

Environmental Minor Project Refinement Form



Project Name: West of Devers Upgrade Project **Request Prepared By:** Sylvia Granados

Date Approval Required: 5/8/2020 **Variance Request No.:** 36

Date Submitted: 5/6/2020 **Locations:** West of GS-6-6N27-6N28-2 and Whitewater Canyon Road in the community of Whitewater, Riverside County (see Description of Change and Justification section below and figures attached).

Landowners and Associated Parcel Numbers:

Proposed Work Area	Property Owner	Assessor's Parcel Number
GS-6N27-6N28-3 (Figure 1)	TOHL, JANET	516-100-003, 516-100-004, 516-100-005

Current Vegetative Cover/Land Use: Desert Scrub

Existing Sensitive Resource? NO YES Specify: DETO Modeled Habitat, CVMV Modeled habitat, desert woodrat buffers

Modifying (check as many as apply):

- MITIGATION MEASURE PLAN/PROCEDURE SPECIFICATION
 DRAWING PERMIT CONDITION OTHER

Specify Source (e.g., Mitigation Measure B.5): NTP #4 Work Areas/Conditions

Description of Change and Justification (Attach additional sheets if needed.)

Attachments:

CONSTRUCTION DRAWING ADDITIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS CORRESPONDENCE OTHER: _____

GS-6N27-6N28-3 : Expansion of Supersite GS-6N27-6N28-2

A new temporary 1.77-acre work area immediately adjacent to the west side of Supersite GS-6N27-6N28-2 is required to safely remove the existing wire and safely install new conductor between Supersites 6N27 and 6N28. Wooden guard structures will be erected within the new work area, on each side of an existing distribution line, to prevent circuit interruptions on the line in the event of a line drop. The work area will be accessed from a dirt road west of Whitewater Canyon Road, as shown on Figure 1.

The new work area will be leveled to facilitate the guard structure construction using digger derrick trucks and other equipment associated with wreck-out activities. To the extent possible, the guards will be positioned on existing disturbed or degraded areas within the delineated work area.

The new work area is privately owned, consists of approximately 1.77-acres of desert scrub, and is located entirely within the SCE transmission line right-of-way.

Environmental Analysis

No impacts to regulated trees, jurisdictional waters, biological, or cultural resources are anticipated during the use of the new work area.

Biological Resources

A desktop analysis was conducted for the new work area using aerial imagery, publicly available data, and project biological data. The new work area was covered during previous surveys, including FRED Preconstruction Survey ID 000179.

Desert Tortoise – The new work area is located within desert tortoise (DETO) modeled habitat (see Figure 1). No definitive signs of DETO have been observed in the new work area during preconstruction surveys or protocol desert tortoise surveys covering this area. With monitoring, no impacts are anticipated. To minimize temporal habitat loss, portions of previously approved work areas in DETO habitat, which were determined to no longer be necessary for construction, will be removed from the project data and avoided to offset mapped habitat impacts to GS-6N27-6N28-3, as shown in Figure 1. Although, due to the nature of the work, only a portion of the delineated work area would be impacted by the guard structures.

Special-status Terrestrial Herpetofauna – No special-status terrestrial herpetofauna have been observed within the new work area during project-related surveys. However, many species have the potential to occur throughout the project area. For instance, an adult Chuckwalla (*Sauromalus ater*) was observed on September 11, 2019 basking on a rock approximately 550-feet west of the new work area (FRED Species Event 000293). A preconstruction survey of the new work area will be conducted prior to use. With implementation of mitigation measures and biological monitoring during construction, no significant impacts to special-status terrestrial herpetofauna are anticipated.

Burrowing Owl – Burrowing owl (BUOW) habitat in the form of annual and perennial grasslands and scrublands characterized by low-growing vegetation is present throughout the project area. No occupied burrows or associated buffers currently intersect the proposed work area.

Active owl burrows observed during preconstruction surveys and during construction would be mitigated in accordance with the Burrowing Owl Management and Passive Relocation Plan. With implementation of mitigation measures, including appropriate avoidance buffers and biological monitoring during construction, no impacts to burrowing owls are anticipated.

Nesting Birds – Suitable substrates for nesting birds protected by the California Fish and Game Code and Migratory Bird Treaty Act, including trees, shrubs, man-made structures, and the ground surface, can be found throughout the project area. Preconstruction surveys, including surveys for nesting birds during the avian breeding season (Jan 1 – Aug 31), will be conducted prior to the initiation of construction in the new work area. If active nests are identified, avoidance buffers will be established in accordance with the Nesting Bird Management Plan.

