

4.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

This section analyzes the proposed project's potential impacts to biological resources. Both direct impacts associated with site development and indirect impacts to off-site biological resources are addressed. The following analysis is based on a June 2012 Biological Resources Assessment performed by Rincon Consultants (Appendix C to this EIR), which included an April 17, 2012, site survey by a Rincon Consultants biologist.

4.3.1 Setting

a. Site Setting. The approximately 9.76-acre project site is a polygonal parcel of land located within the Palos Verdes Peninsula. The site is situated on a ridgeline in a predominantly developed area. The site has been highly disturbed by vegetation clearing (disking and grubbing) and past slope stabilization efforts, and is currently dominated by bare ground, ruderal species and a few remnant native shrubs. A 16.8 acre parcel to the north of the project site has been incorporated into the Rancho Palos Verdes Natural Communities Conservation Planning (NCCP) Subarea Plan (City of Rancho Palos Verdes 2004). This parcel is currently designated as the Vista del Norte Ecological Reserve. Similar to the project site, the reserve is dominated by dense stands of black mustard (*Brassica nigra*), with a small patch of coastal sage scrub (CSS) on the side slope adjacent to Indian Peak Road approximately 230 feet east of the property boundary. Vegetation in the surrounding area is dominated by ornamental species associated with commercial and residential development. Although small open space areas exist approximately 0.51 mile to the northeast, 0.65 mile to the south, and 0.75 mile southwest, the project site is characterized as a biologically isolated and disturbed property.

Topography of the project site is generally undulating to moderately sloping, with elevations ranging from 1,116 to 1,227 feet above mean sea level (msl). The Mediterranean climate of the region and the coastal influence produce moderate temperatures throughout the year, with rainfall concentrated in the winter months. Average rainfall for the project region is 12.34 inches/year (Palos Verdes Est FC43D Station, <http://www.wrcc.dri.edu>). The sea breeze is a dominant climatic factor in the region that typically flows from the west-southwest in a day-night cycle, with wind speeds generally ranging from 5 to 15 miles per hour. No drainages are located on the project site. Surface runoff from the site drains north and east into the Agua Negra Canyon system. Areas south and west of the project site drain towards the Pacific Ocean via unnamed drainages and Altamira Canyon.

The NRCS Web Soil Survey (<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>) does not currently have electronic data for the project area. Background information for the soils of the project area was derived from the Report and General Soil Map, Los Angeles County (USDA, 1969). The soils within the study area are part of the Soper-Calleguas-Bosanko-Alo (s1029) formation (USDA 1969). These soils are moderately well-drained, gravelly fine sandy loam soils largely weathered in place from sedimentary rocks of marine origin. Hydric soil characteristics were not observed in any of the soils at the project site.

b. Vegetation. The project site is regularly cleared and maintained through disking and grubbing. Based on a review of readily available aerial photography (Google Earth 2012, USGS image of November 30, 2003), the project site has been disked for at least the last ten years. Consequentially, the site is dominated by disturbed and ruderal vegetation. Isolated escaped



ornamental trees and scattered native shrubs are also present on site. Because of the single habitat type (ruderal vegetation) present, a vegetation map has not been prepared.

Though not a true community as defined by Holland (1986) or Sawyer et al (2009), ruderal vegetation is dominated by non-native species that are highly adapted to colonizing disturbed areas, typically found in agricultural lands, along roadsides, and urban habitat fragments. A total of 48 species were observed at the project site and adjacent property. Of these, 11 were native and 37 were non-native (introduced) species. Dominant species on site include black mustard (*Brassica nigra*), wild radish (*Raphanus sativus*), blessed milk thistle (*Silybum marianum*), field chrysanthemum (*Glebionis coronaria*), wild oats (*Avena barbata*), and various brome grasses (*Bromus* spp.). Native forbs such as sky lupine (*Lupinus nanus*) and California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*) were observed at low densities, and the native shrub species toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*) was observed scattered in the southeast corner of the property. Escaped or remnant ornamental tree and shrub species are also present at low densities, including Brazilian pepper tree (*Schinus terebinthifolius*), myoporum (*Myoporum laetum*), and an ornamental yucca (*Yucca* sp.).

