

July 29, 2020

RBW-04.05

Mr. Chad Williams
Rainbow Municipal Water District
3707 Old Highway 395
Fallbrook, CA 92028

Subject: Biological Reconnaissance for the North River Road Point Repairs Project

Dear Mr. Williams:

At the request of Rainbow Municipal Water District (District or RMWD), HELIX Environmental Planning, Inc. (HELIX) conducted a biological reconnaissance survey for the North River Road Point Repairs project (project), located in the city of Oceanside in northwestern San Diego County (Figure 1). This letter report details the survey methods and results of the reconnaissance and identifies avoidance measures for coastal California gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica californica*), a federally listed species.

PROJECT LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The District proposes to repair damaged sewer lines at six locations along North River Road (Figures 2a and 2b). Repair location No. 1 is located at the intersection of North River Road and Holly Lane, at the east end of the project. Repair location Nos. 2 through 6 are located between Wilshire Road and Stallion Drive, with location No. 2 nearest to Wilshire Road, approximately two miles west of location No. 1, and location No. 6 at the west end of the project nearest to Stallion Drive. Agricultural lands and residential development are the primary land cover types in the immediately surrounding areas.

METHODS

A biological reconnaissance survey was conducted on July 28, 2020 by HELIX biologist Stacy Nigro, which entailed searching for the presence of coastal sage scrub (i.e., potentially suitable nesting habitat for coastal California gnatcatcher) within 500 feet of each of the six sewer line repair locations. The survey was conducted on foot, with the aid of binoculars. Survey extent is depicted on Figures 3a and 3b.

RESULTS

Coastal sage scrub habitat occurs within 500 feet of repair location Nos. 5 and 6 and is further discussed below. Coastal sage scrub does not occur within 500 feet of repair location Nos. 1, 2, 3, or 4, which are surrounded by active agricultural lands and a small number of semi-rural residences.

Coastal sage scrub is present to the northwest and southwest of repair location Nos. 5 and 6. The northwestern stand of sage scrub occurs west of Stallion Drive on a slope below the First Baptist Church of San Luis Rey, north of North River Road. The southwestern stand of sage scrub parallels the south side of North River Road, above the river valley of the San Luis Rey River. Both stands are relatively small and coastal California gnatcatchers were not detected during the biological reconnaissance survey. However, the potential for nesting gnatcatchers cannot be definitively ruled out at these locations based solely on the reconnaissance survey.

AVOIDANCE MEASURES

The project's environmental noise control specification related to coastal California gnatcatcher states:

- The gnatcatcher breeding season is from February 15th to August 31st. During this timeframe, RMWD will conduct focused surveys to determine if the gnatcatcher is nesting within suitable habitat onsite or within 500 feet of the Work. If nesting gnatcatchers are within 500 feet of the Work, the Contractor shall provide noise control provisions to limit the noise levels at the coastal sage scrub habitat to not exceed an average of 60 decibels per hour. Noise control measures may include straw bales and/or plywood backed with foam core.

Focused surveys for coastal California gnatcatcher require 15-day advance notice to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and consist of a minimum of three surveys spaced one week apart. Given the timing of the project's anticipated start date at the beginning of August, focused surveys were not conducted as the nesting season would be over before surveys were complete. As such, it was determined that the best approach would be to identify whether suitable nesting habitat for gnatcatcher (i.e., coastal sage scrub) is present within 500 feet of the individual repair locations and postpone repairs for any locations with nearby sage scrub until after August 31st.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The two westernmost repair locations, Nos. 5 and 6, are the only locations that contain potentially suitable nesting habitat for gnatcatcher within 500 feet of the repair point. As such, HELIX recommends that repairs at these two locations be postponed until after August 31 in order to avoid the breeding season of coastal California gnatcatcher. If work at these locations cannot be conducted outside the gnatcatcher breeding season, noise control measures such as straw bales and/or plywood backed with foam core would be required in order to comply with the noise control specification.

