DOCKETED	
Docket Number:	26-OPT-01
Project Title:	Vaca Dixon Power Center Project
TN #:	273573
Document Title:	Biological Resources Data Request Responses (Response Set #4)
Description:	The Applicant's responses to the Data Request received from the CEC on October 29, 2026.
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Vaca Dixon Power Center Project (26-OPT-01)

CEC Data Request Response Set #4

prepared by

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RINCON CONSULTANTS

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1 Introduction

On October 29, 2026, Vaca Dixon BESS LLC/Arges BESS LLC (Applicant) received a Data Request from the California Energy Commission (CEC) for the Vaca Dixon Power Center Project (26-OPT-01; Project) in response to the Applicant's application filed on January 14, 2026. The following document provides the Applicant's responses to the Data Requests received from the CEC. The responses included make up the fourth data request response set submitted to the CEC. Table 1 lists all Data Requests for which a response is provided in Response Set #4.

Table 1 Data Responses Included in Response Set #4

Data Request Resources Area	Data Request Number
Biological Resources	REV 1 DR BIO-1 to REV 1 DR BIO-4

The responses are presented in the same order and with the same numbering provided by the CEC. New or revised graphics and or attachments are provided within and as appendices to this document. The responses included in this document are considered complete responses to the corresponding Data Requests.

2 Biological Resources

2.1 Data Request REV 1 DR BIO-1

REV 1 DR BIO-1

As requested in **REV 0 DR BIO-1**, please provide at least three references for all personnel who conducted biological resources surveys in support of the application who are not employed with the same organization the surveyor currently is employed.

Response

Rincon Consultants (Rincon) provided resumes for all staff members (current or past) that conducted biological resources surveys for the Project. Of those resumes, Kristin Asmus, Bayley Elenzweig, and Cristy Rice are no longer employed with Rincon and as such, Rincon cannot provide references outside of what was provided in their resumes prior to their departure. Staff that are still employed with Rincon, Nicole Carpenter, Anastasia Ennis, Isaac Kreger, Stella Moore, and Grace Myers, provided references for all relevant work experience as part of the Data Request-1 Response submittal (Docketed on May 27, 2026). As these personnel have gained all relevant experience related to the biological resources surveyed within the Project site while employed at Rincon, additional references are not provided. Updated resumes including references for Owen Routt and Elizabeth Shoemaker are provided as Appendix A. Like the staff referenced above, Ms. Shoemaker's gained species-specific biological resource survey training while employed at Rincon; therefore, additional references are not provided. To assist the CEC in confirming applicable experience, Rincon references have been included where appropriate.

2.2 Data Request REV 1 DR BIO-2

REV 1 DR BIO-2

Please provide over-wintering survey results per the Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation guidance (CDFG 2012). In addition, provide a schedule for conducting any additional surveys to meet the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) guidance and the results of those surveys once completed.

Response

Non-breeding season burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) protocol surveys in the gen-tie parcel initiated on November 10, 2026, with additional surveys scheduled to be conducted on December 1 and December 22, 2026, and January 12, 2027. Protocol surveys will be conducted in accordance with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's *Staff Report on Burrowing Owls* (CDFG 2012). These survey dates are subject to change depending on weather conditions and/or unforeseeable circumstances. To date, one non-breeding season survey has been completed (November 10, 2026). No burrowing owl or sign of burrowing owl was observed during the survey. Following the completion of all four protocol surveys and analysis of the results, a survey report will be submitted to the Project docket for review.

2.3 Data Request REV 1 DR BIO-3

REV 1 DR BIO-3

Provide a polygon or polygons showing the full extent of both permanent and temporary impacts associated with construction of the two gen-tie lines, including but not limited to access roads, pull sites, lay-down yards, and permanently graded tower pads.

Response

On November 3, 2026, Rincon Consultants reached out to the CEC on behalf of the applicant to confirm if this data was received during a previous submittal. The CEC confirmed that the data had been received previously and that REV 1 DR BIO-3 is considered complete. An updated data package is being provided to the CEC incorporating a minor change to the gen-tie impacts, as displayed in the recent Project Description Redline Update (Docket TN # 273427 and 273428).

2.4 Data Request REV 1 DR BIO-4

REV 1 DR BIO-4

Please provide more detail on gen-tie line construction, including a chronological narrative and a description of where each specific type of equipment would be used, what they would be used for, and at which stage in construction they would be used.

