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GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
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September 11, 2020

Governor's Office of Planning & Research

Sep 11 2020

Ms. Laura Lynch
San Francisco Planning Department
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San Francisco, CA 94103
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STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

Subject: Potrero Yard Modernization Project (2500 Mariposa Street), Notice of Preparation, SCH No. 2020089022, City and County of San Francisco

Dear Ms. Lynch:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has reviewed the Notice of Preparation (NOP) prepared by the City and County of San Francisco for the Potrero Yard Modernization Project (2500 Mariposa Street), referred to as Project, located in the City and County of San Francisco. CDFW is submitting comments on the NOP regarding potentially significant impacts to biological resources associated with the Project.

CDFW ROLE

CDFW is a Trustee Agency with responsibility under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA; Pub. Resources Code, § 21000 et seq.) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15386 for commenting on projects that could impact fish, plant, and wildlife resources (e.g., biological resources). CDFW is also considered a Responsible Agency if a project would require discretionary approval, such as permits issued under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA), the Native Plant Protection Act, the Lake and Streambed Alteration (LSA) Program, and other provisions of the Fish and Game Code that afford protection to the state's fish and wildlife trust resources.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA), proposes to replace the Potrero Trolley Coach Facility at 2500 Mariposa Street, otherwise known as Potrero Yard, in the northeast portion of San Francisco's Mission District near the South of Market and Potrero Hill neighborhoods.

The proposed Project would demolish the existing facility, which has been identified as a historical resource for purposes of CEQA, and replaced with a 1,300,000 gross-square-foot structure approximately 75 to 150 feet tall.

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The structure would accommodate the expansion of the SFMTA's transit vehicle fleet by increasing space for bus parking and circulation (up to 213 buses) and provide areas for SFMTA maintenance, operation, and administrative activities. The facility would also include approximately 33,000 gross-square-feet of commercial space and 575 residential units.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CDFW offers the following comments and recommendations to assist the City and County of San Francisco in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the Project's significant, or potentially significant, direct and indirect impacts on biological resources.

COMMENT 1: Artificial Lighting

Issue: The Project could increase artificial lighting. Artificial lighting often results in light pollution, which has the potential to significantly and adversely affect biological resources.

Evidence the impact would be significant: Night lighting can disrupt the circadian rhythms of many species. Many wildlife species use photoperiod cues for communication (e.g., bird song; Miller 2006) and migration (Longcore and Rich 2004).

Recommendations to minimize significant impacts: CDFW recommends eliminating all non-essential artificial lighting. If artificial lighting is necessary, CDFW recommends avoiding or limiting the use of artificial lights during the hours of dawn and dusk, when many wildlife species are most active. CDFW also recommends that outdoor lighting be shielded, cast downward, and does not spill over onto other properties or upwards into the night sky (see the International Dark-Sky Association standards at <http://darksky.org/>).

COMMENT 2: Exterior Windows

Issue: The glass used for exterior building windows could result in bird collisions, which can cause bird injury and mortality.

Evidence the impact would be significant: Birds, typically, do not see clear or reflective glass, and can collide with glass (e.g., windows) that reflect surrounding landscape and/or habitat features (Klem and Saenger 2013, Sheppard 2019). When birds collide with glass, they can be injured or killed. In the United States, the estimated annual bird mortality is between 365-988 million birds (Loss et al. 2014).

Recommendations to minimize significant impacts: CDFW recommends incorporating visual signals or cues to exterior windows to prevent bird collisions.

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Visual signals or cues include, but are not limited to, patterns to break up reflective areas, external window films and coverings, ultraviolet patterned glass, and screens. For best practices on how to reduce bird collisions with windows, please visit the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's website for Buildings and Glass (<https://www.fws.gov/birds/bird-enthusiasts/threats-to-birds/collisions/buildings-and-glass.php>).

COMMENT 3: Nesting Birds

Issue: Project construction could result in disturbance of nesting birds.

Evidence the impact would be significant: Noise can impact bird behavior by masking signals used for bird communication, mating, and hunting (Bottalico et al. 2015). Birds hearing can also be damaged from noise and impair the ability of birds to find or attract a mate and prevent parents from hearing calling young (Ortega 2012).

Recommendations to minimize significant impacts: If ground-disturbing or vegetation-disturbing activities occur during the bird breeding season (February through early-September), the Project applicant is responsible for ensuring that implementation of the Project does not result in violation of Fish and Game Codes.

To evaluate and avoid for potential impacts to nesting bird species, CDFW recommends incorporating the following mitigation measures into the Project's draft EIR, and that these measures be made conditions of approval for the Project.

Recommended Mitigation Measure 1: Nesting Bird Surveys

If ground-disturbing or vegetation-disturbing activities occur during the bird breeding season, CDFW recommends that a qualified avian biologist conduct pre-Project activity nesting bird surveys no more than seven (7) days prior to the start of ground or vegetation disturbance and if there is a four day or more lapse in ground or vegetation disturbance. CDFW recommends that nesting bird surveys cover a sufficient area around the Project area to identify nests and determine their status. A sufficient area means any area potentially affected by the Project.

During nesting bird surveys, CDFW recommends that a qualified avian biologist establish behavioral baseline of all identified nests. During Project activities, CDFW recommends having the qualified avian biologist continuously monitor nests to detect behavioral changes resulting from Project activities. If behavioral changes occur, CDFW recommends stopping the activity, that is causing the behavioral change, and consulting with a qualified avian biologist on additional avoidance and minimization measures.

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Recommended Mitigation Measure 2: Nesting Bird Buffers

During Project activities, if continuous monitoring of nests by a qualified avian biologist is not feasible, CDFW recommends a minimum no-disturbance buffer of 250 feet around active nests of non-listed bird species and a 1,000-foot no-disturbance buffer around active nests of non-listed raptors. These buffers are advised to remain in place until the breeding season has ended or until a qualified avian biologist has determined that the birds have fledged and are no longer reliant upon the nest or on-site parental care for survival. Variance from these no-disturbance buffers is possible when there is compelling biological or ecological reason to do so, such as when the Project area would be concealed from a nest site by topography. CDFW recommends that a qualified avian biologist advise and support any variance from these buffers.

FILING FEES

CDFW anticipates that the Project will have an impact on fish and/or wildlife, and assessment of filing fees is necessary (Fish and Game Code, section 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, section 21089). Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice of Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Project's NOP. If you have any questions regarding this letter or for further coordination with CDFW, please contact Ms. Monica Oey, Environmental Scientist, at (707) 428-2088 or Monica.Oey@wildlife.ca.gov; or Ms. Randi Adair, Senior Environmental Scientist (Supervisory), at Randi.Adair@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

BE74D4C93C604EA...
Gregg Erickson
Regional Manager
Bay Delta Region

cc: State Clearinghouse

REFERENCES

Bottalico, Pasquale & Spoglianti, Dorina & Bertetti, Carlo & Falossi, Marco. 2015. Effect of noise generated by construction sites on birds, paper presented at Internoise 2015, International Congress and Exposition on Noise Control Engineering.

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