

6. Biological Resources

Overview

This section provides guidelines for evaluating a project's potential impacts on sensitive biological resources. The impact analysis includes assessing the project's potential impacts on special-status species, ecological communities, waters and/or wetlands, landscape connectivity, and potential conflicts with the Ventura County General Plan and zoning ordinances.

This topic section is updated from **Section 4, Biological Resources** in the existing ISAGs.

Thresholds of Significance

Impact analysis guidelines (formerly referred to as "Methodology") are provided accordingly for the following updated thresholds.

[Staff Note: Revisions made to the thresholds in this section were to improve clarity.]

A project may have a significant impact if:

BIO-1

On a plant or animal species, result in one or more of the following:

~~a. Reduces the population of a special status species through any of the following ways, causing the population to decline substantially or drop below self-sustaining levels:~~

a. Loss of one or more individuals, occupied habitat or critical habitat designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) of a species officially listed as endangered, rare, or threatened, a candidate species, or a fully protected species.

b. Impacts that would eliminate or threaten to eliminate one or more element occurrences of a special-status species not otherwise listed under the federal Endangered Species Act or California Endangered Species Act, or as a candidate species or fully protected species.

c. "Take" of birds protected under the California Fish and Game Code (Sections 3503.5, 3511, and 3513) and the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, as "take" is defined in the Fish and Game Code and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

~~d. Substantial reduction in the habitat of a special status species.~~

d. Impacts severe enough to substantially reduce the habitat of a plant or animal species or cause a species population to drop below self-sustaining levels pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15065.

e. Threatens the viability of the habitat of a special-status species, or fragment a habitat and/or critical ecosystem process and functions of a special-status species population. ~~through impacts associated with construction, operational, and/or maintenance activities.~~

f. Isolates or restricts a special-status species from resources necessary for its reproductive capacity or survival.

g. ~~Fragments a habitat and/or critical ecosystem processes and functions of a special status species.~~ Substantially increase human-wildlife conflicts, lighting, noise, and other indirect impacts, which would result in mortality or the reduced fitness of the affected species over time.

6. Biological Resources (cont.)

Thresholds of Significance (cont.)

A project may have a significant impact if:

- BIO-2** On sensitive plant communities, it would result in one or more of the following:
- ~~Change in density or intensity of land use and/or involves pre-construction or construction activities; demolition activities; operational activities; maintenance; decommissioning activities; grading, excavation, vegetation removal; discharge of pollutants into the environment; the placement of fill and/or other substrates, structures, or other materials; and/or any disturbance of the substratum~~ Any project activities that would temporarily or permanently remove, or directly impact the health of sensitive plant communities.
 - Indirect ~~impacts to the aquatic resources~~ within the watershed that would substantially adversely affect the associated sensitive plant communities, including any locally important plant communities, or of a water or wetland, including any locally important plant communities.
- BIO-3** On waters and/or wetlands, it would result in one or more of the following:
- ~~Change in density or intensity of land use~~ Activities that results in the degradation or removal of habitat, including, but ~~is~~ not limited to:
 - ~~subdivisions (commencing with Government Code Section 66410), and any other division of land, including lot splits;~~
 - ~~p~~Pre-construction, construction, operational, maintenance, demolition, decommissioning activities; or
 - ~~g~~Grading, excavation, or vegetation removal;
 - ~~Discharge of pollutants into the environment;~~
 - Placement of fill and/or other substrates, structures, or other materials that include any gaseous, liquid, solid, or thermal waste;
- Any disturbance of the substratum such as dredging, mining, or extraction of any materials;
 - Substantial changes in the hydrological conditions associated with water quality, water quantity, water input, and/or intensity of use, or of access thereto; velocity, siltation and/or sediment (erosion), volume of flow, or runoff rate; and/or the obstruction or diversion of water flow; release of pollutants into the environment; or alteration of ambient water temperatures; or
 - Disruptions to water or wetland ecosystems that would isolate or substantially interrupt the ecosystem function between the aquatic and the associated terrestrial habitats.

6. Biological Resources (cont.)

Thresholds of Significance (cont.)

A project may have a significant impact if:

- BIO-4** On a habitat connectivity corridor or the landscape connectivity for a native resident and/or migratory species and ~~its~~ the habitat needed for reproduction, result in one or more of the following:
- Substantially block, inhibit, impede, interfere, isolate, remove, and/or degrade a habitat connectivity corridor, the Critical Wildlife Passage Area (CWPA), or regional landscape linkage within the project parcel and/or neighboring parcels, ~~as well as the Critical Wildlife Passage Area (CWPA)~~, if applicable.
 - Create physical barriers that substantially block and/or impede the movement, migration, or long- term landscape connectivity of the species.
- BIO-5** Conflict with one or more of the following plans, policies or ordinance provisions and result in a significant adverse environmental effect due to that conflict:
- The biological resources protection policies or standards in the Ventura County General Plan, Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance, and/or Coastal Zoning Ordinance; ~~or~~ and
 - Intimidate the species due to a substantial increase in human and/or domestic animal access, noise, light, waste, wildlife attractants, or other human-wildlife conflicts, and/or the introduction of pests or exotic species that would substantially prevent, interfere, or alter the movements, and/or threaten the use of habitat needed for reproduction and survival.
 - Substantially isolate or fragment species habitat and/or disrupt critical ecosystem processes such as, but not limited to, food webs or species reproduction (e.g., energy flow, decomposition, nutrient cycling), reproductive mechanisms, or ecological functions.
 - An approved local, regional, or state habitat or community conservation plan.

Legend:

 Derived from a combination of specific County standards and Appendix G of CEQA

Related Technical Terms

The following technical terms related to this topic section have been updated or incorporated:

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| ➤ Candidate species | ➤ Element occurrence | ➤ Human-wildlife conflict | ➤ Qualified biologist |
| ➤ Coastal Initial Study Biological Assessment | ➤ Endangered, rare, or threatened species | ➤ Initial Study Biological Assessment | ➤ Regional landscape linkage |
| ➤ Conservation easement | ➤ Environmentally sensitive habitat areas | ➤ Landscape connectivity | ➤ Sensitive biological resources |
| ➤ Conservation instrument | ➤ Fully protected species | ➤ Locally important plant communities | ➤ Sensitive plant communities |
| ➤ Critical Wildlife Passage Area | ➤ Habitat connectivity corridor | ➤ Locally important species | ➤ Special-status species |
| ➤ Core habitat area | ➤ Habitat patch | ➤ No net loss | ➤ Stepping stones |
| ➤ Development envelope | | | ➤ Waters and/or wetlands |