

**THE PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION, OPERATION, AND MAINTENANCE OF RVSS
UGRADE PROJECT
U.S. BORDER PATROL, RIO GRANDE VALLEY SECTOR
RIO GRANDE CITY, McALLEN, WESLACO STATION AORs**

**Mailing List
Agency Coordination Letters**

Distribution List

Mr. Jaime A. Garza, Regional Director
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
Region 15
1804 W. Jefferson Avenue
Harlingen, TX 78550

International Boundary and Water Commission, United States Section
Principal Engineer
ATTN: Mr. Jose A. Nunez
4171 North Mesa, Suite C-100
El Paso, Texas 79902

Texas Department of Transportation
Pharr District
ATTN: Mr. Toribio Garza Jr.
600 W U.S. Expressway 83
Pharr, Texas 78577

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
Wildlife Diversity Program
ATTN: Ms. Kathy Boydson
4200 Smith School Road
Austin, Texas 78744

United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Ecological Services, Corpus Christi Field Office
ATTN: Dawn Gardiner
6300 Ocean Drive, Unit 5837, Classroom West, Room 118
Corpus Christi, TX 78412

United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge
ATTN: Robert Jess
3325 Green Jay Road
Alamo, Texas 78516

Mark Wolfe
State Historic Preservation Officer
Texas Historical Commission
1511 Colorado
Austin, TX 78701

Ron Curry
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Regional Administrator, Region 6
1445 Ross Avenue
Fountain Place 12th Floor, Suite 1200
Dallas, TX 75202

Ms. Lisa Hanf, Office of Federal Activities
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, California 94105

Department of the Interior
ATTN: Mr. Jon Andrew
1849 C Street, NW
MS 3428
Washington, DC 20240

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Galveston District Regulatory Branch
ATTN: Kim McLaughlin, Chief
2000 Fort Point Road
Galveston, TX 77550

Mr. Kelvin Solco
Federal Aviation Administration
Southwest Region, Regional Administrator
2601 Meacham Boulevard
Fort Worth, TX 76137

The Honorable Eloy Vera
Star County Judge
100 N. FM 3167
Rio Grande City, TX 78582

The Honorable Ramon Garcia
Hidalgo County Judge
302 W. University Drive
Edinburg, TX 78539

Ronnie Thomas, Chairman
Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas
571 State Park Road 56
Livingston, TX 77351

Wallace Coffey, Chairman
The Comanche Nation
584 NW Bingo Road
Lawton, OK 73507

Geoffrey Standing Bear, Principal Chief
The Osage Nation
627 Grandview Avenue
Pawhuska, OK 74056

Danny H. Breuninger, Jr., President
Mescalero Apache Tribe of the Mescalero Reservation
101 Central Avenue
Mescalero, NM 88340

Donald Patterson, President
Tonkawa Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma
1 Rush Buffalo Road
Tonkawa, OK 74653-4449

Jeffrey Haozous, Chairman
Fort Sill Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
43187 US Highway 281
Apache, OK 73006

Ronnie Lupe, Chairman
White Mountain Apache Tribe of the Fort Apache Reservation
201 East Walnut Street
Whiteriver, AZ 85941

Tarpie Yargee, Chief
Alabama-Quassarte Tribal Town
101 East Broadway
Wetumka, OK 74883

Lyman Guy, Chairman
Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
511 E. Colorado
Anadarko, OK 73005

Bill John Baker, Principal Chief
Cherokee Nation
17675 South Muskogee Avenue
Tahlequah, OK 74464

Lovelin Poncho, Chairman
Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana
1940 C.C. Bel Road
Elton, LA 70532

Tiger Hobia, Town King
Kialegee Tribal Town
623 East Highway 9
Wetumka, OK 74883

Gilbert Salazar, Chairman
Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma
PO Box 70
McCloud, OK 74851

Amber Toppah, Lady Chairman
Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma
100 Kiowa Way
Carnegie, OK 73015

Buford L. Rolin, Chairman
Poarch Band of Creeks
5811 Jack Springs Road
Atmore, AL 36502

John Berrey, Chairman
The Quapaw Tribe of Indians
5681 South 630 Road
Quapaw, OK 74364

Leonard M. Harjo, Principal Chief
The Seminole Nation of Oklahoma
PO Box 1498
Wewoka, OK 74884

George Scott, Town King
Thlopthlocco Tribal Town
PO Box 188
Okemah, OK 74859

Joey P. Barbry, Chairman
Tunica-Biloxi Indian Tribe
151 Melacon Drive
Marksville, LA 71351

Terri Parton, President
Wichita and Affiliated Tribes
PO Box 729
Anadarko, OK 73005



**U.S. Customs and
Border Protection**

DEC 18 2014

Mr. Jaime A. Garza, Regional Director
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
Region 15
1804 W. Jefferson Avenue
Harlingen, TX 78550

Dear Mr. Garza:

Border Patrol Facilities and Tactical Infrastructure (BPFTI) Program Management Office (PMO), within Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) addressing the proposed upgrade of its Remote Video Surveillance Systems (RVSS) within the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) Rio Grande City (RGC), McAllen, and Weslaco Stations' Areas of Responsibility (AORs). BPFTI is preparing this EA on behalf of the Office of Technology Innovation and Acquisition (OTIA), which is the subcomponent of CBP charged with ensuring that CBP's technology efforts are properly focused on the mission and integrated across CBP. OTIA is the CBP proponent office for the RGC, McAllen, and Weslaco Stations' AORs RVSS Upgrade Project.

The purpose of the proposed action is to provide improved surveillance and detection capabilities to the areas of greatest risk for illegal cross-border activity located within the USBP Rio Grande Valley (RGV) Sector—currently these areas include RGC, McAllen, and Weslaco Stations' AORs. Pre-project planning is also underway to perform similar RVSS upgrades within the remaining RGV Sector station AORs but is not part of the proposed action. A lack of infrastructure and difficult terrain within the RGV Sector affect response time and enforcement operations, thereby creating a need for a year-round, continuous technology-based surveillance capability that can effectively collect, process, and distribute information among USBP agents. The RVSS Upgrade will allow USBP agents to maintain constant surveillance over large areas, contributing to agent safety and increasing operational effectiveness as they detect, identify, and classify incursions/illegal entry at the border and resolve the incursions with the appropriate level of response.

The EA will analyze the potential for significant adverse impacts and beneficial effects on the environment from the proposed action and one alternative (the no action alternative). The proposed action includes the construction, operation, and maintenance of an upgraded RVSS that provides sufficient coverage to affect control of the Station AORs while meeting the purpose and need of the project. CBP is currently analyzing 84 field sensor tower locations—consisting of 42 primary and 42 alternate tower locations—as well as several communication relay towers within the various AORs for use within the RVSS Upgrade project (See Enclosed Figures 1, 2, and 3).

Mr. Jaime A. Garza

Page 2

The RVSS would communicate with the RGC, McAllen, and Weslaco Stations' Command and Control (C2) facilities and would provide enhanced surveillance coverage along approximately 120 miles of border. Infrastructure to be considered within CBP's plan includes improvements to existing, and construction of new, roads to access RVSS towers, as well as support utilities.

CBP is gathering data and input from state and local governmental agencies, departments, and bureaus that may be affected by, or otherwise have an interest in, this proposed action. Since your agency or organization may have particular knowledge and expertise regarding potential environmental impacts from CBP's proposed action, your input is sought regarding the likely or anticipated environmental effects of this proposed action. Your response should include any state and local restrictions, permitting or other requirements with which CBP would have to comply during project siting, construction, and operation.

Per DHS Directive 023-1, Environmental Planning Program, we will provide your agency with a copy of the official Draft EA of OTIA's RVSS Upgrade project for your review and comment. Please let us know if additional copies are needed.

Your prompt attention to this request is appreciated. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Joseph Zidron at (949) 643-6392 or via email at joseph.zidron@cbp.dhs.gov. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Paul Enriquez
Environmental Branch Chief
Border Patrol Facilities and Tactical Infrastructure
Program Management Office

Enclosure(s)



**U.S. Customs and
Border Protection**

Mr. Toribio Garza, Jr.
Texas Department of Transportation
Pharr District
600 W U.S. Expressway 83
Pharr, TX 78577

JAN 15 2015

Dear Mr. Garza:

Border Patrol Facilities and Tactical Infrastructure (BPFTI) Program Management Office (PMO), within Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) addressing the proposed upgrade of its Remote Video Surveillance Systems (RVSS) within the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) Rio Grande City (RGC), McAllen, and Weslaco Stations' Areas of Responsibility (AORs). BPFTI is preparing this EA on behalf of the Office of Technology Innovation and Acquisition (OTIA), which is the subcomponent of CBP charged with ensuring that CBP's technology efforts are properly focused on the mission and integrated across CBP. OTIA is the CBP proponent office for the RGC, McAllen, and Weslaco Stations' AORs RVSS Upgrade Project.

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The EA will analyze the potential for significant adverse impacts and beneficial effects on the environment from the proposed action and one alternative (the no action alternative). The proposed action includes the construction, operation, and maintenance of an upgraded RVSS that provides sufficient coverage to affect control of the Station AORs while meeting the purpose and need of the project. CBP is currently analyzing 84 field sensor tower locations—consisting of 42 primary and 42 alternate tower locations—as well as several communication relay towers within the various AORs for use within the RVSS Upgrade project (See Enclosed Figures 1, 2, and 3).

Mr. Toribio Garza, Jr.

Page 2

The RVSS would communicate with the RGC, McAllen, and Weslaco Stations' Command and Control (C2) facilities and would provide enhanced surveillance coverage along approximately 120 miles of border. Infrastructure to be considered within CBP's plan includes improvements to existing, and construction of new, roads to access RVSS towers, as well as support utilities.

CBP is gathering data and input from state and local governmental agencies, departments, and bureaus that may be affected by, or otherwise have an interest in, this proposed action. Since your agency or organization may have particular knowledge and expertise regarding potential environmental impacts from CBP's proposed action, your input is sought regarding the likely or anticipated environmental effects of this proposed action. Your response should include any state and local restrictions, permitting or other requirements with which CBP would have to comply during project siting, construction, and operation.

