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LIB180398



Pacific Gas and Electric Company

BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Moss Landing-Metcalf 500kV Grading Project

August 2016, Revised October 2018

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BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Moss Landing-Metcalf 500kV Grading Project

Prepared for: Pacific Gas and Electric Company

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

California Department of Fish and Wildlife
California Natural Diversity Database
California Native Plant Society
Limits of Disturbance
Migratory Bird Treaty Act
Pacific Gas and Electric Company
United States Fish & Wildlife Service

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A discrepancy exists beneath the easternmost phase of the Metcalf-Moss Landing 500kV Circuit near Tower 004/024. To resolve the discrepancy, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) plans to grade the top of a terrace located beneath the conductor. This Biological Assessment and the associated field surveys were prepared for the proposed grading in Monterey County, California. The field reconnaissance survey was conducted on April 18, 2016 after conducting a desktop review. Three special-status plant species were observed within the limits of disturbance (LOD) for the grading activities: Hooker's manzanita (*Arctostaphylos hookeri*), Pajaro manzanita (*Arctostaphylos pajaroensis*), and Eastwood's goldenbush (*Ericameria fasciculata*). This Biological Assessment provides proposed measures to minimize impacts and to reduce or eliminate introduction of invasive species.

A follow up site visit to the Moss Landing-Metcalf 500kV Grading Project Location was conducted by an Arcadis Biologist/Botanist on February 13, 2018. The purpose of this site visit was to confirm conditions are the same as those reported in this Biological Assessment dated August 2016 and to document any changes to the habitat quality and vegetation present.

A thorough review of the site confirmed there were no noticeable changes in the vegetation since the previous survey conducted in 2016. The same number and species of special status shrubs were present in the LOD. Additionally, it was noted that there were no trees greater than six inches diameter at breast height within the limits of disturbance.

1 INTRODUCTION

This Biological Assessment and the associated field reconnaissance survey was prepared to support the proposed grading activity associated with the Metcalf-Moss Landing 500kV Circuit between Towers 004/024 and 004/025 in Monterey County, California (Figure 1). This report describes the existing conditions at the site, field survey methods, findings, and recommended mitigation measures.

2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

The proposed grading area is located approximately 100 feet to the northeast of tower 004/024 on the Moss Landing-Metcalf circuit between towers 004/024 and 004/025 (the Site). The Site is 425 feet above mean sea level and sits at the top of a northeast-southwest trending ridge. The Site and associated towers are accessed by dirt roads to the immediate northwest, west, and southwest.

The habitat surrounding the Site is comprised primarily of coast live oak woodland, dominated by coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), with associated stands of central maritime chaparral on south-facing slopes and ridgetops. The LOD area supports central maritime chaparral vegetation along with one coast live oak tree; this vegetation is described further in Section 6. To the northeast is a stand of large Eucalyptus trees (100+ feet tall). Weeds grow abundantly along the access roads and within vegetated areas; the most noxious non-native species include Eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus* sp.; including seedlings), pampas grass (*Cortaderia* sp.), and French broom (*Genista monspessulana*).

The proposed grading area totals 895 square feet. The entire LOD includes grading and erosion control areas, as well as staging and stockpile areas, and covers 5,164 square feet (Figures 2 and 3); the LOD area is dominated primarily by central maritime chaparral vegetation.

3 APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

No state or federally-listed species have the potential to occur within the Site. Therefore provisions listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act and California Endangered Species Act are not applicable.

The oak woodland and eucalyptus stand surrounding the Site provide suitable nesting habitat for raptors and other birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the California Fish and Game Code. The MBTA of 1918 prohibits the harassing, possessing, killing, or trading of migratory birds. Most actions that result in the taking or permanent or temporary possession of protected species violates the MBTA. Raptors and their nests are protected under both the MBTA and Fish and Game Code Section 3503 which prohibits the killing, possession, or destruction of bird eggs or bird nests. Sections 3503.5 and 3513 prohibit the killing, possession, or destruction of all nesting birds (including passerines).

4 METHODS

A desktop review was conducted in preparation for the field reconnaissance survey. This included a review of findings from prior field surveys conducted at this location (AECOM 2012 and Arcadis 2015), a search of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) within 5 miles of the Site, and a Google Earth review of the topography and vegetation canopy. A list of all special-status species with CNDDB

records occurring within the 5-mile radius of the Site and their potential to occur within the Site are presented in the table below.

Table 1: Special-Status Species within a 5-mile Radius
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Species	Status Federal/State/Other	Habitat	Likelihood of Occurrence	
Arctostaphylos hookeri ssp. hookeri Hooker's manzanita	//1B.2	Chaparral, coastal scrub, closed-cone coniferous forest, cismontane woodland. Sandy soils. Blooming period January- June.	Present . 6 plants are present within the Limits of Disturbance in chaparral habitat.	
Arctostaphylos pajaroensis Pajaro manzanita	is//1B.1 soils. Blooming period December-		Present. Approximately 45 plants are present within the Limits of Disturbance in chaparral habitat.	
Centromadia parryiValley and foothilssp. congdonii//1B.1grasslands.Congdon's tarplantMay-October.		Blooming period	Low. Suitable grassland habitat is not present within the Limits of Disturbance.	
Chorizanthe pungens var. pungens Monterey spineflower	FT//1B.2	Sandy soils in coastal dunes or more inland within chaparral or other habitats. Blooming period April-June.	Absent. While suitable sandy soils and chaparral habitat is present, this species has not been identified within the Limits of Disturbance during surveys conducted in 2012 and 2015.	
<i>Cordylanthus rigidus ssp. littoralis</i> seaside bird's beak	us ssp. littoralis/SE/1B.1 woodland, coastal		Absent. While suitable chaparral habitat is present, no recent CNDDB records occur within a 5-mile radius and no individuals were observed during surveys conducted in 2012 and 2015.	
<i>Ericameria fasciculate</i> Eastwood's goldenbush	//1B.1	Sandy openings in chaparral (maritime), coastal scrub, coastal dunes. Blooming period July- October.	Present. 21 plants are present within the Limits of Disturbance in chaparral habitat.	

