
MEMORANDUM

TO: Robert Fletcher, San Diego Gas & Electric

FROM: Melissa Busby, Busby Biological Services, Inc.

DATE: December 7, 2015

RE: Results of Focused Light-Footed Ridgway's Rail (*Rallus obsoletus levipes*) Surveys Performed for the Proposed Sycamore to Peñasquitos 230 Kilovolt Transmission Line Project

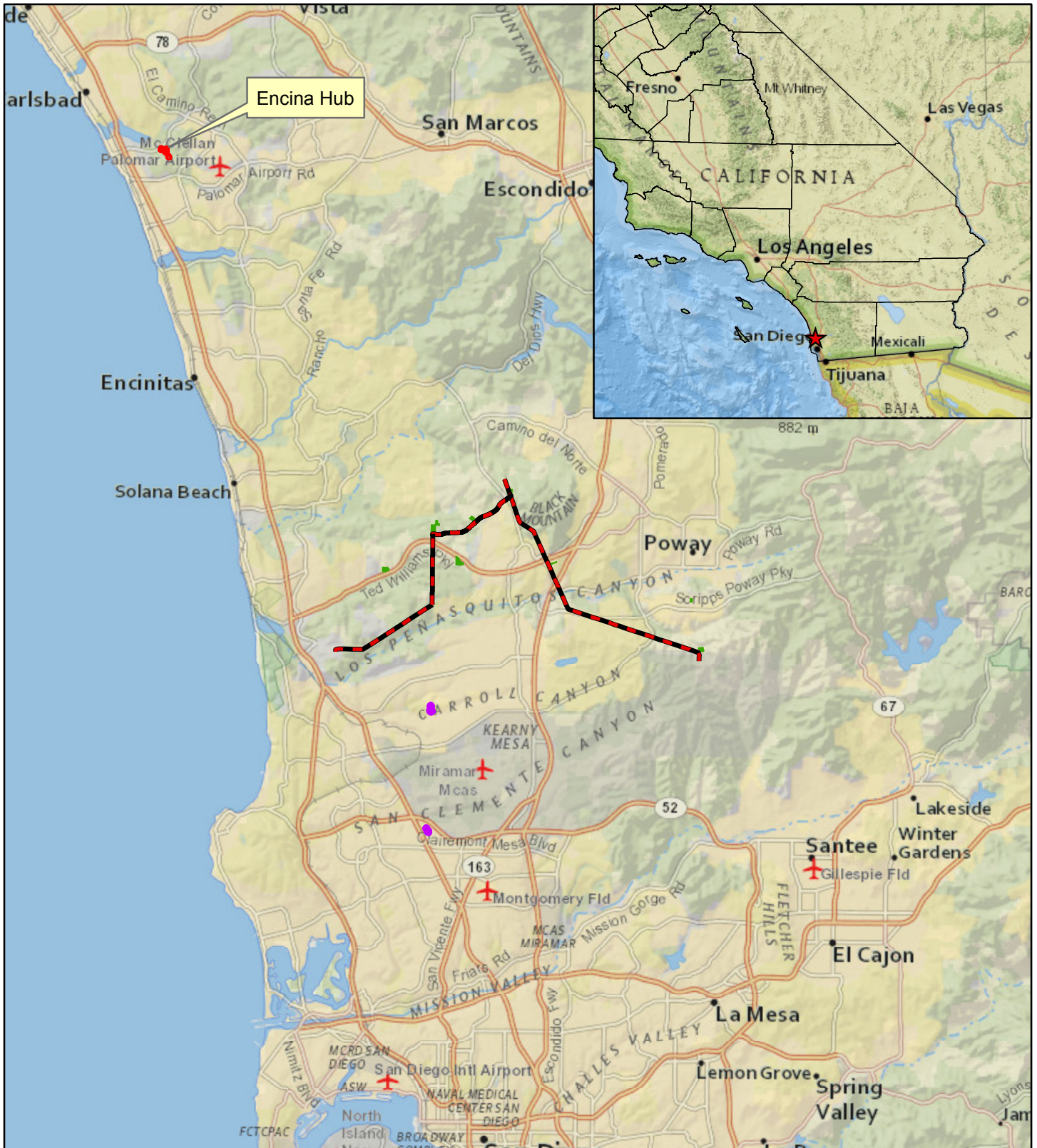
Busby Biological Services, Inc. (BBS) contracted with Konecny Biological Services (KBS) to conduct focused light-footed Ridgway's rail (*Rallus obsoletus levipes*) surveys for the proposed San Diego Gas & Electric Company (SDG&E) Sycamore to Peñasquitos 230 Kilovolt Transmission Line Project (Proposed Project; Attachment 1: Figure 1). The only suitable light-footed Ridgway's rail habitat is located adjacent to the Encina Hub portion of the Proposed Project (Attachment 1: Figures 1 through 4).

