CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION
SOUTH CENTRAL COAST AREA
89 SOUTH CALIFORNIA ST., SUITE 200
VENTURA, CA 93001
(805) 641-0142

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Staff Report: 9/19/96
Hearing Date: October 8-11, 1996
Commission Action:

STAFF REPORT: CONSENT CALENDAR

APPLICATION NO.: 4-96-153

APPLICANT: Los Angeles County Public Works Department

AGENT: Anthony Wilkins - LACPWD Waterworks & Sewer Dept.

PROJECT LOCATION: 22160 West Topanga School Road, Topanga, Los Angeles County.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Construction of two 450,000 gallon water tanks, and the removal of an existing 100,000 gallon water tank. Project also involves the construction of retaining walls and 30 cubic yards of grading.

Lot area:	1.06 acres
Building coverage:	3,930 sq. ft.
Pavement coverage:	9,700 sq. ft.
Ht abv fin grade:	32'-0"

LOCAL APPROVALS RECEIVED: None Required.

SUBSTANTIVE FILE DOCUMENTS: Geotechnical Engineering and Engineering Geology Investigation Report, dated May 18, 1994, prepared by the Materials Engineering Division of the Los Angeles County Public Works Department, Topanga Forks Reservoir Expansion Oak Tree Report, dated May 21, 1996, prepared by Rosi Dagit.

SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Commission determine that the proposed project, as conditioned, is consistent with the requirements of the California Coastal Act. Staff further recommends special conditions regarding; oak woodland revegetation and revegetation and erosion control plans.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The staff recommends that the Commission adopt the following resolution:

I. Approval with Conditions.

The Commission hereby grants a permit, subject to the conditions below, for the proposed development on the grounds that the development will be in conformity with the provisions of Chapter 3 of the California Coastal Act of 1976, will not prejudice the ability of the local government having jurisdiction over the area to prepare a Local Coastal Program conforming to the provisions of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act, and will not have any significant adverse impacts on the environment within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act.

II. Standard Conditions.

1. Notice of Receipt and Acknowledgment. The permit is not valid and development shall not commence until a copy of the permit, signed by the permittee or authorized agent, acknowledging receipt of the permit and acceptance of the terms and conditions, is returned to the Commission office.

2. Expiration. If development has not commenced, the permit will expire two years from the date on which the Commission voted on the application. Development shall be pursued in a diligent manner and completed in a reasonable period of time. Application for extension of the permit must be made prior to the expiration date.

3. Compliance. All development must occur in strict compliance with the proposal as set forth below. Any deviation from the approved plans must be reviewed and approved by the staff and may require Commission approval.

4. Interpretation. Any questions of intent or interpretation of any condition will be resolved by the Executive Director or the Commission.

5. Inspections. The Commission staff shall be allowed to inspect the site and the development during construction, subject to 24-hour advance notice.

6. Assignment. The permit may be assigned to any qualified person, provided assignee files with the Commission an affidavit accepting all terms and conditions of the permit.

7. Terms and Conditions Run with the Land. These terms and conditions shall be perpetual, and it is the intention of the Commission and the permittee to bind all future owners and possessors of the subject property to the terms and conditions.

III. Special Conditions.

1. Oak Woodland Revegetation

Prior to the issuance of a coastal development permit, the applicant shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Director, a Oak Tree Mitigation, Planting and Monitoring Report, prepared by a qualified arborist, ecologist or related resource specialist who are experienced in the field of restoration ecology. All recommendations contained in the Topanga Forks Reservoir Expansion Oak Tree Report, dated May 21, 1996, prepared by Rois Dagit - Certified Arborist, shall be incorporated into this Oak Tree Mitigation Plan.

As the applicant's consultant recommends a two year monitoring period for the replace of any oaks lost due to development activities, a copy of the final monitoring report shall be submitted following the second year of monitoring activities. If the report finds that plantings are in part, or in whole, unsuccessful, then the applicant shall be required to do additional oak plantings and monitor the plantings until the required plantings are successful.

2. Revegetation and Erosion Control Plans.

Prior to issuance of permit, the applicant shall submit landscaping and interim erosion control plans prepared for review and approval by the Executive Director. The plans shall incorporate the following criteria:

(a) All graded and disturbed areas on the subject site shall be planted and maintained for erosion control purposes. To minimize the need for irrigation all landscaping shall consist primarily of native and drought resistant plants (as listed by the California Native Plant Society, Santa Monica Mountains Chapter, in their document entitled Recommended Native Plant Species for Landscaping Wildland Corridors in the Santa Monica Mountains, dated October 4, 1994). Invasive, non-indigenous plant species which tend to supplant native species shall not be used. Such planting shall be adequate to provide 90 percent coverage within two (2) year and shall be repeated, if necessary, to provide such coverage.

(b) Description of temporary drainage and erosion control features such as sandbagging, tarping, or any alternative best management practices for containing stockpiled material and minimizing erosion from staging and construction areas. The temporary plans shall be illustrated in plan view.

(c) Time frame for the placement and removal of the temporary erosion control measures, and a maintenance schedule and criteria for maintenance.

3. Environmental Review Board Review

Prior to the issuance of a coastal development permit, the applicant shall provide to the Executive Director of the Commission, evidence that the Los Angeles County Environmental Review Board has reviewed the proposed project, or evidence that such review is not required.

