

## 4.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

This section evaluates potential impacts to biological resources for the Grover Beach Lodge. This analysis considers sensitive habitats and special-status species that are known to occur or have the potential to occur within the proposed project area. This analysis evaluates potential short-term and long-term impacts to biological resources based on the proposed project description. For those instances where potential impacts to sensitive biological resources may occur, mitigation measures and best management practices are proposed with the objective of avoiding or minimizing the impacts.

The information presented within this section is based on a compilation of previous biological studies conducted within the project area by Althouse and Meade biologists in 2005 and 2007, field verification surveys conducted by SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA) in 2010, and personal communications with California State Parks Biologist, Ronnie Glick. The existing documents used in preparation of this section are found in appendices attached to this EIR, and include the following:

- Biological Resources Constraints Report Regarding the Proposed Grover Beach Conference Center Site (Althouse and Meade, Inc. 2005)(Appendix H)
- Biological Report for the proposed Pacific Coast Hotel (Althouse and Meade, Inc. 2007) (Appendix B)
- City of Grover Beach, Grover Beach Lodge Initial Study (Rincon Consultants 2010) (Appendix A)
- City of Grover Beach, Pacific Coast Hotel, Development Permit application No. 05-025, Initial Study (Appendix B)

### 4.3.1 Methodology

The analysis and description of biological resources within the project area is based on the results of a literature review and several field surveys conducted by Althouse and Meade and SWCA. The literature review included a peer review of existing biological documents listed above and a query of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB). The CNDDDB query (Appendix H) resulted in a list of special-status species that are known to occur within the following eight 7.5-minute U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) quadrangle maps: Nipomo, Santa Maria, Oceano, Arroyo Grande NE, Guadalupe, Tar Springs Ridge, Point Sal, and Pismo Beach. In addition to the CNDDDB query, the California Native Plant Society's (CNPS) Online Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California (2010) was reviewed to provide additional information on rare plants that may occur in the area.

Following the literature review, SWCA Biologist Travis Belt conducted a field survey on August 3, 2010. The surveyor walked through the proposed project area and adjacent areas documenting all biological resources observed. Plant communities and special-status biological resources were mapped with a Trimble® GeoXT Global Positioning System (GPS) unit capable of sub-meter accuracy. The surveyor classified the observed plant communities and habitat types according to the Preliminary Description of Terrestrial Natural Communities of California (Holland 1986) and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) List of California Terrestrial Natural Communities Recognized by the Natural Diversity Data Base (CDFG 2010).

Plant species observed were identified based on The Jepson Manual: Higher Plants of California (Hickman 1993) and Vascular Plants of San Luis Obispo County (Hoover 1970).

### 4.3.2 Existing Conditions

For the purposes of this analysis the proposed project area has been divided into Study Areas A through D. Study Areas A, B, and D mostly consist of urban development and ruderal areas including improved and unimproved parking areas, Le Sage Drive, Pismo State Beach Golf Course, recreational vehicle (RV) dump stations, Fin's Restaurant, North Beach Campground, and other facilities. These urban areas are bounded by relatively natural areas including the dune complex to the west and south and Meadow Creek to the east. The dune complex to the west of the study areas supports intact coastal dune scrub and rare plant species. Study Area C supports disturbed central dune scrub vegetation and numerous equestrian trails. Figure 4.3-1 shows the habitats and other resources that occur in the study areas. Table 4.3-1 in Section 4.3.6.1 provides a summary of acreages associated with each habitat type and potential impacts for each Study Area.

With the exception of the rolling sand dunes in Study Area C and the dunes to the west of Study Area B, the topography in the proposed project area is flat. The elevation of the site ranges from approximately 5 feet above sea level in the west to approximately 30 feet above sea level in the east. Study Areas A through D are discussed in more detail below.

#### 4.3.2.1 Study Area A (Lodge and Conference Center)

This site consists of improved parking areas, unimproved parking areas, an RV dumping station, Le Sage Drive, portions of the Pismo State Beach Golf Course, and Meadow Creek. These areas are indicative of an urban environment with sporadic patches of landscape and natural vegetation. The improved parking areas, RV dump station, and Le Sage Drive consists of asphalt, concrete and associated landscape areas. The unimproved parking area currently consists of bare ground, landscape trees, and ruderal vegetation. Meadow Creek supports disturbed central coast arroyo willow riparian vegetation.

The unimproved parking area includes 5.84 acres of ruderal vegetation with landscape trees. Ruderal vegetation occurs in disturbed areas including abandoned agricultural fields, roadsides, around developments, and in other areas experiencing severe ground surface disturbance. In Study Area A, this vegetation type is dominated by weedy grasses including but not limited to wild oats (*Avena fatua*), riggut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), common brome (*B. marianum* ssp. *gussonieanum*), and veldt grass (*Ehrharta calycina*). Several broad-leaf species including Italian thistle (*Carduus pycnocephalus*), bristly ox-tongue (*Picris echioides*), and telegraph weed (*Heterotheca grandiflora*) occur among the grasses. Few mature landscape trees are scattered in the ruderal vegetation as well. These trees include Monterey pine (*Pinus radiata*), blue gum eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globules*), and Myoporum (*Myoporum laetum*). The Ruderal vegetation in Study Area A provides minimal habitat for wildlife. The grasses and shrubs likely support common reptile and bird species; the landscape trees may support nesting birds.

Meadow Creek is located at the eastern boundary of Study Area A and supports 0.69 acre of disturbed central coast arroyo willow riparian forest. In natural conditions, this is a dense low growing riparian forest dominated by arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*). It occurs in moist to saturated soils around dune slack ponds or low lying areas in the coastal fog zone. Due to the dense cover, the understory is typically sparse in undisturbed settings. In Study Area A, past disturbances related to channelization and flood control has created openings where California

blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*), stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*), poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*), and coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*) have become established. Exotic plant species are also present in this reach of the creek. Exotic species observed included pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*), black mustard (*Brassica nigra*), and English ivy (*Hedera helix*). The central coast arroyo willow riparian forest along Meadow Creek is considered a sensitive habitat by CDFG, the California Coastal Commission (CCC), and other public and private resource agencies. This community provides nesting, foraging, and shelter habitat for bird species and shading for aquatic species.

The reaches of Meadow Creek instream, upstream, and downstream of Study Area A are channelized for flood control purposes. In addition, much of the runoff from developed portions of Grover Beach is directed to this reach of the creek. Due to the flood control and drainage practices, the water quality in this area appears to be heavily degraded. The water observed in this area was stagnant and supported dense coverage of aquatic algae, indicating a high level of pollutants present. The poor water quality in this area provides little useable habitat for aquatic species. However, a large population of bull frog (*Rana catesbeiana*) occurs in the creek.

#### 4.3.2.2 Study Area B (State Parks Improvements)

Study Area B is comprised of improved parking areas, Fin's Restaurant, Pismo Beach ~~Restaurant and~~ Golf Course, and associated structures. The parking areas and associated structures provide little to no habitat for biological resources. Mature landscape trees and shrubs are sporadically placed in the parking areas and the golf course. The golf course and landscape plants are indicative of a developed landscape. Developed landscape areas generally consist of nursery grown native and non-native plants that are maintained on a scheduled basis. When mature, this vegetation can provide habitat for common species, such as house mice (*Mus musculus*), roof-rats (*Rattus rattus*), various insects, weedy plants, migratory birds, and nesting birds. Due to the intense maintenance of these areas, special-status species generally do not proliferate in their vicinity, but opportunistic species may utilize them for shelter or foraging.

Study Area B is mostly comprised of developed areas; however, 0.066 acre of Central dune scrub habitat occurs in the western boundary of the study area. This sliver of Central dune scrub is connected to an intact stand of dune scrub habitat that occurs on the dunes located directly west of Study Area B. This community is considered sensitive by the CDFG and CCC. It supports rare plants and a variety of wildlife species. A more detailed discussion of this community is provided below in Section 4.3.2.3.

#### 4.3.2.3 Study Area C (Equestrian Staging Area)

Study Area C supports 0.89 acre of disturbed central dune scrub habitat with a series of equestrian trails bisecting the area. Central dune scrub vegetation is a back dune plant community that is subject to stresses associated with desiccation, poor water availability, and wind and water driven soil erosion. In an undisturbed setting, coastal dune scrub is characterized by low growing, drought tolerant shrubs including mock heather (*Ericameria ericoides*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), dune lupine (*Lupinus chamissonis*), and many other species. A variety of wildlife typically occurs in this community. The low growing shrubs in central dune scrub habitat provides valuable nesting and foraging habitat for birds and supports numerous reptile species.

