EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Draft Environmental Impact Report (Draft EIR County Project No. 00-136; State Clearinghouse No. 2014091027) has been prepared pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA, Public Resources Code sections 21000 *et. seq*) with respect to the proposed Aidlin Hills Project ("the Project"). In accordance with *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15123, this Section of the EIR provides a brief description of the Project, identification of significant effects and proposed mitigation measures or alternatives that would reduce or avoid those effects, areas of controversy known to the lead agency, and issues to be resolved including the choice among alternatives and whether and how to mitigate any significant effects.

1. PROPOSED PROJECT

Project Location and Surrounding Uses

The Project site is located in the northern foothills of the Santa Susana Mountains in an unincorporated section of Los Angeles County (County) known as Stevenson Ranch. Regional access to the Project site is provided via Interstate 5 (I-5) located approximately 1.6 miles east of the Project site. Local access to the Project site is provided via Pico Canyon Road, a County master-planned arterial road.

A single-family residential community, Southern Oaks, abuts the Project site on the east. The area to the west of the Project site is mostly undeveloped within Pico Canyon, but this area includes the remaining historic buildings of Mentryville and the Pico Canyon Oil Field Well No. 4. Mentryville and the Pico Canyon Oil Field Well No. 4 are state historic landmarks managed by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC). The Pico Canyon Trail, a proposed 5.62-mile trail mostly adjacent to Pico Canyon Road would meander through Pico Canyon in areas generally to the east and southeast of the Project site. A 0.6-mile section of this trail currently exists, extending westward from the trailhead at Stevenson Ranch Parkway to current trail end at the Southern Oaks community. It is planned for this trail to eventually provide access to Mentryville. The areas directly to the north and south of the Project site are mostly undeveloped with moderate to steep variations in topography.

Description of the Project

The Project applicant proposes to develop 102 single-family dwellings and associated supporting infrastructure including local roadways, two 250,000-gallon water tanks with a pump station, water quality treatment basins, and an emergency secondary fire access road within a 230.5-acre Project site. The proposed residential lots would occupy approximately 21.2 acres of the Project site. The Project would require approximately 1,600,000 cubic yards of cut material, which includes 300,000 cubic yards of over-excavation, with all cut material being used as fill material on the site. The architectural styles proposed for the single-family dwellings would encompass Craftsman, Spanish, Tuscan, Colonial and eclectic styles. Typical building materials, including stucco, siding, and stone veneer, would be used. The remaining improved areas of the Project site would include 3.8 acres for the water tanks/pump station, 4.3 acres of water quality basins, 9.7 acres of public streets, and 1.4 acres for the emergency secondary fire access road. On-site developed-area drainage would be diverted to filtration ponds prior to discharge into Pico Creek. The Project applicant proposes to widen the segment of Pico Canyon Road that generally traverses the

northern boundary of the Project site in accordance with the approved alignment of the road; the improvements also will be consistent with the County's designation of the roadway as a major arterial. A 24-foot wide paved emergency vehicle access road, connecting with Verandah Court to the east, would be maintained to provide gated emergency fire access.

The Project applicant also proposes the preservation of approximately 165 acres of undeveloped, natural area within the southern and western portions of the Project site. The current drainage of the Project site would be altered by the construction of "A" Street and Project water quality basins at the location where Pico Creek and Wickham Canyon currently join. Wickham Canyon would also be planted with indigenous native trees and shrubs.

