

# Ocean Breeze Ranch Project

Pasture Management Plan

PDS2016-TM-5615 PDS2016-MUP-16-012 PDS2016-MUP-16-013

August 7, 2019 | OBR-01

Prepared for:

County of San Diego Planning and Development Services

5510 Overland Avenue, Suite 310 San Diego, CA 92123

Project Proponent:

Ocean Breeze Ranch, LLC

1550 South Coast Highway, Suite 201 Laguna Beach, CA 92561

Prepared by:

HELIX Environmental Planning, Inc. 7578 El Cajon Boulevard La Mesa, CA 91942

Stacy Nigro
County-approved Biological Resources
Consultant

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	<u>on</u>			<u>Page</u>
1.0	INTRO	DDUCTION	N	1
	1.1	Purpos	se of Pasture Management Plan	1
		1.1.1	Project Summary	
		1.1.2	Conditions and/or Mitigation Measures that Require a Pasture Mana	
			Plan	_
	1.2	Implen	nentation	2
		1.2.1	Responsible Parties	2
		1.2.2	Pasture Limited Use Easement	3
		1.2.3	Financial Responsibility	3
2.0	PROP	ERTY DES	CRIPTION	3
	2.1	Proper	ty Location	3
	2.2	•	, lse	
3.0	BIOLO	OGICAL RE	ESOURCES DESCRIPTION	4
	3.1	Pasture	e Location and Description	4
	3.2		e Usage of Pastures	
		3.2.1	Wildlife Species Present and Correlation with Habitat On Site	
4.0	PAST	URE MAN	AGEMENT	5
	4.1 Management Goals			5
	4.2	Allowa	ble Activities and Management Tasks in the Pastures	5
		4.2.1	Grazing	5
		4.2.2	Feeding and Grooming	6
		4.2.3	Mowing	6
		4.2.4	Irrigation	6
		4.2.5	Aeration	
		4.2.6	Seeding	
		4.2.7	Herbicide Use	
		4.2.8	Pesticide Use	
		4.2.9	Manure Management	
			Dust Control	
			Construction of Shade Structures	
			Conversion of Disturbed Lands to Pasture	
	4.2		Restoration of Pasture to Native Habitat	
	4.3		ited Uses within Pastures	
	4.4	4.3.1	Conversion of Pasture to Developed Uses	
	4.4	-	Operations and Administrative Tasks  Fencing/Identification of Pasture Boundaries	
		4.4.1		
		4.4.2 4.4.3	Employee Education  Coordination with Biological Open Space Resource Manager	
		4.4.3	Coordination with biological Open Space Resource ividinger	

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (cont.)

Section	<u>Page</u>
5.0	LIST OF PREPARERS
6.0	REFERENCES
	LIST OF FIGURES
No.	<u>Title</u> <u>Follows Page</u>
1 2 3 4	Regional Location
	LIST OF TABLES
<u>No</u> .	<u>Title</u> Page
1	Summary of Pasture Management and Maintenance Tasks/Allowable Uses9

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Cal-IPC California Invasive Plant Council

CDFW California Department of Fish and Wildlife

County County of San Diego

HELIX Environmental Planning, Inc.

I- Interstate

MUP Major Use Permit

PMP Pasture Management Plan

RMP Resource Management Plan

SR State Route

TM Tentative Map

USFWS U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

USGS U.S. Geological Survey

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Pasture Management Plan (PMP or Plan) has been prepared for the 203.6-acre Ocean Breeze Ranch project equestrian facility (facility) in accordance with requirements identified in the project's biological technical report (HELIX Environmental Planning, Inc. [HELIX] 2019a) and Resource Management Plan (RMP; HELIX 2019b). This PMP provides direction for the management of pastures within the equestrian facility as determined through project consultation with the County of San Diego (County) and Wildlife Agencies (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS] and California Department of Fish and Wildlife [CDFW]).

### 1.1 PURPOSE OF PASTURE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The purpose of this PMP is to provide guidance for the management of pastures in order to ensure existing pastures within the facility are maintained in their present state and, therefore, retain their compatibility with potential use of these areas by wildlife.

