

2.4 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

<i>Issues (and Supporting Information Sources):</i>	<i>Potentially Significant Impact</i>	<i>Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporation</i>	<i>Less Than Significant Impact</i>	<i>No Impact</i>
BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES—Would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

SETTING

Because the proposed project area is located in a highly urbanized area and alignments are all on or adjacent to paved City streets, field surveys for botanical and wildlife resources were conducted on June 21, 2004 by driving the proposed project route and mapping adjacent land use types in general categories: residential, commercial, ornamental (*i.e.*, landscaped), and natural habitat (each type is described separately below). In general, a habitat assessment approach to the plant survey and wildlife surveys was adopted because all construction activities would take place within paved rights of way, except Alternative 1 and 3 which would cross under and over Islais Creek, respectively. All plants observed were identified to the level necessary to determine whether they were special-status species.

PROPOSED PROJECT

The proposed project route is located within existing roadways, a paved parking lot, a vacant lot, and existing switchyards in the Potrero Hill/Hunters Point area of San Francisco.

Vegetation

The proposed project route is dominated by commercial and industrial uses with most of the proposed project to be installed within existing paved roads. At several locations along the roads, outside of the work right-of-way (ROW), ornamental landscaping has been planted along industrial lots and other facilities. Adjacent to the project area, in various scattered locations, are highly disturbed vacant dirt lots vegetated primarily with ruderal species. Between Cesar Chavez Street and Marin Street, the project crosses a vacant, dirt lot that is devoid of vegetation, for approximately 40 feet.

Typical vegetation observed along the non-paved locations adjacent to the ROW, but outside the project area, included mustard (*Brassica sp.*), sweet fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), yellow star thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*), and dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*). Additionally, oleander (*Nerium oleander*), wild radish (*Raphanus sativus*), California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), pampas grass (*Cortaderia sp.*), sticky monkey flower (*Mimulus aurantiacus*), and Mediterranean linseed (*Bellardia trixago*) were observed.

Wildlife

Wildlife species observed in the area are characteristic of industrial, residential, and highly disturbed urban areas, and included Brewer's blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*), northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), European starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), rock dove (*Columba livia*), and western gull (*Larus occidentalis*).

Habitat

The only locations along the proposed project route with potential to support biological resources are two parks: India Basin Shoreline Park and Heron's Head Park. The parks are each approximately 100 feet from the Hunters Point Switchyard. Construction activities would not occur within 100 feet of either of the parks.

Sensitive Species

The majority of the project area consists of an urbanized landscape, including streets and adjacent industrial and commercial facilities and warehouses. As such, sensitive plant and wildlife species are not expected to occur. No wildlife corridors are within, or would be impacted by, the project. Sensitive wildlife with potential to occur in the vicinity would be restricted to a few isolated, non-developed areas adjacent to the proposed project route (see Tables 2.4-1 and 2.4-2: California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) List of Sensitive Wildlife and Plant Species). Between Cesar Chavez Street and Marin Street, the project crosses a vacant, dirt lot. This lot does not

**TABLE 2.4-1
SENSITIVE WILDLIFE SPECIES WITH POTENTIAL TO OCCUR IN THE PROJECT AREA**

Scientific Name/ Common Name	Listing Status		Habitat	Range	Potential for Species Occurrence in Project Area
	USFWS	CDFG			
<i>Euphydryas editha bayensis</i> Bay checkerspot butterfly	Threatened	None	Shallow, serpentinite-derived or similar soils, restricted to native grasslands on outcrops of serpentinite soil	East, west, and south of San Francisco Bay, historically. Currently the San Francisco Peninsula, San Mateo County, and Santa Clara County	<i>Low</i> : Although historically found within the project area, no suitable habitat currently exists. No host plants (<i>Plantago erecta</i> , <i>Castilleja densiflorus</i> , <i>C. exserta</i>) were observed on or adjacent to the project.
<i>Icaricia icarioides missionensis</i> Mission blue butterfly	Endangered	None	Grasslands and coastal scrub, native larval food, and nectar plants	Limited distribution to San Bruno Mountain	<i>Low to none</i> : No host plants (<i>Lupinus albifrons</i> , <i>L. formosus</i> , <i>L. variicolor</i>) and no suitable habitat exist within the project area.
<i>Thamnophis sirtalis tetrataenia</i> San Francisco garter snake	Endangered	Endangered, fully protected	Seasonal and permanent wetlands and nearby uplands	San Mateo and North Santa Cruz counties	<i>Low to none</i> : No suitable habitat or prey base in the immediate vicinity of the project area.