In Study Area C, this community is patchy to sparse with occurrences of mock heather, black sage, dune lupine, Blochman's leafy daisy (*Erigeron blochmaniae*), and chaparral nightshade (*Solanum xanti*) growing among ice plant (*Carpobrotus chilensis* and *C. edulis*). Ice plant dominates the central portion of Study Area C; however, native shrub cover increases towards the boundary south of Study Area C. The northern boundary of Study Area C includes approximately 0.01 acre of Central Coast arroyo willow riparian forest associated with Meadow Creek. The riparian forest in this reach of Meadow Creek is less disturbed than the reach in Study Area A and supports a thicker canopy with less understory vegetation.

Central dune scrub is listed as a sensitive community in the CNDDDB. In addition, the central dune scrub in Study Area C supports rare plant species; therefore, the central dune scrub in Study Area C and adjacent areas is potentially considered to be an Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area (ESHA) as determined by the CCC.

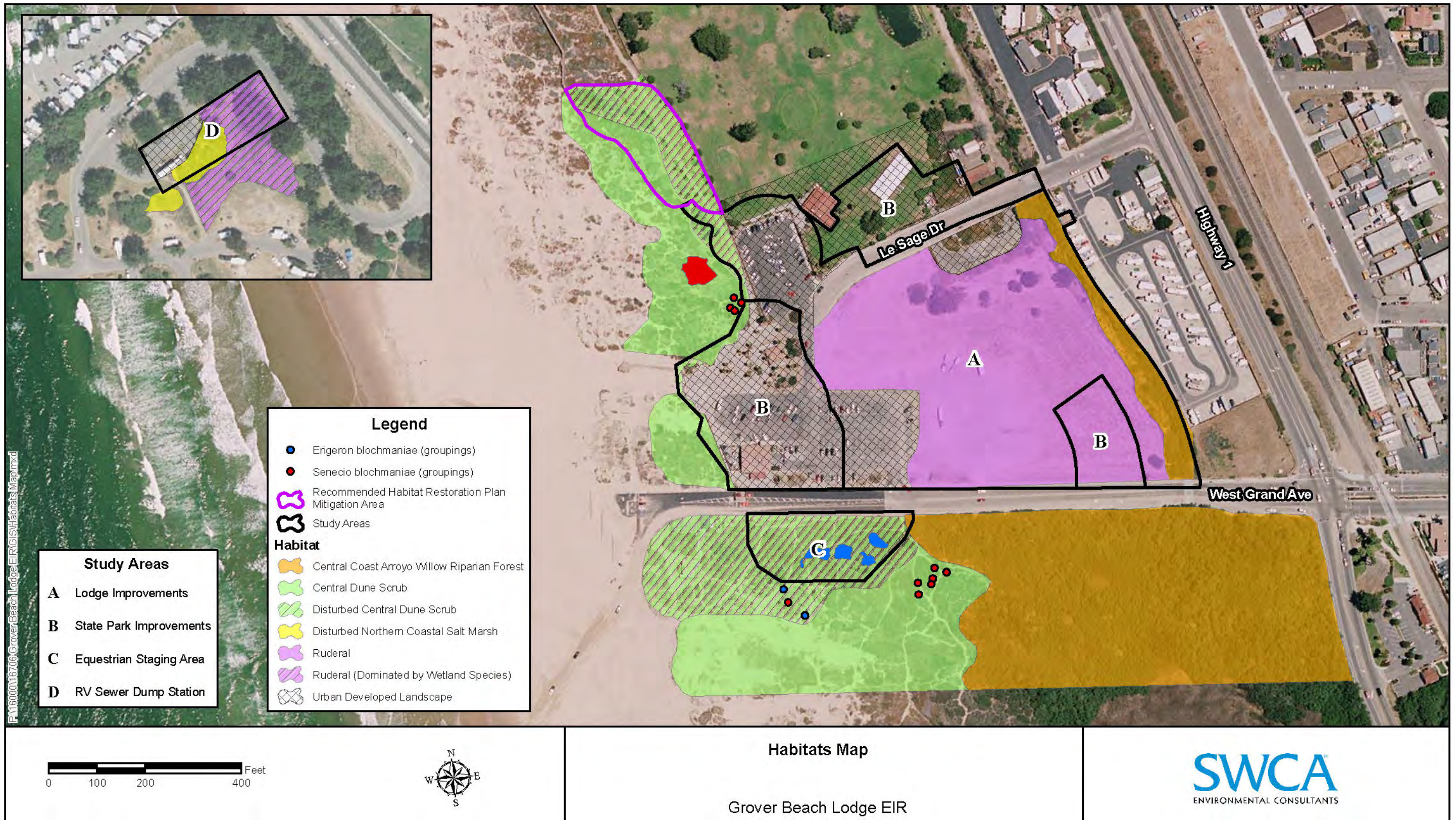
#### **4.3.2.4 Study Area D (RV Sewer Dump Station)**

Study Area D is located near the entrance of the North Beach Camp Ground, approximately 4,000 feet north of Grand Avenue. The North Beach Campground is a recreational area for vehicle, tent, bicycle, and RV camping. The campground is typical of a landscaped camping area that is maintained on a regular basis. Study Area D is located in the northeast corner of the campground, situated just behind the campground entrance kiosk. Study Area D consists of an existing RV sewer dump station with an asphalt access road located adjacent to maintained open space. The open space area is bound by the existing RV sewer dump station in the north, camping spots to the south, the park access road to the east, and an asphalt road to the west (Refer to Figure 4.3-1). Small roadside ditches are located on both sides of the park access road. The topography of Study Area D is slightly depressed.

The vegetation in Study Area D consists of planted landscape trees, volunteer willows (*Salix* sp.), and other low growing wetland species. The willows are located at the edge of the sewer dump station road, where the maintained open space begins. Numerous wetland plant species occur under and around the willows. The lowest part of the depressed area supports dense coverage of Virginia glasswort (*Salicornia virginica*), fleshy Jaumea (*Jaumea carnosa*), alkali heath (*Frankennia salina [grandifolia]*), and saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*). The presence of these wetland species is indicative of a northern coastal salt marsh community. Based on the population boundaries of these species, Study Area D supports 0.056 acre of disturbed northern coastal salt marsh. The higher portion of the open space area supports dense coverage of salt grass and alkali heath, both of which are also wetland indicator species. This portion of Study Area D supports 0.005 acre of ruderal vegetation dominated by wetland species. Although heavily disturbed, Study Area D supports plant species that are characteristic of a wetland.

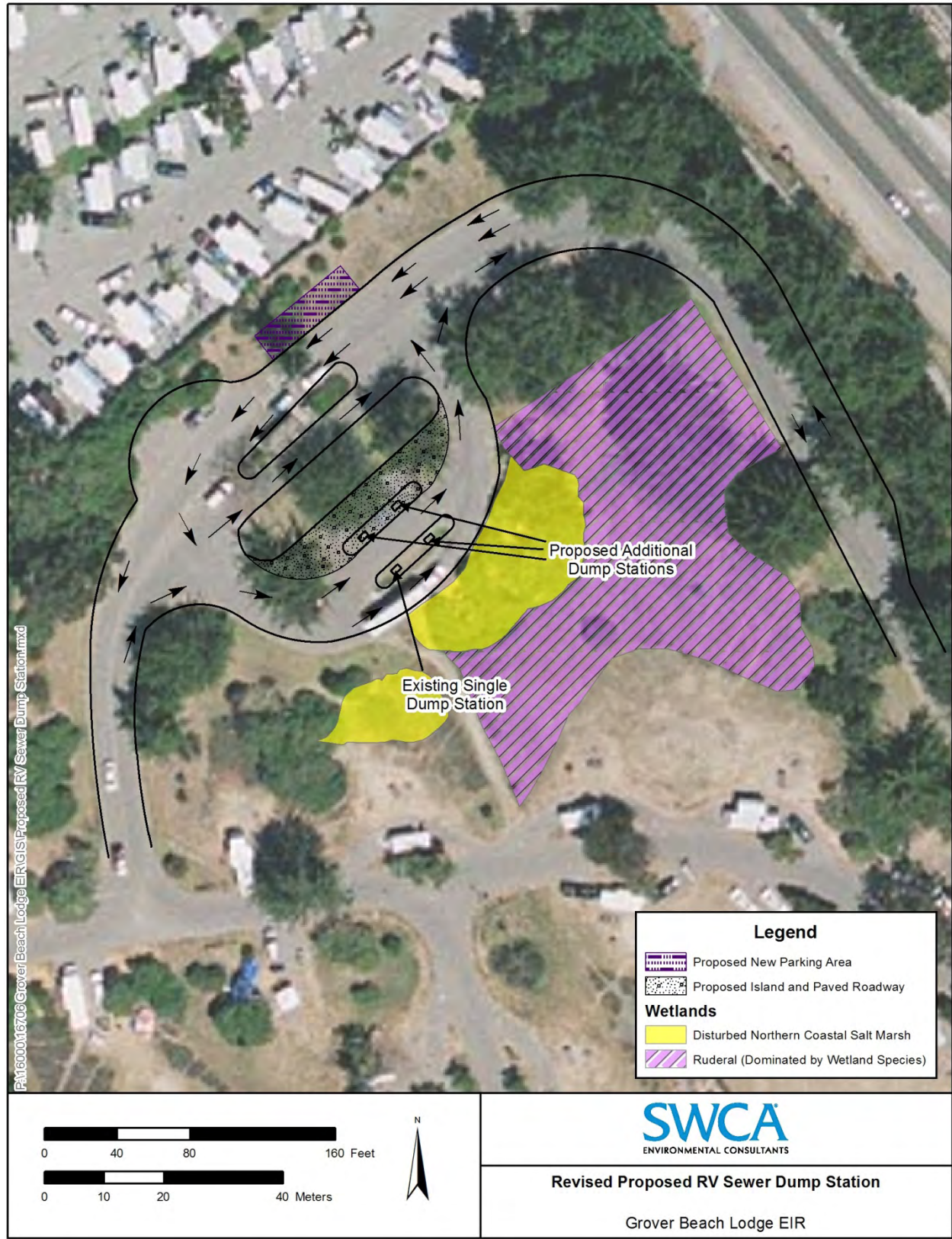
The coverage of wetland indicator species in Study Area D indicates that this area is likely a wetland as described by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) 1987 Wetlands Delineation Manual (Environmental Laboratory 1987); however, Study Area D does not appear to have direct connectivity to traditional navigable waters. Study Area D is approximately 1,500 feet from Pismo Creek and 2,500 feet from Meadow Creek. A detailed Preliminary Jurisdictional Determination should be conducted to determine if Study Area D supports wetlands under the jurisdiction of USACE. Regardless of the federal jurisdiction, Study Area D supports characteristics of a state regulated wetland and impacts to the area would be subject to review and approval by CDFG and CCC.

