



## **Nest Buffer Reduction Request**

**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: 05/12/2017**

In accordance with MM Biology-7 of the Sycamore-Penasquitos 230 kV Transmission Line Project (Project) San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) is requesting a nesting bird buffer reduction to accommodate scheduled potholing, saw cutting, excavation, and trenching activities associated with construction of the underground alignment of the project. If granted, the duration of this buffer reduction would be effective from 5/12/2017 until ground disturbing activities are complete within the reduced buffer or the nest becomes inactive, whichever occurs sooner.

Two Red-tailed hawk nests were previously identified in the Nest Survey Report dated March 30, 2017 and a nest buffer reduction request was approved on March 31, 2017. A revised buffer reduction request is being submitted for one Red-tailed hawk nest (Nest ID: 03212017\_BSL\_03) to encompass all ground disturbing activities and include updated recommendations made by the Qualified Biologist. No changes or modifications to the approved nest buffer reduction request for the second Red-tailed hawk nest (Nest ID: 03292017\_BLM\_01) are required or recommended.

The attached table contains the following information for each 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, please find attached 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.

If SDG&E does not receive a response to the request for a buffer reduction within 1 business day, SDG&E will proceed with the buffer reduction recommended by the Qualified Biologist until the CPUC's independent biologist can review and approve or deny the buffer reduction request. If SDG&E proceeds with a reduced buffer, nests will be monitored on a daily basis during construction activities. If the buffer request is denied, or the Qualified Biologist determines that the nesting birds(s) are not tolerant of project activity, 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:

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

Date: 05/12/2017

Nest Information									Buffer Reduction Request						
Nest ID <sup>1</sup>	Species <sup>2</sup>	Listing Status <sup>3</sup>	Nest Stage <sup>4</sup>	Observation Notes <sup>5</sup>	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
03212017_BSL_03	Red-tailed hawk (RTHA)	Common	Nestlings	3/21 and 3/29 -Adult observed on nest in western sycamore slightly above street level. Mate foraging nearby. 5/12- Observed two chicks in nest	32.890656	-117.194337	Unknown Standard incubation is 28-35 days; standard nestling period is 42-46 days	Incubating nest. Appear tolerant of human activity.	500 feet	150 feet	Nest is located within open space area south of Carroll Canyon Road. Nest is near busy, active roadways and commercial buildings.	Nest is located near busy, active roadway. Birds have been exposed to high levels of noise and human activity. Recommendation is to approve buffer with daily monitoring for duration of construction.	For entire duration of proposed work (5/12/17 - 8/31/17), or until nest is no longer active	Nighttime construction activities include saw cutting, pot-holing and excavation and trenching for installation of new underground 230kV line and vaults.  Buffer reduction is being requested to allow construction to remain on schedule for completion date per CPUC permit.	Nest will be monitored in the morning within 4 hours of sunrise immediately following construction 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.
03292017_BLM_01	Red-tailed hawk (RTHA)	Common	Nestlings	3/29- Adult observed on nest in western sycamore. 4/13- Male observed bringing food to nest, 3 chicks visible with natal down. 5/12- Observed 3 fledglings sitting in the tree near the nest. Still reliant on adults for food, have not left the area yet.3/29 - Adult observed on nest in western sycamore.	32.88905	-117.19857	Unknown Standard incubation is 28-35 days; standard nestling period is 42-46 days	Incubating nest. Appear tolerant of human activity.	500 feet	330 feet	Nest is located south of Carroll Canyon road and approximately 200 feet north of railroad track.	Noise effects from construction would be negligible as nest is over 200 feet from construction work areas. Birds have been exposed to high levels of noise due to proximity to railway. Buffer was approved with daily monitoring for duration of construction.	For entire duration of proposed work (4/2/17 - 8/31/17), or until nest is no longer active	Nighttime construction activities include saw cutting, pot-holing and excavation and trenching for installation of new underground 230kV line and vaults.  Buffer reduction is being requested to allow construction to remain on schedule for completion date per CPUC permit.	





**Legend**


**Bird Nests**


**Tracking**

 Active


**Bird Nest Buffers**


 500 ft

 Proposed Reduced Buffer


 Entrance Point


 Staging Yard

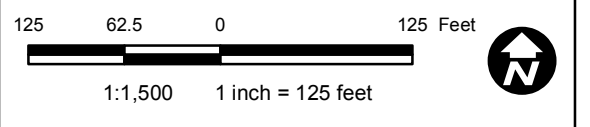
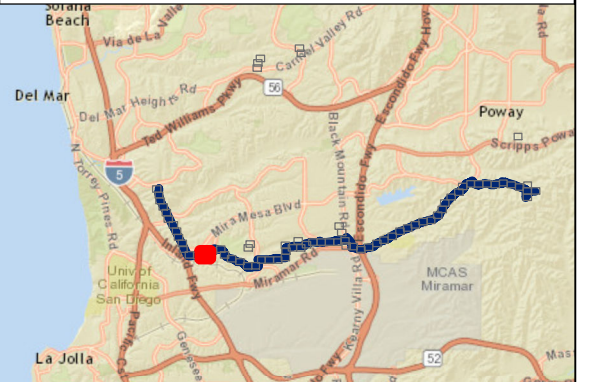
 Temporary Work Space

