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7 February 2017

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FORENSIC BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES LETTER REPORT

Project Name: Foster Grading Plan, County of San Diego

Dear Pat,

I have prepared the following Biological Resources Letter Report at your request and in response to a permit application being submitted to the County of San Diego.

The Foster Project is the application for an after-the-fact permit for agricultural clearing and to create a pad for agricultural support services on a parcel in San Felipe Valley in eastern San Diego County. The clearing and grading took place on APN 196-290-20. However, a boundary adjustment is underway to create a single 136.14 acre parcel (Figures 4 and 5). The area cleared for planting of olive trees is 3.38 acres, and the area cleared or the pad is 1.35 acres.

THE PROJECT SETTING

The project site is situated in the San Felipe Valley on the east side of San Felipe Road (County Road S2) approximately 8.5 miles north of the intersection of Highway 78 and San Felipe Road (Scissors Crossing - Figures 1 and 2). The site is on the opposite side of San Felipe Road from the County of San Diego Borrego/San Felipe Road Maintenance Facility. The approximate USGS coordinates of the site are 33.18°N, 116.58°W as determined on-site by Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver (Ranchita 7.5 minute series USGS quadrangle, see Figure 3). The elevation of the site ranges from 3,000 to 3,100 feet MSL. The project site is bounded on the east by government owned parcels and to the north and south by similar undeveloped parcels. The site was burned in the Pines Fire of 2002.

METHODS

To conduct an assessment of biological resources, I visited the project site on 1 December 2016. The conditions for observation were excellent, with no cloud cover, no impediments to visibility, temperatures in the low 70s, no cloud cover, and a 3-6 knot SW wind. The visit lasted from approximately 1145 to 1315. During my visit, I was able to examine the entire project site and adjacent areas on foot. Observations focused on the cleared areas and immediately adjacent areas in order to determine the likely vegetation communities in the areas cleared. My

observations on-site were recorded as they were made, and form the basis of this report and the site Biological Resources Map. Animals were identified using scat, tracks, nests, burrows, vocalizations, or by direct observation with the aid of 10X42 Leica binoculars. Vegetation community mapping was conducted in accordance with vegetation community definitions as described in Oberbauer, *et. al.* (2008). In addition, vegetation mapping on-site was aided by the use of color digital satellite imagery. Photographs were taken during the visit (Appendix C).

Sensitive Species and Habitats

Prior to the site visit, a variety of sources were reviewed to ascertain the possible occurrence of sensitive species at the project site. First, soil types (Bowman 1973) were checked to determine if the site contains soils known to support sensitive plant species. Records searches for the USGS quadrangle and surrounding quads were done of the California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDB) and California Native Plant Society (CNPS) On-Line Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants. Any sensitive species known to occur in the vicinity were given special attention, and available natural history information was reviewed. Seasonal occurrence patterns (*e.g.,* annual plants, migratory birds) were factored into the survey plan in the event that the site visit was made during time periods when certain species are not present or conspicuous. Information sources include the Jepson Manual (2012), Rare Plants of San Diego (Reiser 1994), A Flora of San Diego County, California (Beauchamp 1986), San Diego Native Plants (Lightner 2011), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Plans for Threatened/Endangered Species, the San Diego County Bird Atlas (Unitt 2004), and numerous other references, publications, and on-line resources.

During the site visit, all habitats were assessed for their suitability for occupation by any sensitive species with potential to occur.

RESULTS[1]

Based on soil conservation service maps (Bowman 1973), the soil types for the area impacted on the project site are Rositas loamy coarse sand, 2-9% slopes (RsC) and Ramona gravelly sandy loam, 9-15% slopes (RcD). A detailed soil analysis is beyond the scope of this report, but on-site examination appeared to verify this soil type.

The areas cleared were Acacia Scrub (Holland Code 33700). It is dominated by cat claw *Senegalia* [*Acacia*] *greggii* interspersed with non-native grasses. The area cleared for planting is bounded on the north and south by Chamise Chaparral (Holland Code 37200) but these areas were not impacted. See the Biological Resources Map. A complete list of plant species observed onsite is contained in Appendix A.