Prior mapping for the NCCP Subarea Plan (URS, July 2004a) previously identified approximately 20,000 sf of nonnative grassland within the project site along the northern property line; however, no nonnative grassland was observed onsite during the April 2012 survey as the site had been recently disked. This prior mapping also identified “Undifferentiated CSS” on about 22,000 sf in the southeastern corner of the site. However, these areas are currently (April 2012) dominated by ruderal and ornamental species, with scattered toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*) shrubs. The remainder of the site was previously mapped as ruderal habitat, except for a small (~9,000 sf) area mapped as “exotic woodland.” It is noted that the project site was not mapped as part of the recent vegetation mapping performed for the abutting Preserve (Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy and California Native Plant Society, January 2010).

c. Wildlife. The periodically disturbed and predominantly non-native vegetation on the project site generally provides poor habitat for wildlife species. Nonetheless, the disturbed and ruderal vegetation on site does provide habitat for a variety of rural and urban-tolerant species. Species observed during the survey included California towhee, lesser goldfinch, western gull, American crow, mourning dove, Anna’s hummingbird, and western fence lizard.

d. Special Status Species.

Special Status Plant Species. Based on a review of the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDDB), thirteen special status plant species are known to occur in the vicinity of the project site (within approximately five miles), although none are tracked within the project site. These include aphanisma, south coast saltscale, Parish’s brittle scale, Davidson’s saltscale, Southern tarplant, Catalina crossosoma, Island green dudleya, Coulter’s goldfields, Santa Catalina Island desert thorn, mud nama, Lyon’s pentachaeta, Brand’s phacelia, and woolly seablite. Of these species, only Lyon’s pentachaeta is state and federally listed as endangered. The remaining species are listed in the California Rare Plant Rank (CRPR) as CRPR 1B, CRPR 2 or CRPR 4 species. Due to the regular vegetation clearing, the project site does not contain suitable habitat for special status plant species, and no special status plant species were observed on site during the April 2012 field



survey. The potential for special status species to become established is low due to isolation from other native habitat within the Palos Verdes Peninsula and due to frequent recurring disturbance (disking). Therefore, special status plant species are considered absent from the site. No oak or other native trees protected by the Rancho Palos Verde Municipal Code were observed on site. Title 17 of the Rancho Palos Verdes Municipal Code does not contain a specific ordinance regarding toyon, an arborescent shrub species, as a native habitat element. The toyon shrubs observed on site are therefore not considered a resource protected by local policies or ordinances.

Special Status Wildlife Species. No special-status wildlife species were identified within the project site or observed during the field survey. Based on the CNDDDB review (see Figure 4.3-1), fifteen special status wildlife species have been recorded in the vicinity of the project site (within approximately five miles). The results from the CNDDDB review are also listed as an appendix to the Biological Resources Assessment (Appendix C of to this EIR). These include seven invertebrate, two reptile, three bird, and three mammal species. Of these, two species (coastal California gnatcatcher and Palos Verdes blue butterfly) were evaluated for potential to occur on site. Burrowing owl is also discussed below with regard to its potential to occur onsite.

The project site is part of the critical habitat area for the coastal California gnatcatcher as defined by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (<http://criticalhabitat.fws.gov/crithab/>). While no CSS vegetation is presently located within the project site, an approximately 0.9-acre stand of disturbed CSS occurs in the Vista Del Norte Reserve along Indian Peak Road, approximately 230 feet from the project boundary. Dominant shrub species in this offsite stand include coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis* ssp. *consanguinea*), mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), toyon, Brazilian pepper tree, and California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), with an understory comprised of California cudweed (*Pseudognaphalium californicum*) and ruderal grasses and forbs.

