

4.4 Biological Resources

	Potentially Significant Impact	Less-Than-Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less-Than-Significant Impact	No Impact
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 Dept. of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 Dept. of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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"/>

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Regional Setting

The Montebello Natural Gas Storage Facility (MGSF) Project area is located in the southeastern portion of Los Angeles County at an elevation of approximately 400-700ft and includes a total area of 43.2 ac in an urban setting of about 1 sq mi. The MGSF facility is located approximately 10 miles southeast of downtown Los Angeles within the cities of Montebello and Monterey Park. Monterey Park is located directly north of Montebello and includes only 2 Project lots, compared to 40+ac in Montebello.

The regional biologic setting is dominated by the urban land development, which has destroyed and disrupted most natural habitats in the Los Angeles area. The MGSF represents the few remaining semi-natural habitats remaining in the urban context and are generally isolated from direct continuity with other areas. Numerous hill areas in the western and southern San Gabriel Valley have remained as introduced isolated grasslands, largely maintained by seasonal fires. The Montebello Hills represent one of these hills. The adjacent OII Landfill is a reconstructed introduced grassland. The south flanks of the hills contain a relatively less-disturbed chaparral and coastal scrub in the Montebello Oil Field. Artificial planting of introduced species of pines and eucalyptus has disturbed the margins of these areas. Presence of the scrub and chaparral remnants has supported the northern range of the some special status species in the area.

Local Setting

Main Facility

The Main Facility (29 ac) was built within the floor of a previous gravel/rock quarry that was developed on three different terraces, with the highest terrace on the north. About half of the ground surface has been covered with asphalt, buildings, machinery pads, and artificial landscaping. The area has been disturbed for a considerable time period, and margins and building surroundings have been landscaped with urban vegetation that is typical for the vicinity, including many eucalyptus trees. Between the uppermost and middle terraces, and on the steep embankment to the west of the facility, a small area natural vegetation has remained and developed, mixed with exotic landscape and ruderal (weedy) species.

This area has been disturbed for a long period and has been landscaped with nonnative vegetation and numerous ornamentals. Ornamentals and exotic plants include ivy (*Hedera helix*), bougainvillea (*Bougainvillea spectabilis*), acacia (*Acacia sp.*), and castor bean (*Ricinus communis*). Numerous gum trees (*Eucalyptus sp.*) and pine trees (*Pinus sp.*) occur along the northern portion of the site. California sycamore trees (*Platanus racemosa*) occur in a landscaped area along the southern boundary of the site. In addition, to the southwest of the main office building, a small patch of giant reed (*Arundo donex*) occurs near mulefat scrub vegetation. Five plant communities occur on the Main Facility parcel, including southern mixed chaparral, California sage/California buckwheat scrub, mulefat scrub, ruderal, and ornamental. In addition, there is a small ephemeral drainage that runs along the west side of the property that drains to the south. This drainage ranges from one to four feet in width and is considered to be jurisdictional non-wetland waters of the U.S.

Larger trees on this parcel may provide nesting habitat for various raptors. Characteristic wildlife species on the Main Facility site include side-blotched lizard, mourning dove, blue-gray gnatcatcher, great horned owl, greater roadrunner, black phoebe, house finch, Virginia opossum, California squirrel, and coyote.

Southern Mixed Chaparral. This densely covered community is composed of a mix of evergreen shrubs. It is present on the lower and middle portions of steep slopes on the Main Facility site. Shrub species found in this community include laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*), lemonadeberry (*Rhus integrifolia*), sugar bush (*Rhus ovata*), holly-leaf redberry (*Rhamnus ilicifolia*), and holly-leaved cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*).

California sage/California Buckwheat scrub. Coastal sage scrub vegetation consists primarily of low, drought-deciduous and evergreen shrubs. California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub is a subtype of coastal sage scrub that is dominated by California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) and California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*). This community occurs on the slope above the middle tier. Other associated species on the site in this community include coastal goldenbush (*Isocoma menziesii*), coyote bush, and coastal prickly pear (*Opuntia littoralis*).

Mulefat Scrub. Mulefat scrub is a tall, herbaceous riparian scrub community dominated by mulefat (*Baccharis salifolia*). This community occurs on the central, eastern, and western portions of the Main Facility site. Other species present on the site include tree tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*) and coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*).

Ornamental. Most of the main facility has been landscaped with tall non-native trees, turf grasses, and ground cover. The vegetation is consistent with the formal landscaping of the surrounding residential area.

Ruderal/Disturbed. A number of areas throughout the property have been disturbed and area dominated by ruderal vegetation and bare ground. Representative species in the dense-to-sparse grassland on the site include ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), foxtail chess (*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*), and wild oats (*Avena* sp.), mustard (*Brassica* sp.), giant reed (*Arrundo donax*), horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*), castor bean (*Ricinis communis*), and tocalote (*Centaurea melitensis*).

East Site

The second-largest Project parcel has been obviously disturbed for many decades and has been graded into pads with an access/maintenance road that meanders through it. The site has been planted with eucalyptus groves on its highest elevation. Patches of disturbed coastal sage scrub vegetation are present and mixed with exotic species.

The majority of the East Site (11 ac) is undeveloped with steep slopes. However, a small developed area containing graded well pads and a dirt access road is present on this site. Numerous pepper trees (*Schinus* spp.) are scattered throughout the parcel. Three plant communities occur on this parcel, including California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub, mulefat scrub, and nonnative grassland.

Characteristic wildlife species on the East Site include California gnatcatcher, greater roadrunner, side-blotched lizard, mourning dove, black phoebe, Bewick's wren, house finch, Virginia opossum, California squirrel, domestic cat, and coyote.

California Sagebrush-California Buckwheat Scrub. This plant community dominated by California sagebrush, California buckwheat, and coastal goldenbush is the dominant vegetation on the site and is scattered throughout.

Mulefat Scrub. A small area of mulefat scrub is present in the western and central portion of the East Site and is dominated by mulefat. Other species present include tree tobacco and coyote bush.

Ornamental. The ornamental vegetation found on the site is similar to the surrounding residential area, including eucalyptus trees, California pepper, and iceplant. The ornamental vegetation is found primarily along the boundary of the site as the property adjoins streets and residential development.

Ruderal/Disturbed. Nonnative grassland occurs on the flat, lowland areas in the northern and southern portions of the site, and representative species present include ripgut brome, red brome, and wild oats. Forbs occurring in this community include horehound and black mustard (*Brassica nigra*).

