

November 27, 2018
(2018-220)

Brent Sutter
Woodard & Curran
980 Washington Street Suite 325
Dedham, MA 02026
Via email: bsutter@woodardcurran.com

Subject: Results of Protocol-level Desert Tortoise Survey Conducted for the SCLA Reclaimed Water Reservoir II Project, City of Victorville, California

Dear Mr. Sutter:

This letter report presents the results of the protocol-level desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) survey conducted by ECORP Consulting, Inc. (ECORP) for the SCLA Reclaimed Water Reservoir II Project (Project), City of Victorville, San Bernardino County, California. The protocol-level desert tortoise survey was conducted in accordance with the recommended survey protocol methods described in the USFWS document *Preparing for Any Action That May Occur within the Range of the Mojave Desert Tortoise*, which requires a 100 percent coverage pedestrian transect survey of the project site be conducted prior to construction activities to ensure that no desert tortoises or desert tortoise burrows are located within the Project Site. This report contains a summary of the survey results.

Project Description and Location

The City of Victorville proposes to construct a new 1,000,000-gallon pre-stressed concrete water storage reservoir on city-owned, undeveloped property, in the City of Victorville, San Bernardino County, California (Figure 1). The Project Site is approximately three miles east of State Route 395, one and a half miles west of National Trails Highway, and a half mile north of Air Base Road. The Project Site is located within the northwest portion of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Victorville 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle in Sections 25, Township 6 North, Range 5 West. Elevation at the site is approximately 2,875 feet above mean sea level (Figure 2). The Project Site is bounded by the former George Air Force Base Barracks with abandoned housing to the north and northeast, an equipment storage facility to the west, run-down base facilities to the southwest, and the West Winds Golf Course to the south and southeast.

The Project Site consists of approximately 10-acres of disturbed habitat, with dominant species being rabbitbrush (*Ericameria nauseosa*), fourwing saltbush (*Atriplex Canescens*), Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus*), and telegraph weed (*Heterotheca grandiflora*). The Project Site also contained chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*) throughout and tamarisk (*Tamarisk aphylla*) and Desert Willow (*Chilopsis linearis*) occur along the edges of the abandoned housing facilities. The Project Site contained compacted soils and remnant piles of disturbed soil were also present within the Project Site. Signs of vehicle disturbances were present in the form of two-track trails within the Project Site.



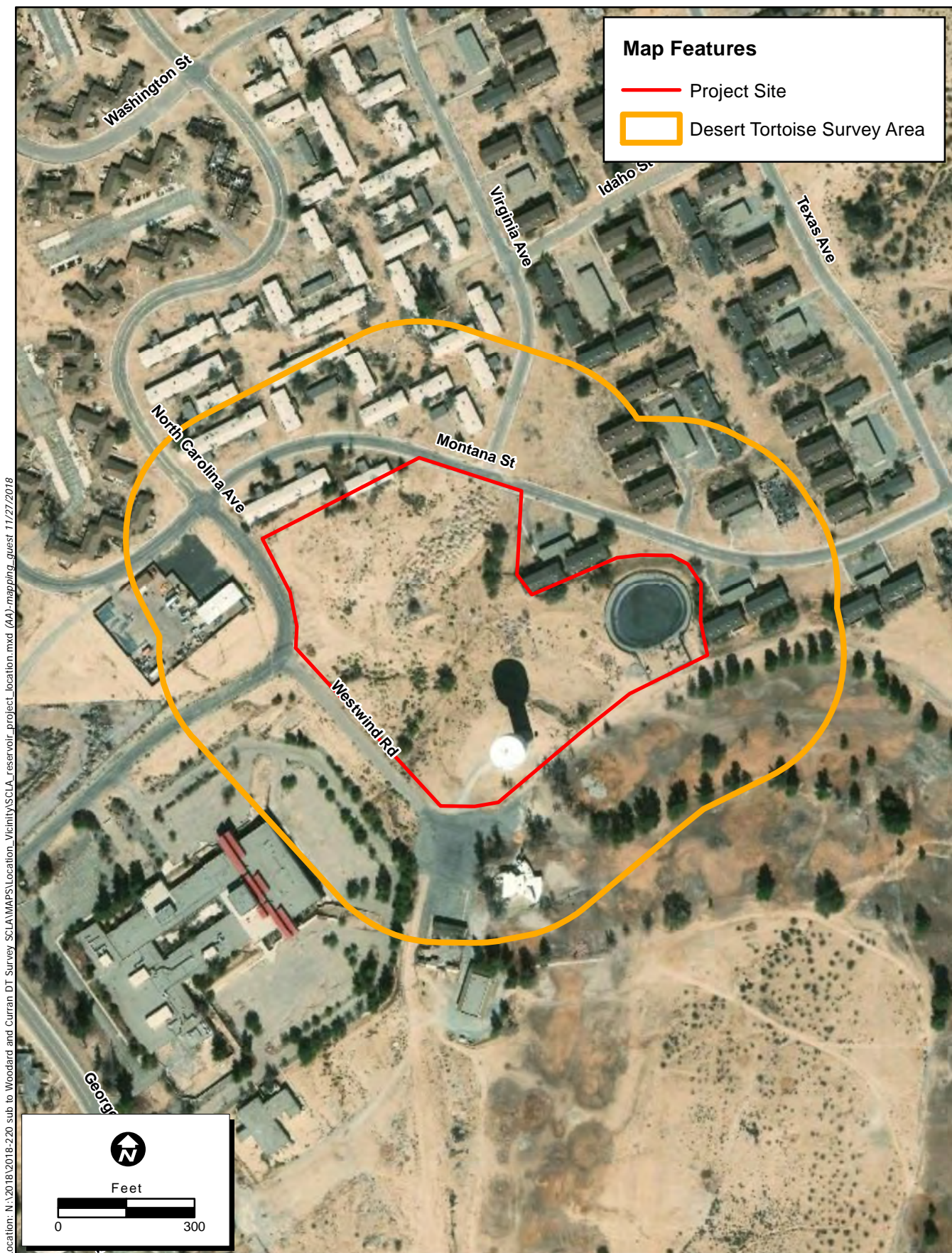
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Map Date: 11/26/2018