#### This Plan:

- 1. Clearly defines the limits of the equestrian facility and existing land uses within the facility;
- 2. Identifies standard management activities implemented on the facility to maintain the existing pastures, activities that have been ongoing for many years;
- 3. Serves as a descriptive inventory of animal species that currently use and others which may potentially use the pastures as habitat;
- 4. Guides management of pastures to help maintain compatibility with potential use of the pastures by wildlife, while ensuring that use of pastures by horses is not impaired;
- 5. Includes descriptions of allowable uses (i.e., grazing, feeding, grooming, mowing, irrigation, aeration, seeding, herbicide/pesticide use, manure management, dust control, construction of shade structures, converting disturbed lands to pasture, and restoring pasture to native habitat) and prohibited uses (i.e., conversion of pastures to landscaping, agriculture, buildings, or other type of developed use) within the pastures;
- 6. Provides an overview of the operation and administrative tasks.

### 1.1.1 Project Summary

The Ocean Breeze project site consists of an approximately 1,402.5-acre property (project site or site) in the unincorporated community of Bonsall, San Diego County, California. The proposed project consists of a 396-lot single-family residential community and a separate, privately-owned and operated 203.6-acre equestrian facility. Project approvals include a Tentative Map, a Major Use Permit (MUP) for all residential areas, and a second MUP for the equestrian facility, and various other subordinate, related permits and approvals.

The equestrian MUP contains existing improved pastures that are subject to ongoing management activities described in this Pasture Management Plan. The equestrian facility pastures are not part of a biological open space easement; however, there are restrictions on types of uses within the pastures



which will be incorporated into a limited use easement for the facility. Allowable and prohibited activities within the equestrian pastures are the subject of this plan.

The residential MUP includes 832.7 acres of lands to be preserved in a biological open space easement, which will protect these lands in perpetuity and will restrict future uses to preserve their biological value. The biological open space lands are separate from the equestrian facility MUP and will be managed pursuant to a stand-alone RMP (HELIX 2019). Pastures within the equestrian facility are not subject to the RMP for the biological open space.

# 1.1.2 Conditions and/or Mitigation Measures that Require a Pasture Management Plan

This PMP satisfies conditions that will be part of the project's Resolution of Approval. Project conditions requiring a PMP include prohibiting development of on-site equestrian pastures within the equestrian MUP to retain their biological functions and values for wildlife that may use these areas, while allowing for continued use of the pastures by horses and associated management practices to maintain this primary use.

### 1.2 IMPLEMENTATION

### 1.2.1 Responsible Parties

### **Equestrian Facility/Land Owner:**

Ocean Breeze Ranch, LLC 1550 South Coast Highway, Suite 201 Laguna Beach, CA 92561

The owner of the facility is responsible for funding the implementation of this Plan and coordinating with the Ranch Manager as needed, in support of Plan implementation.

### Ranch Manager:

Kasey Bennett Ocean Breeze Ranch 5820 West Lilac Rd. Bonsall, CA 92003 760-414-3300

The Ranch Manager, as selected by the owner of the facility, is responsible for all management operations on the ranch and ensuring that ranch operations do not conflict with provisions set forth in this Plan.

<u>Resource Manager</u>: Established conservancy group or natural resources land manager (to be identified for the biological open space)

The Resource Manager for the project's biological open space, who is responsible for implementing the project's RMP for the biological open space, will also have an oversight role in helping to ensure that the



PMP is being followed by the property owner. The Resource Manager will coordinate with the Ranch Manager, County, and the Wildlife Agencies in this oversight capacity.

### 1.2.2 Pasture Limited Use Easement

As part of the project approval by County of San Diego, a limited use easement will be placed over the existing pastures contained within the 203.6-acre equestrian facility. The easement will identify allowable and prohibited uses within the pastures and will specifically prohibit the development of pastures.

### 1.2.3 Financial Responsibility

The property owner is responsible for all funding for PMP implementation.