Townsite Lots and Monterey Park Lots

The Townsite (3 ac) and Monterey Park (1 ac included in the 29 ac total for the Main Facility) Lots containing active or abandoned wells are planted with landscape species that are typically used in the yards of houses in the neighborhood. A paved driveway and parking/work pad is often present on each parcel, and the well head and machinery are covered with a small pagoda style shed that fits into the neighborhood architecture. The Townsite (14) Lots are scattered across north-central Montebello, and two similar lots are located in Monterey Park. All lots can be described as urban landscaped vegetation. The Townsite Lots are planted with ornamental species typically found in yards and are surrounded by residential development. Ground cover consists of landscaping grasses, iceplant (*Mesembryanthemum nodiflorum*), gazania (*Gazania linearis*), and ivy. Other plant species present include oleander (*Nerium oleander*), bougainvillea, acacia, telegraph weed (*Heterotheca grandiflora*), tocalote, and nonnative grasses. Trees present include California juniper (*Juniperus californica*), pine (*Pinus sp.*), and several types of gum trees (*Eucalyptus sp.*).

The Townsite Lots and the Monterey Park Lots support a low diversity of native wildlife species because the lots are covered by nonnative and landscaped plant species.

Special Status Species

A field reconnaissance and habitat suitability analysis of the MGSF project site was conducted by a wildlife biologist on September 12, 2000 (Chambers 2000). The purpose of the field reconnaissance was to document the current biological diversity and assess the habitat for its potential to support sensitive plant and wildlife species. Before the field reconnaissance was conducted, background information on special-status species known or suspected to occur in Los Angeles County and the project vicinity was reviewed. This included the most recent records maintained by the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB 2000) for the El Monte, Whittier, Mt. Wilson, Baldwin Park, and Los Angeles USGS 7.5 minute topographic quadrangle maps. In addition, the California Native Plant Society's (CNPS) Electronic Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of

California (CNPSEI 2000) was also reviewed for the same topographic quadrangles. The target list of special-status species (Table 4.4-1), developed from this information was the

Table 4.4-1: Special-Status Plant and Wildlife Species

Species	Status¹ Fed/Stat/ CNPS	Habitat
Vascular Plants		
<i>Aster greatae</i> / Greata's aster	---/---/1B	Broadleafed upland forest, chaparral, cismontane woodland, lower montane coniferous forest, and riparian woodland (Flowering period: June - Oct)
<i>Astragalus brauntonii</i> / Braunton's milk-vetch	FE/--/1B	Closed-cone coniferous forest, chaparral, coastal scrub, and valley and foothill grassland (Flowering period: March-July)
<i>Atriplex serenana</i> var. <i>davidsonii</i> /Davidson's saltscale	--/--/1B	Coastal bluff scrub, coastal scrub, often in alkaline soils (Flowering period: April-October)
<i>Calochortus plummerae</i> / Plummer's mariposa lily	FSC/--/1B	Chaparral, cismontane woodland, coastal scrub, lower montane coniferous forest, valley and foothill grassland. On granitic, rocky, or alluvial soil. (Flowering period: May-July)
<i>Chorizanthe parryi</i> var. <i>fernandina</i> /San Fernando Valley spineflower	FSC/--/1B	Coastal scrub, often in sandy soils. (Flowering period: April-June)
<i>Chorizanthe parryi</i> var. <i>parryi</i> /Parry's spineflower	FSC/--/3	Chaparral, coastal scrub. In openings on dry, sandy or rocky soil. (Flowering period: April-June)
<i>Dodecahema leptoceras</i> / Slender-horned spineflower	FE/CE/1B	Chaparral, coastal scrub (alluvial fan sage scrub on flood deposited terraces and washes). (Flowering period: April-June)
<i>Galium grande</i> /San Gabriel bedstraw	FSC/--/1B	Chaparral, cismontane woodland, broad-leafed upland forest, lowers montane coniferous forest, and oak woodlands. (Flowering period: January -July)
<i>Helianthus nuttallii</i> ssp. <i>parishii</i> / Los Angeles sunflower	FSC/-- /1A	Marshes and swamps (Coastal salt and freshwater) (Flowering period: August-October)
<i>Horkelia cuneata</i> ssp. <i>puberula</i> /Mesa horkelia	--/--/1B	Chaparral, cismontane woodland, coastal scrub. Often in sandy or gravelly soils. (Flowering period: September)
<i>Lasthenia glabrata</i> ssp. <i>coulteri</i> /Coulter's goldfield	FSC/--/1B	Coastal salt marsh, playas, valley and foothill grassland, and vernal pools, mainly in alkali playas and grasslands. (Flowering period: Feb-June)
<i>Lepidium virginicum</i> var. <i>robinsoni</i> / Robinson's pepper-grass	--/--/1B	Chaparral and coastal scrub. Dry soils in shrubland. (Flowering period: Jan - July)
<i>Linanthus concinnus</i> /San Gabriel linanthus	FSC/--/1B	Upper and lower montane coniferous forest. (Flowering period: April-July)
<i>Linanthus orcuttii</i> /Orcutt's linanthus	FSC/--/1B	Chaparral, lower montane coniferous forest, and pinyon and juniper woodland. (Flowering period: May-June)
<i>Muhlenbergia californica</i> / California muhly	--/--/1B	Coastal sage, chaparral, lower montane coniferous forest and meadows. Usually near streams and seeps. (Flowering period: July-Sept.)

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Table 4.4-1: Special-Status Plant and Wildlife Species (continued)

<i>Navarretia prostrata</i> / Prostrate navarretia	--/--/1B	Coastal scrub, valley and foothill grassland, and vernal pools. (Flowering period: April-July)
<i>Orcuttia californica</i> /California orcutt grass	FE/CE/1B	Vernal pools (Flowering period: April-Aug)
<i>Phacelia stellaris</i> / Brand's phacelia	--/--/1B	Coastal scrub and coastal dunes. (Flowering period: March -June)
<i>Ribes divaricatum</i> var. <i>parishii</i> / Parish's goosbery	FSC/--/1B	Riparian woodland. (Flowering period: Feb-April)
<i>Scutellaria bolanderi</i> ssp. <i>austromontana</i> / Southern skullcap	--/--/1B	Chaparral, cismontane woodland, and lower montane coniferous forest (Flowering period: June-Aug).
<i>Thelypteris puberula</i> var. <i>sonorensis</i> / Sonoran maiden fern	--/--/2	Meadows and seeps. (Fruiting period: Jan-Sept.)
Wildlife		
<i>Scaphiopus hammondi</i> / Western spadefoot toad	FSC/CSC /--	Occurs primarily in grassland and valley-foothill hardwood woodland communities. Vernal pools and ephemeral ponds are essential for breeding.
<i>Phrynosornia coronatum</i> <i>blainvillei</i> / San Diego coast horned lizard	FSC/CSC /--	Occurs in coastal sage scrub, open chaparral, riparian woodland, and annual grassland habitats that support adequate prey species.
<i>Clemmys marmorata</i> <i>pallida</i> / Southwestern pond turtle	FSC/CSC /--	Permanent bodies of water in many habitats. Require basking sites including emergent logs, rocks, vegetation mats, or open mud banks.
<i>Coccyzus americanus</i> <i>occidentalis</i> (nesting)/ Western yellow-billed cuckoo	--/CE/--	Riparian forest nester, along broad, lower flood-bottoms of larger river systems. Deciduous riparian forests and woodlands dominated by willow and cottonwood.
<i>Cypseloides niger</i> (nesting) / Black swift	--/CSC/--	Breeds in small colonies on cliffs behind or adjacent to waterfalls in deep canyons and sea bluffs.
<i>Polioptila californica</i> <i>californica</i> / Coastal California gnatcatcher	FT/CSC/- -	Occurs in coastal sage scrub vegetation on mesas, arid hillsides, and in washes.
<i>Vireo bellii pusillus</i> / Least Bell's vireo	FE/CE/--	Occurs in moist thickets and riparian areas that are predominantly composed of willow and mulefat.

