

Wildlife Handling Guidelines

West of Devers Upgrade Project
Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, California

PREPARED FOR: Southern California Edison (SCE)
PREPARED BY: CH2M HILL Engineers, Inc. (CH2M)
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The following wildlife handling guidelines consolidate the requirements, procedures, and techniques for dealing with wildlife found on or near SCE's West of Devers Upgrade Project (Project) roads, work areas, or the right-of-way (ROW) that are entrapped, injured, orphaned, dead, in harm's way, or that pose a risk to humans. These guidelines were prepared to address Final Environmental Impact Report¹ (FEIR) (California Public Utilities Commission [CPUC], 2015) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) (Bureau of Land Management [BLM], 2016) mitigation measure (MM) WIL-1b. MM WIL-1b requires that SCE provides all biological monitors with guidelines for attending to entrapped or injured wildlife found on or near the Project.

While SCE does not recommend that people handle wild animals, the following guidelines and procedures are required for when the action is deemed necessary by the onsite biologist.

1.0 Communication and Reporting

1. **Notify a Project biologist.** If any construction personnel other than a biological monitor observes wildlife in need of assistance within the Project ROW, they are to notify a biological monitor immediately and are directed to not approach, handle, or move the animal.
2. **Communicate with onsite personnel.** The biological monitor shall notify all construction operators in the immediate vicinity of their intent to enter the work area to protect the safety of the biologist, construction workers, and animal.
3. **Gain permission if required.** If an animal is sick, injured, or under any state- or federal-level protection, the biological monitor must first contact the SCE biologist for permission to move the animal. If necessary, the SCE biologist shall contact the appropriate regulatory agency before granting permission to proceed.
4. **Report special-status² species.** Any entrapped or injured special-status species of wildlife found on Project roads, work areas, or the ROW, must be reported by an SCE biologist to the appropriate resource agency within 1 work day.

¹ For the purpose of this Plan, "FEIR" refers to the FEIR (CPUC, 2015) and Addendum to the FEIR (CPUC, 2016).

² "Special-status" species are species listed as threatened, endangered, candidates, proposed for listing, or sensitive under the federal and/or California Endangered Species Acts; or with special administrative designations such as California Species of Special Concern (SSC).

2.0 Safety and Protective Personal Equipment

- All standard protective personal equipment (PPE) is required during the handling of wildlife, including steel-toed footwear, long pants, safety vest, protective eyewear, and a hardhat.
- Leather or latex gloves must be worn if moving wildlife by hand. Leather gloves shall be sufficiently disinfected with a 1:10 bleach-water solution after each use. Latex gloves must be disposed of after each use.
- If the animal is venomous, additional PPE is required for removal (see Section 5).

3.0 General Wildlife Handling Requirements and Guidelines

- Only Project Authorized or Qualified Biologists³ shall handle listed species in coordination with the USFWS and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).
- Only Project biologists trained in handling wildlife should attempt to handle or help any wild animal.
- Safety of both the animal and biologist/surrounding persons shall be the primary consideration when handling wildlife is unavoidable.
- Biologists involved in handling wildlife shall know the habitats and behaviors of the animal to be handled.
- Always relocate wildlife in the same direction in which they were traveling, if applicable.

4.0 Desert Tortoises

- Only United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)-Authorized Biologists shall handle desert tortoise including juveniles, adults, and eggs in accordance with USFWS's *Desert Tortoise Field Manual* (USFWS, 2009), or more current USFWS guidance.
- Desert tortoises shall be allowed reasonable time (20 minutes) to move out of harm's way under their own accord.
- Desert tortoises found to be at risk of direct harm by construction activities shall be moved out of harm's way by an Authorized Biologist and released in a safe environment at the minimum distance possible within appropriate habitat. Relocated desert tortoises shall be placed in the shade of a shrub.
- Desert tortoises must not be moved in excess of 1,640 feet for adults and 300 feet for hatchlings.
- A desert tortoise removed from its burrow shall be placed in a natural, unoccupied burrow similar to the hibernaculum in which it was found, or in an artificially constructed burrow in accordance with USFWS's *Desert Tortoise Field Manual* (USFWS, 2009), or more current USFWS guidance.
- Any time a desert tortoise is handled, the Authorized Biologist must take photographs and record pertinent data in the daily monitoring report.

