

MEMORANDUM

To: Geoff Fallon, BayWa
From: Callie Amoaku, Dudek
Subject: Activities at Jacumba Pond
Date: June 29, 2021
cc: Candice Magnus, Dudek
Attachment(s): None

The Jacumba Pond has been present since at least the 1960's based on topographic maps available on HistoricAerials.com. The pond historically supported cattails (*Typha* spp.) and other wetland plants, which has subsequently supported nesting tricolored blackbirds (*Agelaius tricolor*). Based on aerial review, the pond fluctuates in size but is approximately 1 acre and supports standing water and wetland vegetation. Tricolored blackbirds have been regularly seen at the Jacumba Pond and recorded there most, if not every year and Jacumba Pond is known as a "hotspot" for bird watching (eBird 2021). This pond is particularly important for tricolored blackbirds because they have used the Jacumba Pond continuously since at least the 1970's (Unitt 2004¹).

July 2019

In 2019, Dudek biologist Callie Amoaku visited the pond from Jacumba Street. At that time it was intact with cattails and surrounding vegetation. Below are Google Earth images from September 2018 and June 2019, along with a photo of the pond taken in July 2019.

September 2018 (Google Earth)



June 2019 (Google Earth)



¹ Unitt, P. 2004. *San Diego County Bird Atlas*. San Diego, California: San Diego Natural History Museum.

Photo of Jacumba Pond in July 2019 (Callie Amoaku)



February 2021

On February 1, 2021, Dudek biologist Tommy Molioo visited the pond and observed that the pond/cattails had been recently scraped and graded. On that date, the pond had been almost entirely graded and filled in, including most of the cattails and immediately surrounding vegetation. Burn marks also appeared on certain trees and areas of the ground. The pond would not support nesting tricolored blackbirds for the 2021 nesting season. Below are photos of the pond from January 2021 (photos from south to north).





June 2021

On June 18, 2021, Dudek biologist Callie Amoaku visited the pond and observed that the area had now been dug back out and was filled with water. The pond is no longer filled with enough cattails or other emergent wetland plants to provide nesting substrate for tricolored blackbirds. Further, the pond has been transformed into a community recreation area with trash cans, signage, open water for swimming, and sandy areas adjacent to the pond for lounging. While there, Ms. Amoaku observed two individuals in the pond and a couple of people removing plant debris and clearing around the area. With regards to tricolored blackbird, this pond no longer functions as nesting habitat for two reasons: 1) the lack of emergent vegetation dominating the pond to provide nesting substrate, and 2) the presence of people deters birds from nesting. Since this is the only known pond in this area, it is unlikely that tricolored blackbirds have another nearby location to nest and it is expected that they would not occur in this region as commonly to forage in the surrounding land. Below are photos from June 18, 2021.



Discussion

The EIR for the JVR Energy Park Project analyzed potential impacts from the development of the Proposed Project on the Project site, which is 0.5 mile east of the Jacumba Pond, on tricolored blackbirds that nest at the pond and forage in the surrounding areas. The EIR identified that the Proposed Project would lead to potentially significant temporary and permanent, direct and indirect impacts on the tricolored blackbird foraging habitat (Impacts BI-W-2 and BI-W-5), but that these impacts would be mitigated to a less than significant level through various mitigation measures. However, the change in vegetative substrate and conversion of use of the Jacumba Pond would eliminate tricolored blackbirds in the area since this is the only known nesting location in southeastern San Diego County. The elimination of tricolored blackbirds nesting at this site would eliminate them from foraging in surrounding lands and on the proposed Project site. Accordingly, if the pond is not restored with dense emergent vegetation and human use prohibited, the Proposed Project would not result in any impacts to tricolored blackbird. If the pond is restored, tricolored blackbirds may use the surrounding lands, including the proposed Jacumba Valley Ranch, in the future. Regardless of whether tricolored blackbirds are foraging on site now, the Proposed Project will continue to comply with the mitigation measures outlined in the EIR.