2. ISSUES RAISED DURING NOP PROCESS

The County circulated a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to public agencies, special districts, and members of the public for an extended 45-day period commencing September 15, 2014 and ending October 29, 2014. The purpose of the NOP was to formally convey that the County is preparing an EIR for the Project, and to solicit input regarding the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIR. A description of the Project was circulated with the NOP. The following summarizes the key potential environmental issues raised in response to the NOP and during the public scoping meeting (the numerical reference in parenthesis is the EIR section in which the analysis is provided). Please refer to Section 1.0, *Introduction*, in this EIR for a detailed discussion of the CEQA environmental review process. The NOP comments are contained in Appendix A:

Aesthetics

- Impacts on the visual character of the site and its surroundings (refer to Section 4.1, *Aesthetics*, of this Draft EIR);
- Impacts on trails (refer to Section 4.1, *Aesthetics*, of this Draft EIR);
- Impacts on natural ridgelines and landforms (refer to Section 4.1, *Aesthetics*, of this Draft EIR); and
- Light and glare impacts (refer to Section 4.1, *Aesthetics*, of this Draft EIR).

Air Quality

- Short-term construction-related air quality impacts associated with the Project. Short-term air quality impacts including particulate (dust) related impacts are included in Section 4.2, Air Quality, and Section 4.7, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, of this Draft EIR; and
- Long-term air quality impacts associated with operation of the proposed residential uses, including emissions associated with new traffic sources (refer to Section 4.2, *Air Quality*, of this Draft EIR).

Biological Resources

- Impacts on wildlife corridors (refer to Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*, of this Draft EIR);
- Impacts on streams and drainages (refer to Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*, and Section 4.8, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, of this Draft EIR);

- Impacts on sensitive plant and animal species (refer to Section 4.3, Biological Resources, of this Draft EIR);
- Impacts on nocturnal habitat from nighttime lighting (refer to Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*, of this Draft EIR);
- Impacts regarding wildlife-human conflicts (refer to Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*, of this Draft EIR);
- Impacts on nesting birds (refer to Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*, of this Draft EIR);
- Impacts on sensitive plant communities (refer to Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*, of this Draft EIR);
- Impacts on wetlands (refer to Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*, of this Draft EIR); and
- Impacts on existing wildlife habitat (refer to Section 4.3, *Biological Resources*, of this Draft EIR).

Cultural Resources

- Impacts on previously known and uncovered cultural resources, including archaeological and paleontological resources (refer to Section 4.4, *Cultural Resources*, of this Draft EIR).

Geology and Soils

- Impacts regarding seismic hazards (refer to Section 4.5, *Geology and Soils*, of this Draft EIR); and
- Impacts regarding the potential for wildland fires (refer to Section 4.7, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Section 4.12, Public Services - Fire Protection Services, and Section 4.14, Traffic and Circulation, of this Draft EIR).

Greenhouse Gases

- Impacts regarding greenhouse gas emissions (refer to Section 4.6, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, of this Draft EIR).

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

- Impacts regarding the potential for wildland fires (refer to Section 4.7, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*, Section 4.12, *Public Services - Fire Protection Services*, and Section 4.14, *Traffic and Circulation*, of this Draft EIR);
- Fire prevention/fuel modification strategies associated with the Project (refer to Section 4.7, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials*, of this Draft EIR);
- Adequacy of site access and circulation (refer to Section 4.7, *Hazards and Hazardous Materials* and Section 4.12, *Traffic/Transportation*, of this Draft EIR); and
- Hazardous materials impacts associated with existing and historic on-site oil wells (refer to Section 4.7, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, of this Draft EIR).

Hydrology and Water Quality

- Impacts on surface and groundwater quality (refer to Section 4.8, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, of this Draft EIR);

- Adequacy of drainage facilities (refer to Section 4.8, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, of this Draft EIR); and
- Impacts regarding flooding (refer to Section 4.8, *Hydrology and Water Quality*, of this Draft EIR).

Land Use and Planning

- Project consistency with applicable County of Los Angeles zoning and General Plan land use designations for the site, as well as applicable policies (refer to Section 4.9, *Land Use and Planning*, of this Draft EIR).

Noise

- Project-related construction and operational (i.e., mobile equipment/traffic noise) noise impacts (refer to Section 4.10, *Noise*, of this Draft EIR).

