



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION IX

75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105-3901

OFFICE OF THE
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

SEP 17 2009

Colonel Thomas H. Magness
District Engineer, Los Angeles District
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
PO Box 532711
Los Angeles, California 90053-2325

Subject: Permit Application No. 2003-01264-AOA for the proposed Newhall Ranch Management and Development Plan, Los Angeles County, California

Dear Colonel Magness:

On August 24, 2009, EPA provided written comments regarding the proposed Newhall Ranch project (enclosed). The applicant, Newhall Land and Farming Company, proposes to fill/impact approximately 82.3 acres of waters of the United States (including wetlands) in conjunction with the construction of the Newhall Ranch Project, a master-planned development encompassing approximately 12,000 acres along the Santa Clara River in unincorporated Los Angeles County. The comments provided identified concerns regarding potential adverse project impacts to waters, and the proposed project's compliance with the Federal Guidelines (40 CFR 230) promulgated under Section 404(b)(1) of the Clean Water Act (CWA). The letter concluded, that based upon the available information, the project may result in substantial and unacceptable impacts to an aquatic resource of national importance (ARNI).

These concerns were reiterated in a second comment letter to your agency, dated 1 September 2009, as part of our review of the project's Draft Environmental Impacts Statement (DEIS) (also enclosed).

We have been working in coordination with the Los Angeles District and the applicant to obtain additional project information. However, given the complexity of the project and the short time allowed under the MOA to resolve initial concerns, no additional substantive information has yet been presented. Therefore, we must act to preserve our authority to elevate the proposed permit in the event that our environmental concerns are not resolved. We respectfully reaffirm our objections to permit approval for the Newhall Ranch Project on the basis that the authorization **will** have substantial and unacceptable impacts to an ARNI.

We look forward to working with you, your staff, and the applicant to resolve the important environmental issues concerning the proposed project. If you wish to discuss this matter further, please call me at (415) 972-3572, or have your staff contact David W. Smith, Chief of our Wetlands Office, at (415) 972-3464.

Sincerely,

Laura Yoshii
Acting Regional Administrator

Enclosure

cc:

Aaron Allen, North Coast Branch Chief
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District
Regulatory Branch – Ventura Field Office
2151 Alessandro Drive, Suite 110
Ventura, CA 93001

Diane Noda, Field Supervisor
U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, Ventura Office
2493 Portola Road, Suite B
Ventura, CA 93003

L.B. Nye, Region Program Manager
Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board
320 W. 4th Street, Suite 200
Los Angeles, CA 90013

Ed Pert, Regional Manager
California Department of Fish and Game
South Coast Region
4949 Viewridge Ave
San Diego, CA 92123

Matt Carpenter, Director
Environmental Resources
Newhall Land and Farming Company
23823 W. Valencia Boulevard
Valencia, CA 91355

145. Letter from Laura Yoshii, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency -- Office of the Regional Administrator, dated September 17, 2009

Responses 1 and 2

The comments reference the letter submitted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), Water Division, dated August 24, 2009, commenting on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (Corps) Public Notice for the Project. Please refer to the responses to the letter from USEPA, dated August 24, 2009 (Letter 004).

Response 3

The comment references the letter submitted by the USEPA Communities and Ecosystems Division, dated September 1, 2009 commenting on the Corps' Public Notice for the Project. Please refer to the responses to letter from USEPA, dated September 1, 2009 (Letter 006; USEPA, Region 9).

Response 4

The comment discusses the coordination among USEPA, the Corps' Los Angeles District, and the applicant regarding Project information. Because the comment does not address the adequacy of the environmental review provided by the Draft EIS/EIR, no further response is provided. The comment will be included as part of the record and made available to the decision makers prior to a final decision on the proposed Project.

Response 5

The comment states that USEPA preserves its authority to elevate the proposed permit in the event its concerns are not resolved. The Corps acknowledges USEPA's ability to preserve its authority to request the elevation of the permit decision. Because the comment does not address the adequacy of the environmental review provided by the Draft EIS/EIR, no further response is provided. The comment will be included as part of the record and made available to the decision makers prior to a final decision on the proposed Project.

Response 6

The comment provides contact information for the drafter. Because the comment does not address the adequacy of the environmental review provided by the Draft EIS/EIR, no further response is provided. The comment will be included as part of the record and made available to the decision makers prior to a final decision on the proposed Project.