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Your prompt attention to this request is appreciated. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Joseph Zidron at (949) 643-6392 or via email at joseph.zidron@cbp.dhs.gov. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Paul Enriquez
Environmental Branch Chief
Border Patrol Facilities and Tactical Infrastructure
Program Management Office

Enclosure(s)



**U.S. Customs and
Border Protection**

Mr. Rodolfo Montero
International Boundary and Water Commission, United States Section
Mercedes Field Office
325 Golf Course Road
Mercedes, TX 78570

JAN 15 2015

Dear Mr. Montero:

Border Patrol Facilities and Tactical Infrastructure (BPFTI) Program Management Office (PMO), within Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) addressing the proposed upgrade of its Remote Video Surveillance Systems (RVSS) within the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) Rio Grande City (RGC), McAllen, and Weslaco Stations' Areas of Responsibility (AORs). BPFTI is preparing this EA on behalf of the Office of Technology Innovation and Acquisition (OTIA), which is the subcomponent of CBP charged with ensuring that CBP's technology efforts are properly focused on the mission and integrated across CBP. OTIA is the CBP proponent office for the RGC, McAllen, and Weslaco Stations' AORs RVSS Upgrade Project.

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The EA will analyze the potential for significant adverse impacts and beneficial effects on the environment from the proposed action and one alternative (the no action alternative). The proposed action includes the construction, operation, and maintenance of an upgraded RVSS that provides sufficient coverage to affect control of the Station AORs while meeting the purpose and need of the project. CBP is currently analyzing 84 field sensor tower locations—consisting of 42 primary and 42 alternate tower locations—as well as several communication relay towers within the various AORs for use within the RVSS Upgrade project (See Enclosed Figures 1, 2, and 3).

Mr. Rodolfo Montero
Page 2

The RVSS would communicate with the RGC, McAllen, and Weslaco Stations' Command and Control (C2) facilities and would provide enhanced surveillance coverage along approximately 120 miles of border. Infrastructure to be considered within CBP's plan includes improvements to existing, and construction of new, roads to access RVSS towers, as well as support utilities.

CBP is gathering data and input from state and local governmental agencies, departments, and bureaus that may be affected by, or otherwise have an interest in, this proposed action. Since your agency or organization may have particular knowledge and expertise regarding potential environmental impacts from CBP's proposed action, your input is sought regarding the likely or anticipated environmental effects of this proposed action. Your response should include any state and local restrictions, permitting or other requirements with which CBP would have to comply during project siting, construction, and operation.

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Your prompt attention to this request is appreciated. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Joseph Zidron at (949) 643-6392 or via email at joseph.zidron@cbp.dhs.gov. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Paul Enriquez
Environmental Branch Chief
Border Patrol Facilities and Tactical Infrastructure
Program Management Office

Enclosure(s)

JAN 29 2015



**U.S. Customs and
Border Protection**

Commissioner Edward Drusina
International Boundary and Water Commission, United States Section
4171 North Mesa, Suite C-100
El Paso, TX 79902

Dear Commissioner Drusina:

Border Patrol Facilities and Tactical Infrastructure (BPFTI) Program Management Office (PMO), within Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) addressing the proposed upgrade of its Remote Video Surveillance Systems (RVSS) within the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) Rio Grande City (RGC), McAllen, and Weslaco Stations' Areas of Responsibility (AORs). BPFTI is preparing this EA on behalf of the Office of Technology Innovation and Acquisition (OTIA), which is the subcomponent of CBP charged with ensuring that CBP's technology efforts are properly focused on the mission and integrated across CBP. OTIA is the CBP proponent office for the RGC, McAllen, and Weslaco Stations' AORs RVSS Upgrade Project.

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Infrastructure to be considered within CBP's plan includes improvements to existing, and construction of new, roads to access RVSS towers, as well as support utilities.

CBP is gathering data and input from state and local governmental agencies, departments, and bureaus that may be affected by, or otherwise have an interest in, this proposed action. Since your agency or organization may have particular knowledge and expertise regarding potential environmental impacts from CBP's proposed action, your input is sought regarding the likely or anticipated environmental effects of this proposed action. Your response should include any state and local restrictions, permitting or other requirements with which CBP would have to comply during project siting, construction, and operation.

Per DHS Directive 023-1, Environmental Planning Program, we will provide your agency with a copy of the official Draft EA of OTIA's RVSS Upgrade Project for your review and comment. Please let us know if additional copies are needed.

Your prompt attention to this request is appreciated. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Joseph Zidron at (949) 643-6392 or via email at joseph.zidron@cbp.dhs.gov. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Paul Enriquez
Environmental Branch Chief
Border Patrol Facilities and Tactical Infrastructure
Program Management Office

Enclosure(s)

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories

January 23, 2015

Paul Enriquez
Border Patrol Facilities and Tactical Infrastructure
Program Management Office
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20229

Re: Comments for the proposed Environmental Assessment for the Remote Video Surveillance Systems within the USBP Rio Grande City, McAllen, and Weslaco Stations' Areas of Responsibility, Hidalgo County (USCBP; Track #201503935)

Dear Mr. Enriquez:

Thank you for providing us the notification and information regarding the future construction and operation of proposed project in Hidalgo County. We look forward in the opportunity to comment on the Environmental Assessment process. This letter serves as comment on the proposed undertaking from the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), the Executive Director of the Texas Historical Commission.

Thank you for your cooperation in this federal review process, and for your efforts to preserve the irreplaceable heritage of Texas. **If we can be of further assistance, please contact David Camarena Garcés at 512/463-6252 or david.camarena@thc.state.tx.us.**

Sincerely,



for
Mark Wolfe, State Historic Preservation Officer





DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
GALVESTON DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
CORPUS CHRISTI REGULATORY FIELD OFFICE
5151 FLYNN PARKWAY, SUITE 306
CORPUS CHRISTI, TX 78411-4318

February 18, 2015

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

Corpus Christi Regulatory Field Office

SUBJECT: Project No. SWG-2015-00013 – Request for Comment

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Bureau of Customs and Border Protection
Office of Border Patrol Facilities and Tactical Infrastructure
Program Management

ATTN: Joseph Zidron
24000 Avila Road
Suite 5020
Laguna Niguel, California 92677

Dear Mr. Zidron:

This is in reference to your request dated December 18, 2014, for comment regarding the preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) detailing the proposed upgrade of Remote Video Surveillance Systems (RVSS) within the United States Border Patrol (USBP) Rio Grande City (RGC), McAllen, and Weslaco Stations' Areas of Responsibility (AORs). The proposed project includes the construction, operation, and maintenance of approximately forty-two (42) field sensor tower sites within the various AORs. Work could include improvements to existing, and construction of new, roads to access the RVSS towers, as well as appurtenant support utilities. The maps you submitted are enclosed in three (3) sheets.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) has determined that project sites may contain jurisdictional waters of the United States. Specifically, there may be navigable waters of the U.S., subject to jurisdiction under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 (RHA) (Section 10), and/or wetland areas, subject to jurisdiction under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) (Section 404). The Corps regulates construction, excavation, or deposition of materials in, over, or under navigable waters, or any work which would affect the course, location, condition, or capacity of those waters, under Section 10. Additionally, the Corps regulates the discharge of dredged and/or fill material into waters of the United States, including navigable waters, under Section 404. Therefore, construction, excavation, and the placement and/or the discharge of dredged or fill material into these waters of the U.S. requires a Department of the Army permit.

Please note the Corps has not delineated the extent of the waters of the U.S. within the proposed project sites. If a delineation of the waters of the U.S. is required, we recommend that you hire an environmental consultant to perform the delineation. Upon its completion, please submit the delineation report to the Corps for verification. A list of consultants is enclosed.

Corps determinations are conducted to identify the limits of the Corps RHA and CWA jurisdiction for particular sites. This determination may not be valid for the wetland conservation provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended. If you or your

tenant are USDA program participants, or anticipate participation in USDA programs, you should request a certified wetland determination from the local office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service prior to starting work.

Please note, this is **not authorization to begin work in jurisdictional areas**. If you have any questions, please contact Kevin Mannie at 361-814-5847 ext. 1005. To assist us in improving our service to you, please complete the survey found at http://corpsmapu.usace.army.mil/cm_apex/f?p=136:4:0.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "N. Laskowski", written in a cursive style.

Nicholas Laskowski
Supervisor
Corpus Christi Regulatory Field Office

Enclosures

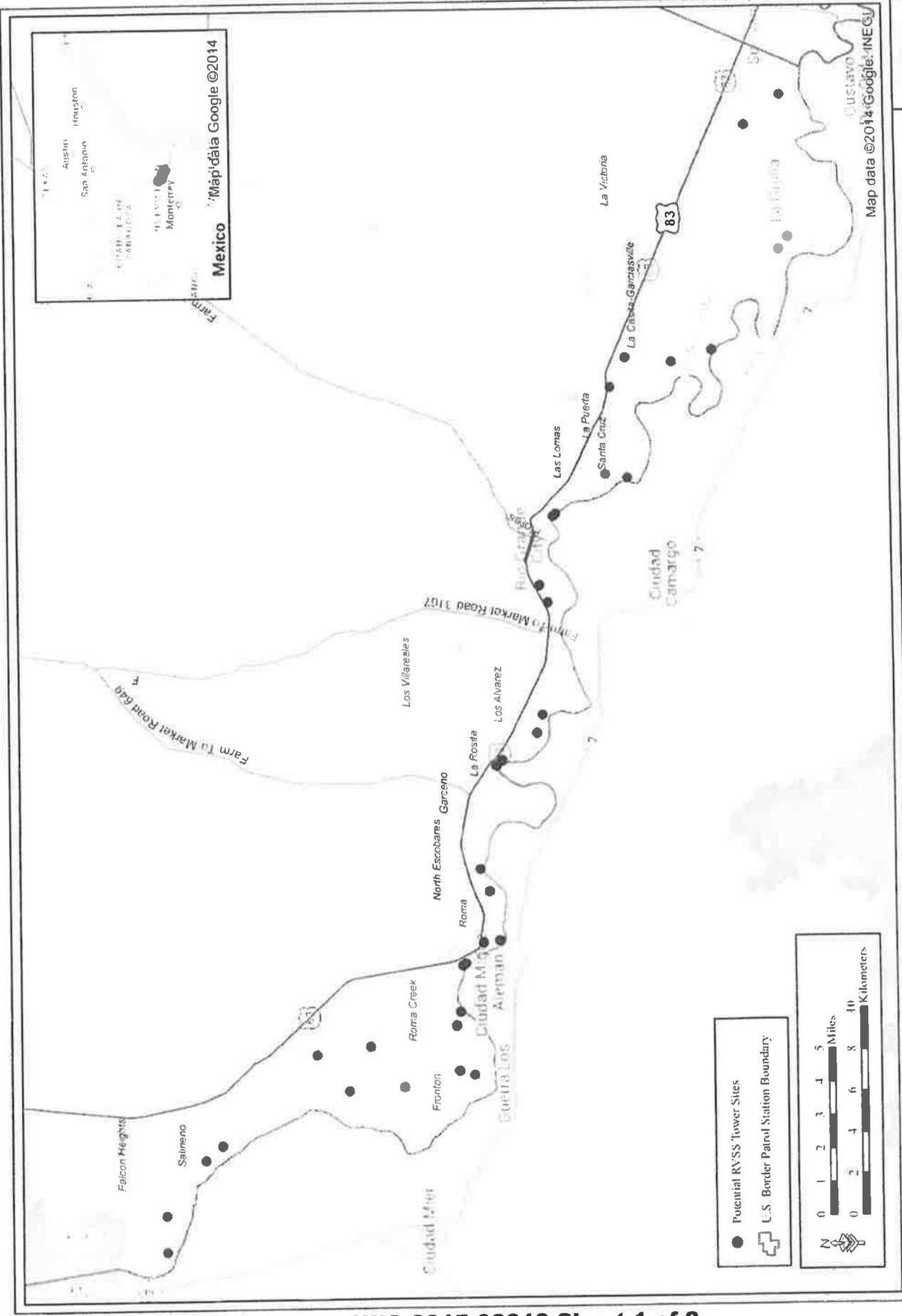


Figure 1. Potential RVSS Tower Sites within Rio Grande City AOR.

