

July 31, 2013

Ms. Jemellee Cruz, P.E.  
Department of Public Works, County of Los Angeles  
Flood Maintenance Division  
900 South Fremont Avenue, Annex Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Alhambra, California 91802-1460

**VIA EMAIL**  
**jcruz@dpw.lacounty.gov**

**Subject:** Results of a Wildlife Survey for the Giant Reed Removal Project at Los Angeles River Soft-Bottom Channel Reach 114 in Long Beach, Los Angeles County, California

Dear Ms. Cruz:

This letter report presents the findings of a wildlife survey at the proposed Giant Reed Removal Project site located at Soft-bottom Channel (SBC) Reach No. 114 of the Los Angeles River Flood Control Channel in Long Beach. SBC Reach No. 114 extends from Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) downstream to west Anaheim Street. In order for construction equipment to access this area, temporary earthen ramps will be placed on both the east and west levees upstream of PCH in SBC Reach No. 25 of the channel. The Giant Reed Removal Project site will therefore include all of SBC Reach No. 114 and 750 feet upstream of PCH in SBC Reach No. 25 (hereinafter referred to as the Project Site). Both of these SBC Reaches are managed by the Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LACFCD), but only SBC Reach No. 25 is included in the current regulatory permits needed for annual fall maintenance activities. SBC Reach No. 114 is not included in the permits and, as a result, the vegetation in this channel reach has not been maintained for years. The LACFCD recently received a request from the Long Beach Police Department to clear vegetation at SBC Reach No. 114 of the Project Site due to the presence of numerous homeless encampments that are a safety concern to the local community.

SBC Reach No. 114 of the Project Site has been included in the annual pre- and post-clearing biological surveys conducted for the LACFCD's annual fall maintenance activities despite the lack of on-going maintenance (i.e. vegetation clearing) at this channel reach. These surveys have shown that SBC Reach No. 114 is heavily infested with non-native invasive species, particularly the giant reed (*Arundo donax*). In addition, more extensive biological surveys have been performed at the Project Site for the LACFCD including a constraints analysis (BonTerra Consulting 2009a) and a focused survey for special status plant species (BonTerra Consulting 2009b). This current wildlife survey serves to update the previous biological surveys conducted at the Project Site.

## **METHODS**

BonTerra Consulting Biologist Jonas Winbolt conducted a general wildlife survey of the Project Site on July 24, 2013. Active searches for reptiles and amphibians included lifting, overturning, and carefully replacing rocks and debris. Birds



were identified by visual and auditory recognition. Surveys for mammals were conducted during the day and included searching for and identifying diagnostic signs including scat, footprints, scratch-outs, dust bowls, burrows, and trails. Taxonomy and nomenclature for wildlife generally follows Fisher and Case (1997) for amphibians and reptiles, American Ornithologists Union (1998) for birds, and Baker et al. (2003) for mammals. All species observed were identified and recorded in field notes and, if needed, the identification was verified by field guides.

Local vicinity maps are attached as Exhibits 1A, and aerial photographs are attached as Exhibits 2A, and Project Site photographs are included as Exhibits 3A. Table 1 presents further Project Site details. The Project Site's elevation is approximately ten feet above mean sea level (msl). Furthermore, this reach is within the ocean tidal zone and contain salt and brackish waters. Freshwater enters the lower Los Angeles River near Willow Street which is approximately one-mile upstream of the Project Site.

**TABLE 1  
SOFT-BOTTOM CHANNEL (SBC) REACH INFORMATION**

Soft-Bottom Channel	Reach Limits (u/s = upstream; d/s = downstream) and Length	USGS Quadrangles and Watershed	Thomas Guide Location	Soil Type Associations	Maintenance Plan
Los Angeles River	Pacific Coast Hwy (u/s) - 1600' N/o west Anaheim Street bridge (d/s); 2,700 feet	Long Beach; Los Angeles River Watershed	795-C5 to 825-C1	Hanford, Tujunga-Soboba	Clearing of all non-native vegetation growing throughout the reach using mechanical equipment