IV. Findings and Declarations.

A. Project Description

The County of Los Angeles Public Works Department proposes the construction of two 450,000 gallon water tanks, and the removal of an existing 100,000 gallon water tank. The project also involves the construction of retaining walls and approximately 30 cubic yards of grading. The two new water tanks will be 32'-0" above the finish grade of the lot, and each tank will have a diameter of 50'-0". The applicant proposes the construction of these new tanks because the existing 100,000 gallon water tank does not provide adequate storage capacity for both domestic service and fire protection for existing domestic customers of the Topanga Canyon area. The new tanks will meet standards for the Topanga Canyon area set by the Waterworks District and Los Angeles County Fire Department.

The proposed project site is 7,800 sq. ft. flat pad, on a 1.06 acre parcel, located approximately 1,500 feet from Topanga Canyon Blvd, and directly adjacent to Topanga Canyon Elementary School. As mentioned above, the site currently contains an existing 100,000 gallon water tank that is to be removed as a part of this project. The site also contains native chaparral plant species and numerous coast live oak trees. Several of these trees will be directly impact by the proposed project. Although the proposed development area has an existing large flat pad, retaining walls and approximately 30 cubic yards of grading will be required in order for the site to adequately accommodate both of the proposed water tanks.

The Commission has previously approved permits for the construction of water storage tanks [5-91-258 (L.A. Co. Water Works District 29) and 4-93-016 (L.A. Co. Public Works)]. These permits were approved with conditions regarding geologic stability and landscaping.

B. Sensitive Habitat Areas

Section 30240 of the Coastal Act states that environmentally sensitive habitat areas must be protected against disruption of habitat values:

Section 30240:

(a) Environmentally sensitive habitat areas shall be protected against any significant disruption of habitat values, and only uses dependent on such resources shall be allowed within such areas.

(b) Development in areas adjacent to environmentally sensitive habitat areas and parks and recreation areas shall be sited and designed to prevent impacts which would significantly degrade such areas, and shall be compatible with the continuance of such habitat areas.

The proposed development is within a sensitive habitat area (ESHA), an area recognized by the Commission as a Disturbed Sensitive Oak Woodland area. The Malibu/Santa Monica Mountains Land Use Plan contains policies applicable to development within disturbed sensitive resource areass. The policies cited below have been found to be consistent with the Coastal Act and, therefore, may be looked to as guidance by Commission staff in reviewing a project's consistency with the Coastal Act.

P68 Environmentally sensitive habitat areas (ESHAs) shall be protected against significant disruption of habitat values, and only uses dependent on such resources shall be allowed within such areas. Residential use shall not be considered a resource dependent use.

P82 Grading shall be minimized for all new development to ensure the potential negative effects of runoff and erosion on these resources are minimized.

P84 In disturbed areas, landscape plans shall balance long-term stability and minimization of fuel load. For instance, a combination of taller, deep-rooted plants and low-growing ground covers to reduce heat output may be used. Within ESHAs and Significant Watersheds, native plant species shall be used, consistent with fire safety requirements.

P85 Earthmoving operations within Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas, Significant Watersheds, and other areas of high potential erosion hazard (including areas with a slope exceeding 2:1) shall be prohibited between November 1 and March 31 unless a delay in grading until after the rainy season is determined by the Planning Director to be more environmentally damaging. Where grading begins before the rainy season, but extends into the rainy season for reasons beyond the applicant's control, measures to control erosion must be implemented at the end of each day's work.

P91 All new development shall be designed to minimize impacts and alterations of physical features, such as ravines and hillsides, and processes of the site (i.e., geological, soils, hydrological, water percolation and runoff) to the maximum extent feasible.

The following Table 1 policies apply to development within Disturbed Sensitive Resource Areas:

In disturbed oak woodland and savannah areas, structures shall be sited in accordance with the Los Angeles County Oak Tree ordinance.

Removal of native vegetation and grading shall be minimized.

Site grading shall be accomplished in accordance with the stream protection and erosion policies.

Approval of development shall be subject to review by the Environmental Review Board.

The applicant proposes the construction of two 450,000 gallon water tanks, and the removal of an existing 100,000 gallon water tank. The project also involves the construction of retaining walls and approximately 30 cubic yards of grading. The project site contains numerous coast live oak trees (Quercus agrifolia), several of which will be directly impacted by the proposed development. The proposed development is within an environmentally sensitive habitat area (ESHA) that is recognized by the Commission as Significant Oak Woodlands.

Topanga Canyon - Significant Oak Woodlands;

The Malibu/Santa Monica Mountains Land Use Plan states the following:

> Significant oak woodlands are woodlands (or savanahs) which are located outside Significant Watersheds (i.e., outside undisturbed watersheds). These woodlands are located much closer to existing roads and development (e.g., Red Rock Canyon area) and, consequently are not as heavily utilized by sensitive, secretive wildlife such as Golden eagles and other birds of preyor large mammals such as mountain lions and bobcats. In this sense, these woodlands are not quite as critical as remote, undisturbed woodlands. Nevertheless, any oak-dominated habitat is considered a biologically critical resource because of the large number of wildlife dependent upon oak trees and because of the declining nature of oak-dominated habitats in southern California.