<i>Piperia yadonii</i> Yadon's rein orchid	FE//1B.1	On sandstone or sandy soils within chaparral, coastal bluff scrub	Absent. While suitable sandy soils and chaparral habitat is present, this species has not been identified within the Limits of Disturbance during surveys conducted in 2012 and 2015.
Plagiobothrys chorisianus var. chorisianus Choris' popcornflower	FT//1B.2	Chaparral, coastal scrub, wetland- riparian. Blooming period March-June	Absent. Typical habitat for this species in the vicinity includes mesic areas which are not present within the Limits of Disturbance, and this species has not been identified during surveys conducted in 2012 and 2015.
Trifolium hydrophilum saline clover	//1B.2	Marshes, swamps, valley and foothill grasslands, vernal pools. Blooming period April-June	Absent. No suitable habitat is present
<i>Ambystoma californiense</i> California tiger salamander	FT/ST	Need underground refuges, especially ground squirrel burrows, & vernal pools or other seasonal water sources for breeding	Low . No suitable perennial or seasonal water source for breeding is present within the vicinity of the Limits of Disturbance. No upland refugia habitat is present.
Ambystoma macrodactylum croceum Santa Cruz long- toed salamander	FE/FP	Wet meadows near sea level in a few restricted locales in Santa Cruz and Monterey counties.	Absent. No suitable habitat is present
<i>Charadrius nivosus nivosus</i> western snowy plover	FT/SSC	Sandy beaches, salt pond levees & shores of large alkali lakes.	Absent. No suitable habitat is present
Elanus leucurus white-tailed kite /FP/BLM-S Habitats may include grass agricultural an		abundant prey base (typically rodents). Nests in a variety of trees or	Low. Marginal nesting and foraging habitat is present within the vicinity of the Limits of Disturbance.

		including freshwater and salt marshes.	
Rallus longirostris obsoletus Ridgway's (=California clapper) rail	FE/SE, FP	Salt and/or brackish marshes.	Absent. No suitable habitat is present
<i>Riparia riparia</i> bank swallow	/ST	Colonial nester; nests primarily in riparian and other lowland habitats	Absent. No suitable habitat is present
<i>Vireo bellii pusillus</i> least Bell's vireo	FE/SE	Summer resident of Southern California in low riparian in vicinity of water or in dry river bottoms; below 2000 ft.	Absent. No suitable habitat is present
Eucyclogobius newberryi tidewater goby	FE/SSC	Brackish water habitats	Absent. No suitable habitat is present
<i>Rana draytonii</i> California red- legged frog	FT/SSC	Lowlands & foothills in or near permanent sources of deep water with dense, shrubby or emergent riparian vegetation.	Absent. No suitable habitat is present
<i>Spirinchus thaleichthys</i> longfin smelt	FC/SE	Found in open waters of estuaries, mostly in middle or bottom of water column.	Absent. No suitable habitat is present

Data sources: California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW 2016), California Native Plant Society (CNPS 2016).

Species Status Codes:

Federal:		
FC – Candidate	State:	Other (CNPS):
FD – Delisted	FP – Fully Protected	1B.1 - Seriously Threatened in California; Rare, Threatened, Endangered in
FE – Endangered	SE – Endangered	California and Elsewhere (CNPS)
e	ST – Threatened	1B.2 - Moderately Threatened in California; Rare, Threatened, Endangered in
FT – Threatened	SSC – Species of Special Concern	California and Elsewhere (CNPS)

The review of past surveys indicated the presence of Hooker's manzanita, Pajaro manzanita, and Eastwood's goldenbush observed on July 26, 2012 and June 3, 2015.

Prior to the field reconnaissance survey, reference monitoring was conducted at the former Fort Ord (approximately 14 miles south) on April 14, 2016 in which Monterey spineflower (*Chorizanthe pungens* var. *pungens*) was observed flowering. In addition, seaside birds-beak (*Cordylanthus rigidus* ssp. *littoralis*) was identifiable and *Piperia* species were observable at reference sites.

Span 004/024 to 004/025 is accessed from 67 Tucker Road, Prunedale, California. The field reconnaissance survey conducted on April 18, 2016, involved walking throughout the Site, the access roads, and surrounding habitat to visually identify, quantify, and record polygons of special-status species present as well as document existing conditions and habitat types. The Site was visited at the peak of the spring flowering season when plant identification is optimal.

