



Colorado River Basin Regional Water Quality Control Board

Certified Mail: **7022 0410 0003 2235 4717**

May 25, 2022

Hazem Gabr
Southern California Edison (SCE)
2244 Walnut Grove Ave.
Rosemead, CA 91770
Hazem.Gabr@sce.com

NOTICE OF APPLICABILITY FOR COVERAGE UNDER ORDER NO. 2004-0004-DWQ, STATEWIDE GENERAL WASTE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS FOR DREDGED OR FILL DISCHARGES TO WATERS DEEMED BY THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS TO BE OUTSIDE OF FEDERAL JURISDICTION, EAGLE MOUNTAIN-BLYTHE (EM-B) 161-KILOVOLT (KV) TRANSMISSION LINE RATING REMEDIATION (TLRR) PROJECT (WDID NO. 7A333242001), RIVERSIDE COUNTY

Dear Mr. Gabr:

On April 14, 2022, Southern California Edison (SCE or Discharger) submitted a Notice of Intent (NOI) to enroll under and comply with State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) Order No. 2004-0004-DWQ, *Statewide General Waste Discharge Requirements for Dredged or Fill Discharges to Waters Deemed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to be Outside of Federal Jurisdiction*. The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Colorado River Basin Region (Colorado River Basin Water Board) has reviewed your enrollment materials and finds that the dredge/fill discharges associated with the Eagle Mountain-Blythe (EM-B) 161-kiloVolt (kV) Transmission Line Rating Remediation (TLRR) Project (Project) meet the requirements for enrollment. You are hereby enrolled under Order No. 2004-0004-DWQ and may proceed with the Project in accordance with the Order.

A copy of [Order 2004-0004-DWQ](#) (https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/board_decisions/adopted_orders/water_quality/2004/wqo/wqo2004-0004.pdf) is attached and it can be found on the State Water Board's Adopted Orders webpage.

Please familiarize yourself with the requirements of Order 2004-0004-DWQ. You are responsible for complying with all applicable Order requirements. Failure to comply with Order 2004-0004-DWQ constitutes a violation of the California Water Code and may result in an enforcement action or termination of enrollment under the Order.

JAYNE POWELL, CHAIR | PAULA RASMUSSEN, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

PROJECT DESCRIPTION, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION:

SCE is continually repairing, maintaining, upgrading, and replacing distribution facilities throughout its service territory. Ongoing operation and maintenance activities are necessary to ensure reliable service as mandated by the California Public Utilities Commission. This project constitutes a necessary reconduction of the existing circuit and there are no practicable alternatives to the proposed discharge which have less adverse impacts than the proposed project.

The Project involves the reconductor of approximately 53 miles of an existing 161-kV transmission line, and structure replacements at select locations. Activities that will result in impacts to waters of the state involve removal of one wood three-pole dead-end structure (CONST 30) and replacement with a three-pole TSP, and two wire setup sites adjacent to CONST 30. Project work will take place within an existing Southern California Edison Right-Of-Way (ROW).

The purpose of the Project is to resolve approximately 168 phase-to-ground clearance discrepancies along the EM-B 161-kV circuit by replacing the existing conductors and replacing select structures to meet the line rating clearance requirement for the circuit.

The Project will temporarily impact 0.08 acres (128.7 linear feet) and 69 cubic yards of ephemeral drainages. Temporarily impacted areas will be restored to pre-existing conditions. Permanent fill in the form of concrete for construction of pole foundations is anticipated to be 63.8 square feet (<0.001 acres) and 71.3 cubic yards. Fill materials will also be removed from the old structures being replaced and disposed of in approved off-site disposal areas.

Permanent impacts associated with this Project would result from the installation of new pole structures. Pole replacements (i.e., pole removal and replacement of a similar pole) is considered "like for like" and is not considered a permanent impact.

Although access is proposed over sections that have been identified as jurisdictional Waters of the State, no permanent or temporary impacts are anticipated to occur within these areas. Proposed access routes are sparsely vegetated, consist of a sandy substrate, and have been previously disturbed by off-road vehicular use.

