

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

INTRODUCTION

The proposed project area is located in a highly urbanized area and the proposed 115 kV cable line would be underneath 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 and wildlife surveys was adopted because all construction activities would take place within paved rights-of-way and footprint of existing switchyards. All plants observed were identified to the level necessary to determine whether they were special-status species.

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 land uses with most of the proposed cable line 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 streets, 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 and Marin Streets, 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, includes 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 the 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.

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 proposed 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**). Between Cesar Chavez Street and Marin Street, the project crosses a vacant, dirt lot. This

**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

SOURCES: CDFG (2004a); CNDDDB (2003); USFWS (2004a); USFWS (2004b)

**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 maritime</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

SOURCES: CDFG (2004b); CNPS (2004); CNDDDB (2003); Essex Environmental (2003)

lot does not 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 (Essex Environmental, 2003). One sensitive butterfly species, Bay checkerspot butterfly, and several sensitive plant species (San Francisco owl's clover, Diablo helianthella, San Francisco gumplant, and Fragrant fritillary) are associated with this soil type.

Between Cesar Chavez Street and Evans Avenue, there are sections of ruderal vegetation adjacent to the proposed project route that are 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 project 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 site reconnaissance. 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, PG&E's 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- foot wide, 100-foot long, and 25-foot 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 identified another potential general construction yard located near the Hunters Point Switchyard, at the intersection of Cargo Way, between Third Street and Jennings Street. This existing construction yard is completely cleared, paved, and provides no habitat for sensitive wildlife or plant species.

As an alternative location to the general construction yard at Cargo Way between Third Street 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.

REGULATORY CONTEXT

Because the proposed project is located within existing roadways, a paved parking lot, a vacant lot, and existing switch yards, there is no relevant biological regulatory setting for the proposed project.

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. The analyses also included staff observations in the field within the project area. 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 proposed project's effects were evaluated as provided under the CEQA Guidelines. This significance criteria, as set forth in CEQA Guidelines Appendix G, are summarized in the checklist provided at the beginning of this section. Environmental Setting and Mitigation Measures

The proposed project area is dominated by commercial and industrial uses with the proposed 115 kV cable line planned 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 and construction activities are not expected to occur within exposed reaches of serpentinite soils. Therefore, due to the nature of the proposed project, there would not be any significant adverse environmental impacts to biological resources, and therefore, no mitigation measures are required.

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

- California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), 2004a. State and Federally Listed Endangered and Threatened Animals of California.
- CDFG, 2004b. State and Federally Listed Endangered and Threatened Plants of California.
- California Natural Diversity Database, 2003. Special element occurrence. San Francisco South, San Francisco North, Hunters Point, and Montara Mountain quadrangles.
- California Native Plant Society, 2004. Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants. <http://www.northcoast.com/~cnps/cgi-bin/cnps/sensinv.cgi> accessed September 22, 2004.
- Essex Environmental, 2003. PG&E Potrero to Hunters Point 115 kV Cable Project, Proponent's Environmental Assessment. December 2003.

United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), 2004a. Bay checkerspot (*Euphydryas editha bayensis*). http://sacramento.fws.gov/es/animal_spp_acct/bay_check.htm accessed September 22, 2004.

USFWS, 2004b. Mission blue butterfly (*Icaricia icarioides missionensis*). http://sacramento.fws.gov/es/animal_spp_acct/mission_blue_butterfly.htm accessed September 22, 2004.