
November 6, 2023

Katherine Clark
1206 Fourth St
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Re: California Tiger Salamander Assessment for 2705 Giffen Avenue in Santa Rosa, California

Dear Ms. Clark,

The purpose of this letter is to describe the methods and results of a protocol-level California tiger salamander (CTS; *Ambystoma californiense*) site assessment for the property located on 2705 Giffen Avenue in Santa Rosa, California (Project Site). For this purpose, this letter addresses the potential for impact to CTS to occur from the proposed project and whether an Incidental Take Permit is required for this project.

Natural History

The California Tiger Salamander (CTS) Sonoma County Distinct Population Segment (DPS) was emergency listed as endangered on July 22, 2002. Critical Habitat for CTS on the Santa Rosa Plain was designated in July 2011, and revised on August 31, 2011. This population is geographically isolated from other CTS in the state and known to occur in the Santa Rosa area (or Plain) and possibly the Petaluma River watershed, historically. CTS in the Santa Rosa Plain inhabits low-elevation (below 500 feet) vernal pools and seasonal pools, associated grassland, and the grassy understory of oak savannah plant communities.

The salamanders breed in natural ephemeral pools, or ponds that mimic ephemeral pools (stock ponds that go dry) and occupy substantial areas surrounding the breeding pool as adults. California tiger salamanders spend most of their time in the grasslands surrounding breeding pools. They survive hot, dry summers by living underground in burrows (such as those created by ground squirrels and other mammals and deep cracks or holes in the ground) where the soil atmosphere remains near the water saturation point. During wet periods, the salamanders may emerge from refugia and feed in the surrounding grasslands.

Methods

The site assessment described in this report was performed in accordance with the October 2003 USFWS Interim Guidance on Site Assessment and Field Surveys for Determining Presence or A Negative Finding of the California Tiger Salamander. A qualified biologist performed the site assessment on September 7, 2023.

Prior to the site visit, available information and the CNDDDB database¹ for records on CTS sightings within 1.3 mile of the Project Site were reviewed. Available aerial photography was reviewed to identify potential breeding/aquatic and upland habitats on the site and surrounding vicinity and whether barrier-free corridors are present to nearby suitable habitats and/or documented occurrences. During the site assessment, transects were conducted across the entire property to determine whether suitable habitat elements (e.g., suitable water bodies, small-mammal burrows, or other suitable refugia) are present to support CTS. Surrounding land uses located between the site and nearby suitable occupied habitats were evaluated. A map of the property and surrounding habitats is provided in Attachment A (Figure 1).

Results

Element 1. Is the Project Site within the range of the CTS?

The Project Site is within the range of the CTS and is located within the Santa Rosa Plain Conservation Strategy Area. The site is located within an area designated as “not likely to affect” as shown on the Potential Effects Determination Map².

Element 2. What are the known localities of CTS within the Project Site and within 1.3 miles (2 km) of the project boundaries?

There are numerous occurrences (or localities) of CTS within 1.3 miles of the Project Site; there are no occurrences on the site. Attachment A, Figure 2 shows the location of these known occurrences respective to the Project Site. The nearest occurrence is approximately 1,400 feet away.

Table 1. CTS occurrences within 1.3 miles of Project Site.

Occurrence number	Location	Distance: miles (feet)	Adult or Larvae
42	FEMA mitigation site	0.27 (1400)	Unknown # Larvae
3	North of Santa Rosa Air Center	0.40 (2100)	Unknown # Larvae
62	Northwest of Old Stony Point Rd and Hearn Ave	0.52 (2700)	5 Larvae
41	Broadmoor North mitigation site	0.57 (3000)	Unknown # Larvae
46	Between Yuba and Ludwig Ave., 0.4 mi west of Stony Point Rd	0.70 (3600)	15 Larvae
77	Southwest of southwest corner of Yeager Dr	0.71 (3700)	1 Adult

¹ California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). 2023. California Natural Diversity Database. Wildlife and Habitat Data Analysis Branch, Sacramento, CA. Most recently accessed on October 2, 2023.