## RESULTS

### Wildlife

The open brackish water habitat of this reach attracts a large number and diversity of water birds throughout the year. Observed during the survey were mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), cinnamon teal (*Anas cyanoptera*), northern shoveler (*Anas clypeata*), ruddy duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*), eared grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*), double-crested cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*), brown pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*), great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*), great egret (*Ardea alba*), green heron (*Butorides virescens*), and American coot (*Fulica Americana*). In addition to rip rap, this reach has some exposed sediment at the toe of the levee banks. This sediment would typically provide foraging and roosting opportunities for a variety of birds, particularly sandpipers, but these opportunities are very limited at the Project Site due to the extent and density of the vegetation (i.e. giant reed). Gulls are common in this channel and the ring-billed gull (*Larus delawarensis*), western gull (*Larus occidentalis*), and California gull (*Larus californicus*) were present during the survey. Other members of the gull family, Laridae, called terns are known to forage in the Los Angeles River estuary but only the Caspian tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*) was detected. Land birds observed during the survey included rock pigeon (*Columba livia*), Eurasian collared-dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*), mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), white-throated swift (*Aeronautes saxatalis*), black phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*), American crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), barn swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), European starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), common yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*), red-winged blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), house finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*), and house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*).

The terrestrial habitats of the Project Site provide limited opportunities for amphibians, reptiles, and mammals. No amphibian or reptiles were detected during the survey, but the Pacific treefrog (*Pseudacris regilla*) may be present. No other amphibian species are expected to occur. The western fence lizard is expected to occur as well as the southern alligator lizard (*Elgaria multicarinata*), but no other reptile species are expected to occur. The California ground squirrel (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*) and the tracks of common raccoon (*Procyon lotor*) were observed during the survey. The Virginia opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*) and black rat (*Rattus rattus*) are expected to occur at the Project Site. The coyote (*Canis latrans*) may also occasionally occur at the Project Site. Dozens of feral cats (*Felis domesticus*) were also present and found in association with the homeless encampments at the Project Site.

Aquatic species included one unidentified turtle under the west Anaheim Street bridge, dozens of carp (*Cyprinus carpio*) and a few channel catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*). Other fish species expected to occur include the northern anchovy (*Engraulis mordax*), cheek-spotted goby (*Lythrypnus albigena*), arrow goby (*Clevelandia ios*), and California killifish (*Fundulus parvipinnis*). The California sea lion (*Zalophus californianus*) may occasionally wander upstream to the Project Site.

### **Special Status Species**

As identified during the biological constraints analysis (BonTerra Consulting 2009a), there are several special status wildlife species expected to use the Project Site including two bird species listed as State and/or federally Endangered: California brown pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis californicus*) and the California least tern (*Sternula antillarum browni*). A third previously listed Endangered species, the American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrines anatum*), is also expected to occur at the Project Site<sup>1</sup>. Of these three species, only the California brown pelican was observed at the Project Site during this survey. The Project Site provides suitable foraging and loafing habitat for the pelican, but not suitable nesting habitat. The main foraging area for the pelican during the survey was outside the Project Site, located approximately 200 feet downstream of the west Anaheim Street bridge.

The American peregrine falcon is expected to occur throughout the year for foraging activities only. The California least tern is only expected to occur from April to August for foraging activities only. The Project Site does not provide suitable nesting habitat for any of these three species. The native riparian habitats of the Project Site are too disturbed to provide suitable habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) and least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) and they are not expected to occur.

### **CONCLUSION**

The proposed giant reed removal activities would potentially occur within the bird nesting season. The giant reed removal activities would also occur adjacent to sensitive aquatic habitats. Based on the potential presence of special-status avian species, Bonterra Consulting recommends fulltime biological monitoring for the duration of the vegetation removal activities at the Project Site.

If any proposed invasive plant species removal activities would potentially occur in the aquatic habitats, then avoidance measures would need to be developed and implemented to avoid potential impacts on eelgrass (*Zostera marina*).

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<sup>1</sup> The American peregrine falcon was delisted from its federal status of Endangered in 1999, and its State status of Endangered in 2009.

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BonTerra Consulting has appreciated the opportunity to assist on this project. If you have any comments or questions, please call Marc Blain or Tom Smith at (626) 351-2000.