¹ FE = Federally Endangered

FT = Federally Threatened

FSC = Federal Species of Concern

CE = State of California Endangered

CT = State of California Threatened

CSC = State of California Species of Special Concern

FPE = Federally Proposed Endangered

FPT = Federally Proposed Threatened

List 1B = CNPS Rare, Threatened, or Endangered in CA & elsewhere

List 2B = CNPS Rare, Threatened, or Endangered in CA, common elsewhere

List 3 = Plants with little information, a review list.

SOURCE: Chambers Group 2000

focus of the field reconnaissance. These included species that are listed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), and California Native Plant Society (CNPS).

LSA Associates conducted another field reconnaissance of the MGSF Main Facility and East Site on December 21, 2000. The purpose of this field reconnaissance was to produce a vegetation and habitat map. The results of the mapping effort are shown in Figure 4.4-1



and a list of plant species found at the Main Facility are in Appendix D. The site delineation completed by LSA Associates assessment is contained in Appendix H.

For the Townsite Lots and Monterey Park Lots of the MGSF sites, all the sensitive plant species either have a low potential for occurrence or are absent due to unsuitable habitat on the site. The lots are either paved or landscaped with grass and ornamental plant species.

The Main Facility and the East Site, however, provide potential habitat for two of the 21 sensitive plant species: Braunton's milkvetch (*Astragalus brauntonii*) and slender-horned spineflower (*Dodecahema leptoceras*).

Braunton's milkvetch (*Astragalus brauntonii*) is a perennial plant that occurs in closed-cone coniferous forest, valley and foothill grassland, chaparral, and coastal scrub at an elevation that includes the Montebello project area. It is often found in recent burn areas or other disturbed areas. Suitable habitat is present on both the Main Facility and the East Site; therefore, Braunton's milkvetch has a moderate potential for occurrence. This plant flowers during the March through July period, and was not observed during the September survey of the sites.

Slender-horned spineflower (*Dodecahema leptoceras*) occurs in chaparral and coastal scrub, particularly alluvial fan sage scrub, on flood deposited terraces and washes at an elevation of approximately 656-2,500 feet above MSL. Marginal suitable habitat is present on both the Main Facility and the East Site; however, the property is below the elevational range of this species. Slender-horned spineflower has a low potential for occurrence on both sites.

Other species listed by the CNPS may also occur on the East Site/ Eleven Acres Site because of suitable habitat. These include:

- Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*)
- Parry's spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *parryi*)
- Mesa horkelia (*Horkelia cuneata* ssp. *puberula*)
- Robinson's pepper-grass (*Navarretia prostrata*)
- Brand's phacelia (*Phacelia stellaris*)

None of these species were observed during the September reconnaissance surveys, conducted outside of the flowering period (March-August) for these species. During a field inspection on May 10, 2001, CDFG indicated that focused surveys should be conducted for the following species:

- Braunton's milkvetch (*Astragalus brauntonii*)
- Plummer's mariposa (*Calochortus plummerae*)
- San Fernando Valley spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *Fernandina*)
- Parry's spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *parryi*)
- Slender-horned spineflower (*Dodecahema leptoceras*)
- Robinson's pepper-grass (*Lepidium virginicum* var. *robinsoni*)

Special Status Wildlife. A number of animal species have the potential to occur within the Montebello property. Table 4.4-1 lists the state and federally listed endangered or threatened, candidate, and sensitive animal species that have the potential to occur within the project site and its vicinity. During the May 10, 2001, representatives of CDFG indicated that Rufus crown sparrow may also be potentially sensitive specie.

For the Townsite Lots, all the sensitive wildlife species have a low potential for occurrence due to the lack of suitable habitat. The Townsite Lots are either paved lots or consist of urban landscaping.

Several raptors have the potential to occur on the Main Facility, Monterey Park Lots, and East Site, including the Coopers hawk (*Accipiter cooperi*), sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus*), red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), and red-shouldered hawk (*Buteo lineatus*). Sensitive species observed on the East Site included the federally threatened California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) and a pair of white-tailed kites (*Elanus leucurus*) that were observed foraging on the East Site. A brief description of the sensitive wildlife species follows.

Western Spadefoot Toad. The western spadefoot toad (*Scaphiopus hammondi*) is FSC- and CSC- listed. It typically occurs in grassland habitats, but can be found in valley-foothill hardwood woodlands. It requires a water source, such as vernal pools or ephemeral ponds, for breeding and egg laying. No western spadefoot toads were observed during the biological survey. Marginal grassland habitat is present on the East Site; therefore, this species has a moderate potential for occurrence. Suitable habitat is not present on the Main Facility site. Also, areas that would be expected to support vernal pools or ephemeral ponds are not present on either site; therefore, this species has a low potential for occurrence.

San Diego Coast Horned Lizard. The San Diego coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma coronatum blainvillei*) is a FSC- and CSC- listed species. This species prefers open areas of sandy soil and low vegetation. They are frequently found near ant colonies, and the lizard ranges from Southern California to northern Baja California. This species is known to occur in a variety of habitats, including coastal sage scrub, open chaparral, riparian woodland, and annual grassland. Suitable habitat is ~~not present on the Main Facility in small patches;~~ therefore, this species has a low to medium potential for occurrence. Suitable habitat is present on the East Site; therefore, this species has a ~~low~~high potential for occurrence. ~~Suitable coastal sage scrub habitat is present on the East Site, so this species has a high potential for occurrence.~~

Southwestern Pond Turtle. The southwestern pond turtle (*Clammys marmorata pallida*) is FSC- and CSC- listed. This species occurs in a variety of habitat types, including woodland, grassland, and open forest. The pond turtle is aquatic, existing in good quality ponds, marshes, rivers, streams, and irrigation ditches that typically have rocky or muddy bottoms with watercress, cattails, water lilies, or other aquatic vegetation. They require basking sites, including partially submerged logs, rocks, mats of floating vegetation, or open mud banks. Suitable habitat (i.e., water source) is not present on either the Main Facility or East Site; therefore, this species has a low potential for occurrence.

Western Yellow-Billed Cuckoo. The western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*) is a state listed endangered species. This species prefers humid willow and riparian thickets and feeds on caterpillars, other large insects, frogs, and some small

lizards. Suitable habitat (riparian woodlands) is not present on either the Main Facility or East Site; therefore, this species has a low potential for occurrence.

