



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Lower Colorado Region
Southern California Area Office
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Temecula, CA 92590-2628

IN REPLY REFER TO:
SCAO-1500
ENV-7.00

DEC 22 2015

MEMORANDUM

To: Assistant Field Supervisor, Palm Springs Fish and Wildlife Office
Attn: Chief, San Bernardino and Riverside Counties

From: William J. Steele
Area Manager

Subject: Riverside-Corona Feeder, La Sierra Pipeline Connection, Riverside County, California

The Western Municipal Water District (Western) is seeking Bureau of Reclamation funding to install components of the Riverside-Corona Feeder project, including the Sterling pump station, the La Sierra pipeline, Reach G and a portion of Reach F. Western also applied to the California State Water Resources Control Board under the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF).¹

The new infrastructure will connect the Arlington desalter pipeline to move water from Chino basin to the Mills gravity pipeline. The project includes 4 miles of 30-inch diameter pipeline to be installed within roadways and flood control easements. Reach G and most of Reach F have been realigned and will be installed along existing concrete channels within County flood control easements. The Sterling pump station will be near the Arlington Desalter at 11615 Sterling Street in the city of Riverside. Reaches F and G and the pump station are in urbanized areas with no native habitat or records of endangered species occurrences.

The La Sierra pipeline component will be installed within the La Sierra Avenue right-of-way in unincorporated Riverside County, extending south from Cleveland Avenue to the Mills gravity pipeline in El Sobrante Road. No habitat is present within the limits of construction.

Adjacent areas along most of the La Sierra pipeline alignment are undeveloped. Suitable habitat for coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) is present in sage scrub and nonnative annual grassland adjacent to the limits of construction. Historic habitat for Stephen's kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys stephensi*) is present on both sides of the alignment. California Natural Diversity Database records indicate least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) nesting in riparian habitat within a drainage west of the roadway.

We have determined that the federal action will have no effect to threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat areas. There will be no direct impacts to any habitat areas.

¹ The CWSRF program is partially funded by a capitalization grant from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Issuance of CWSRF funds is considered equivalent to a Federal action.

Indirect effects to coastal California gnatcatcher, least Bell's vireo, and Stephen's kangaroo rat will be avoided during construction of the La Sierra pipeline.

Avoidance measures recommended in a 2009 biological assessment of the La Sierra pipeline will be implemented as a condition of our financial assistance agreement:

- All construction activity (including parking, staging areas, and spoil storage areas) will be limited to the La Sierra Avenue right-of-way.
- Construction activity will avoid the nesting season (March 1 through August 15).
- The limits of construction adjacent to suitable coastal California gnatcatcher habitat (Riversidean sage scrub and disturbed Riversidean sage scrub) will be fenced with orange vinyl barrier material, and this area will be inspected regularly throughout construction by the project biologist.
- Prior to construction, the limits of construction adjacent to suitable Stephens' kangaroo rat habitat will be fenced with orange vinyl barrier material. Silt fencing will be installed in addition to the orange vinyl fencing to discourage Stephens' kangaroo rats from wandering into the limits of construction. The limits of construction will be inspected regularly throughout construction by the project biologist.

The infrastructure proposed under the current federal action has independent utility from other components of the Riverside-Corona Feeder project. Most of the Riverside-Corona Feeder project will be installed within streets in developed or disturbed urban areas, but some future components are likely to affect federally listed species or designated critical habitat areas.

We met with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists on November 10, 2010, for informal consultation under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Western committed to become a "participating special entity" under the Western Riverside Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) to obtain incidental take authorization for components of the project that may affect federally-listed species or designated critical habitat areas within Riverside County.

The portion of the Northern Reach in San Bernardino County is outside the Western Riverside MSHCP boundary. Formal consultation under section 7 may be required for this component. The Northern Reach includes a turn-out connection at the county line. The Riverside County and San Bernardino County portions of the Northern Reach have independent utility and can be evaluated separately.

The 2009 biological assessment of the La Sierra pipeline, a 2014 general biological update of Reach G and the La Sierra pipeline, and a California Environmental Quality Act addendum evaluating the realignment of reaches F and G are attached. If you need additional information, please call Doug McPherson of my staff at (951) 695-5310 or e-mail dmcpherson@usbr.gov.

Attachments - 3

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