

EXHIBIT C – SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES AND SPECIES OF CONCERN

As stated in Arizona Corporation Commission Rules of Practice and Procedure R14-3-219:

“Describe any areas in the vicinity of the proposed site or route which are unique because of biological wealth or because they are habitats for rare and endangered species. Describe the biological wealth or species involved and state the effects, if any, the proposed facilities will have thereon.”

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) lists species as endangered, threatened, candidate, or proposed for listing, under the Endangered Species Act (1973 as amended); all of these categories are identified as special status species. The endangered classification is provided to an animal or plant in danger of extinction within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range. A threatened classification is provided to an animal or plant likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range. Candidate species are those species for which the USFWS has on file sufficient information on biological vulnerability and threat(s) to support issuance of a proposed rule to list the species, but issuance of the proposed rule is precluded. A proposed species is any species of animal or plant that is proposed in the Federal Register to be listed under Section 4 of the Endangered Species Act. The Endangered Species Act was designed to protect critically imperiled species from extinction as a consequence of economic growth and development untended by adequate concern and conservation.

The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) was enacted in 1940, and has been amended several times since. The Act prohibits anyone, without a permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior, from “taking” bald eagles, including their parts, nests, or eggs. Forms of take include pursue, shoot, shoot at, poison, wound, kill, capture, trap, collect, molest or disturb. Take from indirect project related activities also includes disturbance of a previously occupied nest.

Wildlife of special concern in Arizona and plants protected by the Arizona Native Plant Law are considered special status species. Wildlife of special concern in Arizona that are listed by the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) have populations in the state that may be in jeopardy, have known or perceived threats, or have experienced severe population declines as described by AGFD's listing (formal legislation is pending). Additionally, most desert plants fall into one of four groups specially protected from theft, vandalism, or unnecessary destruction under the Arizona Native Plant Law. Involvement of private land requires notification of the Arizona Department of Agriculture within a specified number of days to allow for salvaging efforts prior to removal of vegetation.

INVENTORY METHODS

Data were gathered from the USFWS and AGFD to develop a list of special status species and species of concern for Pinal County that could occur within the vicinity of the proposed relocation. Aerial photographs, Southwest ReGAP landcover data, soils, and topography data also were reviewed to determine the locations of biologically sensitive areas. WestLand Resources Inc. (WestLand) conducted a field survey of approximately 40 acres within the study area to assess the potential impacts to federally listed species that could occur in the area (WestLand 2012).

INVENTORY RESULTS

The list of special status species and species of concern with potential to occur within Pinal County is provided in Table C-1, along with an evaluation of habitat suitability for each species in the vicinity of the proposed relocation. Table C-2 lists protected native plants found by WestLand during field survey.

Table C-1. Pinal County Special Status Species and Habitat Suitability in the Project Vicinity

Species	Status	Habitat Requirements	Habitat Suitability
PLANTS			
Pima Indian mallow <i>Abutilon parishii</i>	SRA	Grows in mesic habitats on rocky hillsides, cliff bases, canyon bottoms, lower side slopes and ledges of canyons among rocks and boulders. Elevation 1,720 to 4,900 feet (525 – 1,495 meters).	No suitable habitat in project vicinity.
Hohokam agave <i>Agave murpheyi</i>	HSA	Found on benches or alluvial terraces of gentle bajada slopes above major drainages in desert scrub. Elevation 1,300 to 3,200 feet (397 – 976 meters).	No suitable habitat in project vicinity.
Toumey agave <i>Agave toumeyana</i> var. <i>bella</i>	SRA	Grows in open rocky areas, often limestone or basalt slopes of desert scrub, chaparral, and pinon-juniper woodland. Elevation 2,600 to 5,600 feet (800 – 1,700 meters).	Suitable habitat in project vicinity. Agave documented in surveyed area may be this species (WestLand 2012).
Arizona hedgehog cactus <i>Echinocereus triglochidiatus</i> var. <i>arizonicus</i>	LE HSA	Grows on open slopes and cracks and crevices between boulders in interior chaparral and Madrean evergreen woodland habitats at elevations between 3,300 to 5,700 feet (1,005 – 1,740 meters).	No suitable habitat in project vicinity. This species occurs in the highlands between Superior and Globe to within about 3 miles (4.8 km) of the project vicinity.
Nichol's Turk's head cactus <i>Echinocactus horizonthalonius nicholii</i>	LE HSA	Restricted to Sonoran desert scrub habitats at [the in mountains?] and bajadas with limestone derived substrates. Elevation 2,000 to 3,600 feet (610 – 1,098 meters).	No suitable habitat and project vicinity is outside the geographic range of the species.
Acuña cactus <i>Echinomastus erectocentrus acunensis</i>	C HSA	Grows in small isolated populations between major washes on open, rounded small hills, benches and flats with gravelly to rocky substrates. Elevation 1,300 to 2,000 feet (397 – 610 meters).	No suitable habitat and project vicinity is outside the geographic range of the species.
Needle-spined pineapple cactus <i>Echinomastus erectocentrus</i> var. <i>erectocentrus</i>	SRA	Inhabits desert grasslands, occasionally open woodlands, on low gravelly hills and bajadas, on igneous and calcareous substrates. Elevation 3,000 to 4,900 feet (900 – 1,500 meters).	No suitable habitat and project vicinity is outside the geographic range of the species.
San Carlos wild buckwheat <i>Eriogonum capillare</i>	SRA	Grows in disturbed sites with substrates from sandy and gravelly alluvium or weathered limestone gravels. Elevation 1,960 to 4,400 feet (598 – 1,342 meters).	No suitable habitat and project vicinity is outside the geographic range of the species.
Flannel bush <i>Fremontodendron californicum</i>	SRA	Occurs on well-drained rocky hillsides and ridges, in chaparral and oak/pine woodland. Elevation 3,500 to 6,500 feet (1,068 – 1,983 meters).	No suitable habitat in project vicinity.