GS-6N27-6N28-3 is located approximately 540-feet west of an active Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) nest (FRED Nest Event 000506). The nest is located in a south-facing cliffside approximately 35 feet above the ground. The nest height and location offers visual and acoustic buffers to ground sites near the nest. The nest is hidden within a cavity and is best viewed from the southwest. However, the current buffer does not intersect the proposed work area.

Listed Riparian Birds – No suitable habitat for riparian birds (least Bell's vireo [LBVI]/Southwestern willow flycatcher [SWFL]) occurs within 500 feet of the new work area. Therefore, no impacts are anticipated.

Coastal California Gnatcatcher [CAGN] – No suitable habitat for CAGN occurs within 500 feet of the new work area. Therefore, no impacts are anticipated.

Golden Eagle – Based on aerial habitat assessments, limited suitable nesting habitat for golden eagles was identified within 2 miles of the survey area in Segment 6. Protocol aerial surveys conducted for the project in 2019 showed no golden eagle nests within 2 miles of the survey area. Golden eagles have been observed foraging north and east of Segment 6 (Figure 1). On April 25, 2020 one, first-cycle GOEA was observed flying from the north, over Tower 6N28, then westward and out of sight (FRED Species Event 000477). This is likely the same bird as observed in FRED Species Event 000476. Based on information from the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission, a perennial Golden Eagle nest is located in Big Morongo Canyon, outside the 2-mile survey area. However, no nests have been identified within 1 mile of the work area. Therefore, no impacts are anticipated.

Stephens' Kangaroo Rat – The new work area is not located within suitable habitat or the range for this species; therefore, no impacts to SKR are anticipated.

Special-status Bats – No suitable bat roosting habitat or buffers occur within the new work area; therefore, no impacts to special-status bats are anticipated.

Special-status Small Mammals – Special-status small mammals such as the pallid San Diego pocket mouse, northwestern San Diego pocket mouse, American badger, desert kit fox, San Diego desert woodrat, and/or San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit can occur in many parts of the project area. Ringtail and Palm Springs round-tailed ground squirrel are not anticipated to occur in the new work area. However, if any of these species are found, potential impacts will be addressed according to the Small Mammals Avoidance and Minimization Plan.

Little pocket mouse (including Los Angeles pocket mouse [LAPM] and Palm Springs pocket mouse [PSPM] subspecies) occupied habitat is widespread throughout Segment 6 (Figure 1).

The habit events nearest the new work area consist of three desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida*) middens (FRED Habitat Events 000083-000085) observed approximately 715-feet northeast of the new work area along the access road and a fourth desert woodrat midden observed approximately 70-feet east of the new work area, within adjacent supersite GS-6N27-6N28-1 (FRED Habitat Event 000635). The existing 10-foot buffers will be avoided during construction activities associated with the new work area and potential impacts to desert woodrat midden will be addressed in accordance with the Small Mammals Avoidance and Minimization Plan. With implementation of the plan, no significant impacts are anticipated.

Special-status Plants – GS-6N27-6N28-3 is located within Coachella Valley Milk-vetch (*Astragalus lentiginosus* var. *coachellae* [CVMV]; FE, CRPR 1B.2) Modeled Habitat and approximately 100-feet west of CVMV Critical Habitat (Figure 1). No direct impacts to Critical Habitat are anticipated. To minimize temporal habitat loss, portions of previously approved work areas in CVMV modeled habitat, which were determined to no longer be necessary for construction, will be removed from the project data and avoided to offset mapped habitat impacts to GS-6N27-6N28-3, as shown in Figure 1. Although, due to the nature of the work, only a portion of the delineated work area would be impacted by the guard structures.

Previous surveys for CVMV were negative – there are no known locations of CVMV in the project area. If special-status plants are later identified during preconstruction surveys/clearance sweeps/monitoring, they will be avoided to the extent feasible. Unavoidable impacts to special-status plants will be addressed in accordance with the Special-status Plant Salvage and Relocation Plan or, in the case of CVMV, in consultation with the USFWS.

Regulated Trees – No tree trimming or tree removal is required for construction activities within the new work area. Therefore, no impacts are anticipated.

Jurisdictional Waters

Wetland and non-wetland jurisdictional features are located throughout the project area. No jurisdictional features intersect the new work area; however, three non-wetland jurisdictional features are located near the eastern side of the new work area. ESA signs will be established at the edges of the new work area and BMPs will be implemented in accordance with the SWPPP. No impacts to jurisdictional features are expected to result from use of the new work area.