Public Services

- Impacts on fire protection and emergency response services, including ability to maintain adequate response times (refer to Section 4.11, *Public Services*, of this Draft EIR);
- Impacts on parks (refer to Section 6.0, *Other Mandatory CEQA Considerations*, of this Draft EIR); and
- Impacts on school facilities (refer to Section 4.11, Public Services, of this Draft EIR).

Recreation

- Impacts on existing and planned trails near the Project area (refer to Section, 6.0, Other Mandatory CEQA Considerations, of this Draft EIR).

Transportation/Traffic

- Project-related traffic impacts along local streets and access points (refer to Section 4.12, *Traffic/Transportation*, of this Draft EIR);
- Construction-related traffic impacts to school facilities (refer to Section 4.12, *Traffic/Transportation*, of this Draft EIR);
- Need for new traffic lights associated with Project implementation (refer to Section 4.12, *Traffic/Transportation*, of this Draft EIR);
- Adequacy of site access and circulation (refer to Section 4.12, *Traffic/Transportation*, of this Draft EIR);
- Cumulative traffic impacts (refer to Section 4.12, *Traffic/Transportation*, of this Draft EIR); and
- Ability to maintain and provide adequate emergency access in event of wildfire, including number of access points and design of streets (refer to Section 4.7, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, and Section 4.12, Traffic/Transportation, of this Draft EIR).

Utilities and Service Systems

- Water supply impacts (refer to Section 6.0, *Other Mandatory CEQA Considerations*, of this Draft EIR);
- Impacts regarding adequacy of solid waste disposal services (refer to Section 6.0, *Other Mandatory CEQA Considerations*, of this Draft EIR);
- Adequacy of water and wastewater infrastructure and services (local and regional) to support the Project (refer to Section 6.0, *Other Mandatory CEQA Considerations*, of this Draft EIR); and
- Ability to maintain adequate fire flows (refer to Section 6.0, *Other Mandatory CEQA Considerations*, of this Draft EIR).

Alternatives

- Provide a meaningful range of alternatives to the Project (refer to Section 5.0, Alternatives, of this Draft EIR).

3. SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

This section provides a summary of impacts, mitigation measures, and impacts after implementation of the mitigation measures associated with development of the Aidlin Hills Project. The summary is provided by environmental issue area below in **Table ES-1**, Summary *of Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures.*

Section 15126.2(b) of the *State CEQA Guidelines* requires that an EIR describe significant environmental impacts that cannot be avoided, including those effects that can be mitigated but not reduced to a less than significant level. As shown in Table ES-1, and as analyzed in Section 4, *Environmental Impact Analysis*, of this EIR, the Project would not result in any significant, unavoidable impacts. Please refer to Section 4.0, *Environmental Impact Analysis*, for the Project Design Features (PDFs) that would be implemented by the Project relative to each environmental issue area. The PDFs, in many cases, would serve to reduce the extent of the Project's potential for environmental impacts.

Public Resources Code Section 21081 requires a public agency to make a finding that, with respect to each significant project effect, changes or alterations have been made to the project that mitigate or avoid significant project impacts. With respect to these changes, Section 21081.6 requires the public agency to adopt a reporting or monitoring program as to how these changes are met or compliance is achieved to ensure that significant impacts are avoided or mitigated. For the Project, the report or monitoring program will recite the mitigations, the compliance requirement, time frame for compliance, and the authority for determining compliance. Through this monitoring process, the public agency will determine the status and effect of the mitigation based on documentation provided on behalf of the Project applicant. The public agency, in this case the County of Los Angeles, will evaluative the status and effect of the mitigation and indicate either that mitigation requirements are being met or that mitigation measures require modification to achieved the identified level of mitigation.

4. ALTERNATIVES

The *State CEQA Guidelines* section 15126.6 requires an EIR to "describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which will feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but will avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives." The *State CEQA Guidelines* direct that selection of alternatives be

guided by a "rule of reason" that requires the EIR to set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice.