Repairs at location Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4 could be conducted at any time, as these areas do not support suitable nesting habitat for gnatcatcher within 500 feet.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide you with this information. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 760-840-9794 or 619-462-1515 if you have any questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,



Stacy Nigro
Principal Biologist

ATTACHMENTS

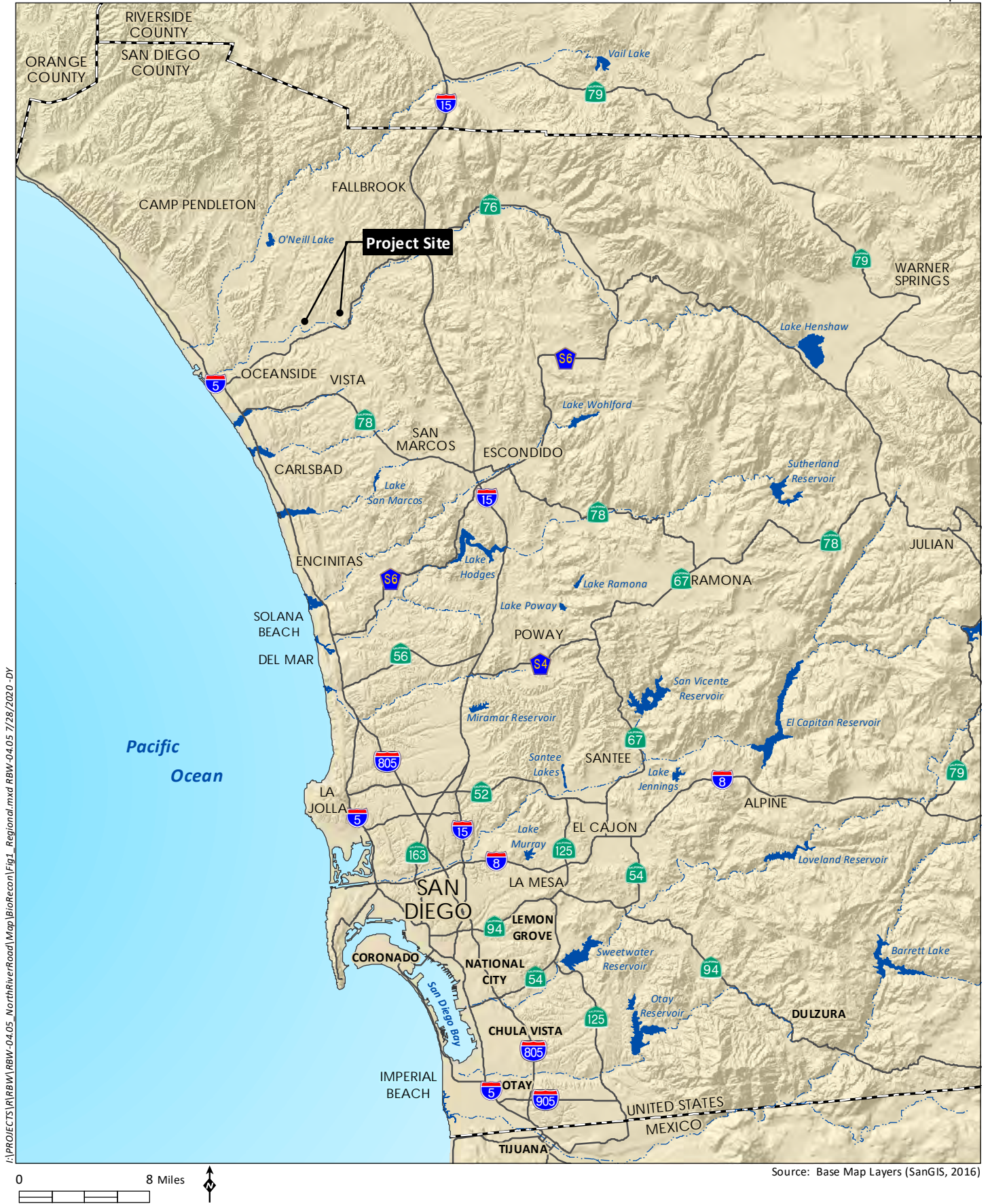
Figure 1: Regional Location

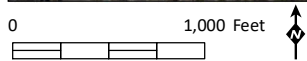
Figure 2a: Project Vicinity (Aerial Photograph)