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Figure 1. Regional Project Location

2018-220 SCLA Reclaimed Water Reservoir II Project



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Map Date: 11/27/2018

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Figure 2. Project Location

2018-220 SCLA Reclaimed Water Reservoir II Project

Methods

Protocol-level survey for the desert tortoise was conducted by qualified biologists according to the methods listed in the USFWS document *Preparing for Any Action That May Occur within the Range of the Mojave Desert Tortoise*, which requires a 100 percent coverage survey of the Project Site, with a focus on locating all desert tortoises above and below ground within the Project Site. As described in the protocol, the first survey was conducted prior to project activities to determine presence or absence of desert tortoise within and around the Project Site.

The desert tortoise survey area included the entire project boundary and a 300-foot buffer. The biologists walked throughout the desert tortoise survey area using pedestrian transects spaced no more than 30 feet apart to provide 100-percent survey coverage. The biologists checked under shrubs and trees and visually inspected any burrows encountered for desert tortoise or desert tortoise sign. The biologists conducted surveys during atmospheric conditions most conducive to observing desert tortoise and avoided adverse conditions that might have inhibited tortoise activity, including high winds and temperature extremes (less than 50 degrees Fahrenheit [°F] and greater than 104°F). If encountered, desert tortoises or their sign (e.g., burrows, carcasses, scat, pellets, drinking sites, tracks, mating rings) were recorded using a GPS device unit in Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) coordinates, North American Datum 1983 (NAD 83), Zone 11. The date of observation, sign type, sign classification (according to the survey protocol), amount of sign, and any pertinent comments were recorded for any sign encountered. When feasible, photographs were taken of desert tortoises and representative desert tortoise sign.

Results

The protocol-level Desert tortoise survey was conducted by ECORP senior wildlife biologist, Phillip Wasz and assistant biologist, Torrey Rotellini on October 30, 2018. Weather conditions during the survey are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Weather Conditions during Survey

Date	Time		Temperature (°F)		Cloud Cover (%)		Wind Speed (m.p.h.)	
	start	end	start	end	start	end	start	end
10/30/2018	0800	1000	52	63	0	0	1-3	1-3

No desert tortoise, desert tortoise burrows, or sign of desert tortoise (e.g., scat, tracks, etc.) were identified on the Project Site, or within the 300-foot buffer during the protocol level desert tortoise surveys.

Discussion

Based on the negative findings of the pre-construction presence/absence surveys, it was determined that desert tortoise was not present on the Project Site at the time of the survey. Protocol-level desert tortoise surveys are formally valid for a period of one year from the date of the survey. For this reason, the survey may need to be updated if construction is delayed past one year from the date of the survey, or if noteworthy changes occur to the project's impact area.

Although the Project Site is located within the desert tortoise range, the poor-quality habitat on site likely precludes this species from occurring on site. However, to avoid project-related impacts to

tortoises potentially occurring on or in the vicinity of the Project Site, it is recommended that a pre-construction survey be conducted no more than 14 days prior to construction to ensure that no desert tortoises are on the Project Site prior to construction.

Thank you for the opportunity to work on your project. If you have any questions regarding the contents of this letter report, please contact me at (909) 307-0046 or pwasz@ecorpconsulting.com.

CERTIFICATION: I hereby certify that the statements furnished above and in the attached exhibits present data and information required for this biological evaluation, and the facts, statements, and information presented are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.



SIGNED: _____

DATE: November 27, 2018

Phillip Wasz
Senior Wildlife Biologist
ECORP Consulting, Inc.
215 N. 5th Street
Redlands, CA 92374

Attachments:

Attachment A: Representative Site Photos

ATTACHMENT A

Representative Site Photos



Photo 1: Middle of Project Site looking northeast.



Photo 2: Middle of Project Site looking west.



Photo 3: Vehicle disturbances within Project Site looking east



Photo 4: Soil pilings within Project Site looking south