

Exhibit A

**General Biological Survey and Jurisdictional
Assessment Letter of Findings**

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CSD-04.03

Tim Manzano, Project Manager
Project Management Division
Department of General Services
County of San Diego
5560 Overland Avenue, Suite 410
San Diego, CA 92123

Subject: General Biological Survey and Jurisdictional Assessment Letter of Findings for the Los Peñasquitos Adobe Drainage Project, Project No. 13205 (ML)

Dear Mr. Manzano:

This letter presents the results of a general biological survey and jurisdictional assessment performed by HELIX Environmental Planning, Inc. (HELIX) for the proposed Los Peñasquitos Adobe Drainage Project (proposed project) located at the Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve in San Diego County, California. The County of San Diego (County) proposes minor subsurface drainage improvements at the Los Peñasquitos Adobe Ranch House property in order to divert groundwater to protect the historical adobe structure.

The proposed project has been specifically designed to be restricted to existing disturbed and developed uplands within the property that lack sensitive biological resources. On May 9, 2013, HELIX performed a general biological survey and jurisdictional assessment over an approximately 1.0-acre area located on and in the immediate vicinity of the Los Peñasquitos Adobe Ranch House property. Potential jurisdictional waters and wetlands associated with Los Peñasquitos Creek were observed in the immediate vicinity of the proposed project, including resources potentially subject to the regulatory jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) pursuant to Section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA); Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) pursuant to Section 401 of the CWA; and, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) pursuant to Sections 1600 et seq. of the California Fish and Game Code (CFG Code).

This letter is primarily intended to provide documentation that the proposed project would have no effect on potential USACE, RWQCB, and/or CDFW jurisdictional resources. Other biological resources issues are addressed to support review of the proposed project in light of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

INTRODUCTION

The proposed project site is generally located north of State Route 52 (SR-52), south of SR-56, east of Interstate 5 (I-5), and west of I-15 in the western portions of San Diego County, California. More specifically, the site occurs within the Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve at the existing Los Peñasquitos Adobe Ranch House property located on Canyonside Park Driveway, San Diego, California. The site is depicted within unsectioned portions of Township 14 South, Range 3 West of the Del Mar, California U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute quadrangle.

The proposed project generally includes installation of a new subdrain and outlet pipe. The proposed improvements will direct groundwater away from the existing abode; collect and convey flows in a subdrain to be installed in disturbed and developed upland areas; and, discharge flows into an existing man-made concrete retention basin. Approximately 210 linear feet of 4.0-inch diameter perforated pipe is proposed to gravity flow along the northern and eastern perimeter of the adobe. Approximately 100 linear feet of 4.0-inch diameter solid pipe is proposed for tightline outlet along the eastern perimeter of the adobe and extending south to an existing concrete retention basin. The pipe would be laid in an 18.0-inch-wide trench with a minimum depth 4.0 feet. The trench would be excavated using hand tools. The 4.0-inch pipe would be covered with drain rock wrapped in non-woven filter fabric which would be capped with 12.0 inches of soil with a minimum compaction of 90%.

METHODS

A review of relevant maps, databases, and literature pertaining to wetland resources known to occur within the project vicinity was performed. Recent and historical aerial imagery (Google 2013), topographic maps (USGS 1994), vegetation maps (SanGIS 2013), and other maps of the study area were acquired and reviewed. In addition, a query of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) was performed.

HELIX biologist, Karl Osmundson, conducted a general biological survey and jurisdictional assessment on May 9, 2013 between the hours of 1300 and 1500. The survey included 100 percent visual coverage of the areas proposed to be impacted by proposed drainage improvements and immediate vicinity (i.e., approximately 100 feet beyond). The total survey area was approximately 1.0 acre in size. Physical parameters assessed included presence of wetland indicator plant species and hydrophytic vegetation; surface soil conditions; and, wetland hydrology indicators. Photographs of areas potentially supporting wetland conditions were taken and compared with project plans. The primary focus of the survey was to define the approximate limits of potential USACE, RWQCB, and/or CDFW jurisdiction and verify that the proposed project would occur within upland areas that lack sensitive biological resources. A formal jurisdictional delineation was not performed as part of the survey.

RESULTS

No sensitive biological resources, including potential jurisdictional waters and wetlands, were identified within the areas proposed for drainage improvements during the May 9, 2013 survey.

The project site is predominantly flat with very little topographic relief. Elevations range from approximately 238 feet above mean sea level (amsl) in the northern portion of the site to approximately 229 feet amsl in the southern portion. No major land features characterize the site. The observed surface soils within the site are disturbed as a result of previous grading and vegetation clearing, placement of landscape groundcover material, and ongoing pedestrian traffic and maintenance activities.

