

BIOLOGY:

Site Visit by Shirley Imsand, 2013.02.06; Report on Biological Impacts of the Project

The Edison transmission line tower where the Sprint project is located is adjacent to an oak woodland on a north-facing slope. The trench to be reopened for placement of the fiber-optic connection is partly within the protected zone of both trees and beneath parts of the canopies of both trees near the utility pole. The 55-ft. trench is entirely within the extent of oak woodland, as calculated by the method of using the canopy to be 10% of the woodland coverage. The trench will cross the service road that circles the installation. Use of the road continually impacts the oak woodland area and the protected zone of both trees.

The oak tree report for the CUP was prepared in October 2002. Since that time about 10.5 years ago, Oak #1 has grown from 28.6 to about 35 inches. This oak has a bulge surrounding the trunk that probably indicates impact from use of the service road. Oak #2 trunks have expanded from 8.8", 9.9", 10.1" to 11.1", 11.5", 12.1". Branches have extended to the point that part of the trench will be beneath the canopies and the protected zone of the trees.

Previous SEATAC review: 2002.09.09, Item 2

Recommendations:

1. Standard conditions should be added for project modifications that exceed biological impact thresholds. SEATAC should review projects that exceed these thresholds:
  - a. Expansion of the footprint of the installation beyond the Sprint pad or extension of height beyond the present height, such as a high installation that would require FAA safety lighting.
  - b. Activity on a tower for which the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) will require safety lighting or additional safety lighting
  - c. Installation of any new tower or pole
  - d. Any addition of lighting to what currently exists. FAA requirements for lighting vary with location and height.

N.B. Conditions do not need modification if a standard policy of thresholds for small-scale wireless projects is in place that accounts for these types of modifications.

Mitigations:

2. The oak tree report shall be updated to cover the current condition and extent of the impact on trees by the project, using current understanding of root extents and what trimming may be needed. The arborist shall make recommendations for the current best methods for trench excavation. A new oak tree permit will be needed.
3. A breeding bird-nesting survey to a radius of 500 ft. from project activities shall be conducted by a biologist acceptable to the Director of the Dept. of Regional Planning within 3 days prior to the start of project activity. The purpose of the survey is to preclude any action that may cause disruption of nesting behavior such as noise exceeding 60dB from equipment. The limits of survey shall be a 500 ft. radius for raptors and 300 ft. radius

for other birds. For any discovered active nest, the biologist shall determine that project activities are outside of a buffer area appropriate for the species, or if project activities are disruptive to nesting, activities shall cease until the biologist advises that nesting has completed. Surveys will need to be repeated if project activities at the site stop for more than one week. The project proponent shall record the results of the surveys; recommended protective measures described above; and submit the records (memo) to the Department of Regional Planning to document compliance with applicable State and Federal laws pertaining to the protection of native birds.

4. Work within the protected zone of oak trees shall be conducted under the supervision of an arborist.

5. The trench shall be excavated during daylight using the most gentle methods possible. Possible methods include hand tools or an air spade that moves dirt from around the roots, but leaves large roots intact. If roots will be exposed overnight, then they shall be covered with damp rags or burlap to prevent desiccation. The conduit shall be threaded through any exposed roots.

6. Any open trenching, conduit, piping, or similar features shall be covered at night to discourage the entry of wildlife and shall be checked for and cleared of wildlife prior to the commencement of work every morning.

7. Project activities shall take place only during daylight hours to avoid the use of artificial lights.

Discussion items for SEATAC:

1. Would the breeding bird survey take care of assessing project impacts to California coast gnatcatcher, or should the original gnatcatcher survey be repeated?
2. Are there other biological recommendations for the CUP for this project or the mitigations?