VENTURA COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE AGENCY

FINAL

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

FOR

MODIFICATION OF CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. CUP-3344
ARGO PETROLEUM CORPORATION
FERNDALE RANCH

THIS REPORT HAS BEEN PREPARED PURSUANT TO DIVISION 13 OF THE PUBLIC RESOURCE CODE.

APPROVED BY:

M. L. Koester

M. L. KOESTER, DIRECTOR
ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE AGENCY

DATE: 6/21/78

3. Mitigation Measures

The only potentially significant noise impacts to the College are from the three to four trucks per day required during the drilling operations. This noise impact could be reduced by limiting the truck traffic to daytime hours.

The applicant's intent to construct a shipping line will eliminate adverse truck noise impacts during the production phase of the project.

H. FLORA AND FAUNA

1. Setting

Most of the Ferndale Ranch is covered with vegetation indigenous to the foothills of California. This includes areas of grassland, chaparral, and woodlands. Grassland and light chaparral associations make up the majority of the vegetation on the property. Grassland vegetation is found both on the gently sloping alluvial plain and the steeper rocky slopes. The chaparral is found mostly on the steeper slopes. Oaks, sycamores, and a few other species are scattered in the grassland and chaparral areas. The grassland and chaparral vegetation has been modified to some extent by the grazing of cattle. The chaparral and grassland vegetation which covers most of the property is highly flammable. Consequently there is a risk of fire, especially during dry, windy summer and fall months. Mixed woodland and riparian vegetation is found mainly along Santa Paula Creek and other major drainage areas.

Although current land use has restricted resident wildlife diversity, the project site still provides a valuable foraging zone for several transitory animals from adjacent habitats. The abundant herbaceous vegetation is likely to be utilized by mule deer, coyote, grey fox, longtailed weasel, skunk, raccoon, and several other species. Surrounding undeveloped areas are known to be inhabited by these animals as well as a full range of wildlife species, including the mountain lion. Nearby riparian habitats of Sisar and Santa Paula Creeks add to the overall diversity of this area by providing important habitat resources such as complex aquatic and terrestrial food webs, perennial water supplies and diversified cover for nesting and breeding. Together these support a variety of resident invertebrates, fish, reptile, mammal, and bird species. Coastal sage scrub, chapparal, grassland, and southern oak woodland associated with hillside and mountainous terrain further contribute to this resource base and, combined with the relative isolation of these areas, provide extensive habitat for wildlife.

According to the U.S. Forest Service, the northeast corner of the Ferndale Ranch property abuts a critical Condor habitat. The Public Works Agency indicates that the nearest known nesting site of the California Condor is approximately 1.75 miles northeast of the project site.

2. Impact

The proposal would result in a temporary displacement of some species during the drilling phase and a permanent displacement of a number of individuals that currently use the site as habitats. The animals most affected would be large animals such as mule deer and coyote.

The location of the drill sites in the canyon bottom and on the ridge to the northeast are factors which tend to reduce the impact of the project on nesting and roosting Condors in the area. It should be noted, however, that any activity beyond the proposed sites could have severe adverse impacts on this endangered species.

The effects of an oil spill or line breakage into Santa Paula Creek could have an adverse effect on this unique riparian habitat, particularly resident and anadromous fish, as well as other aquatic wildlife species. However, the applicant will install shutoff valves in the line on both sides of Santa Paula Creek which would confine the amount of oil spilled in the event of line breakage to 45 barrels (1,890 gallons).

PUBLIC WORKS AGENCY

MEMORANDUM

TO: Road Administration
Attn: D. A. Betlach

DATE: February 14, 1977

FROM: Flood Control - Flora and Fauna

REF. NO:

SUBJECT: Data Request for CUP 3344 Modification, ARGO Petroleum Company, Ferndale Ranch

The following evaluations of issues are general in nature with the exception of the section on the California Condor which is based on knowledge of Condor activity in the immediate area of the proposed project.

1. How would the proposal affect wildlife in the area?

   (a) There would be a temporary displacement of some species during the drilling phase and permanent displacement of a small number of individuals that currently use the sites as habitat. Additionally, the pumping operations would have a permanent, although slight, inhibiting influence on some animals in the immediate area.

   The animals most affected would be the larger mammals such as Mule Deer and Coyote.

2. What would be the combined effect of the proposal and the Thomas Aquinas College?

   (a) The effects of each project differ mainly in degree of human activity in the immediate area and in species affected with the Thomas Aquinas College having the most pronounced effect on the greatest number of species and individuals. The drilling proposals though less permanent and less inhibiting, are in a more remote section of the Ferndale Ranch and would affect animals that are less tolerant of human activity.

   The combination of both proposals would have an effect that would be greater than either alone because a larger number of animals would be displaced and a greater number of species would be affected.

3. If the oil drilling activity in the area continues to increase, would there be a point at which the habitat would be adversely affected?

   (a) Yes. That point was reached when the first oil well was drilled. Each additional well adds to the deterioration of habitat. At what point the habitat becomes adversely affected as to no longer being suitable habitat for wildlife is a question of specific species requirements.

Wildlife habitat is a general term covering many species which have only general needs and tolerances in common. In general as human activity increases, more and more species tolerance levels will be exceeded and these species will either be eliminated from the area or forced to compete for a niche elsewhere, putting a strain on the carrying capacity of the new area.

California Condor

The nearest known California nesting site is approximately 1-3/4 miles northeast of the project site. This is out of the critical Condor habitat as published in the Federal Register.

The location of the site in the canyon bottom and the ridge to the northeast are factors that tend to reduce the impact of the project on nesting and roosting birds in the area.

It should be stated that any activity beyond the proposed sites would have severe adverse impacts on this extremely endangered bird, and this project comes very close to being adverse.

B. Lockard
Staff Conservationist

By _____
R. Foulk
Conservationist

RF:jmk