 Underground Vault

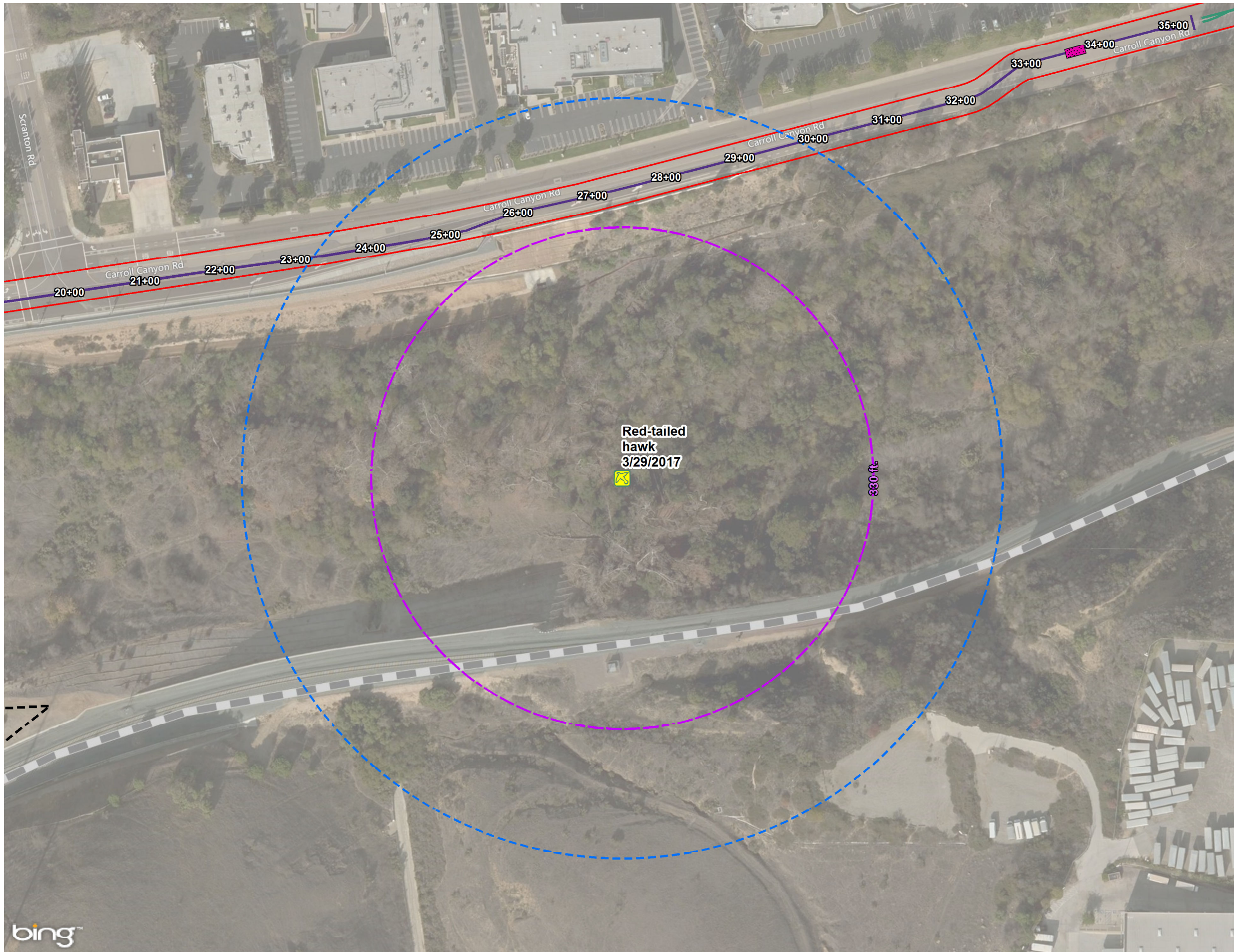
**Segment B**

 Segment 5, Section 2

 Segment 5, Section 3



**Sycamore to Peñasquitos  
230kV Transmission Line Project  
Nesting Birds Survey Report**



**Legend**

**Bird Nests**

**Tracking**


 Active

**Bird Nest Buffers**

 500 ft


 Approved Reduced Buffer


 Access Roads Temporary

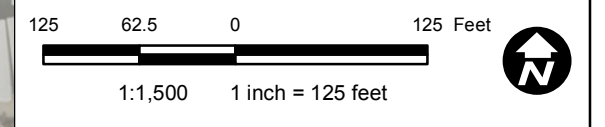
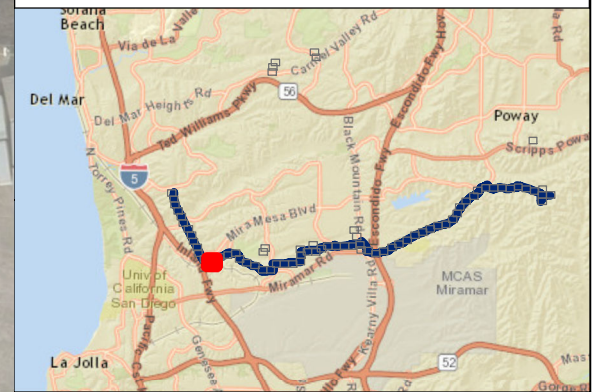
 Work Space Underground

 Vault

**Segment B**

 Segment 5, Section 2

 Segment 5, Section 3



**Sycamore to Peñasquitos  
230kV Transmission Line Project  
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