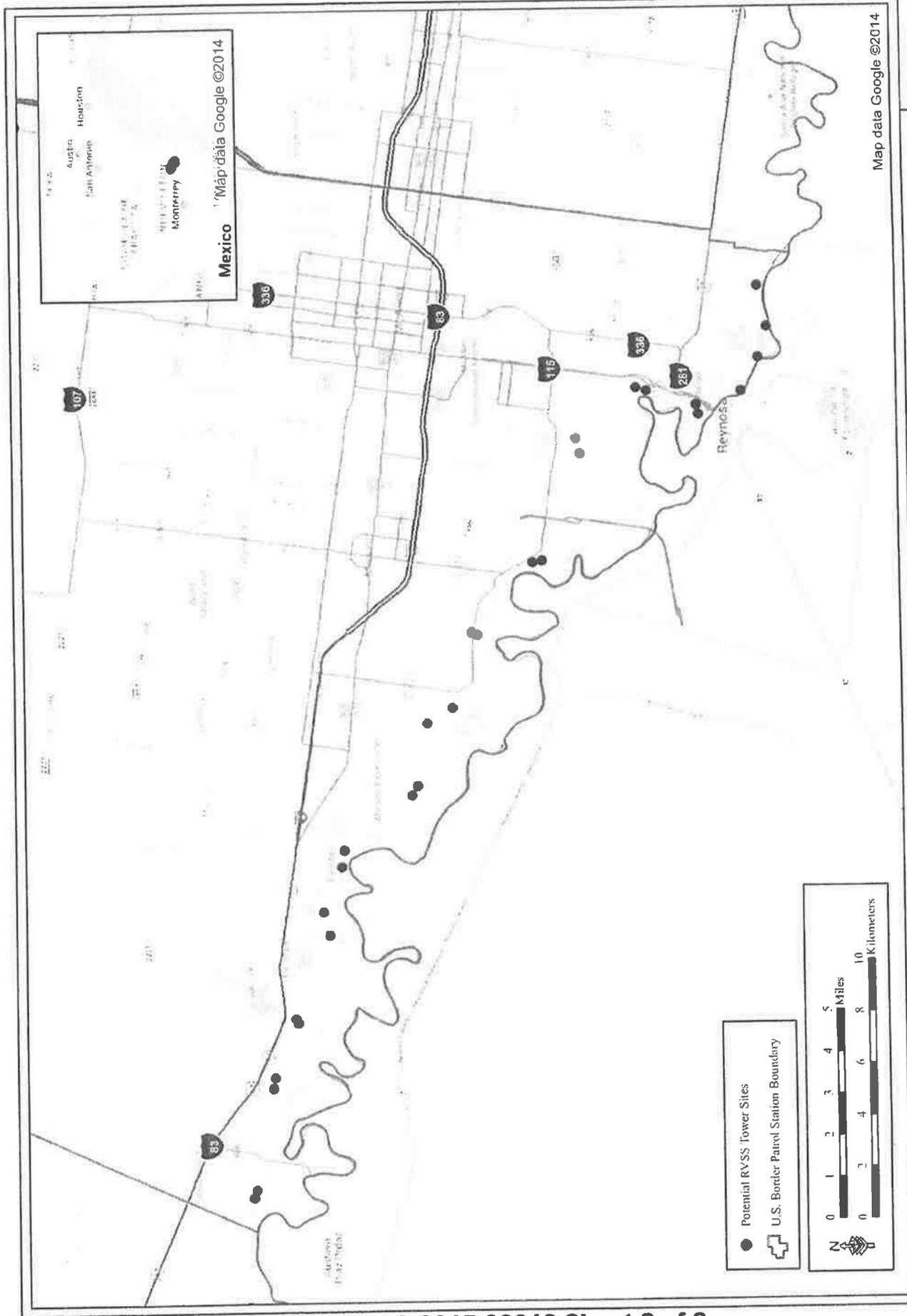


Figure 2. Potential RVSS Tower Sites within McAllen AOR.

Galveston District Environmental Consultant List

Company Name	Point of Contact	Address	Telephone Number	Fax Number	Electronic Mail Address	Website
A. & M. Wetland Consulting Services, L.L.C.	Andy P. Bouse or Michael Christley	502 Vivit, Angleton, Texas 77515	281.595.2118 or 281.627.2659	N/A	andy@texaswetland.com; mike@texaswetland.com	TexasWetland.com
AECOM	Vanessa Pina Tobias	19219 Katy Freeway, Suite 100 Houston Texas 77094	281.646.2400	281.646.2401	vanessa.pina@aecom.com	www.aecom.com
Allen Plumer Associates, Inc.	Loretta E. Mokry	10060 N Dowling RD College Station, TX 77845	979.694.7619	979.694.7619	lmokry@apalenv.com	www.apalenv.com
Allen Plumer Associates, Inc.	Jason Voight	1320 South University Drive, Suite 300 Fort Worth, TX 76107	817.806.1700	817.870.2536	jvoight@apalenv.com	www.apalenv.com
AMEC	Dawn Johnson, PhD	3520 Executive Center DR Suite 200 Austin TX 78731	805.252.4370	512.795.8423	dawn.johnson@amec.com	www.amec.com
Apex TITAN, Inc.	Robin Laine	1601 Rio Grande St., Suite 420 Austin, TX 78701	512.473.8313	512.473.8314	rlaine@apexcos.com	www.apexenv.com
Arcadis U.S. Inc.	Lori K Magyar	2929 Briarpark Drive, Suite 300 Houston, Texas 77042	713.953.4708	N/A	lori.magyar@arcadis-us.com	www.arcadis-us.com
Atwell, LLC	Chris Haas; Project manager Natural Resources	143 Union BLVD, Suite 700 Lakewood, CO 80228	303.825.7110 Cell: 970.471.5141	303.825.7110	chaas@atwell-group.com	www.atwell-group.com
Aviles Engineering Corporation	Shou Ting Hu, P.E.	5790 Windfern Road, Houston TX 77041	713.895.7645	713.895.7943	kfrench@avilesengineering.com	www.avilesengineering.com
Belaire Environmental, Inc	Charlie Belaire	P.O. Box 741 Rockport TX 78381-0741	361.729.2948	361.729.2970	estuary123@aol.com	www.belaireenv.com
Belaire Environmental, Inc	Laura Fox	P.O. Box 741 Rockport TX 78381-0741	361.729.9800	361.729.9800	belaura@sbglobl.net	www.belaireenv.com
Belaire Environmental, Inc	Andi Binton	P.O. Box 741 Rockport TX 78381-0741	361.729.1241	361.729.1441	ab_bei@sbglobl.net	www.belaireenv.com
Belaire Environmental, Inc	B.J. Hill	P.O. Box 741 Rockport TX 78381-0741	361.729.1241	361.729.1441	bh_bei@sbglobl.net	www.belaireenv.com
Benchmark Ecological Services, Inc.	Brett Soutar or Bob Davidson	P.O. Box 158 Katy, TX 77492	281.934.3403	281.934.3404	bsoutar@benchmarkeco.com or bdavidson@benchmarkeco.com	www.benchmarkeco.com
Biological Systems Consultants, Inc.	Jessie Robinson, Senior Project Manager	P.O. Box 54954 Lexington, KY 40509	859.263.4142	N/A	jesse@biologicalsystemsconsultants.com	www.biologicalsystemsconsultants.com
Bio-West, Inc	Dyer Schiltzkus	1018 Frost ST Rosenberg TX 77471	832.595.9064	832.595.9054	dschiltzkus@bio-west.com	www.bio-west.com
Blanton & Associates, Inc.	Jason Schindler	5 Lakeway Centre court, Suite 200 Austin, Texas 78734	512.264.1095 Ext. 117	512.264.1531	schindler@blantonassociates.com	www.blantonassociates.com
Blanton & Associates, Inc.	Don Blanton	5 Lakeway Centre court, Suite 200 Austin, Texas 78734	512.264.1095 Ext. 112	512.264.1531	dblanton@blantonassociates.com	www.blantonassociates.com
Blanton & Associates, Inc.	Kim Johnson	5 Lakeway Centre court, Suite 200 Austin, Texas 78734	512.264.1095 Ext. 120	512.264.1531	kjohnson@blantonassociates.com	www.blantonassociates.com
Blanton & Associates, Inc.	Dean Tesmer	5 Lakeway Centre court, Suite 200 Austin, Texas 78734	512.264.1095 Ext. 124	512.264.1531	dtesmer@blantonassociates.com	www.blantonassociates.com
Blanton & Associates, Inc.	Mark Kainer	5 Lakeway Centre court, Suite 200 Austin, Texas 78734	512.264.1095 Ext. 119	512.264.1531	mkainer@blantonassociates.com	www.blantonassociates.com
Blanton & Associates, Inc.	Dave Severinson	5 Lakeway Centre court, Suite 200 Austin, Texas 78734	512.264.1095 Ext. 118	512.264.1531	dseverinson@blantonassociates.com	www.blantonassociates.com
Blanton & Associates, Inc.	Rick Phillips	5 Lakeway Centre court, Suite 200 Austin, Texas 78734	512.264.1095 Ext. 115	512.264.1531	rphillips@blantonassociates.com	www.blantonassociates.com

Notice: This list is provided for information purposes only and is not intended to serve as an endorsement or as certification of the qualifications of those listed. The following consultants have been added to the list per their request.