Black Swift. The black swift (*Cypseloides niger*) is a CSC species. It breeds in small colonies on cliffs behind or adjacent to waterfalls in deep canyons and sea-bluffs. Cliffs are present on the Main Facility; therefore, this species has a moderate potential for occurrence. Suitable habitat is not present on the East Site; therefore, this species has a low potential occurrence.

Least Bell's Vireo. The least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) is a federal and state-listed endangered species. This species typically occurs in moist thickets and riparian areas composed of willow, mulefat, and mesquite. Suitable willow riparian habitat does not occur on either the Main Facility or East Site; therefore, this species has a low to medium potential for occurrence.

Coastal California Gnatcatcher. The coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) is a federal-listed threatened bird species and a California species of concern. This nonmigratory, insectivorous bird nests and forages in moderately dense stands of coastal sage scrub occurring on hillsides and mesas and in washes. Coastal sage scrub communities dominated by California sagebrush, California buckwheat, white sage (*Salvia apiana*), and black sage (*Salvia mellifera*) are preferred by this species. Suitable habitat is ~~not present on the Main Facility in small patches; therefore, this species has a low to medium~~ moderate potential for occurrence. Suitable habitat is present on the East Site; therefore, this species has a low-high potential for occurrence. A pair of California gnatcatchers were seen, however, was and heard vocalizing in the coastal sage scrub on the East Site during a site visit on December 21, 2000. In addition, CDFG confirmed on May 10, 2001 that there is at least one pair of gnatcatchers on the East Site. Undisturbed native vegetation suitable for the gnatcatcher was also observed on the East Site on May 10, 2001.

Studies of the gnatcatcher have led to development of Habitat Conservation Plans for various regions where its habitat remains intact. Such an area is the main Montebello Oil Field, east of the East Site and Montebello Blvd. Available maps of the area indicate that the plan area lies at least 400 ft from the road and thereby about 500 ft from the nearest MGSF sites.

Riparian and Wetland Habitats

The El Monte Topographical Map (USGS quadrangle, 1965, urban overlay from 1981 aerial photos) identified a "blue-line" stream along the eastern perimeter of the Main Facility and westerly perimeter of the Monterey Park Lots and a series of streams in the area between the Monterey Park Lots (west) and the East Site (southeast). In fact, no "blue-line stream" exists or has existed since before 1981.

The 1981 urban overlay clearly eliminated or greatly modified "blue-line streams" in the area. At the Main Facility site, construction of Howard Ave. along with Texcoco Ave. and internal relocation of site roads in 1965-81 destroyed any remnant streambeds, which had originally passed through the quarry prior to development as a gas storage facility in 1956.

Although one "blue-line stream" passes close to the East Site, the stream does not enter the site and lies north of Jefferson Blvd. A topographic depression did cross the East Site.

For all “blue-line streams” in the area, subsequent developments and grading for road work has removed any natural channel and where depression remain stormwater channels and other formal drainage structures have been installed.

The East Site still contains some original land surface and drainage features although “blue-line streams” do not exist on the East Site.

The open drainage channel along the Main Facility road (the current equivalent to the “blue-line stream”) conveys runoff from the upper site terraces and the Monterey Park Lots to a culvert under the Jefferson Blvd. entrance, along the site road, and then to the storm drain entry under the Main Facility entrance road off of Howard Ave. The storm drainpipe continues southward as a buried drain under Texcoco Ave. south of the Main Facility and connects with the city’s storm drain system at Lincoln Ave. The southern end of the Main Facility originally included the “blue-line” stream but as part of the Texcoco housing and storm drain development the “stream” was replaced with a storm drain and the area has been landscaped into a pocket park buffer between the Main Facility and the downslope residential area. This park supports numerous California sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) and local surface drainage (the “blue-line stream” has been floored with cemented stones. The runoff channel does not support native riparian or wetland vegetation.

REGULATORY SETTING

The CDFG and the USFWS are the primary regulatory authorities for biological resources within Los Angeles County. These agencies provide regulatory protection for animals and plants present in the Los Angeles County area that are listed as protected species by the California and federal Endangered Species Acts (CESA and FESA).

Special-Status Species

Numerous plant and animal species have been given special status under federal or state endangered species legislation or have been otherwise designated as sensitive by state resource agencies. Recognized professional organizations such as the CNPS also promulgate lists of special-status species; these lists are recognized by responding agencies when reviewing environmental documents. Such species are referred to collectively as “special-status species.”

Federal Endangered Species Act

Federally listed threatened and endangered species and their habitats are protected under provisions of the FESA. “Take” under FESA includes activities such as harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect. Harm specifically includes significant habitat modification or degradation. The USFWS regulates activities that may result in take of individuals. Candidates and species proposed for listing also receive special attention from federal agencies during their review.

California Endangered Species Act

State-listed rare, threatened, and endangered species are protected under provisions of CESA. Activities that may result in take of individuals (e.g., “hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill”) are regulated by the CDFG. CDFG has interpreted take to include the destruction of nesting and foraging habitat

necessary to maintain viable breeding populations of relevant state threatened or endangered species.

Species of Special Concern and Protected Species

The CDFG has produced lists of “species of special concern” that serve as watch lists. Species on these lists either are of limited distribution or the extent of their habitats has been reduced substantially, such that threat to their populations may be imminent. Thus, their populations should be monitored. These species may receive special attention during environmental review, and may require mitigation under CEQA if impacts are substantial. These species can be taken or possessed with a permit.

The California Fish and Game Code also provides lists of vertebrate species that are designated “fully protected.” ~~Such~~ The Department is not authorized to issue permits for either the taking or possession of any species so designated ~~species cannot be taken or possessed without a permit.~~

Protection of Raptors

Birds of prey are protected in California under the California Fish and Game Code, §3503.5. Under §3503.5, it is unlawful to take, possess, or destroy any raptors or owls or to take, possess, or destroy the nest or eggs of raptors or owls. Disturbance that causes nest abandonment or loss of reproductive effort is considered a taking by the CDFG. Construction disturbance during the breeding season can result in the incidental loss of fertile eggs or nestlings or otherwise lead to nest abandonment. Any loss of fertile eggs or nesting raptors or any activities resulting in nest abandonment are considered a significant impact.

Migratory Birds

The Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (FMBTA, 16 U.S.C., Sec. 703, Supp. I) prohibits killing, possessing, or trading in migratory birds except in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Secretary of the Interior. The FMBTA encompasses whole birds, parts of birds, and bird nests and eggs. Migratory is defined broadly in the FMBTA so that most native birds fall under its provisions. The FMBTA is typically applied on domestic projects to prevent injury or death of nesting birds and their chicks.

California Native Plant Society

Vascular plants may be listed as rare or endangered in the CNPS Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California, even if those species are not listed under CESA or FESA. These species are categorized as follows:

- **List 1A** Plants presumed extirpated in California
- **List 1B** Plants Rare, Threatened, or Endangered in California and elsewhere
- **List 2** Plants Rare, Threatened, or Endangered in California, but more numerous elsewhere
- **List 3** Plants About Which We Need More Information - A Review List
- **List 4** Plants of Limited Distribution - A Watch List

Lists produced by CNPS go through extensive scientific review and are recognized by botanists with the state and federal government as authoritative. Under CEQA, plants on List 1B can be treated as if they are state or federally listed.