Species	Status	Habitat Requirements	Habitat Suitability
Huachuca water umbel <i>Lilaeopsis schaffneriana</i> <i>var. recurva</i>	LE HSA	Grows in cienegas or marshy wetlands at 2,000 to 6,000 feet (610 – 2,166 meters) elevation, within Sonoran desertscrub, grassland or oak woodland, and conifer forest.	No suitable habitat and project vicinity is outside the geographic range of the species.
Thornber fishhook cactus <i>Mammillaria thornberi</i>	SRA	Grows in Sonoran desert scrub on valley floors, typically under shrubs in silty or sandy soils. Elevation 1,300 to 2,000 feet elevation (400 – 600 meters).	No suitable habitat and project vicinity lies above the elevation range of the species.
Varied fishhook cactus <i>Mammillaria viridiflora</i>	SRA	Grows in semi-desert grasslands, interior chaparral, pinyon-juniper and oak woodlands among crevices, boulders, canyon sides and gravelly igneous substrates. Elevation range between 2,600 to 6,550 feet (1,400 – 2,000 meters).	No suitable habitat in project vicinity.
Staghorn cholla <i>Cylindropuntia versicolor</i>	SRA	Grows in desert flats, washes, rocky hillsides and canyons in desertscrub. Elevation 1,900 to 4,300 feet (600 – 1,300 meters).	Suitable habitat in project vicinity and species documented in surveyed area.
Cantalina beardtongue <i>Penstemon discolor</i>	HSA	Grows in bedrock openings in chaparral or pine-oak woodland at 4,400 to 7,200 feet (1,340 – 2,200 meters) elevation.	No suitable habitat and project vicinity is outside the geographic range of the species.
Organ Pipe Cactus <i>Stenocereus thurberi</i>	SRA	Widespread in Sonoran Desert, adjacent to thorn forests mostly on hills and bajadas. Elevation 1,360 to 3,000 feet (415 – 915 meters).	No suitable habitat and project vicinity is outside the geographic range of the species.
Tumamoc globeberry <i>Tumamoca macdougallii</i>	SRA	Occurs in xeric situations, in the shade of a variety of nurse plants along gullies and sandy washes of hills and valleys in Sonoran desertscrub and Sinaloa thornscrub communities below 3,000 feet (915 meters) elevation.	No suitable habitat and project vicinity is outside the geographic range of the species.
AMPHIBIANS			
Western Narrow-mouthed Toad <i>Gastrophryne olivacea</i>	WSC	Inhabits semi-desert grasslands and mixed shrub grass communities in lowland valleys. Elevation 1,400 to 4,700 feet (427 – 1,434 meters).	No suitable habitat and project vicinity is outside the geographic range of the species.
Lowland leopard frog <i>Rana yavapaiensis</i>	WSC	A habitat generalist that inhabits aquatic systems from desert grasslands to piñon-juniper woodlands. Breeds in a variety of natural and man-made aquatic systems in both still water and running water habitats. Elevation 480 to 6,200 feet (146 – 2,499 meters).	No suitable habitat in project vicinity.
REPTILES			
Sonoran desert tortoise <i>Gopherus agassizii</i>	C WSC	Found in bajadas and rocky slopes of Sonoran desertscrub. Elevation 510 to 5,300 feet (155 – 1,615 meters).	Suitable habitat in project vicinity.
Tucson shovel-nosed snake <i>Chionactis occipitalis klauberi</i>	C	Utilizes creosote-mesquite floodplains with sandy substrates at elevations between 785 and 1,662 feet (239 – 507 meters).	No suitable habitat and project vicinity is outside the geographic range of the species.