5 SPECIAL-STATUS PLANT FINDINGS

A survey for special-status plant species was conducted on April 18, 2016. Hooker's manzanita, Pajaro manzanita, and Eastwood's goldenbush were observed (Figure 3; Table 2). There were other special-status species that were recorded in the CNDDB search within five miles (Figure 2) of the Site but were not observed at or near the proposed excavation area are. Plants identified in CNDDB that have suitable habitat within the Site but are not present include Monterey spineflower (*Chorizanthe pungens* var. *pungens*), and Yadon's rein orchid (*Piperia yadonii*).

Hooker's Manzanita has a CNPS Rare Plant Threat Rank of 1B.2, a plant of limited distribution that is fairly endangered in California (CNPS 2016). Hooker's manzanita was observed growing in the south corner of the LOD. No plants were observed in the grading area and six plants were counted in the LOD.

Pajaro Manzanita has a CNPS Rare Plant Threat Rank of 1B.1, a plant of limited distribution that is seriously endangered in California (CNPS 2016). Pajaro manzanita was observed growing throughout the LOD (Figure 3) and surrounding areas. A total of seven plants were counted within the grading area and 45 plants were counted in the LOD.

Eastwood's goldenbush has a CNPS Rare Plant Threat Rank of 1B.1, a plant of limited distribution that is seriously endangered in California (CNPS 2016). Large, mature individuals of Eastwood's goldenbush were observed growing in the middle of the LOD. A total of 13 plants were counted within the grading area and 21 plants were counted within the LOD.

Scientific Name	Common Name	No. of plants within LOD	Sq. feet of plant cover with LOD	No. of plants within Grading Area	Sq. feet of plant cover within Grading Area
Arctostaphylos hookeri ssp. hookeri	Hooker's manzanita	6	283	0	0
Arctostaphylos pajaroensis	Pajaro manzanita	45	2,132	7	565

Table 2. Special-Status Plant Species in Grading Area and Limits of Disturbance

Ericameria fasciculata	Eastwood's goldenbush	21	426	13	253
Summary		72	2,841	20	818

6 CENTRAL MARITIME CHAPARRAL

The Site is covered with central maritime chaparral vegetation; Pajaro manzanita predominates and Hooker's manzanita and brittle leaf manzanita (*Arctostaphylos crustacea*) also grow within the Site. Additional native species observed within the LOD include deerweed (*Acmispon glaber*), bush monkeyflower (*Mimulus aurantiacus*), coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis* ssp. *consanguinea*), wedge-leaved horkelia (*Horkelia cuneata* var. *cuneata*), California coffeeberry (*Frangula californica*), coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*), common yarrow (*Achillea millifolium*), and rush-rose (*Crocanthemum scoparium*). The central maritime chaparral habitat around the grading area encompasses approximately one acre and is surrounded by coast live oak woodland, non-native Eucalyptus, cleared private land, dirt roads, and agricultural lands.

Central maritime chaparral is characterized as a special-status plant community in the legacy CNDDB legacy community classification system (Holland 1986), and as Pajaro manzanita chaparral (*Arctostaphylos pajaroensis* Shrubland Alliance) in the CNPS/CDFW Manual of California Vegetation (Sawyer, Keeler-Wolf, and Evens 2009). *Arctostaphylos pajaroensis* Shrubland Alliance has a G1 global rarity ranking and an S1 state rarity ranking (fewer than 6 viable occurrences worldwide, and/or up to 1,280 acres), according to Sawyer, Keeler-Wolf, and Evens (2009). CDFW treats natural communities with a G1/S1 rarity ranking as critically imperiled in California because of extreme rarity (often five or fewer occurrences) or because of some factor(s), such as very steep declines, making it especially vulnerable to extirpation from the State (CDFW 2018).

7 WILDLIFE FINDINGS

Suitable nesting bird habitat is present throughout the Site. During the April 18, 2016 survey a red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) was observed perched on tower 04/024. No nests or nest material were observed within or in the vicinity of the Site. California towhees (*Melozone crissalis*) were observed foraging and an American crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) was observed in the area.

The Site does not offer suitable habitat for special-status wildlife species identified within the five-mile CNDDB search (Figure 4). No burrows were noted within the Site. California red-legged frogs have been documented in the vicinity (CNDDB 2016), however none were observed during the survey. The closest stream is approximately 600 feet to the north and 225 feet down a steep slope. California red-legged frogs are not expected to occur within the Site, and impacts from grading activities are not anticipated to affect this species.

No special-status wildlife was observed during the reconnaissance survey, and habitat within the Site is not suitable to support those identified in the CNDDB record search.

8 MINIMIZATION MEASURES

The following proposed measures, when implemented during project activity, will minimize impacts to special-status species and will assist with revegetation by native species.

