Biological Resources Report

Ramon Substation Expansion

Thousand Palms, California

August 3, 2023

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1 Introduction

This report integrates information collected from a variety of literature sources and a field survey to describe the biological resources within the vicinity of the Ramon Substation (project) located in an unincorporated portion of Riverside County, California (Figure 1). The Imperial Irrigation District (IID) is proposing improvements to the existing Ramon Substation as part of the VEGA SES 6 Solar and Battery Storage Project (VEGA 6) in unincorporated Imperial County, CA.

Energy generated by the VEGA 6 project will be transmitted to IID's existing 161 kV "L" Line, with ultimate delivery to IID's Ramon Substation in Riverside County. IID has identified that upgrades to the Ramon Substation will be required in order to accommodate several planned utility-scale projects, including the VEGA 6 project. Implementation of the proposed project would require upgrades to the existing IID Ramon Substation. The upgrades would involve an expansion of the existing developed area of the substation, generally expanding to include 4 additional acres of a currently undisturbed area at the substation site.

1.1 Project Location

The proposed project is located east of Palm Springs near the City of Thousand Palms, approximately 2.1 miles east of Interstate 10 (I-10) and immediately north of Ramon Road (Figure 1). The project is located in Section 16 of Township 4 South, Range 6 East of the United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute series *Myoma, California* topographic quadrangle. The project is located within the boundaries of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP), adjacent to the Thousand Palms Conservation Area. The CVMSHCP covers approximately 240,000 acres of land in Coachella Valley with the purpose to balance growth while conserving sensitive habitats and species.

1.2 Project Description

Ramon Substation Improvements

The IID owns and operates the existing Ramon Substation. The Ramon Substation is located on a single parcel (Assessor Parcel Number 651-230-015) in unincorporated Riverside County, generally northeast of Cathedral City, north of the I-10 Freeway. The existing substation currently occupies approximately 6.7 acres of the 11.26-acre parcel, and contains equipment typically associated with electrical substations including power lines, transformers, and switching gear. Access to the existing substation is provided by Ramon Road, which is immediately south of the existing substation.

Upgrades to the existing Ramon Substation are proposed which would add additional capacity to the substation in order to accommodate electricity generated by planned utility-scale solar projects, which would tie into the substation, and then energy converted would be added to the electrical grid. This includes, but is not limited to, the proposed VEGA 6 solar energy project. The VEGA 6 solar energy project is located in an unincorporated portion of Imperial County.

The upgrades would involve an expansion of the existing developed area of the substation, generally expanding to include 4 additional acres of a currently undisturbed area at the substation site. During construction, access to the proposed expansion area would be through the existing substation site, via existing dirt roads located on the west and east of the existing substation, or a combination thereof.

IID CEQA Responsible Agency

The IID is a Responsible Agency as defined by CEQA Guideline Section 15381 as it relates to the proposed Ramon Substation improvements. In this capacity, the IID has the discretionary authority to approve improvements to the existing Ramon Substation, and would utilize the information contained in the VEGA 6 Environmental Impact Report, as prepared by the County of Imperial as the CEQA Lead Agency, as the CEQA clearance for the substation improvements.

Figure 1. Project Location Map

2 Regulatory Background

The proposed project is subject to state and federal regulations associated with a number of regulatory programs. These programs often overlap and were developed to protect natural resources, including: state and federally listed plants and animals; aquatic resources including rivers and creeks, ephemeral streambeds, wetlands, and areas of riparian habitat; other special-status species which are not listed as threatened or endangered by the state or federal governments; and other special-status vegetation communities.

2.1 Federal

2.1.1 Federal Endangered Species Act

The Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) protects threatened and endangered plants and animals and their critical habitat. Candidate species are those proposed for listing; these species are usually treated by resource agencies as if they were actually listed during the environmental review process. Procedures for addressing impacts to federally listed species follow two principal pathways, both of which require consultation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), which administers the FESA for all terrestrial species. The first pathway, a Section 10(a) incidental take permit, applies to situations where a non-federal governmental entity must resolve potential adverse impacts to species protected under the FESA. The second pathway, a Section 7 consultation, applies to projects directly undertaken by a federal agency or private projects requiring a federal permit or approval.

2.1.2 Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) makes it unlawful to take, possess, buy, sell, purchase, or barter any migratory bird listed in 50 Code of Federal Regulations Part 10, including feathers, or other parts, nests, eggs, or products, except as allowed by implementing regulations (50 Code of Federal Regulations 21).

All raptors and their nests are protected from take or disturbance under the MBTA (16 United States Code [USC], Section 703 et seq.).The golden eagle and bald eagle are also afforded additional protection under the Eagle Protection Act, amended in 1973 (16 United States Code, Section 669 et seq.).

2.1.3 Clean Water Act – Section 404

Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) establishes a program for the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to regulate the discharge of dredge and fill material into waters of the U.S., including wetlands. Activities regulated under this program include fills for development, water resource projects (e.g., dams and levees), infrastructure development (e.g., highways and airports), and conversion of wetlands to uplands for farming and forestry. Either an individual Section 404 permit or authorization to use an existing USACE nationwide permit must be obtained if any portion of an activity will result in dredge or fill effects on a river or stream that has been determined to be jurisdictional under Section 404 of the CWA. When applying for a permit, a company or organization

must show that they would avoid wetlands where practicable, minimize wetland effects, or provide compensation for any unavoidable destruction of wetlands.

Waters of the United States

Pursuant to Section 404 of the CWA, USACE regulates the discharge (temporary or permanent) of dredged or fill material into waters of the U.S. (WOUS) including wetlands.

There have been multiple Supreme Court decisions and regulatory definitions over the past several years concerning the proper standard for how to determine whether a wetland or stream that is not navigable in fact is properly considered a WOUS. Most recently, on May 25, 2023, the U.S. Supreme Court on May 25, issued its opinion in Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency, 598 U.S. (*Sackett*). The opinion addresses the definition of WOUS pursuant to the Clean Water Act (CWA), 33 U.S.C. Section 1251 et seq. and defines the geographic reach of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) authority in regulating streams, wetlands and other water bodies under the CWA.

Sackett In light of *Sackett*, the agencies announced that they are developing a rule to amend the final "Revised Definition of 'Waters of the United States'" rule (see definition below), published in the Federal Register on January 18, 2023, to be consistent with the U.S. Supreme Court's May 25, 2023 decision in *Sackett*. and intend to issue a final rule by September 1, 2023. In the meantime, the agencies will interpret the phrase "waters of the United States" consistent with the Supreme Court's decision in *Sackett*.

The prior definitions and regulatory guidance to identify WOUS in California were the pre-2015 definitions which included significant nexus evaluations for adjacent wetlands, as described in the Rapanos guidance. The Supreme Court ruling in *Sackett* effectively nullifies the use of the Rapanos significant nexus evaluation in future JDs. Under the *Sackett* ruling, WOUS only include navigable waters, impoundments of navigable waters, relatively permanent tributaries of navigable waters, and contiguous or adjoining wetlands (*Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency*, 2023). Ephemeral streams and other water bodies that are not relatively permanent, and wetlands or aquatic habitats that do not have a continuous surface connection with a relatively permanent water (RPW) or navigable water (i.e., isolated wetlands) would not be federally jurisdictional and would not be considered WOUS considering the Court's ruling.

Revised Definition of 'Waters of the United States' Rule (January 2023)

On January 18, 2023, EPA published the final "Revised Definition of 'Waters of the United States' Rule", which became effective on March 20, 2023. This rule establishes a clear and reasonable definition of waters of the United States, which is founded upon the familiar 1986 regulations, with amendments informed by the Clean Water Act and statute as a whole, the scientific record, relevant Supreme Court precedent, and the agencies' expertise. The rule returns the definition of "waters of the United States" to that which existed prior to 2015. The Revised Definition Rule defines the term waters of the "United States" in USACE regulations at 33 Code of Federal Regulations Part 328.3(a) as:

- Traditional Navigable Waters, the territorial seas, and interstate waters (paragraph (a)(1) waters)
- Impoundments of "waters of the United States" (paragraph (a)(2) waters)

- Tributaries to traditional navigable waters, the territorial seas, interstate waters or paragraph (a)(2) impoundments when the tributaries meet either relatively permanent standard or the significant nexus standard ("jurisdictional tributaries");
- Wetlands adjacent to paragraph (a)(1) waters; wetlands adjacent to and with a continuous surface connection to relatively permanent paragraph (a)(2) impoundments or jurisdictional tributaries when the jurisdictional tributaries meet the relatively permanent standard; and wetlands adjacent to paragraph (a)(2) impoundments or jurisdictional tributaries when the wetlands meet the significant nexus standard ("jurisdictional adjacent wetlands" and
- Intrastate lakes and ponds, streams, or wetlands not identified in paragraphs (a)(1) through (a)(4) that meet either the relatively permanent standard or the significant nexus standard ("paragraph (a)(5) waters").

Paragraph (b) of the Revised Definition Rule identifies specific exclusions to waters of the United States, including:

(1) Waste treatment systems, including treatment ponds or lagoons, designed to meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act;

(2) Prior converted cropland designated by the Secretary of Agriculture. The exclusion would cease upon a change of use, which means that the area is no longer available for the production of agricultural commodities. Notwithstanding the determination of an area's status as prior converted cropland by any other Federal agency, for the purposes of the Clean Water Act, the final authority regarding Clean Water Act jurisdiction remains with EPA;

(3) Ditches (including roadside ditches) excavated wholly in and draining only dry land and that do not carry a relatively permanent flow of water;

(4) Artificially irrigated areas that would revert to dry land if the irrigation ceased;

(5) Artificial lakes or ponds created by excavating or diking dry land to collect and retain water and which are used exclusively for such purposes as stock watering, irrigation, settling basins, or rice growing;

(6) Artificial reflecting or swimming pools or other small ornamental bodies of water created by excavating or diking dry land to retain water for primarily aesthetic reasons;

(7) Waterfilled depressions created in dry land incidental to construction activity and pits excavated in dry land for the purpose of obtaining fill, sand, or gravel unless and until the construction or excavation operation is abandoned and the resulting body of water meets the definition of waters of the United States; and

(8) Swales and erosional features (e.g., gullies, small washes) characterized by low volume, infrequent, or short duration flow.

The limits of USACE jurisdiction in non-tidal waters extends to the ordinary high water mark (OHWM) which is defined at 33 CFR 328.3(e) as:

> "…that line on the shore established by the fluctuations of water and indicated by physical characteristics such as clear, natural line impresses on the bank,

shelving, changes in the character of soil, destruction of terrestrial vegetation, the presence of litter and debris, or other appropriate means that consider the characteristics of the surrounding areas."

In practice, examples of a discharge of fill material may include, but are not limited to, grading, placing riprap for erosion control, pouring concrete, and stockpiling excavated material into waters of the U.S. Activities that generally do not involve a regulated discharge (if performed specifically in a manner to avoid discharges) include driving pilings, performing certain drainage channel maintenance activities, constructing temporary mining and farm/forest roads, and excavating without stockpiling.

Since an Approved Jurisdictional Determination (AJD) will not be processed by the USACE until guidance for the Sackett ruling is issued, and then likely take several months or more based on USACE backlog, other options for project proponents to advance may include a Preliminary Jurisdictional Determination (PJD) or relying on professional opinions and legal counsel. Under a PJD, the USACE will verify delineations and assume all, or the majority of, the aquatic features are WOUS for permitting purposes. Advancing a project without USACE guidance, an AJD or PJD / Section 404 permit is a compliance risk that each client should consider with legal counsel, when based on professional judgement, and weighing the likely schedule ramifications.

Wetlands

The term wetlands (a subset of WOUS) is defined at 33 Code of Federal Regulations 328.3(b) as "those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support...a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions." In 1987, USACE published a manual to guide its field personnel in determining jurisdictional wetland boundaries, followed by the Arid West Supplement in 2008 (USACE 2008a). The methodology set forth in the 1987 *Wetland Delineation Manual* and *Arid West Supplement* generally requires that, in order to be considered a wetland, the vegetation, soils, and hydrology of an area exhibit at least minimal hydric characteristics.

While the manual provides great detail in methodology and allows for varying special conditions, a wetland should normally meet each of the following three criteria:

1. The plant community must be determined to by hydrophytic based on: the dominance test applied using the 50/20 rule,[1] or, where the vegetation fails the dominance test and wetland hydrology and hydric soils are present, vegetation is determined to be hydrophytic using the Prevalence Index test[2] based upon the indicator status (i.e., rated as facultative or wetter) in the *National List of Plant Species that Occur in Wetlands* [USACE 2020]);
2. Soils must exhibit physical and/or chemical characteristics indicative of permanent or periodic saturation (e.g., redoximorphic features with a matrix of low chroma indicating a relatively consistent fluctuation between aerobic and anaerobic conditions); and
3. Hydrologic characteristics must indicate that the ground is saturated to within 12 inches of the surface for a sufficient period to cause: the formation of hydric soils and establishment of a

[1] If a particular species accounts for more than 50 percent of the total coverage of vegetation in the stratum, or for at least 20 percent of the total coverage in the stratum which the species was found, that species is defined as dominant.

[2] A Prevalence Index is calculated using wetland indicator status and relative abundance for each vascular plant species present.

hydrophytic plant community. A positive test for wetland hydrology is based on the presence of one primary or two secondary indicators.

2.1.4 Clean Water Act – Section 401

In California, the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and nine RWQCBs regulate activities within state and federal waters under Section 401 of the CWA and the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act. SWRCB is responsible for setting statewide policy, coordinating and supporting RWQCB efforts, and reviewing petitions that contest RWQCB actions. Each RWQCB is semiautonomous and has the authority to set water quality standards, issue Section 401 certifications and waste discharge requirements, and take enforcement action for projects occurring within its boundary. However, when a project crosses multiple RWQCB jurisdictional boundaries, SWRCB becomes the regulating agency that issues project permits.

