
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power

Burbank Boulevard Trunk Line Draft Environmental Assessment

Prepared for
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

P.O. Box 532711
Los Angeles, CA 90053

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Prepared by



CH2MHILL

3 Hutton Centre Drive
Suite 200
Santa Ana, CA 92707

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1.0 Project Information

1.1 Project Proponent

City of Los Angeles
Department of Water and Power
111 North Hope Street, Room 1356
Los Angeles, CA 90012

1.2 Project Name

Burbank Boulevard Trunk Line

1.3 General Project Location

Sepulveda Flood Control Basin Vicinity, Los Angeles County, California, as shown in Figure 1-1.

1.4 Purpose and Need

In 1996, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (Department) performed a study to assess the structural integrity of pipelines that were installed before 1940. The study is on file at the General Office Building of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. The current Ventura Boulevard Trunk Line was constructed in 1921. It is leaking and, with a 30-inch diameter, is undersized for current water distribution requirements. The purpose of the Burbank Boulevard Trunk Line Project is to replace the existing Ventura Trunk Line with a new trunk line under Burbank Boulevard and other area streets.

The replacement has been designed as a 54-inch-diameter pipeline to connect the Encino Reservoir service area with the Stone Canyon Reservoir Inlet Line allowing future expansion to the Franklin Reservoir Inlet Line. During peak demand days, the line would allow additional water to be supplied to the Stone Canyon Reservoir Complex. In addition, during emergency outages of the Encino Inlet Line or Stone Canyon Inlet Line, the Burbank Boulevard Trunk Line can supply water from either direction, creating a backup supply source. The new trunk line would provide a more reliable supply of water and would allow better operational flexibility of the water distribution system in the City of Los Angeles.

In addition to the 54-inch trunk line to replace the Ventura Trunk Line, the Department is proposing a 42-inch backup pipeline that would be constructed after the 54-inch line is completed. The backup pipeline would run perpendicular to the Burbank Boulevard Trunk Line and would provide additional north-south water distribution redundancy in the southern portion of the San Fernando Valley.

