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Preserving natural habitats, watershed resources, and trails

March 17, 2009

John Boccio, Project Manager  
California Public Utilities Commission  
505 Van Ness Avenue  
San Francisco CA 94102

Re: Antelope Pardee Renewable Energy Transmission Project

Dear Mr. Boccio:

On behalf of Antelope Valley Conservancy, I request your time and consideration of our concern, and would appreciate your assistance and response. At the March 2009 meeting of the Leona Valley Town Council, we learned that the tricolored blackbird, a California Species of Special Concern, was observed on the Reitano Ranch in the right-of-way of the Tehachapi Renewable Energy Project now under construction. It is believed that the EIR appears to have missed this critical habitat. This has the potential for a devastating impact on the population of this protected bird, and Antelope Valley Conservancy is deeply concerned.

Noted ornithologist Kimball Garrett, of the LA County Natural History Museum, reportedly documented a colony of 1,500 foraging tricolored blackbirds at the Reitano Ranch in Leona Valley in January. As there were only 5,500 tricolors observed in Southern California during the 2008 triennial Statewide Survey, this population segment appears quite significant. The Leona Valley area has long been documented as a breeding location of the tricolored blackbird, with large quantities of these birds observed along the Amargosa Creek and at sag ponds in and around Leona Valley. Antelope Valley Conservancy has two preservation projects nearby, at Una Lake and Elizabeth Lake, where tricolored blackbirds are sighted. These and other close preserves, Ritter Ranch, Joshua Ranch and the Warnack Nature Preserve, can be expected to share any adverse impacts to the Reitano Ranch population.

Appropriate mitigation or project reconfiguration may be necessary to prevent degradation of a species already in peril, and the assertion has been made that this project is in violation of the California Environmental Quality Act. Please work expeditiously to investigate this matter, and please keep us apprised of your findings and response.

Respectfully Submitted,  
ANTELOPE VALLEY CONSERVANCY  
By Wendy Reed, President

cc: Scott Harris, California Department of Fish and Game