Section 401 specifies that certification from the state is required for any applicant requesting a federal license or permit to conduct any activity including, but not limited to, the construction or operation of facilities that may result in any discharge into WOUS. A federal permit or license cannot be issued that may result in a discharge to WOUS unless certification under Section 401 of the CWA is granted or waived by the EPA, state, or tribe where the discharge would originate (SWRCB 2014). The Project is located within the boundaries of the Colorado (Region 7) RWQCB, which would have the authority to grant, grant with conditions, deny, or waive water quality certification for the Project.

Under Section 401, all activities regulated at the federal level by USACE are also regulated at the state level. Therefore, state jurisdiction usually includes all waters or tributaries to waters that are determined to be WOUS and, similar to WOUS, are typically delineated at the OHWM.

2.2 State

2.2.1 California Endangered Species Act

Sections 2050 through 2098 of the California Fish and Game Code outline the protection provided to California's rare, endangered, and threatened species. Section 2080 of the Fish and Game Code prohibits the taking of plants and animals listed under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). Section 2081 established an incidental take permit program for state-listed species. In addition, the Native Plant Protection Act of 1977 (Fish and Game Code Section 1900 et seq.) gives the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) authority to designate state endangered, threatened, and rare plants and provides specific protection measures for designated populations.

CDFW has jurisdiction over fully protected species of birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and fish, pursuant to Fish and Game Code Sections 3511, 4700, 5050, and 5515. Take of any fully protected species is prohibited, and CDFW cannot authorize their take in association with a general project except under the provisions of a Natural Communities Conservation Plan, 2081.7 or a Memorandum of Understanding for scientific purposes.

The CDFW has also identified many "Species of Special Concern" (SSC). Species with this status have limited distribution or the extent of their habitats has been reduced substantially such that their populations may be threatened. Thus, their populations are monitored and they may receive special attention during the environmental review process. While they do not have statutory protection, they may be considered rare under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and are thereby warranted specific protection measures. Unlike the FESA, CESA does not list invertebrate species.

Sensitive species that would qualify for listing but are not currently listed are afforded protection under CEQA. The CEQA Guidelines Section 15065 (“Mandatory Findings of Significance”) identifies a substantial reduction in numbers of a rare or endangered species as a significant effect. CEQA Guidelines Section 15380 (“Rare or Endangered Species”) provides for the assessment of unlisted species as rare or endangered under CEQA if the species can be shown to meet the criteria for listing. Plant species that are not state or federally listed, but that occur on the California Native Plant Society’s (CNPS) California Rare Plant Rank Lists 1A (plants presumed extirpated in California and either rare or extinct elsewhere), 1B (plants are rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere), 2A (plants presumed extirpated in California but common elsewhere), and 2B (plants rare, threatened, or endangered in California but more common elsewhere) would typically be considered under the CEQA.

The CDFW has jurisdiction over actions with potential to result in the disturbance or destruction of active nest sites or the unauthorized take of birds. Fish and Game Code sections that protect birds, eggs, and nests include Sections 3503 (regarding unlawful take, possession or needless destruction of the nest or eggs of any bird), 3503.5 (regarding the take, possession or destruction of any birds-of-prey or their nests or eggs), and 3513 (regarding unlawful take of any migratory nongame bird).

2.2.2 Lake and Streambed Alteration Program

The CDFW regulates water resources under Sections 1600 et seq. of the California Fish and Game Code. The CDFW has the authority to grant Streambed Alteration Agreements under Section 1602, which states:

> *An entity may not substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow of, or substantially change or use any material from the bed, channel, or bank of, any river, stream, or lake, or deposit or dispose of debris, waste, or other material containing crumbled, flaked, or ground pavement where it may pass into any river, stream, or lake.*

CDFW jurisdiction includes ephemeral, intermittent and perennial watercourses and extends to the top of the bank of a stream or lake if unvegetated or to the limit of the adjacent riparian habitat located contiguous to the watercourse if the stream or lake is vegetated.

Proposed actions that require a Streambed Alteration Agreements may also require a permit from USACE under Section 404 of the CWA. In these instances, the conditions of the Section 404 permit and the Streambed Alteration Agreements may overlap.

2.2.3 Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act

The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act requires that each of the nine RWQCBs prepare and periodically update basin plans for water quality control. Each basin plan sets forth water quality standards for surface water and groundwater and actions to control nonpoint and point sources of pollution to achieve and maintain these standards. Basin plans offer an opportunity to protect wetlands through the establishment of water quality objectives. The RWQCB’s jurisdiction includes federally protected waters, as well as areas that meet the definition of “waters of the state.” Waters of the state are defined as any surface water or groundwater, including saline waters, within the boundaries of the state. RWQCB has the discretion to take jurisdiction over areas not federally regulated under Section 401, provided they meet the definition of waters of the state. Mitigation requiring no net loss of wetlands functions and values of waters of the state is typically required by RWQCB.

2.2.4 California Environmental Quality Act

CEQA requires state and local agencies to identify impacts on the environment that might be caused by their actions. Sensitive species that would qualify for listing but are not currently listed are afforded protection under CEQA. The CEQA Guidelines Section 15065 (Mandatory Findings of Significance) identifies a substantial reduction in numbers of a rare or endangered species as a significant impact. CEQA Guidelines Section 15380 (Rare or Endangered Species) provides for the assessment of unlisted species as rare or endangered under CEQA if the species can be shown to meet the criteria for listing. For example, plant species that are not federally or state listed but that occur on the California Native Plant Society's (CNPS) California Rare Plant Rank Lists 1 and 2 would typically be considered under CEQA. Plant populations of species meeting the California Rare Plant Rank List 3 and 4 designations that are locally significant may also warrant consideration under CEQA.

2.3 Local

2.3.1 Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan

The Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP) received its California state permit in September 2008 and its federal permit in October 2008. The CVMSHCP is a comprehensive habitat conservation-planning program focusing on preservation of species and their associated habitats within the Coachella Valley region of Riverside County. Signatories to the CVMSHCP include the cities of Cathedral City, Coachella, Desert Hot Springs (I-10 annexation area only), Indian Wells, Indio, La Quinta, Palm Desert, Palm Springs, Rancho Mirage as well as Coachella Valley Water District, Imperial Irrigation District, Coachella Valley Association of Governments, and Caltrans. The intent of the CVMSHCP is to preserve native vegetation and meet the habitat needs of multiple species, rather than focusing preservation efforts on one species at a time. As such, the CVMSHCP is intended to streamline review of individual projects with respect to the species and habitats addressed in the CVMSHCP, and to provide for an overall Conservation Area that would be of greater benefit to biological resources than would result from a piecemeal regulatory approach.

The CVMSHCP provides coverage (including take authorization for listed species) for special-status plant and animal species, as well as mitigation for impacts to sensitive species. Through agreements with the USFWS and the CDFW, the CVMSHCP designates approximately 27 special-status animal and plant species that receive some level of coverage under the plan. Of the 27 covered species designated under the CVMSHCP, the majority of these species have no additional survey/ conservation requirements. In addition, the CVMSHCP provides mitigation for project-specific impacts to these species so that the impacts would be reduced to below a level of significance pursuant to CEQA. Beyond the fully covered species, there are species with additional survey/conservation requirements (Coachella Valley Conservation Commission 2016).

Each participating city or local jurisdiction within the Coachella Valley region will impose a development mitigation fee for new development projects within its jurisdiction. As of July 1, 2023, the current fees for development are:

- $1,625 for 0 to 8 residential units per acre
- $675 for 8.1 to 14 residential units per acre
- $300 for more than 14 residential units per acre
- $7,225 per acre for commercial/industrial

3 Methodology

3.1 Literature Review

A literature review was conducted to determine the existence or potential occurrence of special-status plant and animal species on the project footprint and in the project vicinity. Database records for the *La Quinta, West Berdoo Canyon, Keys View, Myoma, East Deception Canyon, Indio, Seven Palms Valley, Rancho Mirage and Cathedral City, California* USGS 7.5-minute series quadrangles were searched on May 31, 2023 using the CDFW Natural Diversity Data Base *Rarefind 5* online application (version 5, dated April 30, 2023) and the California Native Plant Society's *Online Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California* (CNPS 2023. V9.5, http://www.cnps.org/inventory). A USFWS Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC) Trust Resource Report was generated for the project footprint on June 5, 2023. Appendix A includes the CNDDB, CNPS, and IPaC records search results. Soils within the Project area were identified using the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Web Soil Survey (USDA 2023).

3.2 Field Surveys

HDR Biologist Aaron Newton and Ronell Santos conducted a site visit on June 16, 2023 in order to identify general site conditions, vegetation communities, and suitability of habitat for various special-status species. The biological survey area (BSA), project footprint plus 500-foot buffer, was surveyed by foot and binoculars were used to aid in the identification of species, potential nest locations, and foraging areas (Figure 2). All wildlife and plant species encountered during the field surveys were identified and recorded. Plant nomenclature follows Jepson Flora Project (Jepson eFlora 2021). The Calflora online database (Calflora 2023) was also used as a tool to assist with plant identification.

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Figure 2. Project Footprint and BSA

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4 Results

4.1 Environmental Setting

4.1.1 Existing and Adjacent Land Use

The project footprint has a General Plan land use designation of general residential. The surrounding land use designations include general residential and one-family dwellings. The project footprint currently consists of a disturbed area north of the existing Ramon substation, sparsely vegetated with low growing creosote bushes in sandy soils. Two large electrical transmission poles are located within the footprint and dumped materials can be found scattered throughout the southern end of the footprint. A small human encampment was also observed during the field visit.

4.1.2 Soils

The online NRCS Web Soil Survey was referenced to identify potential hydric soils occurring within the BSA (USDA NRCS 2023). The following soils are mapped within the BSA.

- **Carsitas:** The soils of the Carsitas series are characterized by very deep, somewhat excessively drained soils formed in alluvium. Carsitas series soils are on 0 to 30 percent slopes on alluvial fans, fan aprons, valley fills, and in drainageways at elevations of -220 to 2,625 feet. Carsitas series soils within the project footprint include Carsitas gravelly sand, 0 to 9 percent slopes.
- **Myoma:** The Myoma series are characterized by somewhat excessively drained soils with rapid permeability. They are nearly level to rolling at elevations of -200 to 1,800 feet. Myoma series soils within the Project footprint include Myoma fine sand, 0 to 5 percent slopes.

4.1.3 Hydrology

The BSA is located within the Upper Whitewater River watershed, approximately 201,200 acres in size, which is located within the larger Whitewater River Hydrologic Unit (HUC-8 # 180100201). The major surface water within the watershed includes the Whitewater River and originates within the summit of Mount San Gorgonio in the San Bernardino Mountains. The river travels southeast joining with three other tributaries before ultimately draining into the Salton Sea at the southeastern end of the Coachella Valley (Riverside County Watershed Protection 2020).

4.1.4 Vegetation Communities and Other Land Types

Based on a review of historic aerial photographs [Historic Aerials (1959-2020) and Google Earth (1996-2023)] the survey area was cleared of vegetation prior to May 2002 for the creation of the existing Ramon Substation and associated transmission line poles and portions been routinely disturbed since that time.

Vegetation onsite consisted of three land cover types with the predominant land cover type as Developed/Ornamental. A description of each vegetation community occurring within the BSA is provided below and depicted in Figure 3. All botanical species observed are listed in Appendix B. Photographs of the site from the June 16, 2023 visit are included in Figure 4.

Developed/Ornamental

Developed/Ornamental land is comprised of areas of intensive use with much of the land constructed upon or otherwise physically altered to an extent that native vegetation is no longer supported. Developed land is highly modified and characterized by permanent or semi-permanent structures, pavement, unvegetated areas, and landscaped areas that require irrigation. Developed/Ornamental areas typically provide high value or function for human use but provide little habitat value to wildlife. Ornamental plantings can provide some use for wildlife movement or use by species adapted to human presence.

Within the BSA, Developed/Ornamental land includes paved roads, electric substations, areas where non-native ornamental species and landscaping have been installed, and bare ground with compacted soils that no longer support vegetation. A total of 17.15 acres of Developed/Ornamental land occur within the BSA. A strip of land just north of Ramon Road, in front of the substation has planted ornamental vegetation, approximately 1.56 acres of land.

Creosote Bush Scrub (*Larrea tridentata* Alliance)

Within the Creosote Bush Scrub community (*Larrea tridentata* Alliance), creosote bush is dominant in the shrub canopy with several sub-dominant desert shrub species such as four-wing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*), burrobrush (*Ambrosia salsola*), brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*), and Mediterranean grass (*Schismus barbatus*).

Within the BSA, Creosote Bush Scrub occurs primarily in the north and east of the existing Ramon Substation and covers a total of 35.02 acres of the BSA.

Disturbed-Creosote Bush Scrub (*Larrea tridentata* Alliance)

The disturbed-Creosote Bush Scrub community (*Larrea tridentata* Alliance) is composed of similar species as Creosote Bush Scrub but receives regular disturbance from offroad activity and illegal dumping. The vegetation community is dominated by creosote bush with sub-dominant desert shrub species such as four-wing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*), burrobrush (*Ambrosia salsola*), brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*), and Mediterranean grass (*Schismus barbatus*).

Within the BSA, disturbed-Creosote Bush Scrub occurs to the north of the existing Ramon Substation and covers a total of 11.57 acres of the BSA.

Special-Status Vegetation Communities

Special status natural communities are those that are considered to be of special concern based on (1) federal, state, or local laws regulating their development; (2) limited distributions; and/or (3) the habitat requirements of special status plants or animals occurring in those habitats. Natural Communities with ranks of S1-S3 are considered Sensitive Natural Communities to be addressed in the environmental review processes of CEQA and its equivalents.