Figure 2b: Point Repair Overview

Figure 3a: Biological Reconnaissance Survey Area

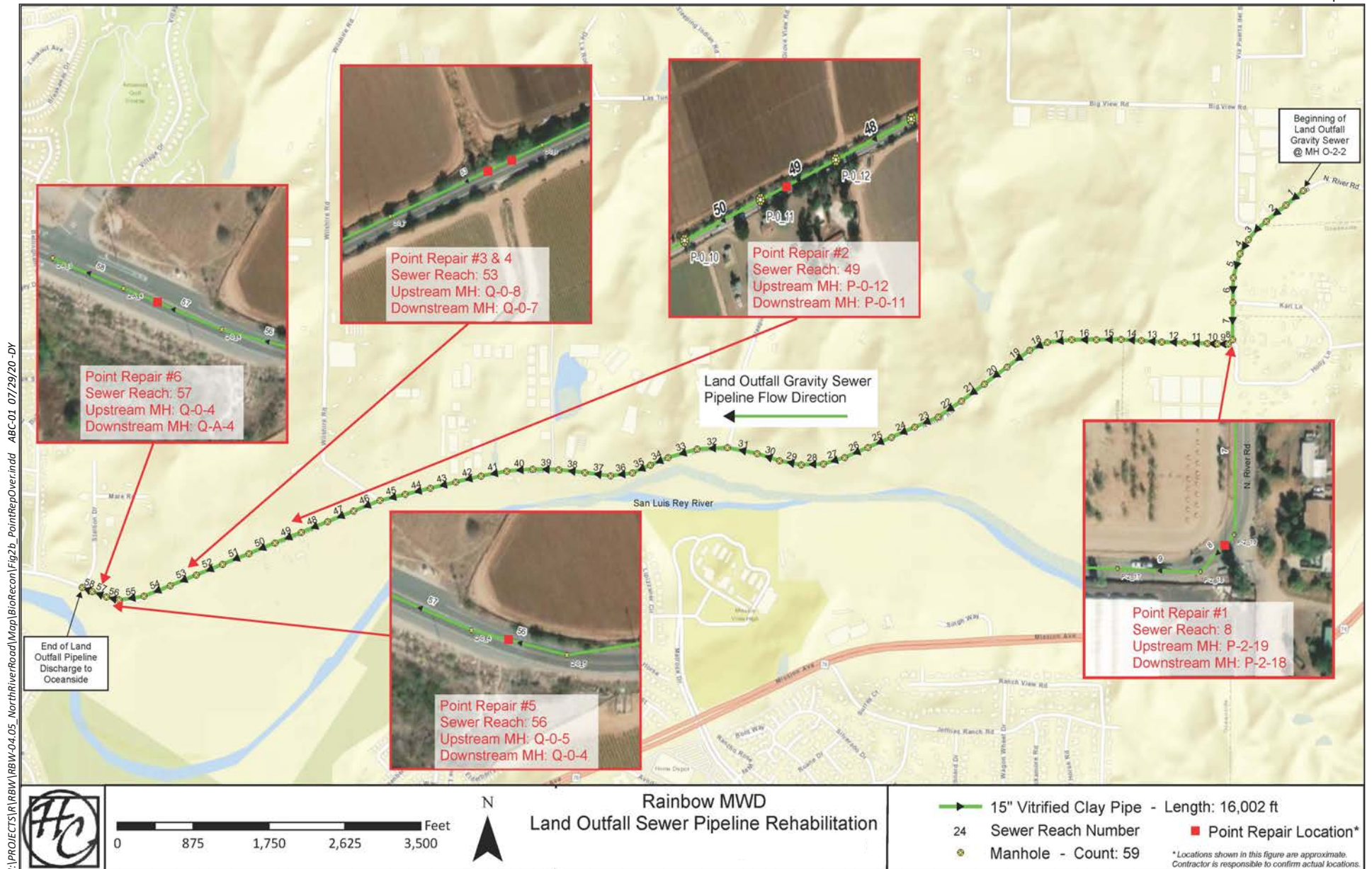
Figure 3b: Biological Reconnaissance Survey Area



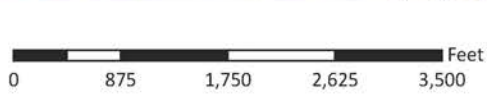


HELIX
Environmental Planning

Figure 2a



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Rainbow MWD
Land Outfall Sewer Pipeline Rehabilitation



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0 225 Feet

Source: Aerial (SanGIS, 2017).



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