SCREENING FORM FOR LOW-EFFECT HCP DETERMINATIONS
and Environmental Action Statement

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I. Project Information

A. Project name: Low-Effect Habitat Conservation Plan for the Sebastopol Meadowfoam and the Sonoma County Distinct Population Segment of the California tiger salamander for the Sonoma County Office of Education's Proposed Community School, Sonoma County, California.

B. Affected species: Sonoma County Distinct Population Segment of the California tiger salamander (*Ambystoma californiense*) and the Sebastopol meadowfoam (*Limnathese vinculans*).

C. Project size: 4.42 acres.

D. Brief project description: The proposed community school will provide an alternative learning environment for 12 to 18-year-old students that encounter difficulties in a traditional school setting and/or exhibit negative behavior patterns in either school or the community at large. The school will include 21,000 square feet (sf) of buildings, play fields, and attendant facilities. The buildings will include a 1,000 sf administration building, two large classrooms with a combined area of 6,000 sf, two medium-sized classrooms with a combined area of 3,000 sf, five standard classrooms with a combined area of 5,000 sf, and a 5,700 sf multi-use room. The multi-use room will include a restroom, a kitchen, a stage and assembly area, and an indoor play area. Outdoor Play areas will include two basketball courts and a field that will serve as a combined soccer field-baseball field. Entry access and 25 parking spaces will be provided along with a car pickup-drop off area. The existing residence and warehouse/garage in the northwest quarter of the site will be retained for administrative purposes and to provide storage facilities. Construction is proposed for 2009. The project will result in permanent affects to 4.13 acres of California tiger salamander upland dispersal habitat and 0.07 acres of Sebastopol meadowfoam habitat and California tiger salamander breeding habitat.

E. Minimization and Mitigation Plans: The Applicant will minimize affects from the proposed project to the Sonoma County Distinct Population Segment of the California tiger salamander (tiger salamander) and Sebastopol meadowfoam (meadowfoam) by implementing the following minimization measures: (1) a biological monitor will be on-site for the entire period during which the school is under construction and earthwork is in progress; (2) a biologist will conduct a training session to all construction workers prior to the start of the project and to any new personnel (training will consist of pictures of the listed species, information on their biology, measures required to protect them, relevant federal and state regulations, and penalties for violating them); (3) before the start work each day the biological monitor will check for animals under any equipment such as vehicles, stored pipes, and steep-walled holes or trenches greater than one foot deep; (4) if a tiger salamander is observed on-site all work will halt until a Service-

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deep; (4) if a tiger salamander is observed on-site all work will halt until a Service-approved biologist can remove the animal from the work area and relocate it to a pre-approved location; (5) a storm water pollution control plan will be developed; (6) a dust control program will be implemented on all active on-site grading operations; (7) all staging will be limited to the project site only; (8) all food and food-related trash items will be enclosed in sealed trash containers and removed from the site once every three days; (8) no pets are allowed anywhere in the project site during construction; (9) a speed limit of 15 miles per hour will be maintained in the western third of the site; (10) all equipment will be maintained such that there will be no leaks of automotive fluids such as gasoline, oils, or solvents; and (11) hazardous materials such as fuels, oils, solvents, etc., will be stored in sealable containers in a designated location that is at least 200 feet from aquatic habitats. All fueling and maintenance of vehicles and other equipment and staging areas will occur at least 200 feet from any aquatic habitat. In addition, the applicant will mitigate for the loss of 4.13 acres of tiger salamander upland habitat at a 2:1 ratio by purchasing 8.3 credits at a Service approved mitigation bank and mitigate for the loss of 0.07 acres of meadowfoam habitat and tiger salamander breeding habitat at a 1.5:1 ratio by purchasing 0.105 credits at a Service approved bank.

II. Does the HCP fit the low-effect criteria in the HCP Handbook?

A. Are the effects of the HCP minor or negligible on Federally listed, proposed, or candidate species and their habitats covered under the HCP prior to implementation of the mitigation plan?

Yes. The project area is located within the urban growth boundary for the City of Santa Rosa and much of the surrounding area was developed prior to 2000 (based on aerial photos). To the east is Dutton Avenue, which is bordered by several developed commercial lots. To the north are two grasslands totaling approximately 4.95 acres, which are in turn bordered to the north by a commercial storage facility. To the west are several residential homes with associated garages and Juniper Avenue. To the south is a ruderal grassland totaling approximately 4.58 acres and a light industrial facility.