Sincerely,

BONTERRA CONSULTING



Thomas E. Smith, Jr., AICP  
Principal

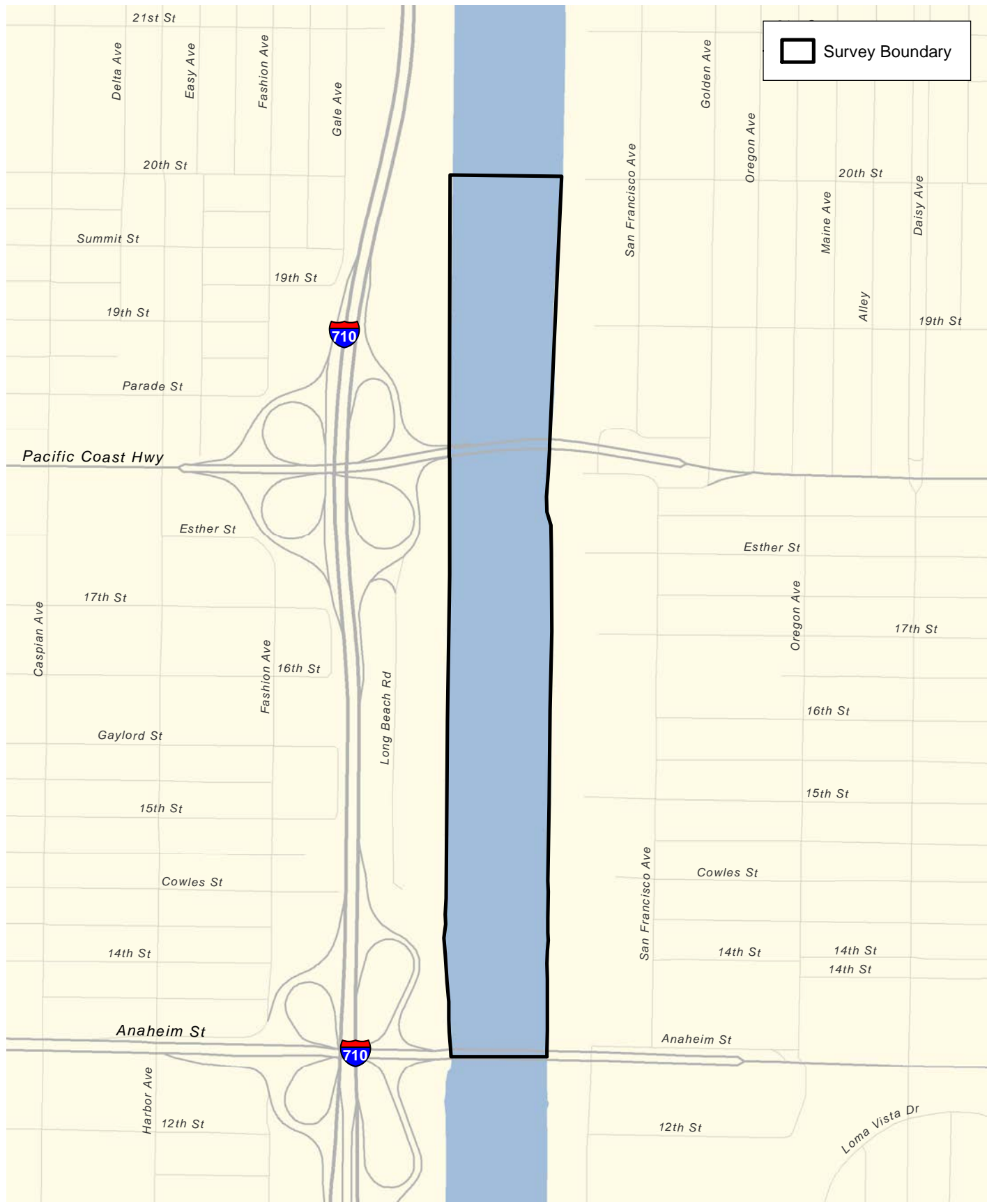


Marc T. Blain  
Associate, Biological Resources Manager

Attachments: Exhibit 1 – Local Vicinity  
Exhibit 2 – Aerial Photograph  
Exhibit 3 – Site Photographs

## REFERENCES

- American Ornithologists' Union. 1998. Check-list of North American Birds, 7th ed. American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.
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- Fisher, R. N. and T. J. Case. 1997. *A Field Guide to the Reptiles and Amphibians of Coastal Southern California*. San Mateo, CA: Lazer Touch.

