

Final Initial Study

Chalice Unitarian Universalist Congregation Conditional Use Permit

Appendix A Chalice Unitarian Universalist Congregation Biological Resources Memorandum

TRC
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San Diego, CA 92123
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February 23, 2017

Chalice U.U. Congregation
c/o Robert Nelson
2324 Miller Ave.
Escondido, CA 92129

Dear Mr. Nelson:

TRC conducted a biological habitat assessment for the Chalice Unitarian Universalist Congregation Conditional Use Permit Amendment (Project) on December 2, 2015. The proposed construction activities include the building of multi-purpose/classrooms, sanctuary, offices, additions onto the existing main structure, re-structuring of the existing parking lot, and the addition of a stormwater detention basin within the current property boundary. This letter summarizes the general biological resources within the project site, assesses the suitability of the project site to support sensitive habitats and special status species, and provides recommendations to minimize or avoid biological impacts.

METHODS

Prior to conducting the field survey, available information pertaining to the natural resources of the project area was reviewed that included:

- Google Earth/Kinder Morgan supplied aerial photographs of the project area.
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife's (CDFW) California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) within a 3-mile radius of the site.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) IPaC (Information for Planning and Conservation) Resource Report generated for the site.
- USFWS Critical Habitat for Threatened & Endangered Species Portal.
- USFWS National Wetlands Inventory website.

TRC biologist Alicia Hill surveyed the Project site during the morning of December 2, 2015. Special attention was given to areas with potential to support special-status species and sensitive habitats. The Survey Area included the entire Project site and was conducted by walking meandering transects throughout the Survey Area.

RESULTS

Flora

The Project area is characterized by five habitats within the property: developed, disturbed, eucalyptus woodland, disturbed coast live oak woodland, and disturbed Diegan coastal sage scrub. The majority of the Project site is developed with vegetated habitats occurring along the borders of the property. The developed area includes the paved parking lot, existing two structures, concrete pathway, and actively maintained ornamental landscaped areas. The highly disturbed habitat is located within a predominantly bare ground area in the northern area of the property that is frequently used for parking vehicles. The disturbed habitat is characterized by 95% bare ground or leaf litter and 5% non-native vegetation that includes: spotted spurge (*Euphorbia maculata*), wild oat (*Avena* sp.), burning nettle (*Urtica urens*), redstemmed filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*), thistle (*Carduus* sp.), and baby sun rose (*Aptenia cordifolia*).

A small patch of eucalyptus woodland is located in the northwest area of the property that is dominated by the non-native redbox (*Eucalyptus polyanthemos*) with limited to no understory vegetation. Additional eucalyptus are present along the northern fenceline within a landscaped area that includes non-native trees such as Jacaranda (*Jacaranda* sp.), pine (*Pinus* sp.) and shamel ash (*Fraxinus uhdei*).

The habitat located in the northeast corner of the property is best characterized by disturbed Diegan coastal sage scrub. This area has been planted with native plants that include: coastal sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), flat-top buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), scrub oak (*Quercus berberidifolia*), Menzies' goldenbush (*Isocoma menziesii*), white sage (*Salvia apiana*), and toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*). Non-native species observed included: oleander (*Nerium oleander*), spotted spurge, wild oat, burning nettle, hedge mustard (*Sisymbrium irio*), and burclover (*Medicago polymorpha*).

Traversing the property on the eastern side of the property, adjacent to an existing drainage swale, contains habitat best described as disturbed coast live oak woodland. The northern area of this habitat is dominated by mature coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and California sycamore (*Plantanus racemosa*) co-dominants the southern section of this habitat. This southern area contains a large percentage of non-native trees with a non-native ornamental understory. Non-native flora observed within this habitat included Jacaranda, shamel ash, aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis*), fountaingrass (*Pennisetum* sp.), rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), rain tree (*Albizia saman*), bird of paradise (*Strelitzia reginae*), pomegranate (*Punica granatum*), cultivated Ceanothus (*Ceanothus* sp.), and English ivy (*Hedera helix*). Two mature California sycamores will be removed as a result of the construction activities. The existing coast live oaks, pine, and shamel ash trees located along the northern and eastern edges of the property will not be removed as part of the construction activities. Photos of the proposed Project area are included in Attachment A.

Fauna

No sensitive wildlife or plant species were observed or are believed to have a significant potential to occur within the Project area. There is no Burrowing Owl suitable habitat within the Project footprint and this species is not expected to occur within the adjacent non-native grassland habitat due to previously recorded negative survey results from 2013 (Helix Environmental, Oak Creek Project), the urban/developed land use of surrounding environment, and lack of suitable burrows observed within 500 feet of the

Project. California Gnatcatcher surveys were not performed due to the extremely small and isolated nature of the disturbed Diegan coastal sage scrub. This species is not expected to occur within the Project boundaries. No sensitive flora or fauna species as listed by the CNDDDB within 3 miles of the Project are expected to occur onsite due to lack of observation and suitable habitat.