- The project footprint will be minimized to the maximum extent feasible and avoid unnecessary disturbance to native vegetation. Where feasible, shrubs shall be cut to the ground without disturbing roots to allow for potential resprouting by some shrub species.
- Preconstruction surveys for Pajaro manzanita, Hooker's manzanita and Eastwood's goldenbush will be conducted within the LOD and plants will be flagged to assist crews with avoidance when possible. Where feasible, temporary fencing (e.g., orange construction fencing) should be installed outside a five-foot buffer from the canopy edge of any sensitive native shrub or shrubs and should remain in place for the duration of grading and construction activities in the area. Fencing should be supported by posts on minimum six-foot (1.8 m) centers or equivalent.
- Work activities will be conducted outside of bird nesting season (February 1 to August 15), if feasible. Prior to initial ground disturbances occurring between February 1 and August 15, a preconstruction survey for nesting birds should be completed two weeks before initial ground disturbing activities to provide specific information on any nesting activities and to ensure that no nesting birds are impacted by project activities. A construction avoidance zone (buffer) from any active bird nests should be established and maintained during construction activities within this time-frame.
- To minimize impacts to special-status plant species, grading will be accessed from the southwest where there is a preexisting eroded slope. All Hooker's manzanita individuals will be avoided this way.
- After grading, the eroded slope will be stabilized using erosion control best management practices (BMPs) to avoid further slope failure and subsequent impacts to native vegetation surrounding the graded area.
- Where feasible, the special-status shrubs will be salvaged under the oversight of a qualified
 restoration ecologist with experience in plant salvaging. The entire root ball and surrounding soil
 should be excavated, and plants should be immediately placed in pre-moistened holes of the
 same size within prepared areas within the LOD. Soil should then be backfilled and gently tamped
 down to prevent air pockets. Each salvaged plant should then be watered in to keep roots moist
 and further eliminate air pockets.
- The top 6 inches of topsoil will be removed and stockpiled nearby on plastic sheets to avoid weed seed introduction and erosion; if the piles will remain for any length of time during the rainy season, ventilated tarps should be placed over the top. After grading activities are complete, the topsoil will be replaced across the disturbed area, which will be excavated slightly below grade to facilitate topsoil replacement. Special care will be employed to avoid over-compacting, and erosion control blankets will be applied to any slope steeper than 2:1 that receives topsoil.

9 PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

The general goal of the minimization measures is to provide functional habitat for native plants and animals within the LOD, including sensitive shrub species. Performance criteria are provided to measure progress toward this goal. Performance criteria are provided in Table 3.

Progress towards achievement of these performance criteria will be quantitatively measured by a qualified restoration ecologist on an annual basis during a three-year monitoring period. Failure to meet the annual performance standards will result in an assessment of causative factors and potential remedial solutions.

Table 3. Performance Criteria

Performance Criteria	Monitoring Frequency	Monitoring Findings	Actions
Invasive weed cover (Cal-IPC rating of 'high' ¹) in post- construction work areas shall remain less than 5% at all times. After three years, targeted invasive weed cover shall be less than 5%.	Twice yearly, in January	Non-native invasive weed cover less than or equal to 5%. If weed eradication event required, targeted invasive weed cover by highly invasive species is zero after weed eradication events.	Continue monitoring; note any target weeds or new weed infestations encountered and conduct weed abatement, if needed.
	and May/June	Non-native invasive weed cover greater than or equal to 5%. Targeted invasive weed cover by highly invasive species (Cal-IPC rating of high) is more than zero after weed eradication events.	Conduct weed abatement and schedule follow-up monitoring event to ensure compliance.
Substrate stable, no sedimentation into adjacent natural areas.	Twice yearly, in January and May/June; more frequently if large storm	Criteria met	Continue monitoring
	events suggest additional monitoring would be needed.	Destabilization of soils; sedimentation into adjacent natural areas.	Repair or provide additional erosion control measures as needed.
increase, attaining 5% cover	estimates of most abundant 5 native species in 5 locations	Native plant equals or exceeds 5% by Year 2 and 10% by Year 3	Continue monitoring
Year 3		Native plant equals or is less than 5% by Year 2 and 10% by Year 3	Apply native seed mix to increase cover.
Ongoing presence of at least		Native sensitive shrub species present	Continue monitoring
(Hooker's manzanita, Pajaro manzanita, or Eastwood's goldenbush)	May/June. Census of three sensitive shrub species within LOD.	Native sensitive shrub species absent	Add seed of sensitive shrub species collected from surrounding area, if needed.
	Invasive weed cover (Cal-IPC rating of 'high' ¹) in post- construction work areas shall remain less than 5% at all times. After three years, targeted invasive weed cover shall be less than 5%. Substrate stable, no sedimentation into adjacent natural areas. <u>Native</u> plant cover will gradually increase, attaining 5% cover by Year 2 and 10% cover by Year 3 Ongoing presence of at least one of three sensitive shrub species within the LOD (Hooker's manzanita, Pajaro manzanita, or Eastwood's	Performance CriteriaFrequencyInvasive weed cover (Cal-IPC rating of 'high' ¹) in post- construction work areas shall remain less than 5% at all times. After three years, targeted invasive weed cover shall be less than 5%.Twice yearly, in January and May/JuneSubstrate stable, no sedimentation into adjacent natural areas.Twice yearly, in January and May/JuneNative plant cover will gradually increase, attaining 5% cover by Year 2 and 10% cover by Year 3Twice annually in May/June. Visual cover estimates of most abundant 5 native species within the LOD (Hooker's manzanita, or Eastwood'sOnce annually in May/June. Census of three sensitive shrub species within LOD.	Performance CriteriaFrequencyMonitoring FindingsInvasive weed cover (Cal-IPC rating of 'high ') in post- construction work areas shall remain less than 5% at all times. After three years, targeted invasive weed cover shall be less than 5%.Twice yearly, in January and May/JuneNon-native invasive weed cover less than or equal to 5%. If weed eradication event required, targeted invasive weed cover by highly invasive species is zero after weed cover greater than or equal to 5%. Targeted invasive weed cover greater than or equal to 5%. Targeted invasive weed cover greater than or equal to 5%. Targeted invasive weed cover or greater than or equal to 5%. Targeted invasive weed cover or greater than or equal to 5%. Targeted invasive weed cover by highly invasive species (Cal-IPC rating of high) is more than zero after weed eradication events.Substrate stable, no sedimentation into adjacent natural areas.Twice yearly, in January and May/June; more frequently if large storm events suggest additional monitoring would be needed.Criteria met Destabilization of soils; sedimentation into adjacent natural areas.Native plant cover will gradually increase, attaining 5% cover by Year 2 and 10% cover by Year 3Once annually in May/June. Visual cover estimates of most abundant 5 native species in 5 locations within LOD.Native plant equals or exceeds 5% by Year 2 and 10% by Year 3Ongoing presence of at least one of three sensitive shrub species within the LOD (Hooker's manzanita, or Eastwood'sOnce annually in May/June. Census of three sensitive shrub species within LOD.Native sensitive shrub species absent