The Significant Ecological Areas of the Santa Monica Mountains Report (R.D. Friesen Ph.D.) describes these woodlands as follows:

> This frequently savana-like, open oak woodland dominated by Coast Live Oak (Quercus agrifolia) on slopes with deep moist soils. Generally it is found in canyon bottoms and on moist north-facing slopes where other species such as the California Walnut (Juglans californica), and members of the California Lilacs (Ceanothus), Sumacs (Rhus), Currents (Ribes), and Poison Oak (Toxicodendron) intrude from adjacent chaparral areas. In open places within the woodland canopy, large tree-size shrubs such as Toyon (Heteromeles arbutifolia) and Blue Elderberry (Sambucus mexicana) frequently occur. In places, trees in this woodland are more scattered and have an understory of typical Southern California Grasslands, forming a typical oak savanna.
>
> Characteristic animals of this community are partly shared from adjacent communities, such as open grasslands or chaparral areas. This is especially true for savanna situations. Insects typical of Southern Oak Woodlands include the Ironclad Beetle (Phloedes pustulosus), California Sister (Adelpha bredowi),...amphibians, including the Arboreal Salamander (Aneides lugubris), Eschscholtz's Salmander (Ensatina eschscholtzi) ...Western Toad (Bufo boreas), are typical species. Typical reptiles include the Coast Horned Lizard (Phrynosoma coronatum),...Western Rattlesnake (Crotalus viridis). Birds, such as the Acorn Woodpecker, Plain Titmouse, Band-tailed Pigeon, Screech Owl, and Lawrence's Goldfinch, are typical inhabitants of this community. Mammals such as the Brush Mouse (Peromyscus boylei), Western Gray Squirrel (Sciurus griseus), Beechey Ground Squirrel (Citellus beecheyi), Raccoon (Procyon lotor), Bobcat (Lynx rufus), and a number of bat species (Myotis, Lasiurus, Eumops), also are typical inhabitants.
>
> In general, oaks are very sensitive to changes in the water table surrounding their extensive root systems. Compaction of the soils under the tree canopy itself can interfere with the normal physiological processes of these trees. The large trees in this woodland (20 to 60 feet tall) provide very important habitat for a number of animals.

Oak woodlands have been identified, by the Fish & Game Commission Hardwood Policies (adopted March 1, 1985), as "extremely important to the fish & wildlife resources of California." They are recognized for supporting a "wide variety of wildlife species by providing food, nesting, and roosting cover, and in many instances, important understory vegetation. In addition, hardwoods benefit fishery resources by preventing the erosion of hillsides and stream banks, moderating water temperatures by shading, and contributing nutrients and food-chain organisms to waterways."

ESHA Issue Analysis

Table 1 policies of the Malibu/Santa Monica Moutains Land Use Plan (LUP) require that the placement of structures within disturbed oak woodlands be site in accordance with the Los Angeles County Oak Tree ordinance. In response to this policy, the applicant has submitted an Oak Tree Report, dated May 21, 1996, prepared by Rosi Dagit, certified arborist (Exhibit 3). This report indicates that the proposed project site contains numerous Coast Live Oak trees, 9 of which will be directly impacted by the proposed development. Of these 9, 2 trees will be removed completely, and a Heritage Oak with a diameter of 41.5" in diameter will loose approximately 40% of its canopy. The remaining 7 trees will all be affected by the encroachment of development within their protected dripline zone.

To mitigate any potential impacts to the oak trees within the proposed development site, the applicant's consultant has made recommendations such as; a) the fencing of trees that are close to development activities; b) that grading work within the protected dripline zone of trees by done by hand; c) that grade changes around oak trees be avoided; and that d) drainage modifications be made so that all drainage is directed away from oak trees. The consultant has also recommended that if specific trees are to be removed that they be replaced with two fifteen gallon coast live oaks, and that understory oak woodland species be incorporated into a landscape plan for the site following construction activities.

The Coastal Act requires that environmentally sensitive habitat areas be protected against disruption of habitat values. Based on the recommendations of the consulting arborist the Commission finds that the proposed development is consistent with Section 30240 of the Coastal Act and applicable LUP policies so long as the arborists recommendations are incorporated into the project plans. Therefore, the Commission finds that it is necessary to require the applicant to submit a Oak Tree Mitigation, Planting and Monitoring Plan that incorporates the recommendations of the consulting arborist. Furthermore, the applicant is required to submit a final monitoring report regarding the success of oak tree revegetation efforts following the consultant's recommended two year monitoring period. Additionally, Table 1 policies of the LUP require that development within disturbed oak woodlands be subject to the review of the Los Angeles County Environmental Review Board. Special Condition No. 3, requires the applicant to submit evidence of ERB review, or evidence that such review is not required.

The Table 1 policies of the LUP state that "the removal of native vegetation and grading shall be minimized" and that "site grading shall be accomplished in accordance with the...erosion policies" of the LUP. The only removal of native vegetation proposed by the applicant is limited to the removal of at

least one coast live oak tree, and the possible pruning of another oak. Furthermore, the applicant only proposes 30 cubic yards of grading (fill) as a part of this project. However, although the applicant has minimized the extent of grading and vegetation removal required to complete this project, the Commission finds that further minimization of site erosion will protect the significant and sensitive habitat values associated with the project site. In order to minimize on site erosion, the Commission finds it necessary to require the applicant to submit a revegetation and erosion control plan for all areas of the site disturbed by development activities. This plan will require the applicant to landscape the site with native vegetation compatible with the surrounding environment for all areas disturbed by construction and grading activities. This condition also requires the applicant to submit interim erosion control plans for areas disturbed by development activities which indicate the best management practices that should be implemented to control erosion and sedimentation on site throughout the construction period. The use of best management practices will help to ensure that sedimentation is controlled on site until such time that development activities cease and revegetation efforts are completed. The Commission finds that, only as conditioned, is the proposed project consistent with Section 20340 of the Coastal Act.