Figure 4.3-1. Habitats Map



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**Figure 4.3-2. Revised Proposed RV Sewer Dump Station**



### 4.3.2.5 Special-status Biological Resources

The project study areas (PSA) support a variety of biological resources some of which are considered rare or sensitive and are protected by various policies and regulations. Due to the presence of these resources, portions of the project area may potentially be ~~are~~ considered to be Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHAs) under the California Coastal Act. ESHAs are defined as "any area in which plant or animal life or their habitats are either rare or especially valuable because of their nature or role in an ecosystem and which could be easily disturbed or degraded by human activities and developments." Under this definition, unique plant habitats; rare and endangered animal habitats; wetlands; coastal streams; rocky points; intertidal areas; and kelp beds are typically considered ESHAs. ~~Based on this definition, the following resources identified in the project area are in ESHAs.~~

#### Sensitive Vegetation Communities

The following sensitive plant communities occur in or directly adjacent to project study areas:

- central coast arroyo willow riparian forest
- central dune scrub
- Northern coastal salt marsh

Sections 4.3.2.1 through 4.3.2.4 discuss these communities; Figure 4.3-1 shows the location of these communities in relation to the study areas; Appendix H of this EIR includes a table summarizing the communities.

#### Special-Status Species

Several species known to occur within, or in the vicinity of the project area, are accorded "special-status" designation due to their recognized rarity or vulnerability to habitat loss or population decline. Some of these receive specific protection defined in Federal or State legislation and policies. Others have been designated as "sensitive" on the basis of adopted policies of State resource agencies or organizations, or policies adopted by local agencies such as counties, cities, and special districts to meet local conservation objectives. These species are referred to collectively as "special-status species" in this EIR, a collective term indicating some level of local, state or federal concern for populations or habitats.

#### *Special-Status Plants*

The following section describes the special-status plant species that have been documented within the reviewed USGS quadrangles. For the purposes of this section, special-status plant species are defined as the following:

- Plants listed or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) (50 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 17.12 for listed plants and various notices in the Federal Register for proposed species).
- Plants that are candidates for possible future listing as threatened or endangered under the FESA (Federal Register Vol. 73, No. 238, pp. 75175-75244, December 10, 2008).
- Plants that meet the definitions of rare or endangered species under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (State CEQA Guidelines, §15380).



- Plants considered by the CNPS to be "rare, threatened, or endangered" in California (Lists 1B and 2 in California Native Plant Society, 2010).
- Plants listed by CNPS as plants about which we need more information and plants of limited distribution (Lists 3 and 4 in California Native Plant Society, 2010).
- Plants listed or proposed for listing by the State of California as threatened or endangered under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (14 California Code of Regulations [CCR] 670.5).
- Plants listed under the California Native Plant Protection Act (California Fish and Game Code 1900 et seq.).
- Plants considered sensitive by other Federal agencies (i.e., United States Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management), state and local agencies, or jurisdictions.

Based on the literature review, 44 sensitive plant species have been documented in the reviewed quadrangles (refer to the table summarizing the plant species found in Appendix H of this EIR). Because the list of species is regional, an analysis of the range and habitat preferences of the species was conducted to identify which species have the potential to occur within the project area. The analysis considered existing habitat, elevation, results of previous surveys, and soils within the project area. Of the 44 plant species evaluated, 25 were eliminated from consideration based on lack of suitable habitat and/or soils on-site. The analysis determined that the study areas support suitable habitat for 19 of the evaluated plant species. Of these 19 species, Blochman's leafy daisy was observed in Study Area C and several Blochman's ragworts were observed directly adjacent to Study Areas B and C.

All of Study Area C and the northwest corner of Study Area A supports disturbed central dune scrub habitat that has potential to support rare plant species. These areas were not included in the surveys conducted by Althouse and Meade. SWCA surveyed these areas in August 2010. The SWCA survey was conducted outside of the blooming period for five of the species that could occur in these areas. Based on discussions with State Parks staff, State Parks has not conducted botanical surveys in these areas. An additional survey of these areas should be conducted in April or May to verify the presence or absence of these plant species. A list of the five plant species that should be targeted during a subsequent survey is provided below.

- *Aphanisma (Aphanisma blitoides)*
- surf thistle (*Cirsium rhothophilum*)
- dune larkspur (*Delphinium parryi* ssp. *blochmaniae*)
- beach spectaclepod (*Dithyrea maritima*)
- Nipomo Mesa Lupine (*Lupinus nipomoensis*)

### *Special-Status Wildlife*

For the purposes of this section, special-status animal species are defined as the following:

- Animals listed or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered under the FESA (50 CFR 17.11 for listed animals and various notices in the Federal Register for proposed species).

- Animals that are candidates for possible future listing as threatened or endangered under the FESA (Federal Register: November 9, 2009 (Volume 74, Number 215).
- Animals that meet the definitions of rare or endangered species under the CEQA (State CEQA Guidelines, §15380).
- Animals listed or proposed for listing by the State of California as threatened and endangered under the CESA (14 CCR 670.5).
- Animal species of special concern to the CDFG (Remsen, 1978 for birds; Williams, 1986 for mammals).
- Animal species that are fully protected in California (California Fish and Game Code, §3511 [birds], §4700 [mammals], and §5050 [reptiles and amphibians]).

Based on a CNDDDB query, a review of existing literature and the local experience of SWCA biologists, 22 special-status wildlife species have been documented in the reviewed USGS quadrangles (refer to Appendix H of this EIR that contains species tables). Because this list of species is regional, an analysis of the range and habitat preferences of the species was conducted to identify which sensitive wildlife species have the potential to occur within the project study areas. As a result of the analysis, it was determined that three of the sensitive wildlife species have potential to occur within, or directly adjacent to the project area. The remaining species were eliminated from consideration based on lack of suitable habitat conditions on or adjacent to the site and past survey data. The project area also has the potential to support nesting birds. A list of the three wildlife species that have potential to occur in or adjacent to the Study Areas is provided below. Appendix H of this EIR provides brief descriptions of these species and a rationale for determining the potential presence for all species evaluated.

- silvery legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra pulchra*)
- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma coronatum* [blainvillii population])
- Wintering western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*)

### 4.3.3 Regulatory Setting

#### 4.3.3.1 Federal Policies and Regulations

##### Section 404 of the Clean Water Act of 1977

Pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1344), the USACE is responsible for the issuance of permits for the placement of dredged or fill material into “Waters of the United States.” As defined by USACE at 33 CFR 328.3(a)(parts 1-6), the following summarizes Waters of the United States:

“Those waters that are currently used, or were used in the past, or may be susceptible to use in interstate or foreign commerce, including all waters which are subject to the ebb and flow of the tide; tributaries and impoundments to such waters; all interstate waters including interstate wetlands; and territorial seas.”

