

Office Memorandum

TO: Nathan Lishman, PG&E Land Planner

DATE: 2/19/2015

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SUBJECT: 7082465 Gas Operations Technical Training Center – Biological Addendum

Background

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) is proposing the construction and operation of the Winters Gas Operations Technical Training Center (GOTTC) Project (project) in the City of Winters. The facility would be constructed at the southwest corner of Interstate 505 (I-505) and State Route (SR) 128 (Grant Avenue) in Yolo County, California. This facility would be a vocational training center for students. The proposed project includes construction and operation of a Training Center (totaling 106,500 square feet) and associated infrastructure.

A Biological Resources Assessment of the Proposed PG&E GOTTC in the City of Winters dated October 2014 was drafted by Estep Environmental Resources which evaluated the potential for occurrence of regional special-status species and potential waters of the U.S. in a defined study area (Figure 1). Areas adjacent to the project area were also discussed in the document as they would pertain to special-status species and potential waters of the U.S.

Since that time, additional areas associated with the site construction design and planning have been added, largely associated with adjacent roadside ditches, and a narrow area on the west side of the site which will be utilized for offsite improvements consisting of a sidewalk.

Additionally, areas to the south of the site were included in the new survey area map, which include riparian areas associated with Putah Creek. While these areas are not depicted on the original survey area map, they have been considered in previous species and habitat discussion, primarily for valley elderberry longhorn beetle and western pond turtle.

To evaluate these areas in a biological context, this addendum is being generated to supplement the original Estep (2014) report and contribute to the Project's Environmental Impact Report being prepared for the City of Winters.

Methods

To evaluate areas of, and adjacent to, the project site, added subsequent to the original reporting, review of the original biological documentation was performed, a site survey was conducted, and aerial photography on GoogleEarth was reviewed.

While conducting the site survey, areas added to the project study boundary as depicted in Figure 2, were walked on foot, or driven by, in their entirety by PG&E Senior Terrestrial Biologist, Ryan Brown on February 2, 2015.

Results

New survey areas offered little additional information in comparison with the results and conclusion of the original biological report provided by Estep (2014). Much of the increase area of this study is comprised of fallow agricultural land dominated by annual grass and ruderal vegetation. Areas west of the site are narrow bands, one comprised mainly of SR-128, which is asphalt, and roadside ditch on the north and south side of the roadway (**Photograph 1**). The other area west of the site is an option to have a sidewalk built to connect with existing residential development. This area is graded, disturbed, and comprised of annual grass and ruderal vegetation.

A roadside ditch occurs along the I-505 on-ramp (**Photograph 2**). Several trees occur along the I-505 ditch which present suitable nesting habitat for passerine birds. Also, within the I-505 ditch are several isolated areas of Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*) brambles, which provide some cover for wildlife and potential nesting sites for passerine birds.

Two residential homes and several mature trees occur on the west side of the property.

Putah Creek occurs south of the project site and contains many mature trees which provide nesting habitat for passerine birds and raptors, including Swainson's hawk (**Photograph 3**). Also, the riverine area provides aquatic habitat for western pond turtle. These species are discussed in the original Estep report.

Putah Creek is Essential Fish Habitat and could support Chinook salmon and steelhead runs.

No special-status species were observed within the added survey areas. No additional elderberry shrubs were observed in these areas that have not already been included in previous study results.

Roadside ditches do occur within the survey areas and occur adjacent to the proposed building envelope for the GOTTC paralleling SR-128 on the north side of the property as discussed above, and paralleling an I-505 onramp on the eastern side of the site. Wetland vegetation was observed in some areas of the I-505 ditch, no standing water or flow was observed. The roadside ditches provide no suitable habitat for fish, or lesser aquatic taxa and appear to flow for short duration (hours to days) after significant precipitation events. Historically, agricultural water originating from a well may have been conveyed in these ditches. These ditches convey flows, when substantial enough, down a concrete spillway into Putah Creek riparian area and eventually into the Creek.

Conclusions

Areas addressed in this addendum do not change the conclusions of the original biological study performed by Estep (2014). Several areas within the study area provide suitable habitat for nesting passerine birds, which are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and raptors, including the state listed threatened Swainson's hawk. These species have been discussed in previous reporting, including potential foraging habitat for the Swainson's hawk.