C. Geologic Stability

Section 30253 of the Coastal Act states:

> New development shall:
>
> (1) Minimize risks to life and property in areas of high geologic, flood, and fire hazard.
>
> (2) Assure stability and structural integrity, and neither create nor contribute significantly to erosion, geologic instability, or destruction of the site or surrounding area or in any way require the construction of protective devices that would substantially alter natural landforms along bluffs and cliffs.

In addition, the Malibu/Santa Monica Mountains Land Use Plan contains policies which have been found to be consistent with the Coastal Act and, therefore, may be looked to as guidance by Commission staff in the analysis of a project's conformity with Coastal Act policy. The LUP contains the following policies regarding geologic hazards which are applicable to the proposed development:

> P147 Continue to evaluate all new development for impact on, and from, geologic hazard.
>
> P148 Continue to limit development and road grading on unstable slopes to assure that development does not contribute to slope failure.

The applicant proposes the construction of two 450,000 gallon water tanks, and the removal of an existing 100,000 gallon water tank. The project also involves the construction of retaining walls and approximately 30 cubic yards of grading.

The proposed development is located in the Santa Monica Mountains, an area which is generally considered to be subject to an unusually high amount of natural hazards. Geologic hazards common to the Santa Monica Mountains include landslides, erosion, and flooding. In addition, fire is an inherent threat to the indigenous chaparral community of the coastal mountains. Wild fires often denude hillsides in the Santa Monica Mountains of all vegetation, thereby contributing to an increased potential for erosion and landslide on the property.

The Coastal Act requires that new development assure "stability and structural integrity, and neither create nor contribute significantly to erosion, geologic instability, or destruction of the site or surrounding area..."

The applicant has submitted a Geotechnical Engineering and Engineering Geology Investigation Report, dated May 18, 1994, prepared by the Materials Engineering Division of the Los Angeles County Public Works Department. The report states as follows:

> Based on our field exploration and laboratory testing, it is concluded, that due to the high compressibility and low shear strength of the native material which overlies competent bedrock, the site in its present configuration is not suitable for the proposed construction. However, with proper modifications presented herin, the site may be feasible for the proposed construction.

The applicant has further submitted evidence, in a letter dated September 10, 1996, that the "cast in place" pier design illustrated in the project plans for the water tanks addresses the concerns and recommendation of the applicant's geologic consultant and increases the factor of safety for the proposed project site to 2.0, far in excess of the minimum County geotechnical standard.

In order to minimize erosion and provide further geologic stability by minimizing surface runoff, the Commission finds it necessary to require the applicant to submit a revegetation and erosion control plan for all areas of the site disturbed by development activities. This plan will require the applicant to landscape the site with native and drought tolerant vegetation for all areas disturbed by construction and grading activities. This condition also requires the applicant to submit interim erosion control plans for areas disturbed by development activities which indicate the best management practices that should be implemented to control erosion and sedimentation on site throughout the construction period. The use of best management practices will help to ensure that sedimentation is controlled on site until such time that development activities cease and revegetation efforts are completed. Only as conditioned is the proposed project consistent with Section 30253 of the Coastal Act.

D. Grading/Landform Alteration & Visual Resources

Section 30251 of the Coastal Act states that:

> The scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas, to minimize the alteration of natural land forms, to be visually compatible with the character surrounding areas, and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas. New development in highly scenic areas such as those designated in the California Coastline Preservation and Recreation Plan prepared by the Department of Parks and Recreation and by local government shall be subordinate to the character of its setting.

In addition, the Malibu/Santa Monica Mountains Land Use Plan contains policies which have been found to be consistent with the Coastal Act and, therefore, may be looked to as guidance by Commission staff in the analysis of a project's conformity with Coastal Act policy. The LUP contains the following policies regarding landform alteration and the protection of visual resources which are applicable to the proposed development:

P82 Grading shall be minimized for all new development to ensure the potential negative effects of runoff and erosion on these resources are minimized.

P90 Grading plans in upland areas of the Santa Monica Mountains should minimize cut and fill operations in accordance with the requirements of the County Engineer.

P91 All new development shall be designed to minimize impacts and alterations of physical features, such as ravines and hillsides, and processes of the site (i.e., geological, soils, hydrological, water percolation and runoff) to the maximum extent feasible.

P125 New development shall be sited and designed to protect public views from LCP-designated scenic highways to and along the shoreline and to scenic coastal areas, including public parklands. Where physically and economically feasible, development on sloped terrain should be set below road grade.

P129 Structures should be designed and located so as to create an attractive appearance and harmonious relationship with the surrounding environment.

P130 In highly scenic areas and along scenic highways, new development (including buildings, fences, paved areas, signs, and landscaping) shall:

be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and to and along other scenic features, as defined and identified in the Malibu LCP.

minimize the alteration of natural landforms.

be landscaped to conceal raw-cut slopes.

P134 Structures shall be sited to conform to the natural topography, as feasible. Massive grading and reconfiguration of the site shall be discouraged.

P135 Ensure that any alteration of the natural landscape from earthmoving activity blends with the existing terrain of the site and the surroundings.

The applicant proposes the construction of two 450,000 gallon water tanks, and the removal of an existing 100,000 gallon water tank. The project also involves the construction of retaining walls and approximately 30 cubic yards of grading. The two new water tanks will be 32'-0" above the finish grade of the site, and each tank will have a diameter of 50'-0". The project is located on a pad above a slope containing numerous coast live oaks and chaparral vegetation. The proposed project site is not within view of any designated scenic highway or public park land. Due to the fact that the project is to be placed on a flat pad, behind an existing wall of native vegetation, the project will not have a significant impact on the aesthetic qualities of the surrounding area so long as the significant oak woodland associated with the project site is maintained in its present character to the greatest extent feasible.