Waters of the United States are typically identified by the presence of an Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM) and connectivity to traditional navigable waters or other jurisdictional features. If

a project would result in dredge or fill of USACE jurisdictional waters, the project would be subject to USACE review under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

#### Section 401 of the Clean Water Act of 1977

Section 401 of the Clean Water Act and its provisions ensure that federally permitted activities comply with the federal Clean Water Act and state water quality laws. Section 401 is implemented through a review process that is conducted by the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), and is triggered by the Section 404 permitting process. The RWQCB certifies via the 401 process that a proposed project complies with applicable effluent limitations, water quality standards, and other conditions of California law. Evaluating the effects of the proposed project on both water quality and quantity falls under the jurisdiction of the RWQCB.

#### Federal Endangered Species Act

The FESA of 1973 provides legislation to protect federally-listed plant and animal species. Impacts to listed species resulting from the implementation of a project would require the responsible agency or individual to formally consult with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) or National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) to determine the extent of impact to a particular species. If USFWS or NOAA Fisheries determine that impacts to a federally-listed species would likely occur, alternatives and measures to avoid or reduce impacts must be identified. USFWS and NOAA Fisheries also regulate activities conducted in federal critical habitat, which are geographic units designated as areas that support primary habitat constituent elements for listed species.

#### Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The MBTA protects all migratory birds, including their eggs, nests, and feathers. The MBTA was originally drafted to put an end to the commercial trade in bird feathers, popular in the latter part of the 1800s. The MBTA is enforced by the USFWS, and potential impacts to species protected under the MBTA are evaluated by the USFWS in consultation with other federal agencies.

### **4.3.3.2 State Policies and Regulations**

#### California Endangered Species Act

The CESA ensures legal protection for plants listed as rare or endangered, and wildlife species formally listed as endangered or threatened. The state also maintains a list of California Species of Special Concern (SSC). SSC status is assigned to species that have limited distribution, declining populations, diminishing habitat; or unusual scientific, recreational, or educational value. Under state law, the CDFG is empowered to review projects for their potential to impact special-status species and their habitats. Under CESA, CDFG reserves the right to request the replacement of lost habitat that is considered important to the continued existence to CESA protected species.

#### California Fish and Game Code

California Fish and Game Code Section 3511 includes provisions to protect Fully Protected (FP) species, such as: (1) Prohibiting take or possession "at any time" of the species listed in the statute, with few exceptions; (2) stating that "no provision of this code or any other law shall be construed to authorize the issuance of permits or licenses to "take" the species; and (3) stating that no previously issued permits or licenses for take of the species "shall have any force or effect" for authorizing take or possession. The CDFG is unable to authorize incidental take of "fully protected" species when activities are proposed in areas inhabited by those species.

Sections 3503 and 3503.5 of the Fish and Game Code state that it is unlawful to take, possess, or destroy the nest or eggs of any bird, with occasional exceptions. In addition, Section 3513 states that it is unlawful to take or possess any migratory bird as designated in the MBTA or any part of such migratory birds except as provided by rules and regulations under provisions of the MBTA.

CDFG also manages the California Native Plant Protection Act of 1977 (Fish and Game Code Section 1900, et seq.), which was enacted to identify, designate, and protect rare plants. In accordance with CDFG guidelines, CNPS plants included on CNPS Lists 1B and 2 are considered “rare” under the Act, and must be considered in CEQA documents.

#### *Other Sections of the Fish and Game Code*

“Fully Protected” species may not be taken or possessed without a permit from the Fish and Game Commission and/or CDFG. Information on these species can be found within Section 3511 (birds), Section 4700 (mammals), Section 5050 (reptiles and amphibians), and Section 5515 (fish) of the Fish and Game Code.

#### California Coastal Act

The California Coastal Act was enacted in 1976 to provide long-term protection of California’s coastal resources. The Act’s coastal resources management policies are based on recommendations contained in the California Coastal Plan. One such policy includes:

“Protection, enhancement and restoration of environmentally sensitive habitats, including intertidal and nearshore waters, wetlands, bays and estuaries, riparian habitat, certain wood and grasslands, streams, lakes, and habitat for rare or endangered plants or animals.”

The California Coastal Commission must evaluate proposed impacts to wetlands. For wetland delineations in the Coastal Zone, the California Coastal Commission utilizes a single-parameter definition (in addition to the USACE three parameter methodology). Delineations performed using the California Coastal Commission definition generally results in larger wetland areas than a corresponding USACE delineation of the same site. This is due to the difference in identifying criteria between methods.

#### **4.3.4 Thresholds of Significance**

The significance of potential biological impacts are based on thresholds identified within Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, which provides the following thresholds for determining impact significance with respect to biological resources. Biological impacts would be considered significant if the proposed project would:

- Substantially affect a rare or endangered species;
- Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community;
- Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act;

- Interfere substantially with the movement of any resident or migratory species of wildlife or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors;
- Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources;
- Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan;
- Reduce the long term viability of native plant, fish, or wildlife populations;
- Reduce species diversity or numbers of species; and,
- Introduce invasive plant or animal species.

#### **4.3.5 Impact Assessment and Methodology**

Impact assessment focused on identifying potential project-related impacts associated with implementation and long term use of the project, and was based on details presented within the project description. Identified impacts represent a reasonable worst case scenario. Potential impacts were expected to occur where proposed construction or development activities would result in temporary or permanent modification of sensitive communities or habitats occupied by special-status species. Impacts to biological resources within the study areas were evaluated by determining the sensitivity, significance, or rarity of each resource that would be adversely affected by the proposed project, and thresholds of significance were applied to determine if the impact constituted a significant impact. The significance threshold may be different for each habitat or species and is based on the resource's rarity or sensitivity and the level of impact that would result from the proposed project. Where potential project-related impacts to sensitive resources were identified, measures for avoiding or minimizing adverse effects to these resources were recommended.

#### **4.3.6 Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

Project specific impacts and mitigation measures have been identified for the project as a whole (all Study Areas, A, B, C and D) and for each individual study areas, as applicable. Each impact identifies which areas fall within this impact category and which mitigation measure is applicable for each Study Area.

##### **4.3.6.1 Sensitive Communities and Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas**

Portions of the proposed project area (all Study Areas combined) support Central coast arroyo willow riparian forest, Central dune scrub, and Northern coastal salt marsh communities, all of which are listed as sensitive communities in the CNDDDB. In addition, the Central dune scrub habitat supports special-status plant species. Due to the rarity of these communities, these areas may be considered to be ESHAs under the California Coastal Act. Table 4.3-1 below provides a summary of potential impacts to each sensitive habitat type and Study Area.

**Table 4.3-1. Summary of Habitats Potentially Affected**

Vegetation Community	Total Acres Affected	Sensitive Habitats Potentially Affected per Study Area (refer to Figure 4.3-1 for habitat locations)			
		Area A	Area B	Area C	Area D
Central Coast Willow Riparian Forest	0.01	0.0	0.0	0.01	0.0
Central Dune Scrub	1.044	0.088	0.066	0.89	0.0
Northern Coastal Salt Marsh	0.056	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.056
Ruderal Dominated by Wetland Indicator Species	0.005	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.005
<b>Total Acres Affected (All Habitats)</b>	<b>1.115</b>	<b>0.088</b>	<b>0.066</b>	<b>0.90</b>	<b>0.061</b>

### Construction-Related Disturbance of Potential ESHAs-All Areas

Proposed project activities would result in direct and indirect impacts to potential ESHAs. Impacts to the potential ESHAs would result from specific activities; therefore, they are evaluated under the appropriate headings below. The potential identified ESHAs are located within close proximity to the proposed work area and would be subject to direct and indirect disturbances from grading, trampling, sedimentation and erosion, or other disturbances. The close proximity of the potential ESHAs creates a constrained work area that must be clearly identified in the field.

**BIO Impact 1**     **The proposed project is located within close proximity to several potential ESHAs and other sensitive resources. Work activities could result in direct or indirect disturbances to the potential ESHAs (All Study Areas).**

*BIO/mm-1     Prior to issuance of construction permits, the applicant shall retain a qualified environmental monitor for all measures requiring environmental mitigation to ensure compliance with Conditions of Approval and EIR mitigation measures. The monitor shall be acceptable to the City and be responsible for preparation of an environmental quality assurance program (EQAP) that has been approved by the City and includes: (1) ensuring that procedures for verifying compliance with environmental mitigations are followed; (2) lines of communication and reporting methods; (3) daily and weekly compliance reporting; (4) construction crew training regarding environmentally sensitive areas; (5) authority to stop work; and (6) action to be taken in the event of non-compliance. Monitoring shall be at a frequency and duration determined by the affected natural resource agencies (e.g., CDFG, RWQCB, and the City).*

*BIO/mm-2     Prior to issuance of any grading permits, a grading plan shall be submitted delineating all temporary fencing to protect any adjacent ESHA areas as determined by the California Coastal Commission at the time of plan*

approval. The grading plans shall clearly show the location of project delineation fencing that excludes any potential adjacent ESHAs from disturbance. The grading plans shall clearly show all staging areas, which shall avoid areas determined to be ESHAs by the Coastal Commission.