Common resident and migratory bird species were observed on the project site. These include Western Scrub-Jay *Aphelocoma californica*, Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*,

[1] Scientific and common names for plant species are derived from The Jepson Manual, 2012, U.C. Press; scientific and common names for birds from the A.O.U. Check-list of North American Birds, 1998, Allen Press Inc.

White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*, and other common species. A total of 8 bird species were recorded (Appendix B).

The only mammal species detected onsite was Botta's Pocket Gopher *Thomomys bottae*. The only reptile or amphibian detected on-site was the Western Fence Lizard *Sceloporus occidentalis*.

Sensitive Resources

Sensitive Habitats

Acacia Scrub is considered a sensitive habitat type by the County of San Diego.

Sensitive Species

Sensitive species are defined here as species of rare, threatened, or endangered status, or depleted or declining species according to the County of San Diego, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), CNPS, and the CNDDB records for the Ranchita 7.5 minute quadrangle.

The CNDDB lists several sensitive species known to occur in the vicinity of the project site. These are:

Payson's jewelflower *Caluanthus simulans* is an annual plant that species that is on the County "D" list of sensitive species, the lowest sensitivity category. Since the site visit was conducted in December, it would not have been visible at that time. It occurs in Mixed Chaparral, Chamise Chaparral, and Pinon-Juniper habitats, none of which were impacted by activities on the project site. Impacts to this species are not anticipated.

The Jacumba Pocket Mouse *Perognathus longimembris internationalis* is a subspecies of the more widespread Little Pocket Mouse (*P.l.*). However, Huey (1939) noted that specimens of this subspecies from the San Felipe Valley were not typical. The preferred habitat for this subspecies is desert willow wash, which does not occur on the project site. The CNDDB record for this subspecies likely came from suitable habitat in San Felipe Creek, west of San Felipe Road. Impacts to this subspecies are not anticipated.

The [Ramona] Southern Grasshopper Mouse *Onychomys torridus ramona* occurs in a variety of habitats only west of the mountains in San Diego County. The subspecies reported in the CNDDB in the vicinity of the project site is likely *O.t. pulcher* which is not considered sensitive by the County of San Diego. Impacts to this subspecies are not anticipated.

The CNBDDB reports Merriam's Kangaroo Rat *Dipodomys merriami* in the vicinity of the project site. This is the common desert Kangaroo Rat and is not considered sensitive by the County of San Diego.

No sensitive, threatened, or endangered species of animals were observed on the site or are considered likely to occur.

Wetlands and Jurisdictional Waters

No jurisdictional wetlands or Waters occur on or near the project site. No RPO or state wetlands or waters occur on the site.

Other Unique Features/Resources

The site contains no unique features such as wildlife corridors and linkages, unique topography, or connectivity. It does not function for hill-topping.

PROJECT IMPACTS

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires that projects avoid or adequately mitigate for the loss of sensitive species and habitats. Such avoidance or mitigation enables city staff to make a finding of No Significant Impact and issue a Negative Declaration or Mitigated Negative Declaration for the proposed project. Direct impacts occur when biological resources are altered or destroyed during the course of, or as a result of, project implementation. Examples of such impacts include removal or grading of vegetation, filling wetland habitats, or severing or physically restricting the width of wildlife corridors. Other direct impacts may include loss of foraging or nesting habitat and loss of individual species as a result of habitat clearing. Indirect impacts may include elevated levels of noise or lighting, change in surface water hydrology within a floodplain, and increased erosion or sedimentation. These types of indirect impacts can affect vegetation communities or their potential use by sensitive species. Permanent impacts may result in irreversible damage to biological resources. Temporary impacts are interim changes in the local environment due to construction and would not extend beyond project-associated construction, including revegetation of temporarily disturbed areas adjacent to native habitats.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines define "significant effect on the environment" as a "substantial, or potentially substantial adverse change in the environment." The CEQA Guidelines further indicate that there may be a significant effect on biological resources if the project will:

A. Substantially affect an endangered, rare or threatened species of animal or plant or the habitat of the species.

B. Interfere substantially with the movement of any resident or migratory fish or wildlife species to the extent that it adversely affects the population dynamics of the species.

C. Substantially diminish habitat for fish, wildlife, or plants.

The project as proposed will impact 4.73 acres of Acacia Scrub. A summary of impacts to plant communities is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Existing, impacted, and preserved vegetation communities on the project site.