10 MONITORING AND REPORTING

The LOD areas will be monitored for the following criteria over a three-year period, utilizing the performance criteria outlined in Table 3, where relevant; a qualitative monitoring event will be conducted in January or after recent heavy rains and a quantitative monitoring event in late spring (May/June):

- Non-native invasive species density, location, and effectiveness of weed treatments, if applicable
- Brief plant list summarizing observed species
- Native plant cover (visual cover estimates of most abundant 5 native species in 5 locations within LOD. Percentage of bare ground will also be estimated, along with non-native weed cover)
- Presence, location, and quantity of sensitive shrub species within the LOD
- Evidence of erosion or burying of plants

If onsite conditions fail to meet performance targets, the monitoring biologist will propose corrective steps to a qualified restoration ecologist, including broadcasting seed, conducting weed eradication, or installing remedial erosion control measures.

A brief summary report will be completed by the end of each monitoring year documenting the monitoring results and any adaptive management measures conducted and/or needed. The report will present the findings, including tables summarizing native plant cover, weed cover, presence of sensitive shrub species, and observed plant species; photographs; and a discussion addressing the establishment and recovery of native vegetation within the LOD and its trajectory in meeting the performance criteria. After the three years of monitoring the restoration will be determined to be a success if all success criteria have been met. Monitoring and reporting will continue beyond three years if all the success criteria have not been met.

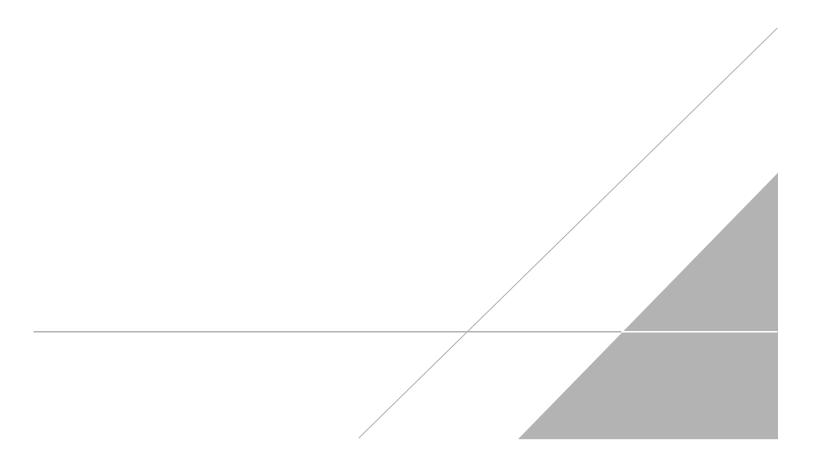
11 ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

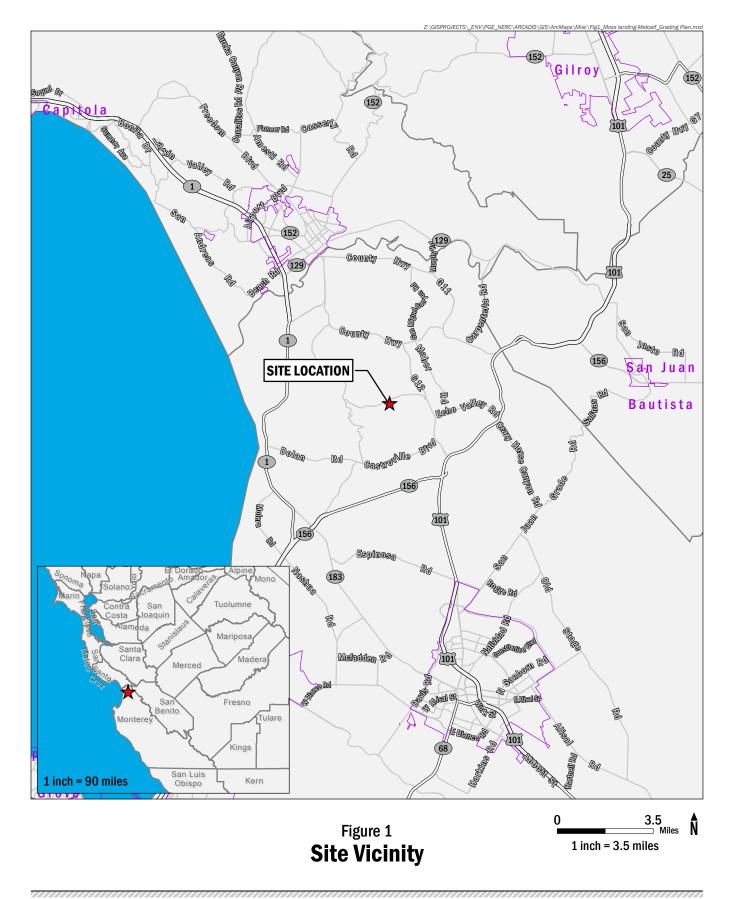
Adaptive management is the process of evaluating the Site after each monitoring event to determine if the Site is progressing towards, or has met, the performance criteria. In addition to the actions proposed in Table 3, there may be other unanticipated issues that arise, such as damaging herbivory or wildfire. These contingency issues will be discussed by the internal management team and recommendations will be made to address them, as needed.