Two coastal California gnatcatchers were detected in this remnant offsite CSS habitat on April 13, 2006 (CNDDDB Occurrence No. 72239). These individuals were not observed nesting at that time, and were likely foraging or dispersing from other habitat areas. The coastal California gnatcatcher prefers intermittent to closed canopy CSS dominated by California sagebrush. Gnatcatchers have been observed breeding in small patches of suitable CSS habitat surrounded by urban development, with the smallest such successful patch being 0.5 acre (Mock 2004). However, due to the number of toyon and Brazilian pepper trees present, high levels of human activity, and the degree of isolation, this CSS does not appear to provide suitable nesting habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher. Since the project site does not contain any Primary Constituent Elements (PCEs) for the coastal California gnatcatcher, namely coastal sage scrub habitat or non-sage scrub habitat near to coastal sage scrub that could provide space for dispersal, foraging, and nesting, no protocol level studies are required. Because the project site does not provide suitable foraging or nesting habitat, coastal California gnatcatcher is assumed to be absent from the project site. Further, the coastal California gnatcatcher was not observed during the field study.

The Palos Verdes blue butterfly is restricted to the cool, fog-shrouded, seaward side of Palos Verdes Hills of Los Angeles County. The project site is regularly cleared of vegetation, and the host plants for the Palos Verdes blue butterfly (seacliff buckwheat, Santa Barbara milkvetch, and deerweed) were not observed during the field study. Therefore, the site is not considered suitable habitat for this species.



Burrowing owl occurs in open, dry, annual or perennial grasslands, deserts and scrublands characterized by low-growing vegetation. Burrowing owls are also known to occur within agricultural fields and utilize irrigation banks that have open burrows. This species is a subterranean nester, dependent upon burrowing mammals, most notably, the California ground squirrel. The site is comprised primarily of a disked field with emergent ruderal species. Much of the soil onsite is covered with coconut fiber matting. No California ground squirrels or burrows were observed during the survey, and no individuals or sign of burrowing owl were observed during the survey. This species is considered to be absent from the site.

Bird nesting activity typically occurs between February 15 and August 31, but varies depending upon the species and climatic conditions. Larger animals, such as raptors, may begin breeding earlier in the year (January) and frequently have young that are dependent on the nest as late as mid-September. In good years, second nesting attempts can begin in June or July, which further extends the breeding period. Nesting birds and particularly raptor nests are protected by Fish and Game Code of California Sections 3503, 3503.5, 3511, 3513 and 3800. Most birds are also regulated under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918. No bird species were observed nesting or breeding on site during the field survey conducted in April 2012; however, the toyon shrubs and Brazilian pepper trees could potentially provide nesting and perch locations for bird species commonly encountered in urban areas.

Sensitive Plant Communities. The CNDDDB identified one sensitive plant community within a five-mile radius of the project site: Southern Coastal Bluff Scrub, which occurs along the bluffs adjacent to the Pacific Ocean approximately 2.03 miles southeast of the project site. This sensitive community does not occur on the project site.

e. Wildlife Movement. Smaller areas surrounded primarily by development, such as the subject property, do not generally contain major wildlife movement corridors within their boundaries. Rather, they may lie along or within such a corridor, or they may only contain smaller, secondary movement pathways or trail systems. Movement pathways provide routes of travel for highly mobile species, such as mule deer, coyote, mountain lion, black bear, bobcat, and some bird species, but by themselves rarely serve to maintain individual population vigor or support the species on a broad geographic scale. Pathways may become well established, but may be altered should obstructions occur, depending on availability of alternative routes. Movement pathways occur at a small scale, typically in terms of a few feet wide to a few hundred feet wide, such as the width of a stream or riparian cover, can be important to local species survival, especially when alternative routes are lacking.