The applicant has submitted evidence, in a report entitled Topanga Forks Reservoir Expansion Oak Tree Report, dated May 21, 1996, by Rosi Dagit - Certified Arborist, that at least nine oak tree will be impacted by the proposed development. The applicant's consultant has made several recommendations regarding the protection of this oak trees during construction activities and the replacement of these trees should they be removed or severely damaged following construction activities. Therefore, to ensure that no visual impacts will result from the disturbance of the significant oak woodland by development activities, the Commission finds it necessary to require the applicant to submit a Oak Tree Mitigation, Planting and Monitoring Plan that incorporates the recommendations of the consulting arborist. In addition, in order to minimize erosion and the visual impacts of the project to the greatest extent feasible, it is necessary to require that applicant to landscape all graded and disturbed areas on site. The Commission finds that the project as conditioned, is consistent with Section 30251 of the Coastal Act.

E. Local Coastal Program.

Section 30604 of the Coastal Act states that:

> a) Prior to certification of the local coastal program, a coastal development permit shall be issued if the issuing agency, or the commission on appeal, finds that the proposed development is in conformity with the provisions of Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 30200) of this division and that the permitted development will not prejudice the ability of the local government to prepare a local program that is in conformity with the provisions of Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 30200).

Section 30604(a) of the Coastal Act provides that the Commission shall issue a Coastal Permit only if the project will not prejudice the ability of the local government having jurisdiction to prepare a Local Coastal Program which

conforms with Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act. The preceding sections provide findings that the proposed project will be in conformity with the provisions of Chapter 3 if certain conditions are incorporated into the project and accepted by the applicant. As conditioned, the proposed development will not create adverse impacts and is found to be consistent with the applicable policies contained in Chapter 3. Therefore, the Commission finds that approval of the proposed development, as conditioned, will not prejudice the City of Malibu's ability to prepare a Local Coastal Program which is also consistent with the policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act as required by Section 30604(a).

F. CEQA.

Section 13096(a) of the Commission's administrative regulations requires Commission approval of Coastal Development Permit applications to be supported by a finding showing the application, as conditioned, to be consistent with any applicable requirement of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Section 21080.5(d)(2)(i) of CEQA prohibits a proposed development from being approved if there are feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen any significant adverse impact which the activity may have on the environment.

As conditioned to prepare and implement a revegetation and erosion control plan, there will be no negative impacts caused by the proposed development which have not been adequately mitigated. Therefore, the proposed project, as conditioned, is found to be consistent with CEQA and the policies of the Coastal Act.

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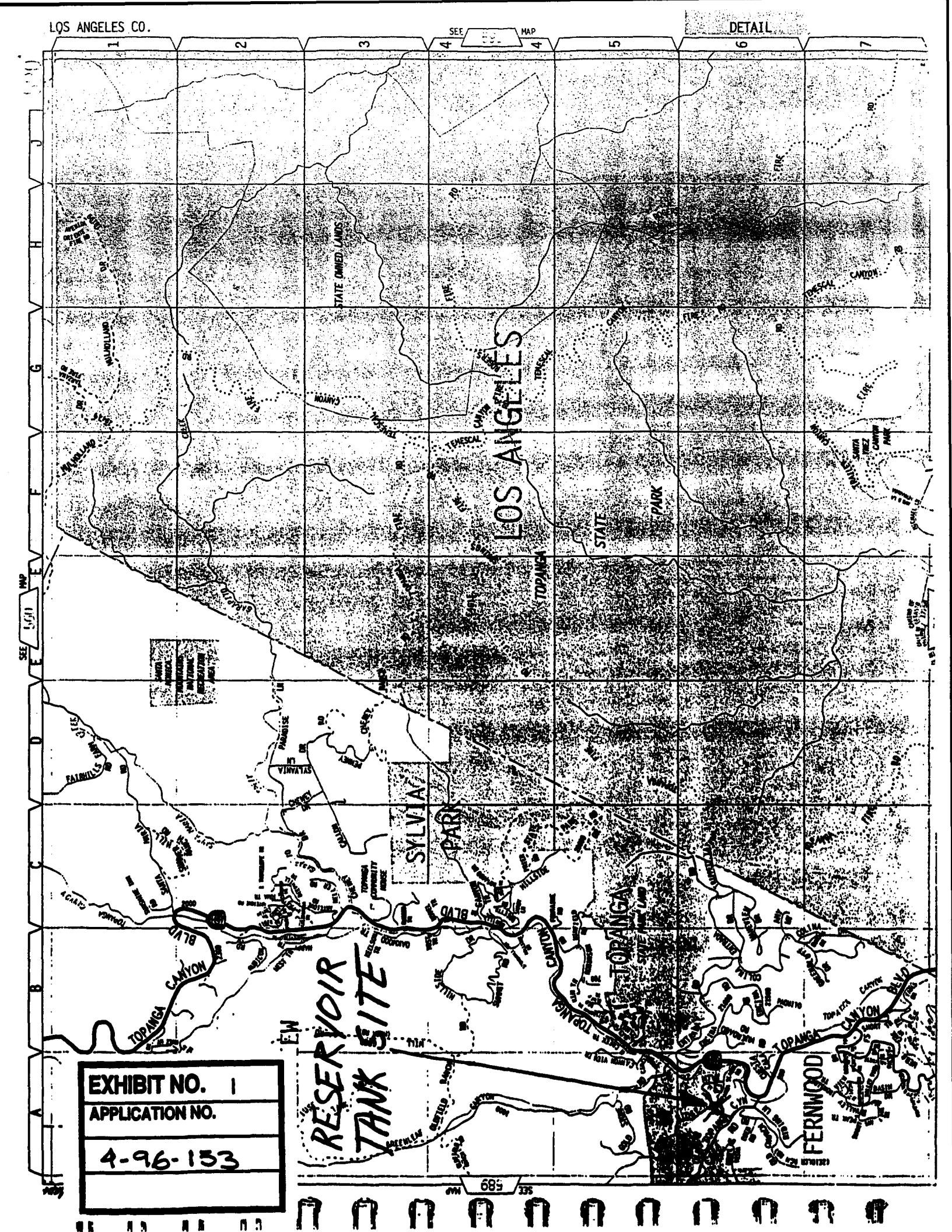
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EXHIBIT NO. 1
APPLICATION NO.
4-96-133