Overall habitat quality at the site is low (due to long term agricultural use) and the two wetland features on site are small. Past disturbances on the site included an orchard and poultry production (1952 – 1989), livestock grazing, an unofficial off-road vehicle course (based on aerial photographs), and most recently mowed and disked (annually since at least 2000 based on aerial photographs). The two seasonal wetlands total 0.07 acres. The larger wetland (0.05 acres) may have been man made and was used to burry debris (glass bottles, concrete, bricks, etc., were found in the hole during soil surveys) and likely receives runoff from the adjacent industrial development. The smaller wetland (0.02 acres) was dry by March 2008 and is extremely shallow; it likely does not hold water long enough to provide breeding habitat for tiger salamanders (Stromberg 2007a). In 2003, Jon Winter and Associates (2004) conducted pit fall surveys for tiger salamanders from November 5, 2003 to December 2, 2003. Two adult male tiger salamanders were

captured in pit fall traps on December 2, 2003 after which time, trapping ceased due to confirmed presence of tiger salamanders. One tiger salamander was observed in the northeast corner of the proposed site and the other in the northwest corner. The 0.05 acre wetland was surveyed for larval tiger salamanders in spring 2003, but none were observed (Jon Winter and Associates 2004). Plant surveys conducted over multiple years (1993, 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2008), during the appropriate bloom seasons, did not detected any listed plants within the project area (Northern 1993; Jane Valerius Environmental Consulting 2001; and Stromberg 2008); however, these surveys were not conducted according to Service guidelines and the area is identified in the Santa Rosa Plains Conservation Strategy as potentially adversely affecting listed plants (Service 2007). Botanical surveys have identified the majority of the site as dominated by non-native vegetation (Northern 1993; Jane Valerius Environmental Consulting 2001; and Stromberg 2008).

Project related effects on tiger salamander and meadowfoam will be permanent in nature, but the effects would be minor due to the small amount of habitat being permanently lost, low density of small mammal burrows throughout the upland portion of the site (no burrows were observed in 2007 (Laurence P. Stromberg Wetland Consultant 2007b)), no observed occurrences of listed plants, low quality upland habitat (likely the result of almost half a century of disturbance from agricultural practices), and the predominately developed nature of the surrounding lands that have fragmented the area from other suitable habitats.

B. Are the effects of the HCP minor or negligible on other environmental values or resources (e.g. air quality, geology and soils, water quality and quantity, socio-economic, cultural resources, recreation, visual resources, etc.) prior to implementation of the mitigation plan?

Yes. Project impacts on air quality will be minor or negligible based on information provided in the *Sonoma County Office of Education Dutton Avenue Community School Initial Study* and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Stromberg 2007b) analysis including the following: construction will be temporary in nature, construction areas will be watered at least twice daily to minimize fugitive dust, and all trucks hauling soil or demolition materials will be covered. In addition, the project is not expected to increase vehicular traffic or emissions because the construction of the school is in response to existing need and demand. There are potential effects related to erosion and storm water runoff; however due to the small size of the project, absence of watercourses (i.e., streams or rivers), existing topography (0-2% slope), and geology of the soils (Wright loam wet soils, which typically have a low erodibility) the project will have a less than significant effect to geology and soils. The proposed project will be connected to the City of Santa Rosa's wastewater collection system and will not affect any existing stream or watercourses. According to information provided by the Northwest Information Center (2007), there are no recorded Native American or historic period archaeological resources present and the likelihood that unrecorded Native American cultural resources or historic period archaeological resources are present is low. Based

on our review of the information provided by the Northwest Information Center (2007), effects of the proposed project on cultural resources will be minor or negligible. The proposed project would have minor effects on recreation, since the construction of the school will include two basketball courts, combination soccer field-baseball field that would serve the public during non-school hours. The surrounding area is primarily commercial and light industrial. Development and construction of the new school facilities will not degrade existing visual and aesthetic resources. The proposed project would likely result in a socio-economic benefit to the City of Santa Rosa, since the applicant has proposed construction of the school in order to meet the needs of the community.

Although not anticipated, it is possible that previously unidentified cultural resources may become apparent during construction activities. Should this occur, all construction activity in the area would cease until a cultural resources specialist evaluates the significance of the finding. Should human remains be identified during construction, the Sonoma County Coroner would be contacted.

C. Would the impacts of this HCP, considered together with the impacts of other past, present and reasonably foreseeable similarly situated projects <u>not</u> result, over time, in cumulative effects to environmental values or resources which would be considered significant?

Yes. The proposed project would result in minor permanent effects to tiger salamander and meadowfoam habitat. Present and future projects adjacent to the project area must include, when appropriate, mitigation measures for both listed species, therefore, no additional development will occur with out assurances that effects to both listed species are appropriately addressed.

III. Do any of the exceptions to categorical exclusions apply to this HCP? (from 516 DM 2.3, Appendix 2)

Would implementation of the HCP:

A. Have significant adverse effects on public health or safety?

No. The project site is small and stormwater pollution prevention and stormwater management plans will be implemented. Sensitive receptors will not be exposed to air-quality impacts. The site is not located within an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone and ground-shaking associated with earthquake poses no risk for liquefaction and minimal risk for seismic-related failure. No risk of landslide exists because the site is flat. No hazardous materials were found on-site in the All-Appropriate Inquiry, Phase-I Environmental Site Assessment (2007). Emergency access is provided as part of the proposed project. The project will, therefore, have no adverse impacts on public health and safety.

B. Have adverse effects on such unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources, park, recreation or refuge lands, wilderness areas, wild or scenic rivers, sole or principal drinking water aquifers, prime farmlands, wetlands, floodplains, or ecologically significant or critical areas, including those listed on the Department's National Register of Natural Landmarks?