USFWS = U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

CDFG = California Department of Fish and Game

SOURCE: CDFG, 2003a; CNDDDB, 2003; USFWS, 2003a

**TABLE 2.4-2
SENSITIVE PLANT SPECIES WITH POTENTIAL TO OCCUR IN THE PROJECT AREA**

Scientific Name/ Common Name	Listing Status			Habitat	Range	Flowering Times	Potential for Species Occurrence in Project Area
	USFWS	CDFG	CNPS				
<i>Astragalus tener</i> var. <i>tener</i> Alkali milk-vetch	Special concern	None	1B	Alkaline flats, vernaly-moist meadows	East San Francisco Bay Area and North San Joaquin Valley	March through June	<i>Low to none:</i> Last collected in Potrero district in 1869. No suitable habitat present.
<i>Fritillaria liliacea</i> Fragrant fritillary	Special concern	None	1B	Heavy soil (includes serpentinite and clay), open fields, and fields near coast	Central western California	February through April	<i>Low:</i> Last observed in 1896. Some serpentinite soil exists adjacent to the project area.
<i>Grindelia hirsutula</i> var. <i>maritime</i> San Francisco gumplant	Special concern	None	1B	Sandy or serpentinite slopes, sea bluffs, valley and foothill grasslands	North central coast (San Francisco and San Mateo counties)	August through September	<i>Low:</i> Habitat search in 1985 did not discover this species. No suitable habitat present.
<i>Helianthella castanea</i> Diablo helianthella	Special concern	None	1B	Open grassy sites, coastal scrub, riparian woodland, valley and foothill grassland	North San Francisco Bay Area	April through June	<i>Low to none:</i> Last observed in 1920. No suitable habitat within the project area.
<i>Layia carnosa</i> Beach layia	Endangered	Endangered	1B	Coastal dunes	North coast and central coast	March through July	<i>Low to none:</i> Presumed to be extirpated by CNDDB at this location, as there are no coastal dunes.

TABLE 2.4-2 (Continued)
SENSITIVE PLANT SPECIES WITH POTENTIAL TO OCCUR IN THE PROJECT AREA

Scientific Name/ Common Name	Listing Status			Habitat	Range	Flowering Times	Potential for Species Occurrence in Project Area
	USFWS	CDFG	CNPS				
<i>Linanthus rosaceus</i> Rose linanthus	Special concern	None	1B	Open or wooded areas, many plant communities	California, excluding Great Basin and Desert Provinces	April through June	<i>Low to none:</i> Last observed in 1885. No suitable habitat exists within the project area.
<i>Sanicula maritima</i> Adobe sanicle	Special concern	Rare	1B	Coastal, grassy, open wet meadows, ravines, valley and foothill grasslands	Primarily in San Francisco Bay Area	February through May	<i>Low to none:</i> Last observed in 1895. Assumed to be extinct at the Potrero Hills location by CNPS.
<i>Triphysaria floribunda</i> San Francisco owl's clover	Special concern	None	1B	Coastal grasslands, serpentinite slopes and non-serpentinite substrate	North central coast and west San Francisco Bay Area	April through June	<i>Low:</i> Considered extirpated in the Potrero area by L. Heckard/ CNDDDB. Last observed in 1881.
<i>Triquetrella californica</i> Coastal triquetrella	None	None	1B	Coastal bluff scrub, coastal scrub	San Francisco Bay Area	Not applicable	<i>Low to none:</i> No suitable habitat exists within the project area.

USFWS = U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
CDFG = California Department of Fish and Game
CNPS = California Native Plant Society
CNDDDB = California Natural Diversity Database

SOURCE: CDFG, 2003b; CNPS, 2003b; CNDDDB, 2003; Hickman, 1996.

support habitat for any sensitive species. The proposed project route then continues east within the asphalted San Francisco Chronicle parking lot until reaching Marin Street.

Although historically serpentinite bedrock was abundant in this area, only a small fraction of exposed serpentinite bedrock remains within the project area. One sensitive butterfly species, Bay checkerspot butterfly, and several sensitive plant species (San Francisco owl's clover, Diablo helianthella, San Francisco gumplant, Fragrant fritillary) are associated with this soil type. Construction activities would not occur within exposed reaches of serpentinite soils.