PLANT COMMUNITY	ACREAGE ON-SITE	IMPACTED ACREAGE ON-SITE	IMPACTED OFF-SITE	IMPACT NEUTRAL	ACREAGE PRESERVED ON-SITE (Ratio)
Acacia Scrub	112.62	4.73	0	0	14.2 (3:1)
Semi-Desert Chaparral	3.33	0	0	0	0
Chamise Chaparral	20.19	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	136.14	4.73	0.	0	14.2

MITIGATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Impacts to 4.73 acres of Acacia Scrub is considered significant by the County of San Diego and will require mitigation to reduce impacts to a level below significant. Based on County Guidelines, the appropriate ratio for this mitigation is 3:1. Thus, it will be necessary to provide 14.2 acres of mitigation. Mitigation is proposed on-site (See Biological Resources Map). On-site mitigation is appropriate because the project parcel is contiguous with existing government-protected open space on the east.

In order to prevent any adverse impacts to off-site resources, it is recommended that adequate measures (Best Management Practices) be taken during construction to prevent runoff from entering the adjacent parcels. These measures should be sufficient to help reduce any possible indirect impacts of the proposed project to a level well below significant.

Impacts to sensitive biological resources will be mitigated to below a level of significance as defined by CEQA.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to conduct this work and prepare this report. Please contact me if I can provide any additional information or provide clarification.

Sincerely,

William T. Everett
San Diego County Approved Biological Consultant

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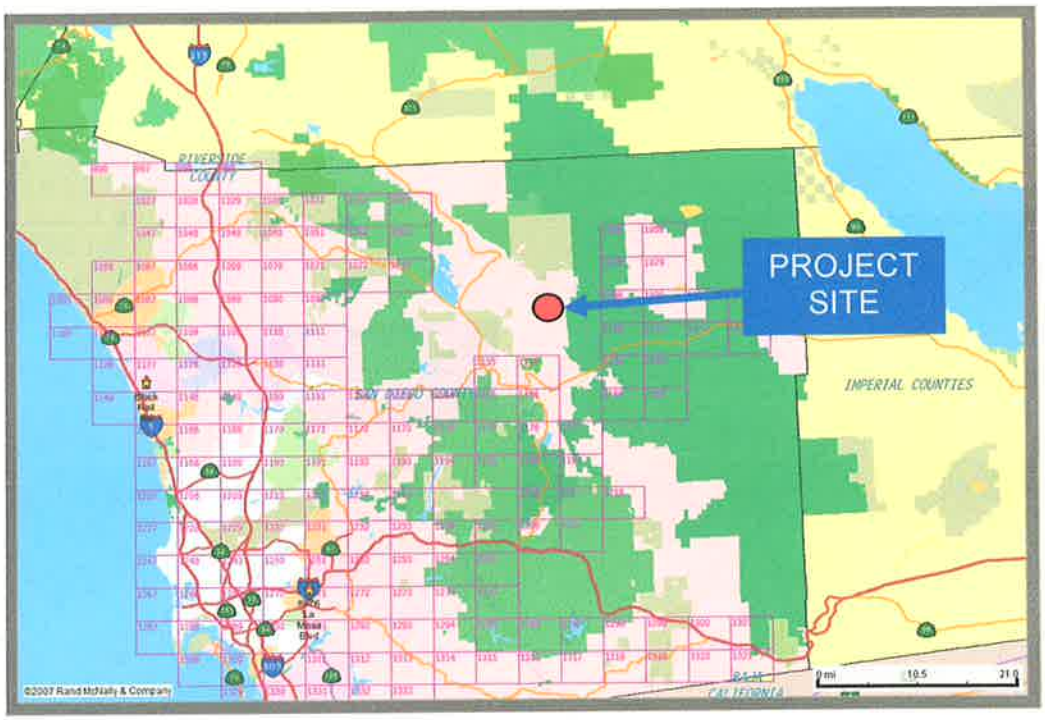

Figure 1. Location of project site in regional context. North of Thomas Bros. Map page #1136.