### 2.0 PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

### 2.1 PROPERTY LOCATION

The approximately 1,402.5-acre project site (site) is located west of Interstate (I-) 15, south of State Route (SR) 76, in the unincorporated community of Bonsall in north San Diego County, California (Figure 1). More specifically, the site occurs immediately north of portions of West Lilac Road and south of the San Luis Rey River, at 5820 West Lilac Rd., Bonsall, California (Figure 2). The site is depicted within Sections 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, and 23 of Township 10 South, Range 3 West of the Bonsall, California U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle map (Figure 3). Primary access to the site is provided by West Lilac Road. The project site occurs within the following twelve Assessor Parcel Numbers 124-150-3400, 124-150-3500, 124-150-2800, 125-131-4800, 125-131-4900, 125-131-5400, 125-080-2100, 126-060-7800, 127-191-2000, 127-230-590, 127-271-0100, and 127-271-0200.

The equestrian facility occupies the northwestern 203.6 acres of the 1,402.5-acre property (Figures 2 and 3).

### 2.2 LAND USE

General land uses on the include agriculture and equestrian uses, and undeveloped land. Cattle-ranching began on the property in the late 1800s, and the site has been an active horse ranch since the 1980s, in addition to orchards, row crops, and other agricultural uses going back several decades. Undeveloped areas are concentrated in the eastern and southwestern portions of the site, consisting of hills primarily supporting native scrub communities.

The equestrian facility has been in use as a stallion breeding farm since the 1980s. Areas within the facility consist primarily of existing pasture, but also include an existing upland-excavated pond, small areas of former row crops, disturbed habitat associated with existing dirt roads and areas of horse pens, barns, and the ranch office.



## 3.0 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES DESCRIPTION

### 3.1 PASTURE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

On-site pastures that will be maintained under this PMP include several existing irrigated horse pastures occurring within the northwestern portion of the property, surrounded by split-rail fences (Figure 4). They support a variety of non-native annual grasses and forbs, and currently total 110.1 acres within the facility, with an additional 10.3 acres of conversion to pasture from former row crops presently underway. Total acreage of pasture in the facility may increase over time if other disturbed lands are converted to pasture in the future (refer to Section 4.2.12).

In addition to the pastures within the equestrian facility, there are five future residential lots that abut the southern edge of the facility, portions of which may be converted to pasture. A limited use easement will be placed over the rear portions of these lots as part of the Major Use Permit for the proposed residential development (Figure 4). This limited use easement will prohibit development of the rear portions of the lots, but conversion to pasture would be allowed. The owner of the equestrian facility is not responsible for maintaining any future pastures within the residential lots.

### 3.2 WILDLIFE USAGE OF PASTURES

### 3.2.1 Wildlife Species Present and Correlation with Habitat on Site

Several wildlife species have been observed within the horse pastures, including non-sensitive species such as California ground squirrel (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*), Botta's pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*), and coyote (*Canis latrans*), as well as the following six sensitive<sup>1</sup> avian species: Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*), great blue heron (*Aldea herodias*), snow goose (*Chen caerulescens*), vermilion flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*), western bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*), and white-faced ibis (*Plegadis chihi*). Additional information about these six species is provided below.

Canada goose and snow goose have been observed overwintering on site, forming mixed flocks in the pastures where they graze on grasses, sedges, and seeds. Flocks of up to approximately 200 individuals of Canada goose have been observed in scattered locations within the pastures and near the upland-excavated pond. Ranch staff has observed several hundred Canada geese overwintering on site, with a few individuals reported to stay year-round. Snow goose has been observed in smaller numbers, with only a handful of individuals observed.

Great blue heron is a year-round resident of San Diego County, often seen foraging in wetlands, ponds, grasslands, and agricultural fields. This species is regularly observed foraging in the pastures for insects, lizards, snakes, and gophers. This species has been observed nesting in trees adjacent to the upland-excavated pond in the southern portion of the equestrian facility.

Refers to species that have been afforded special status and/or recognition by the USFWS, CDFW, and/or the County. In general, the principal reason an individual taxon (species or subspecies) is given such recognition is the documented or perceived decline or limitations of its population size or geographical extent and/or distribution, resulting in most cases from habitat loss.