Waters of the U.S.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has jurisdiction over Waters of the U.S. under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and navigable waters of the U. S. under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899. Waters of the U.S. (jurisdictional waters) under Section 404 include all waters used, or potentially used, for interstate commerce. Such waters include wetlands, tidal waters, tributary waters, and other waters such as lakes. Wetlands are defined as habitats that have three important characteristics: (1) hydrophytic vegetation, (2) hydric soils, and (3) wetland hydrology. Wetlands include marshes, meadows, swamps, bogs, floodplains, basins, and seeps. Wetlands may also include less obvious areas such as seasonal ponds, seasonally wet pastures, or seasonal meadows. Navigable waters of the U.S. subject to USACE jurisdiction under Section 10 include all lands below mean high water, including former tidal areas that are behind a dike but not yet filled above mean high water. Project activities that will result in fill, dredging, destruction, or alteration of Waters of the U.S. must be in compliance with permit requirements of the USACE.

Habitat Conservation and Native Community Conservation Plans

Current Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) or Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP) do not cover or include the MGSF Project sites. The closest HCP and NCCP are 1 mile to the east and 20 mi southwest. The sites are located nearby but outside of Unit 9 – East Los Angeles County – Matrix NCCP Subregion of Orange County, that defines designated critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher. Portions of the property owned by Chevron lie across Montebello Blvd. from the East Site and north of some Townsite Lots and are within the Regional Coastal Sage Scrub Planning Area as established by the NCCP. Chevron has enrolled its Montebello, Fullerton, and Whittier properties in the NCCP program. A joint power agency, the Wildlife Corridor Conservation Authority, implements the NCCP planning efforts. The Authority includes the cities of Brea, Diamond Bar, La Habra Heights, Whittier, and the Santa Ana Mountains Conservancy.

The Palos Verdes NCCP agreement includes a planning area for six target species. The City of Rancho Palos Verdes (30+ mi southwest of the MGSF) serves as the local lead agency, and Rolling Hills Estates and Los Angeles County are formally involved in the process. Proposed habitat for the Palos Verdes Peninsula NCCP subregional plan includes approximately 15,000 ac of coastal sage scrub and 10,000 ac of other habitats. The planning agreement provides for several target species present or expected in the MGSF Project area or vicinity, including the coastal California gnatcatcher, cactus wren, San Diego horned lizard, Palos Verdes blue butterfly, El Segundo blue butterfly, and the bright green dudleya.

Habitat planning as mitigation for the potential loss of coastal California gnatcatcher habitat requires coordination with the USFWS, CDFG, and the habitat conservation planning efforts of the Chevron Stocker Resources properties. The resource preservation goals of a project shall not be in conflict with adopted HCPs or NCCPs.

City General Plans

Both Montebello and Monterey Park have specific prohibitions of tree removals on public lands. Title 9.63.060 of the City of Monterey Park Municipal Code addresses specifically a Tree Removal Permit requirement for persons desiring to remove trees from public property abutting private lands. The County of Los Angeles General Plan, Policy 24 under the Conservation, Open Space and Recreation Element, supports the preservation of heritage trees and encourages tree-planting programs to enhance the beauty of urban landscaping.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Decommissioning of the Montebello Gas Storage Facility is projected to span a five year period. During that time frame it is possible that new species may migrate to the site or that other resident species will be newly listed and require special attention/protection during the course of the project's implementation. Ground disturbing activities associated with decommissioning are not expected to begin until one or more years into the five year period. Focused or protocol surveys for plant and wildlife species were not conducted during preparation of the Initial Study and Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration. Reconnaissance surveys were conducted to determine the general range of species that might be encountered during decommissioning and to define a general approach to ensure protection for any special-status species.

Environmental impacts upon biological resources generally relate to effects on known or expected special status plants and wildlife, although some issues arise with regard to general habitats and wildlife in the larger MGSF sites. An important issue relates to any contribution to maintaining the survival of the:

- Plummer's mariposa lily
- Braunton's milkvetch
- Slender-horned spineflower
- Coast Horned Lizard
- Coastal California Gnatcatcher

Current HCPs or NCCPs have not extended into the MGSF site, and a full review of the four species has not been conducted. Although responsible agencies have recognized the importance of maintaining existing habitats and range occurrences, allowances have developed for relocation, restoration, and other related compensatory measures.

Important effects can be assessed for the proposed Project actions, but significant effects are largely focused on future development and related losses, which could not occur without approval of the decommissioning and related sale of MGSF lands.

Significance criteria have been established through many other reviews and CPUC and state guidelines. Significant impacts are assessed based on the known environmental setting and the proposed Project actions (direct effects) and the reasonably foreseeable future connected actions – urban land development and associated losses of special status species and native habitats.

For the Initial Study, the central issue involves the certainty of no potential of impacts, which should be based on evidence of no effects. Absence of evidence does not confirm absence of impacts with certainty.

Significance Criteria

The significance criteria used to assess potential environmental effects of the proposed Project and connected actions were defined by the Checklist Questions a through f and the following:

- Taking or harassment of endangered, threatened, or rare plant or animal species or their habitats.
- Conflict with local policies, plans, or ordinances protecting biological resources.
- Taking of wetland and riparian habitats.
- Interference with movement, corridors, or nursery sites of native resident wildlife.
- Interference with migratory fish or wildlife species or wildlife nursery sites.
- Conflict with provisions of a Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other local, regional, or state conservation plan.

Decommissioning and Sale

Gas recovery from the MGSF would have little net effect on the surrounding habitats, with only minor increases of operational levels of noise and activities compared to virtually no activities during the last few years.

After gas recovery, decommissioning would begin for the abandonment of wells, cleaning and removal of equipment, and possible remediation of contaminated soils. These activities would require additional and persistent activities similar to those of well maintenance but could be of longer duration and higher intensity than previously. These latter activities of decommissioning actions could generate some adverse effects upon biological resources of the Main Facility site and East Site.

Checklist Questions a), b), d) Decommissioning of facilities and abandonment of wells on the Main Facility site would generate prolonged disturbing activities on the upper and middle terraces of the site and could adversely affect the relatively natural habitats along the western perimeter and buffers of the site. No effects would be significant for the other, easterly and northerly margins of the Site. As no adjacent habitats would be available for wildlife relocation or displacement, adverse effects could be significant on the remaining wildlife of the western margin of the site.

The Main Facility and the East Site provide potential habitat for important plants: Braunton's milkvetch (*Astragalus brauntonii*) and slender-horned spineflower (*Dodecahema leptoceras*). Even limited disturbance and earthwork could encounter these plants during their growing season, destroy seeds, or further isolate them from other stands. With uncertainty of no impact, potential losses of these plants represent a significant effect, which requires mitigation to less than significant levels.