Galveston District Environmental Consultant List

Blanton & Associates, Inc.	Cecilia Green	5 Lakeway Centre court, Suite 200 Austin, Texas 78734	512.264.1095	512.264.1531	cecilia.green@blantonassociates.com	www.blantonassociates.com
Blanton & Associates, Inc.	Jim Thompson	1200 Smith Street, Suite 1600 Houston, TX 77002	713.353.8879	713.353.4601	jthompson@blantonassociates.com	www.blantonassociates.com
Blanton & Associates, Inc.	Velma Danielson	300 Convent St, Suite 1330 San Antonio, TX 78205	210.901.5071	210.901.5001	velma.danielson@blantonassociates.com	www.blantonassociates.com
Blue Ox Environmental Planning Services, LLC	Gregg Hamilton	2851 Johnston Street, # 1803 Lafayette, LA 70503-3243	832.377.7317 cell:337.315.7101	337.534.0370	gregg@blueoxenvironmental.com	www.blueoxenvironmental.com
Brown & Gay Engineers, Inc.	Jim Gregory, Director	10777 Westheimer Rd., Suite 400, Houston, TX 77042	281.558.8700	281.558.9701	jgregory@browningay.com	www.browningay.com
Brown and Caldwell	Brett Massoni or Bryan Mason	10777 Westheimer RD Suite 925 Houston TX 77042	713.759.0999	713.308.3886	bmassoni@brwnclld.com or bmason@brwnclld.com	www.brownandcaldwell.com
Cardno Entrix	Robert Ganzak & Bob Nailon	5252 Westchester ST, Suite 250 Houston, Texas 77005	713.666.6223	713.666.5227	robert.ganzak@cardno.com bob.nailon@cardno.com	www.cardnoentrix.com
C-K Associates, LLC	Melissa Denena	616 FM 1960, Suite 575, Houston, TX 77090	281.397.9016	281.397.6637	melissa.denena@c-ka.com	www.c-ka.com
Coast & Harbor Engineering, Inc.	Hugo Bermudez	3410 Far West Blvd Suite 210 Austin TX 78731	512.342.9516	512.342.9708	hugo@coastharboreng.com	www.coastharboreng.com
Coastal Environments Inc.	Sean R Nash RPA	525 S. Carancahua Corpus Christi, Texas 78401	361.854.4885	361.884.1844	snash@coastalenv.com	www.coastalenv.com
Coastal Resource Biologists	Buddy Ortega	P.O. BOX 922, Sweeny, TX 77480	979.482.6916	979.265.9940	budcorebios@gmail.com	N/A
Coastal Surveying of Texas, Inc.	Sidney Bouse	P.O. Box 2742 Crystal Beach TX 77650	409.684.6100	409.684.6112	sid@surveysgalveston.com	www.surveysgalveston.com
Conestoga-Rovers & Associates	Charles E. Jones	5551 Corporate Boulevard Suite 200 Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70808	225.296.6585 Direct 225.247.3352 Mobile	225.952.2978	cjones@crowworld.com	www.crowworld.com
Cox McLain Environmental Consulting, Inc.	Larry Cox	6010 Balcones Drive, Suite 210 Austin, TX 78731	512.338.2223	512.338.2225	larry@coxmcclain.com	www.coxmcclain.com
CRC, LLC International Archeology & Ecology Consultants	Bob D'Aigle, MA	30 N. Wilds Yaupon Circle Spring, TX 77381	832.592.9549	979.530.0331	rdagle@culturalresource.com	www.culturalresource.com
Crouch Environmental Services, Inc	Kay Crouch - President	402 Teetshorn ST Houston TX 77009	713.868.1043	N/A	kay@crouchenvironmental.com	www.crouchenvironmental.com
Crouch Environmental Services, Inc	Matthew Chastain, P.W.S.	402 Teetshorn St Houston TX 77009	713.868.1043	713.863.1043	matt@crouchenvironmental.com	www.crouchenvironmental.com
CSA International, Inc.	Jeffery Landgraf	11757 Katy Freeway Suite 1300 Houston TX 77079	361.563.4457	771.219.3010	jlandgraf@conshelf.com	www.csaintl.com
DCH Environmental Consultants LP	David C. Hamren	204 Brooks Street, Sugar Land TX 77478	281.980.9600	281.980.9622	dhamren@dch-environmental.com	www.dch-environmental.com/
DESCO Environmental Consultants, LP	Justin Rowland and David Young	P.O. Box 1490 Magnolia, TX 77353	281.252.9799	281.789.1003	jrowland@descoenv.com dyoung@descoenv.com	www.descoenv.com
Disorbo Consulting, LLC	Holly Fuels	1010 Travis ST, Suite 916 Houston, Texas 77002	713.955.1214	713.955.1201	hfuels@disorboconsult.com	www.disorboconsult.com
E Sciences, Inc.	Richard Erp	34 E Pine Street, Orlando, FL 32801	407.481.9006	407.481.9627	rearp@esciencesinc.com	www.esciencesinc.com
Ecological, Inc.	Anne Profflet	4901 Wellford Bellaire TX 77401	713.432.7253	713.432.7253	anne.profflet@att.net.	N/A
Ecosystem Planning and Restoration, LLC	Sonny Kaiser	350 N. Sam Houston PKWY E, Suite 290 Houston, Texas 77060	Office: 832.399.3400 Cell: 832.257.4452	919.388.0789	skaiser@eprusa.net	eprusa.net
ELOS Environmental	Ron Ventola, Luke Watkins or Jay Prather	43177 E. Pleasant Road Hammond, LA 70403	985.662.5501 or 504.228.0008	985.662.5504	rventola@elosenv.com	N/A

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Galveston District Environmental Consultant List

				(713) 941-0401 ext. 227	(713) 941-0402		
Enercon Services, Inc.	Mr. Matthew Chastain, PWS	5850 San Felipe Street, Suite 400 Houston, Texas 77057				mchastain@enercon.com	www.enercon.com
Enterprise Products	Carlos O. Hinojosa, CPWS	1100 Louisiana St Houston TX 77002		713.381.4720 or 832.544.3310	713.803.1432	cohinojosa@eprod.com	N/A
Environ International Corporation	Jason Shackelford	8235 YMCA Plaza, Suite 300 Baton Rouge LA 70810		225.408.2856	225.408.2747	jshackelford@environcorp.com	www.environcorp.com
Frederick Environmental Consulting, LLC	David Frederick	N/A		970.946.5020	970.731.1720	jmdcf@skywerx.com	N/A
Freese and Nichols, Inc.	Thomas P. Dixon	10431 Morado Circle, Suite 300 Austin, TX 78759		512.617.3140	512.617.3101	tom.dixon@freese.com	www.freese.com
G2 Partners	Ms. Cathy Warren	10260 Westheimer RD, Suite 400 Houston, Texas 77042		713.260.4014	N/A	cathy.warren@g2partnersllc.com	N/A
Geosyntec Consultants	Michael F. Bloom, PE, CFM, BCEE	11490 Westheimer RD Suite 150 Houston TX 77077		281.810.5010	281.920.4062	mbloom@geosyntec.com	www.geosyntec.com
Goshawk Environmental Consulting, Inc.	Zane Homesley	7500 West Highway 71, Suite 204 Austin, TX 78715 Mailing: PO Box 151525 Austin, TX 78715		512-203-0484	N/A	zhomesley@goshawkenv.com	www.goshawkenv.com
Goshawk Environmental Consulting, Inc.	Valerie Learman	7500 West Highway 71, Suite 204 Austin, TX 78715 Mailing: PO Box 151525 Austin, TX 78715		512-904-8614	N/A	val@goshawkenv.com	www.goshawkenv.com
Half Associates, Inc.	Tricia H. Mosier	4030 West Braker LN Suite 410 Austin TX 78759		512.777.4600 or 512.777.4567	512.252.8141	tmosier@half.com	www.half.com
Half Associates, Inc.	Mike Voinis, PE	14800 St. Mary's Lane, Suite 160, Houston, Texas 77079-2943		713 . 588.2450	281.310.5259	mvoinis@half.com	www.half.com
Half Associates, Inc.	Robert Saenz, PE	5000 West Military Highway, Suite 100, McAllen, Texas 78503-7446		956.664.0286	956.664.0282	rsaenz@half.com	www.half.com
HDR Engineering	Niel McLellan	4635 Southwest Freeway Suite 1000 Houston, Texas 77065		713.622.9264	713.622.9265	niel.mclellan@hdrinc.com	www.hdrinc.com
HDR Engineering	Joe Moake	555. N. Carancahua, Suite 1650 Corpus Christi, TX. 78401		361.696.3300	361.696.3385	joe.moake@hdrinc.com	www.hdrinc.com
HDR Engineering, Inc	James Thomas, PWS, CWB	4401 West Gate Blvd., Suite 400 Austin, TX 78745-1469		512.912.5129	512.912.5158	james.thomas@hdrinc.com	www.hdrinc.com
HNTB	Leah Oberlin	2950 N Loop West, Suite 900 Houston, TX		713.345.1520	713.354.1501	loberlin@hntb.com	www.hntb.com
Horizon Environmental Services	Tony Vazquez	1507 South IH 35 Austin, TX 78741		512.328.2430 cell:512.426.6964	512.328.1804	tony_vazquez@horizon-esi.com	www.horizon-esi.com
Jacobs Engineering Group Inc.	Robb Fishman, Environmental Program Manager	5985 Rogerdale RD Houston, Texas 77072		832.351.7234	832.351.7773	N/A	www.jacobs.com
Live Oak Associates, Inc	Melissa Denena	4318 Mildred St. Bellaire TX 77401		713.505.1762	408.114.1411	mdenena@loainc.com	www.loainc.com
LJA Engineering, Inc	Jene Adler	923 23rd St Galveston, Texas 77550		409.771.0937	409.813.1916	jadler@ljaengineering.com	www.ljaengineering.com
Maismith Marine Services, Inc.	Seth Gambill	3765 South Alameda, Suit 205 Corpus Christi, TX		361.945.0248 or 361.319.4948	N/A	seth@naismithmarine.com	www.naismithmarine.com

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Galveston District Environmental Consultant List

