



## California Native Plant Society

East Bay Chapter  
Conservation Committee

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April 18, 2007

Greg and Jeanine Newman  
389 South Ave.  
Alamo, CA 94507-2162

Re: **Contra Costa County APN # 198230017**  
**Site Address: 285 Lark Lane, Alamo, CA 94507**

Dear Property Owners:

The California Native Plant Society is a non-profit organization of more than 10,000 laypersons, professional botanists, and academics organized into 32 chapters throughout California. The Society's mission is to increase the understanding and appreciation of California's native plants and to preserve them in their natural habitat through scientific activities, education, and conservation.

Our conservation and rare plants committees have been closely monitoring populations of Mt Diablo sunflower (*Helianthella castanea*) throughout the East Bay, in accordance with California Department of Fish and Game regulations. Mt Diablo sunflower is a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) protected plant that is monitored by State agencies. We feel we are lucky to have this rare plant and hope to maintain its ever vanishing habitat. We monitor one population that is at the northern-most boundary of Las Trampas Regional Park. On a site visit this year, we noticed quite a bit of activity. In reference to the grading and apparent development of your property (APN # 198230017) adjacent to Las Trampas Regional Park, we would like to offer some information about sensitive flora in the area.

The chaparral area toward the western edge of your property is a transition zone, which provides suitable habitat for rare and unusual species. The rare *Helianthella castanea* (Diablo Sunflower or Mount Diablo Sunflower), is a native plant endemic to this area, found only within a fifty mile radius of Mt. Diablo. It grows above 500 feet on grassy north-facing slopes, wooded or brushy hillsides, or in openings in chaparral, and usually blooms between April and June.

These plant populations have been monitored by CNPS for many years and are known to occur on your property, as well as adjacent properties. We would like to make sure that everyone involved in your project is aware of the presence of these beautiful and rare plants, and to request that caution be exercised while working and building in the area.

According to Mary Bowerman, botanist and author of the comprehensive flora of Mount Diablo, The Flowering Plants and Ferns of Mount Diablo California (1944 edition), “*the range of [the Diablo Sunflower] is limited, and curious.*”

Draft appendix to HCP/NCCP species profiles explains, “*Diablo helianthella is known from only a limited number of occurrences and is endangered in a portion of its range (California Native Plant Society 2001). Population trends are unknown (California Natural Diversity Database 2001), but are likely stable. Many of the occurrences on park lands are subject to impacts from recreation and associated activities, such as trail construction and maintenance, **road maintenance, brush-clearing, and off-trail travel** (California Natural Diversity Database 2001). **Diablo helianthella grows in openings in chaparral and at chaparral margins**; because chaparral species can invade these open areas in the absence of fire, fire suppression may lead to the loss of suitable habitat. **Other threats include urban development, road and utility line construction**, grazing, and competition from invasive exotics (California Natural Diversity Database 2001). Grazing and other **ground-disturbing activities can also lead to erosion in habitat areas.**” (emphasis added)*

As you can see, it is important to minimize the impact of the changes in the area being developed in order to protect the surrounding wildlife.

Here is a photo showing a larger group of mature plant clumps of Diablo Sunflower in bloom. Single clumps also occur, and the leaves are evident before and after bloom. Please note the location in an opening at the edge of chaparral:





Here is a close view of a single flower. Fortunately, these plants are hard to miss when in bloom:



We hope that this description and these photos will assist you in protecting the plant communities in your area. We recommend that you show these images to everyone working on the project so they will know what to look for.

The magnificent beauty and diversity of wildlife in California is a primary reason that many are drawn to live here in order to appreciate it. We thank you in advance for your kind consideration toward the care and preservation of our local wildlands.

Please do not hesitate to call (510) 734-0335, or write if you have any questions. We are happy to provide a tour an informational session at your request. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Lech Naumovich  
Conservation Analyst  
California Native Plant Society  
East Bay Chapter  
PO Box 5597  
Berkeley, CA 94705  
(510) 734-0335  
[conservation@ebcnps.org](mailto:conservation@ebcnps.org)  
[www.ebcnps.org](http://www.ebcnps.org)

CC:

Director, Alamo Improvement Association ([aia@alamoca.org](mailto:aia@alamoca.org))  
Mary Ann Showers, Department of Fish and Game  
Heath Bartosh, Rare Plants Committee Chair EBCNPS  
Brad Olson, East Bay Regional Park District