KBS' survey summary report is included as Attachment 2 to this memorandum. The report provides a brief summary of the Proposed Project, a description of the light-footed Ridgway's rail survey area, methods used for these surveys, the results of the surveys, and a brief discussion of the historical location data for the species.

KBS did not detect any light-footed Ridgway's rails during the 2015 focused surveys conducted for the Proposed Project. In addition, KBS indicates that no light-footed Ridgway's rails have been documented south of Cannon Road based on historical data for the region combined with personal knowledge of the historical occurrence of this species.

Please see the attached figures and survey summary report for the survey details.

ATTACHMENT 1
FIGURES







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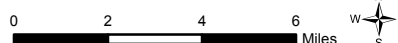
Sycamore to Peñasquitos 230 kV Transmission Line Project

Project Location Map

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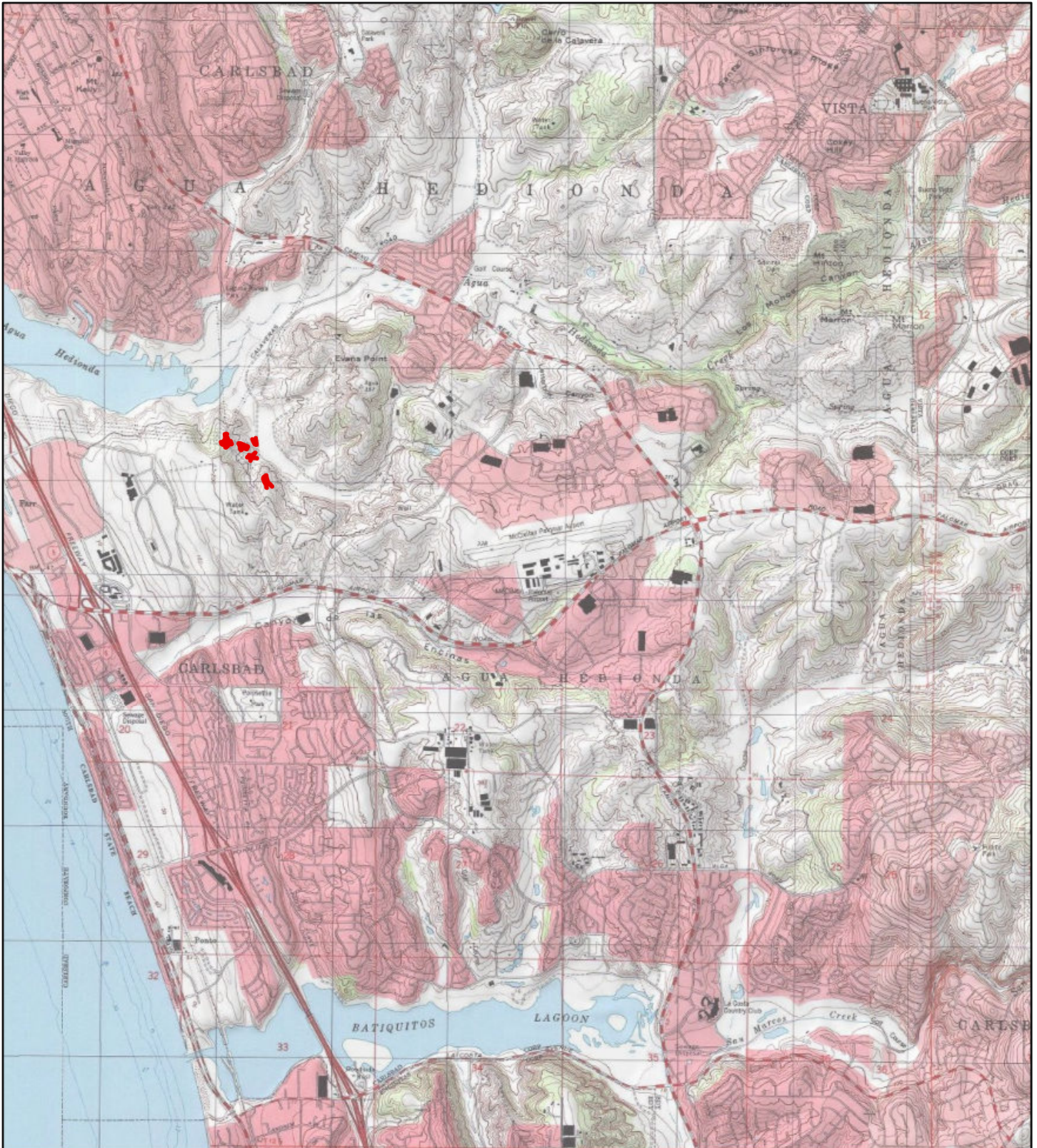
Figure 1