Species	Status	Habitat Requirements	Habitat Suitability
BIRDS			
Golden Eagle <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	BGEPA	Nests in areas with cliffs and steep mountains. Forages widely in both upland and lowland habitats. Elevation 4,000 to 10,000 feet (1,219 – 3,048 meters).	Suitable habitat for foraging in project vicinity. Surrounding mountains suitable for nesting. Known breeding sites occur in the nearby surrounding mountains (Corman and Wise-Gervais 2005).
Great Egret <i>Ardea alba</i>	WSC	Found in marshes, lakes, ponds, lagoons, mangroves and shallow coastal habitats. Elevation 100 to 1,500 feet (30 – 457 meters).	No suitable habitat in project vicinity.
Northern Gray Hawk <i>Buteo nitidus maxima</i>	WSC	Occurs in riparian woodlands with large trees (cottonwoods), usually near mesquite forests.	No suitable habitat and project vicinity outside the geographic range of the species.
Yuma clapper rail <i>Rallus longirostris yumanensis</i>	LE WSC	Fresh water and brackish marshes at elevations less than 4,500 feet (1,372 meters).	No suitable habitat in the project vicinity.
Black-bellied whistling duck <i>Dendrocygna autumnalis</i>	WSC	Found along rivers, ponds, stock tanks, marshes, and swamps. Usually nests in trees. Elevation 985 to 4,200 feet (300 – 1,280 meters).	No suitable habitat in project vicinity.
Bald eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	WSC	Large trees or cliffs near water with abundant prey. Elevation 460 to 7,930 feet (140 – 2,419 meters).	No suitable habitat in project vicinity.
Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy-owl <i>Glaucidium brasilianum cactorum</i>	WSC	Occurs in riparian areas with cottonwoods and willows and adjacent mesquite bosques, usually with saguaros nearby. Also occurs in xero-riparian areas with large mesquite, paloverde, ironwood, and saguaro. Elevation 1,300 to 4,000 feet (397 – 1,220 meters).	No suitable habitat and project vicinity is outside the geographic range of the species.
American peregrine falcon <i>Falco peregrinus anatum</i>	WSC	Found wherever sufficient prey is near cliffs and open expanses. Optimum peregrine habitat for roosting includes steep, sheer cliffs overlooking woodlands, riparian areas, or other habitats supporting abundant avian prey species. Elevation 400 to 9,000 feet (122 – 2,743 meters).	Nesting habitat in mountains surrounding proposed relocation area. Potential foraging habitat and perch sites available in project vicinity.
Crested caracara <i>Caracara cheriway</i>	WSC	Occurs in open country, including pastureland, cultivated areas, and semi-desert, in both arid and moist habitats. Elevation 1,890 to 3,360 feet (576 – 1,025 meters).	No suitable habitat and project vicinity is outside the geographic range of the species.
Western yellow-billed cuckoo <i>Coccyzus americanus occidentalis</i>	C WSC	Occurs in large blocks of riparian woodlands (cottonwood, willow, or tamarisk galleries). Found at elevations less than 6,500 feet (2,011 meters).	No suitable habitat in project vicinity.