Cultural Resources

The new work area is located within the WOD APE and was covered within the record search data that was conducted during previous WOD surveys and studies. The record search and survey results for the new work area were negative for cultural resources. *Williams, Audry. 2016. Cultural Resources Management Plan for Southern California Edison Company's West of Devers Transmission Line Upgrade Project, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, California. Prepared by Southern California Edison.*

Paleontological Resources

The WOD Paleontological Resources Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (PRMMP) requires full-time, qualified paleontological construction monitoring in areas determined to have moderate (PFYC 3) to very high (PFYC 5) sensitivity. Sediments of unknown (PFYC U) sensitivity shall be monitored by a qualified paleontological monitor on a part-time basis and geologic units with very low (PFYC 1) or low (PFYC 2) sensitivity may be spot checked to confirm paleontological sensitivity.

Per the PRMMP, *the types of construction activities that require monitoring or spot-checking include:*

- Grading
- Drilling (if drill bit is greater than two feet in diameter)
- Excavation for retaining walls
- Excavation of construction areas

Types of construction activities that will not require monitoring or spot-checking, regardless of paleontological sensitivity include:

- Small diameter drill holes (less than two feet in diameter)
- Pile driving
- Project activities that do not involve ground disturbance

The proposed work area is located within areas of low PFYC 2 paleontological sensitivity and unknown (PFYC U) sensitivity, therefore, the site will be monitored by a qualified paleontological monitor on a part-time basis, if grading or excavation are required.

Resources:

Biological NO SENSITIVE RESOURCES PRESENT SENSITIVE RESOURCES PRESENT N/A

New Survey Report Attached: YES NO

If No, Previous Biological Survey Reference: A preconstruction survey will be conducted prior to initiating work in the new work area. The new work area was covered during active FRED Preconstruction Survey ID 000179.

Cultural : NO RESOURCES PRESENT RESOURCES PRESENT WITH PROJECT APE: YES NO
 (PAVED/GRAVEL AREA AND NO GROUND DISTURBANCE)

If in APE, Previous Cultural Survey Reference:

If not in APE, attach new survey report.

The new work area is located within the WOD APE and was covered within the record search data that was conducted during previous WOD surveys and studies. The record search and survey results for the work area were negative for cultural resources. Williams, Audry. 2016. Cultural Resources Management Plan for Southern California Edison Company's West of Devers Transmission Line Upgrade Project, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, California.

Other Potential Impacts: (Check any potential changes to permitted impacts and provide details below. Attach additional sheets if needed.)

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> AIR QUALITY | <input type="checkbox"/> LAND USE | <input type="checkbox"/> TRAFFIC |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES | <input type="checkbox"/> NOISE | <input type="checkbox"/> VISUAL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CONTAMINATED SOILS | <input type="checkbox"/> PALEO RESOURCES | <input type="checkbox"/> WATER RESOURCES |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CULTURAL RESOURCES | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIOECONOMIC | <input type="checkbox"/> WETLANDS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HAZARDOUS MATERIALS | <input type="checkbox"/> STORM WATER (SWPPP) | |

NA

CEQA and Permitting: (Provide details for any "Yes" answer and attach additional information if needed.)

1. Will modification involve substantial changes that will require major changes to the CEQA document?
 YES NO
2. Will modification result in new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified impacts?

YES NO

3. Additional agency notifications and/or permit modifications required? YES NO

Conditions of Approval or Reasons for Denial: (Attach additional information if needed.)

 Required Signatures: (Attached email approvals may be used in lieu of signatures.)

 X Chief Construction Inspector or Foreman: VARIANCE MODIFICATION IS NEEDED FOR SAFE AND EFFICIENT CONSTRUCTION