-  Proposed Project Route
-  Staging Yards
-  Encina Hub
-  Mira Mesa Hub



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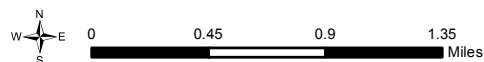
Sycamore to Peñasquitos 230 kV Transmission Line Project

Encina Hub Location Map

Figure 2

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 Project Area



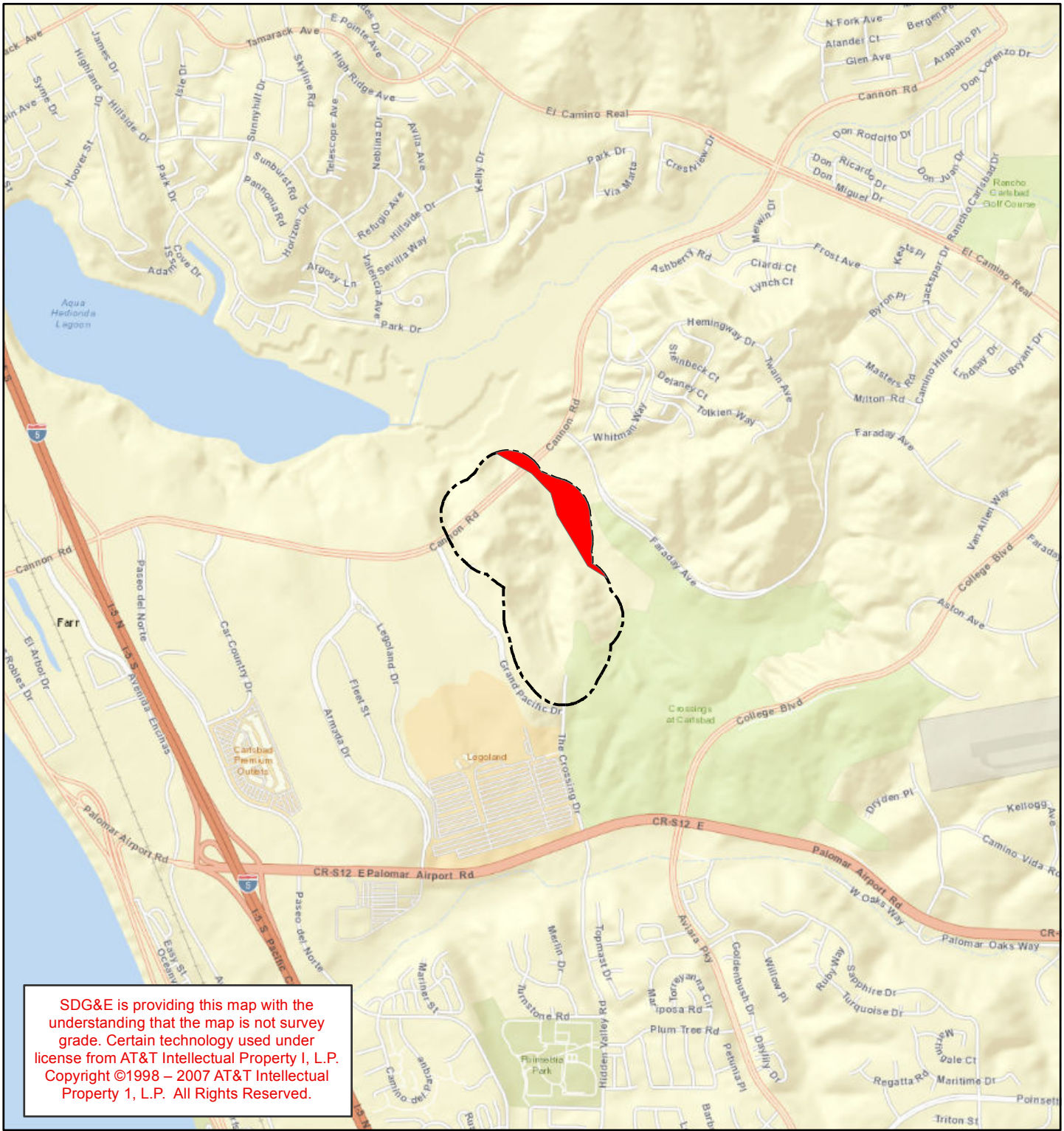
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4/15/2015