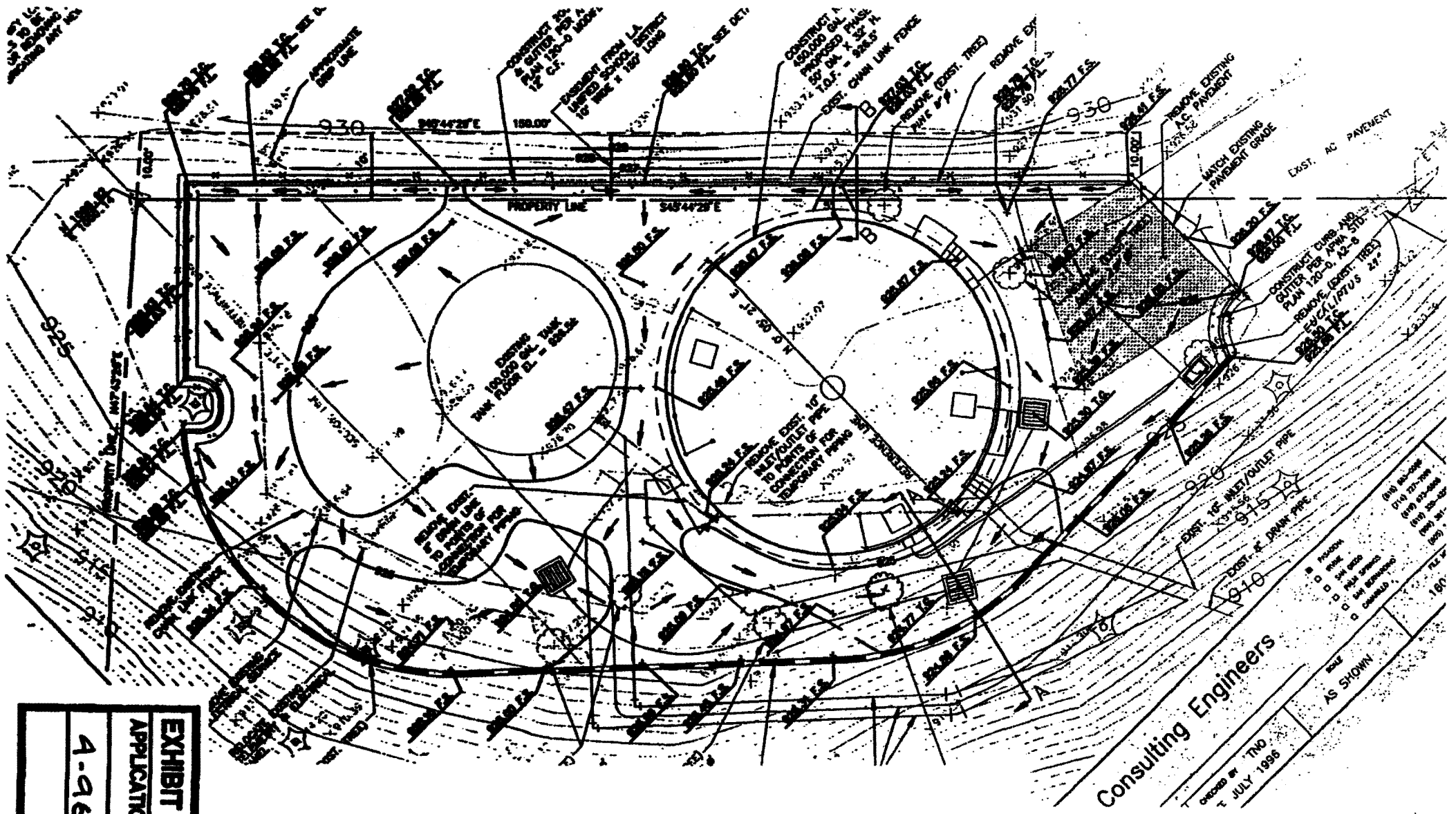
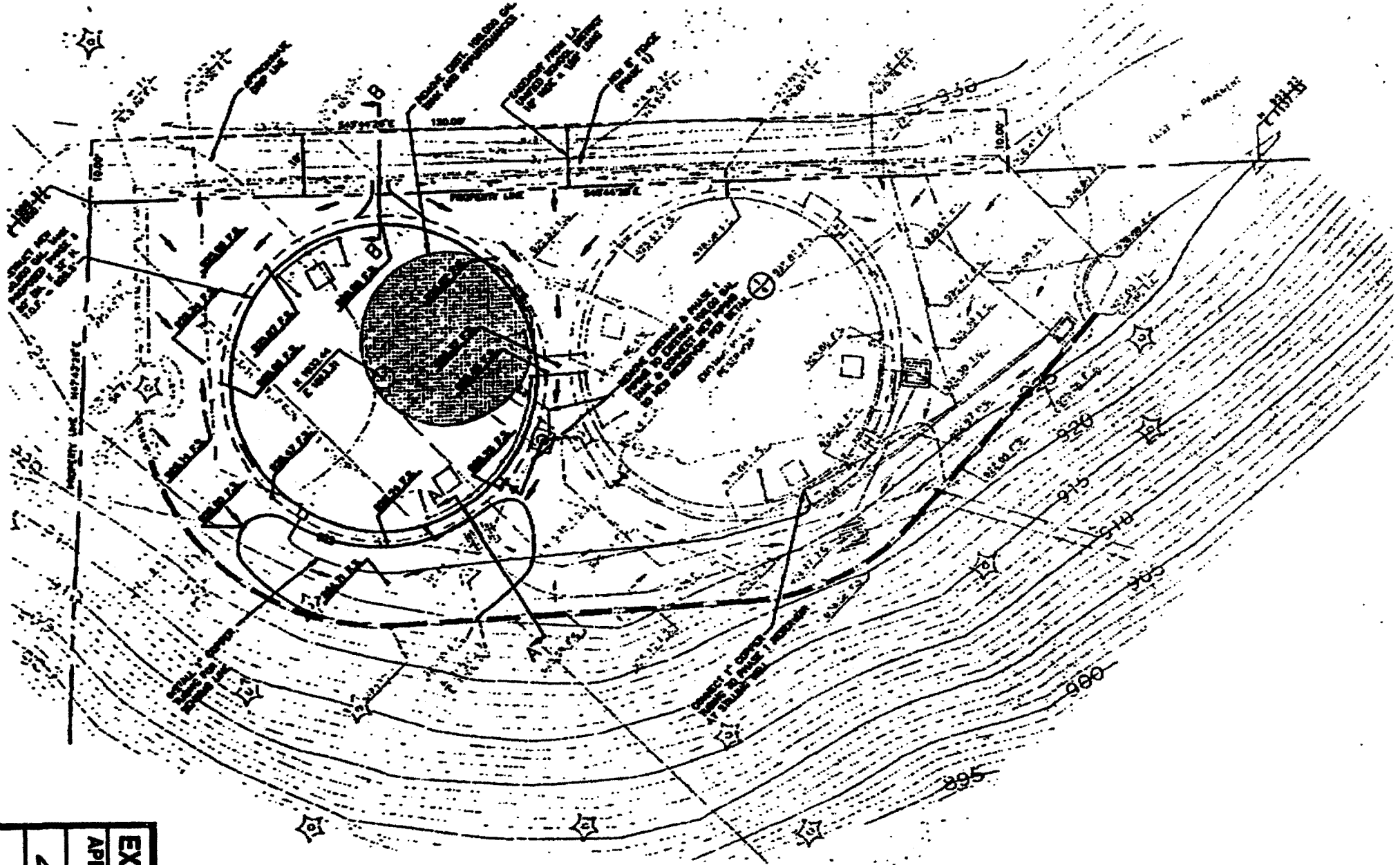