Response

Additional detail of the location where equipment would be utilized during Project gen-tie construction is provided in Figure 1 and Figure 2. Gen-tie construction would initiate with site preparation, consisting of marking temporary work areas and installing temporary gen-tie matting. Matting would be installed in temporary work areas by a skid steer or similar equipment to provide a level surface for conducting work. Once site preparation is complete, gen-tie structure installation would commence. Drilling equipment and cranes would be utilized to install prefabricated concrete piers at each of the specified structure locations. Once foundations are installed, a crane and bucket trucks would be utilized to erect steel monopoles and secure them to the foundations. All equipment would operate from temporary work areas, permanent impact areas associated with the BESS facilities, or existing, paved access roads. Structure installation is anticipated to occur during the “Site Preparation and Grading or Foundation and Equipment Installations” construction phases associated with the Vaca Dixon 57 MWh BESS facilities, as specified in Table 2-3 of the Project Description.

Electrical wire installation would occur over two separate periods, for the 13.8 kV and 115 kV lines associated with the Vaca Dixon 57 MWh BESS facilities and the Arges 400 MWh BESS facilities, respectively as indicated in Table 2-3 of the Project Description. Electric wire installation would utilize bucket trucks, pullers, and tensioners. First, bucket trucks would be utilized to install stringing blocks to prepare for conductor installation. Then dock lines are pulled in either by helicopter (e.g., for the Interstate-80 crossing) or from the ground using cranes and bucket trucks. Ropes are then used to pull cable through the dock lines with puller-tensioner setups at each end. Conductors are then installed using ropes and tensioned to their design sag and terminated and clipped in place using cranes and bucket trucks. All work related to the underground section of the gen-tie line will be conducted within the paved Vaca Dixon Peaker Plant (VDPP) boundaries. The cables would be installed within a prefabricated Trenwa-type concrete cable trench system or an underground concrete-encased duct bank. The proposed cable trench would originate at the gen tie pole in the northwest corner of the VDPP paved area taking the 13.8 kV gen-tie to the low side of the existing 13.8 kV/115 kV GSU at the VDPP. Installation of the cable trench or duct bank will involve conventional earthmoving and construction equipment, including hydraulic excavators, backhoes, skid-steer loaders, dump trucks, and soil compaction equipment, all of

which would be operated entirely within the paved section of VDPP. Upon completion of the line installation, all construction equipment and matting will be removed. Details of the locations where this equipment would be utilized are included in Figure 1 and Figure 2. All equipment, except for the helicopter, would operate from temporary work areas, permanent impact areas associated with the BESS facilities, or existing, paved access roads.

