

**Santa Fe Road Realignment
Biological Survey Report
for the Chevron Tank Farm EIR**

Prepared by MRS

July 2011

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Introduction

As part of the ongoing Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Chevron Tank Farm investigation, Marine Research Specialists (MRS) conducted a one-day biological reconnaissance survey of the Santa Fe Road Realignment Project (the project) area. The purpose of the survey was to (1) include an assessment of the habitat potentially impacted by the proposed Santa Fe Road Realignment and bridge construction over the East Fork of the San Luis Creek (as detailed in the Grading and Drainage Plan provided to MRS by Chevron, dated November 19, 2008) which was not assessed in the original EIR baseline, and (2) ensure that the original baseline description included enough detail to adequately assess impacts for the complete proposed project.

This report provides the results of the biological reconnaissance survey of the project area and provides observed and potential sensitive resources present in the road alignment work area.

Biological Reconnaissance Survey Methods

MRS senior biologists, Ted Mullen and Cletis England, conducted a one day and evening biological reconnaissance survey on July 18, 2011 of the proposed Santa Fe Road realignment and San Luis Obispo Creek bridge crossing. MRS biologists walked a meandering transect through the project area which included the riparian habitat approximately 500 feet upstream and downstream of the expected disturbance area. The survey included both daylight and nighttime hours to assess the habitat during the evening when additional wildlife species could be active. There were no protocol surveys conducted for sensitive species nor wetland delineation conducted as part of this site visit. Special attention was given to the presence of suitable habitat for sensitive species, the presence of sensitive habitats including riparian and wetland boundaries, the general location of the Top of Bank, the presence of sensitive or native trees including oaks and walnut, the presence or potential habitat for special status plants; and the potential for other sensitive resources such as raptor nests or roosts and other migratory bird nesting habitat.

Biological Reconnaissance Survey Results

Sensitive biological resources observed and recorded during the MRS reconnaissance surveys of the project site included mature oak trees, walnut trees, oak woodland habitat, riparian habitat, wetland habitat, raptor roost sites, migratory bird nesting habitat, and potential sensitive wildlife and special status plant species.

In general, the habitat that was observed in the road alignment project area has already been adequately described in detail in the original EIR baseline description. Habitats in the road alignment project area included a mixture of willow and oak riparian, open grassland consisting primarily of non-native grasses, seasonal wet meadows, and oak woodland habitats.

Most of the habitat located within the proposed arch culvert bridge crossing over the east fork of San Luis Creek consisted of Mixed Riparian habitat which extended up to and past the confluences of the San Luis Creek, Acacia Creek, and Orcutt Creek. This riparian habitat is dominated by arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*), blackberry (*Rubus* sp.), and cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), with scattered occurrences of mature coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus* spp.) and black walnut (*Juglans californica*). The creekbed had flowing water at the time of

the survey. Much of the creek bed in the project area showed evidence of past oil field activities, (layers of asphaltic material, several of which were at least two- to three-feet thick), an old concrete and wood bridge support wall, old dump material (which could indicate the presence of historical resources), and recent trash and debris. The riparian habitat, and mature oak, walnut, and eucalyptus trees within the proposed project footprint would provide suitable roost and nest sites for raptor species (two red-tailed hawks, an adult and juvenile, were observed and heard in the canopy during the time of the survey) and nesting bird species which could include sensitive avian species such as yellow warbler. Aquatic species that were observed in the creek included Pacific treefrog (*Pseudacris regilla*), crayfish, mosquitofish (*Gambusia affinis*), and threespine stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*). Suitable habitat was present for steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) although the presence of crayfish reduces the potential for this federally listed amphibian species.

The open grassland habitat within the project area was comprised of a mix of non-native grass species including Italian ryegrass (*Lolium multiflorum*), wild barley (*Hordeum sp.*), star thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*), ripgut grass (*Bromus diandrus*), and wild oat (*Avena barbata*). Interspersed within the open grassland were several lower elevation areas that supported some wetland plant species. These areas are expected to support ephemeral wetlands which could support sensitive species such as Congdon's tarplant (*Centromadia parryi ssp. congdonii*) and western spadefoot (*Spea hammondi*) and sensitive invertebrate species such as vernal pool fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*) which have been recorded on site in the general area.