



Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan

CLARIFICATION AND INTERPRETATION

Subject	Conditions of Approval: Implementation of Condition #1 (Avoid Direct Impacts on Legally Protected Plant and Wildlife Species)
Clarification Number	2013-011
Approved	Edmund Sullivan 
Effective Date	6/24/15
Revision Date <i>(If applicable)</i>	

Category

Conditions of Approval

Topic

Implementation of Condition #1, Protected Species (goldfields, ringtails)

Issue/Question/Problem Statement

Additional information is required to identify when surveys may be required for Contra Costa goldfields and ring-tailed cat.

Plan Guidance

Contra Costa Goldfields

6/24/15

Clarification Number: 2013-011

“Contra Costa goldfields is a federally endangered and CNPS 1B plant species whose extreme rarity precludes coverage under the Habitat Plan. Because the Habitat Plan does not cover the species, compliance is required on an individual basis.

The likelihood of discovery of new occurrences is very low. If a new occurrence of this species is found, its avoidance would be of the highest importance to the species’ viability. If an applicant encounters Contra Costa goldfields on their site, they will contact the USFWS for written concurrence of avoidance to ensure that the project does not jeopardize the continued existence of the species.” (page 6-7)

Ring-Tailed Cat

This species is listed on page 6-7, but there is no guidance on where the species may be found.

Determination/Justification

Contra Costa Goldfields

Lasthenia conjugens

What Are Contra Costa Goldfields?

Contra Costa goldfields (*Lasthenia conjugens*) are federally listed as endangered and California Native Plant Society (CNPS) List 1B¹ species. Contra Costa goldfields are 10- to 30-centimeter-tall (4- to 12-inch-tall) annual herbs of the sunflower tribe (Heliantheae) of the sunflower family (Asteraceae). The opposite leaves are sometimes divided into segments. Each plant bears one to several all-yellow flower heads; the individual flowers lack a pappus (modified floral structures at the top of the fruit). The leaf-like phyllaries subtending the flower heads are fused from one-quarter to one-half of their lengths (Hickman 1993; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS] 2005). The partially fused phyllaries and the lack of pappus distinguish this species from the common Fremont’s goldfields (*Lasthenia fremontii*). This is an annual plant, which means that seed production is the only way for new individuals to occur in the population and for new populations to



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¹ List 1B species are rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere.

6/24/15

Clarification Number: 2013-011

be established. The flowers are self-incompatible and require insect visitors for successful pollination and seed production.

Where Are Contra Costa Goldfields Found?

Contra Costa goldfields typically grow in vernal pools, swales, moist flats, and depressions within a grassland matrix, usually at elevations between 6 and 200 feet (USFWS 2005). Since the adoption of the Habitat Plan, none have been found in the Habitat Plan Study Area. The California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) reported one occurrence in the Plan Area in 1983, which has now been extirpated.

What Happens If Contra Costa Goldfields Are on the Project Site?

This plant is extremely rare, so the likelihood of discovering a new occurrence is low. However, if a new occurrence of this species is found during project planning phase surveys, its avoidance is highly important to the species' viability. If Contra Costa goldfields are encountered on a project site, contact the Habitat Agency and USFWS for written concurrence of avoidance to ensure that the project does not jeopardize the continued existence of the species. The survey period for this species would coincide with its blooming period, which occurs from March through June, depending on environmental conditions (CNPS 2013).

Ringtail

Bassariscus astutus

What Is a Ringtail?

Ringtails (*Bassariscus astutus*) are listed as Fully Protected by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). The ringtail's body is cat-like, with a fox-like face and large oval ears (Goldberg 2003). Their long, bushy tail is banded with 14 to 16 alternating black and buffy rings. The large eyes are ringed by black or dark brown and set within buffy patches. The ringtail is nocturnal and omnivorous; it feeds primarily on animals such as mice, woodrats, birds, reptiles, and amphibians (NatureServe 2013). Mating occurs in late winter, and three to four kits are born in May or June (Jameson and Peeters 2004).



Where Are Ringtails Found?

Ringtails are active throughout the year and inhabit brushy and wooded areas, primarily at lower and middle elevations (Jameson and Peeters 2004). They are usually found within 0.5 mile of water,

Conditions of Approval: Implementation of Condition #1 (Avoid Direct Impacts on Legally Protected Plant and Wildlife Species)

6/24/15

Clarification Number: 2013-011

and their dens are found in rock shelters as well as in tree hollows, under tree roots, in mammal burrows, and under brush piles (NatureServe 2013).

What Happens If a Ringtail Is on the Project Site?

Ringtails may be found in riparian woodlands in the Permit Area. As described in Chapter 1 of the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan, CDFW cannot issue permits for take of this species. During planning surveys, a wildlife biologist will survey the area to be affected for suitable burrows and examine trees to be removed for suitable hollow areas that may provide shelter or denning habitat for ringtail. All hollow trees, snags, downed logs, and appropriately sized burrows that will be removed will be thoroughly examined. If habitat is confirmed to be suitable for ringtails, measures to avoid and minimize impacts on the species will be determined in coordination with CDFW and the Habitat Agency. If a ringtail is found on a project site, the project proponent should develop its own avoidance measures and contact the Habitat Agency.

References

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- Jameson, E. W., Jr., and H. J. Peeters. 2004. *Mammals of California*. Revised edition. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
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