Equipment will consist of rubber-wheeled/rubber-tracked equipment and are not anticipated to impact the bed and bank of the channel. No grading or streambed alteration is proposed and impacts to vegetation within the streambed will be avoided. Additionally, no staging within the road prism will occur outside of the designated work areas.

Given the minor nature and impact of this Project, compensatory mitigation is not proposed. The installation of the poles is not expected to impact groundwater resources. Further, because the pole installation has nominal disturbance, the project is not expected to adversely affect any of the beneficial uses of the area.

PROJECT LOCATION:

The Project is located in the Chuckwalla Valley, from Desert Center to Blythe in Riverside County, California. The Eagle Mountain Substation is located 3 miles south of the town of Eagle Mountain, approximately 7 miles north of Interstate 10 (I-10), and 400 feet west of the intersection of Kaiser Truck Road and Power Line Road. The Blythe Substation is located one-quarter mile north of I-10 and 840 feet east of the intersection of Buck Boulevard and Hobsonway in Blythe. The overland travel will occur along previously disturbed overland travel routes, which have likely been used during prior pole/line maintenance work.

The latitude and longitude of the impacted area is listed below. Maps showing the Project location are found in Attachment A of this Order.

Site No.	Latitude	Longitude
1	33.816077° N	-115.424154° W

APPLICATION FEE RECEIVED:

A fee of \$2,417 was received on April 13, 2022.

The fee amount was determined as required by California Code of Regulations, title 23, sections 3833(b)(3) and 2200(a)(3), and was calculated as category A – Fill and Excavation Discharges (fee code 84) with the dredge and fill fee calculator.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA):

The Colorado River Basin Water Board has determined that the enrollment of this Project under Order 2004-0004-DWQ, which prescribes waste discharge requirements for the Project, is categorically exempt from the procedural requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Public Resources Code section 21000 et seq. Specifically, the issuance of this Order and the Project described herein meet the criteria for the following exemptions under the CEQA Guidelines (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15000 et seq.): Class 1, Existing Facility (§ 15301); Class 2, Replacement or Reconstruction (§ 15302), and Class 4, Minor Alterations to Land (§ 15304). Additionally, no exceptions to the CEQA exemptions listed above apply.

The above-listed exemptions are supported by the Findings of Facts (Findings) set forth in Attachment B, which is incorporated herein.

AVOIDANCE AND MINIMIZATION MEASURES:

The Permittee must implement the avoidance and erosion control methods as proposed in the Project application, as well as comply with all applicable requirements in Order 2004-0004-DWQ.

TERMINATION OF COVERAGE:

Upon completion of the Project, the Permittee shall submit a complete Notice of Termination (NOT) requesting to no longer be enrolled under Order 2004-0004-DWQ. Attachment 2 to Order 2004-0004-DWQ contains the NOT form.

If you have questions concerning this matter, please contact Kai Dunn, 401 Water Quality Certification Program Manager, at (760) 776-8986 or at Kai.Dunn@waterboards.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Original Signed By

Paula Rasmussen
Executive Officer
Colorado River Basin
Regional Water Quality Control Board

Enclosures: 1) Attachment A Project Maps
2) Attachment B CEQA Findings
3) Order No. 2004-0004-DWQ

KD/

cc via email (with enclosures):

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File: 7A333242001, RM: 447507, Place ID: 880779, SCE Eagle Mountain-Blythe (EM-B) 161-kiloVolt (kV) Transmission Line Rating Remediation (TLRR) Project (Project), Order 2004-0004-DWQ