5.0 Rattlesnakes

- Biological monitors will alert all onsite personnel of presence of rattlesnakes in the work area. The biological monitor shall observe the snake from a distance while alerting workers to its movements.

³ Authorized Biologists are biologists authorized by the USFWS and CDFW under the project permits to handle desert tortoises. Qualified Biologists for specific species are biologists who hold appropriate USFWS Section 10(a)(1)(A) recovery permits and/or CDFW memoranda of understanding, or who are authorized under the project permits with USFWS and/or CDFW approval, to conduct surveys, monitoring, handling, and other duties related to the conservation and recovery of those species.

- The biological monitor shall ensure that other Project personnel do not harass or handle rattlesnakes.
- If time and work allow, give the snake space and let it leave the area on its own. Given space, time, and an adequate escape route, snakes will typically retreat on their own.
- Stop work immediately if the snake or workers are at risk of injury.
- If a venomous snake needs to be moved (e.g., in harm's way, posing a threat to humans, under a piece of equipment, etc.), only biologists pre-authorized by SCE to handle venomous snakes shall participate in relocating the individual. SCE shall ensure that an adequate number of qualified individuals are trained and have proper equipment for the safe and proper handling of rattlesnakes.
- Additional PPE and equipment required for handling snakes includes the following:
 - Snake-proof gaiters (recommended when working in areas with dense vegetation)
 - Snake hook 3- to 4-foot long
 - Snake tongs (use of snake tongs shall be limited to situations in which there is no other alternative. Snake tongs may cause internal injury, particularly to gravid [pregnant] snakes)
 - 5-gallon bucket with screw-top lid and air holes
- When placing a snake inside a bucket, the biologist shall make sure the snake is held a safe distance away and that the hand being used to secure the lid of the bucket is placed in the middle of the screw-top lid, rather than on the side where the hand may be prone to a bite.
- Biologist shall carry the bucket containing the snake a safe distance away (100 to 300 feet) from Project activities, walking in the same general direction in which the snake was first observed moving, and then release snake into appropriate habitat.
- Handling and relocation of snakes must be documented in daily monitoring reports.
- If a special-status rattlesnake, such as the red diamond rattlesnake (*Crotalus ruber*), is relocated, documentation must be submitted to CPUC, BLM, and CDFW.

6.0 Entrapped Wildlife

- If an animal is entrapped, a biological monitor shall free the animal if feasible or work with construction crews to free the animal while complying with Project safety regulations.
- If biological monitors cannot free the animal, or the animal is too large or dangerous for monitors to handle, SCE shall contact and work with animal control, CDFW, or other qualified party to obtain assistance for the animal as soon as possible.
- It is up to the biological monitor to determine whether wildlife requires additional care, or if they can be immediately released a safe distance away from the Project into appropriate habitat.
- Entrapped and/or released wildlife shall be documented in daily monitoring reports.

7.0 Injured Wildlife

- Biological monitors will receive training for the safe and proper handling and transport of injured wildlife. These monitors will be provided with appropriate equipment and will be available to capture and transport injured wildlife to a local wildlife rehabilitation facility as needed.
- If the injured animal is too large or dangerous for biologists to handle, or a trained and equipped biologist is not available, SCE shall contact and work with a local wildlife rehabilitator, animal control, CDFW, or other qualified party to obtain assistance for the animal as soon as possible.

- If an injured animal requires special care, a wildlife rehabilitation center shall be contacted for further assistance.
- All Project-related injuries to wildlife shall be documented in daily monitoring reports.
- Dead animals of non-special-status species found on unpaved project roads, work areas, or the ROW shall be reported to the appropriate local animal control agency within 24 hours. A biological monitor shall safely move the carcass out of the road or work area as needed. Dead animals of special-status species found on unpaved project roads, work areas, or the ROW shall be reported to CDFW within one work day and the carcass handled as directed by CDFW.
- Within 3 days of locating any injured desert tortoises or other federal or state-listed species, SCE will notify the Palm Springs Fish and Wildlife Office by telephone (760-322-2070) or email (felicia_sirchia@fws.gov). The report will include the date, time, location of observation, a photograph, cause of injury (if known), and any other pertinent information. CDFW also will be contacted according to the schedule and process described in the Incidental Take Permit for the Project. A Qualified Biologist must assess injured wildlife found within the Project ROW to determine if the animal’s injuries are Project-related.