Western pond turtle could occur in Putah Creek aquatic habitat. This species has been previously addressed.

Roadside ditches within the study site were created in uplands, to drain uplands, and flow for a short duration of the year, less than 3 months. These physical parameters would not qualify these features to be waters of the U.S. under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Although, these features would presumably be waters of the State and regulated by the Regional Water Quality Control Board under the Porter Cologne Act. The regulatory status of site ditches has also been discussed in previous reporting (Estep 2014). If any “fills” are required for the development of the site, permitting may be necessary.

This study’s findings are consistent with the original biological reporting performed by Estep and no new mitigations, surveys, or studies are recommended.

References:

Estep Environmental Consulting. 2014 (October). Biological Resources Assessment of the Proposed PG&E Gas Operations Technical Training Center in the City of Winters.

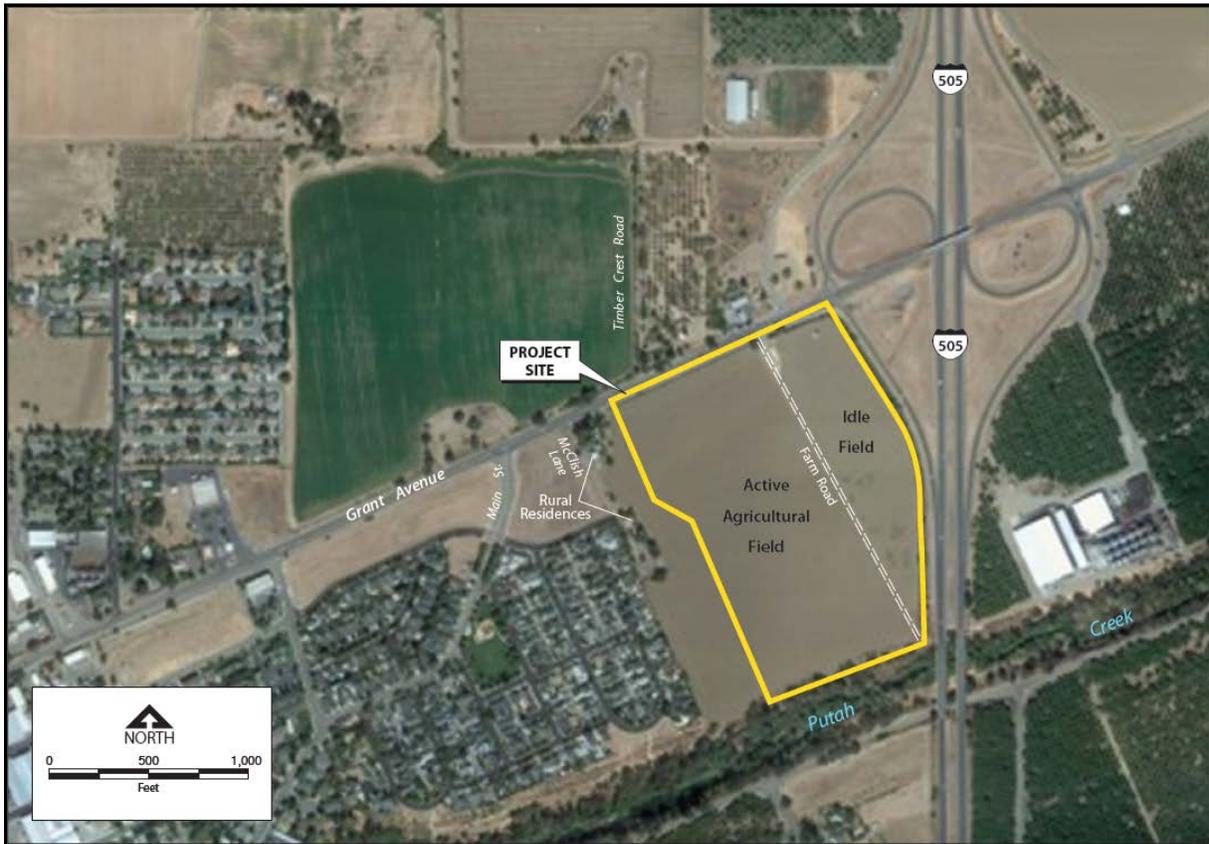


Figure 1. Overview of original Project Site and vicinity.