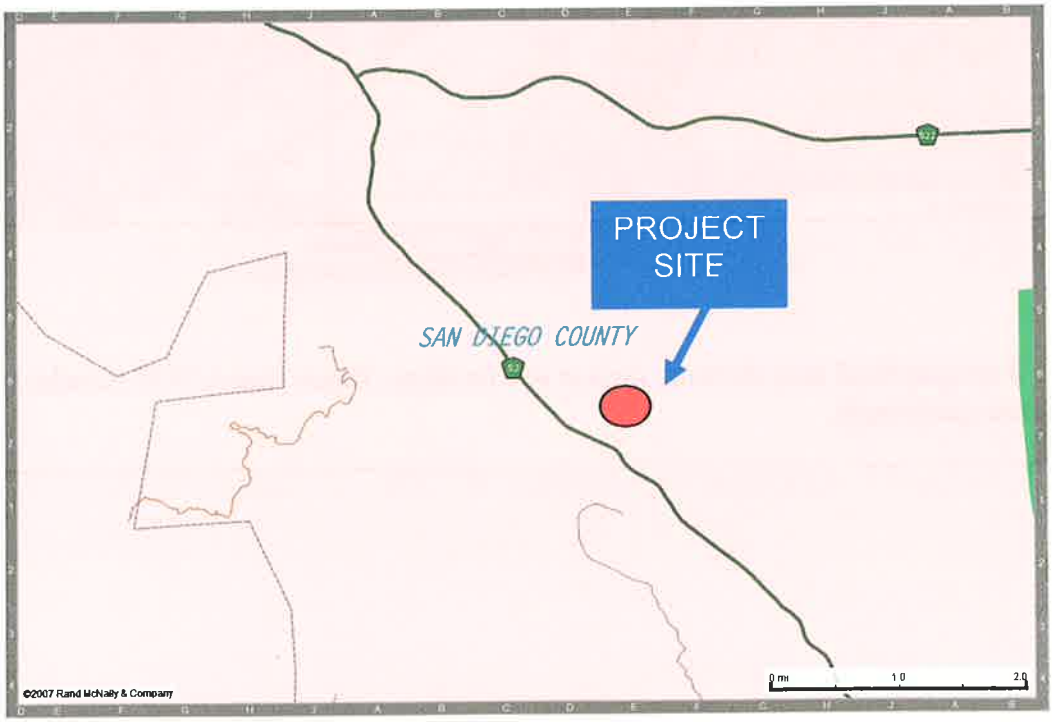

Figure 2. Detail location map of project site. North of Thomas Bros. Map page #1136.