BIO/mm-3 Prior to issuance of any grading permits, the applicant shall submit a comprehensive interpretive sign program for review and approval by the City Community Development Director. The plan shall clearly delineate the location of interpretive signs along the proposed public boardwalk. The signs shall inform boardwalk users of the ecology of central dune habitats, beach habitat, and plant and wildlife species that utilize these areas. Signs shall be placed along portions of the boardwalk located at the western boundaries of Study Area B.

BIO/mm-4 Within a week prior to the initiation of construction, the monitoring biologist shall conduct environmental awareness training for all construction personnel. The environmental awareness training shall include discussions of the sensitive resources ESHAs, and sensitive plant and animal species identified within the project area. Topics of discussion shall include: description of the species' habitats; general provisions and protections afforded to the resources; measures implemented to protect special-status species; review of the project boundaries and special conditions; the monitor's role in project activities; lines of communications consistent with BIO/mm-1; and procedures to be implemented in the event a special-status species is observed in the work area.

BIO/mm-5 Prior to the initiation of construction, the applicant's contractors and the monitoring biologist shall coordinate the placement of project delineation fencing throughout the work areas. The monitoring biologist shall field fit the placement of the project delineation fencing to minimize impacts to any ESHAs and other sensitive resources. The project delineation fencing shall remain in place and functional throughout the duration of the project. During construction, no project related work activities shall occur outside of the delineated work area.

#### Residual Impact

Implementation of this measure would reduce short-term construction impacts to a less than significant level.

#### Sedimentation and Erosion Impacts to Potential Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas-All Areas

During construction, grading operations would require the removal of vegetation, disturbance of soil layers, and the creation of soil stockpiles. This would expose soils to erosion by rainfall and runoff as storm water leaves the project site. The adverse effects of erosion and sediment transport include deposition of sediment within Meadow Creek and riling in sensitive habitats.

Construction activities could also affect water quality due to the potential for pollutants to be discharged to adjacent soils and surface water bodies. Construction of the proposed project would involve the use, fueling, and storage of heavy equipment onsite. Soil and associated

building material including asphalt and concrete has the potential to enter Meadow Creek, cause an increase in suspended sediments, sedimentation of aquatic habitat, and introduce compounds that could potentially be toxic to aquatic organisms.

Implementation of the proposed project would result in disturbance exceeding one acre; therefore, a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) would be required. The SWPPP would identify the minimum required Best Management Practices (BMP) to be implemented during construction. BMP examples would include: erosion control barriers such as silt fences, hay bales, drain inlet protection, and gravel bags; preservation of existing vegetation to the maximum extent feasible and; stabilization of disturbed areas with vegetation or hard surface treatments upon completion of construction in any specific area.

**BIO Impact 2    Vegetation removal, grading, and construction activities could result in indirect impacts including erosion and down-gradient sedimentation and pollutant discharges (e.g., sediment, oil, fuel, materials) into potential ESHAs (All Study Areas).**

*BIO/mm-6        During construction, to avoid erosion and downstream sedimentation, no work within or adjacent to Meadow Creek riparian area shall occur during the rainy season (October 15 through April 15); work could occur adjacent to the riparian area if proper erosion control is in place and the work effort is acceptable to the CDFG.*

*BIO/mm-7        During construction, no equipment access or construction activities shall occur within the banks of Meadow Creek. No equipment or fill material shall be staged in or adjacent to Meadow Creek, unless authorized by the appropriate permits.*

*BIO/mm-8        Prior to issuance of any grading permits, the applicant shall submit a grading plan identifying all stockpile and staging areas. Stockpiles and staging areas shall not be placed in areas that have potential to experience significant runoff during the rainy season. All project-related spills of hazardous materials within or adjacent to project sites shall be cleaned up immediately. Spill prevention and cleanup materials shall be on-site at all times during construction. Cleaning and refueling of equipment and vehicles shall occur only within designated staging areas. The staging areas shall conform to standard BMPs applicable to attaining zero discharge of storm water runoff. No maintenance, cleaning or fueling of equipment shall occur within wetland or riparian areas, or within 50 feet of such areas. At a minimum, all equipment and vehicles shall be checked and maintained on a daily basis to ensure proper operation and to avoid potential leaks or spills.*

*BIO/mm-9        Prior to issuance of any grading permits, the applicant shall submit a detailed sediment and erosion control plan for approval by the City, which shall address both temporary and permanent measures to control erosion and reduce sedimentation. Erosion and soil protection shall be provided on all cut and fill slopes. Revegetation shall be facilitated by mulching, hydro-seeding, or other methods, and shall be initiated as soon as possible after completion of grading, and prior to the onset of the rainy season (October 15). Permanent revegetation and landscaping shall emphasize native shrubs, and trees, to improve the probability of slope and soil stabilization without adverse*



*impacts to slope stability due to irrigation infiltration and long-term root development. All plans shall show that sedimentation and erosion control measures are installed prior to any other ground disturbing work.*

*BIO/mm-10 Prior to issuance of any grading permits, the applicant shall prepare and submit a Notice of Intent and SWPPP to the RWQCB. A copy of the SWPPP shall be submitted to the City for approval to show that sedimentation and erosion control measures are installed prior to any other ground disturbing work.*

Residual Impact

With implementation of the above mitigation measures, sedimentation and erosion impacts to potential ESHA would be considered less than significant.

Central Dune Scrub-Areas A, B and C

*Direct Impacts*

Permanent impacts to central dune scrub would result from the construction of the equestrian parking area affecting 0.89 acres (Study Area C), improvements around Fin's Restaurant affecting 0.066 acres (Study Area B), and portions of the public boardwalk/landscaping affecting 0.088 acres (Study Area A). Construction of the proposed equestrian parking area would convert approximately 0.89 acre of central dune scrub to permeable decomposed granite or similar materials, resulting in the permanent loss of the affected area. The habitat in Study Area C is disturbed due to existing recreational use and encroachment of ice-plant, but does include Blochman's leafy daisy, a sensitive plant species. Impacts to central dune scrub habitat would be potentially significant.

Construction of the public beach plaza area and associated landscaping just west of Fin's Restaurant (Study Area B) would permanently remove 0.066 acre of central dune scrub. In addition, Construction of the boardwalk and landscaping areas at the northwest corner of Study Area A would permanently convert approximately 0.088 acre of central dune scrub to urban development.

**BIO Impact 3     The proposed project would result in 1.044 acre of permanent impacts to central dune scrub habitat, of which 0.088 acres are in Study Area A, 0.066 acres are in Study Area B, and 0.89 acres are in Study Area C.**

*BIO/mm-11 Prior to issuance of any grading permits, the applicant shall retain a qualified biologist acceptable to the City to prepare a Dune Habitat Restoration Plan (HRP) for review and approval by the CDFG and the City. The HRP shall be prepared by a qualified biologist and/or botanist and shall detail the methods for restoring or enhancing 2.088 acres (2:1 for permanent impacts) of central dune scrub habitat, of which 0.18 acres will be mitigation for impacts to Area A, 0.13 acres will be mitigation for impacts Area B and 1.78 acres will be mitigation for impacts to Area C. The restoration area(s) should be located directly northwest of the proposed public access improvements near the proposed Building 2 (refer to Figure 4.3-1). The recommended HRP mitigation area is located on State Parks property; therefore, the City must discuss, coordinate, and finalize the final location of the mitigation area with the State Parks. The goal of the HRP would be to mitigate permanent*

*impacts to central dune scrub, so that project impacts do not significantly disrupt the habitat. The HRP shall focus on restoring and enhancing central dune scrub habitat by removing invasive species (iceplant) and planting the appropriate native species (mock heather, purple nightshade, Blochman's ragwort, Blochman's leafy daisy, and suffrutescent wall flower). At a minimum, the HRP should include the following elements:*

- a. Identification of locations, amounts, size and types of plants to be replanted, as well as any other necessary components (e.g., temporary irrigation, amendments, etc.) to insure successful reestablishment.*
- b. Provide for a native plant salvage effort prior to ground disturbing activities. Salvaged plants shall include but not be limited to Blochman's leafy daisy and any other CNPS listed plant species that may be affected;*
- c. Quantification of impact based on "as-built plans" and quantification of mitigation areas such that the replacement criteria are met.*
- d. A program schedule and success criteria for a five year monitoring and reporting program that is structured to ensure the success of the HRP.*
- e. Provide for the in-kind replacement of Blochman's leafy daisy that are removed or damaged at a 3:1 ratio (based on square feet cover).*

BIO/mm-12

*Prior to initiation of construction, the applicant shall retain a qualified biologist/botanist acceptable to the City to supervise the implementation of the HRP. The qualified biologist/botanist should supervise plant salvage, site preparation, implementation timing, species utilized, planting installation, maintenance, monitoring, and reporting of the restoration efforts. The qualified biologist/botanist shall prepare and submit four annual reports and one final monitoring report to the City and CDFG for review and approval. The annual and final monitoring reports should include discussions of the restoration activities, project photographs, and an assessment of the restoration efforts attainment of the success criteria.*

#### Residual Impact

With implementation of the above mitigation measures, direct impacts to central foredune habitat would be less than significant.