None of the vegetation communities within the project footprint is considered sensitive or of special concern.

Figure 3. Vegetation Communities and Other Land Cover Types in the BSA

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4.1.5 Plant Species

Special-status plant species include plants that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Listed or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered under the Federal ESA or candidates for possible future listing as threatened or endangered under the ESA (50 CFR Section 17.12)
- Listed or candidates for listing by the State of California as threatened or endangered under the California ESA (Fish Game Code Section 2050 et seq.)
- Listed as rare under the California Native Plant Protection Act (Fish and Game Code Section 1900 et seq.); a plant is rare when, although not presently threatened with extinction, the species, subspecies, or variety is found in such small numbers throughout its range that it may be endangered if its environment worsens (Fish and Game Code Section 1901)
- Meet the definition of rare or endangered under CEQA Guidelines Section 15380, subdivisions (b) and (d), including:
    - Plants considered by CDFW to be “rare, threatened or endangered in California.” This includes plants tracked by the CNDDB and the CNPS as California Rare Plant Rank 1 or 2
    - Plants that may warrant consideration on the basis of declining trends, recent taxonomic information, or other factors; this may include plants tracked by the CNDDB and CNPS as California Rare Plant Rank 3 or 4
- Considered locally significant plants (i.e., plants that are not rare from a statewide perspective but are rare or uncommon in a local context such as within a county or region [CEQA Guidelines, Section 15125, subd. (c)], or as designated in local or regional plans, policies, or ordinances [3.2.6 CEQA]); examples include plants that are at the outer limits of their known geographic range or plants occurring on an atypical soil type

A full list of rare plants occurrences within the surrounding nine quadrangles can be found in Appendix A. A list of all plants observed on site can be found in Appendix B.

Federally and/or State-Listed Plant Species

Based upon the results of the literature review, thirty-eight (38) special-status plant species are known to occur within the vicinity of the project footprint. These species, their federal and State status, habitat requirements and occurrence probability are included in Table 1. Of the 38 species, only one federally listed species has a moderate probability of occurring, the Coachella Valley milk-vetch (*Astragalus lentiginous* var. *coachellae*, CNPS 1B.2).

- **Coachella Valley milk-vetch.** Coachella Valley milk-vetch (*Astragalus lentiginosus* var. *coachellae*) is federally endangered and a CVMSCHP covered species. The species generally occurs in dunes and sandy flats, along the disturbed margins of sandy washes, and in sandy soils along roadsides adjacent to existing sand dunes. The species may also occur in sandy substrates in creosote bush scrub, not directly associated with sand dune habitats. There are core habitat areas within the Thousand Palms Preserve including a small area in the Thousand Palms Canyon and a larger area south of Ramon Road (Coachella Valley Conservation Commission 2016).

Potentially suitable habitat does occur within the sandy creosote bush scrub vegetation community in the BSA with critical habitat occurring just north of the BSA. None were observed within the BSA during the field survey.

Other Special-Status Plant Species

Of the 38 special-status plant species, only 13 have a low or moderate probability of occurring within the BSA. Table 1 lists these species as well as their habitat requirements and occurrence probability. Only the mecca-aster (*Xylorhiza cognata*, CNPS 1B.2) has a low probability of occurring within the BSA and is covered under the CVMSHCP. Additionally, none of these species were observed within the BSA during the field survey.

Table 1. Special-Status Plant Species Known From the Vicinity of the Project Footprint

Species	Status	Habitat and Distribution	Blooming Period	Occurrence Probability
Abronia villosa var. *aurita* **Chaparral sand-verbena**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 1B.1 CVMSHCP: NC	Sandy soils in chaparral, coastal scrub, and desert dunes. Found at 75 to 1,600 meters (246 to 5,249 feet) above MSL.	Blooms January through September (annual herb)	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
Astragalus bernardinus **San Bernardino milk-vetch**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 1B.2 CVMSHCP: NC	Often in granitic or carbonate soils in Joshua tree woodland and Pinyon and juniper woodland from 900 to 2,000 meters elevation.	Blooms April through June (perennial herb)	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
Astragalus hornii var. *hornii* **Horn's milk-vetch**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 1B.1 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in meadows and seeps and playas from 60 to 850 meters (195 to 2,790 feet) above MSL.	Blooms May through October (annual herb)	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
Astragalus lentiginous var. borreganus **Borrego milk-vetch**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 4.3 CVMSHCP: NC	Mojavean desert scrub, Sonoran desert scrub.	Blooms February through May (annual herb)	Low. Suitable habitat present, nearest CNPS record within Myoma quadrangle.
Astragalus lentiginosus var. *coachellae* **Coachella Valley milk-vetch**	US: FE CA: None CNPS: 1B.2 CVMSHCP: C	Occurs in desert dunes and sandy Sonoran desert scrub from 40 to 655 meters (130 to 2,150 feet) above MSL.	Blooms February through May (annual/perennial herb)	Moderate: Suitable habitat present, species known from immediate vicinity, critical habitat to the north of site.
Astragalus preussii var. *laxiflorus* **Lancaster milk-vetch**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 1B.1 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in chenopod scrub habitat at 700 meters (2,295 feet) above MSL.	Blooms March through May (perennial herb)	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.

Table 1. Special-Status Plant Species Known From the Vicinity of the Project Footprint

Species	Status	Habitat and Distribution	Blooming Period	Occurrence Probability
Astragalus sabulonum **Gravel milk-vetch**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 2B.2 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in usually sandy, sometimes gravelly soils in desert dunes, Mojavean desert scrub, and Sonoran desert scrub. Found in flats, washes, and roadsides from -60 to 930 meters (-195 to 3,050 feet) above MSL.	Blooms February through June (annual/perennial herb)	Not Expected. Suitable habitat present, however, nearest CNDDB records approx. 11 miles southeast of site.
Astragalus tricarinatus **Triple-ribbed milk-vetch**	US: FE CA: None CNPS: 1B.2 CVMSHCP: C	Occurs in sandy or gravelly soils in Joshua tree woodland and Sonoran desert scrub habitats from 450 to 1,190 meters (1,475 to 3,905 feet) above MSL.	Blooms February through May (perennial herb)	Not Expected. Site below known elevational range.
Ayenia compacta **California ayenia**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 2B.3 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in rocky soils in Mojavean desert scrub and Sonoran desert scrub habitats from 150 to 1,095 meters (490 to 3,595 feet) above MSL.	Blooms March through April (perennial herb)	Not Expected. The site does not contain suitable soils to support this species.
Calochortus palmeri car. munzii **San Jacinto mariposa-lily**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 1B.2 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in chaparral, lower montane coniferous forest and meadows and seep habitats from 855 to 2,200 meters (2,805 to 7,220 feet) above MSL.	Blooms April through July (perennial bulbiferous herb)	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
Cuscuta californica var. *apiculata* **Pointed dodder**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 3 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in Mojavean desert scrub and Sonoran desert scrub from 0 to 500 meters (0 to 1,640 feet) above MSL.	Blooms February through August (annual vine (parasitic))	Low. Suitable habitat present, nearest CNPS record within Cathedral City quadrangle.
Ditaxis claryana **Glandular ditaxis**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 2B.2 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in sandy soils in Mojavean desert scrub and Sonoran desert scrub from 0 to 465 meters (0 to 1,525 feet) above MSL.	Blooms October through March (perennial herb)	Low. Suitable habitat present, nearest CNDDB records approx. 7 miles south of site.

Table 1. Special-Status Plant Species Known From the Vicinity of the Project Footprint

Species	Status	Habitat and Distribution	Blooming Period	Occurrence Probability
Ditaxis serrate var. californica **California ditaxis**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 3.2 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in Sonoran desert scrub from 30 to 1,000 meters (100 to 3,280 feet) above MSL.	Blooms March through December (perennial herb)	Low. Suitable habitat present, nearest CNDDB records approx. 8 miles south of site.
Eremothera boothii ssp. boothii **Booth's evening-primerose**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 2B.3 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in Joshua tree "woodland", Pinyon and juniper woodland habitat from 815 to 2,400 meters (2,675 to 7,875 feet) above MSL.	Blooms April through September (annual herb)	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
Erigeron parishii **Parish's daisy**	US: FT CA: None CNPS: 1B.1 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in usually carbonate and sometime granitic mojavean desert scrub, pinyon and juniper woodland habitat from 800 to 2,000 meters (2,625 to 6,560 feet) above MSL.	Blooms May through August (perennial herb)	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
Euphorbia abramsiana **Abrams' spurge**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 2B.2 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in Mojavean desert scrub and Sonoran desert scrub from -5 to 1,310 meters (-15 to 4,300 feet) above MSL.	Blooms August through November (annual herb)	Low. Suitable habitat present, nearest CNDDB records approx. 4.5 miles south of site.
Euphorbia arizonica **Arizona spurge**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 2B.3 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in sandy Sonoran desert scrub from 50 to 300 meters (165 to 985 feet) above MSL.	Blooms March through April (perennial herb)	Low. Suitable habitat present, nearest CNDDB records approx. 3 miles north of site.
Euphorbia platysperma **flat-seeded spurge**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 1B.2 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in desert dunes and sandy Sonoran desert scrub from 65 to 100 meters (215 to 330 feet) above MSL.	Blooms February through September (annual herb)	Moderate. Suitable habitat present, nearest CNDDB records less then 1 mile southwest of site.
Galium angustifolium ssp. gracillimum **Slender bedstraw**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 4.2 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in granitic or rocky Sonoran desert scrub and Joshua tree "woodland" from 130 to 1,550 meters (425 to 5,085 feet) above MSL.	Blooms April through July (perennial herb)	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.

Table 1. Special-Status Plant Species Known From the Vicinity of the Project Footprint

Species	Status	Habitat and Distribution	Blooming Period	Occurrence Probability
Horsfordia alata **Pink velvet-mallow**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 4.3 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in rocky Sonoran desert scrub from 100 to 500 meters (330 to 1,640 feet) above MSL.	Blooms February through December (perennial shrub)	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
Horsfordia newberryi **Newberry's velvet-mallow**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 4.3 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in rocky Sonoran desert scrub from 3 to 800 meters (10 to 2,6250 feet) above MSL.	Blooms February through December (perennial shrub)	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
Johnstonella costata **Ribbed cryptantha**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 4.3 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in desert dunes, Mojavean desert scrub, Sonoran desert scrub from -60 to 500 meters (-195 to 1,640 feet) above MSL.	Blooms February through May (annual herb)	Moderate. Suitable habitat present, site within CNPS Myoma quadrangle.
Johnstonella holoptera **Winged cryptantha**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 4.3 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in Mojavean desert scrub, Sonoran desert scrub from 100 to 1,690 meters (330 to 5,545 feet) above MSL.	Blooms March through April (annual herb)	Moderate. Suitable habitat present, site within CNPS Myoma quadrangle.
Juncus acutus ssp. leopoldii **Southwestern spiny rush**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 4.2 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in coastal dunes (mesic), coastal scrub, meadows and seeps (alkaline seeps), marshes and swamps (coastal salt) from 3 to 900 meters (10 to 2,955 feet) above MSL.	Blooms March through June (perennial rhizomatous herb)	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
Juncus cooperi **Cooper's rush**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 4.3 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in meadows and seeps (mesic, alkaline or saline) from -260 to 1,770 meters (-855 to 5,805 feet) above MSL.	Blooms April through August (perennial herb)	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
Linanthus maculatus ssp. *maculatus* **Little San Bernardino Mtns. linanthus**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 1B.2 CVMSHCP: C	Occurs in desert dunes, Joshua tree "woodland", Mojavean desert scrub and Sonoran desert scrub from 140 to 1,220 meters (460 to 4,005 feet) above MSL.	Blooms March through May (annual herb)	Not Expected. Site below known elevational range.

Table 1. Special-Status Plant Species Known From the Vicinity of the Project Footprint

Species	Status	Habitat and Distribution	Blooming Period	Occurrence Probability
Lycium torreyi **Torrey's box-thorn**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 4.2 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in Mojavean desert scrub, Sonoran desert scrub from -50 to 1,220 meters (-165 to 4,005 feet) above MSL.	Blooms January through November (perennial shrub)	Moderate. Suitable habitat present, site within CNPS Myoma quadrangle.
Marina orcuttii var. orcuttii **California marina**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 1B.3 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in rocky soils in Chaparral, Pinyon and juniper woodland, and Sonoran desert scrub from 1,050 to 1,160 meters (3,445 to 3,805 feet) above MSL.	Blooms May through October (perennial herb)	Not Expected. Site below known elevational range.
Matelea parvifolia **Spear-leaf matelea**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 2B.3 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in rocky soils in Mojavean desert scrub and Sonoran desert scrub from 440 to 1,095 (1,445 to 3,595 feet) above MSL.	Blooms March through May (perennial herb)	Not Expected. Site below known elevational range.
Monardella robisonii **Robinson's monardella**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 1B.3 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in pinyon and juniper woodland habitat from 610 to 1,500 meters (2,000 to 4,920 feet) above MSL.	Blooms February through October (perennial rhizomatous herb)	Not Expected. Site below known elevational range.
Nemacaulis denudata var. *gracilis* **Slender cottonheads**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 2B.2 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in coastal dunes, desert dunes, and Sonoran desert scrub from -50 to 400 meters (-165 to 1,310 feet) above MSL.	Blooms March through May (annual herb)	Low. Suitable habitat present, nearest CNDDB records approx. 6 miles southwest of site.
Petalonyx linearis **Narrow-leaf sandpaper-plant**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 2B.3 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in Mojavean desert scrub, Sonoran desert scrub from -25 to 1,115 meters (-80 to 3,660 feet) above MSL.	Blooms January through December (perennial shrub)	Low. Suitable habitat present, nearest CNDDB records approx. 3 miles northeast of site.
Pseudorontium cyathiferum **Deep Canyon snapdragon**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 2B.3 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in rocky Sonoran desert scrub below 800 meters (2,625 feet) above MSL.	Blooms February through April (annual herb)	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.