Proposed 42-inch backup pipeline route and regulating station

Proposed 54-inch trunk line route

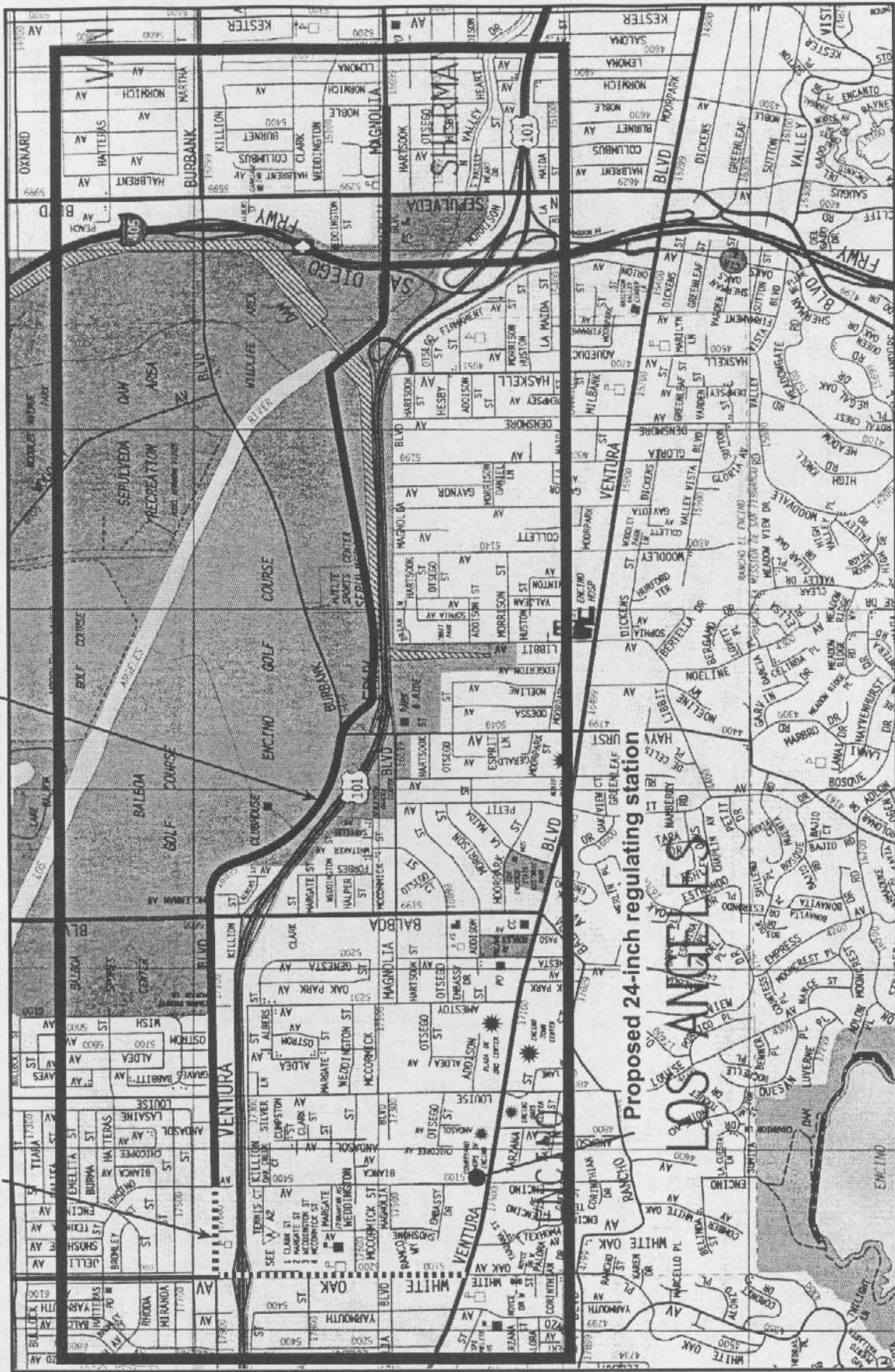


Figure 1-1
Location of Proposed Project
Burbank Boulevard Trunk Line

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SOURCE: Thomas Bros. Maps, 2000 Edition, P. 561



The proposed project also includes the construction of two trunk line pressure regulating stations. One regulating station is required to connect the proposed trunk line and the proposed backup pipeline; the second regulating station is required to connect existing Ventura and Encino pipelines.

1.5 Project Location

1.5.1 Trunk Line

The Burbank Boulevard Trunk Line would utilize streets and private property within the City of Los Angeles. The general location of the proposed trunk line would be along Burbank Boulevard, through the Sepulveda Dam Recreational Area (Sepulveda Basin), under the Sepulveda Dam and the Los Angeles River, under Interstate 405 (I-405) and the Sepulveda Boulevard/Magnolia Boulevard intersection, and east of Sepulveda Boulevard along Magnolia Boulevard (Figure 1-1).

The westerly connection of the trunk line is at the Encino Inlet in the vicinity of the intersection of Burbank Boulevard and Encino Avenue. The route would proceed east along Burbank Avenue to the intersection of Burbank Boulevard and Hayvenhurst Avenue, boring under the Burbank Boulevard/Balboa Boulevard and Burbank Boulevard/Hayvenhurst Avenue intersections. In the vicinity of Hayvenhurst Avenue, the trunk line would proceed in a southeasterly direction, boring beneath Encino Creek and continuing into the Sepulveda Basin, as shown in Figure 1-1. The trunk line route through Sepulveda Basin crosses open land currently used for flood control and agriculture, and proceeds along the north side of the Sepulveda Dam, just west of the Los Angeles River.

At a point west of the main channel of the Los Angeles River, the project proposes to bore under the dam and the river and exit south of the dam and east of the river, near the current location of the spillway. From the spillway, the trunk line would proceed across vacant land to the east and then bore under I-405. The route would continue along Magnolia Boulevard west of Sepulveda Boulevard, bore beneath the intersection of Sepulveda and Magnolia Boulevards, and continue to the easterly connection of the trunk line near the intersection of Magnolia Boulevard and Noble Avenue (Figure 1-1). The total length of the proposed trunk line is approximately 17,500 feet.

Two 54-inch gate valves would be constructed as part of the trunkline, one at Balboa Boulevard and the second at the intersection of Magnolia Boulevard and Noble Avenue. The gate valves would facilitate inspection and/or repair of the trunkline in the Sepulveda Basin in the case of a scheduled or emergency shutdown. An 8-inch flap gate would be constructed for draining groundwater from a filter blanket into the Los Angeles River at the downstream side of the Sepulveda Dam.

1.5.2 Backup Pipeline

The general location of the proposed backup pipeline would be along White Oak Avenue between Ventura and Burbank Boulevards and along Burbank Boulevard between White Oak and Encino Avenues (Figure 1-1).

The Department proposes to connect the backup pipeline to the existing Ventura Boulevard Trunk Line at the intersection of Ventura Boulevard and White Oak Avenue. The backup pipeline route would then travel northwards in White Oak Avenue to the intersection of White Oak Avenue and Burbank Boulevard. The route would bore beneath the White Oak Avenue/Burbank Boulevard intersection and proceed eastward in Burbank Boulevard to Encino Avenue. The total length of the backup pipeline is approximately 3,750 feet.

1.5.3 Regulating Stations

A regulating station that would provide a 42-inch connection for the backup pipeline would be required in Burbank Boulevard between White Oak and Encino Avenues.

A second regulating station that would provide a 24-inch connection between the existing Encino and Ventura pipelines would be required in Encino Avenue, immediately north of Ventura Boulevard.