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FIGURES







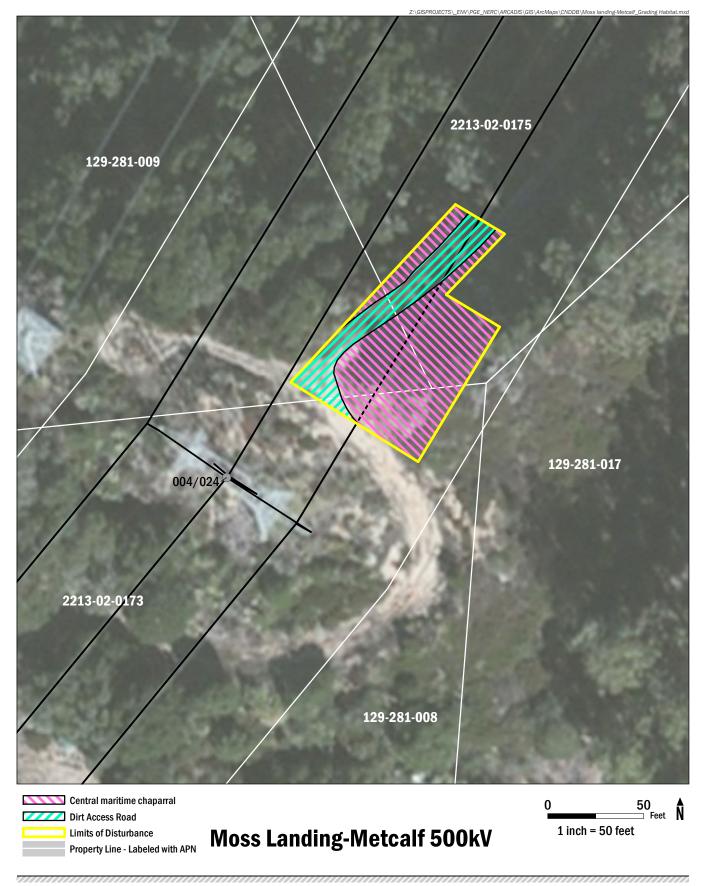




Figure 2: Habitat Map

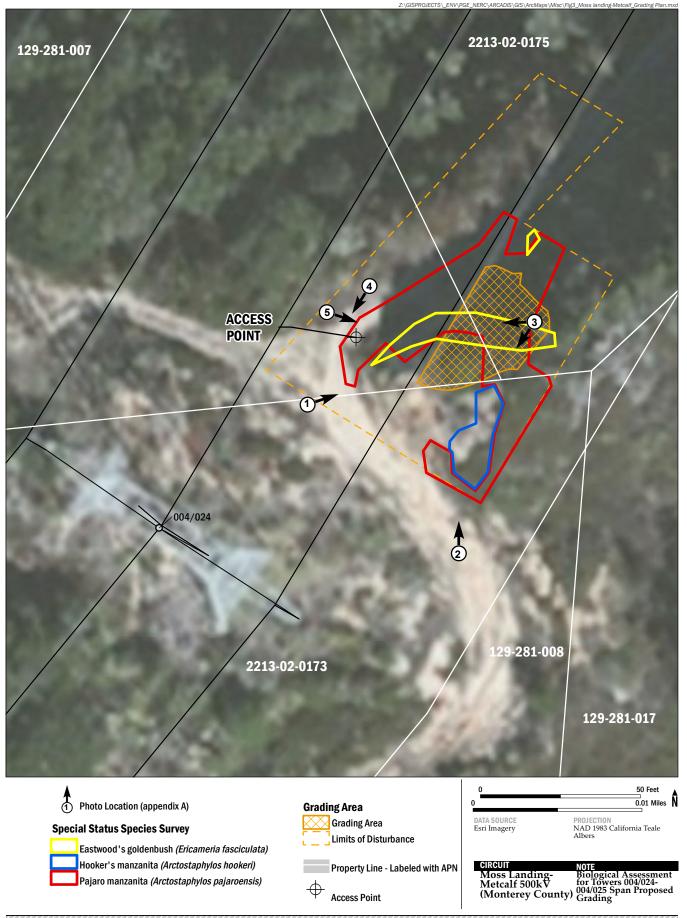
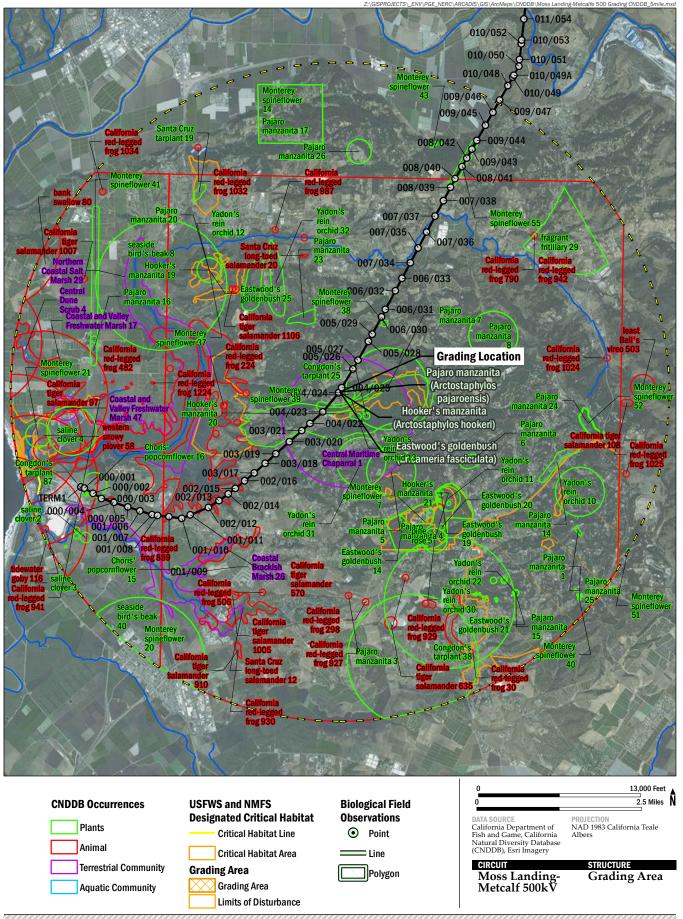