Table 1. Special-Status Plant Species Known From the Vicinity of the Project Footprint

Species	Status	Habitat and Distribution	Blooming Period	Occurrence Probability
Saltugilia latimeri **Latimer's woodland-gilia**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 1B.2 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in granitic, rocky, sandy, washes in chaparral, Mojavean desert scrub and pinyon and juniper woodland habitats from 400 to 1,900 meters (1,310 to 6,235 feet) above MSL.	Blooms March through June (annual herb)	Not Expected. Site below known elevational range.
Selaginella eremphila **Desert spike-moss**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 2B.2 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in chaparral and gravelly, rocky Sonoran desert scrub from 200 to 1,295 meters (655 to 4,250 feet) above MSL.	Blooms May through July (perennial rhizomatous herb)	Not Expected. Site below known elevational range.
Senna covesii **Cove's cassia**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 2B.2 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in dry, sandy desert washes and slopes in Sonoran desert scrub habitat from 225 to 1,295 meters (740 to 4,250 feet) above MSL.	Blooms March through August (perennial herb)	Not Expected. Site below known elevational range.
Stemodia durantifolia **Purple stemodia**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 2B.1 CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in mesic or sandy soils in Sonoran desert scrub habitat from 180 to 300 meters (590 to 985 feet) above MSL.	Blooms January through December (perennial herb)	Not Expected. Site below known elevational range.
Xylorhiza cognata **Mecca-aster**	US: None CA: None CNPS: 1B.2 CVMSHCP: C	Occurs in Sonoran desert scrub habitat from 20 to 400 meters (65 to 1,310 feet) above MSL.	Blooms January through June (perennial herb)	Low. Suitable habitat present, nearest CNDDB records approx. 6.5 miles east of site.

Notes:

US: Federal Classifications

FE Taxa listed as Endangered

FT Taxa listed as Threatened

CA: State Classification

SE Taxa State-listed as Endangered

ST Taxa State-listed as Threatened

CNPS Rare Plant Rank*

List 1B.2 List 1b: Rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere. 0.2: Fairly endangered in California

List 2.3 List 2: Rare, threatened, or endangered in California, but more common elsewhere. O.3: Not very endangered in California.

List 4.2 Limited distribution (Watch list). 0.2: Fairly endangered in California.

Table 1. Special-Status Plant Species Known From the Vicinity of the Project Footprint

Species	Status	Habitat and Distribution	Blooming Period	Occurrence Probability

List 4.3 Limited distribution (Watch list). 0.3: Not very endangered in California.

List A Plants rare, threatened or endangered in California and elsewhere.

List B Plants rare, threatened or endangered in California but more common elsewhere.

*California Rare Plant Ranks are assigned by a committee of government agency and non-governmental botanical experts and are not official State designations of rarity status.

CVMSHCP Conservation Status

NC Impacts to this species are not covered through participation in the CVMSHCP.

C Impacts to this species are covered through participation in the CVMSHCP.

4.2 Wildlife Species

Special-status wildlife species include wildlife that meets one or more of the following criteria:

- Listed or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered under the ESA or candidates for possible future listing as threatened or endangered under the ESA (50 CFR Section 17.12)
- Listed or candidates for listing by the State of California as threatened or endangered under the California ESA (Fish and Game Code, Section 2050 et seq.)
- Meet the definition of rare or endangered under CEQA Guidelines Section 15380, subdivisions (b) and (d), including:
    - Although not presently threatened with extinction, the species is existing in such small numbers throughout all or a significant portion of its range that it may become endangered if its environment worsens
    - The species is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range
- Considered locally significant species (i.e., species that are not rare from a statewide perspective but are rare or uncommon in a local context such as within a county or region [CEQA Guidelines, Section 15125, subd. (c)], or as designated in local or regional plans, policies, or ordinances [CEQA Guidelines, Appendix A])

Federally and/or State-Listed Wildlife Species

No special-status wildlife species were observed during the biological field surveys, though specific protocol surveys were not conducted.

Wildlife species observed within the project footprint consisted of those common to disturbed areas and adapted to human presence. Species observed during the site visit include mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), common raven (*Corvus corax*) and northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*). All wildlife species observed are listed in Appendix B.

Based upon the results of the literature review, twenty-nine (29) special-status wildlife species are known to occur within the vicinity of the project footprint. These species, their federal and State status, habitat requirements and occurrence probability are included in Table 2. One of these species is listed as endangered, threatened or is a candidate for listing under the federal and/or California Endangered Species Acts:

Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard

The Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard (*Uma inornate*) is federally threatened, state endangered and a CVMSHCP covered species. The species is restricted to the Coachella Valley and historically ranged from Cabazon, east to Thermal. The lizard is associated with aeolian sands and has developed morphological and behavioral adaptations including a unique way of "swimming" through the loose sand. As a result, the lizard is dependent on less compacted sands for burrowing to escape the heat of the day, sometimes deeper than five centimeters and in the shade on the hottest days. During normal and wet years, the species feeds on flowers and plant dwelling arthropods, switching to leaves and ants during the dry years (Coachella Valley Conservation Commission 2016).

The BSA is located within designated critical habitat for the species and adjacent to the Thousand Palms Conservation Area of the CVMSCHP. The majority of the BSA contains creosote bush scrub habitat with looser sands, however, proper aeolian sands that the species is closely associated with is absent from the BSA.

Other Special-Status Wildlife Species

Twelve (12) special-status wildlife species have the potential to occur within the BSA, as follows:

- **Flat-tailed horned lizard**. Flat-tailed horned lizard (*Phrynosoma mcallii*) is a CDFW species of special concern and CVMSHCP covered species. The species is associated with sand flats and sand dunes, however, hard packed sand or desert pavement with aeolian sands on top are common habitat type preferences. In addition, the species is commonly associated with creosote bush and white bursage perennial plant species. The species is located at lower elevations in Coachella Valley and two of the conservation areas within the CVMSHCP plan area, including the Thousand Palms Preserve near the BSA. The species has been located within dune habitat south of Ramon Road, however, none have been known to occur north of Ramon Road within the Thousand Palms Preserve (Coachella Valley Conservation Commission 2016).
- **Burrowing owl**. Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) is a CDFW bird species of special concern and CVMSHCP covered species. The species has a broad distribution and in southern California is known to occur in lowlands over a large region, including agricultural areas. They can occur in open desert areas, along irrigation dikes and levees, or wherever burrows are available away from intense human activity (Coachella Valley Conservation Commission 2016).

  The BSA does not contain suitable natural habitat for the species as open grasslands are absent, however, debris was observed onsite that has the potential to provide suitable burrowing habitat for the species.
- **Loggerhead shrike**. Loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*, species of special concern) occur in open woodlands with areas of grass cover and bare ground and require tall shrubs, trees, fences, or power lines for hunting perches. Loggerhead shrike use areas of short grasses, forbs, or bare ground for hunting and thorny vegetation or barbed wire fences for impaling a wide

variety of prey including insects, arachnids, reptiles, amphibians, small birds, and small mammals (Shuford and Gardali 2008).

Potentially suitable habitat for loggerhead shrike to hunt in occurs within the creosote bush scrub within the BSA.

- **Vermilion flycatcher**. Vermilion flycatcher (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) is a CDFW bird species of special concern with a range from southwestern United States south to central Argentina and Uruguay. The species was more abundant within the Coachella Valley but has declined since the 1950s and is more occasionally wintering in the valley. The species is associated with arid scrub, farmlands, savanna, agricultural areas, and riparian woodland (Shuford and Gardali 2008).

  Potentially suitable habitat for the vermilion flycatcher can include the surrounding trees where they can nest and the creosote bush scrub within the BSA.

- **Palm Springs pocket mouse**. Palm Springs pocket mouse (*Pergnathus longimembris bangsi*) is a CDFW mammal species of special concern and CVMSHCP covered species. The species ranges in the lower Sonoran life zones from the San Gregorio Pass area east to the Little San Bernardino Mountains and south along the eastern edge of the Peninsular Range to Borrego Valley and the east side of San Felipe Narrows. Habitat is described as having level to gently sloping topography, sparse to moderate vegetative cover, and loosely packed or sandy soils. The species is known to occur south of Ramon Road within the Thousand Palms Preserve and north of Ramon Road, west of Thousand Palms Canyon Road (Coachella Valley Conservation Commission 2016).

  Potentially suitable habitat occurs throughout the BSA within sandy creosote bush scrub vegetation areas, however, the site is adjacent to disturbed areas.

- **American badger**. American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) is a CDFW mammal species of special concern that occupy a diversity of habitats, including grasslands, savannas, and desert areas. Potentially suitable habitat does occur within the BSA, however, the area is disturbed and the nearest known occurrence is recorded 10 miles from the BSA.

- **Coachella Valley round-tailed ground squirrel**. Coachella Valley round-tailed ground squirrel (*Xerospermophilus tereticaudus chlorus*) is a CDFW mammal species of special concern and CVMSHCP covered species. The species is associated with sand fields and dune formations, however, active dune and blowsand areas are not required. Habitat details include mesquite hummocks, creosote bush scrub, or desert saltbush scrub. The species is known to occur south of Ramon Road in the dune area of the Thousand Palms Preserve as well as the dunes north of Ramon Road and west of Thousand Palms Canyon Road (Coachella Valley Conservation Commission 2016).

  Potentially suitable habitat does occur within the creosote bush scrub in the BSA, however, area and immediately adjacent areas are disturbed. In addition, nearest CNDDB occurrence is located 5 miles from the BSA.

Table 2. Special-Status Wildlife Species Known From the Vicinity of the Project Footprint

Species	Federal/State Status	Habitat and Distribution	Potential for Occurrence
FISH			
Cyprinodon macularius **Desert pupfish**	US: FE CA: SE CVMSHCP: C	Springs, seeps, and slow-moving streams, as well as backwaters and sloughs.	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable riparian habitat to support this species.
INSECTS			
Danaus plexippus **Monarch Butterfly**	US: FC CA: None CVMSHCP: NC	Typically overwinter in groves of eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus* sp.), Monterey pine (*Pinus radiata*), or Monterey cypress (*Hesperocyparis macrocarpa*) along the California coast. Adult females lay eggs on milkweed species (*Asclepias* spp.). Milkweeds are critical for successful development of the caterpillar into an adult butterfly (Western Monarch Milkweed Mapper 2022).	Not Expected. The site does not contain suitable overwintering or milkweed habitat to support this species.
Dinacoma caseyi **Casey's June beetle**	US: FE CA: None CVMSHCP: NC	Known from only two small populations in southern Palm Springs. Emergence holes have been observed in disturbed, sandy wash areas and semi-developed areas beneath non-native vegetation. Soils that are modified or compacted are not likely to support persistent occupancy. Associated with alluvial fans and Carsitas series soil.	Not Expected. Suitable soils on site but outside of species known geographic range. Nearest known occurrence is over 6 miles east.
Bombus crotchii **Crotch bumble bee**	US: None CA: CE CVMSHCP: NC	Found between San Diego and Redding in a variety of habitats including open grasslands, shrublands, chaparral, desert margins including Joshua tree and creosote scrub, and semi-urban settings. It is near endemic to California, with only a few records from Nevada and Mexico (CDFW 2022). Williams et al. (2014) report plants in the genera *Asclepias, Chaenactis, Lupinus, Medicago, Phacelia*, and *Salvia* as example food plants.	Potentially suitable creosote scrub habitat onsite, however, nearest CNDDB occurrence is over 9.5 miles west of the site.

Table 2. Special-Status Wildlife Species Known From the Vicinity of the Project Footprint

Species	Federal/State Status	Habitat and Distribution	Potential for Occurrence
REPTILES			
Crotalus ruber **Red-diamond rattlesnake**	US: None CA: SSC CVMSHCP: NC	Arid scrub, coastal chaparral, oak and pine woodlands, rocky grassland, and cultivated areas. On desert slopes of mountains, it ranges into rocky desert flats.	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
Gopherus agassizii **Desert tortoise**	US: FT CA: ST CVMSHCP: C	Firm ground to dig burrows, or rocks to shelter. In arid sandy or gravelly locations along riverbanks, washes, sandy dunes, alluvial fans, canyon bottoms, desert oases, rocky hillsides, creosote flats, and hillsides.	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species. Nearest CNDDB occurrence is 8.5 miles northeast of the site.
Phrynosoma blainvillii **Coast horned lizard**	US: None CA: SSC CVMSHCP: NC	Primarily in sandy soil in open areas, especially washes and floodplains, in many plant communities. Requires open areas for sunning, bushes for cover, patches of loose soil for burial, and an abundant supply of ants or other insects. Occurs west of the deserts from northern Baja California north to Shasta County below 2,400 meters (8,000 feet) elevation.	Not Expected: The site does outside of known range for this species. Nearest CNDDB occurrence is 13 miles northeast of the site.
Phrynosoma mcallii **Flat-tailed horned lizard**	US: None CA: SSC CVMSHCP: C	Sandy desert hardpan or gravel flats with scattered sparse vegetation of low species diversity. Common in areas with high density of harvester ants and fine windblown sand, but rarely occurs on dunes.	Suitable habitat onsite, nearest CNDDB occurrence is less than 1 mile northeast of the site.
Uma inornata **Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard**	US: FT CA: SE CVMSHCP: C	Sparsely-vegetated arid areas with fine wind-blown sand, including dunes, washes, and flats with sandy hummocks formed around the bases of vegetation. Needs fine, loose sand for burrowing.	Suitable habitat onsite, nearest CNDDB occurrence is less than .5 miles west and east of the site. Within critical habitat.