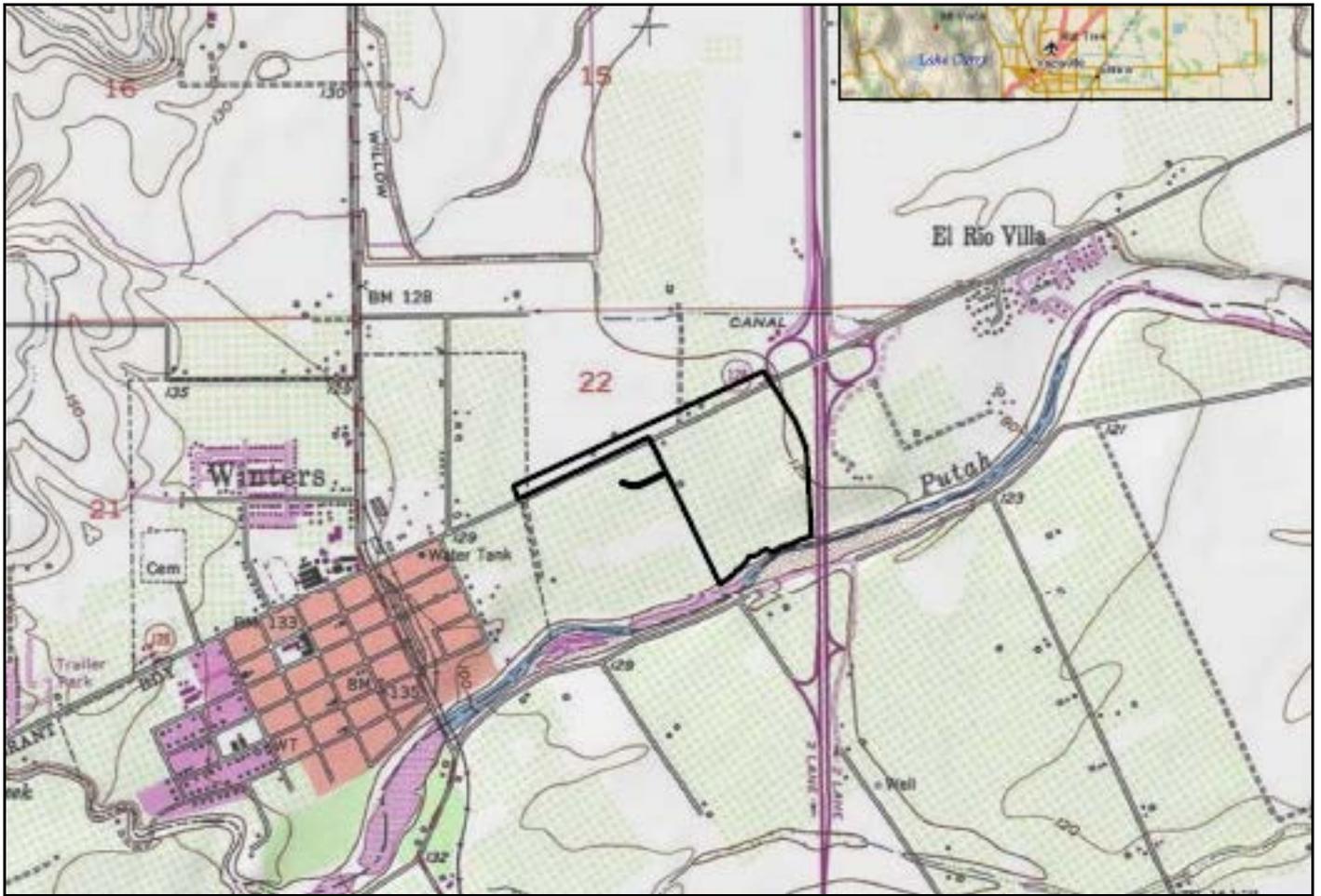


Figure 2. Updated Project Area Study Boundary.



Photograph 1 – Depicts roadside ditch at north border of project site on SR-128. Photo taken facing west.



Photograph 2 – Depicts roadside ditch paralleling I-505 on-ramp. Photo taken facing south.



Photograph 3 – Depicts Putah Creek riparian area on the south end of the project site. Photo taken facing west.