No. No geographic characteristics such as refuge lands, wilderness areas, wild or scenic rivers, principal drinking water aquifers, floodplains, ecologically significant or critical areas occur within the project area or the Service-approved conservation bank where the applicants will purchase their mitigation credits. According to the California Division of Land and Resource Protection (2004), the project area includes approximately 3.1 acres designated as farmland of local importance. No prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, or unique farmland occurs within or adjacent to the action area; therefore, none will be affected.

C. Have highly controversial environmental effects?

No. No substantial disputes exist as to the size, nature, or effect of the proposed project; the project does not have highly controversial effects.

D. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?

No. The proposed project would not involve significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks because the proposed construction activities are generally routine with predictable and negligible impacts. There are no uncertain or potentially significant impacts expected from the proposed project or the proposed HCP.

E. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?

No. The proposed project site is in an established mixed use commercial, light industrial, and residential area. The Applicant's HCP is proposing minimization and mitigation consistent with the Santa Rosa Conservation Strategy (2005) as well as the *Programmatic Biological Opinion for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Permitted Projects that May Affect California Tiger Salamander and Three Endangered Plant Species on the Santa Rosa Plain* (Service 2007). No significant environmental impacts are anticipated from this project. Therefore, the issuance of this permit would not establish a precedent for future actions.

F. Be directly related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects?

No. Other development has occurred adjacent to the project site, including commercial, and light industrial development. The proposed project is only one of four undeveloped parcels in this area, but is not directly related to any actions that may occur on the other undeveloped parcels or any of the surrounding development.

G. Have adverse effects on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places?

No. According to information provided by the Northwest Information Center, there are no state or federal historic properties within the proposed project area. The Service is not aware of any property, listed or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places in the Plan Area.

H. Have adverse effects on listed or proposed species, or have adverse effects on designated Critical Habitat for these species?

No. Although the proposed action may result in the incidental take of tiger salamanders and meadowfoam, any such take would result in minor or negligible effects to the persistence of the species as explained in Section II.A above. This finding will be evaluated in further detail in the Service's intraservice section 7 consultation under the Endangered Species Act. No critical habitat for the Sonoma Distinct Population Segment of the California tiger salamander is present within the action area; therefore none will be affected. No critical habitat for the Sebastopol meadowfoam has been designated; therefore none will be affected.

I. Have adverse effects on wetlands, floodplains or be considered a water development project thus requiring compliance with either Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management), Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), or the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act?

No. There are no floodplains within the proposed project area. There are no wetlands on federal lands within the proposed project area; therefore Executive Order 11990 does not apply. The proposed project is not a water development project; therefore the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act does not apply.

J. Threaten to violate a Federal, State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?

No. Implementation of the HCP would not violate Federal, State, local or tribal law imposed for the protection of the environment.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION STATEMENT

Within the spirit and intent of the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and other statutes, orders, and policies that protect fish and wildlife resources, I have established the following administrative record. Based on the analysis above, this HCP qualifies as a "Low-Effect" HCP as defined in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Habitat Conservation Planning Handbook (November 1996). The extraordinary circumstances defined in 516 DM 2 Appendix 2 were fully considered, and the proposed action does not fall within any exception to the Categorical Exclusions. This action fits categorical exclusion C(2) of 516 DM 8.5, and can be categorically excluded from NEPA as provided by 40 CFR 1508.4, 516 DM 2, and 516 DM 8. Therefore, a more extensive NEPA process is unwarranted, and no further NEPA documentation will be made.

Other supporting documents:

California Division of Land and Resource Protection. 2004. Sonoma County Important Farmland Data. Available at: http://redirect.conservation.ca.gov/DLRP/fmmp/product_page.asp

Harris and Lee Environmental Sciences. June 4, 2007. All-appropriate inquire, phase-I environmental site assessment: 3255 and 3261 Dutton Avenue, Santa Rosa, California.

Jon Winter and Associates. January 13, 2004. California tiger salamander survey results: Dutton Meadow Avenue, Santa Rosa.

Northwest Information Center. August 8, 2007. Records search results for the Alternative Education Community School Project at 3255 and 3261 Dutton Avenue, Santa Rosa, Sonoma County, California.

Conservation Strategy Team. 2005. Santa Rosa Plain Conservation Strategy. Final. December 1, 2005. Available at the Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Service website:

Stromberg, Laurence P [Stromberg]. 2007a. June 26, 2007. Habitat quality evaluation for the proposed community school site, (A.P. NOS. 134-072-016, -019), Santa Rosa, California.

_____. 2007b. November 12, 2007. Low-effect habitat conservation plan for the California tiger salamander and Sebastopol meadowfoam, for the proposed community school site, Santa Rosa, California.

_____. April 13, 2008. Results of 2008 survey for special-status plant species, proposed community school site, A.P. NOS. 134-072-016 and -019, City of Santa Rosa, California.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [Service]. 2007. Programmatic Biological Opinion for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Permitted Projects that May Affect California Tiger Salamander and Three Endangered Plant Species on the Santa Rosa Plain, California (Corps File Number 223420N), Appendix D.

Signature Approval:

Susan K. Moore

Susan K. Moore
Field Supervisor
Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office

12 August 2008
Date