Morris P. Hebert, Inc. – Corporate Operations	Michael Capello – Vice President of Environmental Services	283 Corporate Drive, Houma, LA 70361	985.879.2731	985.876.9052	mcapello@mphinc.com	www.mphinc.com
Morris P. Hebert, Inc. – Houston Operations	Richard Fontenot – Senior Environmental Project Manager	10101 Southwest Freeway, Suite 620, Houston, TX 77074	713.219.1470	713.219.1471	rfontenot@mphinc.com	www.mphinc.com
Naismith Engineering, Inc.	David E Sullivan, C.E.P.	4501 Gollihar Road Corpus Christi TX 78411	361.814.9900	361.814.4401	dsullivan@naismith-engineering.com	N/A
Peloton Land Solutions	Chris A. Hamilton	5751 Kroger Drive, Suite 185 Keller Texas 76244	817.562.3350	N/A	chris.hamilton@pelotonland.com	www.pelotonland.com
Phase Engineering, Inc.	Tracy Watson	5524 Cornish Street Houston Texas 77007	713.476.9844 Cell: 210.997.4056	713.476.9797	tracy@phaseengineering.com	www.phaseengineering.com
Providence Engineering and Environmental Group, LLC	John Gross	11767 Katy Freeway, Suite 403 Houston, TX 77079	281.497.5656	281.497.5657	johngross@providenceeng.com	www.providenceeng.com
QPS Engineering, LLC	Brandy Smart	1300 Commerce Drive Mbon Township, PA 15108	Office: 412.424.8914 Cell: 406.600.7014	N/A	brandy.smart@qpsps.com	www.qpsps.com
raba-Kistner Environmental, Inc.	Sam Blanco, AICP	12821 West Golden Lane San Antonio Texas 78249	210.694.3691	210.699.6426	sblanco@rki.com	www.rki.com
River Specialists, LLC	Bruce Cole	PO Box 593303 San Antonio, Texas 78259	210.870.7204	N/A	cole@riverspecialists.com	www.riverspecialists.com
RPS	Mark Fuller, P.E.	1250 Capital of Texas Highway Building Three Suite 200 Austin, Texas 78746	512.347.7588	512.347.8243	markfuller@rpsgroup.com	www.rpsgroup.com
RPS Group	Allen Rienstra	Cello Center 1250 South Capital of Texas Highway Building 3, STE 200 Austin, TX 78746	512.341.7588 cell: 409.504.6933	512.347.8243	allenrienstra@rpsgroup.com	www.rpsgroup.com
Shellmark Engineering, LLC	Rhonda Gregg, Senior Project Manager	921 FM517 Rd East Dickinson, TX 77539	409.935.9986	409.938.8706	rgregg@shelmark.net	www.shelmark.net
Shellmark Engineering LLC	Rhonda Gregg, Senior Project Manager	921 FM517 Road East Dickinson, TX 77539	409.935.9986	409.938.8706	rgregg@shelmark.net	www.shelmark.net
Shellmark Engineering LLC	Marcus Michna, P.E., Principal	921 FM517 Road East Dickinson, TX 77539	409.935.9986	409.938.8706	mjmichna@shelmark.net	www.shelmark.net
Shoreline Environmental Assessments	Anne Williams	14493 South Padre Island Drive Suite A-328 Corpus Christi TX 78418	361.815.6041	N/A	info@SEAssessments.net	www.SEAssessments.com
Southeast Archeological Research, INC (SEARCH)	Jason Burns, M.A. RPA, Cultural Resources Project Manager	428 E. Government St. Pensacola, FL 32502-6132	850.607.2846 or 352.215.3153	850.607.8439	jason@searchinc.com	www.searchinc.com
Spere 3 Environmental, Inc.	Kerri Smith	1501 Bill Owens Parkway Longview TX 75604	903.297.4673	903.297.4675	ksmith@spere3environmental.com	www.sphere3environmental.com
Spirit Environmental	Travis Beakley	20465 State Highway 249, Suite 300 Houston, TX 77070	281.664.2835	281.664.2491	tbeakley@spiritenv.com	http://www.spiritenvironmental.com/
Stantec Consulting Services Inc	Mr. Brandon L. Owens, PWS	2700 NE Loop 410, Suite 125 San Antonio, TX 78217	210.560.5061 cell or 210.561.9876 office	281.647.1399	Brandon.Owens@Stantec.com	Stantec.Com
Stelly Environmental, LLC	David L. Stelly	309 N. Adelaide St, Suite A terrell, Texas 75160	Office: 469.474.7890 Mobile: 214.734.8013	N/A	dstelly42@yahoo.com	N/A
Stream Wetland Services, LL	David Richard or Dean Roberts	P.O. Box 40 Lake Charles LA 70602 or 2417 Shell Beach DR Lake Charles LA 70601	337.433.1055 David x119 Dean x121	337.439.2170	N/A	http://www.streamcompany.com/
SWCA Environmental Consultants	Matt Stahman, Program Director	10245 West Little York Road, Suite 600 Houston, TX 77040	713.934.9900	713.934.9906	mstahman@swca.com	www.swca.com

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125 EAST 11TH STREET | AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701-2483 | (512) 463-8588 | WWW.TXDOT.GOV

February 13, 2015

Paul Enriquez
Environmental Branch Chief
Border Patrol Facilities and Tactical Infrastructure
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20229

Re: Remote Video Surveillance System

Dear Mr. Enriquez:

In review of your January 15, 2015 letter to Mr. Toribio Garza concerning your preparation of an Environmental Assessment addressing the proposed upgrade of the Remote Video Surveillance System (RVSS) within the Rio Grande Valley, we have no comments at this time.

However, if you want to connect to any state roadways as you improve or construct access roads to the proposed RVSS towers, you will need to consider the Texas Department of Transportation's access management policies and permitting processes once you are at the design stage.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your proposed project. If you need any additional information, do not hesitate to call me at 956-702-6180.

Sincerely,

Norma Y. Garza, P.E.
Advance Planning and Project Development Supervisor
Pharr District



INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY AND WATER COMMISSION
UNITED STATES AND MEXICO

February 26, 2015

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
UNITED STATES SECTION

Mr. Paul Enriquez
Environmental Branch Chief
Border Patrol Facilities and Tactical Infrastructure
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20229

Subject: Preparation of Environmental Assessment to upgrade the Remote Video Surveillance Systems (RVSS) within the U.S. Border Patrol Rio Grande City, McAllen, and Weslaco's Areas of Responsibility

Dear Mr. Enriquez:

The United States Section, International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) is in receipt of your letter dated January 29, 2015, regarding the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Border Patrol Facilities and Tactical Infrastructure (BPFTI), Program Management Office (PMO), proposal to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) to upgrade the video surveillance system (RVSS) in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV). The proposal consists of improving the current system to include construction, operation, and maintenance of the RVSS that may include up to eighty-four (84) towers. Maps of the proposed locations of the towers were included with your correspondence.

With regard to the above, the USIBWC would like to be included as early as possible in the NEPA process in order to provide timely information and feedback. As you are aware, some of these tower locations may fall within the limits of the USIBWC LRGV Flood Control Project and as such, we would not only have to evaluate the project for environmental effects but, also for factors such as deflection of flood flows and increases to the water surface elevation as required under the 1970 Boundary Treaty with Mexico. In addition, any project within the LRGVFCP would require a license through the USIBWC, which is a separate requirement once the NEPA process has been adequately completed.

Staff from the USIBWC will be available to assist CBP during the NEPA process to provide information regarding our flood control project and convey information to assist in the development of this proposal. Please feel free to contact Mr. Gilbert Anaya, Chief of our Environmental Management Division, at (915) 832-4702 or to gilbert.anaya@ibwc.gov. Mr. Anaya will assist you with any information that you need from previous NEPA actions and datasets

The Commons, Building C, Suite 100 • 4171 N. Mesa Street • El Paso, Texas 79902-1441
(915) 832-4100 • Fax: (915) 832-4190 • <http://www.ibwc.gov>

that might help assess the affected environment for this project that falls within the USIBWC's jurisdiction.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (915) 832-4749.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jose A. Nuñez".

Jose A. Nuñez, P.E.
Principal Engineer

cc: Scott Recinos
Program Manager
1331 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Suite 1220
Washington, CC 20004



TONKAWA TRIBE OF OKLAHOMA
**NATIVE AMERICAN GRAVES PROTECTION
AND REPATRIATION ACT**

• 1 RUSH BUFFALO ROAD, TONKAWA, OKLAHOMA 74653 •
• PHONE (580) 628-2561 • FAX: (580) 628-9903 •
WEB SITE: www.tonkawatribe.com

Dear Sir or Madam,

Regarding your proposed projects, the Tonkawa Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma submits the following:

The Tonkawa Tribe has no specifically designated historical or cultural sites identified in the above listed project area. However if any human remains, funerary objects, or other evidence of historical or cultural significance is inadvertently discovered then the Tonkawa Tribe would certainly be interested in proper disposition thereof.

We appreciate notification by your office of the many projects on-going, and as always the Tonkawa Tribe is willing to work with your representatives in any manner to uphold the provisions of NAGPRA to the extent of our capability.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Miranda 'Nax'ce' Myer".

Miranda "Nax'ce" Myer
NAGPRA Representative



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

South Texas Refuge Complex

3325 Green Jay Road

Alamo, Texas 78516

April 8, 2015



Paul Enriquez
Environmental Branch Chief
Border Patrol Facilities and Tactical Infrastructure
1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Mr. Enriquez:

This responds to your request for our input in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed construction, operation, and maintenance of Remote Video Surveillance Systems (RVSS) towers in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. It is our understanding the proposed action may include the installation of several of these towers on portions of the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge. In some cases, this may require rights-of-way or easements on refuge lands for proposed tower sites and associated infrastructure. As you are aware, these refuges were established to protect important fish and wildlife resources for the continuing benefit of the American people. In the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas alone, over 95% of the native wildlife habitat has been lost to development. A primary goal of these refuges is to protect the remainder of these unique habitats as well as to maintain ecological processes for the benefit of resident and migratory wildlife.

