

**BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
FOR THE PROPOSED VAN NESS AVENUE WELL FIELD PROJECT
LOCATED IN THE CITY OF TORRANCE,
LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

Prepared For: The City of Torrance

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	4
2. Site Locations and Existing Conditions	4
3. Biological Survey Methods	6
4. Results	6
5. Indirect Effects	7
6. Mitigation Measures	7
7. Levels of Significance	8

EXHIBITS

A. Photo Documentation	10
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Executive Summary

This Biological Technical Report (BTR) or Biological Assessment (BA) describes current biological conditions on the proposed Van Ness Avenue Wells Field Project. The Proposed Project consists of a circa 4 mile linear water pipeline placed under existing paved streets and includes development of three well sites and associated infrastructure. This report evaluates the on-site biological resources, potential impacts of the Proposed Project on site-specific and regional biological resources, and provides mitigation measures if necessary to offset any potential adverse effects. Project-specific mitigation measures are consistent with the requirements of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Los Angeles County Biological and Resource Policies. Jeremiah George conducted a biological site visit on April 21, 2018. No jurisdictional waters, wetlands, or vernal pools have been documented on-site. No Federal or State threatened or endangered species or special-status plant or wildlife species or sensitive habitats were observed or would be expected on the Proposed Project site. The site is outside of the Critical Habitat boundaries for any federally-listed threatened or endangered species.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Jeremiah George was retained by the City of Torrance to provide a biological assessment of the proposed Van Ness Avenue Well Field Project. The Proposed Project is a new project and no previous biological assessments or EIRs have been previously completed for this project or any previous versions of the the Proposed Project.

1.1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Van Ness Avenue Well Field project proposes to construct a new municipal well water transmission main of approximately 4.0 miles in length along Van Ness Avenue from a proposed new well site in Descanso Park (Well No. 14) and from two newly developed ground water well sites (Wells No. 12 & 13) both located off Van Ness Avenue, north of the 405 Freeway to the existing Border Avenue Facilities for treatment and distribution to the east side of the City of Torrance. The Proposed Project is entirely within City owned property and existing street right of ways.

The wells proposed on this project require connections to the storm drain systems to dispose of well start up and test water. This will include the construction of the following new storm drain pipes for Well No. 12 on 185th Street to the intersection of Purche Avenue and 185th Street then to an existing City storm drain on 182nd Street; construction of a new storm drain system from Site Well No. 14 on Casimir Avenue to intersection of Casimir Avenue and Artesia Blvd and the extension of an existing storm drain pipe at the Border Avenue north of Plaza Del Amo for disposal of potable and raw water from the reservoir facility at 2223 Border Avenue.

The project also includes minor modifications to La Carretera Park to accommodate and mitigate Well No. 13 which include resurfacing basketball court, fence reconstruction, play equipment replacement, bench and table relocation. The project also includes minor modifications to Descanso Park to accommodate and mitigate Well No. 14 which include paving a walking trail around the park. See appendix A for photo documentation.

2.0 SITE LOCATION AND EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Proposed Project is in the City of Torrance (COT) in southwestern Los Angeles County. The areas the Proposed Project alignment runs through is predominantly residential land use north of north of the 405 Freeway. South of the 405 Freeway the alignment runs through a large area of heavy manufacturing (Petroleum Refinery) with concentrations of light industrial and commercial uses at the southern terminus of the Proposed Project.

2.1 GIS AND LITERATURE ANALYSIS OF SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES DATA

A comprehensive evaluation of GIS database information available for the site including special status species data from the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB, 2018) and USFWS Species Occurrence Data, Critical Habitat boundaries, the CDFW California Wildlife Habitat

Relationships Database and a general literature review. Analysis for the proposed alignment included data for the Torrance, Redondo Beach and the Gardena USGS 7.5-minute quadrangle.

2.2 USFWS CRITICAL HABITAT

“Critical Habitat” is a term within the Endangered Species Act defined as “an area occupied by a species listed as threatened or endangered within which are found physical or geographical features essential to the conservation of the species, or an area not currently occupied by the species which is itself essential to the conservation of the species”. The site is outside the Critical Habitat boundaries for any State or federally-listed threatened or endangered species. The closest designated critical habitat in the region is for the California Gnatcatcher on the Palos Verdes Peninsula and is approximately 2.85 miles southwest of the closest portion of the Proposed Project.

2.3 NATURAL COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PLAN OR HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN (NCCP/HCP)

The Proposed Project site is not located within the boundaries of a Natural Community Conservation Plan or Habitat Conservation Plan (NCCP/HCP).

2.4 CALIFORNIA NATURAL DIVERSITY DATABASE / CONSORTIUM OF CALIFORNIA HERBARIA / EBIRD ANALYSIS

The California Natural Diversity Database records reported occurrences of special status plants, wildlife, and vegetation communities. The CNDDDB provides a broad indication of species that may exist within an area although the exact mapped locations may or may not be accurate. Numerous missing records not documented by the CNDDDB at times can be retrieved by a Consortium of California Herbaria and eBird search for botanical and birds data respectively. Data current as of 2018 reveals records of 20 species of special status plants, 1 rare vegetation communities, and 47 species of special status wildlife within a 5 mile plus search radius. Numerous special status species have been recorded historically from the project area. However few persist in the vicinity of the project and the species which do are restricted to remnant natural areas or "ruderal habitats" in the remaining undeveloped open spaces in the region. No appropriate habitat for any of the assorted 67 special status species (vertebrate, invertebrate or botanical) historically or currently known within a 5 mile plus radius of the total project alignment have persisted within the Proposed Project footprint or in the immediate vicinity.

