

June 7, 2017

Edith Moreno
San Diego Gas & Electric
8315 Century Park Court
San Diego, CA 92123

Re: *May 16, 2017 Western Burrowing Owl (Athene cunicularia hypugaea) Pre-construction/Take Avoidance Surveys Report; Sycamore-Peñasquitos 230-Kilovolt Transmission Line Project, San Diego, California*

Dear Ms. Moreno,

This report summarizes the results of the May 16, 2017 western burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*; WBO) pre-construction/take avoidance survey for the Sycamore-Peñasquitos 230-kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line Project (Project) for San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E). The surveys were conducted in accordance with the Burrowing Owl Monitoring and Mitigation Plan - Sycamore-Peñasquitos 230 Kilovolt Transmission Line Project (Chambers Group 2016a) Mitigation Measure (MM) Biology-8: Burrowing Owl Monitoring and Mitigation Plan and in compliance with the guiding principles in the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation* (CDFW 2012).

Project Description

The Project consists of the construction and operation of a 230-kV transmission line between the existing Sycamore Canyon and Peñasquitos substations. The 14-mile long Project alignment has been divided into three segments and spans developed and open space areas (Figure 1). The segments are divided into the following components:

- Segment A - Construction of approximately 0.65 mile of new overhead 230 kV transmission line and approximately 0.74 mile of relocated existing overhead 138kV power line on one new tubular steel pole (mono-pole structure) and one new steel H-frame structure that will replace existing wood structures, all within existing SDG&E Right-of-Way (ROW). Construction of two new cable poles at the transition points from overhead to underground, outside of the Sycamore Canyon Substation. Construction of approximately 0.2 mile of new underground 230-kV transmission line and approximately 0.15 mile of relocated underground 138-kV power line into the existing Sycamore Canyon Substation.
 - Segment B - Construction of approximately 11.55 miles of 230 kV underground transmission line in existing roads and bridges and two new cable poles at the transition point from overhead to underground.
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- Segment C – Installation of approximately 2.08 miles of new 230 kV transmission line and all-dielectric self-supporting (ADSS) communication cable on existing 230 kV tubular steel poles and one new interset structure within existing SDG&E ROW from approximately Carroll Canyon Road to the Peñasquitos Substation.
- Minor modifications of the existing Sycamore Canyon and Peñasquitos Substations to allow for connection of the new 230 kV transmission line.

Project Location

The Project is located between the existing Peñasquitos and Sycamore Canyon substations in San Diego, CA (United States Geological Survey [USGS] Del Mar and Poway 7.5-minute quadrangles). The Project originates from the Peñasquitos substation, south of Carmel Mountain Road, and extends southeast to Interstate-805 and Carroll Canyon Road. The alignment follows Carroll Canyon Road until extending slightly north of Miramar Road through commercial development before it reaches Interstate-15. At Interstate-15, the alignment follows Pomerado Road to Stonebridge Parkways and terminates at the Sycamore Canyon substation on Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar.

Burrowing Owl Monitoring and Mitigation Plan

These take avoidance surveys were conducted as part of the implementation of the Burrowing Owl Monitoring and Mitigation Plan (Plan) for the Project. The Plan was prepared to comply with Mitigation Measure (MM) Biology-8: Burrowing Owl Monitoring and Mitigation Plan, as described in the Project's Final Environmental Impact Report (CPUC 2016) Mitigation, Monitoring, Compliance, and Reporting Program (MMCRP). The Plan requires that preconstruction take avoidance surveys of WBO suitable habitat be conducted, consistent with CDFW's *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation* (CDFW 2012), in advance of ground disturbance or vegetation trimming/removal activities.

Survey Methodology

Survey methods were conducted for the Project in accordance with the CDFW's *Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation* (CDFW 2012). WBO surveys were conducted to determine the presence or absence, abundance, and breeding status of the species within suitable habitat within the Project.

CDFW (2012) protocol requires that the Project footprint and a 500-foot buffer surrounding the project footprint be surveyed for the presence/absence of WBO.