Species	Status	Habitat Requirements	Habitat Suitability
Southwestern willow flycatcher <i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>	LE WSC	Occurs in cottonwood-willow and tamarisk vegetation communities next to rivers and streams or in areas flooded by these. Elevation 75 to 9,180 feet (23 – 2,798 meters).	No suitable habitat in project vicinity.
Mississippi kite <i>Ictinia mississippiensis</i>	WSC	Tall forest, open woodland, prairie, semiarid rangeland, shelterbelts, wooded areas bordering lakes and streams in more open regions, scrubby oaks and mesquite, and lowland/floodplain forests. Elevation 1,400 to 3,040 feet (427 – 927 meters).	No suitable habitat and project vicinity is outside the geographic range of the species.
Least bittern <i>Ixobrychus exilis</i>	WSC	Occurs in freshwater and brackish marshes with dense, tall growths of aquatic or semiaquatic vegetation. Elevation 850 to 1,500 feet (259 – 458 meters).	No suitable habitat in project vicinity.
Mexican spotted owl <i>Strix occidentalis lucida</i>	LT WSC	Occupies dense old growth mixed-conifer forests located on steep slopes, especially deep, shady ravines. Elevation 2,720 to 9,600 feet (829 – 2,926 meters).	No suitable habitat in project vicinity.
Thick-billed kingbird <i>Tyrannus crassirostris</i>	WSC	Occurs in deciduous riparian woodlands in semi-arid canyons with sycamores and cottonwoods. Elevation 2,100 to 4,300 feet (641 – 1,312 meters).	No suitable habitat and project vicinity is outside the geographic range of the species.
Tropical kingbird <i>Tyrannus melancholicus</i>	WSC	Areas with scattered trees, savanna, open woodland, forest edge, plantations, residential areas and agricultural lands. Occurs in lowlands near water in Arizona, often nests in cottonwoods. Elevation 1,070 to 4,100 feet (326 – 1,250 meters).	No suitable habitat and project vicinity is outside the geographic range of the species.
MAMMALS			
Mexican long-tongued bat <i>Choeronycteris mexicanus</i>	WSC	Occurs in mesic areas in canyons of mixed oak-conifer forests in mountains rising from the desert. Elevation 2,540 to 7,320 feet (774 – 2,233 meters).	No suitable habitat and project vicinity is outside the geographic range of the species.
California leaf-nosed bat <i>Macrotus californicus</i>	WSC	Found in arid Sonoran desertscrub habitats with roost sites including caves, mines, and deep grottos. Forages through matrix of shrubs, often gleaning prey from shrubs or ground. Elevation 160 to 3,980 feet (49 – 1,214 meters).	Suitable habitat for foraging. Roost habitat available in mountainous terrain outside proposed relocation area.
Lesser long-nosed bat <i>Leptonycteris yerbabuenae</i>	LE WSC	This migratory species roosts in caves or abandoned mines during the breeding season spring and summer months. Feeding habitat includes columnar cacti and agave. Feeds on nectar and columnar cactus fruits. Known to forage nightly over long distances from the roost. Elevation 1,190 to 7,320 feet (363 – 2,233 meters).	Potential foraging habitat in the project vicinity. The project vicinity is outside the known geographic range. This species could occasionally fly over the survey area while foraging.

Species	Status	Habitat Requirements	Habitat Suitability
Ocelot <i>Leopardus pardalis</i>	LE WSC	Occupies dense thickets of thorn scrub or mesquite that are almost impenetrable. Generally found at elevations below 4,000 feet (1,200 meters).	Potential habitat in project vicinity. The project vicinity lacks suitable dense thorn scrub or mesquite. Verifiable sightings in Arizona are rare. However, a male was killed by a vehicle along Highway 60 between Globe and Superior in April 2010 (Westland 2012).
Western red bat <i>Lasiurus blossevillii</i>	WSC	Occurs in riparian and other wooded areas. Roosts by day in trees. May occasion areas away from these habitats while foraging. Elevation 1,900 to 7,200 feet (580 – 2,196 meters).	No suitable roosting habitat in project vicinity. Species may forage occasionally in project vicinity.
Western yellow bat <i>Lasiurus xanthinus</i>	WSC	Habitat requirements are not well-known. Most often found roosting in palm trees, but will also utilize broad-leaved deciduous trees and tall yuccas (i.e., Joshua trees) as roost sites. Is likely a habitat generalist otherwise. Found in both native and human-influenced habitats. Elevation 550 to 6,000 feet (168 – 1,830 meters).	No suitable roost habitat in project vicinity. Project vicinity outside the geographic range of the species.
FISH			
Desert pupfish <i>Cyprinodon macularis</i>	LE WSC	Occupies shallow clear waters in springs and backwaters with fine textured substrates.	No aquatic habitat in project vicinity.
Gila chub <i>Gila intermedia</i>	LE WSC	Uses small headwater streams, cienegas, marshes and springs of Gila River Drainage.	No aquatic habitat in project vicinity. Nearby Queen Creek has potential habitat but is outside the geographic range of the species.
Razorback sucker <i>Xyrauchen texanus</i>	LE WSC	Occurs in a wide range of aquatic habitats in streams, large rivers, and reservoirs.	No aquatic habitat and project vicinity is outside the geographic range of the species.
Spikedace <i>Meda fulgida</i>	LE WSC	Lives in small streams with eddies and riffle habitats.	No aquatic habitat in project vicinity. Potential habitat may occur in the nearby Queen Creek drainage but is outside the geographic range of the species.
Loach minnow <i>Tiaroga cobitis</i>	LE WSC	Occupies large rivers and tributaries with turbulent waters and a rocky substrate.	No aquatic habitat in project vicinity. Nearby Queen Creek has potential habitat but is outside the geographic range of the species.
Roundtail chub <i>Gila robusta</i>	C WSC	Inhabits warm to cool mid-elevation rivers and streams.	No aquatic habitat in project vicinity. Nearby Queen Creek has potential but is outside the geographic range of the species.

