

June 3, 2010

Edalia Olivo-Gomez
Environmental Specialist
8315 Century Park Court, CP21E
San Diego, CA 92123-1548

Subject: Letter Report Summary of the Breeding Season Burrowing Owl Surveys, Ocotillo Sol Project, Imperial County, California

Dear Ms. Olivo-Gomez:

LSA Associates, Inc. (LSA) has prepared this letter report for the San Diego Gas & Electric Company (SDG&E) Imperial Valley Ocotillo Sol (Ocotillo Sol) photovoltaic (PV) project to document the results of 2010 breeding season surveys for burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*). Surveys were conducted in preparation of the proposed project in Imperial County, California on previously undisturbed Federal land surrounding the SDG&E Imperial Valley Substation (Figure 1; all figures attached).

Burrowing owls are known from the survey area, but no breeding burrowing owls were detected in 2010; however, burrowing owls were found to use the survey area during the 2009/2010 winter season.

Methodology

In October 2009 and May 2010, LSA Senior Biologist Ingri Quon and Assistant Biologist Mark Billings conducted a total of six field visits to the study area. Survey visits included a preliminary burrow survey in 2009 followed by subsequent focused breeding season surveys in 2010. The site was surveyed for breeding owls under moderate to favorable weather conditions (Table A).

A general burrow survey of the study area was conducted on October 26 and 27, 2009, and included the entire project area and areas within 150 meters (approximately 500 feet) of the project area (Figure 2). The burrow survey was conducted by two biologists walking parallel transects, allowing for 100 percent visual coverage of the ground. In October 2009, and again during visits in May 2010, the biologists mapped the locations of all potential burrowing owl burrows (Figure 2), and all burrows that were not collapsed, ultimately narrowed in the back, or blocked by cobwebs or debris at the entrance were investigated during each of the four breeding season surveys.

Burrowing owl burrows are determined to be occupied by either observing a burrowing owl at the burrow or finding recently molted feathers, cast pellets, prey remains, or excrement at or near the burrow entrance. If degraded whitewash and/or pellets were found at or around a burrow, this was an indication that the burrow had not been used in several months (e.g., since the winter season).

Table A: Breeding Season Burrowing Owl Survey Dates, Weather Conditions, and Results

Date (2010)	Time (24-Hr Clock) Start–Finish	Temperature Start–Finish	Weather Conditions/Wind	Burrowing Owl Results
May 10	1715–2015	81–69 °F	Clear, 10–17 mph, 26% humidity. Clear, average 10 mph west (maximum 20 mph).	No breeding season owls detected. Winter season sign (e.g., whitewash, pellets) found.
May 11	0615–0915	61–70 °F	20% cloud cover, 0–2 mph, 47% humidity. Clear, 0–2 mph, 31% humidity.	No breeding season owls detected. Winter season sign (e.g., whitewash, pellets) found.
May 13	1745–2045	91–80 °F	10% cloud cover, 3–6 mph, 17% humidity. 10% cloud cover, <5 mph, 17% humidity.	No breeding season owls detected. Winter season sign (e.g., whitewash, pellets) found.
May 14	0515–0815	64–82 °F	Clear, 1 mph, 35% humidity. Clear, 0–1 mph, 27% humidity.	No breeding season owls detected. Winter season sign (e.g., whitewash, pellets) found.

°F = degrees Fahrenheit

Hr = hour

mph = miles per hour

Results

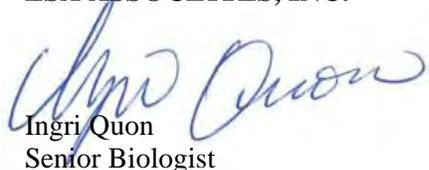
During the burrow survey in the winter of 2009, many potentially suitable burrows were mapped and at least three adult burrowing owls were found occupying burrows within the study area. In addition, during focused surveys for other species, an adult burrowing owl was detected at a burrow just outside the southwest portion of the study area and an owl in flight was observed in the southeast portion of the study area.

On May 10–11 and 13–14, 2010, the four focused breeding season field visits found these same occupied burrows inactive and investigated approximately 25 suitable burrowing owl burrows (see Figure 2). Overall, most burrows in the study area were suitably sized for use by burrowing owls, clear of debris and cobwebs, and in marginally suitable foraging habitat (Figure 2). Overall, most burrows were being used by reptiles (lizards, snakes), rodents, and small mammals, including kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis*).

In addition, LSA biologists observed high migratory bird activity in May 2010.

Sincerely,

LSA ASSOCIATES, INC.



Ingri Quon
Senior Biologist

Attachment: Figures 1–2