Table 2. Special-Status Wildlife Species Known From the Vicinity of the Project Footprint

Species	Federal/State Status	Habitat and Distribution	Potential for Occurrence
BIRDS			
Athene cunicularia **Burrowing Owl**	US: None CA: SSC CVMSHCP: C	Open country in much of North and South America. Usually occupies ground squirrel burrows in open, dry grasslands, agricultural and range lands, railroad rights-of-way, and margins of highways, golf courses, and airports. Often utilizes man-made structures, such as earthen berms, cement culverts, cement, asphalt, rock, or wood debris piles. They avoid thick, tall vegetation, brush, and trees.	Low: The site does not contain suitable natural habitat to support this species, but debris piles are present within the site.
Aquila chrysaetos **Golden eagle**	US: None CA: FP CVMSHCP: NC	Open and semi-open country featuring native vegetation. Found primarily in mountains up to 12,000 feet, canyonlands, rimrock terrain, and riverside cliffs and bluffs. Nests on cliffs and steep escarpments in grassland, chaparral, shrubland, forest, and other vegetated areas. Year-round, diurnal activity.	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
Empidonax traillii extimus **southwestern willow flycatcher**	US: FE CA: SE CVMSHCP: C	Requires extensive, dense riparian areas with willows or tamarisk. Require standing water.	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
Lanius ludovicianus **Loggerhead shrike**	US: None CA: SSC CVMSHCP: NC	Inhabits open country with short vegetation and well-spaced shrubs or low trees, particular those with spines or thorns. Frequent agricultural fields, pastures, old orchards, riparian areas, desert scrublands, savannas, prairies, golf courses, and cemeteries.	Moderate: Site contains suitable habitat to support this species. Nearest CNNDB occurrence is 4 miles southeast of site.
Polioptila californica californica **coastal California gnatcatcher**	US: FT CA: SSC CVMSHCP: NC	Year-round resident that occurs in coastal sage scrub and valleys up to about 500 meters (1,640 feet).	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.

Table 2. Special-Status Wildlife Species Known From the Vicinity of the Project Footprint

Species	Federal/State Status	Habitat and Distribution	Potential for Occurrence
Pyrocephalus rubinus **Vermilion flycatcher**	US: None CA: SSC CVMSHCP: NC	Scrub, desert, cultivated lands, and riparian woodlands.	Moderate: Site contains suitable habitat to support this species. Nearest CNNDB occurrence is 7 miles southeast of site.
Toxostoma bendirei **Bendire's thrasher**	US: None CA: SSC CVMSHCP: NC	Breeds in Mojave scrub habitats. Associated with yucca (Yucca spp.) and prickly pear (Opuntia ssp.), as well as firmly packed soil. Generally avoids areas with steep slopes and rocky terrain.	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable dense habitat to support this species.
Toxostoma crissale **Crissal thrasher**	US: None CA: SSC CVMSHCP: C	Found in dense, low scrubby vegetation, such as desert and foothill scrub and riparian brush.	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
Toxostoma lecontei **Le Conte's thrasher**	US: None CA: SSC CVMSHCP: C	Desert scrub, mesquite, tall riparian brush, and chaparral.	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
Vireo bellii pusillus **least Bell's vireo**	US: FE CA: SE CVMSHCP: C	Dense riparian habitats with a stratified canopy, including southern willow scrub, mule fat scrub, and riparian forest.	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
MAMMALS			
Chaetodipus fallx pallidus **Pallid San Diego pocket mouse**	US: None CA: SSC CVMSHCP: NC	Sandy herbaceous areas, usually in rocky or coarse gravel soils in desert wash, desert scrub, desert succulent shrub, pinyon-juniper, and annual grasslands ranging from sea level to 1,350 meters.	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
Eumops perotis californicus **Western mastiff bat**	US: None CA: SSC CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in many open, semi-arid to arid habitats, including conifer and deciduous woodlands, coastal scrub, grasslands, chaparral, etc.; roosts in crevices in vertical cliff faces, high buildings, and tunnels, and travels widely when foraging.	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.

Table 2. Special-Status Wildlife Species Known From the Vicinity of the Project Footprint

Species	Federal/State Status	Habitat and Distribution	Potential for Occurrence
Lasiurus xanthinus **Western yellow bat**	US: None CA: SSC CVMSHCP: C	Arid to dry areas including savannas, secluded woodlands, pasture or croplands, and urban areas.	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
Neotoma lepida intermedia **San Diego desert woodrat**	US: None CA: SSC CVMSHCP: NC	Occurs in a variety of shrub and desert habitats, primarily associated with rock outcrops, boulders, cacti, or areas of dense undergrowth.	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
Nyctinomops femorosaccus **Pocketed free-tailed bat**	US: None CA: SSC CVMSHCP: NC	Rugged cliffs, and high rocky outcrops and slopes.	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
Ovis canadensis nelsoni **Desert bighorn sheep**	US: None CA: FP CVMSHCP: C	Open rough, rocky, and steep terrain encompassing springs and plateaus.	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
Ovis canadensis nelsoni pop.2 **Peninsular bighorn sheep DPS**	US: FE CA: ST CVMSHCP: C	Found in the Peninsular Ranges occupying steep slopes and cliffs, rough and rocky topography, and sparse vegetation. Uses alluvial fans, washes, and valley floors for dispersal to neighboring ranges.	Not Expected: The site does not contain suitable habitat to support this species.
Perognathus longimembris bangsi **Palm Springs pocket mouse**	US: None CA: SSC CVMSHCP: C	Creosote scrub, desert scrub, and grasslands, generally occurring on loosely packed or sandy soils with sparse to moderately dense vegetative cover.	Low: The site contains suitable habitat to support this species but is disturbed. Nearest CNDDB occurrence is 5 miles southeast of site.
Taxidea taxus **American badger**	US: None CA: SSC CVMSHCP: NC	Agricultural land, grassland and other open areas and brush lands with sparse groundcover.	Low: The site contains suitable habitat to support this species, however, nearest CNDDB occurrence is 10 miles southeast of site.

Table 2. Special-Status Wildlife Species Known From the Vicinity of the Project Footprint

Species	Federal/State Status	Habitat and Distribution	Potential for Occurrence
Xerospermophilus tereticaudus chlorus **Coachella Valley round-tailed ground squirrel**	US: None CA: SSC CVMSHCP: C	Sandy arid areas with scrub and wash habitats including mesquite- and creosote-dominated sand dunes, creosote bush scrub, creosote-palo verde, and saltbush/alkali scrub. Wind-blown sand, coarse sand, and packed silt with desert pavement.	Low: The site contains suitable habitat to support this species but is disturbed. Nearest CNDDB occurrence is 5 miles southeast of site.

Notes:

FE	Federally Endangered
FT	Federally Threatened
FC	Federal Candidate for Listing
SE	Endangered in California
ST	Threatened in California
CE	Candidate for Endangered Status
CT	Candidate for Threatened Status
CR	Rare in California
SSP	State Species of Concern
FP	State Fully Protected

CVMSHCP Conservation Status

NC	Impacts to this species are not covered through participation in the CVMSHCP.
C	Impacts to this species are covered through participation in the CVMSHCP.

4.3 Potential Jurisdictional Wetlands and Streambeds

The project footprint does not support any areas that would be considered jurisdictional under Sections 401 and 404 of the Clean Water Act or Section 1602 of the California Fish and Game Code. No further studies to determine potential USACE, CDFW, or RWQCB jurisdiction within the project footprint are required.

Figure 4. Site Photographs

Photo 1: View of the project footprint looking south towards existing Ramon Substation, showing disturbed Creosote Bush Scrub habitat.

Photo 2: View of the project footprint towards east, showing Creosote Bush Scrub Habitat.

Photo 3: View of the construction debris piles in the disturbed Creosote Bush Scrub habitat within the project footprint.

Photo 4: View of the offroad activity in the disturbed Creosote Bush Scrub habitat within the project footprint.

4.4 Nesting Birds

Creosote Bush within the project footprint and Eucalyptus and Mesquite Trees in the buffer area provide potentially suitable habitat to support nesting birds protected under the MBTA and California Fish and Game Code occurs within the BSA. Although no raptors were observed during the site visit, the disturbed habitat within project footprint does provide foraging habitat for raptors, such as hawks and owls, among other resident and other avian species.

4.5 Wildlife Movement, Corridors, and Nursery Sites

Wildlife movement corridors, also called dispersal corridors or landscape linkages, are linear features whose primary wildlife function is to connect at least two significant habitat areas. Other definitions of corridors and linkages are as follows:

- A corridor is a specific route used for movement and migration of species. A corridor may be different from a linkage because it represents a smaller or narrower avenue for movement.
- Linkage means an area of land that supports or contributes to the long-term movement of wildlife and genetic material. A linkage is a habitat area that provides connectivity between habitat patches, as well as year-round foraging, reproduction, and dispersal habitat for resident plants and animals.

Wildlife corridors and linkages are important features in the landscape, and the viability and quality of a corridor or linkage are dependent on site-specific factors. Topography and vegetative cover are important factors for corridors and linkages. These factors should provide cover for both predator and prey species. They should direct animals to areas of contiguous open space or resources and away from humans and development. The corridor or linkage should be buffered from human encroachment and other disturbances (e.g., light, loud noises, domestic animals) associated with developed areas that have caused habitat fragmentation (Schweiger et al. 2000). Wildlife corridors and linkages may function at various levels depending upon these factors and, as such, the most successful of wildlife corridors and linkages will accommodate all or most of the necessary life requirements of predator and prey species.

Areas not considered functional wildlife dispersal corridors or linkages are typically obstructed or isolated by concentrated development and heavily traveled roads, known as chokepoints. One of the worst scenarios for dispersing wildlife occurs when a large block of habitat leads animals into cul-de-sacs of habitat surrounded by development. These habitat cul-de-sacs frequently result in adverse human/animal interfacing.

The project footprint is disturbed and contains very little native vegetation, additionally, the site is bordered by the Southern California Edison Mirage substation to the west, the existing Ramon Substation and Ramon Road to the south, which limits wildlife movement through the project site.

4.6 Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Compliance

As stated previously, the proposed project is within the planning boundary of the CVMSHCP; however, the project footprint is not within but adjacent to the Thousand Palms Conservation Area (Figure 5).

According to the CVMSHCP,

> "Local jurisdictions will impose a mitigation fee on new Development within the Plan Area that impacts vacant land containing Habitat for the Covered Species or any of the conserved natural communities in the Plan through adoption, or amendment of an existing fee ordinance. In addition to large vacant areas, this also applies to small vacant lots within urban areas that still contain natural open space."

Development on this vacant land would impact critical habitat for the Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard, a CVMSHCP covered species, and the IID is a permittee to the CVMSHCP, requiring payment of the land development mitigation fee. As the IID is a permittee of the CVMSHCP, with payment of the mitigation fee, and compliance with the requirements of CVMSHCP Section 4.2, Conservation Areas; Section 4.4, Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Measures; and Section 4.5, Land Use Adjacency Guidelines, full mitigation compliance with CEQA, CESA, and FESA will be granted for covered species.

Figure 5. Coachella Valley Multiple Species Conservation Plan Area

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5 Impacts Analysis

For the purpose of this impact analysis, the proposed expansion of the existing Ramon Substation is assumed to be the physical project footprint. Permanent and direct impacts are assumed within the project footprint.

Project construction- and operational-related impacts are analyzed in the context of direct or indirect effects. Direct impacts are those on the physical environment that are immediately related to the proposed project; they occur at the same time and place as the proposed project (e.g., vegetation removal and grading associated with construction). Indirect impacts are those that occur later in time or farther removed in distance than direct effects (e.g., long-term changes in water quality and offsite impacts from noise, dust, lighting, etc.). In this analysis, direct impacts from construction are treated as short term (temporary), while indirect impacts from operation are treated as long term (permanent).

5.1.1 Vegetation Communities/Land Cover Types

The proposed project would primarily affect disturbed creosote bush scrub and developed/ornamental vegetation communities. There are no special-status vegetation communities within the BSA. The proposed project would also permanently impact a small amount of natural creosote bush scrub.

5.1.2 Riparian Habitat and Other Special-Status Vegetation Communities

The proposed project would have impacts to creosote bush scrub, disturbed creosote bush scrub, and developed/ornamental vegetation communities. Table 3 summarizes the proposed project impacts on vegetation communities and land cover types. Figure 6 depicts these impacts. No riparian habitat or other special-status vegetation communities are present within the BSA. Therefore, construction and operation of the project would have no direct or indirect impacts on riparian habitat or other special-status vegetation communities.

Table 3. Vegetation Community and Land Cover Type Impacts

Vegetation Community/Land Cover Type	Acreage
Creosote Bush Scrub	0.13
Disturbed Creosote Bush Scrub	3.83
Developed/Ornamental	0.03
Total	**3.99**

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Figure 6. Vegetation Communities and Land Cover Type Impacts

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5.1.3 Special-Status Plant Species

Federally and/or State-Listed Plant Species

As noted above, one federally and/or state listed plant species would have a moderate probability of occurring within the BSA. The Coachella Valley milk-vetch is known to occur within sandy substrates in creosote bush scrub habitat which occurs within the proposed Project footprint, north of the existing Ramon substation. No Coachella Valley milk-vetch individuals were observed during the field visit. The area adjacent to the substation is disturbed due to dumping of materials and garbage and usage of the area by the homeless. In addition, the creosote bush vegetation is more spread out as a result of the disturbance. Surrounding land uses are residential with buildings and areas being used immediately west of the project.

The Coachella Valley milk-vetch is a CVMSCHP covered species and direct impacts to this species is considered a covered activity and mitigated through participation in the CVMSCHP. In addition, mitigation measure BIO-1 would be implemented and would require payment of the mitigation fee as required by the CVMSCHP.

No other federally and/or state listed plant species have any probability from occurring or were observed during the field visit. In this context, no significant impacts on federally and/or state listed plant species would be expected.