The following wildlife species were observed during the survey: Western Kingbird, Northern Mockingbird, Mourning Dove, Lesser Goldfinch, House Finch, Spotted Towhee, White-crowned Sparrow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Western Scrub-jay, House Wren, California Towhee, Black Phoebe, Anna's Hummingbird, European Starling, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Western pygmy blue butterfly (*Brephidium exilis*), Western fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*), and California Ground Squirrel (*Spermophilus beecheyi*).

Jurisdictional Features

No potentially jurisdictional features will be impacted as a result of the proposed construction activities. The existing drainage swale, as mentioned above, runs through the eastern edge of the property through the disturbed coast live oak woodland and presumably contains water during and immediately after significant rain events for short durations of time. The ephemeral water enters the property along the northeastern property line from an existing culvert that runs underneath Interstate-15. The northern portion of the water feature is best characterized as a natural swale. Moving southward, the swale contains imported river rock and eventually becomes a concrete brow ditch channel. The channel exits the property in the southeast corner and flows underneath Hamilton Lane through a culvert, exiting to a previously determined one foot wide Non-wetland Waters of the U.S. and Waters of the State (Helix Environmental, Oak Creek Project, 2014). The proposed construction activities have been designed to avoid altering the flow, topography, and/or adding fill material to the existing swale.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following avoidance and minimization measures are recommended to help prevent impacts to wildlife species and sensitive habitat communities:

- In order to comply with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, no impacts should occur to nesting birds as a result of the construction activities. If vegetation removal should occur during the nesting season (February 15-August 31), a general pre-construction nesting bird survey should be conducted no more than 7 days prior to the commencement of vegetation removal. If active nests are discovered, and if construction may affect an active nest, the biologist shall establish a no-disturbance buffer. No-disturbance buffers for passerines will be a minimum of 25 feet and raptors a minimum of 300 feet. Active nests shall be monitored and exclusion buffer sizes increased if the monitoring biologist determines this is necessary based on disturbance behavior exhibited by nesting birds in proximity to project construction.
- It is recommended that no trenching and/or dirt disturbance occur within the dripline, as well as removal of any coast live oaks occur due to construction activities. Through this implementation, no significant impacts are expected to occur to these protected trees (Escondido Municipal Code (EMC) §33-1069, §33-1052).
- It is recommended that any mature tree, as defined in EMC §33-1052, removed as a result of the construction activities shall be mitigated by the replacement of a

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tree of equal mature size and caliper. It is recommended that two California Sycamore trees be planted within the nearby vicinity of the two individuals that will be removed as a result of the construction activities. Through a 1:1 planting ratio of mature trees, it is anticipated a less than significant impact.

- Construction activities are not expected to alter the topography, flow, or result in additional discharge to the drainage swale; therefore, it is expected no significant impacts will occur as a result of the proposed construction activities.
- It is recommended that appropriate erosion and sedimentation controls be implemented during construction in order to prevent potential adverse water quality impacts to the drainage swale.

Please refer any questions regarding the information in this letter to Alicia Hill at (760) 533-9667.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alicia Hill". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Alicia" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Hill".

Alicia Hill
Lead Biologist

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A- Photo Exhibit

Attachment A-Photo Exhibit

Client:	Chalice Unitarian Universalist Congregation	Photography:	TRC
Project:	CUUC Conditional Use Permit Amendment	Location:	Escondido, California
Date Taken:	December 2, 2015		



Photograph # 1

Existing lower, main parking lot, facing northeast.



Photograph # 2

Disturbed habitat within upper parking area, facing northeast.

Attachment A-Photo Exhibit

Client:	Chalice Unitarian Universalist Congregation	Photography:	TRC
Project:	CUUC Conditional Use Permit Amendment	Location:	Escondido, California
Date Taken:	December 2, 2015		



Photograph # 3

Area of future stormwater detention basin on right and multi-purpose building in background, facing southwest.



Photograph # 4

Future area of multi-purpose building, facing northeast.

Attachment A-Photo Exhibit

Client:	Chalice Unitarian Universalist Congregation	Photography:	TRC
Project:	CUUC Conditional Use Permit Amendment	Location:	Escondido, California
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Photograph # 5

Existing swale water feature at northern property boundary, facing southwest.



Photograph # 6

Concrete brow ditch water feature towards southern end of disturbed coast live oak woodland habitat, facing southwest.

Attachment A-Photo Exhibit

Client:	Chalice Unitarian Universalist Congregation	Photography:	TRC
Project:	CUUC Conditional Use Permit Amendment	Location:	Escondido, California
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Photograph # 7

Concrete brow ditch with future multi-purpose building in background, facing north.



Photograph # 8

Concrete brow ditch exiting the southeastern property line, subsequently crossing underneath Hamilton Lane, facing northeast.