The Vista del Norte Preserve to the north of the site provides a habitat fragment that can potentially enhance movement of bird species from the more functional habitat to the south, and southwest and northeast of the project site. However, due to the degree of disturbance and human activity at the project site and the extent of commercial and residential development surrounding the area, wildlife movement within or through the Crestridge site itself is expected to be low.

f. Regulatory Setting. Regulatory authority over biological resources is shared by Federal, State, and local authorities under a variety of statutes and guidelines. Primary authority for general biological resources lies within the land use control and planning authority of local jurisdictions. The California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) is a



trustee agency for biological resources throughout the state under CEQA and also has direct jurisdiction under the Fish and Game Code of California. Under the State and Federal Endangered Species Acts, the CDFG and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) also have direct regulatory authority over species formally listed as Threatened or Endangered. The U.S. Department of Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) has regulatory authority over specific biological resources, namely wetlands and waters of the United States, under Section 404 of the Federal Clean Water Act.

The Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy (PVPLC) serves as the management agency for the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve for the City of Rancho Palos Verdes. The Preserve was formed under a Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP) Subarea Plan to “maximize benefits to wildlife and vegetation communities while accommodating appropriate economic development within the City of Rancho Palos Verdes and region pursuant to the requirements of the NCCP Act and Section 10(a) of the ESA” (URS, July 2004). As a primary component of the NCCP, a Preserve design was proposed to conserve regionally important habitat areas and provide habitat linkages to benefit sensitive plants and wildlife. PVPLC manages the Preserve under an operating agreement with the City. The project site is situated within the Rancho Palos Verdes NCCP, and lies adjacent to a City-owned property dedicated to the Preserve system: the Vista del Norte Ecological Reserve. The Crestridge Development is included as a covered project in the NCCP, with any losses of CSS habitat determined to be likely mitigated through past donation of Redevelopment Agency owned land to the preserve system. Habitat values at the Vista del Norte Ecological Reserve are relatively low as the site is dominated by black mustard with a small fragment of CSS located adjacent to Indian Peak Road.

The City has established the Natural Overlay Control District for the protection of biological resources. According to Section 17.40.040 of the Municipal Code, this District is established to maintain and enhance land and water areas necessary for the survival of valuable land and marine-based wildlife and vegetation. The subject property is not located within this District.

The site does not lie within the California Coastal Zone or within any areas designated as Environmentally Sensitive Habitat (ESH), the habitats onsite do not qualify as ESH under the Coastal Act, and the site does not lie within any mapped Los Angeles County Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs).

Plants or animals may be considered to have “special-status” (see discussion above under *d. Special Status Species*) due to declining populations, vulnerability to habitat change, or restricted distributions. Special-status species are classified in a variety of ways, both formally (e.g. State or Federally Threatened and Endangered Species) and informally (“Special Animals”). Species may be formally listed and protected as Threatened or Endangered by the CDFG or USFWS or as California Fully Protected (CFP). Informal listings by agencies include California Species of Special Concern (CSC) (a broad database category applied to species, roost sites, or nests), or as USFWS Candidate taxa. CDFG and local governmental agencies may also recognize special listings developed by focal groups (i.e. Audubon Society Blue List; California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Rare and Endangered Plants; U.S. Forest Service regional lists). Section 3503.5 of the Fish and Game Code of California specifically protects birds of prey, and their nests and eggs against take, possession, or destruction. Section 3503 of the Fish and Game Code also incorporates restrictions imposed by the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) with respect to migratory birds (which consists of most native bird species).



Two designated federal critical habitats (FCH), the Palos Verdes Blue Butterfly FCH and the coastal California gnatcatcher FCH, were identified within a five mile radius of the project site. As shown on Figure 4.3-1, coastal California gnatcatcher critical habitat is mapped within the project site. Critical habitat mapping is intended to contain those lands essential for the conservation of a species, but any such land within the mapped boundary must also contain the known physical or biological features (Primary Constituent Elements or PCEs) within the geographical area that are essential to the species conservation. For CAGN, the PCEs are 1) dynamic and successional sage scrub habitats and 2) non-sage scrub communities like chaparral, grassland, riparian areas, near to suitable sage scrub habitats. As described above, the project site does not contain suitable habitat for coastal California gnatcatcher because of the lack of compositional integrity (i.e., no CSS on-site) and the substantial disturbance and human activity on site. In addition, it is not located sufficiently close to land containing suitable habitat whereby the project site could be used for foraging habitat. As also discussed above, the site does not contain suitable habitat for the Palos Verdes blue butterfly.