EXHIBIT NO. 2

APPLICATION NO. 4-96-153

LOS ANGELES COUNTY WATERWORKS DIST. 29

TOPANGA FORKS PHASE I & II
SITE PLAN *Reduced*



LOS ANGELES COUNTY WATERWORKS DIST. 29

TOPANGA FORKS PHASE III
SITE PLAN *Reduced*

EXHIBIT NO. 2
APPLICATION NO.
4-96-133

TOPANGA FORKS RESERVOIR EXPANSION

OAK TREE REPORT

21 MAY 1996

Prepared for
ASL Consulting Engineers
3280 East Foothill Blvd., #350
Pasadena, CA 91107

By
Rosi Dagit
Certified Arborist #1084
P.O. Box 1454
Topanga, CA 90290
310-455-7528

EXHIBIT NO. 3
APPLICATION NO.
4-96-153

Site Description:

The existing reservoir tank sits on a partly graded hillside above Topanga Elementary School. The project proposes to install an additional reservoir tank on the existing graded pad, with some fill and a retaining wall to extend the pad for future tank expansion. A partially paved asphalt driveway leads from the school to the tank site. Some large pines and eucalyptus trees in and around the site will be removed, along with 2 young Coast Live Oaks along the north fence line (dbh= 2 and 4 inches). Oak tree #11 and potentially #23 will need to be removed. Trees #5 and 21 will have moderate to serious impacts within the dripline.

The hill sloping up to the northeast is primarily a matrix of native and introduced grasses, chaparral shrubs and scattered oaks at the ridgeline. A section of the Backbone Trail follows the existing fence line on the northeast side.

Downslope of the project, oak woodlands form a band between the tanks and the chaparral community further down. Most of these trees show evidence of previous fire damage. In fact, it is interesting to note how many have resprouted into multi-trunk trees from single fire damaged cores. The understory vegetation is composed of sumac, coffeeberry and scattered herbs. The leaf litter is quite thick and undisturbed. A tangle of old irrigation pipes with emitters covers much of the upper portion of the slope.

All trees were visually inspected during the first week of May, 1996, with detailed observations included on the attached data sheets. Stamped metal tags were placed on the upslope or north side of the trees at approximately 4.5 feet above grade. Health and vigor was rated according to the following scale:

"A" Outstanding: A healthy vigorous tree characteristic of its species and reasonably free of any visible signs of stress, disease, or pest infestation.

