

DATE: September 11, 2008
TO: John McKenzie, Project Manager
FROM: Michael Isensee, Agriculture Department
SUBJECT: Excelaron LLC Oil Well Development DRC2006-00222

Thank you for the opportunity to review the revised Conditional Use Permit request on a site just west of Huasna Valley (the Mankins/Wineman property, APNs 085-271-001 and -004) for the establishment of up to four production oil wells, associated infrastructure, and the transport of crude oil off the site for processing. Based upon the applicant's project description, the project will result in approximately 1.5 acres of disturbance.

The soil type on the entire project site is *204 Santa Lucia shaly clay loam*, 50 to 75 percent slopes. According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, this soil's non-irrigated capability class is 7 (soils with very severe limitation that make them unsuitable for cultivation). It is considered poorly suited to rangeland and has a severe erosion hazard rating. A portion of the project site, specifically the processing area, is located on a parcel that is encumbered with a Land Conservation Act (Williamson) contract, limiting the use of the site to agricultural uses and uses that are found to be compatible with the site's agricultural use. While it would be preferable to locate non-agricultural development off of contracted land, the county's rules allow for such uses if they are found to be compatible with the agricultural use of the site.

Based upon the limited amount of disturbance and the poor agricultural quality of the soils, the project does not appear to create any significant direct agricultural resource impacts. The potential agricultural impacts associated with the project would be through increased fire risk, potential impacts to water quality/quantity, and potential dust impacts to cropland along the haul route. Appropriate mitigation measures would:

- minimize fire risk and the potential for wildfires to adversely affect crops, rangeland, and agricultural infrastructure.
- minimize and control water use, implement water quality measures to protect both ground and surface water, and avoid erosion of the site's highly erosive soils.
- control particulate emissions (dust) from the project site and haul routes in order to avoid potential impacts to crops.

The comments and recommendations in our report are based on agricultural policies in the County's general plan, the land use ordinance, the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and on current departmental policy to conserve agricultural resources and to provide for public health, safety and welfare while mitigating negative impacts of development to agriculture. If I can be of further assistance, please call 781-5753.