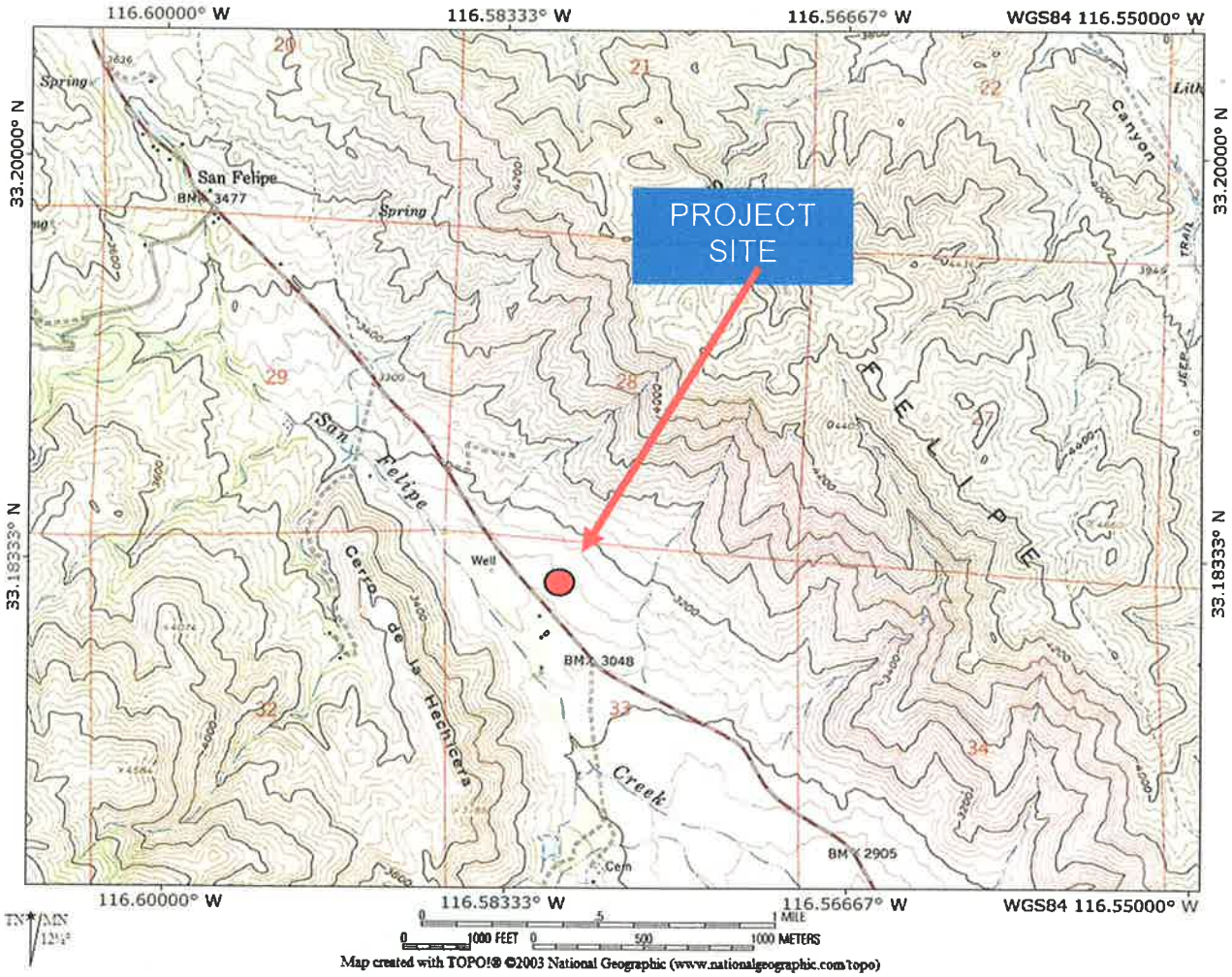

Figure 3. Topographical map showing project site location. Taken from USGS Ranchita 7.5 minute series quadrangle.

Figure 4. Close-up satellite photograph of project site showing the parcel where clearing and grading activities were conducted.

Figure 5. Close-up satellite photograph showing approximate boundaries of the four contiguous parcels that will be boundary adjusted to create a single legal parcel.

APPENDIX A

PLANT SPECIES OBSERVED ON THE SITE

Note: This list contains plant species observed on the site and does not purport to be a complete list of species that occur on the site. Floral lists are compiled to assist in accurate plant community determination and as a by product of surveys for sensitive species.

Adoxaceae - Moschatel Family

Sambucus mexicana

Anacardiaceae - Sumac Family

Malosma laurina
Laurel Sumac
Schinus molle
* Peruvian Pepper Tree

Asteraceae (Compositae) - Sunflower Family

Ambrosia dumosa
Burro Bush
Encelia farinosa
Brittlebush

Bignoniaceae - Trumpet-Creeper Family

Chilopsis linearis
Desert willow

Brassicaceae (Cruciferae) - Mustard Family

* Hirschfeldia incana
Short-Pod Mustard

Cactaceae - Cactus Family

Cylindropuntia californica
Snake Cholla
Opuntia phaeacantha
Mojave Prickly Pear

Chenopodiaceae - Goosefoot Family

Salsola tragus
Russian Thistle

Convolvulaceae - Morning-glory Family

Cuscuta sp.
Dodder

Cucurbitaceae - Gourd Family

Cucurbita palmata
Coyote Melon

Euphorbiaceae - Spurge Family

Eremocarpus setigerus
Turkey mullein, dove weed

Fabaceae (Leguminosae) - Pea Family

Acmispon rigidus
Desert Lotus
Senegalia greggii
Cat Claw

Fagaceae - Oak Family

Quercus agrifolia
Coast Live Oak
Qurecus cornelius-mulleri
Desert Scrub Oak

Geraniaceae - Geranium Family

* Erodium sp.
Filaree

Oleaceae - Olive Family

* Olea europea
Olive

Poaceae (Gramineae) - Grass Family

* Avena barbata
Wild Oats
Bromus carinatus var. carinatus
California brome
* Bromus diandrus
Ripgut Grass
* Bromus hordeaceus
Soft Chess
* Bromus madritensis ssp. rubens
Red Brome