FIGURE 3 : SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES SURVEY PG&E NERC Program



ARCADIS

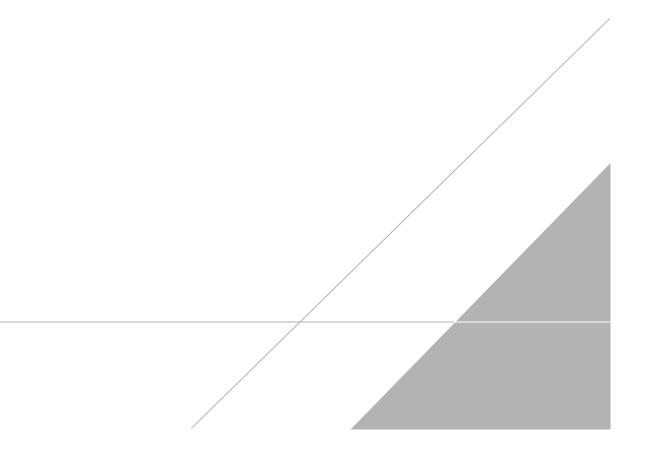
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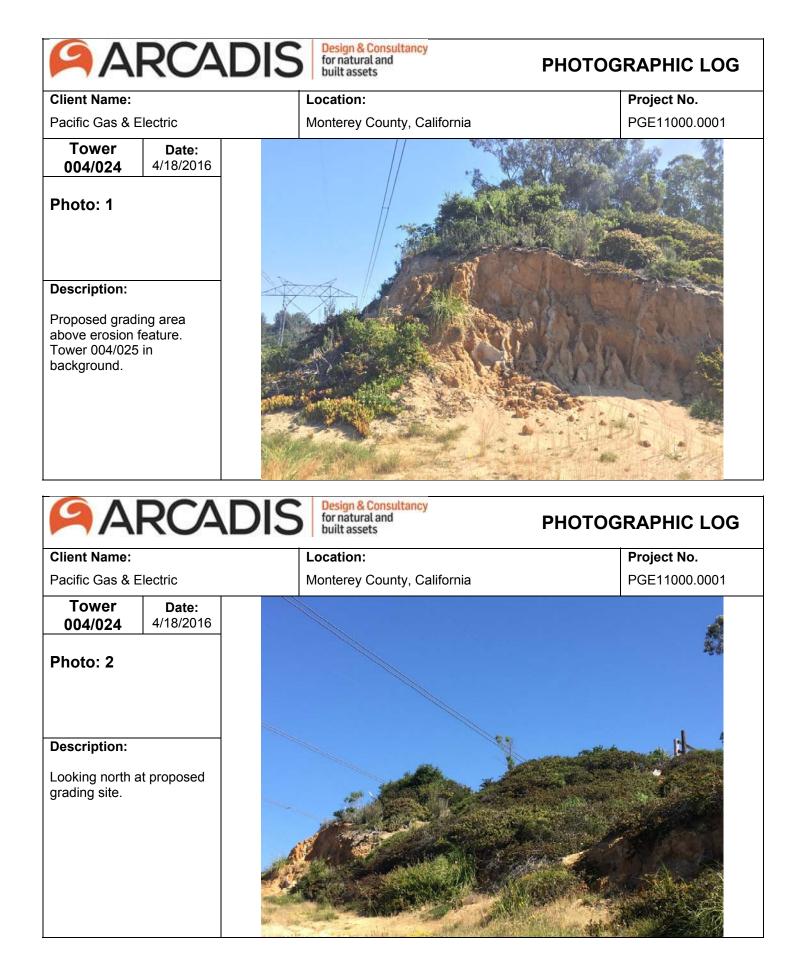
Figure 4: CNDDB & CRITICAL HABITAT **OCCURRENCES** Within 5 mile radius of