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Sycamore to Peñasquitos 230 kV Transmission Line Project

Ridgeway's Rail Suitable Habitat

Figure 3



- Ridgeway Rail Habitat
- Biological Survey Area



Date: 4/15/2015



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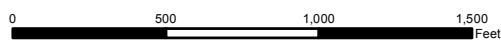
Sycamore to Peñasquitos 230 kV Transmission Line Project

Ridgeway's Rail Survey Area

Figure 4



-  Ridgeway Rail Habitat
-  Biological Survey Area



Date: 4/15/2015



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ATTACHMENT 2
KONECNY BIOLOGICAL SERVICES
SURVEY SUMMARY REPORT

Konecny Biological Services

Biological Consulting, Research, Conservation

July 11, 2015

Busby Biological Services, Inc.
4629 Cass Street, # 192
San Diego, California, 92109

Attn: Ms. Melissa Busby

Re: Results of a Focused Survey for the Light-footed Ridgeway's Rail for the Encina Hub Portion of the Proposed San Diego Gas & Electric Sycamore to Penasquitos 230 Kilovolt Transmission Line Project, City of Carlsbad, San Diego County, California, 2015.

Dear Ms. Busby:

This letter report presents the results of a focused survey for the light-footed Ridgeway's rail (*Rallus obsoletus levipes*; LFRR) (formerly light-footed clapper rail, *Rallus longirostris levipes*), for the Encina Hub portion of the proposed San Diego Gas and Electric (SDG&E) Sycamore to Penasquitos 230 Kilovolt Transmission Line Project (Proposed Project) located in the City of Carlsbad, north-coastal San Diego County, California (Figure 1). The LFRR is listed as an endangered species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). This coastal southern California subspecies is one of three subspecies of federally endangered *R. obsoletus*, which was formerly *R. longirostris* but recently has been taxonomically reclassified by the American Ornithologist Union because of genetic studies (Chesser *et al* 2014).

Surveys for the LFRR were conducted by wildlife biologist John Konecny. The surveys were conducted in accordance with the recommendations provided to the USFWS by the Clapper Rail Study Team (2009). This activity is authorized by John Konecny's USFWS Section 10(a)(1)(A) permit number TE-837308-6, and a CDFW Memorandum of Understanding. No LFRRs were detected in the survey area in 2015.