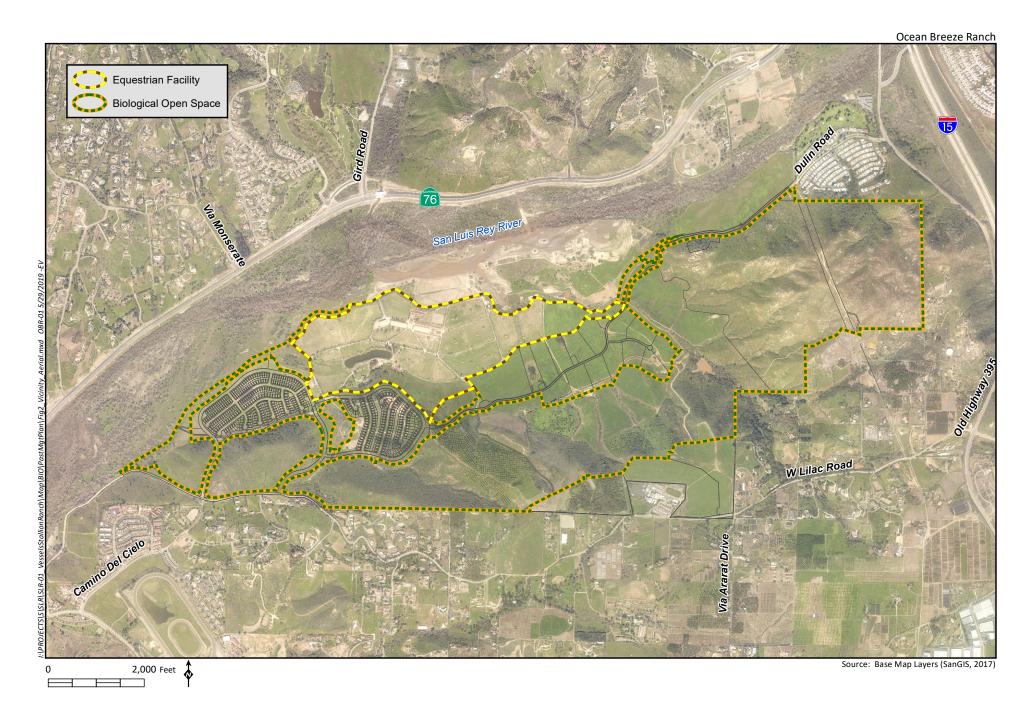


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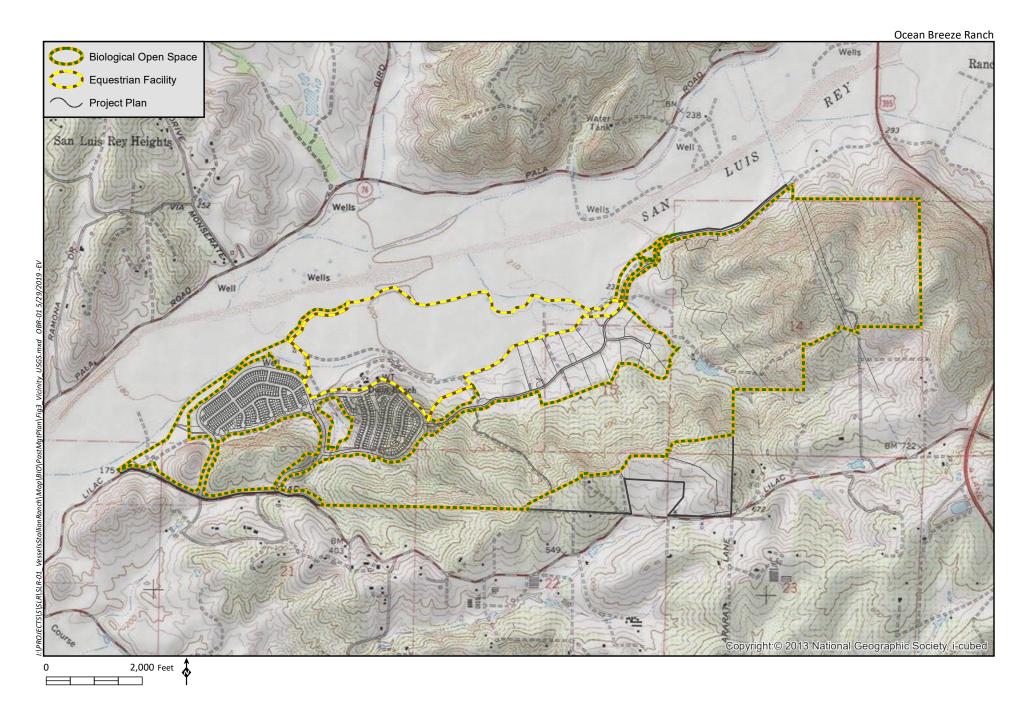


8 Miles

Source: Base Map Layers (SanGIS, 2016)











White-faced ibis nests in freshwater marshes and forages in shallow waters and wet, grassy habitats. Flocks of up to approximately 50 individuals have been observed foraging in maintained pastures in the equestrian facility. On site pastures are not suitable nesting habitat for this species, which only uses the pastures to forage for insects, snails, earthworms, and other suitable prey.

