



May 14, 2010

Rancho La Laguna Agriculture Pond

To: Leo Hanly & Charles Roven
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From: Vince Semonsen, Wildlife Biologist

This is a brief letter report documenting the status of the agricultural pond located within the Rancho La Laguna property in northern Santa Barbara County. This pond was addressed in my Initial Site Assessment for CA tiger salamanders dated May 9, 2008, and again in a recent Wetland Delineation Report done by the Entrix consulting group. In addition to the wetland report some photo documentation (March 2009 – February 2010) was provided by Tish Beltranena of MNS Engineers. I have been asked by Ms. Beltranena to comment on the status of the pond and on the conclusions of the Wetland Delineation.

On May 7, 2010 I again visited the Rancho La Laguna agricultural pond. The pond was dry, but there were several small patches of cattail and bulrush growing within the much larger patches of old dead tules. The description of these patches in the Wetland Delineation Report were consistent with what I saw in the field, “very low in stature, approximately 1-2 feet in height. Only about 10% or less of the stems were live, and these appear to be supported by existing rhizomes”. The photo documentation shows that over the last two years the pond has not been maintained for agricultural use and has been dry.

I agree with the conclusions of the wetland delineation report that states, “This site (1) was created by purely artificial means, (2) was maintained by artificial means, and (3) appears to be reverting back to upland conditions.” Given the ponds location below a small canyon some water is expected to collect in the basin, hence the patches of tules and the “soils consistent with a wetland determination”. However, without the artificial input of water the agricultural pond will not hold ponded water and therefore will not support any sensitive species, specifically CA tiger salamanders or CA red-legged frogs.