The more natural habitats on the East Site would be affected only by the abandonment of two relatively isolated wells and some minor pipework. Decommissioning could generate impacts on the East Site by temporary disturbance of California gnatcatcher of the horned

lizard from noise and human presence associated with demolition, salvaging, or remediation activities. This could result in temporary displacement and possibly nest or territory abandonment during the nesting and rearing seasons, or harassment and physical harm and requires mitigation to reduce any potential impacts to less than significant levels.

The East Site is separated from the main Montebello Oil Field area, ~~and~~ but is continuous habitat of several special-status species. The East Site could represent an element in the distribution ~~and migratory patterns~~ of gnatcatchers and the migratory patterns of various hawks and owls in the area, especially during changes between winter and summer (April-May).

Although these actions and disruptions would have little and perhaps short-term impacts on general resident wildlife, impacts may be significant for the known presence of the gnatcatcher and high potential of the coast horned lizard on the site. Even the potential effects for 4 special status species on the East Site represents a potentially considerable cumulative adverse effect arising from decommissioning of a limited number of facilities, and the significant and cumulative effects require mitigation to levels of less than significant or no impacts.

Checklist Question c) “Blue-line streams” did once occur on the Main Facility. Other drainages on the Main Facility site and East Site contain mulefat scrub and willows vegetation. Given the past disturbance for these features, the value of these drainages as functional wetlands may be limited. Decommissioning, demolition, and earthwork could affect portions of the original waterway along the east side of the Main Facility site. LSA Associates conducted a jurisdictional wetland delineation for all Project sites on January 5, 2001. This delineation effort determined that ~~no~~ jurisdictional wetlands do exist on any MGSF properties. The drainages at the Main Facility are predominantly concreted lined or cobbled and do not support wetland vegetation. The drainage on the East Site is unlined and does support wetland vegetation.

Checklist Question e) Decommissioning activities at the Main Facility and East Sites may have the need to work in and around trees on these properties. The City of Montebello and the City of Monterey Park only require permits for tree removals on public lands. Efforts should be made, if feasible, to protect large trees from damage or removal.

Checklist Question f) As there is no Habitat Conservation Plan or Natural Community Conservation Plan or other approved local, regional, or state conservation plan for the Project area. Since there is no conflict with any of these plans, there would be no impact.

Future Development

Future development on the important Main Facility and East Sites would occur after several years of decommissioning, and measures taken during the decommissioning may address many concerns or potential issues during future development. No impact is considered significant for the Townsite Lots, and less than significant effects are assessed for the Monterey Park Lots.

Checklist Question a) The Main Facility and the East Site provide potential habitat for important plant species: Braunton’s milkvetch (*Astragalus brauntonii*) and slender-horned

spineflower (*Dodecahema leptoceras*) and wildlife species, and future development may totally eradicate such species from the Main Facility site and the East Site.

Future development would generate construction impacts on the East Site by permanent loss of habitat for and perhaps loss of the California gnatcatcher and the horned lizards from earthwork, noise, and human presence and activities. These impacts are considered less-than-significant only if a commitment is in-place to avoid impacts by restricting construction activities or by compensation in or by expansion of the nearby designated Habitat Conservation area for the gnatcatchers and horned lizards in the Montebello Oil Field. In addition, the incorporation of a wildlife biologist as a construction monitor and limiting clearing, trimming, or earth moving in coastal sage scrub vegetation to the smallest, practical area would reduce or eliminate the unauthorized “take” of the Braunton’s milkvetch, slender-horned spineflowers, coastal California gnatcatcher, or horned lizard. Take is broadly defined to include harm or harassment. If any coastal sage scrub is removed or destroyed, such action may be considered a take.

Future construction for development on the East Site has the potential to endanger the coast horned lizard on the site, if confirmed.

Losses of many tall trees from the Main Facility site, Monterey Park lots, and East Site may interfere with and lead to the loss of raptor roosts and nests.

Checklist Question b) Development construction on the Main Facility site and the East Site would adversely affect the mulefat scrub habitat and a few remaining sycamores (riparian species). As this habitat and species is considered as an indicator for riparian habitat, removal would be a significant impact without mitigation.

Checklist Question c) “Blue-line streams” did once occur on the Main Facility. Other drainages on the Main Facility and East Site contain mulefat scrub and willows vegetation. Given the past disturbance for these features, the value of these drainages as functional wetlands may be limited. Although no “blue-line streams” remain on any MGSF site, some riparian habitat and trees suggest that remnant wetlands may still persist within the Main Facility site and East Site.

Future development on these MGSF sites could cause adverse effects on small riparian or wetlands habitats (e.g., small springs or seeps with wiregrass of less than 100 sq ft). If such drainage features are filled or otherwise altered, such actions and their effects on potential wetland species would be a very limited, but significant impact without mitigation.

Checklist Question d) Future development of the Main Facility and East Site would virtually eliminate movements, uses, and nesting of native wildlife species on the sites. Wildlife adapted to urban environments (side-blotched lizards, black phoebes, house finches, mourning doves, bushtit, Virginia opossums, California squirrels, etc.) may be displaced to remnant habitats and return after construction. During the conduct of a field visit on May 10, 2001, a Cooper’s hawk was observed on the East Site, indicating that future development activities could result in an impact to a sensitive species. Preconstruction surveys and appropriate mitigation actions will be required to ensure that no harm, harassment, or impact occurs to this specie sensitive species.

The Monterey Park lots (2) contain numerous tall trees, which are used for roosting and perhaps nesting by raptors using the adjacent grasslands of the OII Landfill and scrub of

the Montebello Oil Field. The City of Monterey Park is currently considering changing the General Plan Land Use designation for these lots to open space and SCG has indicated they have no objections to the potential redesignation. Based on discussions with the City of Monterey Park there is a strong probability that the redesignation will be approved, and that these two lots will remain in a form of open space use. Because of various jurisdictional issues and practical constraints, development of the lots does not appear reasonably foreseeable, and the lots may and should remain as they are or developed for recreational open space uses. No significant adverse effects are attributable at this time to future development.

The Townsite Lots, however, sustain a relatively low diversity of urban-tolerant native wildlife, because vegetation cover is provided by nonnative and landscaped plant species. The movement through or within the areas for common-occurring mammals, birds, reptiles, and insects adapted to urbanized environments would continue without any significant effects.

Although no large migratory wildlife is known to use the site, future development would substantially interfere with or eliminate wildlife movement and use although development would not affect a recognized migratory corridor of large ground wildlife.

Overall the development would eliminate native wildlife from the area and reduce their ranges to the remaining open spaces of the OII Landfill and Montebello Oil Field and Whittier Narrows areas. This reduction is a significant or cumulatively considerable effect but can be mitigated by simple compensation measures of habitat improvement in the ~~OII Landfill or Montebello Oil Field~~ areas as approved by the resource agencies.