4.3.2 Impact Analysis

a. Methodology and Significance Thresholds. Chapter 1, Section 21001(c) of CEQA states that it is the policy of the state of California to: “Prevent the elimination of fish and wildlife species due to man’s activities, ensure that fish and wildlife populations do not drop below self-perpetuating levels, and preserve for future generations representations of all plant and animal communities.” Environmental impacts relative to biological resources may be assessed using impact significance criteria encompassing checklist questions from the *CEQA Guidelines* and federal, state, and local plans, regulations, and ordinances. Project impacts to flora and fauna may be determined to be significant even if they do not directly affect rare, threatened, or endangered species. The project would have a significant impact if it were found to:

- *Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;*
- *Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;*
- *Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means;*
- *Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites;*
- *Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance; and*
- *Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan.*



As discussed in the project Initial Study (Appendix A to this EIR), impacts related to the third criterion outlined above would be less than significant. Therefore, the impact discussion below focuses on impacts related to the remaining criteria.

b. Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures.

Impact BIO-1 The proposed Crestridge Senior Housing Project would not have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Impacts would be Class III, *less than significant*.

The proposed project would involve vegetation removal, grading and development of the majority of the project site. The project site has been highly disturbed by vegetation clearing (disking and grubbing) and past slope stabilization efforts, and is currently dominated by bare ground, ruderal species and remnant native shrubs. Given the high level of disturbance at the project site and the surrounding development, it is unlikely that special status plant species would occur on site. The survey by Rincon Consultants was conducted in the spring during the blooming period of species that have a potential to exist onsite. No special status plant species were observed and the entire project area was disked. Potential impacts to special status plants are considered to be less than significant.

The coastal California gnatcatcher, a special-status bird species, has been recorded off site in a small fragment of CSS vegetation located in the Vista del Norte Ecological Reserve approximately 230 feet to the east of the property and adjacent to Indian Peak Road. The project site itself does not provide nesting or foraging habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher, and this species was not detected in the project area during the April 2012 site visit, though this single day visit does not constitute a protocol-level survey. Due to the lack of coastal sage scrub or other suitable habitat on site and the high level of human activity in the immediate vicinity, impacts to coastal California gnatcatcher are not expected and potential effects to the coastal California gnatcatcher are considered to be less than significant.

The Crestridge site does not provide suitable habitat for the Palos Verdes blue butterfly, and it is unlikely this species would occur on site. Therefore, potential effects to the Palos Verdes blue butterfly would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures. As impacts would be less than significant, no mitigation is required.

Significance After Mitigation. Impacts would be less than significant without mitigation.



Impact BIO-2 The proposed Crestridge Senior Housing Project would not have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Impacts would be Class III, *less than significant*.

The proposed project would involve removal of ruderal vegetation on the project site and subsequent grading and development of a senior housing complex. The CNDDDB identified one sensitive plant community within a five-mile radius of the project site: Southern Coastal Bluff Scrub, which occurs along the bluffs adjacent to the Pacific Ocean approximately two miles southeast of the project site. This sensitive community does not occur on the project site. Riparian habitats or other sensitive natural communities do not occur on site. No coastal sage scrub or nonnative grassland exist onsite due to recurrent disturbances including disking. In addition, the area previously identified as containing nonnative grassland is outside of the proposed grading envelope (see Figure 2-4 for extent of grading). Grading or other development activity (path construction) would not extend past the north property boundary.