Figure 1 Vaca Dixon BESS Gen-Tie Construction Plan

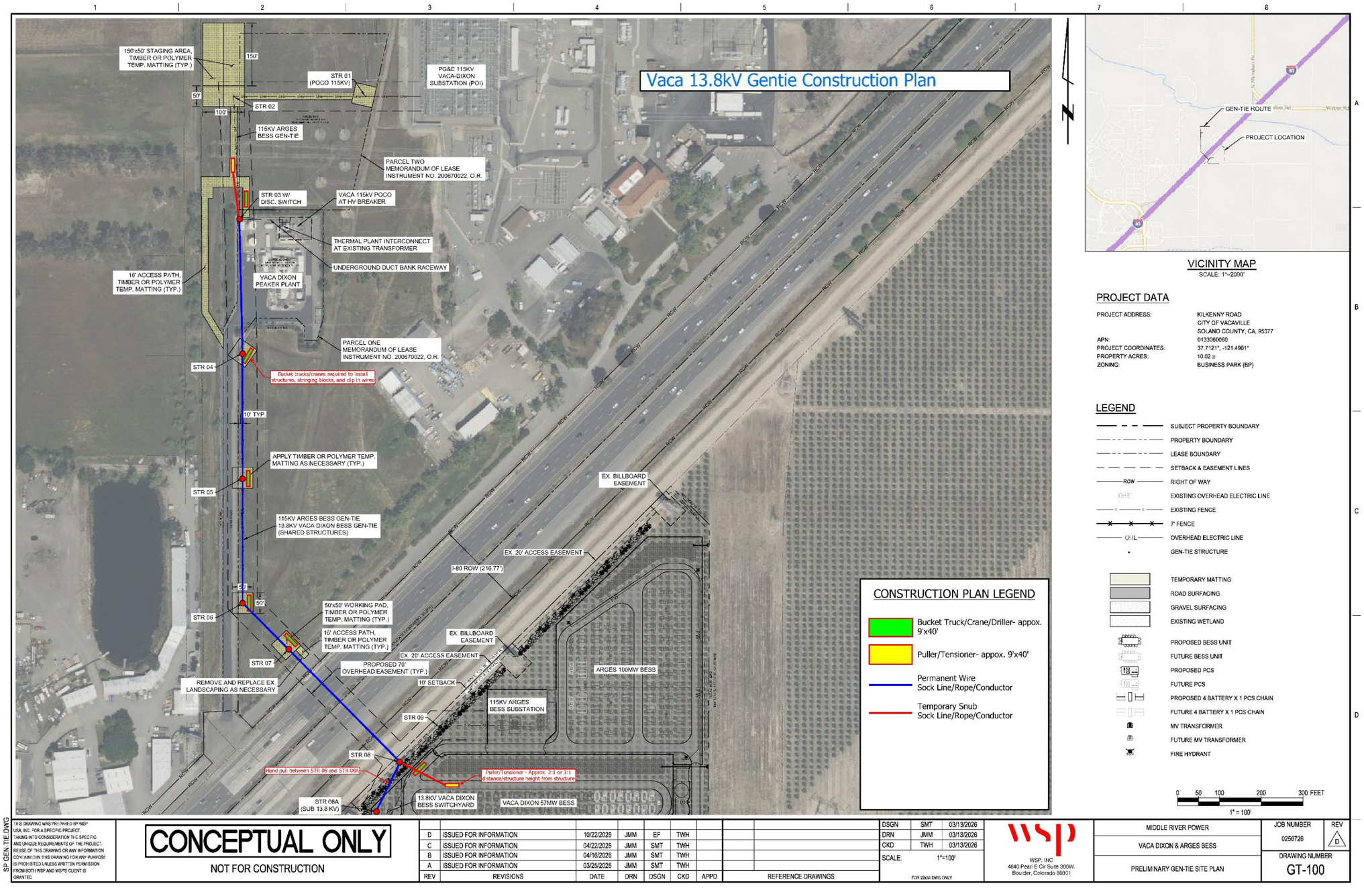
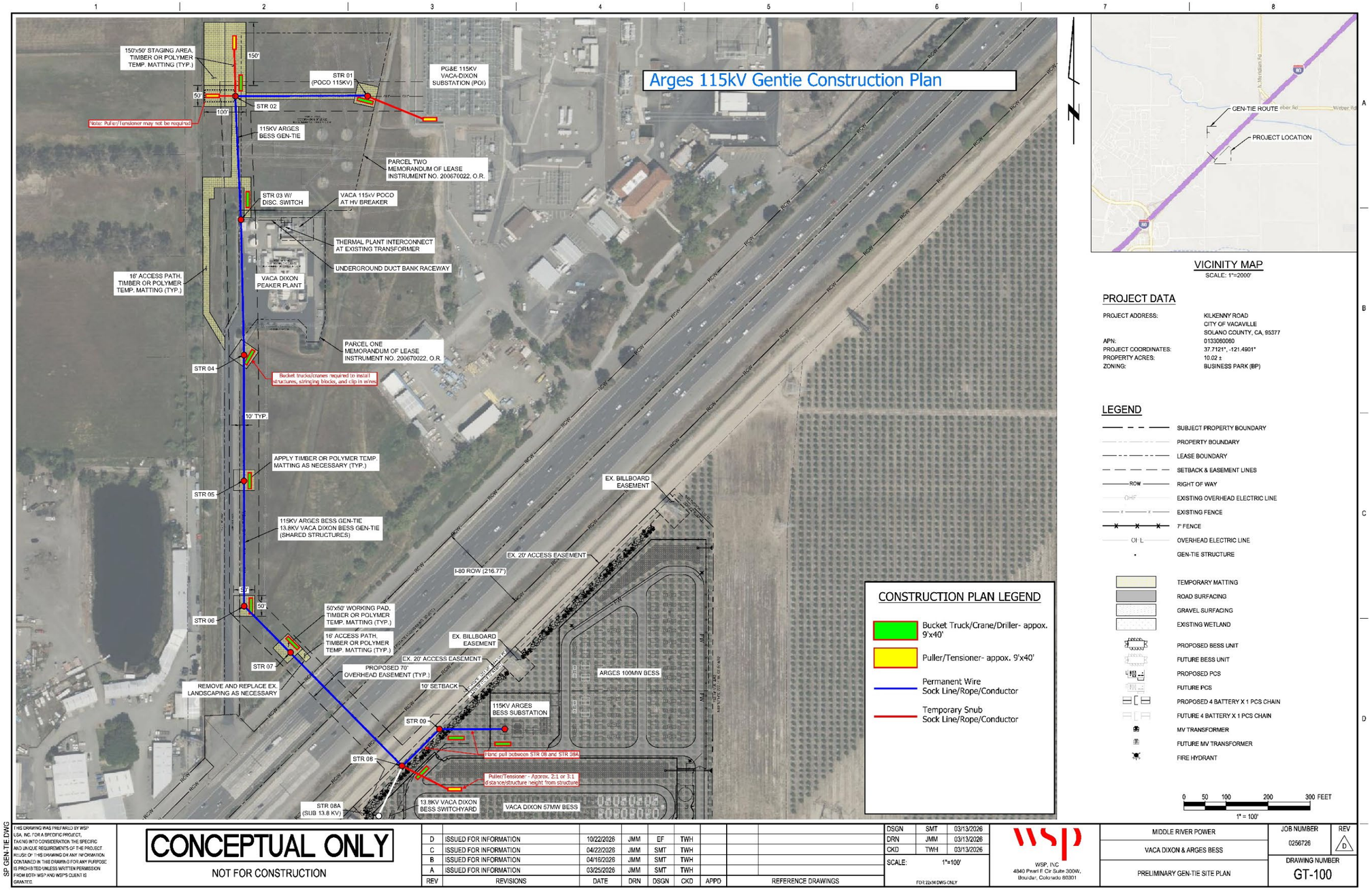