Other Special-Status Plant Species

As noted in Table 1, 13 non-listed special-status plant species have the potential to occur in the BSA or within the project vicinity. None of these species were observed during the field visit. Implementation of the project would impact disturbed creosote bush scrub and creosote bush scrub vegetation communities that may be suitable habitat for these non-listed special-status plant species. Significant impacts may occur as a result of the project, however, most of the construction activities would be limited to creosote bush scrub that has been disturbed previously or is subject to dumping activities. In addition, implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-2 and BIO-3 would reduce impacts to these special-status plant species. Mitigation Measure BIO-2 would implement biological resource protection measures prior to construction including a worker's environmental training and review of approved work areas with appropriate fencing. Mitigation Measure BIO-3 would require preconstruction surveys for the presence of any of these special-status plant species and would work to avoid any impacts to them. In this context, impacts to non-listed special-status plant species would be reduced to less than significant.

5.1.4 Special-Status Wildlife Species

Federally and/or State-Listed Wildlife Species

As noted above, one federally and/or state listed wildlife species would have a potential of occurring within the BSA. The Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard has the potential of occurring within the sandy substrates of the creosote bush scrub located within the project footprint. No Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard individuals were observed during the field visit; however, no protocol surveys were conducted. The project footprint is located within federally designated critical habitat for the species. Surrounding land uses are residential with buildings and areas utilized for living spaces located to the west. In addition, the creosote bush scrub directly north of the existing substation is subject to human disturbance as dumped materials and garbage was observed onsite as well as a small encampment.

The project is located adjacent to the Thousand Palms conservation area as designated by the CVMSCHP. The Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard is a CVMSCHP covered species and direct impacts to this species is considered a covered activity and mitigated through participation in the CVMSCHP. Mitigation Measure BIO-1 would also be implemented and would require payment of the mitigation fee as required by the CVMSCHP.

No other federally and/or state listed wildlife species have any probability of occurring or were observed during the field visit. In this context, impacts to federally and/or state listed wildlife species would be less than significant.

Other Special-Status Wildlife Species

As noted in Table 2, 12 non-listed special-status wildlife species have the potential to occur within the BSA. The project would be limited to the disturbed creosote bush scrub habitat that occurs north of the existing Ramon substation. In addition, surrounding land uses are residential with living areas and buildings located to the west. The flat-tailed horned lizard, Palm Springs pocket mouse, and Coachella Valley round-tailed ground squirrel are CDFW species of special concern and CVMSCHP covered species that are known to occur in active dunes and creosote bush scrub habitats. They are noted to occur north and south of Ramon Road in active dune sites. The loggerhead shrike and vermilion flycatcher are known to forage and hunt within creosote bush scrub. The American badger is known to occur within a variety of habitat, including the present creosote bush scrub. Suitable habitat for the burrowing owl does not occur within the BSA, however, dumped materials observed onsite may provide suitable burrows for the species to utilize.

Although the creosote bush scrub is suitable habitat for these species, the area is disturbed with dumping of materials or homeless encampments. Adjacent areas are also highly disturbed with residential living areas or are lacking active dune habitat that some species utilize. In addition, construction activities over the minimally suitable habitat would take place in short duration. Implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-2 and BIO-3 would help to reduce impacts to any special-status wildlife species. Mitigation Measure BIO-2 would require the implementation of biological resource protection measure prior to construction, including worker environmental trainings and review of the approved work area with appropriate fencing. Mitigation Measure BIO-3 would require preconstruction surveys for non-CVMSCHP covered or non-listed special-status wildlife species and work to avoid any impacts to these species. In this context, impacts to non-listed special-status wildlife species would be less than significant.

5.1.5 Jurisdictional Aquatic Resources

No jurisdictional aquatic resources were found during the field visit. The proposed project would be limited to the area north of the existing Ramon substation and utilize established access routes or previously disturbed or developed areas. No impacts to jurisdictional aquatic resources would be expected.

5.1.6 Wildlife Corridors

Development of the project footprint will not result in the loss of any potential wildlife movement areas, wildlife corridors or nursery sites as the project site is not located within but is adjacent to an established habitat corridor or linkage area. Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-2 will ensure the project will avoid potential impacts to nearby wildlife movement areas and corridors.

5.1.7 Local Policies and Ordinances Protecting Biological Resources

County General Plans and development ordinances may include regulations or policies governing biological resources. For example, policies may include tree preservation, locally designated species survey areas, local species of interest, and significant ecological areas. There are no local ordinances applicable to biological resources on site except for code provisions related to the CVMSHCP mitigation fee and land credits. The project will not be in conflict with any local policies or ordinances applicable to existing biological resources on site.

6 Cumulative Effects

Cumulative impacts of development on biological resources potentially include habitat fragmentation, increased edge effects, reduced habitat quality, and increased mortality of some common wildlife species. The proposed project would be an expansion of the existing Ramon substation within creosote bush scrub that is slightly disturbed with dumped materials or human encampments. The project is located at the edge of a conservation area as defined by the CVMSHCP and would impact the disturbed creosote bush scrub. The project is within the CVMSHCP boundaries and implementation of Mitigation Measures BIO-1 through BIO-4 would minimize or avoid impacts that could otherwise contribute to cumulative impacts to biological resources. As the IID is a permittee to the CVMSHCP, the proposed project would be a covered activity under the CVMSHCP with the mitigation payment and compliance under the CVMSHCP, CEQA, CESA, and FESA requirements.

7 Avoidance and Minimization Measures

In order to ensure that the project is in compliance with the CVMSHCP and project effects on biological resources are less than significant with respect to CEQA, the following avoidance and minimization measures should be implemented:

BIO-1. Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Fee Payment.

As a signatory to the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan, the IID shall require a local development mitigation fee prior to the issuance of building permits for the proposed use on the project site at the rates applicable at the time of payment of the fee as set forth in the most recent fee schedule. The project applicant shall be required to provide documentation to the IID confirming the payment of the local development mitigation fee.

The Coachella Valley milk-vetch and Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard are federally listed species and CVMSHCP covered species with potential to occur within the project footprint. Direct impacts to these species as a result of the covered project activity would be in compliance with the CVMSHCP as long as the IID, a permittee of the CVMSHCP, submits a payment of the mitigation fee, complies with the requirements of CVMSHCP Section 4.2, Conservation Areas; Section 4.4, Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Measures; and Section 4.5 Land Use Adjacency Guidelines, and is in full compliance with CEQA, CESA, and FESA requirements.

BIO-2. Implement Biological Resource Protection Measures Prior to Construction

a. Prior to the commencement of construction, a project biologist (a person with, at minimum, a bachelor's degree in biology, ecology, or environmental studies with familiarity with special status plant and wildlife species with the potential to be affected by the project) shall be responsible for overseeing compliance with protective measures for biological resources during vegetation clearing and work activities within and adjacent to areas of native habitat. The project biologist shall be familiar with the local habitats, plants, and wildlife, and shall maintain communications with the contractor to ensure that issues relating to biological resources are appropriately and lawfully managed. The project biologist may designate qualified biologists or biological monitors to help oversee project compliance or conduct preconstruction surveys for special status species. These biologists shall have familiarity with the species for which they would be conducting preconstruction surveys or monitoring construction activities.

b. The project biologist or designated qualified biologist shall review final plans, designate areas that need temporary fencing (e.g., environmentally sensitive area [ESA] fencing), and monitor construction activities within and adjacent to areas with native vegetation communities or special status plant and wildlife species. The qualified biologist shall monitor activities within designated areas during critical times such as vegetation removal, initial ground disturbing activities, and the installation of BMPs and fencing to protect jurisdictional resources, and shall ensure that all regulatory agency permit requirements, conservation measures, and general avoidance and minimization measures are properly implemented and followed. The qualified biologist shall check construction barriers or exclusion fencing and shall provide corrective measures to the

contractor to ensure that the barriers or fencing are maintained throughout construction. The qualified biologist shall have the authority to stop work if a special status wildlife species is encountered within the project area during construction. Construction activities shall cease until the project biologist or qualified biologist determine(s) that the animal will not be harmed or that it has left the construction area on its own. The appropriate regulatory agency(ies) shall be notified within 24 hours of sighting of a special status wildlife species.

c. Prior to the start of construction, all project personnel and contractors who will be on site during construction shall complete mandatory training conducted by the project biologist or a designated qualified biologist. Any new project personnel or contractors that come on board after the initiation of construction shall also be required to complete the mandatory Worker Environmental Awareness Program training before they commence with work. The training shall advise workers of potential impacts on jurisdictional resources. At a minimum, the training shall include the following topics: (1) occurrences of special status species and special status vegetation communities in the project area (including vegetation communities subject to USACE, CDFW, and RWQCB jurisdiction), (2) the purpose for resource protection; (3) protective measures to be implemented in the field, including strictly limiting activities, vehicles, equipment, and construction materials to the fenced to avoid jurisdictional resource areas in the field (i.e., avoid areas delineated on maps or on the Project site by fencing); (5) environmentally responsible construction practices; and (6) the protocol to resolve conflicts that may arise at any time during the construction process.

d. Prior to any ground disturbance the project boundary will be fenced as a means to protect the adjacent lands. The fencing/signage shall be clearly marked in the field by construction personnel under the guidance of the biologist or designated employee. The fencing/signage will remain in place for the duration of the project activities and no work or other project activities will occur outside of the fenced area to incidental impacts to nearby species. Upon completion of project activities, the fencing/signage will be removed.

e. Construction activities shall be limited to daylight hours to the extent feasible. If nighttime activities are unavoidable, then workers shall direct all lights for nighttime lighting into the work area and shall minimize the lighting of natural habitat areas adjacent to the work area. The contractor shall use light glare shields to reduce the extent of illumination into special status vegetation communities. If the work area is located near surface waters, the lighting shall be shielded such that it does not shine directly into the water.

f. Clearing shall be confined to the minimum area necessary to facilitate construction activities. Cleared vegetation and spoils shall be disposed of daily at a permanent off site spoils location or at a temporary on site location that will not create habitat for special status wildlife species. Spoils and dredged material shall be disposed of at an approved site or facility in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local regulations.

g. The Contractor shall avoid wildlife entrapment by completely covering or providing escape ramps for all excavated steep walled holes or trenches more than 1 foot deep at the end of each construction workday. The qualified biologist shall inspect open trenches

and holes and shall remove or release any trapped wildlife found in the trenches or holes prior to filling by the construction contractor.

h. Wildlife can be attracted to den like structures such as pipes and may enter stored pipes and become trapped or injured. All construction pipes, culverts, or similar features; construction equipment; or construction debris left overnight in areas that may be occupied by special status species that could occupy such structures shall be inspected by a qualified biologist prior to being used for construction. Such inspections shall occur at the beginning of each day's activities for those materials to be used or moved that day. If necessary, and under the direct supervision of the biologist, the structure may be moved up to one time to isolate it from construction activities, until the special status species has moved from the structure of its own volition, has been captured and relocated, or has otherwise been removed from the structure.

i. The spread of dust from work sites to special-status vegetation communities or habitats for special-status species on adjacent lands shall be minimized by use of a water truck. Dirt access roads, haul roads, and spoils areas shall be watered at least twice each day when being used during construction dry periods.

BIO-3. Minimize and Avoid Effects on Special-Status Species

a. The project biologist shall conduct focused pre-construction surveys for federal- and State-listed and other special-status plants. All special-status plant species (including listed threatened or endangered species, and all CRPR 1A, 1B, 2, 3, and 4 ranked species) impacted by project activities shall be documented in pre-construction survey reports. Surveys shall be conducted during the appropriate season in all suitable habitat located within the project footprint. The field surveys and reporting must conform to current CDFW botanical field survey protocol (CDFG 2009) or more recent updates, if available.

b. The project biologist shall conduct focused pre-construction surveys for any special-status wildlife species, including Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard, flat-tailed horned lizard, burrowing owl, loggerhead shrike, vermilion flycatcher, Palm Springs pocket mouse, American badger, and Coachella Valley round-tailed ground squirrel. Surveys shall be conducted at least 14 days prior to the start of construction within suitable habitat located within the project footprint. At the discretion of the project biologist, work will be halted if the species are highly disturbed.

BIO-4. Avoid Effects on Migratory and Nesting Birds

When feasible, any vegetation removal or tree trimming activities shall occur outside of the nesting season (February 15–August 31). If vegetation removal or tree trimming activities must occur during the nesting season, a qualified biologist shall conduct a preconstruction survey to locate any active nests within seven days prior to such activities. Should nesting birds be found, an exclusionary buffer (typically 100 feet or up to 300 feet for raptors) suitable to prevent nest disturbance as a result of project activities shall be established by the biologist. This buffer shall be clearly marked in the field by construction personnel under the guidance of the biologist, and construction or clearing shall not be conducted in the buffer until the biologist determines that the young have fledged or the nest is no longer active.