Fuel modification is a source of indirect effects on sensitive habitats; however, any fuel modification associated with development of the site would not have an impact on any remnant coastal sage scrub habitats within the adjacent reserve. The residential structures are located 70 – 150 feet from the north property boundary with the Vista Del Norte Ecological Reserve, with all fuel modification activity to be restricted to within the landscaped open space between the residences and the Reserve. Further, the reserve is already disked and/or mowed frequently, and any fuel modification associated with the proposed development would be a less than significant effect on natural or sensitive habitats. Therefore, potential effects to CSS, nonnative grassland, and sensitive plant communities are considered to be less than significant. Impacts to sensitive plant communities would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures. As impacts would be less than significant, no mitigation is required.

Significance After Mitigation. Impacts would be less than significant without mitigation.

Impact BIO-3 The proposed Crestridge Senior Housing Project would not be expected to interfere substantially with the movement of native resident or migratory wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites. However, native bird species commonly encountered in urban areas could nest in the dispersed toyon shrubs and Brazilian peppertrees found at the project site. Impacts would be Class II, *significant but mitigable*.

Smaller project areas, such as the subject property, do not generally contain major wildlife movement corridors within their boundaries. Rather, they may lie along or within such a corridor, or they may only contain smaller, secondary movement pathways or trail systems.



The Vista del Norte Preserve to the north of the site provides a habitat fragment that can potentially enhance movement of bird species from the more functional habitat to the south, and southwest and northeast of the project site. However, due to the degree of disturbance and human activity at the project site, wildlife movement within or through the Crestridge site itself is expected to be low. Nonetheless, native birds species commonly encountered in urban areas could nest in the dispersed toyon shrubs and Brazilian peppertrees found at the project site. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Fish and Game Code of California (3503, 3503.5, 3511, 3513 and 3800) protect almost all native nesting birds, not just special-status birds. Removal of vegetation that contains nesting birds would potentially conflict with these existing regulations and this effect is considered potentially significant. Mitigation Measure BIO-3 is recommended to reduce the potential for harm to protected native birds (including the coastal California gnatcatcher) during the nesting season and reduce this impact to a less than significant level.

Mitigation Measures. Mitigation Measure BIO-3 is recommended to reduce impacts associated with wildlife movement to a less than significant level.

BIO-3 Nesting Bird Surveys and Avoidance. Site disturbance shall be prohibited during the general avian nesting season (February 1 – August 30), if feasible. If breeding season avoidance is not feasible, a qualified biologist shall conduct a preconstruction nesting bird survey to determine the presence/absence, location, and status of any active nests on or adjacent to the project site. The surveys shall be conducted by a qualified biologist approved by the Community Development Department. The extent of the survey buffer area surrounding the site shall be established by the qualified biologist to ensure that direct and indirect effects to nesting birds are avoided. To avoid the destruction of active nests and to protect the reproductive success of birds protected by MBTA and the Fish and Game Code of California, nesting bird surveys shall be performed twice per week during the three weeks prior to the scheduled vegetation clearance. In the event that active nests are discovered, a suitable buffer (e.g. 30-50 feet for passerines) should be established around such active nests and no construction within the buffer allowed until a qualified biologist has determined that the nest is no longer active (e.g. the nestlings have fledged and are no longer reliant on the nest). No ground disturbing activities shall occur within this buffer until the City-approved biologist has confirmed that breeding/nesting is completed and the young have fledged the nest. Nesting birds surveys are not required for construction activities occurring between August 16 and February 1.

Significance After Mitigation. Impacts would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-3.

Impact BIO-4 The proposed Crestridge Senior Housing Project would not conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or



ordinance. In addition, the project site is not within an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan area. However, potential introduction of non-native plant species associated with on-site landscaping could conflict with the adopted Natural Conservation Community Plan. Impacts would be Class II, significant but mitigable.

