

APPENDIX C

Biological Resources Assessment Letter



March 10, 2021

Rachel Philipson
Brown and Caldwell
201 North Civic Drive
Walnut Creek, California 94596

Re: Biological Resource Assessment of North Coast County Water District Sheila Water Tank, Pacifica, San Mateo County, CA

Dear Rachel,

This letter report provides the results of the biological resources assessment that was conducted at the Sheila Tank Replacement Project (Project) located in the City of Pacifica (Appendix A, Figure 1). The Project site is located within the Linda Mar residential neighborhood at 1141 Sheila Lane (APN: 023-311-010; Study Area). The Study Area currently consists of the existing redwood water tank, a surrounding chain-link fence, wood chips, gravel, and weedy vegetation. Access to the tank is provided via a gated dirt road off Sheila Lane.

This report describes the results of the biological resources assessment which evaluated the Study Area for: (1) the potential to support special-status species, and (2) the potential presence of other sensitive biological resources protected by local, state, and federal laws and regulations. This assessment was based on information available at the time of the study and on-site conditions that were observed during the site visit.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Study Area is approximately 1.08 acres and slopes steeply to the southwest. The Study Area contains the Sheila Tank which was constructed in 1955 and has since been designated by the North Coast County Water District (NCCWD) as no longer functioning. The Project would replace the out of service 100,000 gallon Sheila Tank with a larger capacity, partially buried, prestressed concrete tank with a volume of approximately 600,000 gallons.

The Project has been designed to avoid tree loss and tree trimming to the maximum degree possible. No tree removal is planned. If tree removal is necessary, the NCCWD will comply with the City of Pacifica tree ordinance. If vegetation removal or initial Project ground disturbance occurs within the breeding bird season (February 1 – August 31), the Project site would be surveyed for the presence of breeding birds within 14 days of the start of construction or any project-related activities. If no active nests are observed, work can proceed.

If any active nests are found in proximity to work areas, a qualified biologist will establish a protective buffer zone around nests based on species-specific behavior and tolerance for disturbance. No work will be conducted within established buffers until all young have fledged the nest or the nest is otherwise

determined inactive by the qualified biologist. If construction is initiated outside of the breeding bird season (September 1 – January 31), construction will proceed without completion of a breeding bird survey.

METHODS

On February 17 and 18, 2021, WRA, Inc. (WRA) biologists conducted site visits within the Study Area. The potential occurrence of special-status species in the Study Area was evaluated by first determining which special-status species occur in the vicinity of the Study Area through a literature and database search. Resources reviewed included California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Natural Diversity Database records (CNDDDB; CDFW 2021), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Conservation Species Lists (USFWS 2021), and California National Plant Society (CNPS) Inventory records (CNPS 2021).

The Study Area was examined for indicators of wetlands, non-wetland waters, and riparian habitat potentially subject to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), and/or the CDFW jurisdictions. The Study Area was also examined to determine if special-status species or their associated habitats were present. Areas that met characteristics to be considered habitat for special-status species were mapped in portions of the Study Area where this habitat was determined to represent a potential constraint associated with proposed Project activities.

The conclusions of this report are based on conditions observed at the time of the site visit and regulatory policies and practices in place at the time the report was prepared; changes that may occur in the future with regard to conditions, policies, or practices could affect the conclusions presented in this study.

RESULTS

Sensitive Communities

The Study Area contains five non-sensitive land cover types including Monterey pine (*Pinus radiata*) stands, 0.36 acres of non-native annual grassland, 0.04 acres of non-native blackberry thicket, 0.33 acres of ruderal herbaceous forbs and grasses, and 0.11 acres of developed/landscaped terrain (Appendix A, Figure 2). Appendix B provides representative photographs of the Study Area.

No wetlands or non-wetland waters that could be considered potentially jurisdictional of the Corps, RWQCB, or the CDFW were observed within or adjacent to the Study Area. No CDFW-sensitive communities were present within the Study Area.

Special-status Species

Special-status Plant Species

No special-status plant species were observed in the Study Area during the site assessment. Seventy-six special-status plant species have been documented in the Montara Mountain and five surrounding USFS quadrangles (CDFW 2021, CNPS 2021). These species are unlikely or have no potential to occur in the Study Area due to one or more of the following reasons:

- Specific edaphic conditions, such as serpentine or volcanic soils, are absent;

- Specific hydrologic conditions, such as wetlands or riverine, are absent;
- Common associated plant species and vegetation communities are absent;
- The Study Area is above/below the documented elevation range of the species;
- Lack of a viable seed bank due to historic and contemporary soil alterations;
- Non-native species competition;
- Regular disturbance (e.g., mowing, landscape maintenance) of the Study Area; and
- Development including pavement and structures precludes the presence of the species.

