

To: Rob Fletcher
Environmental Specialist, Biologist
SDG&E Environmental Services
8315 Century Park Court, CP21E
San Diego, CA 92123

From: Chambers Group, Inc.

Date: 07/31/15

RE: Revised Habitat Mapping Memo regarding Energy Division Data Request #17 (Question 5 – Part 4) for the SX to PQ 230kV Transmission Line CPCN Project

**Habitat Mapping Memorandum for the San Diego Gas & Electric Carmel Valley Staging Yard,
Sycamore to Penasquitos 230 Kilovolt Transmission Line Project,
San Diego County, California**

This Habitat Mapping Memorandum (Memo) was prepared by Chambers Group, Inc. (Chambers Group) biologist Paul Morrissey as a response to the Energy Division Data Request #17 (Question 5 – Part 4) for the Sycamore to Penasquitos (SX to PQ) 230 Kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line Project (Proposed Project). This information is intended to supplement the information provided in the Biological Technical Report (BTR) prepared for the Proposed Project (BBS 2014a). For additional information pertaining to the biological resources associated with the Proposed Project, please refer to the BTR.

Study Area

San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) plans to utilize the Carmel Valley Road Staging Yard (Study Area; formerly the Camino Del Sur Staging Yard) as part of the Proposed Project. The Study Area is situated on a mesa top at the northeast corner of the intersection of Carmel Valley Road and Camino Del Sur in the City of San Diego, in San Diego County. The Study Area evaluated during the vegetation and habitat mapping assessment included the final proposed limits of the Carmel Valley Staging Yard (approximately 6.84 acres) and the remainder of the approximately 25 acre property (Study Area) (Attachment A, Figure 1). Topographically, the Study Area is level.

Proposed Project activities within the Study Area would include the use of the area for an approximately 6 acre staging yard. The staging yard may be used for equipment and materials storage, placement of construction trailers and restroom facilities, equipment storage, materials laydown, and helicopter flight operations. Following completion of the Proposed Project, all materials, equipment, and rock base would be removed, soils would be de-compacted and stabilized, and all BMPs would be removed after closeout of applicable portions of the Proposed Project Stormwater Pollution and Prevention Plan (SWPPP).

Vegetation Mapping

Vegetation communities were classified according to those described within the *SDG&E Subregional NCCP*. NCCP vegetation community classifications are consistent with, or similar to, the *Preliminary*

Descriptions of the Terrestrial Natural Communities of California (Holland 1986). For the Proposed Project, vegetation communities within the Study Area were identified according to the estimated percent cover of the combination of dominant plant species observed. Vegetation community classifications are based on a dominant species within the mapped unit relative to the list of dominant species for a given Holland vegetation community.

Past and Present Land Use

Historical aeriels of the site were reviewed from 1953 to present day. Prior to 1996, the site was undeveloped and appears as non-native grassland potentially used for grazing. Sometime between 1996 and 2002, the site was extensively graded for development. By 2002 the existing parking lot, driveway and constructed brow ditches appear on aeriels. Since 2002 the Study Area has been used for material storage.

Preliminary Site Visit and Vegetation Mapping

A habitat assessment within the Study Area on June 4 and June 11, 2015 (refer to the Response to ED Data Request 16, Attachment ED17 – Q5 dated July 13, 2015). The site visit included a pedestrian survey of the Study Area. Plant communities within the Survey Area were identified, qualitatively described, and mapped onto high resolution aerial photographs. Vegetation communities were classified according to those described within the *SDG&E Subregional Natural Communities Conservation Plan* (NCCP). The NCCP vegetation community classifications are consistent with, or similar to, the *Preliminary Descriptions of the Terrestrial Natural Communities of California* (Holland 1986). For the Proposed Project, vegetation communities within the Study Area were identified according to the estimated percent cover of the combination of dominant plant species observed relative to the list of dominant species for a given Holland vegetation community. Within the Study Area, three vegetation communities/land use types were identified, including: developed lands, non-native grasslands, and disturbed habitat. During a previous survey conducted in June 2015, a small area approximately 0.13 acre in size within the Study Area was misidentified as a meadow/seep (Holland Code 45400). This "meadow/seep area" is surrounded to the south by a developed asphalt parking pad, to the west by a gravel road, and to the north and east by disturbed upland habitat.

Meadow/seeps, a NCCP-vegetation classification, are composed of annual and perennial herbs, including wildflowers and bulbs such as mariposa lily (*Calochortus* spp.), lupine (*Lupinus* spp.), and blue dicks (*Dichelostemma capitatum*). Where meadow/seeps occur, groundwater keeps the soil moist longer than the surrounding uplands, and vegetation often includes rushes (*Carex* spp.), spike rushes (*Eleocharis* spp.) and other plants typically associated with moist or wet areas. Meadow/seeps are located on slopes or at the base of slopes.