No trees or other biological resources are on the project site that are explicitly protected by local policies or ordinances. The site is within coastal California gnatcatcher FCH; however, the site does not contain coastal sage scrub or otherwise currently provide suitable habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher. Therefore, project implementation would not conflict with the provisions of the coastal California gnatcatcher FCH. The project site is not located within the Palos Verdes Blue Butterfly FCH. Therefore, project implementation would not conflict with the provisions of the Palos Verdes Blue Butterfly FCH.

The adjacent Vista del Norte Ecological Reserve was created due to a provision of the NCCP to dedicate the 16.8 acre City Redevelopment Agency parcel to the NCCP preserve system when the adjacent Mirandela project was approved. Since the subject property abuts the Reserve, potential conflicts can occur when new development is constructed adjacent to reserves. As such, Section 6.2.2.2 of the current NCCP Subarea Plan addresses project design review and best management practices for such developments that occur on property that abuts a Reserve. The nearest residence would be a minimum of 70 feet from the property boundary with the Vista Del Norte Ecological Reserve, with an intervening 1.67 acre landscaped open space. The following addresses the guidelines of Section 6.2.2.2.

1. Grading Plan Review. The grading envelope is generally at least 25 feet south of the property boundary, except for the northeast corner where an overlook patio will be constructed. The City would review all preliminary and final grading plans for the proposed project. The project would be consistent with this measure.
2. Bird Nesting. Measure BIO-3 above has been included to meet compliance with this guideline.
3. Use of Access Roads. No access roads into the reserve are proposed or necessary. The project would be consistent with this guideline.
4. Topsoil Stockpiling. As noted above, the proposed grading envelope is set back from the property line and thus the reserve, and no offsite stockpiling is proposed. Stockpiling, if needed, would occur adjacent to Crestridge Road. With Mitigation Measure BIO-4(c), the project would be consistent with this guideline.
5. Construction Staging Areas. Any construction staging and fueling would occur within the area proposed for development, which is at least 70 feet from the Reserve. With Mitigation Measure BIO-4(c), the project is consistent with this guideline.
6. Construction Scheduling. No drainages or habitat that may be occupied by sensitive breeding wildlife is present on the adjacent Reserve. This guideline is not applicable.
7. Construction Noise. As previously noted, the adjacent Reserve has limited habitat and birds that are likely to breed in this area that is surrounded by existing commercial and residential development are not expected to be highly noise sensitive. This guideline is not applicable.
8. Minimize Habitat Fragmentation. This guideline regarding the location of new roads, trails and utility corridors is not relevant to this reserve as it is already an isolated



- habitat fragment. No additional alteration of the Reserve is proposed by the applicant and this guideline is not applicable.
9. Construction Fencing. While grading activity will generally be located away from the property boundary, Mitigation Measure BIO-4(a) is included below to maintain consistency with this guideline.
 10. Underground Utilities. The project will connect to the existing utility infrastructure and does not require the extension of any services beyond that needed for the site. This measure is not applicable.
 11. Revegetation of Cut/Fill Slopes. Constructed slopes within the site will be landscaped as part of the 1.67 acre open space. A specific planting plan has not been developed, and it could potentially contain aggressive, invasive plants that could affect the ability of future efforts to improve the wildlife habitat value of the adjacent Reserve. Mitigation Measure BIO-4(b) is included below to maintain consistency with this guideline.
 12. Restoration Plans and Construction Monitoring. No restoration plans are needed as no activity will occur within the Reserve. Construction monitoring will be implemented as a standard condition of development.
 13. Noise Barriers. No new public roads are proposed for the site, and the additional traffic noise on existing streets associated with the new residential use would not cause a substantial increase in local ambient levels at this location. This measure is not applicable.
 14. Side-casting of Materials. No side-casting of materials into the Reserve area is anticipated given the distance between it and development activity. This measure is not applicable.