Attachment A
Project Maps

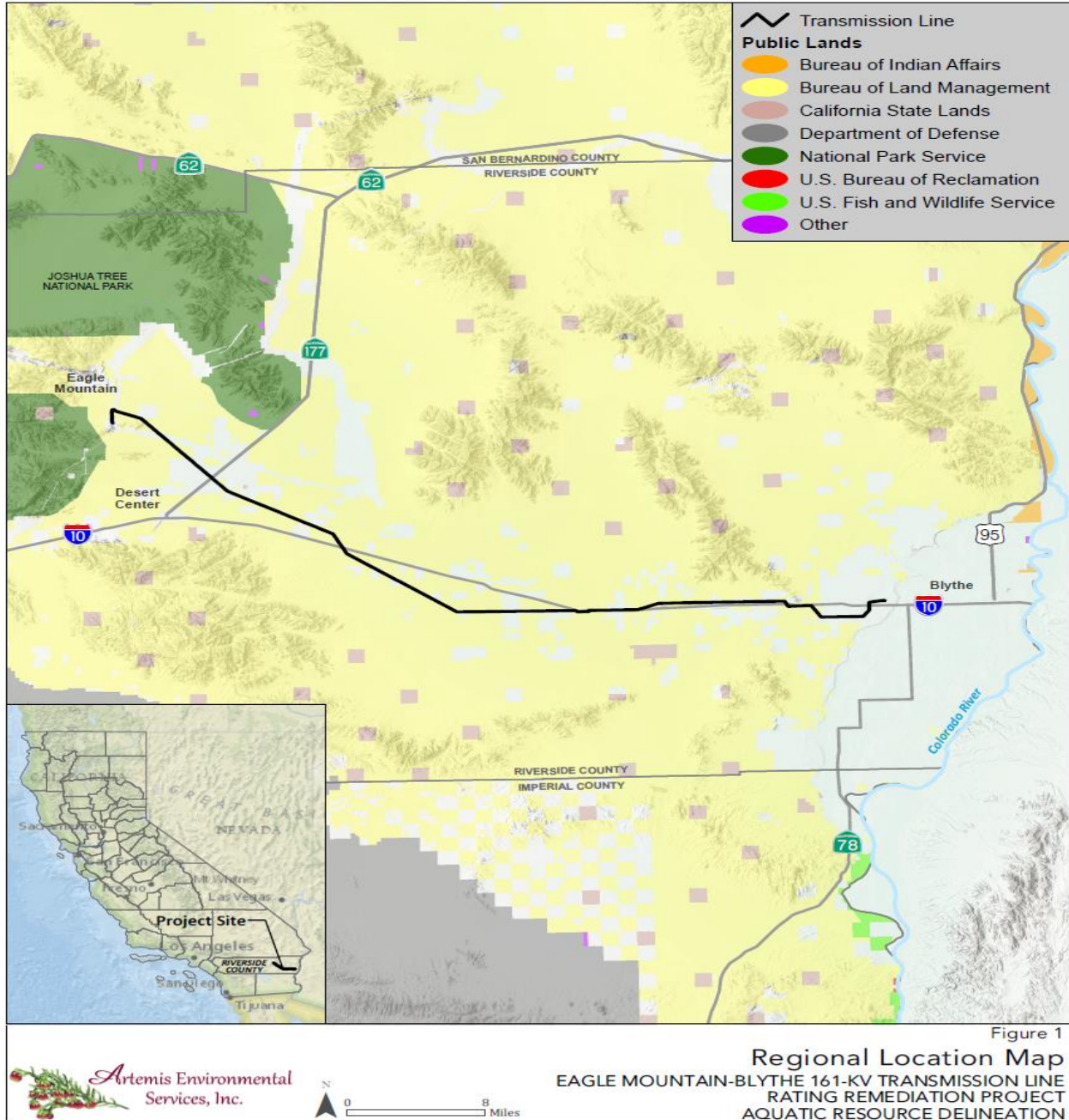


Figure 1: Regional Location Map¹

¹Southern California Edison, April 2022. Notice of Intent (NOI) for the Southern California Edison Eagle Mountain-Blythe (EM-B) 161-kiloVolt (kV) Transmission Line Rating Remediation (TLRR) Project.