INTRODUCTION

The LFRR is a slender, tawny-breasted bird with grayish edges on brown centered back feathers, olive wing coverts, vertical white bars on the flanks, a white stripe over the eye, and a partially orange bill. LFRR occurred historically along the coast of southern California from Carpinteria Marsh in Santa Barbara County south to San Quintín, Baja California, Mexico (Grinnell and Miller 1944, USFWS 1994).

The LFRR is a permanent resident of coastal salt marsh traversed by tidal sloughs, usually characterized by cordgrass (*Spartina foliosa*) and pickleweed (*Salicornia* spp.) (Grinnell and Miller 1944, USFWS 1994). LFRRs have also nested in freshwater marsh characterized by cattails (*Typha* sp.) and bulrush (*Scirpus* sp.) at Buena Vista, Agua Hedionda, Batiquitos, San Elijo, and San Dieguito Lagoons in San Diego County (Zemba *et al* 2014); and in spiny rush (*Juncus acutus*) at Naval Air Station (NAS) Point Mugu.

LFRRs forage primarily on crustaceans when present. They will also feed on mollusks, small fish, aquatic insects, grasshoppers, small vertebrates, and in some cases, seeds (Eddleman and Conway 1998). LFRRs forage within emergent vegetation or along the ecotone between mudflats and marsh (Zemba and Fancher 1988), and in the central drains of tidal creeks at low tide. Surface gleaning and shallow probing compose approximately 90 percent of foraging time, while they very irregularly probe deep into the substrate (Zemba and Fancher 1988).

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Populations of LFRRs have undergone decline in the United States due to the subspecies's limited distribution and destruction and degradation of coastal salt marsh habitat. The statewide LFRR population in 2014 was reported to be 528 pairs in 21 marshes (Zembal *et al* 2014), and represents the highest count since the statewide census began in 1980. The 2014 total is three pairs greater than the 2013 count of 525 pairs, the previous high. Fifty-six percent of these pairs were found in two coastal salt marsh complexes at Upper Newport Bay and the Tijuana Marsh National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Six other marshes; NAS Point Mugu, Batiquitos Lagoon, San Elijo Lagoon, Buena Vista Lagoon, Seal Beach NWR, and Kendall-Frost Marsh in Mission Bay, had between 16 and 49 pairs, representing an additional 34 percent of the state total. The remaining 13 marshes had between one and nine pairs.

Zembal and Massey (1986) have shown that paired LFRR can be detected “clapping” throughout the year, but have a bimodal peak in vocalizing during mid-February to mid-April and again in September through October. The initial peak in “clapping” vocalizing corresponds to the onset of breeding season and the second peak is thought to function in pair formation in the fall (Zembal and Massey 1986). In contrast to “clapping”, single male and female “kekking” is highly seasonal, almost exclusively occurring between February and June.

PROJECT LOCATION

The Encina Hub portion of the Proposed Project is located just southeast of Agua Hedionda Lagoon and southwest of Faraday Road in an unnumbered Section of the U.S. Geological Survey San Luis Rey 7.5-minute quadrangle. The Proposed Project LFRR survey area is predominantly south of Cannon Road and north of the Encina Hub (Figure 1). A small portion of the survey area lies just north of Cannon Road.

PROJECT SITE DESCRIPTION

The Encina Hub portion of the Proposed Project site is a mosaic of Diegan coastal sage scrub, southern willow scrub with several small pockets of freshwater marsh imbedded, and disturbed habitat. The southern willow scrub is characterized by arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*), black willow (*S. gooddingii*), sandbar willow (*S. hindsiana*), and mule fat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), with scattered cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), and a large component of coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*). The small pockets of freshwater marsh are predominantly cattails, bulrush, and some tall grasses mixed in. Elevation of the Encina Hub portion of the Proposed Project site is approximately thirteen to forty feet (four to twelve meters) above mean sea level.