Special-status Wildlife Species

No special-status wildlife species were observed in the Study Area during the site assessment. Thirty-eight special-status wildlife species have been documented in the CNDDDB in the Montara Mountain and five surrounding USFS quadrangles (CDFW 2021). The wildlife which have been documented in the vicinity were determined to have no potential, or are unlikely to occur within the Study Area due to one or more of the following reasons:

- The setting of the Study Area is developed, and the Study Area itself is disturbed;
- Aquatic habitats necessary to support special-status wildlife species (e.g., ponds, freshwater streams/rivers) are not present in the Study Area;
- Vegetation communities (e.g., tidal or freshwater marsh, open grassland, oak woodlands, old-growth coniferous forest, and riparian woodland/forest) that provide nesting and/or foraging resources necessary to support special-status wildlife species are not present in the Study Area;
- Structures or vegetation (e.g., caves, old-growth trees) necessary to provide nesting or cover habitat to support special-status wildlife species are not present in the Study Area;
- The Study Area is outside of special-status wildlife species' documented range.

However, migratory birds with baseline legal protections under the CFGC have the potential to nest within the Study Area. The legal protection of migratory birds includes their eggs and/or chicks during the nesting period.

Trees

The Study Area may contain heritage trees. Heritage trees are all trees within the City of Pacifica, exclusive of eucalyptus, which have a trunk with a circumference of fifty inches (approximately sixteen inches in diameter, 16 DBH) or more, measured at twenty-four inches above the natural grade.

SUMMARY

Based on the site visit and a review of background literature and databases, the Study Area does not contain any sensitive biological communities and is unlikely or has no potential to support special-status plant or wildlife species; however, non-special-status nesting birds may be present in the Study Area during the breeding season and on-site trees may be subject to the City of Pacifica Code of Ordinances Chapter 12: Preservation of heritage trees. The Project has been designed to avoid tree loss and tree trimming. If tree removal is necessary, the NCCWD will comply with the City of Pacifica tree ordinance and applicable City regulations. Nesting bird surveys would be implemented if vegetation removal or ground disturbance is initiated during the nesting bird season.

Based on the site visit and review of information pertinent to the Study Area, the construction of the Project will not result in significant impacts to special-status plant and wildlife species or to any sensitive habitats.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Molly Brewer', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Molly Brewer
Wildlife Biologist
WRA, Inc.

Appendices:

- A: Figures
- B: Site Photographs

REFERENCES

- [CDFW] California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2021. Natural Diversity Database, Wildlife and Habitat Data Analysis Branch. Sacramento, California. Accessed: March 2021.
- [CNPS] California Native Plant Society. 2021. Electronic Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California. California Native Plant Society, Sacramento, California.
- [USFWS] U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2021. Information for Planning and Conservation Database. Available online at: <https://ecos.fws.gov/ipac/>. Most recently accessed: March 2021.

Appendix A – Figures



Path: L:\Acad 2000 Files\25000\25329-1\GIS\ArcMap\25329-1Base.aprx

Sources: National Geographic, WRA | Prepared By: njander, 2/23/2021

Figure 1. Study Area Regional Location Map

Biological Resource Assessment
 Sheila Tank Replacement
 Pacifica, San Mateo County, California

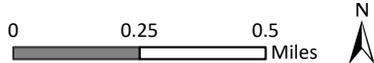




Figure 2. Biological Communities in the Study Area

Appendix B – Site Photographs



Photograph 1. Photograph showing non-native annual grasslands in the foreground and Sheila Tank in the background with Monterey pine stands on both western and eastern edges of the Study Area, facing south. Taken February 18, 2021.



Photograph 2. Photograph showing Monterey pine stands in the Study Area, facing east. Taken February 18, 2021.



Photograph 3. Photograph showing several biological communities and steep slopes of the Study Area, facing north. Taken February 18, 2021.



Photograph 4. Photograph showing ruderal herbaceous biological community in the Study Area, facing east. Taken February 18, 2021.



Photograph 5. Photograph showing *Rubus* shrublands in the Study Area, facing east. Taken February 18, 2021.