An initial habitat assessment of the Project footprint and buffer was conducted, and suitable WBO habitat was identified and surveyed, during the pre-activity survey (Chambers Group 2016d) and focused breeding season WBO surveys (Chambers Group 2016c) for the Project (Figure 2). Take avoidance surveys were conducted for the Driving Range Staging Yard and the Interstate-805/Carroll Canyon Road area on December 23, 2016 and February 28, 2017 respectively with negative results. This take avoidance survey

covers project components along the underground alignment east of Interstate 15. The Project footprint (east of Interstate-15) and a 500-foot buffer are collectively referred to as the biological survey area (BSA) herein. The BSA was surveyed to assess suitable burrowing owl habitat that may be indirectly affected by project activities. No direct impacts to suitable burrowing owl habitat are anticipated, as work is occurring in the paved right-of-way.

The Project occurs within a variety of vegetation communities, including coastal sage scrub, chaparral, grassland, landscape/ornamental, disturbed habitats, development, and bare ground. Suitable WBO habitat identified within the Project consists of grassland, disturbed, landscaped, and bare ground areas along flat- to- gentle slopes.

Visits and Timing

Burrowing owls are more detectable during the breeding season with detection probabilities being highest during the nestling stage (Conway et al. 2008). In California, the WBO breeding season extends generally from February 1 to August 31 (Haug et al. 1993) with some variances by geographic location and climatic conditions.

Per CDFW 2012 requirements, where suitable WBO habitat exists, initial take avoidance surveys should be conducted no less than 14 days prior to ground disturbance activities. As mentioned above, previous take avoidance surveys were conducted for the Driving Range Staging Yard and the Interstate-805/Carroll Canyon Road area on December 23, 2016 and February 28, 2017 respectively with negative results. Take avoidance surveys in this report only include the WBO suitable habitat area east of Interstate-15 and Pomerado Road, in anticipation of construction starting in July. To ensure the greatest detection probability, the take avoidance survey was conducted at an expected time of high burrowing owl activity (dawn to early morning). The take avoidance survey date, observers, weather data, and times are presented in Table 1.

Survey Method

The BSA north of Pomerado Road is a gated private horse farm and the area south of Pomerado Road is a fenced off military training area. Portions of both survey areas were outside of the project work area and were fenced and could not be accessed on foot; therefore, 20 meter (m) transects within a portion of the suitable habitat were not able to be walked. However, surveys were conducted by biologists walking the perimeter areas of the BSA, scanning continuously using binoculars to detect visual signs of burrowing owls. Due to the open nature and high visibility of the BSA that could not be walked, this survey method provided adequate coverage to determine the presence or absence of burrowing owl.

Table 1
Survey Dates, Personnel, and Weather Conditions

| Survey Number | Date | Survey Personnel | Time | Weather Conditions |
|----------------------|-------------|----------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------|
| 3 | 5/16/2016 | Amy Trexler and Ron Walker | 0645-0800 | Overcast, 56°F, with slight mist |

Burrowing Owl Take Avoidance Survey Results

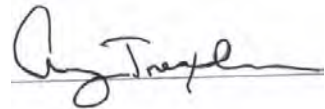
No burrowing owls, suitable burrows, or signs of burrowing owl were detected during the take avoidance survey conducted on May 16, 2017. Per the Burrowing Owl Monitoring and Mitigation Plan (2016), in areas where WBO are not found, construction may proceed without further mitigation.

Biological Recommendations

As required by the Burrowing Owl Monitoring and Mitigation Plan and MM-Biology-7, pre-construction nesting bird surveys will be performed within 5 days of construction activities and will verify that conditions related to WBO, as outlined during the take avoidance survey, remain the same. In addition, ground disturbing activities will be monitored by the Lead Environmental Inspector.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this letter report, please contact me at 315-263-7005.

Sincerely,



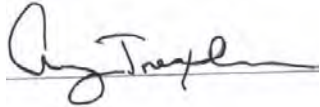
Balk Biological, Inc.
322 Encinitas Blvd. #290
Encinitas, CA 92024
atrexler@balkbiological.com

Attachments:

- Figure 1 – Project Component and Vicinity Map
 - Figure 2 – Suitable WBO Habitat
 - Attachment A – Photographic Document
 - Attachment B – Wildlife Species Detected
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Certification

Qualified biologists who conducted burrowing owl surveys within the burrowing owl BSA for the proposed project certify that the information in this survey report fully and accurately represents the work performed. Signatures of biologists who conducted protocol surveys are included below. The results of focused surveys for listed species are typically considered valid for 1 year by the resource agencies.