Vermilion flycatcher and western bluebird are primarily insectivorous birds that have been observed perching in trees adjacent to the pastures and foraging for insects in the vicinity. Both species have been observed nesting in trees near the pastures.

Several species of raptors have been observed on the property and the pastures may serve as foraging habitat for some of these species (e.g., northern harrier [Circus cyaneus], red-tailed hawk [Buteo jamaicensis], and white-tailed kite [Elanus leucurus]).

No bird species are anticipated to nest within the pastures given that these areas are regularly maintained, including, but not limited to, seeding, aeration, irrigation, and mowing.

### 4.0 PASTURE MANAGEMENT

### 4.1 MANAGEMENT GOALS

The purpose of this PMP is to detail the methods to protect and maintain the long-term viability and the functions and values of pastures within the equestrian facility such that wildlife species associated with use of the pastures can continue to utilize these areas. This PMP establishes the following goals with regard to the pastures:

- To preserve and manage pastures within the equestrian facility in ways that minimize harm to wildlife while still maintaining their primary function as pasture lands for horses;
- To help ensure the continued existence of equestrian pastures within the 203.6-acre equestrian facility.

# 4.2 ALLOWABLE ACTIVITIES AND MANAGEMENT TASKS IN THE PASTURES

Several management activities are allowable in the pastures as they relate to maintenance of the facility for horses. Briefly, these include horse grazing, feeding, grooming, mowing, irrigation, soil aeration, seeding, limited use of herbicides and pesticides, manure management, dust control, and construction of shade structures. Restoration of pasture to native habitat or naturalized grassland also is allowed, provided any such restoration is coordinated with and approved in writing by the County and Wildlife Agencies. Allowable activities within the pastures are further discussed below.

### 4.2.1 Grazing

As its most basic function, pastures within the facility are intended to allow for grazing by horses. The Ranch Manager is responsible for determining the carrying capacity of any given pasture.



### 4.2.2 Feeding and Grooming

Supplying feed and performing grooming of horses within the pastures are allowable uses.

### **4.2.3** Mowing

Mowing of the pastures is an allowable type of maintenance. The pastures are mowed on an as-needed basis from April through October, typically once per month. If mowing in other months is needed, this is allowed. Mowing is to be conducted at the discretion of the Ranch Manager. The primary purpose of mowing is to maintain the pastures for equestrian use. However, mowing also helps remove many weeds and prevents them from going to seed. The Ranch Manager will take this into consideration as a means of managing weeds.

### 4.2.4 Irrigation

Pastures may be irrigated as needed. Irrigation of the pastures typically begins in March or April depending on environmental factors (e.g., amount of winter rain fall, spring temperatures, and grass growth). Permanent irrigation already exists for current on-site pastures, which are irrigated using groundwater pumped from on-site wells.

### 4.2.5 Aeration

Pastures may be aerated to as needed to promote continued growth of Bermuda grass cultivars commonly sold as pasture grass, or other suitable pasture grasses appropriate for use in southern California. Aeration of the pastures typically occurs once per year. Aeration of the pastures would be conducted at the discretion of the Ranch Manager.

### 4.2.6 Seeding

Pastures may be seeded as needed to promote the growth and establishment of grasses or other type of forage plant suitable for equestrian uses/horse grazing. The type of seed used and frequency of application is at the discretion of the Ranch Manager, however, species listed as highly invasive by the California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC) should not be used. Cal-IPC's list of invasive species is available at <a href="https://www.cal-ipc.org/plants/inventory/">https://www.cal-ipc.org/plants/inventory/</a>.

