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Memorandum

To: Mr. Abdullah Arakozie
Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E)

From: Molly Sandomire
TRC Solutions

Subject: PG&E Fulton-Fitch Mountain Reconductoring Project
Biological Reconnaissance Survey for Backup Work Areas, Access Roads, and
Helicopter Touch-Down Areas

Date: June 23, 2016

CC: Nate Lishman, PG&E

Dear Mr. Arakozie:

This letter report documents additional biological reconnaissance surveys conducted for the backup work areas and access roads and helicopter touch down areas for the Fulton-Fitch Mountain Reconductoring Project. Note that this is an addendum report to supplement the biological resources technical report prepared for the project by Garcia and Associates (GANDA 2012). TRC biologists Molly Sandomire and Amber Amelingmeier conducted a reconnaissance-level field survey on March 15 and 16, 2016. The purpose of the field survey was to identify the existing land uses and vegetation communities within the survey area, map all aquatic resources, and determine the suitability of the survey area to support the special-status plant and wildlife species previously evaluated in the GANDA report.

Background

In 2012, GANDA completed a biological resources study (GANDA 2012) for the PG&E Fulton-Fitch 60 kV Reconductoring Project. Since that time, the project has undergone various additions and revisions. In 2015, TRC conducted an additional literature and database review and biological reconnaissance survey (TRC 2015). The current biological reconnaissance survey was completed for areas that PG&E may use for helicopter touch down or for backup work areas or project access.

Methods

The background research and literature review conducted by GANDA covered a wide buffer well beyond the project alignment and encompassed the area evaluated in this report. TRC biologists performed a search of the California Natural Diversity Database for occurrences within five miles of the project and established that no species had been added to the search area. Therefore, the same special-status species listed in the GANDA report were evaluated for this report. The field survey in the GANDA report did not include the possible helicopter touch down areas or backup work spaces or access roads. These areas were therefore surveyed by TRC. Field survey and mapping methods, along with the description of the survey area, were similar to those described in the GANDA report; however, focused special-status plant surveys were not conducted.

Results

The findings from the March 15 and 16, 2016 field survey are summarized in the following paragraphs. In general, this report uses report headings similar to those in the GANDA report for consistency purposes, and defers to the GANDA report for vegetation community descriptions and species accounts.

Vegetation Communities and Land Uses

The survey area covers approximately 326 acres. Survey areas consist mainly of existing access roads and areas contiguous with the survey area assessed in the GANDA report. As in the GANDA report, much of the survey area is vegetated with woodland, grassland, and forest communities that intergrade with each other. The approximate acreage for each vegetation community and land use type identified within the survey area is provided in Table 1. The attached maps show the location of each category within the survey area. As mentioned previously, descriptions for the categories can be found in the GANDA report, and habitat suitability for special status plants and wildlife in each category are identical to those identified in the GANDA report.

Table 1 — Vegetation Communities and Land Use Types

Vegetation/Land Use	Description	Approximate Acreage
Grassland	Grasslands are located throughout the survey area north of Shiloh Ranch Regional Park. Approximately 104 acres between poles 81 and 88 consists of mixed non-native grassland/valley needlegrass. Two areas of non-native grassland (approximately 3 and 10 acres) were mapped along Brooks Road. Approximately 5 acres of non-native grassland is contiguous with a construction work area on Chalk Hill Road. The rest of the mapped grasslands are small in size and contiguous with areas in the GANDA report.	138
Developed	Developed areas include paved or well-graveled access roads and shoulders, the Shiloh Ranch Regional Park parking lot, the Brooks Stone Quarry on Brooks Road, and a barn and yard area.	71
Coast live oak woodland and/or forest	Coast live oak woodlands were mapped along existing paved and unpaved access roads, and in areas through which overland travel may occur. These areas are contiguous with those mapped in the GANDA report.	44
Oregon oak woodland	Areas of Oregon oak woodland occur north of pole 55.	33
Agricultural land (including orchard)	Two large areas of agricultural land (approximately 7 and 19 acres) were mapped south of Shiloh Ranch Regional Park. The larger area is composed of land grazed by horses. The smaller is currently active cropland.	26
Vineyard (including fallow)	See the GANDA report.	11
Central coast live oak riparian forest	Central coast live oak riparian forest was mapped in areas adjacent to existing paved and unpaved access roads. See the GANDA report.	2

