

CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION
REPORT OF CONVERSATION Page 1 of 3

DOCKET
 11-AFC-4
 DATE APR 19 2012
 RECD APR 24 2012



Siting, Transmission, and Environmental Protection Division	File: 11-AFC-04	
	Project Title: Rio Mesa Solar Electric Generating Facility	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Telephone:	<input type="checkbox"/> Meeting Location:	
Name(s): Scott White, Rick York, Laura Zaninovich, and Pierre Martinez	Date 4/19/12	Time 1:00 p.m.
With: Jon Goin (URS), Todd Stewart (BrightSource Energy), Brian Biering (Ellison, Schneider & Harris – representing BrightSource Energy), John Boone (Great Basin Bird Observatory, consultant to BrightSource Energy), Joel Pagel and Jody Fraser (USFWS), and Kim Marsden (BLM)		
Subject: Conference Call Notes : Elf Owl Survey Protocols		
<p>ELF OWL PROTOCOL</p> <p>1. Update from URS on elf owl survey progress to date: JG: Survey crew has completed first round of surveys throughout microphyll woodland on project area and ¼ mile buffer, now ready to begin on remaining portions of 1-mile buffer (per CEC/REAT request). Initial surveys strictly followed cactus ferruginous pygmy owl (CFPO) protocol per Arizona Game and Fish Dept., (dawn/dusk survey period, with call stations at 150-m intervals). Subsequent surveys have used elf owl protocol as recommended by John Boone in letter dated 5 April 2012. Note that the initial part of the letter (pp 1-4) makes recommendations specific to the Rio Mesa site, the remainder describes recommendations in denser woodland “obstructed” habitat for other project areas.</p> <p>Two elf owls were heard 3-4 nights ago, near the corner of the western project area boundary (section corner 16/17/20/21). Jon will provide latitude/longitude location via email. Field biologists remained in the area for several hours but were unable to locate the birds. They returned the following evening and looked around the area for nest cavities before dark (didn’t find nest), then continued tape/response survey but did not hear them again. Returned again the following night, still did not hear again.</p> <p>JB: If a territory is active, should expect follow-up responses. It is possible that these birds did not have a territory and/or were migrating through the area rather than establishing a nesting territory. Mid April is the late part of “migration window” for elf owls (based on mid-April arrival dates in Arizona).</p> <p>2. Schedule for completion? SW: John Boone’s recommended survey protocol identifies a “preferred window” beginning first week of April through 15 May. However, San Bernardino County Museum reports numerous elf owl nesting records into June and July (data provided by Robert McKernan via email on 20 Mar 2012). Is there a risk of missing territorial elf owls by ending surveys in mid May?</p> <p>JB: The preferred window is not intended to imply that elf owls wouldn’t be on territories later; instead, the dates are intended to optimize call responses. Recommended date represents best response period, based on survey data.</p> <p>JG: Based on progress to date, field crew will probably complete 3rd round of surveys by about June 1st.</p> <p>JP: Is there any owl activity increase/ phenology change related to insect emergence outbreak?</p>		



REC'D
SIBS & RPT. CENTER

JB: None known.

3. Requested protocol changes per BSE letter 5 April 19, 2012

a. Extended evening survey period

JG: Currently implementing survey period beginning at dusk and continuing 5 hrs into evening, based on recommendations from JB.

JB: This is a better match to elf owl activity period. The dawn/dusk protocol for CFPO is based on that species' crepuscular activity period. Elf owl is a nocturnal species so the night time survey period better reflects its activity.

RY: What time were the calls detected on-site?

JG: Not sure, probably around 10:00 – 11:00 pm; the biologists continued to search until 2:30 am.

b. 400 m call station separation

JB: Summarized info as described in letter (p 6); adequacy of 400-m point separation is dependent on wind and survey replication.

JG: Field crew is using 400-m call point separation w/ 2-min stops midway between points (see p. 6 of the 5 Apr 2012 letter). Field crew is calling off surveys if wind speed is more than about 10-15 mph. Replication is accomplished through the 3 full survey rounds, per the CFPO protocol.

JB: Is "comfortable" with 2 replicate surveys but would "suggest" 3 surveys as planned.

SW: Note that CDFG and USFWS survey protocols for listed threatened or endangered birds require multiple survey coverage, usually about 8 replicate surveys.

c. Reduced listening period at each station

JB: Summarized info that elf owls are responsive within first few minutes after playing call recording (see p 4 of the 5 Apr 2012 letter).

JG: Field crew using 6-min listening/call protocol (see p. 6 of the 5 Apr 2012 letter).

d. Reduced off-site buffer area (1/4 mile instead of 1 mile)

SW: Reason for off-site buffer area surveys are (1) to account for birds in any habitat that could be affected by diverted flows from project site and (2) be sure to find any birds off-site that may have territories ranging into the project area.

TS: Project won't create major obstructions to storm flows. Project would divert flows around power blocks but sheet flow otherwise; see soils/water section of AFC.

JB: Home range data are limited; his telemetry data on two elf owls show 13 ha and 8 ha home ranges. About 90% of linear movement distances from nest cavity have been within 400 m; small number of points to 600 m. Core use area smaller than home range, gen within about 150 m of nest cavity. Prior home range estimates in literature from TX, smaller areas. Availability of nest cavities is important to popn densities. In general elf owls select territories where multiple cavities are available.

CALIFORNIA ENERGY COMMISSION
REPORT OF CONVERSATION Page 3 of 3



4. Review additional elf owl information from John Boone and Scott Carroll, forwarded yesterday

SW: Pertinent points already covered above.

5. Status & schedule for CEC response to requests

SW: Will prepare memo for internal review by Friday Apr 20th, will email to BSE as soon as possible thereafter.

cc:	Date:	Signed:
		Name: Rick York