Amy Trexler
Biologist



Ron Walker
Environmental Inspector/Biologist

Literature Cited

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)

2012 Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (Dept. of Fish and Game, March 7, 2012). Available at http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/nongame/survey_monitor.html.

California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC)

2016 Sycamore-Peñasquitos 230-kV Transmission Line Project Final Environmental Impact Report; Addendum,
[http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/Environment/info/panoramaenv/Sycamore_Penasquitos/FEIR.html](http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/Environment/info/panoramaenv/Sycamore_Penasquitos_FEIR.html). May.

Chambers Group, Inc. (Chambers Group)

2016a Burrowing Owl Monitoring and Mitigation Plan - Sycamore-Peñasquitos 230 Kilovolt Transmission Line Project.

2016b Results of the 2015/2016 Wintering and Breeding Season Focused Surveys for Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*) for the Carmel Valley Staging Yard Portion of the Proposed 230kv Artesian Substation Expansion Project, San Diego County, California.

2016c Results of the 2016 Focused Surveys for Burrowing Owl (*Athene Cunicularia*) For Alternative 5 of the Sycamore to Peñasquitos 230-Kilovolt Transmission Line Project, San Diego County, California. September 28.

2016d Draft Pre-Activity Survey Report (PSR) for the Sycamore to Peñasquitos Transmission Line Project. December 2016.

Conway, C. J., V. Garcia, M. D., and K. Hughes (Conway et al.).

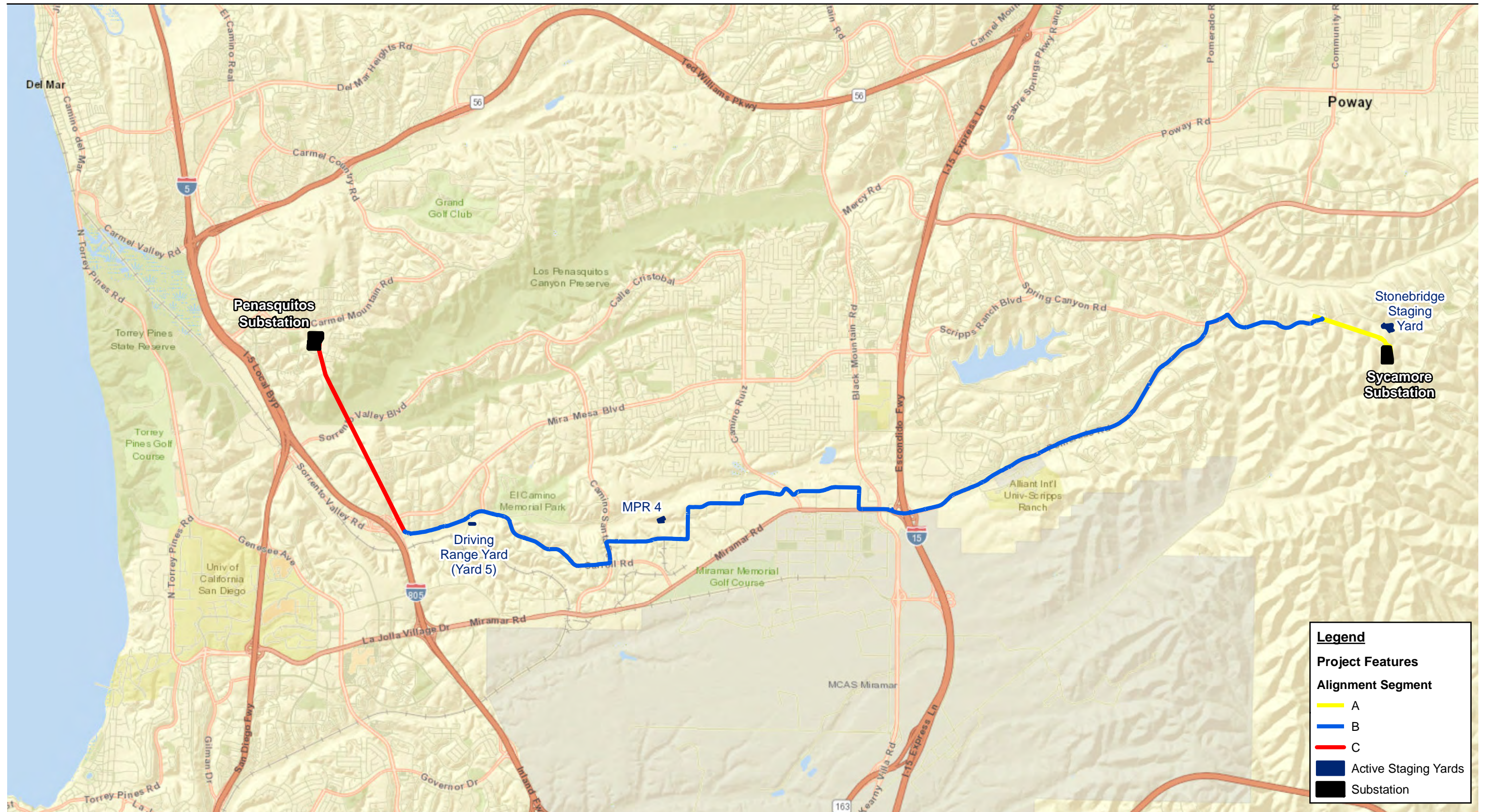
2008. Factors affecting detection of burrowing owl nests during standardized surveys. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 72:688-696.