Therefore, with respect to the proposed action, we recommend the EA include a range of alternatives that avoid or minimize the need for further impacts to sensitive areas of the refuges. The granting of rights-of-ways and/or easements across national wildlife refuges is outlined in pertinent part both in regulation and policy (Fish and Wildlife Service Manual, Part 340 FW3-Rights-of-Way; 603 FW1-Appropriate Refuge Uses; and 603 FW2-Compatibility). We appreciate your request for input and look forward to an opportunity to review the EA, when it becomes available. If we can be of further assistance, please feel free to contact me at (956) 784-7591 or via email at Robert_jess@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Jess
Project Leader, South Texas Refuge Complex

cc: Bryan Winton, Refuge Manager, Lower Rio Grande Valley NWR, Alamo, TX
Gisela Chapa, Refuge Manager, Santa Ana NWR, Alamo, TX
Kelly McDowell, Refuge Supervisor-OK/TX Refuges,
Ernesto Reyes, Biologist, Ecological Services Field SubOffice, Alamo, TX
Joseph Zidron, CBP, Office of Border Patrol Facilities/Tactical Infrastructure



White Mountain Apache Tribe

Office of Historic Preservation

PO Box 1032

Fort Apache, AZ 85926

Ph: (928) 338-3033 Fax: (928) 338-6055

To: Paul Enriquez, BPFTI Environmental Branch Chief
Date: January 7, 2015
Re: EA for the proposed Upgrade of its Remote Video Surveillance System, Texas

.....
The White Mountain Apache Tribe Historic Preservation Office appreciates receiving information on the proposed project, December 18, 2014. In regards to this, please attend to the following checked items below.

► ***There is no need to send additional information unless project planning or implementation results in the discovery of sites and/or items having known or suspected Apache Cultural affiliation.***

N/A - The proposed project is located within an area of probable cultural or historical importance to the White Mountain Apache tribe (WMAT). As part of the effort to identify historical properties that maybe affected by the project we recommend an ethno-historic study and interviews with Apache Elders. The tribe's ***Cultural Heritage Resource Director Mr. Ramon Riley*** may be contacted at (928) 338-3033 for further information should this become necessary.

► Please refer to the attached additional notes in regards to the proposed project:

We have received and reviewed information regarding BPFTI's proposal to prepare an Environmental Assessment to provide improved surveillance and detection capabilities to the areas of greatest risk for illegal cross-border activity located within the USBP Rio Grande Valley, Texas, and we have determine the proposed plans will ***not have an impact*** on the White Mountain Apache tribe's (WMAT) historic and/or traditional cultural properties. Regardless, any/all ground disturbing activities should be monitored ***if*** there are reasons to believe that there are human remains and/or funerary objects are present, and if such remains and/or objects are encountered they shall be treated with respect and handled accordingly until such remains are repatriated to the affiliated tribe.

Thank you. We look forward to continued collaborations in the protection and preservation of place of cultural and historical significance.

Sincerely,

Mark T. Altaha -THPO

White Mountain Apache Tribe
Historic Preservation Office



United States Department of the Interior
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Texas Coastal Ecological Service Field Office
3325 Green Jay Rd
Alamo, TX 78516

February 13, 2015

Paul Enriquez
Environmental Branch Chief
Border Patrol Facilities and Tactical Infrastructure
Program Management Office
U.S. Custom and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20229

Consultation No. 02ETCC00-2015-TA-0173

Dear Mr. Enriquez:

Thank you for your letter received December 22, 2014, on effects of a proposed upgrade of the Remote Video Surveillance System (RVSS) on federally listed species in Hidalgo and Starr counties, Texas. Border Patrol Facilities and Tactical Infrastructure (BPFTI) Program Management Office, within Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is preparing an Environmental Assessment addressing the proposed project within the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) Rio Grande City, McAllen, and Weslaco's Stations' Area of Responsibility (AORs) in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) Sector. In addition, your project was evaluated with respect to wetlands and other important fish and wildlife resources.

The purpose of the proposed action is to improve surveillance and detection capabilities in areas of greatest risk for illegal cross-border activity in the USBP RGV Sector. Currently these are Rio Grande City, McAllen, and Weslaco Stations' AORs. Pre-project planning is also underway to perform similar RVSS upgrades within the remaining RGV Sector station AORs, but is not part of the proposed action. The RVSS Upgrade will allow USBP agents to constantly surveil large areas, contributing to agent safety and increasing operational effectiveness.

The EA will analyze the potential for significant adverse impacts and beneficial effects on the environment from the proposed action and a no action alternative. The proposed action includes the construction, operation, and maintenance of an upgraded RVSS that provides sufficient coverage to affect control of the Station AORs while meeting the purpose and need of the project. CBP is currently analyzing 84 field sensor tower locations, 42 primary and 42 alternate locations-as well as several communication relay towers for use within the RVSS Upgrade project. The infrastructure to be considered includes improving existing and constructing new roads to access RVSS towers, as well as support utilities.

There are six federally-listed endangered plants (Zapata bladderpod, ashy dogweed, Johnston's frankenia, star cactus, Walker's manioc, and Texas ayenia) that occur between Starr and Hidalgo counties on federal, state and private lands. Zapata bladderpod has Critical Habitat in Starr County. Johnston's frankenia is being considered for delisting, so the Service is concerned with impacts that could prevent the species' recovery. Some private landowners have conservation agreements with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the Nature Conservancy, and the Service to protect these plants. There are also many federal, state, and private lands that have not been surveyed for endangered plants, so when USBP selects a preferred alternative, we recommend endangered plant surveys.

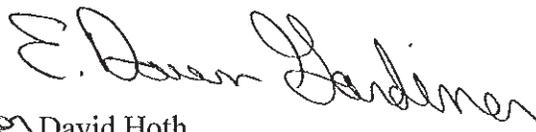
There are two National Wildlife Refuges in Hidalgo and Starr counties: Lower Rio Grande Valley and Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge. Although the exact location of the proposed sites have not been determined, any planned/proposed RVSS towers, transmission lines, and access roads going through refuge lands, will require right-of-ways (Realty Division) and agency clearances that will take considerable time to consider, process, and prepare a "Compatibility Determination". Compatibility determinations signify whether proposed uses of national wildlife refuges are compatible with their established purposes and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System and there is no guarantee of ultimate approval, therefore, both refuges recommend avoidance of any new proposed RVSS sites on Refuge lands. ROW line requests on refuge land will also require an easement and compatibility determination. There are also other conservation lands that require coordination and ROW permits from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and The Nature Conservancy in Hidalgo and Starr counties. Also, some of the sites are located in the U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission flood control zone areas along the river and require a permit from IBWC to place permanent structures in the flood control zone.

Regarding other important fish and wildlife resources, please keep in mind that many bird species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act nest in the project areas. As the Federal agency responsible for the protection of migratory birds, the Service recommends that vegetation disturbance avoid the general nesting period of March through August. If clearing must occur during that time, please have a biologist trained in bird identification survey areas proposed for disturbance to check for nesting birds, to avoid the inadvertent destruction of nests, eggs, etc. and violation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

There is an Avian Protection Plan (APP) prepared by The Edison Electric Institute's Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC) designed to minimize adverse impacts of power lines to protected avian species. Working in a partnership to benefit both the birds and the electric utility industry, the APP Guidelines were developed in a joint, collaborative way. The APP Guidelines serve as a "tool box" to select and tailor components applicable to specific project needs. These guidelines are intended to be used in conjunction with APLIC's *Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power Lines: The State of the Art in 1996* and *Mitigating Bird Collisions with Power Lines: The State of the Art in 1994*, or the most current editions of these documents, which contain more detail on construction design standards and line siting recommendations. Copies of the APP Guidelines and current information on related issues can be downloaded from APLIC (<http://aplic.org>) and Edison Electric Institute (<http://eei.org>) websites.

A list of federally threatened and endangered species is enclosed for your assessment. Also enclosed are cell tower guidelines to minimize impacts to migratory birds. We appreciate the opportunity to provide pre-planning information and look forward to providing further assistance. If we can be of further assistance, please contact Ernesto Reyes at (956) 784-7560.

Sincerely,


for David Hoth
Acting Field Supervisor

Enclosures

cc:
Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Corpus Christi, TX

Threatened and Endangered Species of Texas
September 26, 2012

County-by-County lists containing species information is available at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service), Southwest Region, web site <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/EndangeredSpecies/lists>.

This list represents species that may be found in counties throughout the state. It is recommended that the field station responsible for a project area be contacted if additional information is needed.

DISCLAIMER

This County by County list is based on information available to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at the time of preparation, date on page 1. This list is subject to change, without notice, as new biological information is gathered and should not be used as the sole source for identifying species that may be impacted by a project.

Hidalgo County

Gulf Coast jaguarundi	(E)	<i>Herpailurus yagouaroundi cacomitli</i>
Northern aplomado falcon	(E)	<i>Falco femoralis septentrionalis</i>
Ocelot	(E)	<i>Leopardus pardalis</i>
Red-crowned parrot	(C)	<i>Amazona viridigenalis</i>
Sprague's pipit	(C)	<i>Anthus spragueii</i>
Star cactus	(E)	<i>Astrophytum asterias</i>
Texas ayenia	(E)	<i>Ayenia limitaris</i>
Walker's manioc	(E)	<i>Manihot walkerae</i>

Starr County

Ashy dogweed	(E)	<i>Thymophylla (=Dyssodia) tephroleuca</i>
Gulf Coast jaguarundi	(E)	<i>Herpailurus yagouaroundi cacomitli</i>
Johnston's frankenia	(E)	<i>Frankenia johnstonii</i>
Least tern	(E ~)	<i>Sterna antillarum</i>
Ocelot	(E)	<i>Leopardus pardalis</i>
Sprague's pipit	(C)	<i>Anthus spragueii</i>
Star cactus	(E)	<i>Astrophytum (=Echinocactus) asterias</i>
Walker's manioc	(E)	<i>Manihot walkerae</i>
Zapata bladderpod	(E w/CH)	<i>Lesquerella thammophila</i>



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Raleigh Field Office

Post Office Box 33726

Raleigh, North Carolina 27636-3726

Service Interim Guidelines For Recommendations On Communications Tower Siting, Construction, Operation, and Decommissioning

1. Any company/applicant/licensee proposing to construct a new communications tower is strongly encouraged to co-locate the communications equipment on an existing communication tower or other structure (*e.g.*, billboard, water tower, or building mount). Depending on tower load factors, from 6 to 10 providers may collocate on an existing tower.
2. If collocation is not feasible and a new tower or towers are to be constructed, communications service providers are strongly encouraged to construct towers no more than 199 feet above ground level (AGL), using construction techniques which do not require guy wires (*e.g.*, use a lattice structure, monopole, etc.). Such towers should be unlighted if Federal Aviation Administration regulations permit.
3. If constructing multiple towers, providers should consider the cumulative impacts of all of those towers to migratory birds and threatened and endangered species as well as the impacts of each individual tower.
4. If at all possible, new towers should be sited within existing “antenna farms” (clusters of towers). Towers should not be sited in or near wetlands, other known bird concentration areas (*e.g.*, state or Federal refuges, staging areas, rookeries), in known migratory or daily movement flyways, or in habitat of threatened or endangered species. Towers should not be sited in areas with a high incidence of fog, mist, and low ceilings.
5. If taller (>199 feet AGL) towers requiring lights for aviation safety must be constructed, the minimum amount of pilot warning and obstruction avoidance lighting required by the FAA should be used. Unless otherwise required by the FAA, only white (preferable) or red strobe lights should be used at night, and these should be the minimum number, minimum intensity, and minimum number of flashes per minute (longest duration between flashes) allowable by the FAA. The use of solid red or pulsating red warning lights at night should be avoided. Current research indicates that solid or pulsating (beacon) red lights attract night-migrating birds at a much higher rate than white strobe lights. Red strobe lights have not yet been studied.
6. Tower designs using guy wires for support which are proposed to be located in known raptor or waterbird concentration areas or daily movement routes, or in major diurnal migratory bird movement routes or stopover sites, should have daytime visual markers on the wires to prevent collisions by these diurnally moving species. (For guidance on markers, see *Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC). 1994. Mitigating Bird Collisions with Power Lines: The State of the Art in 1994. Edison Electric Institute, Washington, D.C., 78 pp.* and *Avian Power Line*

Interaction Committee (APLIC). 1996. Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power Lines. Edison Electric Institute/Raptor Research Foundation, Washington, D.C., 128 pp. Copies can be obtained via the Internet at <http://www.eei.org/resources/pubcat/enviro/>, or by calling 1-800/334-5453).