8 References

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Appendix A. Literature Review

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Selected Elements by Common Name

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

California Natural Diversity Database

Query Criteria: Quad IS (La Quinta (3311663) OR West Berdoo Canyon (3311672) OR Keys View (3311682) OR Myoma (3311673) OR East Deception Canyon (3311683) OR Indio (3311662) OR Seven Palms Valley (3311684) OR Rancho Mirage (3311664) OR Cathedral City (3311674))

Species	Element Code	Federal Status	State Status	Global Rank	State Rank	Rare Plant Rank/CDFW SSC or FP
Abrams' spurge *Euphorbia abramsiana*	PDEUP0D010	None	None	G4	S2	2B.2
Algodones euparagia *Euparagia unidentata*	IIHYMBC010	None	None	G1G2	S1S2	
American badger *Taxidea taxus*	AMAJF04010	None	None	G5	S3	SSC
Arizona spurge *Euphorbia arizonica*	PDEUP0D060	None	None	G5	S3	2B.3
Bendire's thrasher *Toxostoma bendirei*	ABPBK06050	None	None	G4	S3	SSC
black-tailed gnatcatcher *Polioptila melanura*	ABPBJ08030	None	None	G5	S3S4	WL
Booth's evening-primrose *Eremothera boothii ssp. boothii*	PDONA03052	None	None	G5T4	S3	2B.3
burrowing owl *Athene cunicularia*	ABNSB10010	None	None	G4	S3	SSC
California ayenia *Ayenia compacta*	PDSTE01020	None	None	G4	S3	2B.3
California ditaxis *Ditaxis serrata var. californica*	PDEUP08050	None	None	G5T3T4	S2?	3.2
California marina *Marina orcuttii var. orcuttii*	PDFAB2F031	None	None	G2G3T1T2	S2?	1B.3
Casey's June beetle *Dinacoma caseyi*	IICOLX5010	Endangered	None	G1	S1	
chaparral sand-verbena *Abronia villosa var. aurita*	PDNYC010P1	None	None	G5T2?	S2	1B.1
cheeseweed owlfly (cheeseweed moth lacewing) *Oliarces clara*	IINEU04010	None	None	G1G3	S2	
Coachella giant sand treader cricket *Macrobaenetes valgum*	IIORT22020	None	None	G1G2	S2	
Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard *Uma inornata*	ARACF15010	Threatened	Endangered	G1Q	S1	
Coachella Valley jerusalem cricket *Stenopelmatus cahuilaensis*	IIORT26010	None	None	G1G2	S2	
Coachella Valley milk-vetch *Astragalus lentiginosus var. coachellae*	PDFAB0FB97	Endangered	None	G5T1	S1	1B.2

Species	Element Code	Federal Status	State Status	Global Rank	State Rank	Rare Plant Rank/CDFW SSC or FP
coast horned lizard *Phrynosoma blainvillii*	ARACF12100	None	None	G4	S4	SSC
coastal California gnatcatcher *Polioptila californica californica*	ABPBJ08081	Threatened	None	G4G5T3Q	S2	SSC
Colorado Valley woodrat *Neotoma albigula venusta*	AMAFF08031	None	None	G5T3T4	S1S2	
Cove's cassia *Senna covesii*	PDFAB491X0	None	None	G5	S3	2B.2
Crissal thrasher *Toxostoma crissale*	ABPBK06090	None	None	G5	S3	SSC
Crotch bumble bee *Bombus crotchii*	IIHYM24480	None	Candidate Endangered	G2	S2	
Deep Canyon snapdragon *Pseudorontium cyathiferum*	PDSCR2R010	None	None	G4G5	S1	2B.3
desert bighorn sheep *Ovis canadensis nelsoni*	AMALE04013	None	None	G4T4	S3	FP
Desert Fan Palm Oasis Woodland *Desert Fan Palm Oasis Woodland*	CTT62300CA	None	None	G3	S3.2	
desert pupfish *Cyprinodon macularius*	AFCNB02060	Endangered	Endangered	G1	S1	
desert spike-moss *Selaginella eremophila*	PPSEL010G0	None	None	G4	S2S3	2B.2
desert tortoise *Gopherus agassizii*	ARAAF01012	Threatened	Threatened	G3	S2S3	
Earthquake Merriam's kangaroo rat *Dipodomys merriami collinus*	AMAFD03144	None	None	G5T2?	S2	
ferruginous hawk *Buteo regalis*	ABNKC19120	None	None	G4	S3S4	WL
flat-seeded spurge *Euphorbia platysperma*	PDEUP0D1X0	None	None	G3	S1	1B.2
flat-tailed horned lizard *Phrynosoma mcallii*	ARACF12040	None	None	G3	S3	SSC
glandular ditaxis *Ditaxis claryana*	PDEUP080L0	None	None	G3G4	S2	2B.2
golden eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*	ABNKC22010	None	None	G5	S3	FP
gravel milk-vetch *Astragalus sabulonum*	PDFAB0F7R0	None	None	G4G5	S2	2B.2
Horn's milk-vetch *Astragalus hornii var. hornii*	PDFAB0F421	None	None	GUT1	S1	1B.1
Lancaster milk-vetch *Astragalus preussii var. laxiflorus*	PDFAB0F721	None	None	G4T2	S1	1B.1

Species	Element Code	Federal Status	State Status	Global Rank	State Rank	Rare Plant Rank/CDFW SSC or FP
Latimer's woodland-gilia *Saltugilia latimeri*	PDPLM0H010	None	None	G3	S3	1B.2
Le Conte's thrasher *Toxostoma lecontei*	ABPBK06100	None	None	G4	S3	SSC
least Bell's vireo *Vireo bellii pusillus*	ABPBW01114	Endangered	Endangered	G5T2	S3	
Little San Bernardino Mtns. linanthus *Linanthus maculatus ssp. maculatus*	PDPLM041Y1	None	None	G2T2	S2	1B.2
loggerhead shrike *Lanius ludovicianus*	ABPBR01030	None	None	G4	S4	SSC
Mecca-aster *Xylorhiza cognata*	PDASTA1010	None	None	G2	S2	1B.2
narrow-leaf sandpaper-plant *Petalonyx linearis*	PDLOA04010	None	None	G4	S3?	2B.3
pallid San Diego pocket mouse *Chaetodipus fallax pallidus*	AMAFD05032	None	None	G5T3T4	S3S4	SSC
Palm Springs pocket mouse *Perognathus longimembris bangsi*	AMAFD01043	None	None	G5T2	S1	SSC
Palm Springs round-tailed ground squirrel *Xerospermophilus tereticaudus chlorus*	AMAFB05161	None	None	G5T2Q	S2	SSC
Parish's daisy *Erigeron parishii*	PDAST3M310	Threatened	None	G2	S2	1B.1
Peninsular bighorn sheep DPS *Ovis canadensis nelsoni pop. 2*	AMALE04012	Endangered	Threatened	G4T3Q	S2	FP
pocketed free-tailed bat *Nyctinomops femorosaccus*	AMACD04010	None	None	G5	S3	SSC
prairie falcon *Falco mexicanus*	ABNKD06090	None	None	G5	S4	WL
purple stemodia *Stemodia durantifolia*	PDSCR1U010	None	None	G5	S2	2B.1
red-diamond rattlesnake *Crotalus ruber*	ARADE02090	None	None	G4	S3	SSC
Robison's monardella *Monardella robisonii*	PDLAM180K0	None	None	G3	S3	1B.3
San Bernardino milk-vetch *Astragalus bernardinus*	PDFAB0F190	None	None	G3	S3	1B.2
San Diego desert woodrat *Neotoma lepida intermedia*	AMAFF08041	None	None	G5T3T4	S3S4	SSC
San Jacinto mariposa-lily *Calochortus palmeri var. munzii*	PMLIL0D121	None	None	G3T3	S3	1B.2
slender cottonheads *Nemacaulis denudata var. gracilis*	PDPGN0G012	None	None	G3G4T3?	S2	2B.2

Species	Element Code	Federal Status	State Status	Global Rank	State Rank	Rare Plant Rank/CDFW SSC or FP
southwestern willow flycatcher *Empidonax traillii extimus*	ABPAE33043	Endangered	Endangered	G5T2	S3	
spear-leaf matelea *Matelea parvifolia*	PDASC0A0J0	None	None	G5	S3	2B.3
triple-ribbed milk-vetch *Astragalus tricarinatus*	PDFAB0F920	Endangered	None	G2	S2	1B.2
vermilion flycatcher *Pyrocephalus rubinus*	ABPAE36010	None	None	G5	S2S3	SSC
western mastiff bat *Eumops perotis californicus*	AMACD02011	None	None	G4G5T4	S3S4	SSC
western yellow bat *Lasiurus xanthinus*	AMACC05070	None	None	G4G5	S3	SSC

Record Count: 66

CNPS Rare Plant Inventory

California Native Plant Society

Search Results

27 matches found. Click on scientific name for details

Search Criteria: 9-Quad include [**3311663:3311672:3311682:3311673:3311683:3311662:3311684:3311664:3311674**], **0** feet between Plant low elevation and high elevation, **800** feet between Plant low elevation and high elevation

FAMILY	▲ SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	FED LIST	STATE LIST	CA RARE PLANT RANK	LIFEFORM	BLOOMING PERIOD	GENERAL HABITATS	LOWEST ELEVATION (FT)	HIGHEST ELEVATION (FT)
Nyctaginaceae	*Abronia villosa* var. *aurita*	chaparral sand-verbena	None	None	1B.1	annual herb	(Jan)Mar-Sep	Chaparral, Coastal scrub, Desert dunes	245	5250
Fabaceae	*Astragalus hornii* var. *hornii*	Horn's milk-vetch	None	None	1B.1	annual herb	May-Oct	Meadows and seeps, Playas	195	2790
Fabaceae	*Astragalus lentiginosus* var. *borreganus*	Borrego milk-vetch	None	None	4.3	annual herb	Feb-May	Mojavean desert scrub, Sonoran desert scrub	100	2935
Fabaceae	*Astragalus lentiginosus* var. *coachellae*	Coachella Valley milk-vetch	FE	None	1B.2	annual/perennial herb	Feb-May	Desert dunes, Sonoran desert scrub (sandy)	130	2150
Fabaceae	*Astragalus sabulonum*	gravel milk-vetch	None	None	2B.2	annual/perennial herb	Feb-Jun	Desert dunes, Mojavean desert scrub, Sonoran desert scrub	-195	3050
Malvaceae	*Ayenia compacta*	California ayenia	None	None	2B.3	perennial herb	Mar-Apr	Mojavean desert scrub, Sonoran desert scrub	490	3595

Convolvulaceae	*Cuscuta californica* var. *apiculata*	pointed dodder	None None 3	annual vine (parasitic)	Feb-Aug	Mojavean desert scrub, Sonoran desert scrub	0	1640
Euphorbiaceae	*Ditaxis claryana*	glandular ditaxis	None None 2B.2	perennial herb	Oct-Mar	Mojavean desert scrub, Sonoran desert scrub	0	1525
Euphorbiaceae	*Ditaxis serrata* var. *californica*	California ditaxis	None None 3.2	perennial herb	Mar-Dec	Sonoran desert scrub	100	3280
Euphorbiaceae	*Euphorbia abramsiana*	Abrams' spurge	None None 2B.2	annual herb	(Aug)Sep-Nov	Mojavean desert scrub, Sonoran desert scrub	-15	4300
Euphorbiaceae	*Euphorbia arizonica*	Arizona spurge	None None 2B.3	perennial herb	Mar-Apr	Sonoran desert scrub (sandy)	165	985
Rubiaceae	*Galium angustifolium* ssp. *gracillimum*	slender bedstraw	None None 4.2	perennial herb	Apr-Jun(Jul)	Joshua tree "woodland", Sonoran desert scrub	425	5085
Malvaceae	*Horsfordia alata*	pink velvet-mallow	None None 4.3	perennial shrub	Feb-Dec	Sonoran desert scrub (rocky)	330	1640
Malvaceae	*Horsfordia newberryi*	Newberry's velvet-mallow	None None 4.3	perennial shrub	Feb-Dec	Sonoran desert scrub (rocky)	10	2625
Boraginaceae	*Johnstonella costata*	ribbed cryptantha	None None 4.3	annual herb	Feb-May	Desert dunes, Mojavean desert scrub, Sonoran desert scrub	-195	1640

Boraginaceae	*Johnstonella holoptera*	winged cryptantha	None None 4.3	annual herb	Mar-Apr	Mojavean desert scrub, Sonoran desert scrub	330	5545
Juncaceae	*Juncus acutus* ssp. *leopoldii*	southwestern spiny rush	None None 4.2	perennial rhizomatous herb	(Mar)May-Jun	Coastal dunes (mesic), Coastal scrub, Marshes and swamps (coastal salt), Meadows and seeps (alkaline seeps)	10	2955
Juncaceae	*Juncus cooperi*	Cooper's rush	None None 4.3	perennial herb	Apr-May(Aug)	Meadows and seeps (mesic, alkaline or saline)	-855	5805
Polemoniaceae	*Linanthus maculatus* ssp. *maculatus*	Little San Bernardino Mtns. linanthus	None None 1B.2	annual herb	Mar-May	Desert dunes, Joshua tree "woodland", Mojavean desert scrub, Sonoran desert scrub	460	4005
Solanaceae	*Lycium torreyi*	Torrey's box-thorn	None None 4.2	perennial shrub	(Jan-Feb)Mar-Jun(Sep-Nov)	Mojavean desert scrub, Sonoran desert scrub	-165	4005
Polygonaceae	*Nemacaulis denudata* var. *gracilis*	slender cottonheads	None None 2B.2	annual herb	(Mar)Apr-May	Coastal dunes, Desert dunes, Sonoran desert scrub	-165	1310

Loasaceae	*Petalonyx linearis*	narrow-leaf sandpaper-plant	None	None	2B.3	perennial shrub	(Jan-Feb)Mar-May(Jun-Dec)	Mojavean desert scrub, Sonoran desert scrub	-80	3660
Plantaginaceae	*Pseudorontium cyathiferum*	Deep Canyon snapdragon	None	None	2B.3	annual herb	Feb-Apr	Sonoran desert scrub (rocky)	0	2625
Selaginellaceae	*Selaginella eremophila*	desert spike-moss	None	None	2B.2	perennial rhizomatous herb	(May)Jun(Jul)	Chaparral, Sonoran desert scrub (gravelly, rocky)	655	4250
Fabaceae	*Senna covesii*	Cove's cassia	None	None	2B.2	perennial herb	Mar-Jun(Aug)	Sonoran desert scrub	740	4250
Plantaginaceae	*Stemodia durantifolia*	purple stemodia	None	None	2B.1	perennial herb	(Jan)Apr-Dec	Sonoran desert scrub (often mesic, sandy)	590	985
Asteraceae	*Xylorhiza cognata*	Mecca-aster	None	None	1B.2	perennial herb	Jan-Jun	Sonoran desert scrub	65	1310

Showing 1 to 27 of 27 entries

Suggested Citation:

California Native Plant Society, Rare Plant Program. 2023. Rare Plant Inventory (online edition, v9.5). Website https://www.rareplants.cnps.org [accessed 31 May 2023].