Checklist Question e) The City of Montebello and the City of Monterey Park have ordinances regarding tree removal on public lands but do not have a tree removal ordinance for private property. Future development of the MGSF sites would not be in conflict with current local policies or ordinances. Therefore no significant effect would arise from the removal of trees during future development, although the numbers involved could be more than 100 trees of more than 20 years growth. The City of Montebello may develop local policies during the next few years as part of their general plan updating and especially as the CDFG and USFWS have developed plans for portions of their jurisdiction.

Tree planting and habitat improvements during the decommissioning could provide mitigation for other adverse effects of future development and contribute to a lessening of the impacts after decommissioning.

Checklist Question f) Current Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) or Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP) do not cover or include the MGSF Project sites and therefore no direct effect would arise from development of the MGSF sites.

Designated critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher lie across Montebello Blvd. from the East Site and north of some Townsite Lots and are within the Regional Coastal Sage Scrub Planning Area as established by the NCCP. The Wildlife Corridor Conservation Authority implements the NCCP planning efforts in the cities of Brea, Diamond Bar, La Habra Heights, Whittier, and the Santa Ana Mountains Conservancy. The Authority would have jurisdiction over the Chevron properties and activities and

could have over at least the East Site if preliminary studies are confirmed or the presence is expanded and the horned lizard is confirmed to be present.

Studies and compensatory measures for special status species and general wildlife are recommended on both the Main Facility site and the East Site. These measures would reduce the significance of any habitat losses for coastal California gnatcatcher or horned lizard habitats within the East Site and would be coordinated with the USFWS, CDFG, and the habitat conservation planning efforts on the Chevron Stocker Resources properties. SCG studies and plans would be coordinated and consistent with existing HCP and NCCP plans for the Chevron Montebello Oil Field.

MITIGATION MEASURES

Significant and cumulative impacts for the proposed Project actions and more especially the future connected actions focus primarily on the losses of habitat for special status species. Several habitat and wildlife issues have been identified above that may have significant adverse effects without mitigation, compensation, or other measures recommended to reduce the potential adverse effects of the decommissioning and future development of the MGSF sites. Some individual measures could be used to reduce effects for more than one checklist issue (e.g., general and special status wildlife, overall habitat or plant measures and wildlife or animal measures) while others would be specific to a single issue (e.g., protection and relocation of gnatcatcher and horned lizards).

Mitigation shall be required to reduce these impacts and demonstrate an exemplary approach to mitigation in the major degraded habitats in the LA metropolitan region.

Checklist Questions a), b), and d) Habitats for suspected and known special status plants and wildlife occur within the Project sites, and small portions may be disturbed or destroyed during decommissioning.

Mitigation Measure 4.4-1

To ensure that the interests of the USFWS, and CDFG and other relevant resource agencies are adequately addressed in the future focused or protocol surveys will be conducted not more than one year prior to any ground disturbing activities. For the purposes of this analysis the baseline condition is assumed to be the currently permitted levels of operation. Consultation will take place with USFWS and CDFG prior to implementation of these mitigation measures.

Mitigation ~~would~~ shall compensate for adverse effects of other activities discussed below. Impact-reducing measures to be undertaken prior to or during decommissioning shall include:

- a. Baseline surveys of special-status and sensitive species identified during the May 10, 2001 field visit shall be conducted by SCG no later than June 15, 2001 for plant species and August 30, 2001 for wildlife species. In the event that plant protocol surveys cannot be implemented by June 15, 2001 because of seasonal timing, they will be completed no later than June 15, 2002. Future surveys may require alteration of the species list in consultation with USFWS and CDFG.
- a.b. Protocol sSurveys shall be conducted for special-status and sensitive species having suitable habitat as identified by CDFG during a site visit on May 10, 2001. The surveys shall be conducted during the appropriate season, and not more than one year prior to

the first ground-disturbing activity, the surveys shall clearly identify the precise locations, presence, and degrees/types of use of the species by plants, lizards, gnatcatcher, and other special status species on MGSF areas. The surveys shall strictly adhere to all current (at implementation) protocols established or regulated by the USFWS and the CDFG. The USFWS and CDFG shall be contacted prior to commencing the surveys for the purpose of defining protocol requirements. The USFWS and CDFG shall be provided copies of the survey results for the purpose of assessing the need for mitigation and the appropriate mitigation required for the resource type and extent of potential impact.

- ~~b.c.~~ Isolation and demarcation of special-status plant populations or designated special-status species wildlife habitat prior to and during decommissioning.
- ~~e.d.~~ Within the decommissioning area, collection of seeds and seedlings for dominant species of sensitive vegetation communities (i.e., coast sage scrub, riparian) that may require restoration. These seeds and seedlings may be suitable for protection and development of nursery stocks by others for relocation and replanting on MGSF sites not planned for development or other lands approved by USFWS and CDFG. Seed collection will not be used for restoration of rare plants. High quality top soil from the impacted site should be segregated and used for any future re-planting efforts. Scheduling of decommissioning activities to avoid seasonally sensitive periods for protected and special status species. seasonal minimal use periods to avoid direct effects if the sensitive species is present.
- ~~e.e.~~ Provision of suitable gnatcatcher and horned lizard nesting sites on other lands during the 3-7 year decommissioning period. In general, this type of mitigation has not proven highly successful and should not be relied upon as the sole method of offset or mitigation.
- f. Replacement planting of replacement trees listed trees at replacement ratios determined suitable and appropriate, in consultation with the Cities of Montebello and Monterey Park and the County of Los Angeles after decommissioning for losses caused during decommissioning

SCG shall conduct surveys for special-status plant species during the appropriate flowering period prior to surface-disturbing activities.

~~If based on the field surveys, impacts to endangered, threatened or special status plants are identified and project impacts to plants cannot be avoided, mitigation alternatives and plans shall be designed based on the specific requirements of the species and habitat involved. The plan shall include a combination of on-site and off-site mitigation:~~

- a. On-site: Partial avoidance, seed collection with re-seeding, or acquisition of seedlings from a ~~and~~ nursery and/or replacement of stockpiled soil, as directed by USFWS and CDFG. Any on-site re-planting plans shall include monitoring for a minimum of five years to determine success of re-seeding and habitat creation. The mitigation shall be implemented prior to surface disturbance of listed plants.
- b. Off-site: Land acquisition or use of a conservation easement over an existing population of the special-status species that the project eliminated (minimum 1:1 replacement). Establishment of a management endowment as necessary to provide for long-term management of the population.

Mitigation Measure 4.4-2

Any modifications to the Mulefat/willow and sycamore riparian habitat on the MGSF sites shall be coordinated with the USACOE and CDFG to determine the extent, if any, of their jurisdiction for riparian or wetland habitats. Any identified jurisdictional habitats would be isolated and demarcated for protection during the decommissioning and provided for in the habitat restoration program. Such habitat replacement (estimated at less than 1 ac) would be coordinated and added to the measures for Checklist Question a), above.