#### *Indirect Impacts*

As proposed, the equestrian parking area and portions of the public boardwalk would be located within central dune scrub habitat. As proposed, the equestrian parking area would include fencing; however, no rail or fence is proposed on the boardwalk in areas where the proposed path would be at or close to grade of the central dune scrub vegetation. In these areas, it appears that walkers are already having some impact on the dune habitat as they leave the existing main trail to access the beach. This condition may be exacerbated as boardwalk users could step off the path into the native habitat. Over time, it is likely that regular users would

create informal or unimproved access to the beach in these locations. This undirected egress on to the dunes would contribute to trampling and subsequent erosion of the dune habitat.

**BIO Impact 4     The proposed project would allow undirected egress into central dune scrub habitat, which would result in long term trampling and erosion of dunes. (Study Areas B and C)**

*Implement BIO/mm-3.*

*BIO/mm-13     Prior to issuance of any grading permits, the applicant shall submit a final landscape plan for review and approval by the City Community Development Director showing habitat protection fencing. To minimize visual impacts of the fencing, it shall be no more than 18" high wood post or steel rod, and cable. The intent of the fence would be to deter users from trampling the dune habitat while accessing the beach from the boardwalk.*

**Residual Impact**

With implementation of the above mitigation measures, long-term impacts to central dune scrub habitat would be less than significant.

It is evident that continuous use of the trails in the dune habitat by equestrians has resulted in the creation of informal trails. These extraneous trails are contributing to the long term degradation of central dune scrub habitat in the area. Long term use of the proposed equestrian parking and staging area will likely result in increased use of these informal trails and continued degradation of habitat in the area.

Equestrians routinely trailer their horses from one location to another location. Seed from exotic and invasive species attach to the horses, horse trailers and vehicles, which then transport the seed to new locations. The transport of weed seed contributes to the spread of exotic plant species in natural areas. Relocating the equestrian parking area directly adjacent to the central dune scrub habitat would increase the deposition of weed seed into the dune habitat.

**BIO Impact 5     Long term use of the proposed equestrian parking and staging area would contribute to the degradation of central dune scrub habitat adjacent to the equestrian parking area and existing trails by increasing erosion on informal trails and transporting weed seed into the dune habitat. (Study Area C)**

*BIO/mm-14     Prior to issuance of a grading permit for Area C, if trails maintenance will become the responsibility of the concessionaire, the applicant shall submit an Equestrian Area Trails and Maintenance Plan for review and approval by State Parks. The area of the plan shall be determined in consultation with the City and State Parks. At a minimum, the Equestrian Area Trails and Maintenance Plan shall include the immediate area to the south of the proposed equestrian area and the access to the two primary trails, and shall include at minimum the following elements:*

- a. *A funding mechanism that provides for the implementation of the Equestrian Area Trails and Maintenance Plan in perpetuity.*

- b. *A detailed trail plan prepared by a professional landscape architect in coordination with State Parks that identifies two primary trails to be improved for continued use by the equestrians, hikers and beach users. The primary trails should be located at the north western and southeastern corners of the proposed equestrian parking area. The primary trails shall connect to appropriate secondary trails to provide access to the beach and other attraction areas. All other existing trails not identified for continued use shall be fenced off with temporary exclusion fencing and restored with Central dune scrub vegetation.*
- c. *A Central dune scrub vegetation restoration plan that utilizes native species to restore all trails not identified for continued use. The Central dune scrub restoration element of the Equestrian Area Trails and Maintenance Plan shall incorporate the requirements of the HRP as described in BIO/mm-11.*
- d. *A schedule for conducting trash cleanup on a regular basis (at least once a month) and the entity responsible for the cleanup.*
- e. *A schedule for weekly manure removal and the entity responsible for the removal.*
- f. *Identification of responsible party(s) to maintain all facilities associated with the equestrian parking and staging area and trails.*
- g. *The Equestrian Area Trails and Maintenance Plan shall clearly identify all areas that fall within the control of the plan. At a minimum, the plan shall include the immediate equestrian parking and staging area.*

~~This mitigation measure may not be the sole responsibility of the applicant, since the applicant is to be a concessionaire of State Parks under the JPA and is not responsible for the maintenance of State Park areas not under the concession contract.~~ It is recommended that an equestrian group that regularly accesses the equestrian trails “adopt” the parking area similarly to the adoption of habitat areas by other groups, such as the Small Wilderness Area Preservation, to maintain the equestrian parking area and trails. The adoption of the equestrian parking area could then be maintained by the groups using the facility and in this manner ensure that the parking area and adjoining habitat are kept clean of trash and manure, and that trail use is limited to the identified trails.

#### Residual Impact

This impact is considered significant and unavoidable, even with mitigation measures implemented as described above. The area potentially meets the definition of an ESHA because there are listed plant species that have been identified in Area C. Overriding considerations would be required by the City Council to allow development in Area C.

#### Alternative To Area C Equestrian Parking Area

An alternative measure to reduce and avoid impacts to potential ESHA south of West Grand Avenue would be to move the equestrian parking onto the concession area north of West Grand Avenue. The southeastern-most parking area could be re-designed such that a portion of the lot

could be constructed with a decomposed granite or hard packed base acceptable to horses and designated for loading and unloading for equestrian use only.

This alternative has secondary indirect impacts, mainly the potential for increased erosion and water quality into Meadow Creek caused by locating the equestrian parking adjacent to the creek corridor (although probably similar to the existing use and not substantial). The drainage of the parking area may require minor alteration to ensure that the drainage flowed into the bioswales prior to discharging into the creek. This alternative may reduce the number of parking spaces in this lot, increase dust in the vicinity of the lodge, and increase vectors (especially flies if manure is not regularly removed), increased potential for weed seeds to enter the creek, and safety. Mitigation measure BIO-mm/14 would still apply since the increase in equestrian parking may also cause indirect impacts to the potential ESHA located south of West Grand Avenue.

**BIO Impact 6** **If the alternative location for the equestrian parking is implemented, ~~instead of implementing BIO-mm/1, i.e.,~~ relocated the Equestrian Parking and Staging Area to the north side of West Grand Avenue. This alternative has the potential to increase sediment and pollution deposition into Meadow Creek. If this alternative is implemented, the following mitigation measure shall be applied (Study Area A).**

*BIO/mm-15* *Prior to issuance of any grading permits, the applicant shall submit a final grading and drainage plan showing all storm water drainage flows being directed into the proposed bio- swales, prior to entering Meadow Creek.*

#### Residual Impact

With implementation of the above mitigation measures, indirect impacts resulting from the alternative location of the equestrian parking area to Area A to central dune scrub habitat would be less than significant because the alternative avoids impacts to ESHA.

#### Landscaping - Areas A, B and C

The proposed Landscaping Plan for the project includes several areas for potential “Dune Demonstration-Native Dune Stabilization” plantings and landscaping. Many of the plant species proposed for these areas are included on the California Invasive Species Council’s (Cal-IPC) invasive plant species list. The proposed dune stabilization areas and landscape areas would be in close proximity to the existing natural dune habitat. Seeds from plantings in these areas could be deposited in the native dune habitat by horses, people, vehicles, or wind. Deposition of weed seed in the adjacent dune habitat could exacerbate the spread of invasive species in the natural areas.

**BIO Impact 7** **The use of invasive plant species in the Dune Demonstration-Native Dune Stabilization and landscaping areas could contribute to the spread of invasive species in the adjacent dune habitat (Study Areas A, B, and C).**

*BIO/mm-16* *Prior to issuance of grading permits, the applicant shall submit a final landscape plan that shall prohibit any invasive or exotic species. Any restoration or dune revegetation areas shall not utilize the following:*

- *Dune spinach (Tetragonia decumbens)*

- *European beach grass (Ammophila arenaria)*

*The following native plant species may be used and are recommended for use in the dune restoration or revegetation areas.*

- *mock heather (Ericameria ericoides)*
- *purple nightshade (Solanum xanti)*
- *Blochman's ragwort (Senecio blochmaniae)*
- *Blochman's leafy daisy (Erigeron blochmaniae)*
- *suffrutescent wall flower (Erysimum insulare ssp. suffrutescens)*
- *American Dune Grass (Leymus mollis)*
- *Nuttall's milkvetch (Astragalus nuttallii)*
- *beach saltbush (Atriplex leucophylla)*
- *Camissonia cheiranthifolia (beach evening primrose)*

BIO/mm-17

*Prior to issuance of grading permits, the landscaping plans for the lodge grounds landscape areas shall not utilize any species recognized by Cal-IPC, California Exotic Pest Plant Council (Cal-EPPC), CDFG, California State Parks, or other resources organizations as invasive or potentially invasive. The following plant species shall be removed from the proposed Landscaping plans:*

- *Erigeron karvinskianus*
- *cabbage tree (Cordyline australis)*
- *white willow (Salix alba)*
- *Bermuda grass (Cynodon dactylon)*

#### Residual Impact

With implementation of the above mitigation measures, indirect impacts to central dune scrub habitat would be less than significant.