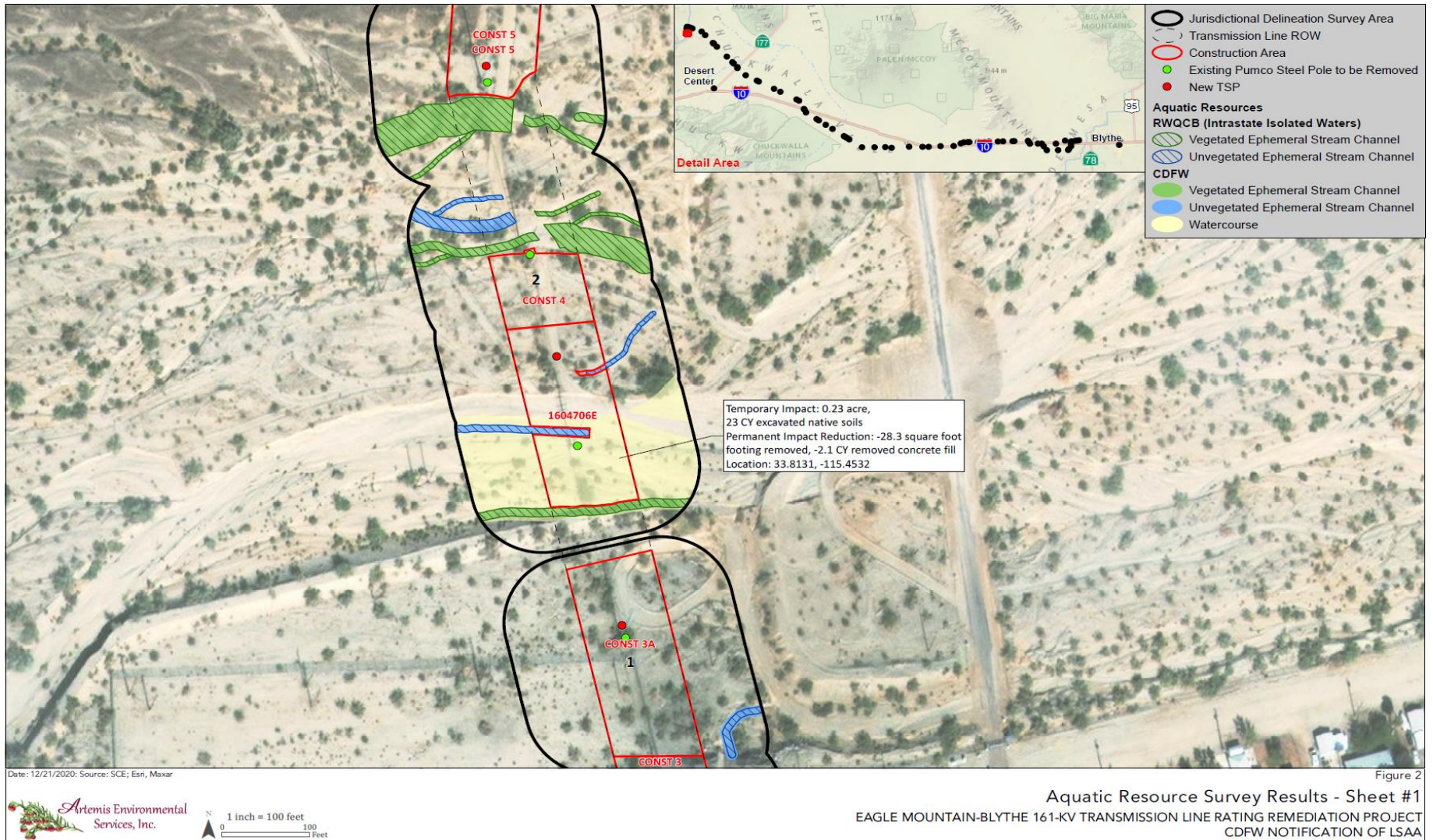


Figure 2: Aquatic Resource Survey Results Map

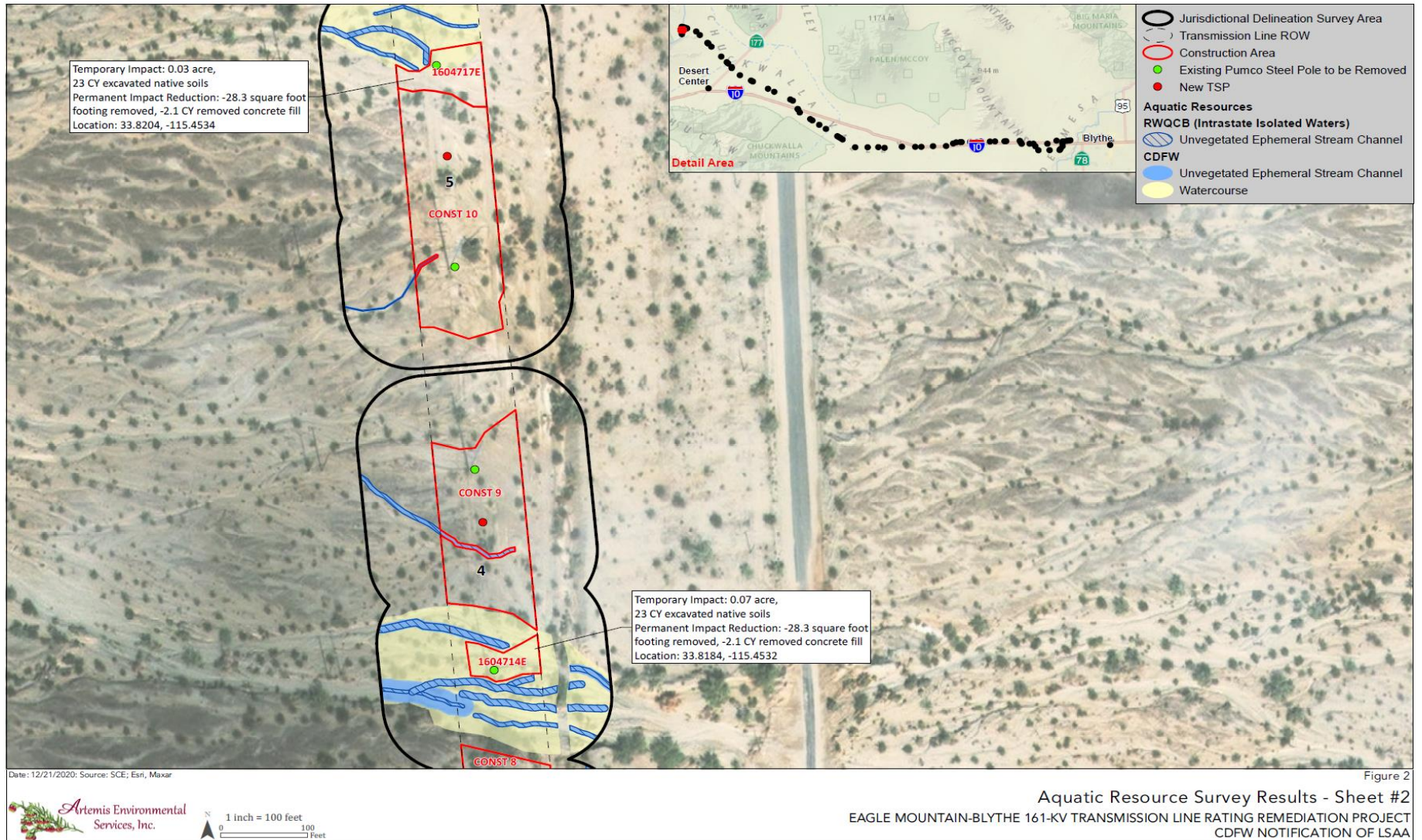


Figure 3: Aquatic Resource Survey Results Map

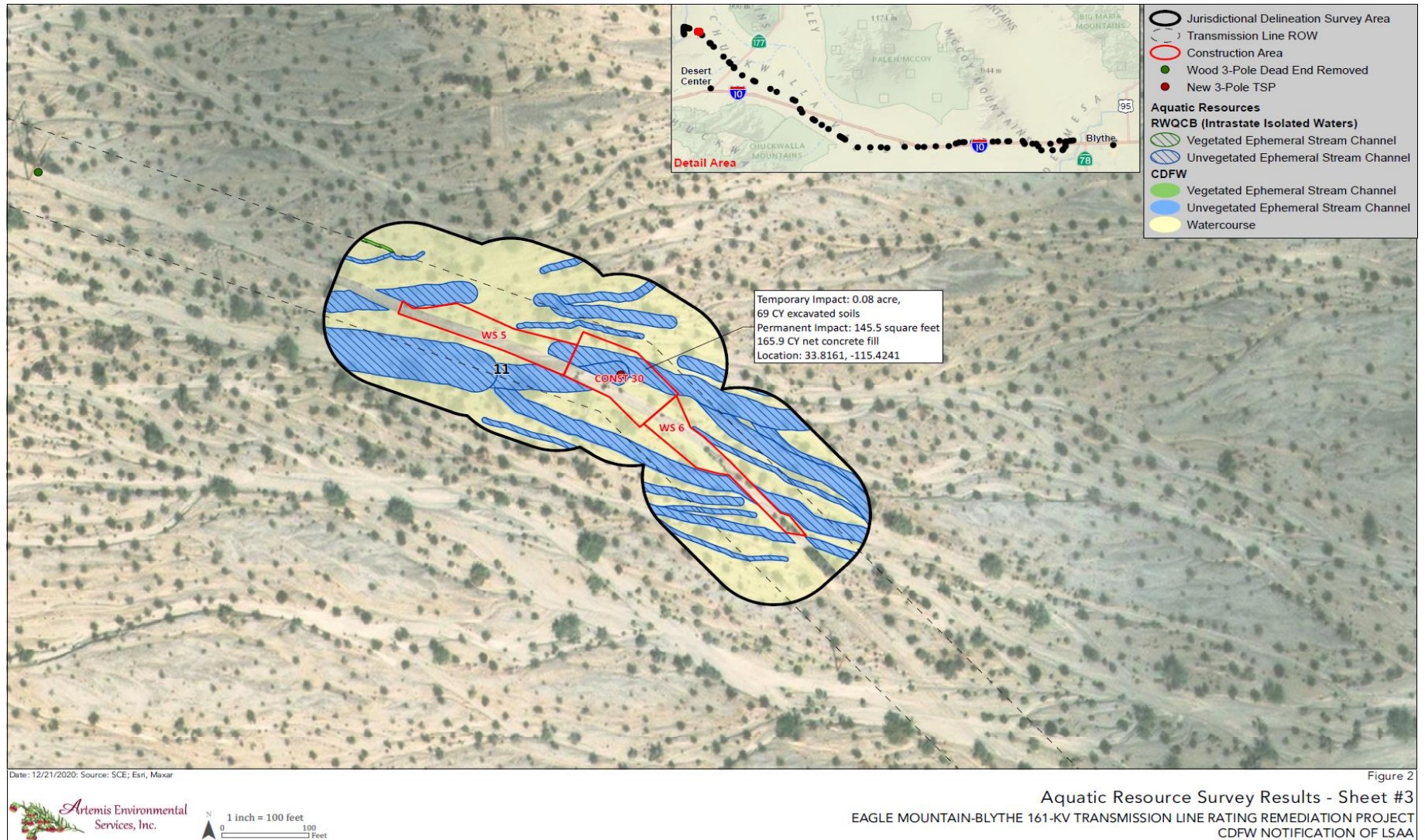


Figure 4: Aquatic Resource Survey Results Map



Photo Exhibit



Photo Exhibit

Attachment B CEQA Findings

A. Introduction

The Colorado River Basin Water Board has determined that the Project is exempt from review under CEQA pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15061. Specifically, the issuance of this Order and the Project described herein meet the exemptions criteria under California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15301 (Existing Facilities), section 15302 (Replacement and Reconstruction), and section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land).