Polygonaceae - Buckwheat Family

Eriogonum fasciculatum ssp. fasciculatum
California Buckwheat

Rosaceae - Rose Family

Adenostoma fasciculatum
Chamise

* = Non-Native Species

APPENDIX B

WILDLIFE SPECIES OBSERVED OR DETECTED ON THE PROJECT SITE

BIRDS

Anna's Hummingbird	*Calypte anna*
Mourning Dove	*Zenaida macroura*
Northern Flicker	*Colaptes auratus*
Phainopepla	*Phainopepla nitens*
Northern Mockingbird	*Mimus polyglottos*
Western Scrub-Jay	*Aphelocoma californica*
White-crowned Sparrow	*Zonotrichia leucophrys*
Common Raven	*Corvus corax*

MAMMALS

Botta's Pocket Gopher *Thomomys bottae*	Burrows

AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

Western Fence Lizard *Sceloporus occidentalis*	Observed

APPENDIX C

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE PROJECT AREA

All photographs taken 2016 by W.T. Everett

Photograph 1. View from south end of graded pad looking north.

Photograph 2. View from north end of graded pad looking south.

Photograph 3. View of olive orchard on lower portion of the site.

Photograph 4. View of acacia scrub vegetation community typical of most of the project site.

APPENDIX D

PREPARER QUALIFICATIONS

William T. Everett is a research, consulting, and conservation biologist with more than 40 years experience in the San Diego environment and around the world. He has logged more than 14,000 hours of field work, all detailed with field notes. In the 1970's Bill apprenticed in the study of chaparral ecology under Frank Gander, the retired but renown premier California botanist of the 1930s and 40s. Although his specialty is ornithology, Bill has a long-standing interest in all endangered species management and conservation issues. As President then Conservation Chairman of the San Diego Chapter of the Audubon Society in the late 1970s, he gained a keen understanding of the conservation challenges facing a growing Southern California. He subsequently became one of the first Biological Consultants certified by the County of San Diego in the 1980s. Bill is a Fellow of the National Association of Environmental Professionals (NAEP) and subscribes to the NAEP Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Environmental Professionals.

Bill Everett has published numerous scientific articles and conducted research in Southern California, Alaska, Antarctica, Baja California, South America, and throughout the tropical Pacific Ocean. In 1977, in recognition of his accomplishments, he was appointed as a Research Associate of the Department of Birds and Mammals of the San Diego Natural History Museum. In 1990 he was elected as a Research Fellow of the Zoological Society of San Diego, and in 1988 was appointed as the Senior Conservation Biologist of the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology. The Royal Geographic Society of London elected Bill as a Fellow in 1996, following his election as a Fellow of the Explorers Club in 1990.

Hired as a biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1977, Bill conducted research on endangered Peregrine Falcons in Northern California at a time when their continued existence was questionable. His interest in threatened species led to publication by the Audubon Society in 1979 of his paper entitled "Threatened, Declining and Sensitive Bird Species in San Diego County" (Sketches 36:1-2). This paper contained the first published account of the decline of the California Gnatcatcher.

Beyond the Southern California area, Bill has prepared the seabird impacts sections for the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements for Hawaii-based Pelagic Fisheries of the Western Tropical Pacific Ocean (2001), received a National Science Foundation major grant to lead an International Biocomplexity Survey and Expedition to Isla Guadalupe, Baja California, Mexico (2000), led the effort to save North America's most endangered bird species, the San Clemente Loggerhead Shrike (1991-1997), and headed up efforts in 2002 and 2003 to restore bird populations on Wake Atoll and Christmas Island in the central Pacific.

Bill holds a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Master Bird Banding Permit (#22378) with Endangered Species Authorization, and California Gnatcatcher Survey Authorization Permit # TE-788036. He received his Masters Degree from the University of San Diego in 1991 and completed a post-graduate program at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government in 1997.

Bill served as a member of the Conservation and Research Committee of the Zoological Society of San Diego since the committee was first established. In 1990, he founded the Endangered Species Recovery Council, an international coalition of scientists and conservationists dedicated to finding solutions to the problem of species extinctions. He continues as President of the organization.

In May 2002 Bill was honored in New York as a first recipient of the Explorers Club "Champions of Wildlife" award.