Haug, E.A., B.A. Millsap, and M.S. Martell (Haug et al.).

1993. Burrowing owl (*Speotyto cunicularia*). *Birds of North America*, No.61. A. Poole and F. Gill [EDS.]. Philadelphia, The Academy of Natural Sciences; Washington, D.C. The American Ornithologists' Union.

FIGURE 1

Project Component and Vicinity Map



Source: SDGE, ESRI.

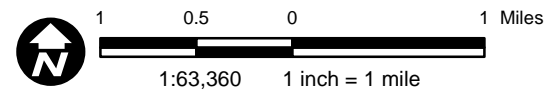
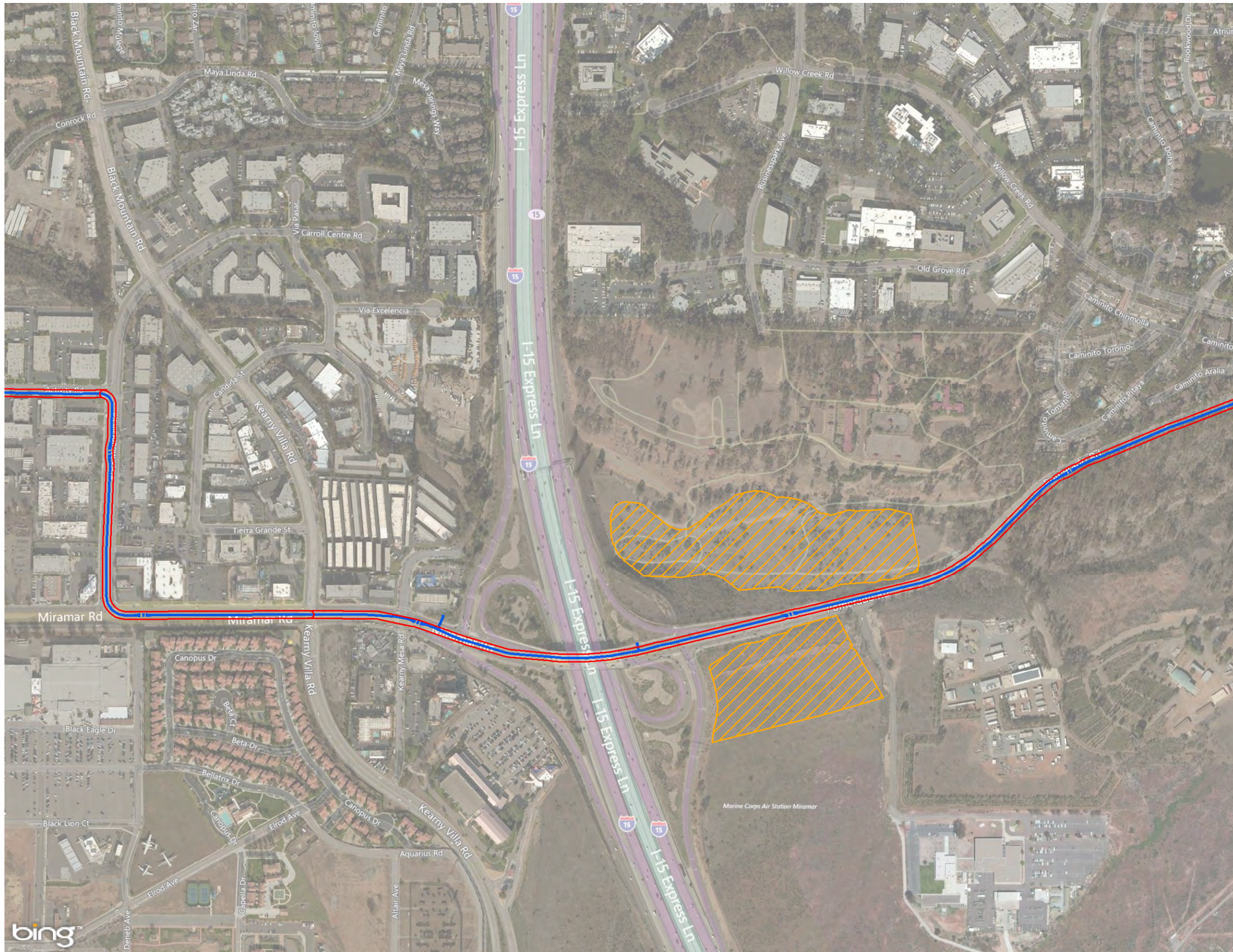