² <https://fws.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=ac94c1a176f04d4587aff1f0fd16a7f8&level=11>
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Santa Rosa Plain Biological Opinion 2020. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Southwest Region, Sacramento, California.

Occurrence number	Location	Distance: miles (feet)	Adult or Larvae
11	Southwest Community Park	0.73 (3800)	Unknown # Larvae
39	Yuba preserve	0.77 (4000)	Unknown # Larvae
4	Northwest of Santa Rosa Air Center	0.80 (4200)	89 Larvae
48	North of Ludwig Ave 1.0 mi west of Stony Point Rd	0.90	22 Larvae
40	Between Santa Rosa Air Center and intersection of Wright Rd and Ludwig Ave	0.92 (4800)	41 Larvae
47	0.1 mi east of Stony Point Rd, 0.2 mi north of Bellevue Ave	0.94 (4900)	2 Adults
72	Hearn Ave and Westwood Dr	0.94 (4900)	2 Adults
81	Montevino Dr and Rain Dance Way	0.97 (5100)	1 Adult
64	0.15 mi west of Dutton Meadows Rd and 0.3 mi north of Bellevue Ave	1.06 (5600)	2 Adults
2	0.1 mi west of Stony Point Rd and Bellevue Ave	1.10 (5800)	8 Larvae
51	West end of Butler Rd	1.23 (6500)	26 Larvae
63	North of Bellevue Ave between Dutton Meadows Dr and Burgess Dr	1.27 (6700)	2 Adults
38	Shiloh, Margaret, and Margaret West mitigation sites	1.30 (6900)	130 Larvae

Element 3. What are the habitats within the Project Site and within 1.24 miles (2 km) of the project boundaries?

The Project Site is a 1.0-acre portion of a parcel 110 feet above sea level with 0 percent slopes. There is a hardscaped parking lot at the northwest corner of the site. There is loosely vegetated soil in the east end of the site, as well as along the south fence. Plant communities present include native/nonnative grassland. No wetlands are present on the site. Several dozen fossorial mammal (likely gopher) burrows were visible along both sides of the southern fence. The Project Site is currently being used as a parking lot and as storage for shipping containers. Surrounding land use is predominantly light manufacturing and industrial use. To the south of the site is a strip of lawn grass that also has fossorial mammal (likely gopher) burrows. Across Northpoint Parkway from this neighboring strip of grass is a vacant lot of native/nonnative grassland. The closest breeding habitat for CTS is 1,400 feet away at the FEMA mitigation site east of Fresno Avenue. A single corridor is present, from the FEMA mitigation site to the vacant lot, which would require travel across the two-lane road (with no culvert or underpass), through the neighboring lawn and under the fence, to the Project Site.



Above photo shows mammal burrows near east end of Project Site.



Above photo shows mammal burrows near south fence.



Above photo shows mammal burrows near south fence.



Above photo shows mammal burrows in south neighbor's lawn.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Project Site is located within a “No Effect” area as designated by the USFWS in their 2020 Santa Rosa Plain Programmatic Biological Opinion Action Plan and as such, mitigation for loss of critical habitat is not required. While the site is within 2,200 feet of potential breeding habitat and contains marginal upland estivation habitat (i.e., mammal burrows or other refugia), dense commercial development, roads, and parking lots likely preclude CTS from dispersing onto or across the Project Site. Therefore, no mitigation measures are recommended for the proposed project at this time.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dana Riggs". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line extending to the left.

