

**APPENDIX 6.6-B – 2007/2008 WINTER AND 2008 BREEDING COASTAL  
CALIFORNIA GNATCATCHER (*POLIOPTILA CALIFORNICA*  
*CALIFORNICA*) SURVEY REPORT FOR THE PROPOSED ORANGE  
GROVE PROJECT**



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June 9, 2008

Ms. Sandra Marquez  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
6010 Hidden Valley Road  
Carlsbad, California 92011

**SUBJECT: 2007/2008 Winter and 2008 Breeding Coastal California Gnatcatcher  
(*Polioptila californica californica*) Survey Report for the Proposed Orange  
Grove Project**

**Permit Number: TE-037508-1**

Dear Ms. Marquez:

This letter report summarizes the methodology and findings of protocol-level surveys for the federally listed threatened coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) conducted by TRC in 2007/2008 (winter, non-breeding) and 2008 (spring, breeding) for the proposed Orange Grove Energy Power Plant Project (project) located near Pala, in San Diego County, California. The areas surveyed are located in northeastern San Diego County east of Interstate 15, north of State Route 76, and west of the Pala Casino. Surveys were conducted to determine the presence of coastal California gnatcatchers.

### ***SURVEY LOCATIONS***

Surveys were conducted on and up to 250 feet surrounding the proposed project site and on either side of the project linear routes (See Map 1). The survey area also included an area that was at one time a part of the project, but is no longer part of the project area (See Map 2). Only suitable coastal California gnatcatcher habitat was surveyed. Elevation in the survey areas ranged from approximately 250 to 750 feet above sea level. A small portion of the survey area shown on Map 1 falls within coastal California gnatcatcher critical habitat (USFWS Coastal California Gnatcatcher Critical Habitat San Diego County Map, dated December 2007) and all of the survey area shown on Map 2, which is no longer part of the project, falls within the coastal California gnatcatcher critical habitat (please see Map 1 and 2).

The project includes both non-breeding and breeding surveys for different portions of the project. This is due to the fact that a portion of the project changed during the course of the planning and additional gnatcatcher surveys were required. At the time the breeding survey season had begun so it was decided to continue to the non-breeding surveys and then start a new set of surveys under the breeding protocols. Below outlines the two areas.

### ***Winter (Non-breeding) Survey Location***

Located north of State Route 76 and along Pala Del Norte Road, the area surveyed included appropriate habitat on and surrounding the proposed project site southwest to the northeast side of the existing San Diego Gas & Electric Pala Substation (see Map 1). This survey area is within T9S, R2W of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Pala 7.5-minute quadrangle.

### ***Spring (Breeding) Survey Locations***

Located south of the winter survey area described above, the area surveyed included appropriate habitat west and south of the existing San Diego Gas & Electric Pala Substation along the linear route components of the proposed project, to the north side of State Route 76 (see Map 1). This survey area is within T9S, R2W of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Pala 7.5-minute quadrangle. Additionally, appropriate habitat north of State Route 76 along Rice Canyon Road was included in the surveys. At one time this area was included in the project scope. This survey area is within T10S, R3W of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Bonsall 7.5-minute quadrangle.

### ***PLANT COMMUNITIES***

All appropriate coastal sage scrub vegetation found on and within the 250 feet of the proposed project site and linear routes was surveyed. For the winter survey, approximately 30 acres of moderate to good quality coastal sage scrub was surveyed. For the spring survey approximately 45 acres of moderate to good quality coastal sage scrub was surveyed. Dominant native shrub species observed within the coastal sage scrub vegetation include California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), white sage (*Salvia apiana*), California broom (*Lotus scoparius*), lemonadeberry (*Rhus integrifolia*), laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*), and cholla and prickly pear (*Opuntia* spp.).

### ***METHODOLOGY***

Permitted biologist Paula Potenza (Permit No. TE-037508-1), authorized to independently conduct gnatcatcher protocol-level surveys, conducted all the surveys according to the *USFWS Coastal California Gnatcatcher Presence/Absence Survey Protocol* for non-NCCP areas (USFWS, 1993). Ryan Villanueva (on the same permit or recently submitted to be on the same permit) accompanied Paula Potenza on two of the surveys as a biologist authorized to conduct activities for coastal California gnatcatchers under the direct supervision of an independently authorized biologist.

Surveys for coastal California gnatcatcher were conducted in areas surrounding the project that contain coastal sage scrub vegetation. Within the survey areas, only appropriate vegetation was surveyed. For the winter surveys, at least nine surveys were conducted approximately two weeks apart. The spring surveys all occurred within the gnatcatcher-breeding season (March 15 through June 30), with six surveys conducted approximately one week apart. Table 1 below provides the survey dates for the winter and spring surveys.

**Table 1: 2007/2008 Survey Schedule**

<b>Survey Location</b>	<b>Surveyors</b>	<b>Survey Dates</b>
Winter (Non-breeding)	Paula Potenza	December 5 and 20, 2007; January 3, 26, and 31, 2008; February 15 and 29, 2008; March 14 and 31, 2008; and April 10, 2008
Spring (Breeding)	Paula Potenza Ryan Villanueva	March 28, 2008; April 3, 10, 17, and 25, 2008; and May 2, 2008

All surveys were conducted between approximately 7:00 a.m. and 12:45 p.m. Weather conditions during the surveys consisted of temperatures from 45 to 78 degrees Fahrenheit, winds from 0 to 8 miles per hour, and cloud cover from 0 to 100 percent. Surveys were either not conducted, or were halted during periods of excessive heat, wind, rain, fog, or other inclement weather. Taped vocalizations (used infrequently) and “pishing” sounds were used to initially locate coastal California gnatcatchers. Taped calls were not used to elicit or prompt further behaviors from birds. Surveys were conducted by slowly walking survey routes and no more than 80 acres of suitable gnatcatcher habitat were surveyed per biologist per day.

## **RESULTS**

During the spring surveys a single pair (adult male and adult female) and three juveniles (belonging to this pair) were observed in coastal sage scrub vegetation along the proposed linear route of the project (see Map 1). No coastal California gnatcatchers were observed in the coastal sage scrub surveyed in the area along Rice Canyon Road (see Map 2) and no coastal California gnatcatchers were observed during the winter surveys.

The coastal California gnatcatcher pair was observed during all six surveys. They were observed successfully nesting and fledging three young. By the last survey, the pair appeared to be constructing a second nest and all three juvenile birds were seen in the area with their parents. See Map 1 for the location of the nest sites. Additionally, a single male coastal California gnatcatcher was observed on February 12, 2008 during a habitat assessment of the proposed project linear route (see incidental sighting location on Map 1). This male could have been the male from the pair subsequently seen during the spring surveys or a separate male that moved out of the survey area before the start of the spring surveys.

Please contact me at (760) 603-1740 if you have any questions or comments regarding this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paula Potenza". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Paula Potenza  
Lead Biologist

Attachments