Between Cesar Chavez Street and Evans Avenue, there are sections of ruderal vegetation adjacent to the proposed project route, associated with the on-ramps and off-ramps to Interstate 280, as well as Caltrain construction workspace. Primarily non-native plant species were observed in these areas, with sweet fennel, pampas grass, and wild radish dominating the sites. The native California poppy was also observed. There is low potential for sensitive plant species to occur at these locations due to the lack of suitable habitat. Additionally, these areas are not needed for construction, and are currently fenced off and would not be accessible by equipment or personnel during construction.

There are planted trees within landscaped industrial parks, as well as other trees along the public roads located at least 10 feet from the edge of the ROW. Some of these trees may be of adequate size for raptor species to nest. However, existing traffic and other human activity would likely preclude raptor nesting in these trees. No raptors were observed during the field visit. Additionally, as the project area is highly industrialized, minimal foraging habitat exists to support these species. Therefore, no suitable habitat exists and no resident raptor species are expected to occur.

Switchyards

Both of the switchyards are gravel yards with multiple structures and other related equipment, and are fenced off from the surrounding environment. Because these locations are completely graded and covered with asphalt and gravel, the switchyards do not provide habitat for sensitive wildlife and plant species.

Excavated Materials Storage and Staging Areas

Across the street from the Potrero Switchyard on the northeast corner of Illinois Street and 22nd Street, Pacific Gas and Electric Company's (PG&E) General Construction yard provides storage for vehicles and other types of equipment. This yard would be used for storage of excavated material during construction. This yard is completely cleared and graded with gravel, except for a group of serpentinite rocks (in an approximately 20 to 60 feet wide by 100 feet long by 25 feet tall area) in the northeast corner of the yard. The rocks are covered with ruderal vegetation, including eucalyptus trees and non-native grasses. Several plants listed by the CNDDDB are dependent on serpentinite soils. The serpentinite rocks are outside of the area that would be used for construction.

PG&E has another general construction yard located near the Hunters Point Switchyard, at the intersection of Cargo Way and Jennings Street, which may be used during construction of the project. This existing construction yard is completely cleared and paved. The area provides no habitat for sensitive wildlife or plant species.

As an alternative location to the General Construction yard at Cargo Way and Jennings Street, PG&E is discussing with the Port of San Francisco the use of land on Port property located northeast of Cargo Way between Jennings Street and Third Street. If this or an alternative location is chosen for use during construction, the site would be surveyed by a biologist prior to construction to verify that no sensitive resources are present.

ALTERNATIVE 1

Alternative 1 is located within existing roadways, an existing duct bank installed underneath Islais Creek, and existing switchyards in the Potrero Hill/Hunters Point area of San Francisco.

Vegetation

The setting of the vegetation is the same as above in the proposed project setting. Terrestrial vegetation at Islais Creek is restricted to weeds found on sections of the shoreline that have not been covered by pilings, piers, rubble, bridge supports or other structures or other landscaped areas (ornamental plantings) associated with existing land uses.

Wildlife

The setting of the wildlife is the same as above in the proposed project setting. Additionally, in the area of Islais Creek the following species have been identified: Anna's Hummingbird, House Finch, White-crowned Sparrow, Red-tailed Hawk (nesting in a warehouse), and the House Sparrow (Lawson & Nelson, 2001).

Habitat

The setting of the habitat is the same as above in the proposed project setting. Note that Islais Creek is an additional location with the potential to support biological resources.

Sensitive Species

The setting of the sensitive species is the same as above in the proposed project setting. However, the Draft Supplemental EIR for San Francisco Water Front states that the staff of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in Santa Rosa indicated that there were no anadromous fishes of concern known to inhabit Islais Creek.

Switchyards

The setting of the switchyards is the same as the proposed project setting.

Excavated Materials Storage and Staging Areas

The setting of the excavated materials storage and staging areas is the same as in the proposed project setting.

ALTERNATIVE 2

Alternative 2 is located within existing roadways, a paved parking lot, a vacant lot, and existing switch yards in the Potrero Hill/Hunters Point area of San Francisco. Accordingly, the entire biological setting is the same as under the proposed project setting.