The project site is characterized by two vegetation communities or land use types, based on classifications suggested by Oberbauer et al. (2008): disturbed habitat and urban/developed land. Neither of these onsite communities is considered a sensitive natural community. The alignment traverses disturbed and developed areas within the Adobe Ranch House property that are comprised of bare earth and non-native grasses. Several non-native ornamental trees also occur in the immediate vicinity of the site, including date palm (*Phoenix* sp.), gum tree (*Eucalyptus* sp.), and Peruvian pepper tree (*Schinus molle*); however, no impacts would occur to these trees. No sensitive plant and animal species have a high potential to occur within the project site due to lack of suitable habitat; therefore, no direct impacts to sensitive species would be expected as a result of the proposed project. Indirect impacts to sensitive species potentially occurring in the vicinity of the project site would not be expected given that the pipeline installation activities would be performed using hand tools, within a confined area, and over a short duration of time.

An offsite emergent wetland occurs east of the southern terminus of the subdrain alignment. Emergent wetland is considered a sensitive natural community. The offsite emergent wetland is presumed to have been formed as a result of seepage and overflow from an existing Spring House for the property, which abuts the emergent wetland to the immediate east. Portions of the emergent wetland closest to the project site are heavily dominated by the native perennial herb, yerba mansa (*Anemopsis californica*). Yerba mansa is an obligate wetland plant and perennial hydrophyte (i.e., plant associated with wet conditions that persist throughout the entire year) that occurs almost always under natural conditions within wetlands. Based on the strong dominance of yerba mansa, the emergent wetland adjacent to the Spring House likely supports wetland conditions year-around.

The project site occurs entirely within upland areas that lack jurisdictional waters and wetlands. However, the offsite emergent wetland could support wetland resources subject to the regulatory jurisdiction of the USACE, RWQCB, and CDFW. The emergent wetland occurs as an adjacent wetland associated with Los Peñasquitos Creek, which is a jurisdictional water of U.S. with an obvious nexus to a downstream traditional navigable water (i.e., Los Peñasquitos Creek outfalls into Los Peñasquitos Lagoon and the Pacific Ocean). Based on conditions observed during the May 9, 2013 survey and the number of existing seeps and springs in the local area, a subsurface hydrologic connection between Los Peñasquitos Creek and the wetlands adjacent to the Spring

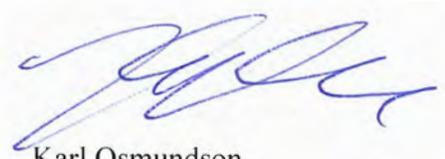
House is likely present, thereby providing rationale for qualifying the area as supporting adjacent wetland waters of the U.S. The offsite emergent wetland area could also be considered wetland waters of the State subject to the regulatory jurisdiction of the RWQCB. Although no OHWM, streambed, or riparian habitat characterizes the portions of the emergent wetland closest to the project site, the areas could also be subject to the regulatory jurisdiction of the CDFW based on the presence of a wetland understory to adjacent riparian habitat. Additional USACE, RWQCB, and CDFW jurisdiction occurs further offsite to the south as freshwater marsh and riparian habitat associated with the Los Peñasquitos Creek floodplain and riparian corridor.

The approximate limits of potential USACE, RWQCB, and CDFG jurisdiction are depicted in blue on Photograph 2 of Attachment A, and further called out as the sensitive wetland area to be avoided. The approximate subdrain alignment is shown in red as traversing the non-sensitive upland area and is setback from the sensitive wetland area. At its closest point, the subdrain alignment occurs in excess of 10 feet from the sensitive wetland area where it outlets at an existing man-made concrete retention basin. Disturbed uplands and the existing concrete retention basin separate the alignment from the sensitive wetland area.

Given that the subdrain alignment is restricted to disturbed uplands, is setback from the offsite sensitive wetland area and will be installed using hand tools and over a short duration of time, no direct or indirect impacts to sensitive biological resources are anticipated to occur as a result of project construction and operation.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide you with this letter report. Please do not hesitate to contact Bruce McIntyre or me at (619) 462-1515 if you have any questions or require further assistance.

Sincerely,



Karl Osmundson
Biology Group Manager
County of San Diego-Approved CEQA Consultant

Enclosures:

Attachment A Representative Site Photos

REFERENCES

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Photograph 1. North-facing view of approximate alignment for proposed 4" gravity flow subdrain pipeline (red). The existing Adobe Ranch House is depicted in the background left. The subdrain alignment has been specifically designed to be restricted to disturbed uplands within the property. No direct or indirect impacts to sensitive biological resources would occur.



Photograph 2. View of approximate alignment for proposed 4" subdrain pipeline (red) in relation to approximate boundary (blue) of adjacent offsite sensitive wetland area. As depicted, the subdrain alignment has been specifically designed to be restricted to disturbed uplands within the property. The subdrain will outlet at the existing man-made concrete retention basin at a location in excess of 10 feet west of the approximate wetland area boundary. Project construction and operation would completely avoid the sensitive wetland area and no direct or indirect impacts would occur.

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Representative Site Photos

LOS PENASQUITOS ADOBE DRAINAGE ALTERATION PROJECT

Attachment A