In summary, little habitat value is present within the reserve, and the reserve's biological resources are generally not expected to be adversely affected by possible indirect effects of the proposed development. The type and use of the development proposed is not expected to produce a substantial increase in noise or lighting. The existing project site is currently surrounded by development, and unnatural lighting (street lights, parking lot lights, and commercial and residential lighting) and human-induced noise are already present at the project site and reserve. As such, the effects of the lighting and noise produced as a result of the proposed development on the reserve would be similar to that which already surrounds the reserve. In addition, no significant erosion or dust is expected to result from the proposed project or the ongoing use of the development, as the development is situated topographically high and senior residential use of the site is not expected to produce substantial levels of dust. While indirect effects of lighting, noise, erosion, and dust are all considered less than significant, the proposed development includes potential introduction of non-native plant species associated with on-site landscaping. Mitigation Measure BIO-4(b) is intended to reduce potential impacts from invasive species to a less than significant level, while Measure BIO-4(a) includes the requirement for temporary fencing to limit access from the site to the Reserve during construction. Mitigation Measure BIO-4(c) addresses specific best management practices identified in the NCCP Subarea Plan. With mitigation, project implementation would not conflict with the provisions of the City adopted NCCP.

Mitigation Measures. Mitigation Measures BIO-4 would reduce impacts associated with NCCP consistency to a less than significant level.



BIO-4(a) Construction Best Management Practices. The following measures shall be employed as part of construction monitoring for the site:

- Contractors shall be educated regarding the off-site Reserve and the need to keep equipment and personnel within the project site prior to the initiation of construction.
- Temporary construction fencing shall be placed at the planned limits of disturbance adjacent to the Reserve.

BIO-4(b) Provisions for Invasive Species and Native Habitat Elements in the Landscaping Plan. No species listed in the Cal-IPC Invasive Plant Inventory (2006) or identified as potentially invasive ornamental species in the Rancho Palos Verdes NCCP Subarea Plan (2004) will be utilized in the landscaping plan for the site. Species listed in the Subarea Plan include everblooming acacia (*Acacia longifolia*), Sydney golden wattle (*Acacia cyclops*), Peruvian pepper tree (*Schinus molle*), Brazilian pepper tree (*Schinus terebenthifolia*), black locust (*Robinia pseudo-acacia*), myoporum (*Myoporum laetum*), gum tree (*Eucalyptus* spp.), and pines (*Pinus* spp.). In addition, to the extent feasible the proposed project shall incorporate native habitat elements into the landscaping plan for the 1.67-acre passive park with trails, scenic overlooks, and community gardens in the northern portion of the Crestridge Senior Housing development project. Native habitat elements include using locally sourced native shrubs such as toyon, California sagebrush, coastal bluff buckwheat, native grasses, and native perennial forbs as part of the planting palette.

BIO-4(c) Construction Staging and Stockpiling Areas. Grading and building plans submitted for the proposed project for City review and approval shall identify areas for construction staging, fueling and stockpiling. These areas shall be located as far as practical from the Vista del Norte Preserve, and not closer than 70 feet from the Preserve boundary.

Significance After Mitigation. Impacts would be less than significant with implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-4(a) through 4(c). Inclusion of Measure BIO-4(b) would enhance the habitat values of the open space area with respect to the Vista Del Norte Ecological Reserve.

c. Cumulative Impacts. The project site is situated within an urbanized area with generally low habitat values in the immediate vicinity of the project site. Regional analysis and conservation planning for the coastal California gnatcatcher and the Palos Verdes blue butterfly, and other special status species has been conducted as part of the Rancho Palos Verdes NCCP. Among the objectives of NCCP planning processes is a regional analysis of approved and proposed projects to assess their contribution to fragmentation of open space, the loss of sensitive habitats and species, urban expansion into natural areas and isolation of open space within the region, and the development of a regional habitat conservation plan. The Crestridge project is included as a covered project in the Subarea Plan, with any losses of



habitat mitigated through the past donation of the Vista Del Norte Ecological Reserve. Inclusion of native habitat elements into the landscaping plan in the northern portion of the property will further contribute to regional conservation goals and habitat enhancements. Therefore, the proposed project is not expected to result in significant cumulative impacts.