7. Towers and appendant facilities should be sited, designed and constructed so as to avoid or minimize habitat loss within and adjacent to the tower “footprint.” However, a larger tower footprint is preferable to the use of guy wires in construction. Road access and fencing should be minimized to reduce or prevent habitat fragmentation and disturbance, and to reduce above ground obstacles to birds in flight.

8. If significant numbers of breeding, feeding, or roosting birds are known to habitually use the proposed tower construction area, relocation to an alternate site is recommended. If this is not an option, seasonal restrictions on construction may be advisable in order to avoid disturbance during periods of high bird activity.

9. In order to reduce the number of towers needed in the future, providers are encouraged to design new towers structurally and electrically to accommodate the applicant/licensee’s antennas and comparable antennas for at least two additional users (minimum of three users for each tower structure), unless this design would require the addition of lights or guy wires to an otherwise unlighted and/or unguyed tower.

10. Security lighting for on-ground facilities and equipment should be down-shielded to keep light within the boundaries of the site.

11. If a tower is constructed or proposed for construction, Service personnel or researchers from the Communication Tower Working Group should be allowed access to the site to evaluate bird use, conduct dead-bird searches, to place net catchments below the towers but above the ground, and to place radar, Global Positioning System, infrared, thermal imagery, and acoustical monitoring equipment as necessary to assess and verify bird movements and to gain information on the impacts of various tower sizes, configurations, and lighting systems.

12. Towers no longer in use or determined to be obsolete should be removed within 12 months of cessation of use.



Life's better outside.®

February 5, 2015

Paul Enriquez
Border Patrol Facilities and Tactical Infrastructure
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20229

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Carter P. Smith
Executive Director

RE: Preparation of a Draft Environmental Assessment for remote video surveillance systems upgrade in Rio Grande City, McAllen and Weslaco Stations' area of responsibility, Starr and Hidalgo Counties, Texas

Dear Mr. Enriquez:

This letter is in response to your request for comments and information regarding the proposed project referenced above. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to address the proposed upgrade of its Remote Video Surveillance System (RVSS) within the Rio Grande City, McAllen and Weslaco Stations' Area of Responsibility (AOR). The Office of Technology Innovation and Acquisition (OTIA) is the CBP proponent office for the RVSS upgrade project.

Project Description

The proposed project includes the construction, operation, and maintenance of an upgraded RVSS for the Rio Grande City, McAllen and Weslaco Stations' AORs. The EA will evaluate potential significant adverse impacts and beneficial effects of the project on the environment. Only the preferred and no action alternatives are being considered. Currently, CBP is analyzing 84 field sensor tower locations; 42 primary and 42 alternate tower locations. Towers would either be self-supporting lattice towers or monopoles, ranging in height from 60 to 199 feet. The permanent footprint of each tower site would be approximately 10,000 square feet and would consist of the tower, equipment shelter, power source, and parking area with a fence enclosure. Several communication relay towers within the various AORs would also be constructed as part of the RVSS upgrade project.

Infrastructure to be considered in the RVSS upgrade include improvements to existing access roads, and the construction of new roads to access RVSS towers as well as support utilities.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) staff reviewed the information provided and offers the following comments and recommendations. Due to the scale and the lack of detail (e.g., landmarks or coordinates) of the project area maps provided to TPWD, comments regarding the siting of proposed towers are based on their approximate locations.

TPWD Review Methods

As part of the review, TPWD searched the most recent version of the Texas Natural Diversity Database (TXNDD) of known records for species and rare resources within 1.5 miles of the approximate location of each RVSS tower site. TXNDD Element Occurrence (EOID) records found within the delineated study area boundary and extending five miles outside of that boundary provide a best estimate of the species and other rare resources that could potentially occur in the project's study area. **A lack of site-specific records should not be interpreted as presence/absence data, but instead that little information is available to date.**

Rare and Protected Species

Based on the project as presented, the TPWD annotated county list of rare species for Hidalgo and Starr counties, and presently known TXNDD records for the general project area, the following listed species could be impacted by proposed project activities *if suitable habitat* is present:

Federal and State Listed Endangered

- * Jaguarundi (*Herpailurus yaguarondi*)
- * Ocelot (*Leopardus pardalis*)
- Ashy dogweed (*Thymphylla tephroleuca*)
- * Johnston's frankenia (*Frankenia johnstonii*)
- Star cactus (*Astrophytum asterias*)
- Texas ayenia (*Ayenia limitaris*)
- * Walker's manioc (*Manihot walkerae*)
- * Zapata bladderpod (*Physaria thamnophila*)

Federal Candidate for Listing

- Sprague's Pipit (*Anthus spragueii*)

State Listed Threatened

- * Black-spotted newt (*Notophthalmus meridionalis*)
- * Mexican burrowing toad (*Rhinophrynus dorsalis*)
- Mexican treefrog (*Smilisca baudinii*)
- * Sheep frog (*Hypopachus variolosus*)
- * South Texas siren (larger form) (*Siren* sp. 1)
- * White-lipped frog (*Leptodactylus fragilis*)
- Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl (*Glaucidium brasilianum cactorum*)
- * Grey Hawk (*Asturina nitida*)
- Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet (*Campostoma imberbe*)
- * Rose-throated Becard (*Pachyramphus aglaiae*)
- Tropical Parula (*Parula pitiayumi*)
- White-faced Ibis (*Plegadis chihi*)

- White-tailed Hawk (*Buteo albicaudatus*)
- Wood Stork (*Mycteria americana*)
- Zone-tailed Hawk (*Buteo albonotatus*)
- Southern yellow bat (*Lasiurus ega*)
- * White-nosed coati (*Nasua narica*)
- Black-striped snake (*Coniophanes imperialis*)
- Northern cat-eyed snake (*Leptodeira septentrionalis septentrionalis*)
- * Reticulate collared lizard (*Crotaphytus reticulatus*)
- Speckled racer (*Drymobius margaritiferus*)
- * Texas horned lizard (*Phrynosoma cornutum*)
- * Texas indigo snake (*Drymarchon melanurus erebennus*)
- * Texas tortoise (*Gopherus berlandieri*)

Species of Concern

- Audubon's Oriole (*Icterus graduacauda audubonii*)
- Brown Jay (*Cyanocorax morio*)
- Mexican Hooded Oriole (*Icterus cucullatus cucullatus*)
- * Sennett's Hooded Oriole (*Icterus cucullatus sennetti*)
- Cave myotis bat (*Myotis velifer*)
- Plains spotted skunk (*Spilogale putorius interrupta*)
- * Spot-tailed earless lizard (*Holbrookia lacerata*)
- * Bailey's ballmoss (*Tillandsia baileyi*)
- * Chihuahua balloon-vine (*Cardiospermum dissectum*)
- * Gregg's wild-buckwheat (*Eriogonum greggii*)
- Kleberg saltbush (*Atriplex klebergorum*)
- * Mexican mud-plantain (*Heteranthera mexicana*)
- * Runyon's cory cactus (*Coryphantha macromeris* var *runyonii*)
- * Runyon's water-willow (*Justicia runyonii*)
- * St. Joseph's staff (*Manfreda longiflora*)

Special Features and Natural Communities

- * American elm-Hackberry Series (*Ulmus Americana-Celtis spp.*)
- * Cedar elm-Hackberry Series (*Ulmus crassifolia-Celtis laevigata*)
- * Texas ebony-Anacua Series (*Pithecellobium ebano-Ehretia anacua*)
- * Texas ebony-Snake-eyes Series (*Pithecellobium ebano-Phaulothamnus spinescens*)

Managed Areas

- * USFWS-Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge
- * USFWS-Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge
- * Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park
- * Falcon State Park
- * TPWD-Las Palomas Wildlife Management Area

Review of the TXNDD indicates that occurrences of the species and features shown above and preceded by an asterisk (*) have been documented in and/or possibly within 1.5 miles of the project locations. EOID data sheets and maps of the project area are being provided as electronic attachments.

Based on a review of the TXNDD, over 150 EOIDs have been documented in the two county project corridor. Most of these EOIDs indicate that habitat suitable to support listed species could occur at or near proposed project sites. Additionally, of the 84 potential tower sites, many occur adjacent to or within tracts of managed land, including multiple tracts of the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuges and Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, two State Parks, seven State Wildlife Management Areas, and Nature Conservancy tracts that occur along the border and are components of the Wildlife Corridor.

The TXNDD is intended to assist users in avoiding harm to rare species or significant ecological features. Absence of information in an area does not imply that a species is absent from that area. Given the small proportion of public versus private land in Texas, the TXNDD does not include a representative inventory of rare resources in the state. Although it is based on the best data available to TPWD regarding rare species, the data from the TXNDD do not provide a definitive statement as to the presence, absence or condition of special species, natural communities, or other significant features within your project area. These data are not inclusive and **cannot be used as presence/absence data**. They represent species that could potentially be in your project area. This information cannot be substituted for on-the-ground surveys.

Please be aware that determining the actual presence of a species in a given area depends on many variables including daily and seasonal activity cycles, environmental activity cues, preferred habitat, transiency and population density (both wildlife and human). The absence of a species can be demonstrated only with great difficulty and then only with repeated negative observations, taking into account all the variable factors contributing to the lack of detectable presence.