Figure 1
Project Alignment Overview




SXPQ - Sycamore to Peñasquitos 230kV Transmission Line Project

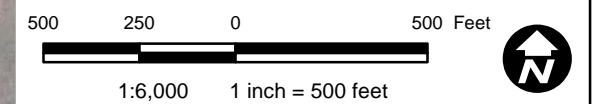
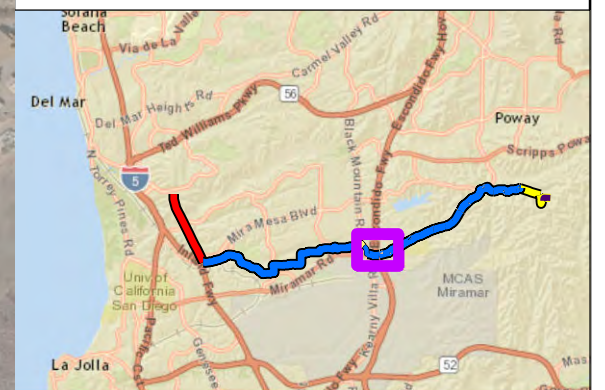
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FIGURE 2
Suitable WBO Habitat



Legend

-  BUOW Suitable Habitat
-  Underground Alignment
-  Temporary Work Space



**SXPQ - Sycamore to Peñasquitos
230kV Transmission Line Project**
BUOW Suitable Habitat Survey Area Map

ATTACHMENT A
Photographic Document



Figure 1. North-facing view of the BUOW survey area east of Interstate-15 and north of Pomerado Road.



Figure 2. North-facing view of the BUOW survey area east of Interstate-15 and north of Pomerado Road.



Figure 3. South-facing view of survey area east of Interstate-15 and south of Pomerado Road.



Figure 4. West-facing view of survey area east of Interstate-15 and south of Pomerado Road.

ATTACHMENT B
Wildlife Species Detected

ACCIPITRIDAE –Hawks, Kites, and Eagles Family

Buteo jamaicensis - red-tailed hawk

COLUMBIDAE –Pigeon and Dove Family

Zenaida macroura -mourning dove

CORVIDAE –Crows, Jays, and Magpies Family

Corvus corax – common raven

EMBERIZIDAE – Emberizid Finch Family

Melospiza melodia – song sparrow

Melospiza crissalis – California towhee

Zonotrichia leucophrys – white-crowned sparrow

FALCONIDAE – Falcon Family

Falco sparverius – American kestrel

FRINGILLIDAE – Finch Family

Carpodacus mexicanus – house finch

STURNIDAE – Starling Family

Sturnus vulgaris – European starling

SYLVIIDAE– Babblers Family

Chamaea fasciata - wren

TROCHILIDAE—Hummingbird Family

Calypte anna—Anna’s hummingbird