As described in with a comparative analysis in Section 5, *Alternatives*, of this EIR, three alternatives were analyzed, the No Project/No Development Alternative, the "One Valley, One Vision" Alternative, "One Valley, One Vision" Density-Control Alternative, and the Reduced Density Alternative. In addition, an Alternative Location to the proposed Project site was considered but also rejected. Under the No Project Alternative, no improvements on the Project site would occur, and the site would remain in its existing vacant, undeveloped state. The No Project Alternative would result in no impact.

The "One Valley, One Vision" Alternative would voluntarily comply with the land use restrictions placed on the site as part of the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan update. It would create up to 12 five-acre and eight 20-acre parcels with each lot's development potential up to 3.5 acres. The resulting 20-parcel subdivision would have a development footprint, inclusive of fuel modification, of approximately 70 acres, which would not be clustered. No provision for water storage tanks would be included in this Alternative and a secondary emergency access would not be needed or proposed. The "One Valley, One Vision" Alternative would have greater impacts on aesthetics, biological resources, and soil erosion than the proposed Project. This Alternative would have similar impacts on hydrology, based on the need for compliance with the same regulatory requirements. For all other environmental factors, this Alternative would have less impact than that of the Project.

The "One Valley, One Vision" Density-Control Alternative would comply with the land use categories placed on the site as part of the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan update. It would create 20, 15,000-square foot parcels with each lot's development potential being approximately 0.5 acres. The resulting 20-parcel subdivision would have a development footprint, inclusive of fuel modification, of approximately 15 acres, which would be clustered with a common access street connecting to Verandah Court. No provision for water storage tanks would be included in this Alternative and a secondary emergency access would not be needed or proposed. The "One Valley, One Vision" Density-Control Alternative would have greater impacts only on the reliability of fire flow capacity than the proposed Project. This Alternative would have similar impacts on hydrology, based on the need for compliance with the same regulatory requirements. For all other environmental factors, this Alternative would have less impact than that of the Project.

The Reduced Density Alternative would reduce the overall development intensity by 26 percent relative to the proposed Project and would allow for a maximum of 75 single-family dwellings, while excluding the emergency secondary fire access road. Lot size would be comparable to that of the proposed Project, ranging from 6,000 to 15,000 square feet and averaging about 10,000 square feet per lot. Both natural and landscaped open space would amount to approximately 200 acres. Total grading would amount to about 1,000,000 cubic yards of cut with an equal amount of fill materials. Like the proposed Project, this Alternative would be as a density-controlled development requiring a conditional use permit. The Reduced Density Alternative would have lesser impacts for all environmental factors than the proposed Project with the exception of hazards/hazardous materials and land use.

Environmentally Superior Alternative

Section 15126.6(e)(2) of the *State CEQA Guidelines* indicates that an analysis of alternatives, including the "No Project Alternative," to a proposed project shall identify an environmentally superior alternative among the alternatives evaluated in an EIR. The *State CEQA Guidelines* also state that should it be determined that the No Project Alternative is the environmentally superior alternative, the EIR shall identify another

environmentally superior alternative among the remaining alternatives. With respect to identifying an environmentally superior alternative among those analyzed in this EIR, the range of feasible alternatives to be considered include the "One Valley, One Vision" Alternative, "One Valley, One Vision" Density-Control Alternative and the Reduced Density Alternative, as described above, in addition to the No Project/No Development Alternative. Based on the evaluation of impacts presented in Section 5.0, the "One Valley, One Vision" Density-Control Alternative is determined to be the environmentally superior alternative. As summarized in Table 5-1, No Project/No Development Alternative would result in no impact. The "One Valley, One Vision" Density-Control Alternative would not meet the objectives of incorporating multiple fire protection measures to safeguard the Project and the existing adjacent residential community from wildfire hazards, or to construct a significant number of new housing units to assist in providing for the County housing needs.