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Carlsbad Fish And Wildlife Office
2177 Salk Avenue - Suite 250
Carlsbad, CA 92008-7385
Phone: (760) 431-9440 Fax: (760) 431-5901

In Reply Refer To:
Project Code: 2023-0089763
Project Name: Ramon Substation

June 05, 2023

Subject: List of threatened and endangered species that may occur in your proposed project location or may be affected by your proposed project

To Whom It May Concern:

The enclosed species list identifies threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate species, as well as proposed and final designated critical habitat, that may occur within the boundary of your proposed project and/or may be affected by your proposed project. The species list fulfills the requirements of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) under section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*).

New information based on updated surveys, changes in the abundance and distribution of species, changed habitat conditions, or other factors could change this list. Please feel free to contact us if you need more current information or assistance regarding the potential impacts to federally proposed, listed, and candidate species and federally designated and proposed critical habitat. Please note that under 50 CFR 402.12(e) of the regulations implementing section 7 of the Act, the accuracy of this species list should be verified after 90 days. This verification can be completed formally or informally as desired. The Service recommends that verification be completed by visiting the ECOS-IPaC website at regular intervals during project planning and implementation for updates to species lists and information. An updated list may be requested through the ECOS-IPaC system by completing the same process used to receive the enclosed list.

The purpose of the Act is to provide a means whereby threatened and endangered species and the ecosystems upon which they depend may be conserved. Under sections 7(a)(1) and 7(a)(2) of the Act and its implementing regulations (50 CFR 402 *et seq.*), Federal agencies are required to utilize their authorities to carry out programs for the conservation of threatened and endangered species and to determine whether projects may affect threatened and endangered species and/or designated critical habitat.

A biological assessment is required for construction projects (or other undertakings having similar physical impacts) that are major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment as defined in the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(c)). For projects other than major construction activities, the Service suggests that a biological

evaluation similar to a biological assessment be prepared to determine whether the project may affect listed or proposed species and/or designated or proposed critical habitat. Recommended contents of a biological assessment are described at 50 CFR 402.12.

If a Federal agency determines, based on the Biological Assessment or biological evaluation, that listed species and/or designated critical habitat may be affected by the proposed project, the agency is required to consult with the Service pursuant to 50 CFR 402. In addition, the Service recommends that candidate species, proposed species and proposed critical habitat be addressed within the consultation. More information on the regulations and procedures for section 7 consultation, including the role of permit or license applicants, can be found at the Fish and Wildlife Service's Endangered Species Consultation website at:

https://www.fws.gov/endangered/what-we-do/faq.html

Migratory Birds: In addition to responsibilities to protect threatened and endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), there are additional responsibilities under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) to protect native birds from project-related impacts. Any activity, intentional or unintentional, resulting in take of migratory birds, including eagles, is prohibited unless otherwise permitted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (50 C.F.R. Sec. 10.12 and 16 U.S.C. Sec. 668(a)). For more information regarding these Acts see https://www.fws.gov/birds/policies-and-regulations.php.

The MBTA has no provision for allowing take of migratory birds that may be unintentionally killed or injured by otherwise lawful activities. It is the responsibility of the project proponent to comply with these Acts by identifying potential impacts to migratory birds and eagles within applicable NEPA documents (when there is a federal nexus) or a Bird/Eagle Conservation Plan (when there is no federal nexus). Proponents should implement conservation measures to avoid or minimize the production of project-related stressors or minimize the exposure of birds and their resources to the project-related stressors. For more information on avian stressors and recommended conservation measures see https://www.fws.gov/birds/bird-enthusiasts/threats-to-birds.php.

In addition to MBTA and BGEPA, Executive Order 13186: *Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds*, obligates all Federal agencies that engage in or authorize activities that might affect migratory birds, to minimize those effects and encourage conservation measures that will improve bird populations. Executive Order 13186 provides for the protection of both migratory birds and migratory bird habitat. For information regarding the implementation of Executive Order 13186, please visit https://www.fws.gov/birds/policies-and-regulations/executive-orders/e0-13186.php.

We appreciate your concern for threatened and endangered species. The Service encourages Federal agencies to include conservation of threatened and endangered species into their project planning to further the purposes of the Act. Please include the Consultation Code in the header of this letter with any request for consultation or correspondence about your project that you submit to our office.

Attachment(s):

- Official Species List

OFFICIAL SPECIES LIST

This list is provided pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, and fulfills the requirement for Federal agencies to "request of the Secretary of the Interior information whether any species which is listed or proposed to be listed may be present in the area of a proposed action".

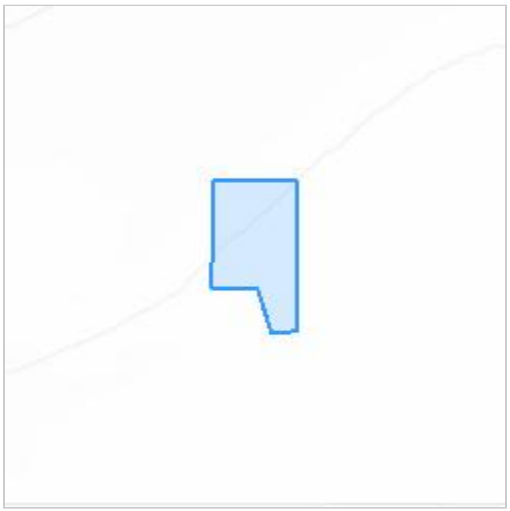
This species list is provided by:

Carlsbad Fish And Wildlife Office
2177 Salk Avenue - Suite 250
Carlsbad, CA 92008-7385
(760) 431-9440

PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Code: 2023-0089763
Project Name: Ramon Substation
Project Type: Distribution Line - New Construction - Above Ground
Project Description: Improvements to the existing Ramon Substation
Project Location:

The approximate location of the project can be viewed in Google Maps: https://www.google.com/maps/@33.81955935,-116.36739771508995,14z



Counties: Riverside County, California

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT SPECIES

There is a total of 7 threatened, endangered, or candidate species on this species list.

Species on this list should be considered in an effects analysis for your project and could include species that exist in another geographic area. For example, certain fish may appear on the species list because a project could affect downstream species.

IPaC does not display listed species or critical habitats under the sole jurisdiction of NOAA Fisheries[1], as USFWS does not have the authority to speak on behalf of NOAA and the Department of Commerce.

See the "Critical habitats" section below for those critical habitats that lie wholly or partially within your project area under this office's jurisdiction. Please contact the designated FWS office if you have questions.

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1. NOAA Fisheries, also known as the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), is an office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration within the Department of Commerce.

BIRDS

NAME	STATUS
Least Bell's Vireo *Vireo bellii pusillus* There is **final** critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/5945	Endangered
Southwestern Willow Flycatcher *Empidonax traillii extimus* There is **final** critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/6749	Endangered

REPTILES

NAME	STATUS
Coachella Valley Fringe-toed Lizard *Uma inornata* There is **final** critical habitat for this species. Your location overlaps the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/2069	Threatened
Desert Tortoise *Gopherus agassizii* Population: Wherever found, except AZ south and east of Colorado R., and Mexico There is **final** critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat. Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/4481	Threatened

FISHES

NAME	STATUS
Desert Pupfish *Cyprinodon macularius*	Endangered

There is **final** critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat.
Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/7003

INSECTS

NAME	STATUS
Monarch Butterfly *Danaus plexippus*	Candidate

No critical habitat has been designated for this species.
Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9743

FLOWERING PLANTS

NAME	STATUS
Coachella Valley Milk-vetch *Astragalus lentiginosus var. coachellae*	Endangered

There is **final** critical habitat for this species. Your location does not overlap the critical habitat.
Species profile: https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/7426

CRITICAL HABITATS

There is 1 critical habitat wholly or partially within your project area under this office's jurisdiction.

NAME	STATUS
Coachella Valley Fringe-toed Lizard *Uma inornata*	Final

https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/2069#crithab

IPAC USER CONTACT INFORMATION

Agency:	County of Riverside
Name:	Aaron Newton
Address:	8690 Balboa Ave.
Address Line 2:	Suite 200
City:	San Diego
State:	CA
Zip:	92123
Email	aaron.newton@hdrinc.com
Phone:	8587128331

Appendix B. Plant and Wildlife Species Observed

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Species	Common Name	Special-Status	Wetland Rank	Weed Rank
EUDICOTS				
ASTERACEAE – SUNFLOWER FAMILY				
Ambrosia salsola var. salsola	common burrobrush			
Encelia farinosa	brittlebush			
CHENOPODIACEAE – GOOSEFOOT FAMILY				
Atriplex canescens	four-wing saltbush			
FABACEAE – LEGUME FAMILY				
*Parkinsonia aculeata**	Mexican palo verde		FAC	
Psorothamnus emoryi	Emory's indigo-bush			
Psorothamnus spinosus	smoke tree			
Senna armata	spiny senna			
LAMIACEAE – MINT FAMILY				
Salvia dorrii	Dorr's sage			
MYRTACEAE – MYRTLE FAMILY				
*Eucalyptus camaldulensis**	red gum		FAC	
SIMMONDSIACEAE – JOJOBA FAMILY				
Simmondsia chinensis	jojoba			
TAMARICACEAE – TAMARISK FAMILY				
*Tamarix ramosissima**	saltcedar			4500
ZYGOPHYLLACEAE – CALTROP FAMILY				
Larrea tridentata	creosote bush			
MONOCOTS				
POACEAE – GRASS FAMILY				
*Schismus barbatus**	barbed Mediterranean grass			

Scientific Name	Common Name	Special Status
REPTILES		
IGUANIDAE - IGUANA FAMILY		
Dipsosaurus dorsalis	Desert Iguana	
BIRDS		
COLUMBIDAE - PIGEON FAMILY		
Zenaida asiatica	White-winged Dove	
Zenaida macroura	Mourning Dove	
CORVIDAE - CROW FAMILY		
Corvus corax	Common Raven	
MIMIDAE - THRASHER FAMILY		
Mimus polyglottos	Northern Mockingbird	
PASSERIDAE - OLD WORLD SPARROW FAMILY		
*Passer domesticus**	House Sparrow	
TROCHILIDAE - HUMMINGBIRD FAMILY		
Calypte anna	Anna's Hummingbird	

LEGEND

Federal (USFWS):

BGEPA=Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act

FE=Endangered

FT=Threatened

FC=Candidate

FCE=Federal Candidate Endangered

FCT= Federal Candidate Threatened

Legend

Symbols:

* Non-native species
cf. confer: This designation is used when a species or infraspecific taxon cannot be confirmed, but is believed to be the selected species of infraspecific taxon based on available anatomy

Federal Designations:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:

FE Endangered
FT Threatened
FC Candidate Species

U.S. Forest Service:

FSS Forest Service Sensitive
WL Watch List

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Wetland Rank:

OBL: Obligate Wetland - Almost always occur in wetlands. With few exceptions, these plants are found in standing water or seasonally saturated soils near the surface.
FACW: Facultative Wetland - Usually occur in wetlands, but may occur in non-wetlands. These plants predominately occur with hydric soils, often in geomorphic settings where water saturates the soils or floods the soil surface at least seasonally.
FAC: Facultative - Occur in wetlands and non-wetlands. These plants can grow in hydric, mesic, or xeric habitats.
FACU Facultative Upland - Usually occur in non-wetlands, but may occur in wetlands. These plants predominately occur on drier or more mesic sites in geomorphic settings where water rarely saturates the soils or floods the soil surface seasonally.
None (UPL): Upland - Almost never occur in wetlands. These plants occupy mesic to xeric non-wetland habitats. They almost never occur in standing water or saturated soils.

Other Designations:

California Invasive Plant Council Rank:

High These species have severe ecological impacts on the surrounding habitat. They have moderate to high rates of dispersal and establishment, and most are widely distributed.
Moderate These species have substantial and apparent—but generally not severe—ecological impacts on the surrounding habitat. They have moderate to high rates of dispersal. Distribution may range from limited to widespread.
Limited These species are invasive, but their ecological impacts are minor on a statewide level. They have low to moderate rates of colonization. Although their distribution is generally limited, these species may be locally persistent and problematic.
Watch List These species are predicted to become invasive if no further actions are taken. Distribution may range from limited to widespread in specific regions.

State of California Designations:

California Department of Fish and Wildlife:

SE Endangered
ST Threatened
SR Rare

California Rare Plant Rank:

1A Plants presumed extirpated in California and either rare or extinct elsewhere
1B Plants Rare, Threatened, or Endangered in California and elsewhere
2A Plants presumed extirpated in California, but more common elsewhere
2B Plants Rare, Threatened, or Endangered in California, but more common elsewhere
3 Plants about which we need more information - review list
4 Plants of limited distribution - watch list

Threat Code Extensions:

None Plants lacking any threat information
.1 Seriously threatened in California (over 80% of occurrences threatened; high degree and immediacy of threat)
.2 Moderately threatened in California (20–80% of occurrences threatened; moderate degree and immediacy of threat)
.3 Not very threatened in California (<20% of occurrences threatened; low degree and immediacy of threat or no current threats known)

California Department of Food and Agriculture Weed Rank:

A eradication, containment, rejection, or other holding action at the state-County level is mandated
B eradication, containment, control, or other holding action is at the discretion of the commissioner
C no state action is required except to retard the speed of spreading
4500 this plant is included in CCR Section 4500 list of state noxious weeds