Please review the most current TPWD annotated county list of rare species, as other rare species could be present depending upon habitat availability. These lists are available online at: <http://tpwd.texas.gov/gis/rtest/>

For the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) rare species lists please visit: http://eco.fws.gov/tess_public/serviet/gov.doi.tess_public.serviets.EntryPage.

Recommendation: Because the TXNDD is continuously updated, as a standard protocol, TPWD recommends requesting data from the TXNDD prior to project initiation. Requests may be submitted to TexasNatural.DiversityDatabase@tpwd.texas.gov. Additional information

about the TXNDD program is available online at:
http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/wildlife_diversity/txndd/.

Federal Regulations

Endangered Species Act

Federally-listed animal species and their habitat are protected from “take” on any property by the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Take of a federally-listed species can be allowed if it is “incidental” to an otherwise lawful activity and must be permitted in accordance with Section 7 or 10 of the ESA. Federally-listed plants are not protected from take except on lands under federal/state jurisdiction or for which a federal/state nexus (i.e., permits or funding) exists. Any take of a federally listed species or its habitat without the required take permit (or allowance) from the USFWS is a violation of the ESA.

Recommendation: The proposed RVSS tower locations would be located in close proximity to properties managed specifically for federally-listed wildlife species, including plants. The Draft EA should thoroughly evaluate the potential effects of the project on federally-listed wildlife, including plants, and its habitat. Project plans should include proposed measures developed to avoid and/or minimize impacts to federally-listed species.

In general, clearing dense corridors of brush for access roads should be avoided in order to preserve travel corridors that are necessary for listed felids (i.e, jaguarundi, ocelots). Prior to clearing areas to access or construct RVSS towers, TPWD recommends those surveying areas for the presence of federally-listed plants following protocols established by the USFWS. Surveys should be conducted by a qualified botanist with experience with rare plants of south Texas. If federally-listed plants are observed, the USFWS and TPWD should be contacted.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) implicitly prohibits intentional *and unintentional* take of migratory birds, including their nests and eggs, except as permitted by the USFWS. This protection applies to most native bird species, including ground nesting species. Although not documented in the TXNDD, many bird species which are not listed as *threatened* or *endangered* are protected by the MBTA and are known to be year-round or seasonal residents or seasonal migrants through the proposed project area. Additional information regarding the MBTA is available from the USFWS-Southwest Regional Office (Region 2) at (505) 248-7882.

During the winter, South Texas is the southernmost limit for many migratory birds and it is the northernmost extreme in the breeding season (spring-summer) for other species. Additionally, the proposed project area is in the middle of the Central Migratory Flyway through which millions of birds pass during spring and fall migration. Available food, cover, and water sources provide important stopover habitats for both Trans-Gulf and Circum-Gulf Neo-tropical migrants.

Biologically, this area of south Texas is highly productive and provides a range of habitats including large tracts of undeveloped land, grasslands, brush, riparian woodlands and freshwater habitats. The diversity of habitats is suitable to support a diversity of wildlife species. In particular, the range of habitats provides cover, feeding, nesting and loafing areas for many species of birds; grassland birds, Neo-tropical migrants, wading birds, and raptors.

Recommendation: The proposed project would traverse approximately 100 miles through two counties and very diverse habitats that are within the range and suitable habitat for many rare species and migratory birds. TPWD recommends the Draft EA thoroughly evaluate the proposed project's potential impacts to federally-listed species and migratory birds.

Any vegetation clearing that would be required to improve existing access roads, create new access roads or construct RVSS towers and associated equipment should be scheduled to occur outside of the April 1-July 15 migratory bird nesting season in order to fully comply with the MBTA. Contractors should be made aware of the potential of encountering migratory birds (either nesting or wintering) on the proposed project sites and be instructed to avoid negatively impacting them.

If clearing vegetation in project areas must be scheduled to occur during the nesting season, TPWD recommends that the vegetation to be impacted should be surveyed for active nests prior to clearing by a *qualified biologist*. If active nests are observed during surveys, TPWD recommends avoiding the area until the young have fledged or nests are abandoned.

The proposed RVSS structures would be either self-supporting towers or monopole towers ranging in height from 180 to 199 feet and 60 to 140 feet, respectively.

Comment: TPWD appreciates that the proposed towers would be self-supporting or monopoles that do not require support by multiple guy wires. In general, guyed towers increase the probability of bird collisions compared to self-supporting structures.

Recommendation: TPWD recommends tower design, siting, and construction follow the guidelines recommended by the USFWS in the

“Communication Tower Siting, Construction, Operation, and Decommissioning Recommendations” available online at: <http://www.fws.gov/habitatconservation/communicationtowers.html>. In particular, TPWD recommends avoiding siting towers near wetlands, in areas of known bird concentrations (e.g., state or federal refuges), or in known high bird use areas. Lighting on towers, if used, should consist of minimum intensity, maximum off-phased white strobe lights. Security lighting within the fenced compound should be down-shielded.

State Regulations

Parks and Wildlife Code

State law prohibits any take (incidental or otherwise) of state-listed species. Laws and regulations pertaining to state-listed endangered or threatened animals are contained in Chapters 67 and 68 of the Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPW) Code; laws pertaining to endangered or threatened plants are contained in Chapter 88 of the TPW Code. There are penalties, which may include fines and/or jail time in addition to payment of restitution values, associated with take of state-listed species. Please see “Laws and Regulations Applicable to TPWD Review” at: http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/wildlife_diversity/habitat_assessment/laws.phtml.

In addition to state- and federally-protected species, TPWD tracks special features, natural communities, species of concern (SOC), and species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) in the TXNDD and actively promotes their conservation. TPWD considers it important to evaluate and, if necessary, minimize impacts to rare species and their habitat to reduce the likelihood of endangerment.

For purposes of relocation, surveys, monitoring, and research, terrestrial state-listed species may only be handled by persons permitted through the TPWD Wildlife Permits Program. For more information regarding Wildlife Permits, please visit TPWD’s wildlife permit website at: <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/business/permits/land/wildlife/>. For the above-listed activities that involve aquatic species please contact the TPWD Kills and Spills Team (KAST) for the appropriate authorization. For more information on KAST please visit http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/water/environconcerns/kills_and_spills/regions.

Recommendation: As with federally-listed species, TPWD recommends that the Draft EA thoroughly evaluate the proposed project’s potential impacts to state-listed endangered, threatened and rare species, including rare plants and remnant natural communities. Each RVSS tower and associated infrastructure

should be designed to avoid or minimize adverse impacts to the state's fish, wildlife and habitat resources.

Protection of Public Parks and Recreational Lands

TPW Code §26.001 states that a department, agency, political subdivision, county, or municipality of this state may not approve any program or project that requires the use or taking of public lands unless it determines that there is "no feasible and prudent alternative to the use or taking of such land", and the project "includes all reasonable planning to minimize harm to the land...resulting from the use or taking."

Two state parks and multiple tracts of the Las Palomas WMA administered by TPWD occur at or within 1.5 miles of one or more proposed RVSS tower locations. Because they are managed specifically for wildlife and for providing outdoor recreational opportunities, state parks and WMAs generally provide higher quality wildlife habitat than surrounding areas and often display an exceptional diversity of wildlife. In the Lower Rio Grande Valley, these areas are extremely important for migratory birds.

Recommendation: TPWD recommends that during scoping and planning, all TPWD managed areas in or near the project area be identified. When determining the precise locations for the proposed RVSS towers, TPWD recommends avoiding locating towers within or immediately adjacent to tracts of land managed by TPWD. If alternative tower locations include placement within state park or WMA tracts or accessed through these properties, coordination with TPWD would be required per Chapter 26.

Construction Impacts

Suitable habitat for state-listed species, particularly reptiles, occurs in the project area. Small wildlife such as the Texas tortoise, lizards and snakes are susceptible to falling into excavations (e.g., open pits, trenches, bore holes, etc.) left open and/or uncovered in a project area. They are also subject to direct impacts (i.e., crushing by heavy equipment) during construction.

Recommendation: Many reptiles, including the Texas horned lizard and the Texas Tortoise, become more active during the spring mating season and may be more susceptible to being negatively impacted by construction activities. If possible, TPWD recommends scheduling construction activities involving clearing, grading or bulldozing to occur outside of the spring to avoid and or minimize potential impacts to these species.

Also, during the late fall and winter (October through March), reptiles become less active or completely inactive hibernating only a few inches (6 to 12 inches) underground or occupying burrows or similar cavities which makes them much more susceptible to impacts from heavy equipment and compaction. Completing major ground disturbing activities such as constructing new access roads, before October when reptiles become inactive and could be utilizing burrows in areas subject to disturbance would minimize potential negative impacts.

Several state-listed snakes occur in the project area. Some, such as the black-striped snake and speckled racer, reach the northern limits of their range in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Recommendation: Because all snakes are generally perceived as a threat and killed when encountered during vegetation clearing, TPWD recommends project plans include comments to inform contractors of the potential for state-listed snakes, all of which are non-venomous, to occur in the project area. Contractors should be advised to avoid impacts to state-listed and other snakes as long as the safety of the workers is not compromised. For the safety of workers and preservation of a natural resource, attempting to catch, relocate and/or kill non-venomous or venomous snakes is discouraged by TPWD. If encountered, snakes should be permitted to safely leave project areas on their own. TPWD encourages construction sites to have a “no kill” policy in regard to wildlife encounters.

Potential impacts to state-listed species would best be accomplished by excluding them from active construction areas. Recommendations for excluding the Texas tortoise from construction sites are available on TPWD’s website (see link below). These recommendations are also applicable to other reptiles such as the Texas horned lizard.

Recommendation: In order to avoid and/or minimize potential negative impacts to state fish and wildlife resources, TPWD recommends reviewing and implementing appropriate best management practices (BMPs) during construction. A number of BMPs and additional information are available on TPWD’s Wildlife Habitat Assessment Program website: http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/wildlife_diversity/habitat_assessment/tools.phtml.

Information on other important natural resource considerations is available online at: http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/wildlife_diversity/habitat_assessment/resources.phtml

Mr. Paul Enriquez
February 5, 2015
Page 10 of 10

I appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on this project and look forward to reviewing the Draft EA when it is available. Please contact me at (361) 825-3240 or russell.hooten@tpwd.texas.gov if you have any questions regarding our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Russell Hooten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Russell Hooten
Wildlife Habitat Assessment Program
Wildlife Division

/rh 34140

Attachments-3 (electronic)