Figure 2 Arges BESS Gen-Tie Construction Plan



Appendix A

Resumes



Owen Routt

Senior Biologist

Owen has over 10 years of experience as a wildlife biologist focused on the conservation of state and federally listed wildlife species and their habitats. His field experience includes surveys and handling of California tiger salamander, San Francisco garter snake, California red- legged frog, and western pond turtle. He has also conducted protocol surveys for burrowing owl across California. He has created and presented environmental awareness training to a variety of public agencies and private enterprise clients and provided environmental compliance support and construction monitoring services.

EDUCATION

BS, Environmental Science and Ecology, University of Redlands

CERTIFICATIONS/ REGISTRATIONS

40-hour Basic Wetland Delineation

10-hour OSHA Construction

40-hour HAZWOPER

Basic Life Support/CPR

Wilderness Fist Aid

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

10+

EXPERIENCE

Rincon Consultants, Inc. (2023 to present)

SELECT PROJECT EXPERIENCE

Lead Field Biologist, Intersect Power, Darden Clean Energy, Fresno County
Lead field biologist for protocol burrowing owl surveys and construction monitoring during Geotech exploration and testing. Conducted burrowing owl transect surveys and camera trapping following habitat assessment surveys. Dozens of suitable burrowing owl burrows identified and 14 adult burrowing owls observed over 60 survey hours. Dozens of burrowing owl detections on camera traps.

Designated Biological Monitor, Intersect Power, Aramis Solar Energy Generation and Storage, Alameda County
CDFW approved Designated Monitor for burrowing owls and California tiger salamander. Conducted protocol burrowing owl transect surveys and camera trapping. Conducted California tiger salamander burrow excavations for burrows less than three inches in diameter. Hundreds of suitable burrowing owl burrows identified and six adult burrowing owls observed over 80 survey hours. Dozens of burrowing owl detections on camera traps.

Biologist, BAE Systems – Hollister Test Facility Remedial Action Plan, Hollister
Conducted four nights of pitfall trapping for California tiger salamander to assess local population density. Conducted visual encounter and dip-net surveys for California tiger salamander, California red-legged frog, and western pond turtle. Construction monitoring during contaminated soils removal including burrow excavations. Oversaw excavator operator during soil removal and hand excavated burrows when discovered.

