Nest Buffer Reduction Request #12

To: Billie Blanchard, California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC)

Cc: Jeff Thomas (Panorama), Sheila Hoyer (Panorama)

Subject: Mitigation Measure (MM) Biology-7 Nest Buffer Reduction Request

From: Amy Trexler, Qualified Biologist

Date: 08/01/2017

In accordance with MM Biology-7 of the Sycamore-Peñasquitos 230 kV Transmission Line Project (Project) San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) is requesting a nesting bird buffer reduction to accommodate ongoing construction activities associated with construction of the Project. If granted, the duration of these buffer reductions would be effective until construction activities are complete within the reduced buffer or the nest becomes inactive, whichever occurs sooner.

One new common bird species nest has been identified on the perimeter of the Hanson Staging Yard. The nest was observed during regular environmental compliance inspection of the active yard. The attached table contains the following information for the recorded nest SDG&E is requesting a buffer reduction for:

- Species
- Location
- Pre-existing conditions present on site
- Description of the work to be conducted within the reduced buffer
- Size and expected duration of proposed buffer reduction
- Reason for the buffer reduction

Also, attached please find a map showing the location of the documented nest, the standard nest buffer limits identified in MM Biology-7, and the reduced buffer limits being recommended by the Qualified Biologist. Please note that no ground disturbing or vegetation clearing activities are occurring at this staging yard location, the biologist has established a buffer around the nest to prevent any direct disturbance to the nest.

As this nest was found in an active construction area, SDG&E has implemented the buffer reduction recommended by the Qualified Biologist. The nest will be monitored on a daily basis during construction activities. If the buffer request is denied, or the Qualified Biologist determines that the nesting bird(s) are not tolerant of ongoing project activities, the specified buffer(s) listed in MM Bio-7 will be implemented.

If you have any questions regarding the details of this request, please contact the Qualified Biologist making the buffer reduction request at the contact information below:

Amy Trexler
C: 315-263-7005
atrexler@balkbiological.com
Balk Biological, Inc.
322 Encinitas Blvd. #290
Encinitas, CA 92024

Sycamore to Peñasquitos 230 kV Transmission Line Project Nesting Bird Buffer Reduction Request
Date: 8/01/2017

Nest Information									Buffer Reduction Request						
Nest ID[1]	**Species[2]**	**Listing Status[3]**	**Nest Stage[4]**	**Observation Notes[5]**	**Latitude (decimal degrees)**	**Longitude (decimal degrees)**	**Estimated Fledge Date**	**Nesting Bird Behavior**	**Standard Buffer**	**Reduced Buffer Necessary for Construction**	**Pre-Existing Conditions Onsite**	**Reason for Buffer Reduction/Biologist Recommendation**	**Duration of Buffer Reduction**	**Work Activity Description**	**Monitoring Approach**
08012017_ACT_01	Lesser goldfinch (LEGO)	Common	Incubating	Observed female sitting on the nest incubating. Male flew to the nest twice to feed the female. No evidence of disruption of nesting activity from construction was observed.	32.891565	-117.158514	Unknown Standard incubation is 12-13 days; standard nestling period is 12-14 days	Appears tolerant of human activity.	250 feet	10 feet	Nest is located on a tree with branches overhanging the perimeter fence at the Hanson Staging Yard.	Nest is located near busy active mine and staging yard. Birds have been exposed to high levels of noise and human activity. Recommendation is to approve buffer with daily monitoring for duration of construction or until nest becomes inactive.	For entire duration of proposed work during nesting season (8/1/2017- 8/31/17), or until nest is no longer active	Construction activities include active staging of equipment and materials. Buffer reduction is being requested to allow continued staging within an active yard.	Nests will be monitored during daytime construction when work activity and noise levels are high in order to best determine the birds' noise tolerance. Monitoring will occur from a distance using binoculars or a spotting scope whenever possible to minimize nest disturbance. If nest cannot be adequately monitored from a distance, the CPUC qualified biologists (qualified biologist) will approach the nest to gather nest data. When approaching a nest, the qualified biologist will first determine whether there are any potential nest predators nearby, such as raptors, corvids, jays, and brown-headed cowbirds. If no predators are observed, the qualified biologist will approach the nest and collect nest data. The qualified biologist will observe the nest for a sufficient amount of time based on their professional judgment (usually between 30-60 minutes if an adult is not immediately observed on the nest) to determine nest status and will record the nest status (e.g., nest building, incubating, nestlings, etc.), and observe avian behavior (carrying food, agitation or distress, etc.). If the qualified biologist is unable to make a determination on nest status and has not detected the nest pair in the vicinity of the nest, the qualified biologist will continue to monitor the nest daily for a period of 5 days. If the qualified biologist is not able to determine nest status after 5 days due to lack of activity at the nest (including the observation of fledgling groups in the vicinity of the nest), the biologist will determine the nest is no longer active. The qualified biologist will gather appropriate nest data to allow proper documentation of nest stage and recommended buffer effectiveness. The qualified biologist will make assessments based on their experience, professional judgment and the following considerations: incubation period and nestling period (i.e., fledge date) of species, geographic location, existing ambient conditions (human activity such as traffic, jet noise, rail noise, etc.), type and extent of construction within nest buffer, visibility of construction to nest, and other environmental factors such as the species' site-specific level of habituation to disturbance. The nest buffers will be increased or reinstated if there are signs of significant disturbance and risk of project-induced nest abandonment consistent with MM Biology-7.

Legend

Bird Nests

Tracking

Active

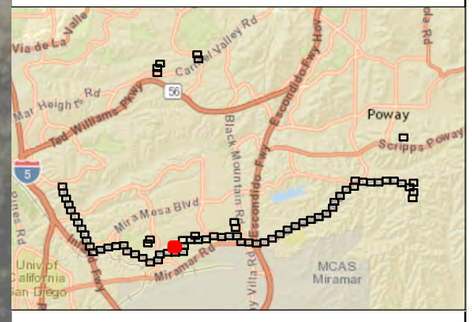
Reduced Bird Nest Buffers

Proposed Reduced Buffer

Bird Nest Buffers

250 ft

Staging Yard



75 37.5 0 75 Feet

1:900 1 inch = 75 feet

Sycamore to Peñasquitos 230kV Transmission Line Project
Nesting Bird Survey
Buffer Reduction Request

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