This habitat was not identified as a meadow/seep area based on the recent July 24, 2015 jurisdictional delineation survey effort. This area was delineated on July 24, 2015 by Chambers Group biologist Paul Morrissey and SDG&E Environmental Specialist Tamara Spear. Species identified within this area include: non-native Italian ryegrass (*Festuca perennis*; Facultative (FAC) species), wild oat (*Avena barbata*; Upland (UPL) species) fringed by tamarisk (*Tamarix* sp.; FAC), Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus*), bristly ox tongue (*Helminthotheca echiloides*; Facultative Upland (FACU) species), and scattered native

slender creeping spike-rush (*Eleocharis montevidensis*; Facultative wet (FACW) species). This area also hosted one small pepper tree (*Schinus molle*) and is predominantly surrounded by Russian thistle (Attachment B, Photos). The slender creeping spike-rush and the non-native tamarisk each comprised approximately 10 percent within this vegetation community. The non-native Italian ryegrass comprised approximately 50 percent of the area, and occurs in both wet and dry environments. Although collectively these species pass the dominance test for hydrophytic vegetation for this location, the Italian ryegrass is the dominant species and is typically found in non-native grassland communities. Based on the results of the delineation, no water features potentially under federal or state jurisdiction were identified within the Study Area. Based on the topography, lack of hydrologic connectivity, and existing conditions of the surrounding area, this small 0.13 acre area has been re-classified as non-native grassland.

In addition, during the habitat assessment of the Study Area, vegetation was updated for an approximately 0.5 acre area located at the corner of Carmel Valley Road and Camino Del Sur (refer to Attachment ED16 – Q5). The areas mapped as disturbed habitat within the proposed Carmel Valley Road Staging Yard (including the area changed from non-native grassland) were characterized by heavily disturbed and previously graded areas intersperse with developed and paved areas. Soils within the yard exhibit various levels of disturbance ranging from tire tracks, scattered rip-rap, man-made surface water control systems, and gravel/crushed rock base. Vegetation appeared previously mowed within disturbed areas as evidenced by lower vegetation height than that in the surrounding areas (typically less than 1 foot in height compared to surrounding areas up to 2-3 feet in height). Dominant plant species observed to occur within these areas included Russian thistle, ragweed (*Ambrosia psilostachya*), filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*), fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), wild oat, mustard (*Heirshfeldia* sp.), and red brome (*Bromus madritensis*). Sub-dominant species occurring occasional throughout the yard included artichoke thistle (*Cynara cardunculus*), crab grass (*Digitaria* sp.), cheeseweed (*Malva parviflora*), smooth cats ear (*Hypochaeris glabra*), and salt cedar (*Tamarix* sp.). Occasional native species such as coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*) and needle grass (*Stipa* sp.) occur, primarily within small fragmented patches immediately adjacent to the paved areas, possibly due to previous landscaping as they are intermixed with non-native wattle trees (*Acacia* sp.).

CONCLUSION

The survey effort resulted in the determination that the Study Area does not contain meadow/seep vegetation. The Study Area includes developed and disturbed areas and non-native grassland vegetation.

Depending upon the availability of property between the proposed Camino Del Sur and Carmel Valley Road Staging Yards at the time of construction, SDG&E may use all, or a portion of, the anticipated 2.6 acres assigned to the Camino Del Sur Staging Yard at the Carmel Valley Road site to either increase the usable size, or allow flexibility to work with the Property owner (PUSD) to use a different portion of the Property than the area included as SDG&E proposed Carmel Valley Road Staging Yard (as shown on Figure 1). Application of this 2.6 acres would allow use of the Property where non-native grassland is present.

If you have any questions regarding this internal memo, please feel free to contact me at (949) 261-5414 extension 7288 or at pmorrissey@chambersgroupinc.com.

Respectfully submitted,



Paul Morrissey
Director of Biology
Chambers Group, Inc.


Attachments

- Attachment A: Project Figure
- Attachment B: Site Photos

ATTACHMENT A – hk\ K #u'FIGURE



Legend


 Carmel Valley Road Staging Yard (Approx.)


 Property Boundary

Vegetation Community (Acres in Staging Yard)

 Disturbed (6.05 acre)

 Developed (1.18 acres)

 Non-Native Grassland (0.16 acres)

 Ornamental Landscaping


 Valley Needlegrass Grassland

Figure 1
Vegetation Communities

ATTACHMENT B – PHOTO PAGES



SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1. Soil investigation within the non-native grassland habitat comprised of Italian ryegrass, wild oat, Russian thistle, bristly oxtongue, and scattered native slender creeping spike-rush fringed by tamarisk.



Photo 2. Area immediately surrounding the non-native grassland (green vegetation area) within the proposed Staging Yard. Species include non-native Russian thistle, ragweed, filaree, fennel, wild oat, mustard, and red brome, artichoke thistle, crab grass, cheeseweed, and smooth cats ear.



Photo 3. Vegetation appeared previously mowed as evidenced by lower vegetation height than that in the surrounding areas, and disturbed by tire tracks and other human disturbances.



Photo 4. Example of the non-native grassland outside of the proposed Carmel Valley Road Staging Yard.