Name: Jeff Miller Signature:  Date: 5/5/2020

Environmental Inspector: FIELD REVIEW COMPLETE

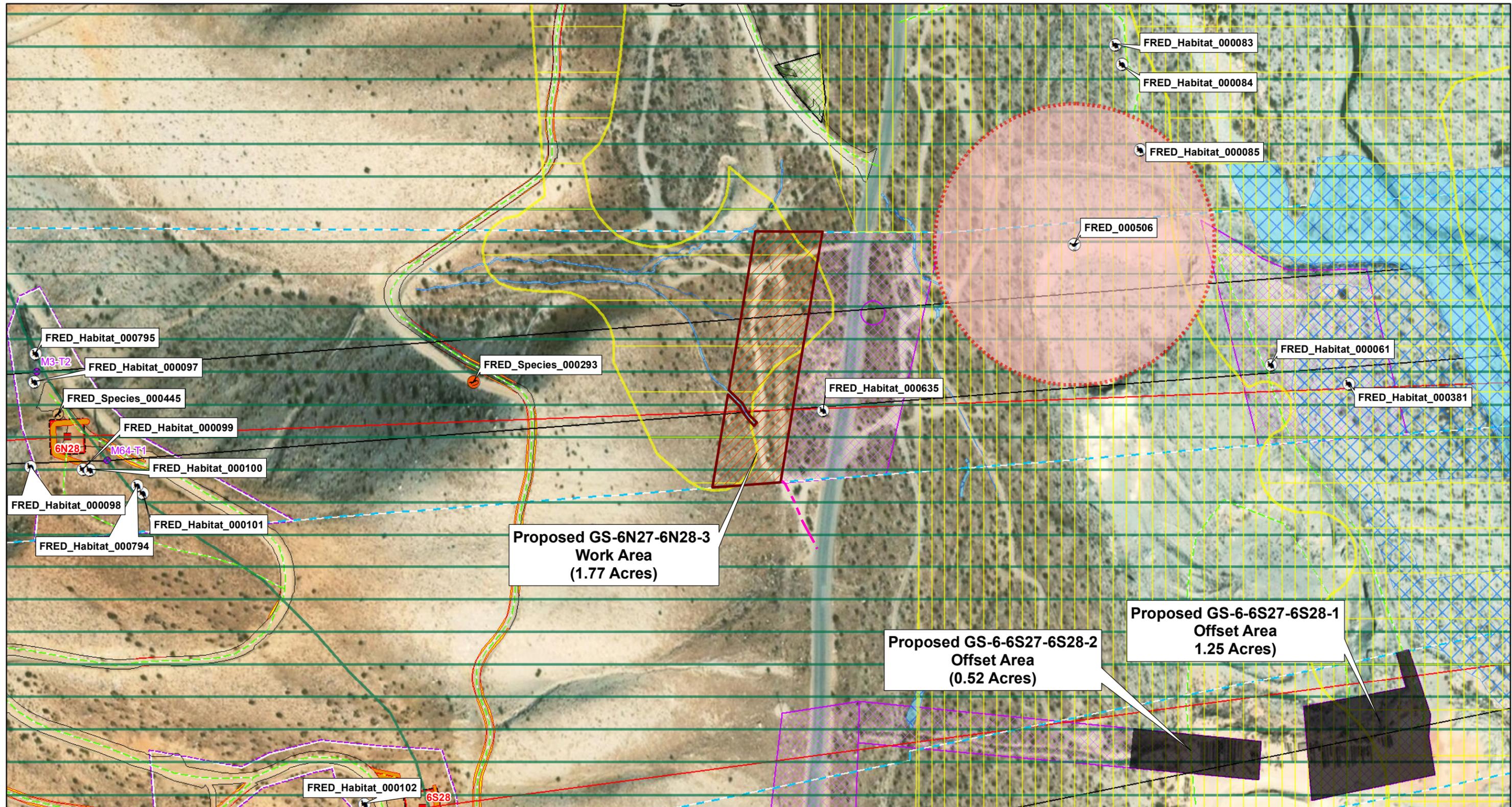
Name: Lisa Amador Signature: *Lisa Amador* Date: 5/5/2020

 X Land Agent: CONSISTENT WITH EXISTING RIGHTS NEW RIGHTS OBTAINED

Name: James Spence Signature:  Date: 5/5/2020

 X Environmental Compliance Lead: APPROVED APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS (SEE CONDITIONS ABOVE) DENIED

Name: Sylvia Granados Signature: *Sylvia Granados* Date: 5/5/2020



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LEGEND

- Proposed MPR #36 Work Area
- Proposed MPR #36 Offset Area
- Proposed MPR #36 Access Road
- FRED Active Nest Event**
- Barn Owl

- FRED Active Nest Buffer**
- Barn Owl (300ft Buffer)
- FRED Species Event**
- Chuckwalla
- Golden Eagle

- FRED Habitat Event**
- Desert Woodrat (10ft Buffer)
- Coachella Valley Milk-Vetch Critical Habitat
- Coachella Valley Milk-Vetch Modeled Habitat
- Desert Tortoise Modeled Habitat

- Non-wetland Waters**
- CDFW Jurisdiction
- USACE/RWQCB Jurisdiction
- Major Trans Structure**
- Proposed
- Remove

- Major Trans Line**
- Proposed
- Existing
- Civil Access Roads Lines**
- New Access Road
- Existing Access Road

- Civil Access Road Areas**
- Existing Road Edge
- Designed Road Boundary
- Potential Road Widening
- Existing ROW

- Construction Areas**
- Construction Work Site
- Guard Pole
- O&M Tower Area
- Structure Work Area
- Work Area

SCE, ESRI World Imagery
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FIGURE 2

Southern California Edison
 West of Devers Upgrade Project
Proposed GS-6N27-6N28-3 Work Area
 MPR #36