Table 1. CDFW-Approved Wildlife Rehabilitation Facilities
West of Devers Upgrade Project Wildlife Handling Guidelines

Wildlife Rehabilitation Facility	Location	Phone Number
<i>San Bernardino County</i>		
All God’s Creatures	Chino Hills	909-393-1590
Joseph and Linda Chalk	San Bernardino	909-887-8267
Kandie Cansler	Oak Glen	909-790-1010
<i>Riverside County</i>		
Stephanie McKierman	Cherry Valley	951-769-0847
Hope Wildlife	Corona	951-279-3232
Coachella Valley Wild Bird Center	Indio	760-347-2647
The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens	Palm Desert	760-346-5694

8.0 Transportation of Sick, Injured, or Orphaned Wildlife

- Transport containers for wildlife must have proper ventilation and be appropriate for the size, strength, and behavior of the species being moved.
- Transport containers that are not fully enclosed shall be covered to reduce light, visual stimuli, and stress.
- Transportation containers shall be secured in the vehicle to prevent movement, rolling, or tipping during transport that could cause stress or injury to the animal.
- Vehicles shall be kept as quiet as possible during animal transport.
- If transporting species that are venomous or capable of transmitting zoonotic diseases, containers must be locked, secured, and clearly marked with warning labels such as “Caution — venomous snake inside,” or “Caution — live bat inside.”

9.0 Dead Animals

- Within 3 days of locating any dead desert tortoises or other federal listed species, SCE will notify the Palm Springs Fish and Wildlife Office by telephone (760-322-2070) or email (felicia_sirchia@fws.gov). The report will include the date, time, location of the carcass, a photograph, cause of death (if known), and any other pertinent information. CDFW will also be contacted according to the schedule and process described in the Incidental Take Permit for the Project for mortalities of State-listed species. A Qualified Biologist must assess injured wildlife found within the Project ROW to determine if the animal's injuries are Project-related.
- All dead animals will be handled only while wearing gloves.
- Dead animals of special-status species found on unpaved Project roads, work areas, or the ROW will be reported to CDFW within 1 work day. The carcass will be handled as directed by CDFW.
- Dead animals of non-special-status species found on unpaved Project roads, work areas, or the ROW will be reported to the appropriate local animal control agency within 24 hours.
- A biologist will safely move the carcass out of the road or work area as needed.
- Handlers will be directed to avoid direct contact with the dead animal's body fluids (i.e., blood, urine, feces). If contact does occur, wash the affected skin area with soap and water as soon as possible. Alert supervisor of contact and seek medical attention if personal contamination is suspected. Personal contamination will be considered if the dead animal's body fluids come in contact with a person's mouth, eyes, nose, or open skin abrasions.
- Caution will be used to avoid contact with animal's external parasites (for example, fleas or ticks) if present.
- Any suspected zoonotic diseases (for example, rabies or tularemia) will be documented in the mortality report.
- Any Project-related deaths to wildlife shall be documented in daily monitoring reports.

10.0 References

Bureau of Land Management (BLM). 2016. *Final Environmental Impact Statement*. West of Devers Upgrade Project.

California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). 2015. *Final Environmental Impact Report*. Southern California Edison's West of Devers Upgrade Project. SCH #201405104. December.
<http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/asp/westofdevers/toc-feir.htm>.

California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). 2016. *Addendum to Final Environmental Impact Report*. Southern California Edison's West of Devers Upgrade Project. SCH #2014051041. April.
http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/environment/info/asp/westofdevers/feir_addendum.pdf.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 2009. *Desert Tortoise (Mojave Population) Field Manual (Gopherus agassizii)*, Region 8, Sacramento, California. December.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 2016. *Formal and Informal Section 7 Consultation on the West of Devers Upgrade Project, San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California*. Reference FWS-SB-RIV-14B0011-16F0668. December 23.