#### Meadow Creek and Wetlands – Area A

The proposed project (Area A) includes the construction of bioswales just outside the edge of riparian vegetation. The bioswales have been included by the applicant to address the need for filtration of drainage into the creek. Since the creek was originally realigned to act as stormwater drainage it has been impacted by realignment activities, storm water runoff, pesticides, and other pollutants; therefore, has degraded value as aquatic habitat. The LCP for the area requires all projects to consider the pollution filtering capabilities of Meadow Creek during project design and evaluation. LCP policy for Meadow Creek (Western Branch):

“4. Policy: The existing sediment filtering capabilities of Meadow Creek as it passes through the Coastal Planned Commercial area shall be maintained and where feasible it shall be enhanced through the use of “stilling devices” to filter out additional oils and sediment (LCP Coastal Resources Component, Part 2.1.5, Recommendations, B. Inland Resource Areas, Water Resources, and Meadow

Creek (Western Branch) Policy 4; page 26 of the City of Grover beach, Local Coastal Program)

“5: That there shall be a minimum of a 50 foot buffer, or other appropriate buffer established by a habitat restoration plan approved by the Department of Fish and Game, on both sides of the portion of Meadow Creek north of Grand Avenue. The purpose of this buffer is to protect and enhance the habitat values and filtration capabilities of Meadow Creek while recognizing that for most of its length north of Grand Avenue there is existing development on both sides of the creek.” (LCP Coastal Resources Component, Part 2.1.5, Recommendations, B. Inland Resource Areas, Water Resources, and Meadow Creek (Western Branch) Policy 5; page 26 of the City of Grover Beach, Local Coastal Program)

The project includes the bioswales to improve water quality in Meadow Creek and increase habitat values. The proposal of bioswales, although they would be manmade features within the 50 foot buffer, would meet the policy by filtering stormwater prior to it entering the creek. The bioswales would enhance the habitat value by utilizing native species as plant filters, adding the appropriate soils and improvements aimed to reduce pollutants that would be entering the creek as a result of development. The proposed stormwater plan outlined in the Preliminary Hydrology Study for the proposed project (Appendix M) indicates that the bioswales would be constructed based on LEED storm water quality and quantity requirements and would be designed according to the Urban Runoff Quality management, WEF Manual of Practice produced by the ASCE. The intent is to utilize the bioswales to improve stormwater quality prior to entering the creek. It appears that the use of bioswales, particularly if revegetated with riparian plant species, would meet the intent of the LCP policies.

**BIO Impact 8**     **If not properly designed, the introduction of bioswales adjacent to Meadow Creek, in Area A, could be inconsistent with the LCP Policies for the Meadow Creek Western Branch with regard to use of the 50 foot buffer.**

*BIO/mm-18*     *Prior to issuance of grading permits in Area A, the applicant shall submit a Habitat Restoration Plan for the 50 foot buffer area adjacent to Meadow Creek. The proposed bioswales shall incorporate appropriate riparian vegetation consistent with the goal of improved habitat quality along the creek. A habitat restoration plan shall be developed by a restoration specialist approved by the City and reviewed for adequacy by the CDFG and RWQCB. The restoration plan shall include BMPs for habitat management, stormwater retention, water quality control, and be consistent with the City’s SWMP.*

*BIO/mm-19*     *The habitat restoration plan required in BIO/mm-18 shall also include restoration of riparian habitat within the Meadow Creek corridor, either on site (first priority) or replacement or restoration downstream of West Grand Avenue within the Meadow Creek corridor with appropriate wetland and native plant species equal to 0.69 acre area of the Meadow Creek corridor.*

*BIO/mm-20*     *Prior to issuance of any grading permits if it is determined that any restoration would occur within the riparian corridor under the jurisdiction of the CDFG or within jurisdictional waters regulated by the USACE, then the appropriate permits shall be obtained from the agencies.*

## Residual Impact

With implementation of the above mitigation measures, encroachment of the 50 foot buffer would be less than significant.

### RV Sewer Dump Station – Area D

The proposed project includes removing an existing RV dump station located on Le Sage Drive; removal and relocation is the responsibility of the project applicant. In order to avoid the loss of RV dumping capabilities, an existing RV Dump Station located at the North Beach Campgrounds would be expanded to accommodate two dumping stations. The dump station to be expanded is located in a developed area that supports coverage of wetland plant species and patches of northern coastal salt marsh habitat. This vegetation type is indicative of a state regulated wetland (~~ESHA~~) and may be considered a wetland under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. As proposed, expansion of the existing RV dump station would permanently remove approximately 0.061 acre of wetland vegetation that would be subject to authorization by CDFG and USACE.

**BIO Impact 9      Expansion of the existing North Beach Campground RV Dump Station would permanently impact 0.061 acre of wetland vegetation that may be subject to CDFG and USACE jurisdiction. (Study Area D)**

BIO/mm-21

*~~Prior to issuance of a grading permit for Area D to expand the North Beach Campground RV Dump Station, the applicant shall redesign the dump station layout and proposed improvements to avoid take of any wetland areas that may exist at the dump station area as shown in Figure 4.3-2 retain a qualified biologist acceptable to the City to prepare a Preliminary Jurisdictional Determination focusing on Study Area D. The Preliminary Jurisdictional Determination shall identify potential waters of the United States, as defined by the USACE, and potential waters of the State of California, as defined by the CDFG and the CCC. The Preliminary Jurisdictional Determination shall be submitted to USACE for review and verification. If Study Area D is determined to support jurisdictional areas that would be impacted by the RV Dump Station expansion, the applicant shall obtain the appropriate permits prior to impacting the jurisdictional areas. If permits are required, it is likely that habitat replacement at an equal ratio would be required prior to construction of the improvements.~~*

## Residual Impact

Successful implementation of BIO/mm-21 would result in avoidance of the potential wetlands. If the dump station improvements are conducted outside the wetland boundaries, no impacts to potential wetlands would occur and potential impacts would be less than significant. Expansion of the RV Dump Station in Study Area D could be considered independent of the proposed Lodge project; therefore, it can be considered as having independent utility under CEQA. The proposed Lodge could be constructed prior to the establishment of mitigation measures for potential impacts associated with the RV Dump Station. However, the RV Dump Station improvements cannot be conducted until the required Jurisdictional Determination is finalized, appropriate permits are obtained, and mitigation is established by the permitting agencies. With the appropriate permits in place and agency required mitigation measures established potential impacts to wetlands would be less than significant



#### 4.3.6.2 Special-Status Plants

Most of the proposed project area is disturbed or developed and has limited available habitat for special-status plant species. However, all of Study Area C, the western boundary of Study Area B, and the northwest corner of Study Area A supports disturbed central dune scrub habitat that has potential to support the following rare plant species: Aphanisma, surf thistle, dune larkspur, beach spectaclepod, and Nipomo Mesa lupine. Although the presence of these species in the project area is unlikely, surveys conducted in support of this EIR were insufficient to verify absence of these species. As proposed, construction of the equestrian parking and staging area (Area C) and public access improvements (Study Areas A and B) would impact habitat with potential to support special-status plants.

**BIO Impact 10 Construction of the equestrian parking and staging area and public access improvements would impact dune habitat with potential to support special-status plants. (Study Areas A, B, and C)**

*BIO/mm-22 In order to avoid potential impacts to special-status plant species in Study Area C, the applicant shall implement one of two options, as follows:*

*Option 1: Relocate the proposed equestrian parking and staging area (Study Area C) to the southeast corner of Study Area A (as discussed in BIO Impact 6). If impacts to the central dune scrub habitat can be avoided or minimized, the mitigation requirements (BIO/mm-11) for impacts to central dune scrub could be reduced appropriately. Or;*

*Option 2: If the equestrian area is to remain at Area C, it is assumed that the identified rare plants are present at the site and appropriate mitigation shall occur prior to development. Or, if presence is not assumed, approval of the proposed project shall be postponed until rare plant surveys can be conducted in the identified areas and presence or absence of rare plant species with potential to occur can be verified. A survey of the identified areas should be conducted in April or May to verify the presence or absence of special-status plant species. In the event that additional special-status plant species are identified in the affected areas, mitigation for impacts to the species shall be included in the HRP as discussed in BIO/mm-11 and BIO/mm-12.*

*BIO/mm-23 In order to avoid potential impacts to special-status plant species in Study Areas A and B, the applicant shall revise the project plans to clearly show the avoidance of central dune scrub habitat located at the northwest corner of Study Area A and along the western boundary of Study Area B. This can be achieved by limiting all improvements to existing developed areas. If impacts to the central dune scrub habitat can be avoided or minimized, the mitigation requirements (BIO/mm-11) for impacts to central dune scrub could be reduced appropriately.*

*If complete avoidance of the central dune scrub habitat in Study Areas A and B is not feasible, the applicant shall conduct rare plant surveys in the identified areas, as discussed in BIO/mm-22 Option 2.*

## Residual Impact

With implementation of the above mitigation measures impacts to suitable special-status plant species habitat would be less than significant.

