

INITIAL STUDY CHECKLIST

Job: PD-1944

Requester: Todd Militello

Applicant: Reliant Energy Mandalay LLC

Date: September 9, 2002

Survey Type: Field

Rationale: Wetlands

Site Description: A field visit of the site (Edison Canal access road north of 5th Street) was conducted on September 9, 2002. The site is located immediately adjacent to the Edison Canal, which provides cooling water to the Mandalay power plant from Channel Island Harbor, Oxnard, California. The access road appears to have been unused for at least 10 years. In the interim, shrubs and small trees have colonized the road, primarily myoporum (*Myoporum laetum*) and coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*). In addition, hotten-tot fig (*Carpobrotus edulis*) is dominant in the northern portion of the access road. The project reviewed is limited to grading of the access road, dredging of the Edison Canal is not authorized under this permit action.

| | Project Impact Degree of Effect* | | | | Cumulative Impact Degree of Effect* | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|----|------|----|--|----|------|----|
| | N | LS | PS-M | PS | N | LS | PS-M | PS |
| 6. <u>Biological Resources</u> | | | | | | | | |
| a. endangered, threatened, or rare species | | X | | | | X | | |
| b. wetland habitat | | | X | | | | X | |
| c. coastal habitat | | | X | | | | X | |
| d. migration corridors | | X | | | | X | | |
| e. locally important species/communities | | | X | | | | X | |

***N** **No Impact**

LS **Less Than Significant Impact**

PS-M Potentially Significant Impact Unless Mitigation Incorporated

PS Potentially Significant Impact

SECTION C

DISCUSSION OF RESPONSES

a. Plant or animal species listed under either the Federal or California Endangered Species Acts reported within five miles of the site include:

- Ventura marsh milkvetch (*Astragalus pycnostachyus* var. *lanosissimus*, Federal and State Endangered) – reported from within 1,000 feet of the site.
- Tidewater goby (*Eucyclogobius newberryi*, Federal Endangered) – reported from the mouth of the Santa Clara River, 2.3 miles north of the project site.
- Western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus browni*, Federal and State Endangered) – reported from McGrath State Beach, 1.7 miles north of the project site.
- California least tern (*Sterna antillarum browni*, Federal Threatened) – reported from McGrath State Beach, 1.7 miles north of the project site. Reported foraging in Edison Canal adjacent to project site by Bowland & Associates (2002).
- Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*, Federal and State Endangered) – reported from the Santa Clara River, 3.6 miles to the northeast.

Belding's savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi*, State Endangered) - reported from McGrath State Beach, 1.7 miles north of the project site.

Stabilized dunes immediately west of the project site provide similar habitat as the known location of Ventura marsh milkvetch; however, this species was not observed by Bowland & Associates (2002). The project site does not provide suitable habitat for tidewater goby, western snowy plover, least Bell's vireo and Belding's savannah sparrow, and no impacts to these species are expected. California least tern forages in Edison Canal and may be disturbed during road grading activities. However, the foraging area affected would be very small in comparison to that available in the area. Therefore, impacts to this species are considered less than significant.

- b. The Ventura County General Plan Goals, Policies and Programs document defines wetlands as:

“...lands transitional between terrestrial and aquatic systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface or the land is covered by shallow water. The frequency of occurrence of water is sufficient to support a prevalence of vegetative or aquatic life that requires saturated or seasonally saturated soil conditions for growth and reproduction. Wetlands include marshes, bogs, sloughs, vernal pools, wet meadows, river and stream overflows, mudflats, ponds, springs and seeps.”

Based on the site visit conducted by Padre and the Biological Report prepared by Bowland & Associates (2002), a 0.05 acre patch of arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*) occurs on the access road. Arroyo willow has been designated a wetland plant species by Reed (1988), meaning this species requires seasonally saturated soils for growth and reproduction. Therefore, this area meets the Ventura County wetland definition. Most of the willow trunks are located on the small berm at the top of the Canal bank; however, much of the canopy is located on the access road. Proposed grading of the access road may result in the loss of most of the willow wetlands.

- c. The site is located within the Coastal Zone. The Channel Islands Harbor and Edison Canal may be an important nursery area for coastal marine fish. Topsmelt are known to spawn in shallow coastal waters, including Mugu Lagoon (Onuf, 1987). A small school of about 15 topsmelt was observed by Padre in the Edison Canal during the site visit. This species is also very commonly observed in the Channel Islands Harbor. Grading of the access road may result in discharge of earth materials and debris into the Edison Canal, which may reduce water quality and degrade the habitat quality of this potential nursery area.
- d. The access road provides a convenient corridor through dense stands of myoporum, and abundant coyote scat was observed along the road during the site visit. However, the access road does not connect two habitat areas and much of the surrounding area does support wildlife habitat. Therefore, the access road is not considered an important movement corridor. Project impacts would include short-term disturbance and loss of cover, and are considered less than significant.
- e. Special-status species known to occur within 5 miles of the project site includes burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), southwestern pond turtle (*Clemmys marmorata pallida*), San Diego horned lizard (*Phrynosoma coronatum blainvillei*) and yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*). The project site does not provide suitable habitat for these or other special-status species, nor were any such species observed on the project site.

The patch of arroyo willows along the access road may be considered southern arroyo willow riparian forest, which is considered a sensitive plant community by the California Natural Diversity Data Base. These willows may be removed by grading.

References

- Bowland & Associates. 2002. Edison Canal Access Road Biological Report. Prepared for Reliant Energy Mandalay LLC.
- California Natural Diversity Data Base. 2002. RAREFIND 2 Output for the Oxnard 7.5' Quadrangle map.
- Onuf, C. P. June 1987. *The Ecology of Mugu Lagoon, California: An Estuarine Profile*. Performed for U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service. Biological Report 85(7.15).
- Reed, P.B. Jr. 1988. *National List of Plant Species that occur in Wetlands: California (Region 0)*. (U.S. Fish and Wildl. Serv. Biol. Rep. 88(26.10)). St. Petersburg, FL.

SECTION D
MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Based on the information contained within Sections B and C:

YES/MAYBE NO

- | | | |
|---|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Does the project have the potential to significantly degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory? | <u> X </u> | |
| 2. Does the project have the potential to achieve short-term, to the disadvantage of long-term, environmental goals? (A short-term impact on the environment is one which occurs in a relatively brief, definitive period of time while long-term impacts will endure well into the future). | <u> </u> | <u> X </u> |
| 3. Does the project have impacts which are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (Several projects may have relatively small individual impacts on two or more resources, but the total of those impacts on the environment is significant). | <u> </u> | <u> X </u> |
| 4. Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly? | <u> </u> | <u> X </u> |

SECTION E
DETERMINATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT

On the basis of this initial evaluation:


I find the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION should be prepared.

I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because the mitigation measure(s) described below will be applied to the project. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION should be prepared.

I find the proposed project, individually and/or cumulatively MAY have a significant effect on the environment and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.

Mitigation Measures

- a. The willow wetlands shall be preserved by narrowing the access road to 8 feet adjacent to the willows, and trimming all willow limbs to accommodate this width. No root crowns shall be removed.
- b. Silt fencing shall be installed along the access road shoulder near the top of bank, prior to grading, to prevent incidental discharge of earth materials and debris into the Edison Canal.



Signature of Preparer