2.5 LOS ANGELES COUNTY SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREAS

The Proposed Project does not fall within or abut any Los Angeles County designated Significant Ecological Area (SEA). The closest SEA to the project site is the Madrona Marsh Preserve (SEA 11) located in the City of Torrance, 1.54 miles west of the southern terminus of the project. The next closest SEA is Harbor Lake Regional Park (SEA 9) in Harbor City circa 1.93 Miles southwest of the southern terminus of the Proposed Project. Both SEAs are natural wetlands, however neither are reliant on deep ground water resources for recharge or seasonal inundation (Carollo 2016,). Madrona marsh is fragment of a historically extensive vernal pool and seasonal wetland system which occurred in the region prior to extensive urbanization (Mattoni and Longcore 1997). Its wetland resources are seasonally inundated from surface water run-off and the presence of a

distinct relatively shallow subsurface soil hardpan. Madrona Marshes hydrology can be characterized as a perched seasonal aquifer and as such is not reliant on groundwater resources that would be utilized as part of the Proposed Project. The hydrology of Harbor Lake appears more complicated but it is also primarily maintained by surface runoff (and possible local subsurface flow) and is best characterized as a modified vernal lake. The current extent of perennial water at Harbor Lake appears to be an artifact of urban runoff which has led to a more extensive persistence of above ground water through the summer months than was documented prior to the extensive urbanization of the area (Carollo 2016, pers obs.). Any proposed groundwater extraction associated with this project appears not to present any indirect potential impacts to either of these two regional SEAs.

3.0 BIOLOGICAL SURVEY METHODS

A Biological field surveys of the Proposed Project site were conducted by Jeremiah George in April 2018. Results from these surveys provided an inventory of biological resources present on the site as well as an assessment of rare, threatened, or endangered plant or wildlife species with the potential to occur. The general biological surveys covered all slope aspects, soil types, and drainages. These surveys did not detect any special-status species or federal or state listed plant or wildlife species on the site. Surveys of the site also showed very low to no potential for occupancy by any special-status species.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 VEGETATION COMMUNITIES - NATIVE VEGETATION

No native vegetation communities (or native plant species) persist within the project alignment or within the immediate Proposed Project project vicinity. The persistence of a number of native annuals (i.e. *Lupinus bicolor*, *Camissonia strigulosa*, *Heterotheca grandiflora*, *Camissoniopsis micrantha* and *Malvella leprosa*) were observed well outside of the proposed work footprint (circa 800 feet east) along an inactive railroad right of way east of the intersection of Van Ness Avenue and Del Amo Boulevard. No native vegetation or native plant species were documented to persist within the Proposed Project alignment or the immediate vicinity of any potential staging or construction support areas.

4.2 JURISDICTIONAL WATERS, WETLANDS AND VERNAL POOLS

The project area historically supported an extensive mosaic of seasonal wetland and associated upland communities. However no evidence of these historic communities within or adjacent to the Proposed Project footprint have persisted. No jurisdictional waters, wetlands, vernal pools or species associated with vernal pools were observed on the Proposed Project site.

4.3 SPECIAL-STATUS SPECIES SURVEYS

No focused surveys for special-status plant or wildlife species on the Proposed Project site were conducted, as the site contains no suitable habitat for species requiring focused surveys. No appropriate habitat for any of the assorted 67 special status species (vertebrate, invertebrate of

botanical) historically or currently known within a 5 mile plus radius of the total project alignment have persisted within the Proposed Project footprint or in the immediate vicinity.

5.0 INDIRECT EFFECTS

5.1 TOXINS

The project would not result in the production or utilization of any regulated chemicals, stock-piling of chemicals or discharge of any toxins.

5.2 LIGHTING

No project specific lighting is associated with the Proposed Project except for modification of existing lighting at Descanso and La Carretera Parks.

5.3 NOISE

Sources of urban noise associated with the project such as well pumps would adhere to City noise standards, and would be below the levels of significance (based on current ambient site lighting) for impacts to any sensitive resources in the area i.e. nesting birds.

5.4 INVASIVE PLANTS

No landscaping is proposed as part of this project.

5.5 DRAINAGE

Infrequent discharge into the storm drain system of well watering during testing and startup will be in compliance with RWQCB standards and permitting. Any Indirect effects would be mitigated to below a level of significance through compliance with required RWQCB permitting/

6.0 MITIGATION MEASURES (MM)

The following mitigation measure would reduce impacts to nesting birds and would ensure compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) AND Section 3503 of the California Fish and Game Code.

MM-BIO-1: The applicant/developer shall retain a qualified biologist (with at least 2 years of avian experience and knowledge of local bird species) to conduct a directed clearance survey to locate any active bird nests prior to any grading/construction activities during the bird or raptor breeding season (general breeding and nesting bird season of February 1 through September 1; raptor nesting season of January 1 through July 31). This survey shall be conducted no more than three days prior to the start of grading. If a qualified biologist determines there are active nests, a construction buffer will be implemented to avoid impacts to the nest. The qualified biologist shall determine the appropriate standard buffer widths for nests based on the sensitivity levels of specific avian species. The determination of the standard buffer widths shall be site- and species-specific and data-driven and shall not be based on generalized assumptions regarding all nesting birds. If

warranted, the qualified biologist will identify feasible measures to avoid any potential adverse effects on nesting birds.

7.0 LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

All potential biological impacts would be expected to be reduced to below a level of significance with the implementation of the mitigation measure provided in Section 6.0.

Jeremiah N. George PhD

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeremiah N. George", enclosed within a large, loopy oval flourish.

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