Dana Riggs, Principal Biologist

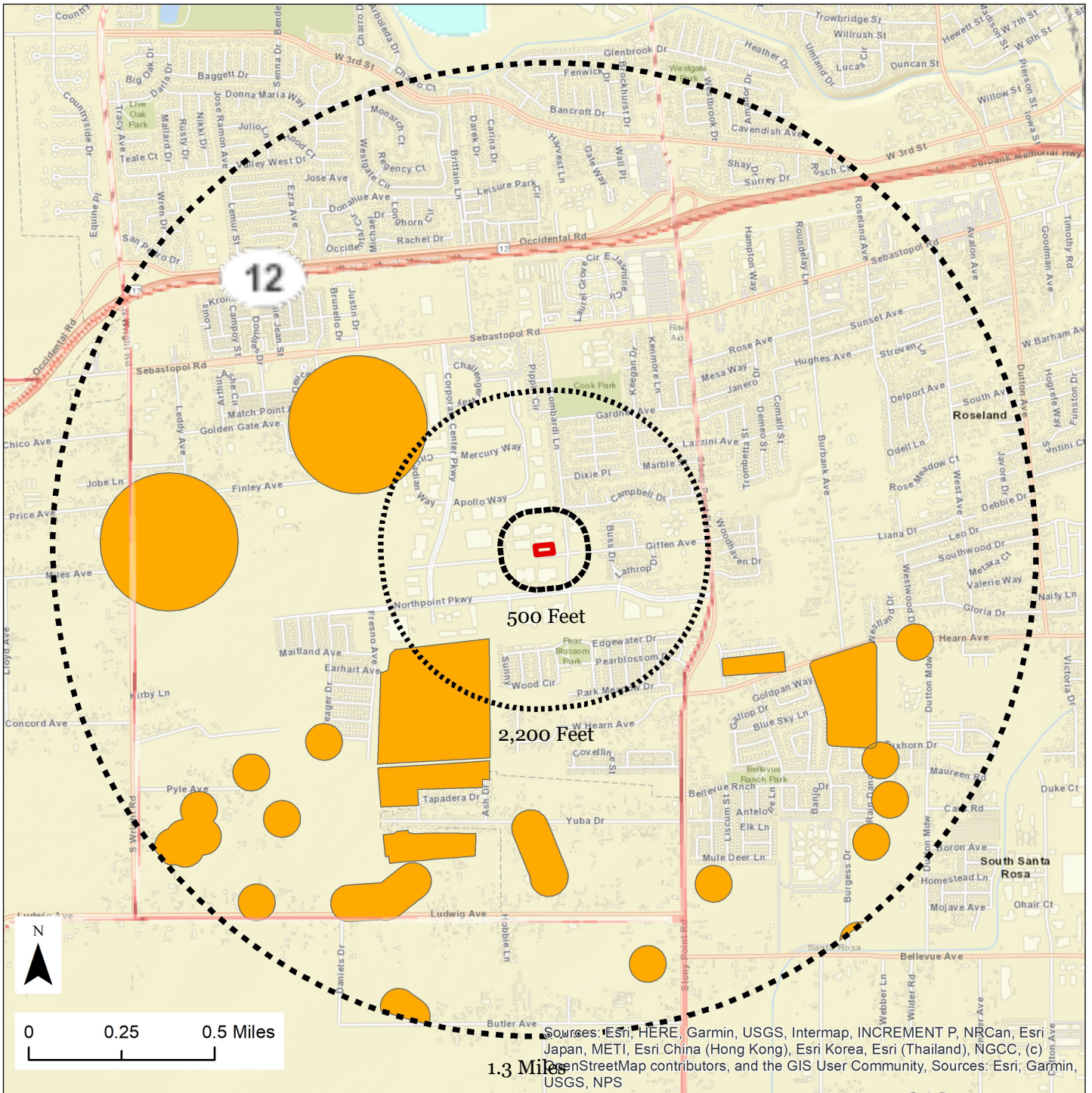
Attachments (1): A. Project Figures

Figure 1: Location of Project Area
 2705 Giffen Avenue, Santa Rosa, Sonoma County, CA



- Project Study Area
- Parcels
- Streets

Figure 2: CTS Occurrences within 500 Ft., 2,200 Ft., and 1.3 Miles of the Project Site
 2705 Giffen Avenue, Santa Rosa, Sonoma County, CA



- Project Study Area
- 500-Foot Buffer
- 1.3-Mile Buffer
- 2,200-Foot Buffer
- CTS Occurrence (18)