Species	Status	Habitat Requirements	Habitat Suitability
Gila topminnow <i>Poeciliopsis occidentalis occidentalis</i>	LE WSC	Occurs in small streams, springs, and cienegas in vegetated shallows.	No aquatic habitat in project vicinity. Documented from nearby Queen Creek.

SOURCES: USFWS 2012, AGFD 2012

NOTES: Agency or Law: BLM = Bureau of Land Management; ESA = Endangered Species Act

Status Definitions: **ESA**: LE = listed endangered; LT = listed threatened; P = proposed endangered; C = candidate; SC = species of concern. **BLM**: S = sensitive. **State of Arizona**: HSA = highly safeguarded plant in Arizona; SRA = salvage restricted plant in Arizona; WSC = wildlife of special concern in Arizona. **BGEPA**: Protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

Habitat Suitability Definitions: Suitable habitat = habitat is large enough and has the qualities required by the species; Limited suitable habitat = habitat has the qualities required by the species, but may be too small to support the species; Potential habitat = area may or may not have the qualities required by the species, further field investigation would be necessary.

Table C-2. Protected Native Plants Found During Field Survey

Plant Species Common Name	Plant Species Scientific Name	Protected Status
Agave	<i>Agave</i> sp.	Salvage Restricted
Saguaro	<i>Carnegiea gigantea</i>	Salvage Restricted
Fishhook barrel cactus	<i>Ferocactus wislizenii</i>	Salvage Restricted
Ocotillo	<i>Fouquieria splendens</i>	Salvage Restricted
Teddybear cholla	<i>Cylindropuntia bigelovii</i>	Salvage Restricted
Jumping cholla	<i>C. fulgida</i>	Salvage Restricted
Prickly pear	<i>Opuntia</i> spp.	Salvage Restricted
Staghorn cholla	<i>C. versicolor</i>	Salvage Restricted
Blue paloverde	<i>Parkinsonia florida</i>	Salvage Assessed
Littleleaf paloverde	<i>P. microphylla</i>	Salvage Assessed
Velvet mesquite	<i>Prosopis velutina</i>	Salvage Assessed
Banana yucca	<i>Yucca baccata</i>	Salvage Restricted

IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODS

The potential impacts to species that are known to occur or could potentially occur in the project vicinity were assessed using natural history and distribution information. Data were obtained from literature sources and from a biological evaluation prepared for the project (WestLand 2012).

IMPACT ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Protected Native Plants

Construction of the transmission line would remove or degrade a small amount of vegetation in the requested transmission line corridor for the proposed relocation. This would remove or degrade habitat for the nine salvage restricted plant species and three salvage assessed species in the project vicinity. Individuals of these species also could be removed when land is cleared during construction. However, adherence to the Arizona Native Plant Law would require prior notice so that these individuals could be salvaged. Alternatively, impacted native plants could be avoided or transplanted on site to the extent feasible.

Sonoran Desert Tortoise

The desert tortoise has not been recorded within 3 miles of the proposed relocation, but it does have limited potential to occur in the area. The requested transmission line corridor for the proposed relocation is within the range of the tortoise and contains Sonoran paloverde mixed-cacti desertscrub habitat that is used by the tortoise. The desert tortoise burrows or shelters on rocky slopes and bajadas, which are lacking in the proposed relocation area. This species was not observed during field surveys and the slopes in the proposed relocation area appear to offer little opportunity for excavation to create shelters.