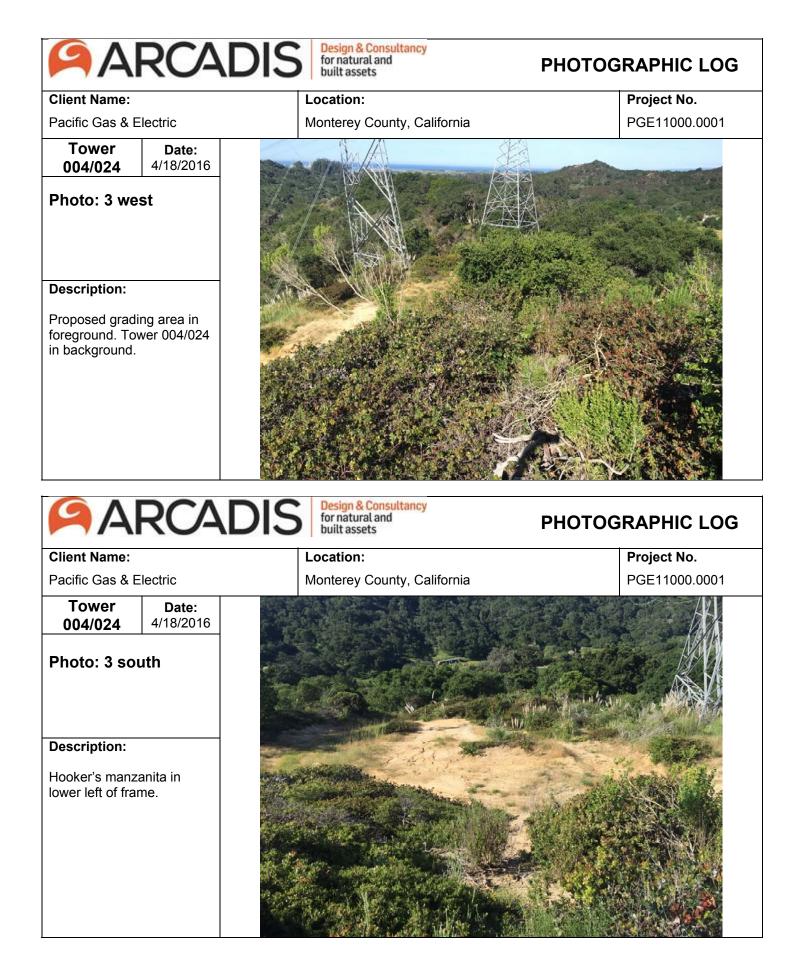
PG&E NERC Program

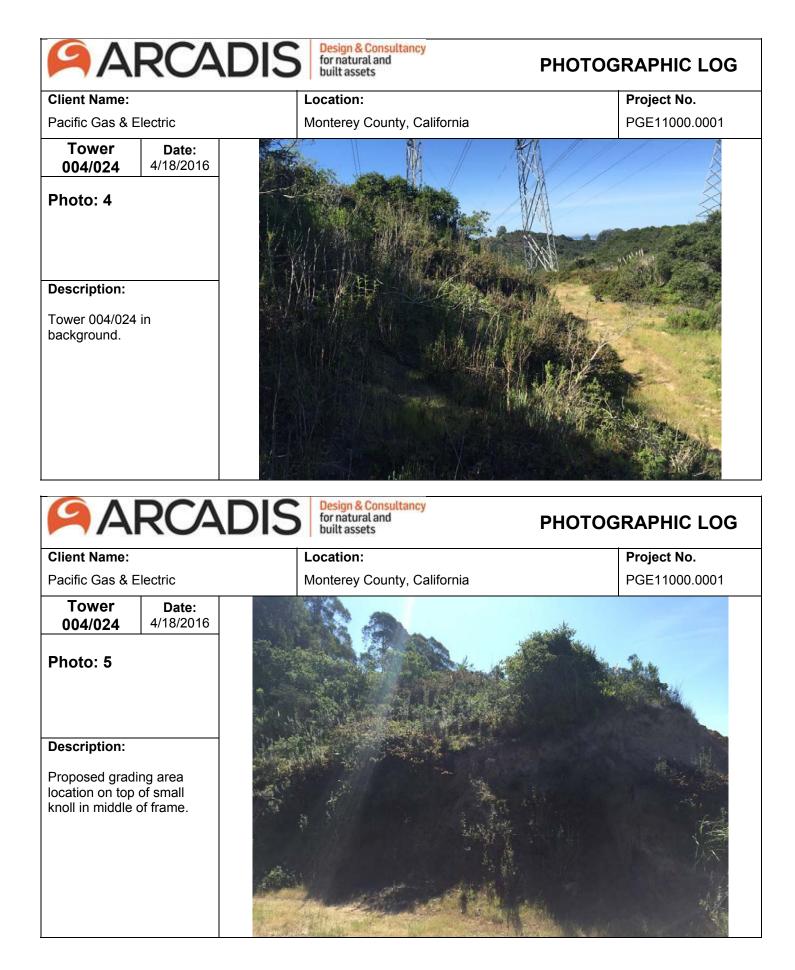
APPENDIX A

Photographic Log











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