#### 4.2.7 Herbicide Use

The pastures are currently maintained without the use of herbicides. Weeding is accomplished by hand on an as-needed basis. However, should the use of herbicide be deemed necessary by the Ranch Manager, application should be minimal, and may only occur in compliance with all federal and state laws. The Ranch Manager will notify the Resource Manager of any intent to use herbicides within the pastures and will consult with the Resource Manager on recommended herbicides. Any herbicide used should be applied by backpack sprayers or stump painting directly on target weeds, and involve short duration, biodegradable chemicals. Prior to using herbicide, the type of weed(s) present will be determined, as some herbicides are more effective on certain weeds than others. For example, selective herbicides, such as aminopyralid (e.g., in Milestone) and clopyralid (e.g., in Transline), target shrubs and/or forbs but not grasses. Application of herbicides shall require the applicator to have a current Qualified Applicator Certificate issued by the State of California.



#### 4.2.8 Pesticide Use

Pesticide use within the pastures is primarily limited to application of gopher bait. Pastures are treated for gophers on an as-needed basis. The bait is typically applied in January by blade-cutting lines through the pastures and inserting the bait approximately one-foot deep into the ground.

Argentine ants are not currently known to occur in the pastures. If this species is found within the pastures, the Ranch Manager may elect to use appropriate pesticides or other management techniques to treat this pest species, following coordination with the Resource Manager. Ant bait is the preferred method of treatment. Application of any spray pesticides shall require the applicator to have a current Qualified Applicator Certificate issued by the State of California.

### 4.2.9 Manure Management

Manure management will be conducted pursuant to the Manure Management Plan being prepared for the facility. In general, manure management in the larger pastures is typically accomplished by "mowing in" the manure to break it down into smaller pieces and allow for decomposition in situ, while manure in the smaller pastures is collected at regular intervals and hauled off site.

### 4.2.10 Dust Control

If airborne dust is an issue within the facility, it may be controlled through the application of water at the discretion of the Ranch Manager.

#### 4.2.11 Construction of Shade Structures

In order to provide shade for horses within the pastures, construction of shade structures within the pastures is an allowable use.

### 4.2.12 Conversion of Disturbed Lands to Pasture

At the Owner's discretion, existing disturbed or developed lands within the equestrian facility can be converted to pasture. Such lands include areas of former row crops, dirt roads and other similarly disturbed lands, and areas containing horse pens, barns, and other outbuildings. A portion of former row crops is currently undergoing conversion to pasture and is shown on Figure 4. Conversion of non-native grassland on the north-facing slope in the southernmost portion of the equestrian facility is not included as an area that can be converted to irrigated pasture.

### 4.2.13 Restoration of Pasture to Native Habitat

The PMP allows for restoration of pasture to other habitat types for the benefit of native plant and animal species. Such restoration could include conversion of pasture to native habitat types or naturalized grassland. It is noted herein that restoration of pasture to native habitat or naturalized grassland is not required by this Plan but is an allowable use. Any such restoration proposed by the Owner would be subject to prior review and written approval by the County and Wildlife Agencies (USFWS and CDFW). Development of the pastures is not allowed (see Section 4.3.1).



The following steps shall be taken by the Owner if proposing to restore any pasture lands to native habitat:

- Prepare a map identifying the area of proposed pasture to native habitat conversion and approximate acreage. Type of native habitat proposed does not need to be identified at this stage, as County or Wildlife Agencies may want to provide input;
- Submit map and approximate acreage of the proposed conversion area, along with the project name, location, and Equestrian MUP number, to the Resource Manager, County PDS, CDFW, and USFWS, at the following addresses (verify address is current prior to submittal of documentation):

Resource Manager (to be determined)

County of San Diego Planning and Development Services 5510 Overland Avenue, Suite 310 San Diego, CA 92123

California Department of Fish and Wildlife 3883 Ruffin Road San Diego, CA 92123

<u>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service</u> 2177 Salk Avenue, Suite 250 Carlsbad, CA 92008

- Request a meeting with the Resource Manager, County PDS, CDFW, and USFWS to discuss the restoration process (e.g., type of restoration proposed, purpose of the restoration, restoration requirements, necessary documentation, etc.).
- Submit any additional documentation requested by the County or Wildlife Agencies, such as a
  restoration plan that identifies the area, target habitat type, and plant palette. A restoration
  biologist should be involved in preparation of any restoration plan.

