Meeting Summary

Date:	December 15, 2020	**Time:**	1:00 p.m.
Location:	MS Teams Call		
Subject:	Elk Grove California Northstate University - Modification of EIR Biological Resource Mitigation Measures		
Project No:	17010101.04		
Attendees:	Sarah Kirchgessner, City of Elk Grove	Allison Fuller, Ascent Environmental	
	Beatrix Treiterer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service		
	Bart McDermott, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service		
	Pat Angell, Ascent Environmental		
	Tammie Beyerl, Ascent Environmental		

Summary of Meeting, Key Discussion Points, and Action Items

The purpose of the meeting was to update the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service on the status of the environmental review process, California Northstate University (CNU) proposed modifications to the helicopter flight path to avoid roosting sites and rookeries for bird species in the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (NWR); a new mitigation measure to require monitoring of bird strikes on the hospital building and further corrective actions to the building to mitigate any significant bird strike issues; and invasive species concerns regarding Project landscaping.

Proposed Modification to the Helicopter Flight Path (see attachment)

USFWS staff appreciated the modification to the flight path to address their concerns but did note that the helicopter path would still pass over a portion of the NWR that is used by birds. They did ask whether there were any roosting sites within the Sacramento Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant Buffer Lands within the new helicopter path. Ascent staff shared that they consulted Regional San biologist Bryan Young to confirm there are no significant roosting sites present along this new helicopter path. USFWS also asked for information on the anticipated helicopter flight altitude as well as the extent of helicopter flights to the hospital that may occur. Ascent staff identified that the Draft EIR assumes 4-6 helicopter flights per month but actual helicopter flights to Sacramento area hospitals is less than what the Draft EIR assumed. Ascent staff agreed to provide this helicopter data after the meeting (provided to USFWS on December 22, 2020).

Proposed New Mitigation Measure for Monitoring of the Effectiveness of Hospital Building Design to Minimize Bird Strikes

Ascent staff provided an overview of the new mitigation measure that would consist of routine (daily) monitoring of the Project site for dead birds during the initial operation of the building (e.g., three years). The monitoring would use protocols used in other bird collision studies. Ascent staff provided the referenced bird collision survey protocol study as requested by USFWS (provided to USFWS on December 15, 2020). Dead birds would be collected and stored on-site or photographed for inspection and identification by an avian biologist. Monitoring reports would be provided to the City for review and identification of corrective measures to minimize bird collisions to ensure that the local populations of migratory or protected bird species are not reduced to below self-sustaining levels and that bird species do not become newly classified as rare or endangered as a result of the project.

USFWS staff identified that permits would be required to collect the birds for this mitigation measure. They also identified that timing of collection of dead birds needs to be timed to avoid scavengers taking the birds. They also identified that potential funding mechanisms between USFWS and CNU for monitoring would be difficult to set up.

Invasive Species Issues with Project Landscape Plans

USFWS staff identified concerns regarding invasive species proposed in the Project landscaping plans. The City and Ascent noted that CNU is proposing to remove the California pepper tree from the proposed landscaping plan. The City staff noted that final landscaping plans need to meet City Municipal Code standards for landscaping that require the use of native plants. It was agreed that Ascent would provide the California Native Plant Society's Homegrown Habitat list to the City and CNU for use in final landscape design.