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June 16, 2025

Craig Spencer, Director
County of Monterey Housing & Community Development
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**Subject: Harper Canyon (Encina Hills) Subdivision Project (Project)
Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR)
SCH No.: 2003071157**

Dear Craig Spencer:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) previously commented on the Draft SEIR (DSEIR) on May 29, 2024, and Final SEIR (FSEIR) on April 11, 2025, and has had ongoing conversations with Monterey County to address CDFW concerns related to the potential Project-related impacts to the essential habitat linkage (i.e., wildlife corridor) that traverses the Project site. CDFW appreciates the continued coordination with Monterey County and the continued opportunity to provide comments and recommendations to further minimize potentially significant impacts to population-level connectivity for species such as mountain lion (*Puma concolor*; a State candidate for potential listing as a protected species under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) within this Southern California/Central Coast Evolutionary Significant Unit (ESU)), and the State and federally threatened California tiger salamander - central California Distinct Population Segment (DPS) (*Ambystoma californiense* pop. 1; CTS).

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As detailed in CDFW's DSEIR and FSEIR comment letter, the Project site lies within the wildlife corridor that connects the Fort Ord National Monument and other wildlife habitat north of State Route 68 to the Santa Lucia Mountains via Toro Regional Park. This corridor is an essential habitat linkage and movement corridor for many species, including mountain lion and CTS. CDFW previously recommended modifying the Project to consolidate the footprint to the extent feasible and to consult with CDFW. These recommendations were relayed to Monterey County within CDFW's DSEIR and

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Craig Spencer, Director
County of Monterey Housing & Community Development
June 16, 2025
Page 2

FSEIR comment letters, and during testimony provided to the Monterey County Board of Supervisors during the May 20th public hearing. Monterey County staff consulted with CDFW on several occasions immediately prior to and following the May 20th public hearing to obtain guidance to further minimize potentially significant impacts to wildlife connectivity.

In response to CDFW's recommendations, Monterey County included modified mitigation measures to: further limit the size of the building envelopes and placement of fencing; restrict building envelopes from the proposed Wildlife Corridor Plan and limit the construction of roads, utilities, and subdivision improvements to maintain wildlife movement; further clarified the specifications for wildlife-friendly lighting; prohibited the keeping of livestock except for cattle and horses, and restricted discing to within the building envelope. Additionally, Condition 120 was added to the Project's Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan, which states, "A resource conservation easement (CE) shall be conveyed to the County over those portions of the property outside the building envelopes designated on each final map. A proposed easement deed shall be submitted to, and approved by, the Director of HCD - Planning and accepted by the Board of Supervisors prior to recording the parcel /final map. (HCD - Planning)".

The incorporation of these additional measures, including the addition of Condition 120, which conserves a large portion of the 17-lot development in perpetuity, further minimizes the potential extent of impacts within this essential habitat linkage and further mitigates for the wildlife connectivity impacts associated with the building envelopes. As such, in lieu of re-siting the Project lots entirely, CDFW concurs that the updated mitigation measures minimize potential Project-related impacts to wildlife connectivity to the extent feasible.

CDFW would like to note that, while Monterey County incorporated several of CDFW's recommendations and comments, CDFW continues to recommend the following also be incorporated to further minimize the potential for human-wildlife conflict:

Livestock

CDFW recommends further modifying Mitigation Measure 3.3-8f to prohibit the use of horses outside of the building envelope and solely allow for the use of cattle for vegetation maintenance and maintenance and fuel reduction purposes.

Monterey County Trapper

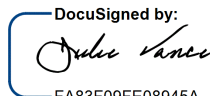
While CDFW understands the limitations in Monterey County's ability to require a county trapper as part of the Project, CDFW recommends that Monterey County retain a

Craig Spencer, Director
County of Monterey Housing & Community Development
June 16, 2025
Page 3

county trapper on staff for proactive management of potential human-wildlife interactions throughout the area.

Questions regarding this letter or further coordination should be directed to Evelyn Barajas-Perez, Environmental Scientist, at (805) 503-5738 or evelyn.barajas-perez@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

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Julie A. Vance
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