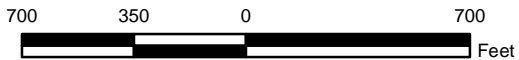


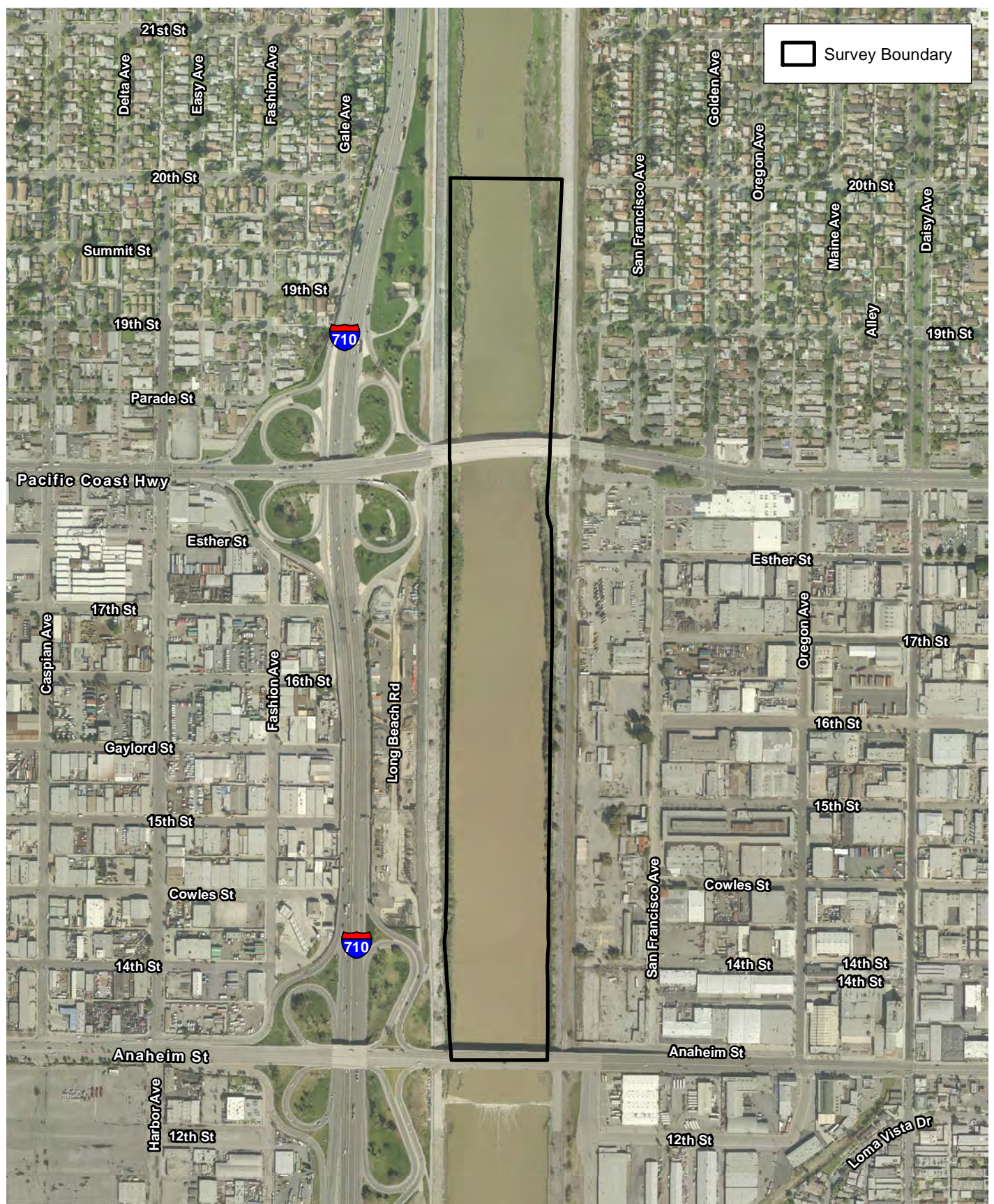
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## Local Vicinity

## Exhibit 1

*Giant Reed Removal Project at Los Angeles River Channel Reach 114,  
Long Beach, Los Angeles County, California*



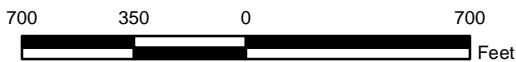


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## Aerial Photograph

Exhibit 2

*Giant Reed Removal Project at Los Angeles River Channel Reach 114,  
Long Beach, Los Angeles County, California*



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View of proposed location upstream of Pacific Coast Highway for temporary earthen ramp.



View of brown pelicans downstream of Anaheim Street.



View from Pacific Coast Highway of the Los Angeles River Channel Reach No. 114.

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## Site Photographs – July 24, 2013

Exhibit 3

*Giant Reed Removal Project at Los Angeles River Channel Reach No. 114,  
Long Beach, Los Angeles County, California*

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