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Vegetation/Land Use	Description	Approximate Acreage
Mixed north slope cismontane woodland	Mapped in areas through which unpaved access roads pass. See the GANDA report.	1

Wetlands and Water Features

A number of aquatic features identified in the GANDA report survey area extend into this report’s survey area. All of the mapped features are seasonal wetlands and seasonal watercourses composed of intermittent or ephemeral drainages. A summary of the features mapped during the field survey is provided in Table 2 and the attached maps show their locations within the survey area. Descriptions of the feature types are provided in the GANDA report.

Table 2 — Water Features with the Survey Area

Water Feature Type	Number of Occurrences	Acreage
Seasonal Wetland	2	1.09
Seasonal Watercourse	21	6.21

Special-Status Species

As mentioned previously, the same special-status species listed in the GANDA report were evaluated for this report; however, focused special-status plant surveys were not conducted. Federal or state listed, or List 1 or List 2 plant species, could occur within grasslands or woodlands within the survey area.

Agricultural areas near the Fulton substation are within an area designated in the Santa Rosa Plain Conservation Strategy as having low potential for California tiger salamander to occur; however, the area surveyed consists of active farmland and is subject to regular ground disturbance, including tilling. Records for the species within 5 miles of the survey area are limited to a single occurrence within the Santa Rosa Plain approximately two miles from the survey area. The surveyed area is bordered on the southwest by Highway 101, which limits potential for this species to disperse into the area. Based on the lack of suitable habitat for the species, the closest known occurrence, and the barriers to movement into the survey area, it is unlikely that California tiger salamander would be found in the surveyed area.

The vegetation and structures within and adjacent to the survey area provide suitable habitat for pallid bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, western red bat, American badger, and a variety of nesting birds.

Potentially suitable terrestrial and seasonally wetted dispersal habitat for California red-legged frog is present within the survey area in areas contiguous with those identified in the GANDA report; however, assessments and surveys of potential breeding sites indicate there is a very low to low potential for this species to occur in the project area (Swaim 2016). The nearest known populations of California red-legged frog are approximately nine miles from the project, and barriers to movement from these potential source populations are present. Habitat quality at ponds within one mile of the project area ranged from low to very low. Furthermore, species which prey on frogs and tadpoles, including introduced fish and bullfrogs, are common at ponds within one mile of project areas. For these reasons, it is unlikely that California red legged frog would be found in the surveyed area.

An individual western pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*) was observed on an access road adjacent to seasonal watercourse SEW 9A. This species is currently under review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for listing as an endangered or threatened species under the Endangered Species Act.

Conclusions

The backup construction work areas are located in flat, open areas outside the boundaries of the mapped water features and will have no direct impact on water resources. The final locations of overland access routes and helicopter touch-down areas will be identified within surveyed areas at the time of construction and can be configured to avoid impacts on water resources. Implementation of the Avoidance and Minimization Measures (AMMs) prescribed in the GANDA report will help avoid impacts on water quality within on-site and off-site aquatic features.

Overall project activities have the potential to adversely impact plant and wildlife species. The plant and wildlife species that have the potential to occur in this portion of the project area are the same species identified in the GANDA report as having potential to occur along the project alignment. Therefore, implementation of the AMMs prescribed in the GANDA report will help avoid project-related impacts on special-status species in the surveyed areas.

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Down Areas

If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at (650) 967-2365 or by email at msandomire@trcsolutions.com.

Molly Sandomire
Senior Environmental Planner
TRC Solutions

References

California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2016. California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB), commercial version. Wildlife and Habitat Data Analysis Branch. Accessed April 2016. Sacramento, California.

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