ALTERNATIVE 3

Alternative 3 is located within the same footprint as Alternative 1, except that the Islais Creek crossing is proposed to go overhead. Accordingly, the entire biological setting is the same as under Alternative 1.

NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE

The setting for the No Project Alternative is the same as the current conditions since construction of a 2.5 mile cable project would not occur.

REGULATORY CONTEXT

Because the proposed project is located within exiting roadways, a paved parking lot, a vacant lot, and existing switch yards, there is no regulatory setting. However, environmental regulations would require the following approvals for Alternative 1 of the Potrero to Hunters Point Cable Project.

- Review and concurrence from the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC). BCDC has jurisdiction over all areas of the San Francisco Bay subject to tidal action, and a shoreline band extending 100 feet inland. BCDC also has jurisdiction over salt ponds, managed wetlands, and certain other waterways, and is responsible for making a determination of consistency with the federal Coastal Zone Management Act.

IMPACTS DISCUSSION OF BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

METHODOLOGY AND SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

The analyses of the potential intensity of impacts to biological resources included a review of available information and databases published by agencies authorized to report such information for the project area. Where possible, mapped locations of sensitive resources were compared between alternative locations. The analyses also included staff observations in the field and from within each of the alternative locations. Site specific surveys were not conducted by specialists to

determine the presence of rare or endangered biological resources; instead the analysis relied on existing information and databases to characterize the project area.

To determine the level of significance of the impacts anticipated from the proposed project, the project's effects were evaluated as provided under the revised CEQA guidelines. These guidelines are summarized in the checklist provided at the beginning of this section.

PROPOSED PROJECT

The proposed project area is dominated by commercial and industrial uses with the route to be installed within existing roadways, a paved parking lot, a vacant lot, and existing switch yards in the Potrero Hill/Hunters Point area of San Francisco. Although historically serpentinite bedrock was abundant in this area, only a small fraction of exposed serpentinite bedrock remains within the project area. However construction activities are not expected to occur within exposed reaches of serpentinite soils. Therefore, due to the nature of the project, no significant adverse impacts of the project to biological resources have been identified and no mitigation measures are proposed.

ALTERNATIVE 1

The area encompassing the Alternative 1 route is dominated by commercial and industrial uses with the route to be installed within existing roadways, an existing duct bank installed underneath Islais Creek, and existing switchyards in the Potrero Hill/Hunters Point area of San Francisco. This alternative crosses underneath Islais Creek and would use an existing duct bank which was previously installed. This duct bank is set at a depth of approximately 33 feet (10 meters) below the bottom of the creek. Therefore, due to the nature of the alternative, no significant adverse impacts to biological resources have been identified and no mitigation measures are proposed.

ALTERNATIVE 2

The areas encompassing the Alternative 2 route is dominated by commercial and industrial uses with the route to be installed within existing roadways, a paved parking lot, a vacant lot, and existing switch yards in the Potrero Hill/Hunters Point area of San Francisco. Therefore, due to the nature of Alternative 2, no significant adverse impacts to biological resources have been identified and no mitigation measures are proposed.

ALTERNATIVE 3

Alternative 3 is the same as Alternative 1 with the exception of the Islais Creek crossing; where an overhead line is proposed. The additional area is dominated by commercial and industrial uses with the route to be installed within existing roadways and existing switchyards in the Potrero Hill/Hunters Point area of San Francisco. Therefore, due to the nature of the alternative, no significant adverse impacts to biological resources have been identified and no mitigation measures are proposed.

NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE

The No Project Alternative would avoid all impacts related to biological resources associated with the proposed project.

CHECKLIST IMPACT CONCLUSIONS

- a) Due to the reasons discussed above, the proposed project would not have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- b) Due to the reasons discussed above, the proposed project would not have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- c) Due to the reasons discussed above, the proposed project would not have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means.
- d) Due to the reasons discussed above, the proposed project would not interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.
- e) Due to the reasons discussed above, the proposed project would not conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance.
- f) Due to the reasons discussed above, the proposed project would not conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan.

REFERENCES – Biological Resources

Essex Environmental. December 2003. PG&E Potrero to Hunters Point 115 kV Cable Project Proponent's Environmental Assessment.

Laws, Jack & Nelson, Kelley, Habitat Survey 2001,
<http://www.islaiscreek.org/HabitatSurveys2001.html>.

San Francisco Planning Department. September 2000. San Francisco Southern Waterfront Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report.