B. Findings

1. Applicable Categorical Exemptions

Under title 14, section 15301 of the California Code of Regulations, there is a “Class 1” categorical exemption where the proposed project “consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that existing at the time of the lead agency’s determination” such as “(b) [e]xisting facilities of both investor and publicly-owned utilities used to provide electric power, natural gas, sewerage, or other public utility services.”

Under title 14, section 15302 of the California Code of Regulations, there is a “Class 2” categorical exemption where the proposed project involves “replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities” including the “(c) [r]eplacement or reconstruction of existing utility systems and/or facilities involving negligible or no expansion of capacity.”

Under title 14, section 15304 of the California Code of Regulations, there is a “Class 4” categorical exemption where the proposed project “consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation” including “(f) [m]inor trenching and backfilling where the surface is restored.”

The Project falls within the exemptions per section 15301 (Existing Facilities), section 15302 (Replacement and Reconstruction), and section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land). The Project involves the reconductor of approximately 53 miles of an existing 161-kV transmission line, and structure replacements at select locations. The project will involve the removal of one wood three-pole dead-end structure (CONST 30) and replacement with a three-pole TSP, and two wire setup sites adjacent to CONST 30. The Project

will entail minor excavation of unnamed ephemeral stream; however, once the work has been completed, SCE will restore the temporarily impacted areas to pre-construction conditions.

2. No Exceptions to the Categorical Exemption Apply

There is no substantial evidence that any exceptions to the CEQA categorical exemptions listed above apply. Analysis of the relevant exceptions pursuant to section 15300.2 of the State CEQA Guidelines are as follows:

- a. *Location. Class 4 is qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located—a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, this class is considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may have an impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.*

The Project occurs in the Chuckwalla Valley, from Desert Center to Blythe in Riverside County, California. The Project would involve temporary impacts within an unnamed ephemeral stream; the work area will be restored to pre-Project conditions following Project completion. Impacts are anticipated to be short-term and less than significant. Permanent impacts associated with this Project would result from the installation of new pole structures. Pole replacements (i.e., pole removal and replacement of a similar pole) is considered “like for like” and is not considered a permanent impact. Furthermore, the Project falls within the exemption found in Section 15301 (Class 1, Existing Facilities), which is not qualified by consideration of location.

- b. *Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.*

No significant cumulative impacts over time are anticipated. This Project is not a part of a larger project.

- c. *Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.*

There are no “unusual circumstances” that would create a reasonable possibility of significant environmental impacts. The Project is being conducted near established roads that have been in use for some time. All construction will be performed under “no flow” conditions in the washes to preclude potential impacts to water quality. Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be used that are appropriate for this type of project activity.

- d. *Scenic Highway. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway.*

The Eagle Mountain Substation is located 3 miles south of the town of Eagle Mountain, approximately 7 miles north of Interstate 10 (I-10), and 400 feet west of the intersection of Kaiser Truck Road and Power Line Road. The Blythe Substation is located one-quarter mile north of I-10 and 840 feet east of the intersection of Buck Boulevard and Hobsonway in Blythe. The Project will not damage the scenic resources within a highway/road officially designated as a state scenic highway/road.

- e. *Hazardous Waste Sites. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of Government Code.*

The Project site is located along an existing Right-Of-Way and is not included on any list compiled pursuant to section 65962.5 of the Government Code.

- f. *Historical Resources. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.*

There is no anticipated substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. The Project occurs along the Southern California Edison Right-Of-Way (ROW).

C. Determination

The issuance of this Order and the activities described herein meet the exemptions criteria under California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15301 (Existing Facilities), section 15302 (Replacement and Reconstruction), and section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land).

The Colorado River Basin Water Board concludes that no exceptions to the CEQA exemptions listed above apply to the activities approved by this Order.

The Colorado River Basin Water Board will file a Notice of Exemption with the State Clearinghouse within five (5) working days from the issuance of this Order (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 15062).