducted prior to ground disturbing activities.

Tidewater goby (*Eucyclogobius newberryi*) has been documented in Corcoran Lagoon and the southern mile-long reach of Rodeo Gulch. The drainage bordering the property flows into Rodeo Gulch approximately 0.6 miles north of the lagoon, therefore, water flowing from the drainage may impact tidewater gobies. The proposed project will not impact the drainage.

Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) and Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*) are known to occur in the vicinity, but there is no suitable roosting habitat on the project site.

There are two documented monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) overwintering sites within one mile of the project site: Moran Lake and the "Lifeguard Headquarters" site on Scholl Lane near Schwan Lagoon. Monarch butterflies have never been documented aggregating or overwintering in the eucalyptus trees on the property, but the larger trees may serve as temporary shelter for transitory migrating monarchs in the fall and spring. No wintering monarch aggregations were observed during my site visit, but three monarch butterflies were observed flying around the eucalyptus trees. The proposed removal of smaller eucalyptus trees on the edge of the riparian corridor would not impact overwintering monarchs.

### *Nesting Birds*

One potentially active bird nest was observed. A red-tailed hawk nest was present in a eucalyptus tree in the southwest corner of the property. One adult red-tailed hawk was perched in the tree near the nest. The nest will likely be active this season. According to a local resident, the hawks have nested in this location in previous years. Potential habitat for other nesting birds exists in trees, shrubs, and other structures on the property. Mitigation measures including nesting bird surveys and construction activity buffers should be used to avoid impacts to nesting birds.

### *Recommendations*

In order to avoid impacts to nesting birds, nesting bird surveys should be conducted in advance of any tree trimming, tree removal, or construction activities which take place during nesting season (February 15 through August 31). If nesting birds are located, active nests should be buffered from construction activities at a distance which conforms to Santa Cruz County regulations.

An appropriately timed botanical survey (between June and November) should be conducted prior to ground-disturbing activities to determine whether or not Santa Cruz tarplant is present on site.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jessica L. Griffiths". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jessica Griffiths

*References*

- California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). 2000. Guidelines for Assessing the Effects of Proposed Projects on Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plants and Natural Communities. Revised May 8, 2000.
- California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). 2009. Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special Status Native Plant Populations and Natural Communities. November 24.
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Natural Diversity Database. 2017. Special Animals List. Periodic publication. 65 pp. October.
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Natural Diversity Database. 2017. Special Vascular Plants, Bryophytes, and Lichens List. Quarterly publication. 145 pp. October.
- California Native Plant Society (CNPS). 2018. Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants (online edition, v8-03 0.39). California Native Plant Society. Sacramento, CA. Accessed on January 30, 2018.
- California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB). 2018. RareFind 5 [Internet]. California Department of Fish and Wildlife. February 2, 2018.

**Photographs taken January 31, 2018**



Photo 1. Proposed project location. Open field is mowed at least once annually. Small coast live oak trees are scattered throughout the yard. Eucalyptus trees next to drainage are visible at the back of the property. View south.



Photo 2. Single-story house that will be removed as part of the proposed project. The house is surrounded by non-native acacia trees. View southeast.





Photo 3. This drainage forms the southern boundary of the property. Water was present in the drainage. Note downed trees and other woody debris in channel. View west.



Photo 4. Potentially active red-tailed hawk nest in a blue gum eucalyptus in the southwest corner of the property. One adult red-tailed hawk was observed perched near the nest. View southwest.