METHODS

Six focused LFRR survey events were conducted at least five days apart in all potentially suitable freshwater marsh habitat within the Encina Hub survey area between 30 April and 26 May 2015. The survey area is comprised of all LFRR suitable habitat that occurs within a 500 foot buffer of the Encina Hub portion of the Proposed Project footprint. The LFRR surveys were conducted mostly in accordance with the recommendations provided to the USFWS by the Clapper Rail Study Team (2009), but with a compressed schedule. Surveys were conducted at either dawn or dusk. Each dawn and dusk survey lasted approximately three hours. Dawn surveys were conducted from pre-dawn to no later than three-hours after sunrise, with the exception of the first survey which lasted a bit longer. Dusk surveys were initiated three hour before sunset and continued until dark. A summary of the environmental conditions on the eleven survey dates is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Summary of Weather Conditions During Six Light-footed Ridgeway's Rail Survey Events for the Encina Hub Portion of the Proposed San Diego Gas and Electric Sycamore to Penasquitos 230 Kilovolt Transmission Line Project in 2015.

Survey	Date	Surveyor (Species)	Time	Weather Conditions
1	04/30/2015	JK (LFRR)	1620-1950	80% overcast, 72-67°F, wind 5-9 mph
2	05/05/2015	JK, (LFRR)	1620-1930	80% overcast, 65-61°F, wind 3-7 mph
3	05/10/2015	JK (LFRR)	0610-0915	100% overcast, 54-61°F, wind 1-3 mph
4	05/16/2015	JK (LFRR)	1620-1925	100% overcast, 56-58°F, wind 1-3 mph
5	05/21/2015	JK (LFRR)	0600-0910	100% overcast, 60-62°F, wind 1-3 mph
6	05/26/2015	JK (LFRR)	1625-1940	100% overcast, 66-62°F, wind 1-3 mph

*JK = John Konecny; LFRR = light-footed Ridgeway's rail

The surveys were conducted by stopping at stations approximately 100 feet (33-meters) apart along the perimeter of the survey area and listening for vocalizing LFRRs. Occasionally, forays were made into the southern willow scrub in an attempt to get closer to marsh habitat. If LFRRs were not detected passively, a digital call-prompt of the LFRR "dueting" was played with an iPod and amplified speakers at 30-second intervals. A response was listened for before proceeding to the next survey station.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

No LFRRs was detected in the survey area for the Encina Hub portion of the Proposed Project in 2015.

Described as "formerly common in all coastal marshes" by Grinnell and Miller (1944), the LFRR has never been a common bird species in the Agua Hedionda Lagoon area in recent history. Since the LFRR range-wide survey was initiated in 1980, the LFRR population has varied between zero and a high of nine pairs in 2012.

A major change in the drainage of Agua Hedionda Creek greatly impacted the eastern saltmarsh in the 1980's and 1990's and only between zero and three pairs were present during most of those years. With the buildup of urbanization in the area, street runoff has likely contributed to the enhancement of the area to some degree. Eight pairs were present in 2006, 2008, and 2011 (Zemba *et al* 2014). An all-time high of nine pairs were detected in 2012. Six pairs were present in 2014 (Zemba *et al* 2015). LFRR's have been detected as far east as the SDG&E transmission line between Kelly Street and the Discovery Center. I am not aware of LFRRs being detected south of Cannon Road.

CERTIFICATION

I certify that the information in this survey report and attached exhibits fully and accurately represent my work. The results of focused surveys for listed species are typically considered valid for one year by the USFWS and CDFW. If you have any questions or require additional information, please call me at (760) 390-8959.