"B" Above Average: A healthy and vigorous tree with less than 25% of the tree effected by visible signs of stress, disease, or pest infestation.

"C" Average: Although healthy in overall appearance, 25%-75% is effected by visible signs of stress, disease, or pest infestation.

"D" Below Average/Poor: Greater than 75% of this tree is effected by visible signs of stress, disease, or pest infestation, and appears to be in a general state of decline.

"F" Dead: This tree exhibits no signs of life.

EXHIBIT NO. 3
APPLICATION NO.
4-96-153

Potential Impacts:

Tree #1-4: beautiful young trees, no impact expected.
Tree#5: Heritage Oak with a 41.5 inch diameter. The proposed fence line will be inside the dripline of the tree, but will bow around the trunk to minimize impacts. Any fence post footings will be dug by hand, with care to avoid impacting any woody roots. However, the retaining wall which is proposed will impact roughly 20% of the root zone on the west/ southwest side. Should the existing tank be replaced as planned during Phase II with a larger tank, approximately 40% of the existing canopy will need to be removed.
Tree #6: No impacts expected.
Trees #7-8: These trees are downslope and just outside property line. No impacts are expected. Data sheets were not prepared for these trees.
Trees #9-10: These trees are downslope, approximately 5-15 feet from the existing fence line and utility box. The proposed retaining wall will come within the protected zones of these trees. Careful monitoring of the roots during construction is recommended.
Tree #11: Removal necessary in order to accommodate retaining wall.
Tree #12: No impact expected.
Tree #13: Encroachment into protected zone will occur, as this tree is less than 15' from the proposed retaining wall. Existing drainage leads towards this tree. New path should direct flow away from the trunk.
Trees #14-19: All of these trees are downslope and no impacts are expected.
Tree #20: Encroachment into the protected zone will be necessary for installation of the temporary pipes and retaining wall. It may be necessary to trim a few branches for utility line clearance.
Tree #21: Existing drainage channel leads towards this tree. The plan calls for above ground temporary pipes and telemetry which will encroach into the protected zone. Since these pipes are above ground, and can be routed to avoid the trunk, impacts should be minimal.
Tree #22: This young tree is quite close to the proposed retaining wall corner, near a large eucalyptus which is to be removed. Protective fencing during construction is recommended.
Tree #23: This tree may need to be removed due to impacts associated with retaining wall construction. Every effort should be made to work around this tree in order to preserve it.

Permit Request:

In order to construct this project as proposed, the proponents request permission to:

1. Encroach into the protected zones of Trees #5, 9, 10, 13, 20, 21, 22 and 23.

2. Remove Tree #11 and possibly #23.

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Recommendations:

1. FENCING: Trees number 1-4 should be fenced to protect the 5' zone outside the dripline during the construction phase, according to the specifications of the LA County Oak Tree Ordinance. Another fence should extend from Tree #6 along the south west border of the project to Tree #20, 5 feet upslope of the driplines of these trees. That will prevent construction related damage to these downslope trees. Tree #22 should also be fenced outside the dripline. Fencing should be in place prior to the start of the project.

2. HAND WORK: All grading and retaining wall work within the protected zone of Tree #5 should be done by hand and supervised by an arborist on site, in compliance with the LA County Oak Tree Ordinance. Installation of the temporary pipes encroaching into the protected zone of Tree #21 also needs to be done by hand and supervised. If it is determined that Tree #23 can remain, then all work in the protected zone needs to be done by hand.

3. GRADE CHANGE: Any grade change within the protected zone of Tree #5 should be avoided.

4. DRAINAGE: Some minor modifications of the route for the temporary surface pipes may be necessary in order to avoid unnecessary impacts to the protected zones of Tree #21. Also, the new drainage swales should be directed to avoid impacts to any trees, especially Trees # 13 and 20.

5. LANDSCAPING: After project completion, it is recommended that at least 2 five gallon coast live oaks are used in the planting plan, to replace the small trees lost. Use of native trees and oak associated understory is recommended.

6. REMOVALS: It will be necessary to remove Tree #11, and plant 2 fifteen gallon coast live oaks in its place. If it becomes necessary to remove Tree #23, then a minimum of 2 additional fifteen gallon coast live oaks should be planted with appropriate irrigation and monitoring for 2 years. Placement along the southern edge of the project is recommended to provide screening from the school property.

7. PRUNING: If it appears that Phase II will proceed within the next 5 years, then removal of small potions of the canopy of Tree #5 yearly is recommended. This would avoid removing a large section of canopy at one time and allow the tree to adjust. No more than 20% living wood should be removed in a given growing season. Since approximately 40% of the canopy would be impacted by installation of a larger tank, corrective pruning should begin two to three years prior to installation. All pruning should be done under the supervision of a certified arborist.

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Topanga Forks Reservoir Oak Report

Summary:

The oak trees on this site enhance slope stability, provide a visual barrier to the tanks from Old Topanga Canyon Road, and are an essential part of the ecological community on that portion of the Backbone Trail. This project can work around the trees to ensure their continued health by following accepted industry standards for tree care.

While it will be necessary to remove Tree #11 and possibly Tree #23, as well as encroach into the protected zones of Trees #5, 9, 10, 13, 20, 21, 22, and 23, following the recommended mitigations should provide adequate protection for the trees during and after the construction process.

I hereby certify that the information in this report is accurate according to the the plans provided by ASL Consulting Engineers (January 1996) and the condition of the trees during the first week of May 1996.

Signed Rosi Dagit 22 May 1996

Rosi Dagit, Certified Arborist #1084

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