Mitigation Measure 4.4-3

Any riparian vegetation (willow) affected in the decommissioning due to remediation activities shall be transplanted directly or held for nursery stock development. Mitigation measures during decommissioning shall include:

- a. Avoidance or minimization of impacts from decommissioning and development construction to any wetland vegetation.
- b. Development and implementation of wetland mitigation and monitoring plan to compensate for any loss of wetland vegetation cover.
- c. Replacement compensation at a mitigation ratio to replace or exceed any loss of habitat and functional value of the wetland habitat.

If USACOE takes jurisdiction on any site within the MGSF property, the Section 404 permit approval action, if such were required, would most likely trigger a Section 7 consultation between the USACOE, USFWS, and CDFG regarding the special status plants, coastal California gnatcatcher, and the horned lizard (the impacts would be mitigated through measures discussed above).

If protected species have established nests or are using the Main Facility and East Site during migration, well abandonments shall be undertaken when young have fledged or migrating birds have left unless noise levels are within levels acceptable to CDFG and/or USFWS. Migrations would be expected for wildlife species or adequate similar habitat may be available to allow the special status species (e.g. gnatcatcher) to migrate to areas, which would either ~~be have visual screening screened or~~ be sufficiently remote to isolate critical activities of the special-status species.

Mitigation Measure 4.4-4

Suitable habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher (coastal sage scrub) is available on the East Site, and one gnatcatcher was identified through vocalization to be present on the site during the September 2000 reconnaissance-level survey. In addition, CDFG confirmed on May 10, 2001 that there is at least one pair of gnatcatchers on the East Site. A total of 4.94 acres of coastal sage scrub was identified predominantly on the East Site. It is unknown at this time how many acres will be affected either directly or indirectly by the project.

When the East Site is subjected to disturbance or decommissioning noise during the site abandonment and salvaging operation, the following impact avoidance measures shall be followed if there are nesting gnatcatchers on the site:

- a. Construction activities will be scheduled for the nonbreeding season of the California gnatcatcher (August 31 through February 14) to avoid disturbance of nesting birds (provided that the habitat is not totally removed).
- b. During abandonment, salvaging, and/or site remediation activities, a biologist acceptable to the USFWS will be on site during brush clearing within coastal sage scrub habitat. The biologist will have the authority to stop construction activities when the potential for “take” of a gnatcatcher may occur. Such incidences of “take” could be physical harm, killing, harassment, capturing, pursuing, or collecting individual birds. This section could be eliminated if the Project obtains a Section 10(a) Incidental Take permit.
- c. Earthmoving or demolition equipment will be confined to the narrowest practicable corridor. Waste dirt or rubble will not be deposited within coastal sage scrub vegetation. The area of vegetation removal, trimming, or clearing will be the smallest practicable area to achieve the desired goal of the demolition, salvaging, or site remediation activity.
- d. Noise associated with decommissioning will be attenuated to less than 65 decibels measured from the edge of the habitat as defined by a timely protocol survey. Attenuation will include use of hospital grade mufflers, temporary sound walls, and work outside of the breeding season, or other acceptable noise reducing measures acceptable to USFWS and CDFG.

~~If demolition, salvage, well abandonment, or site remediation is scheduled for the breeding season (February 15 to August 30),~~ Aa wildlife biologist shall conduct preconstruction surveys for California gnatcatchers in the coastal sage scrub habitat. The surveys shall be conducted under a Section 10(a)(1)(A) permit to determine occupancy and to establish a no-disturbance buffer zone around active nest/breeding sites. The surveys shall be conducted in accordance with the Coastal California Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) Presence/Absence Survey Guidelines, February 28, 1997 (USFWS 1997).

Nine surveys shall be conducted during the nonbreeding season (between August 31 through February 14) or six surveys will be conducted during the breeding season (between February 15 through August 30). Individual surveys will be conducted at least two weeks apart during the nonbreeding season or at least one week apart during the breeding season.

If nest sites, eggs, breeding couples, or fledglings are identified on the site, the following step shall be taken:

- a. Within 45 days following the field surveys, the permitted wildlife biologist will submit a report of findings to the USFWS and the CDFG. The report will contain:
 1. Map showing the location of the survey area
 2. Names of all biologists and associated personnel with reference to their section 10(a)(1)(A) permit number
 3. A complete description of survey methods, including number of acres surveyed per biologist per hour and the number of acres surveyed per day per biologist. In addition, the number and dates of surveys, the start and stop times of surveys, survey route delineated on maps, temperature and weather conditions, and the frequency of taped delineations

4.4: Biological Resources

4. Written and mapped qualitative descriptions of plant communities (including dominant species and habitat quality) on and adjacent to the survey area
 5. Number, age (adult, independent juvenile, dependent juvenile, recently fledged juvenile, nestling, unknown), sex of all coastal California gnatcatchers, and color band information, if any. Data will be plotted on 1:24,000 and 1:200 scale maps of the survey area
- b. The permitted wildlife biologist will meet with the USFWS and the CDFG to review the reports and to formalize appropriate measures to reduce or eliminate a “take” of the California gnatcatcher.

Depending on the outcome of the breeding or nonbreeding surveys, such measures to avoid “take” of coastal California gnatcatcher shall include:

- a. Flagging and marking known nest sites
- b. Prohibition of demolition, salvaging, and site remediation within specified distances (500 – 1,000 feet) from a nest site between February 15 and August 30.

SCG should coordinate the results of the protocol surveys with the USFWS and CDFG, and shall develop appropriate strategies to compensate for the loss of sage scrub habitat during decommissioning. Removal of coastal sage scrub shall be compensated at a ratio of 1:1 for unoccupied habitat on the Main Facility and 3:1 on the East Site. Depending on whether the USACOE exerts jurisdiction, either a Section 7 consultation will be initiated or Section 10 permit application will be filed with the USFWS by SCG. The exact means of compensation would be coordinated with the appropriate agencies, but could include:

- a. Development of an on-site HCP or participation in an adjacent HCP or NCCP program.
- b. Restoration of on-site or nearby disturbed areas of coastal scrub.
- c. Preservation of coastal sage scrub vegetation within the East Site and/or within established coastal sage scrub vegetation on nearby sites and incorporation of appropriate conservation easements.
- d. Conduct Section 7 consultation between USFWS and USACOE.

Mitigation Measure 4.4-5

To ensure compliance with biological resource mitigation measures that are required prior to or during development of the sold MGSF properties the following notifications will be made by SCG:

- a. Notify USFWS and CDFG with the buyer’s name and information related to the sale of the MGSF properties.
- b. Notify the buyer and the City of Montebello of the MGSF of the presence of sensitive habitats and species that may not be disturbed without prior written notification to the USFWS and CDFG (at least 60 days prior to surface disturbance) or of any other mitigation measure conditions that apply prior to and after sale of the MGSF properties.

Mitigation Measure 4.4-6

All of the preceding measures shall be coordinated through SCG’s the development of a biological resources mitigation and monitoring plan.