### 4.3 PROHIBITED USES WITHIN PASTURES

### 4.3.1 Conversion of Pasture to Developed Uses

Pasture cannot be converted to developed lands, landscaping, row crops, orchard, or any other type of improved use. Pastures are to remain as pastures, with the only exception being restoration of pasture to native or naturalized habitat types for the benefit of native wildlife, and then only with the prior written approval of the County and Wildlife Agencies. See Section 4.2.13 for a description of the agency notification process if conversion of pasture to habitat is proposed by the Owner.

### 4.4 FACILITY OPERATIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS

The primary responsibility for ongoing maintenance and administration of the pastures and overall equestrian facility shall be the responsibility of the Property Owner. The Owner may elect to delegate



responsibility for ongoing duties to the Ranch Manager. The general operations, maintenance, and administrative tasks to be conducted by the Property Owner will include those discussed below. A summary of pasture maintenance and management tasks, including allowable uses, is provided in Table 1.

Table 1
SUMMARY OF PASTURE MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE TASKS/ALLOWABLE USES

PMP Report Section	Maintenance/Management Tasks	Frequency				
Allowable Uses Summary						
4.2.1	Grazing	As needed				
4.2.2	Feeding and Grooming	As needed				
4.2.3	Mowing	As needed				
4.2.4	Irrigation	As needed				
4.2.5	Aeration	As needed				
4.2.6	Seeding	As needed				
4.2.7	Herbicide Use	As needed				
4.2.8	Pesticide Use	As needed				
4.2.9	Manure Management	As needed				
4.2.10	Dust Control	As needed				
4.2.11	Construction of Shade Structures	As needed				
4.2.12	Conversion of Disturbed Lands to Pasture	At Owner's discretion				
4.2.13 Restoration of Pasture to Native Habitat		Restoration of pasture to native habitat is not required but is an allowable use. Any such restoration proposed by the Owner would be subject to prior review and written approval by the County and Wildlife Agencies				
Facility Operati	ons and Administrative Tasks					
4.4.1	Fencing/Identification of Pasture Boundaries	As needed				
4.4.2	Employee Education	As needed				
4.4.3	Coordination with Biological Open Space Resource Manager	As needed				

### 4.4.1 Fencing/Identification of Pasture Boundaries

The pastures are surrounded by fencing and it is the responsibility of the Property Owner to maintain fencing and ensure that any damage to fencing or lack of fencing around a pasture does not result in conversion of pasture to a non-allowed use. Fencing currently consists of 5-foot high wood post and rail.

As horse manure may cause elevated levels of nutrients and/or microbes in water, fencing near waterways will be maintained in such a way as to not allow for potential runoff of horse manure and avoid potential impacts to the waterways.

Installation of any buffer plantings to provide a visual barrier between the pastures and off-site uses to the north along the future San Luis Rey River Trail would not interfere with pasture fencing.



### 4.4.2 Employee Education

It is the responsibility of the Property Owner to ensure that employees and subcontractors working in the pastures are familiar with the allowable uses, management practices, and restrictions within the pastures, as documented in the Plan.

### 4.4.3 Coordination with Biological Open Space Resource Manager

As stated in Section 1.2.1, the Resource Manager for the RMP will have an oversight role in implementation of the PMP. The Owner shall allow the Resource Manager to conduct semi-annual site visits at a minimum to verify that the pastures are being maintained as described in this plan. The Resource Manager will notify the Owner prior to conducting site visits within the equestrian facility. The Resource Manager will notify the Owner, County, and the Wildlife Agencies of any observed changes in use in the equestrian facility that conflict with the PMP.

The Resource Manager will incorporate the results of equestrian facility coordination and oversight results in the annual report for the RMP. No stand-alone reporting is required by the Owner for the PMP.



## 5.0 LIST OF PREPARERS

Stacy Nigro<sup>1, 2</sup> B.S., Forest Resources and Conservation (emphasis Wildlife Ecology), University

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## 6.0 REFERENCES

HELIX Environmental Planning, Inc. (HELIX). 2019a. Ocean Breeze Ranch Project Biological Technical Report. August 7.

2019b. Conceptual Resource Management Plan for the Ocean Breeze Ranch Project. August 7.