Sincerely,



John K. Konecny
Wildlife Biologist
TE837308-6

REFERENCES CITED

- Chesser R.T., Richard C. Banks, Carla Cicero, Jon L. Dunn, Andrew W. Kratter, Irby J. Lovette, Adolfo G. Navarro-Sigüenza, Pamela C. Rasmussen, J. V. Remsen, Jr., James D. Rising, Douglas F. Stotz, and Kevin Winker (2014) Fifty-Fifth Supplement to the American Ornithologists' Union *Check-list of North American Birds*. *The Auk*: October 2014, Vol. 131, No. 4, pp. CSi-CSxv.
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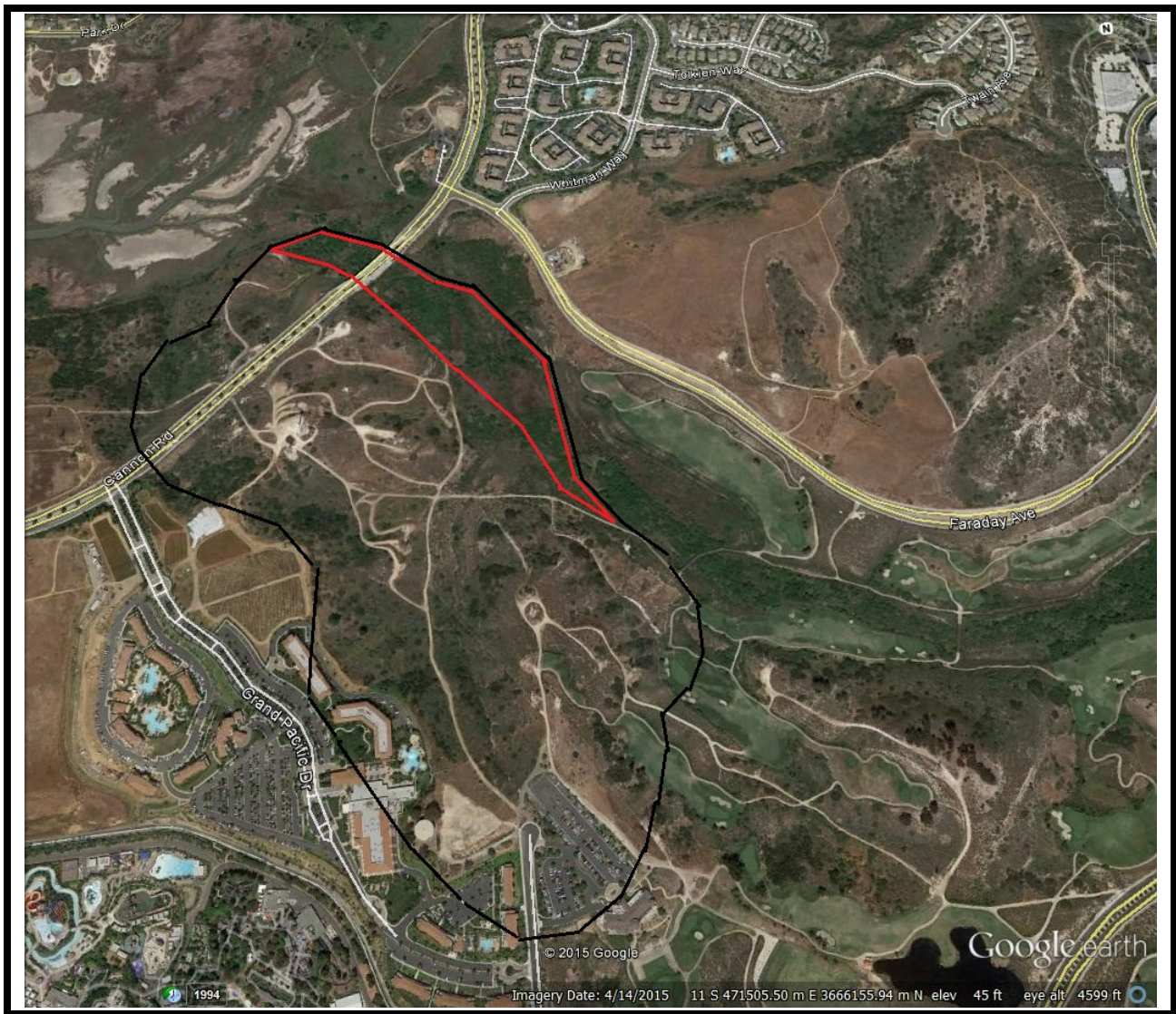


Figure 1. Location of the Proposed San Diego Gas & Electric Sycamore to Penasquitos 230 Kilovolt Transmission Line Project Site (shown as black line) and Light-footed Ridgeway's Rail Survey Area (shown as red line), San Diego County, California, 2015.