### Blochman's Leafy Daisy – Area C

Blochman's leafy daisy, a CNPS List 1B.2 species occurs in Study Area C. This species is rhizomatous; therefore, it is difficult to determine how many individuals occur in the area. However, the square feet of area covered by the individuals are easily mapped; approximately 3,328 square feet of sparse Blochman's leafy daisy occur in Study Area C. If the equestrian parking and staging area is constructed in Study Area C, the identified Blochman's leafy daisy would be removed.

#### **BIO Impact 11 Construction of the equestrian parking and staging area would impact 3,328 square feet of Blochman's leafy daisy. (Study Area C)**

*BIO/mm-24 In order to avoid potential impacts to special-status plant species, the applicant shall implement one of two options, as follows:*

*Option 1: Implement BIO/mm-22; or*

*Option 2: The applicant shall incorporate Blochman's leafy daisy propagation and planting efforts in the HRP as described in BIO/mm-11. The HRP shall include detailed discussions of the methods to be employed to establish and monitor a Blochman's leafy daisy population in the identified mitigation area (refer to Figure 4.3-1).*

## Residual Impact

With implementation of the above mitigation measures impacts to Blochman's leafy daisy would be less than significant.

### **4.3.6.3 Special-Status Wildlife**

The proposed project would avoid direct impacts to the aquatic portions and riparian vegetation of Meadow Creek and would likely increase water quality in the creek by enhancing run off filtration capabilities on the site. Due to the lack of direct impacts to aquatic and riparian habitat and the anticipated improvements to water quality, adverse impacts to aquatic species in Meadow Creek are not expected.

Based on the existing conditions and documented special-status species occurrences, the proposed project area may support nesting bird species, wintering western snowy plover, silvery legless lizard, and coast horned lizard. As proposed, project activities could impact these resources. Impacts to these resources are discussed below.

### Nesting Birds – All Study Areas

The various habitats occurring in the project Study Areas provide suitable nesting habitat for a variety of bird species. Shore birds may utilize the central dune scrub habitat for nesting; common passerines may use the ruderal, landscape, or coastal bluff scrub for nesting. If construction occurs between March and September, the available nesting habitats would be impacted by grading and equipment access. If bird species are nesting within or adjacent to the

affected area during construction, the individuals could be directly or indirectly impacted. Direct impacts may include loss of active nests during vegetation removal. Noise or other disturbances may cause an individual to abandon a nest resulting in an indirect impact.

**BIO Impact 12 Construction activities conducted during the nesting season (March through September) could directly or indirectly impact nesting birds, protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). (All Study Areas)**

*BIO/mm-25 If vegetation removal occurs between March and September, prior to any site activity (such as installation of the project delineation fencing and the commencement of site grading), the environmental monitor shall conduct pre-construction nesting bird surveys. If nesting activity is identified, the following measures shall be implemented:*

- a. If an active nest of common passerine or shorebird species' are observed in the work area or within 100 feet of the work area, construction activities shall be modified and or delayed as necessary to avoid direct take or indirect disturbance of the nests, eggs, or young;*
- b. If active nest sites of raptors or other special-status species are observed within the work area or 300 feet of the work area, the environmental monitor shall establish a suitable buffer around the nest site. Construction activities in the buffer zone shall be prohibited until the young have fledged the nest and achieved independence.*
- c. Active raptor or special-status species nests should be documented and a letter report should be submitted to the City, USFWS, and CDFG, documenting project compliance with the MBTA and applicable project mitigation measures.*

**Residual Impact**

With implementation of the above mitigation measures impacts to nesting birds would be less than significant.

**Western Snowy Plover – Areas A, B and C**

The central dune scrub habitat in the project area could support wintering habitat for the federally threatened western snowy plover. According to State Parks biologist, wintering western snowy plover occur annually approximately 0.25 mile south of the proposed project area. These individuals are observed foraging on the shoreline and typically disperse when vehicles drive by. Considering that wintering western snowy plover are known to occur in the vicinity, it is reasonable to presume that wintering individuals could utilize the dunes in the proposed project area. However, Western snowy plover have not been observed nesting in or near the proposed project area, and the disturbed conditions and presence of people, vehicles, and horses in the project area are unsuitable for nesting snowy plover. Project activities conducted during the snowy plover wintering season (October through February) could disrupt individuals that may be utilizing the surrounding area for wintering.

**BIO Impact 13 Construction activities conducted during the wintering season (October through February) for western snowy plover could disturb wintering western snowy plover. (Study Areas A, B, and C)**

*Implement BIO/mm-4.*

*BIO/mm-26 If construction activities occur during the western snowy plover wintering season (October through February), and if required by CDFG or State Parks, the project applicant shall retain a qualified biologist acceptable to the City to conduct daily pre-disturbance surveys for wintering western snowy plover. The pre-disturbance surveys must be conducted when any work related activities will occur in or within 100 feet of any dune habitat (Study Area C and western portions of Study Areas B and A). If wintering western snowy plover are observed, all project activities within 500 feet of the observed individual(s) shall be postponed until the observed individual(s) leave the area on their own accord. The monitoring biologist or contractors shall not conduct any actions that would result in the deliberate or inadvertent disruption of the observed individual(s) behavior.*

**Residual Impact**

With implementation of the above mitigation measures, potential impacts to wintering western snowy plover would be less than significant.

**Silvery Legless Lizard and Coast Horned Lizard- Areas A, B and C**

The central dune scrub community in and adjacent to Study Areas A, B, and C provide suitable habitat for silvery legless lizard, coast horned lizard and other common reptiles. CNDDDB documents several occurrences of these species in the Guadalupe Dunes complex with similar habitat conditions as the proposed project area. Grading activities could result in direct take of silvery legless lizard, coast horned lizard and other reptiles. Direct take may include being struck by equipment, entrapped in stockpiled materials or trenches, or trampled or collected by construction personnel.

**BIO Impact 14 The proposed project could result in direct take of silvery legless lizard and coast horned lizard in Areas A, B and C.**

*BIO/mm-27 Prior to issuance of grading permits, the applicant shall retain a qualified biologist acceptable to the City (this can be the environmental monitor). The biologist shall conduct a survey for silvery legless lizard, coast horned lizard and other reptiles in Areas A, B and C. The surveyor shall utilize hand search methods in areas of disturbance where these species are expected to be found (e.g., under shrubs, other vegetation, or debris on sandy soils). Any individuals located during this survey should be safely removed from the construction area and placed in suitable habitat.*

**Residual Impact**

With implementation of the above mitigation measures, long-term impacts resulting from this project to coast horned lizard would be less than significant.

### 4.3.7 Cumulative Impacts

The proposed project would result in permanent and temporary impacts to potential ESHAs, rare plant species, wildlife, and wetlands. These resources fall under the jurisdiction of various state and federal resource agencies. The proposed Pacific Coast Hotel would be constructed just east of the proposed project in a vacant lot with similar conditions as Study Area A of the Grover Beach Lodge project. The Pacific Coast Hotel project is not anticipated to impact sensitive biological resources (Pacific Coast Hotel Initial Study); therefore, impacts associated with the Grover Beach Lodge would not exacerbate those caused by the Pacific Coast Lodge project.

Even though impacts associated with the Grover Beach Lodge combined with those of the Pacific Coast Hotel would not result in significant cumulative impacts, the Grover Beach Lodge project does have the potential to result in an increased demand for public access to sensitive areas. The increased use of sensitive areas has the potential to affect natural resources and habitats in the vicinity. The potential impacts to the sensitive species and habitat types discussed in this section, when considered in context with the potential for losses of similar habitats due to the construction of future projects within the vicinity, constitute a cumulative impact to these biological resources.

**BIO Impact 15    The increased use of sensitive areas resulting from development of the proposed project would contribute to the cumulative degradation of biological resources of the area, resulting in a potentially significant cumulative impact.**

*Implement BIO/mm-1 through BIO/mm-27.*

Residual Impact

Implementation of these measures would reduce project specific and cumulative impacts to a less than significant level.

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