Biologist, Assistant Project Manager, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission – Bioregional Habitat Restoration Program, Alameda County
Conducted five years of surveys for California tiger salamander and California red-legged frog across over 600 acres and 9 occupied stock ponds. Encountered and handled dozens of larval and adult California tiger salamander during hundreds of hours of aquatic larval sampling and upland refugia surveys.

Biologist, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission – Bioregional Habitat Restoration Program, San Mateo County
Conducted pond and wetland hydrology monitoring and visual encounter surveys for San Francisco garter snake and California red-legged frog over five years. Conducted hundreds of hours of dip-net and visual encounter surveys for California red-legged frog and California tiger salamander under the supervision of a permitted biologist. Duties included conducting wildlife and plant surveys, data analysis and report preparation.

Biological Monitor, Pacific Gas and Electric Company – Natural Gas Transmission System Hardening, Multiple projects, San Joaquin County
Conducted pre-construction habitat suitability surveys with a special focus on California tiger salamander. Served as lead biological monitor responsible for providing environmental awareness training, daily monitoring, and hand excavation of any burrows discovered in the work area. Worked with construction staff to establish an excavation plan for each new area of ground disturbance.

Lead Field Biologist, Southern California Gas Company, On-Call Support, Pipeline Safety Enhancement Plan, Line 3000, San Bernardino County
Lead field biologist and assistant project manager responsible for managing team of biologists during a five-month survey effort. Mapped vegetation and land cover types across approximately 224-mile pipeline alignment between Barstow and Needles in the Mojave Desert covering approximately 5,526 acres. Conducted aquatic resources delineations across the entire project area mapping the boundaries of potentially jurisdictional features, and recording observations of state and federally listed species including desert tortoise, burrowing owl, golden eagle, and desert bighorn sheep. Identified hundreds of suitable burrowing owl burrows and observed four adults over hundreds of survey hours.

REFERENCES

Krystal Pulsipher, Verdantas, (916) 583-1018

Mathew Bettleheim, AECOM, (925) 451-1719

Susan Sanders, AECOM, (530) 477-7415



Elizabeth Shoemaker

Biologist II

Elizabeth has helped support many different projects with biological monitoring, pre-construction surveys, nesting bird and special-status wildlife and plant surveys, and reporting. Elizabeth has helped prepare biological reports that include daily and monthly monitoring reports, a nesting bird management monitoring and reporting plan, and biological resources assessments. In addition, Elizabeth has experience conducting protocol-level Crotch's bumble bee surveys and identifying bumble bee species/casts and has experience performing bird nest and bat surveys. Ms. Shoemaker participated in the 2024 CA Bumble Bee Atlas Project.

EDUCATION

BS, Environmental Management and Protection, Minor in Political Science, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

CERTIFICATIONS/ REGISTRATIONS

n/a

PERMITS

CDFW Bumble Bee MOU/SCP No. S-242420002-24249-001

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

1

EXPERIENCE

Rincon Consultants, Inc. (2023 to present)

SELECT PROJECT EXPERIENCE

Crotch's Bumble Bee Surveys, Palmdale Water District – Palmdale Ditch Conversion Project, Palmdale

Ms. Shoemaker conducted Crotch's Bumble bee photo surveys along 7 miles of the Palmdale ditch. These surveys consisted of walking transects throughout the project area, recording floral resources, and bumble bee identification. She surveyed for and identified both Crotch's Bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii)* and Yellow-faced Bumble bees (*Bombus vosnenskii*). She observed 2 male and 6 worker *B. Crotchii.*

Crotch's Bumble Bee Surveys, Renewable Properties – RPCA 230th Street Solar Project, Lancaster

Ms. Shoemaker conducted Crotch's Bumble bee capture surveys across the approximately 33 acre project area. These surveys consisted of walking transects throughout the project area, recording floral resources, and bumble bee identification. She surveyed for Crotch's Bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii)* and captured/identified *B. Crotchii.* Three *B. Crotchii* workers were captured/observed within the project area.

Crotch's Bumble Bee Surveys, Tracy BESS LLC– Tracy Long Duration Energy Storage Project, San Joaquin County

Ms. Shoemaker conducted Crotch's Bumble bee capture surveys across the approximately 39.5 acre project area. These surveys consisted of walking transects throughout the project area, recording floral resources, and bumble bee identification. She captured and identified one male black-tailed bumble bee (*Bombus melanopygus*).