It is possible that individual tortoises could be encountered during surface disturbance activities. If a Sonoran desert tortoise is encountered, measures for avoiding impacts to the tortoise would be implemented. Pre-construction surveys by qualified biologists that focus on microsites with the greatest potential for supporting tortoises would confirm the presence of the species. If a tortoise is found in the proposed relocation area, activities would be modified to avoid injuring or harming it. If activities cannot be modified, tortoises in harm's way would be moved in accordance with AGFD's "Guidelines for Handling Sonoran Desert Tortoises Encountered on Development Projects", revised October 23, 2007.

Golden Eagle

The proposed relocation area lacks suitable nesting habitat, but golden eagles could nest in the surrounding mountains. The requested transmission line corridor for the proposed relocation could be used for foraging, or golden eagles could use perch sites on existing transmission line towers. Golden eagles could occasionally and temporarily occupy the area during foraging or movement.

The proposed relocation would remove or degrade a small amount of potential foraging habitat. Noise generated during construction could alarm any golden eagles that could be near the area. However, adverse impacts to habitat and from noise would be negligible.

American Peregrine Falcon

The proposed relocation area lacks suitable nesting substrate for the peregrine falcon, but the species could nest in the surrounding mountains. The requested transmission line corridor for the proposed relocation could be used for foraging, or perch sites on existing transmission line towers. Peregrine falcons could occasionally occupy the project vicinity during foraging or movement.

The proposed relocation would remove or degrade a small amount of potential foraging habitat. Also noise generated during construction could alarm any peregrine falcons that could be near the area. However, adverse impacts to habitat and from noise would be negligible.

Western Red Bat

The western red bat is a tree roosting species that primarily utilizes riparian woodlands and forests for foraging and roosting. It may occasionally forage farther into dry habitats. The species is known from Queen Creek near Superior, and it could occur occasionally in the requested transmission line corridor for the proposed relocation during foraging bouts, though the potential habitat would be for secondary use by the species.

The proposed relocation would remove or degrade small amount of potential habitat. The adverse impacts to vegetation would be negligible compared to the available desert scrub habitat outside the proposed relocation area.

Lesser Long-nosed Bat

The lesser long-nosed bat has not been recorded from within 3 miles of the proposed relocation, but there is a small potential that it may utilize the area. The requested transmission line corridor for the proposed relocation occurs along the northeastern extent of the species' range and the area contains foraging plants for this species. Saguaro and agave occur within portions of the proposed relocation area and individual forage plants may be impacted by proposed activities.

This species has not been detected within the Tonto National Forest (Tonto National Forest 2004), which surrounds the private lands that include the proposed relocation area, and there have been no detections of this bat during surveys conducted by AGFD (Bill Burger, AGFD, pers. comm. *in* WestLand 2012) and WestLand (WestLand 2012) in the area. No lesser long-nosed bats are anticipated to be directly impacted and no potential roosts (caves or abandoned mines) would be impacted by the proposed relocation.

Ocelot

The ocelot has not been recorded within 3 miles of the proposed relocation, but has a small potential to occur within the requested transmission line corridor for the proposed relocation. A male ocelot was killed by a vehicle in 2010 between Globe and Superior (approximately 4 miles east of the requested transmission line corridor), and the project vicinity contains desertscrub habitat which can be used by the ocelot. However, the vegetation in the area does not provide the characteristic dense cover that is preferred by the species making it marginally suitable. Confirmed sightings of ocelot in Arizona are rare. Breeding ocelots have never been confirmed in Arizona and there are no confirmed records of female ocelots within Arizona. Any rare occurrences of ocelots in the project vicinity are expected to be dispersing males.

Because the area lacks dense vegetation to provide adequate cover for this species, any occurrences would be temporary, and the likelihood of adverse impacts to ocelot as a result of loss of habitat is improbable. No impacts to ocelot individuals are anticipated.

CONCLUSION

The project would have negligible adverse impacts to special status species. The disturbance area would be small relative to the available Sonoran paloverde mixed-cacti desert scrub surrounding the proposed relocation area. The potential to adversely impact protected native plants is somewhat higher because 12 species are documented from field surveys of the relocation area, and individual plants may be removed during land clearing. However, impacts to individual plants can be mitigated through avoidance, salvage, or onsite transplanting.

Adverse impacts to special status animals would be negligible to improbable. The project vicinity has limited habitat for each of the six animal species that could occur there. Also their use of the area would be transient and construction activities are unlikely to disturb any of these species. Also the loss or degradation of habitat would be negligible compared to the available habitat in the surrounding area.

REFERENCES

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