Crotch's Bumble Bee Surveys, City of San Luis Obispo – PCE Plume Characterization Project, San Luis Obispo

Ms. Shoemaker conducted Crotch's Bumble bee capture surveys across the approximately 15 acre project area. These surveys consisted of walking transects throughout the project area, recording floral resources, and bumble bee identification. She surveyed for Crotch's Bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii)* and captured/identified Yellow-faced Bumble bees (*Bombus vosnenskii*), California Bumble bee (*Bombus fervidus*), and Black-tailed Bumble bees (*Bombus melanopygus*). No *B. Crotchii* were captured or observed.

Crotch's Bumble Bee Surveys, Patch Services, LLC– Vaca Dixon Power Center 2025 Site B, Vacaville
Ms. Shoemaker conducted Crotch's Bumble bee capture surveys across the approximately 10 acre project area. These surveys consisted of walking transects throughout the project area, recording floral resources, and bumble bee identification. No bumble bees were captured or observed.

Bumble Bee Surveys – Xerces California Bumble Bee Atlas Project
Ms. Shoemaker conducted field point surveys and incidental observations for bumble bees under the Atlas Project CDFW Scientific Collecting Permit and Memorandum of Understanding. She conducted 2 survey hours incidentally observed various bumble bee species in April 2024.

Bumble Bee Surveys, City of Santa Barbara– Parma Park Restoration Ares, Santa Barbara

Ms. Shoemaker surveyed for bumble bees and nesting birds before weed whipping activities at a restoration site in Santa Barbara. No bumblebees were observed.

SELECT TRAINING/COURSES

- California Bumble Bee Atlas Training Workshop, Xerces Society, March 2024
- Male Bumblebee Identification along the Pacific Coast of North America, Xerces Society, April 2024
- Western Bumble Bee Identification for Bumble Bee Atlas Volunteers, Xerces Society, April 2024
- 2024 Bumble Bee Workshop, Xerces Society and the Western Section of the Wildlife Society, July 2024

ADDITIONAL PROJECT EXPERIENCE

Biologist, City of Goleta – Goleta City of Public Works Ellwood MBHMP, Goleta
Ms. Shoemaker helped survey the Ellwood area for the Monarch Butterfly Habitat Management Program (MBHMP). These surveys consisted of collecting data on the environmental conditions, tree/cluster location, and the number of butterflies observed in the Ellwood survey areas. In addition, Ms. Shoemaker drafted the annual monarch survey report for the 2023-24 overwintering season. This report summarized the data collected on the Ellwood monarch butterflies in the 2023-24 overwintering season and reflected on trends in monarch counts in past seasons.

Biological Monitor, Santa Barbara Flood Control – Santa Barbara County Beach Operations, Goleta
Ms. Shoemaker monitored beach operations for Goleta Beach. These beach operations consisted of Santa Barbara County bringing sediment loads from the Goleta Slough and depositing it on Goleta Beach for beach enhancement and flood control. Monitoring activities included taking VOC readings from sediment loads deposited on the beach, visually inspecting sediment loads for beach compatible material, compiling a list of species observed each day, and drafting an end of day summary of beach activities.

Biologist, Santa Barbara Public Works – East Beach Restoration Project, Santa Barbara
Ms. Shoemaker helped monitor the restoration efforts for the East Beach Restoration Project. These efforts included flagging in the restoration areas, seed sorting, and plant identification. Additionally, Ms. Shoemaker assisted with drafting a monthly monitoring report that outlined restoration efforts conducted in the month of March.

Biologist, NextEra – Roadhouse BESS, Ontario
Ms. Shoemaker helped conduct a field reconnaissance survey of the project site for a battery energy storage system (BESS) project. She surveyed for special status species, suitable habitats for special status species, and protected vegetative communities. In addition, she helped draft a Biological Resource Assessment of the project area and determine the potential to occur of special status species within the study area.

Biologist, Ventura County– Santa Paula Emergency Storm Protection, Santa Paula
Ms. Shoemaker surveyed for fish in the Santa Paula Creek during a diversion for the emergency storm protection project. She deployed block nets, seined the area and dip netted for fish, and relocated fish during dewatering.

REFERENCES

Robin Murray, rmurray@rinconconsultants.com, (805) 598-2552
Lisa Achter, lachter@rinconconsultants.com, (530) 217-8952
Chris Enyart, cenyart@rinconconsultants.com, (818) 596-1325