3.0 Affected Environment and Environmental Impacts

This section addresses the different categories of the affected environment (existing conditions) at the location of the project and then evaluates the environmental impacts anticipated to result from the proposed project. The initial text of each environmental category describes the affected environment and the expected impacts of the preferred alternative, which is based upon minimizing adverse environmental effects. Twenty-one environmental parameters are analyzed to the extent considered adequate to determine if the project as scoped would pose significantly adverse environmental effects.

3.1 Vegetation/Habitat

3.1.1 Affected Environment

The proposed trunk line route lies predominately along urban areas with no natural vegetation; this includes urban areas along Burbank Boulevard and Magnolia Avenue. California oak saplings and other ornamental trees are growing in the median of Burbank Boulevard between Balboa Boulevard and Hayvenhurst Avenue. Undeveloped land along the proposed route is largely confined to areas in the vicinity of the Sepulveda Basin, including the riparian vegetation along Encino Creek, found along a portion of Burbank Boulevard. Vegetation types in the project area where natural vegetation exists include non-native annual grasslands and localized riparian communities. Specific vegetation communities occurring along the pipeline route are described below:

Non-native Annual Grassland: Limited areas of non-native annual grassland occur in the Sepulveda Basin adjacent to riparian or agricultural areas, and a small parcel of annual grassland occurs just south and east of the spillway below the Sepulveda Dam. Dominant species in the project area include wild oats (*Avena barbata*; *A. fatua*); soft chess (*Bromus mollis*); filaree (*Erodium* spp.); and flowering annuals, including California poppy (*Eschscholtzia californica*) and others. Some woody species, including naturalized exotic species, such as eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus* spp.), are present in scattered open occurrences in annual grasslands in the project area.

Mule Fat Scrub: This community consists of a depauperate, tall, herbaceous riparian scrub strongly dominated by mule fat (*Baccharis salicifolia*). It is maintained by disturbance, including grazing or frequent flooding, and found along intermittent stream channels below about 2,000 feet. It is often interspersed with, or found as an understory to, more developed riparian communities with willow (*Salix* spp.) overstories. In the project area, it is found in small patches in disturbed portions of streamside vegetative communities, including along Encino Creek and its tributary in the vicinity of Burbank Boulevard and Hayvenhurst. Patches of this are found on the main branch of Encino Creek near the proposed pipeline crossing.

Southern Sycamore- Alder Riparian Woodland: This community is represented in this area by moderately tall, open to dense, broadleafed streamside woodland dominated by western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*); Goodding's willow (*Salix gooddingii*); Oregon ash (*Fraxinus oregona*); California walnut (*Juglans californica*); and exotics to this region, including California fan palm (*Washingtonia filifera*). This community occurs along perennial streams in the vicinity of the Sepulveda Basin, including Encino Creek and its tributaries. More specifically, this community is found along the branch of Encino Creek, which parallels Burbank Boulevard, including in the site of the proposed pipeline crossing near Hayvenhurst.

Southern Cottonwood-Willow Riparian Forest: This community has limited representation in the vicinity of the proposed project; it is primarily found in overflow areas of the Sepulveda Basin. It is dominated by Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), western sycamore, Goodding's willow, and other shrubs and trees; the overstory canopy is generally open, with dense shrub growth consisting of willow saplings. No occurrences of this community were observed directly in the path of the proposed pipeline route. The nearest occurrence was observed on the east side of the Los Angeles River, out of the area that would be impacted.

3.1.2 Environmental Impacts

Construction of the proposed project may require removal of the California oak saplings and other ornamental trees growing in the median of Burbank Boulevard between Balboa Boulevard and Hayvenhurst Avenue.

Vegetation types in the project area where natural vegetation exists include non-native annual grasslands and localized riparian communities. Small patches of mule fat scrub may be impacted where the project trenches through Encino Creek immediately north of Ventura Freeway. Small areas of non-native annual grassland may be impacted adjacent to riparian or agricultural areas and just south and east of the spillway below the Sepulveda Dam.

3.2 Riparian/Wetland/Aquatic Resources

3.2.1 Affected Environment

South of Balboa Boulevard, across from the Encino Golf Course club house, a small perennial creek parallels the roadway (Figure 3-1, Reach A). A well developed riparian canopy consisting of willows (*Salix* sp.) and ash (*Fraxinus* spp.) exists here. The riparian canopy is dense, well stratified, and up to 60 feet in height. The bank full channel is approximately 6 to 8 feet wide. The creek is a western tributary to Encino Creek, and continues to the confluence with the main branch of Encino Creek near Hayvenhurst. The project proposes boring beneath this creek just upstream of the confluence, to the east of Hayvenhurst (Figure 3-1, Reach B).

Well-developed riparian habitat also exists along the main branch of Encino Creek. This drainage, as shown in Figure 3-1, Reach C, originates in the Santa Monica Mountains to the south, and flows north into the Sepulveda Basin, eventually emptying into the Los Angeles River. The project proposes crossing Encino Creek in the reach north of Ventura Freeway, but prior to the confluence with the western tributary. Riparian habitat is degraded in

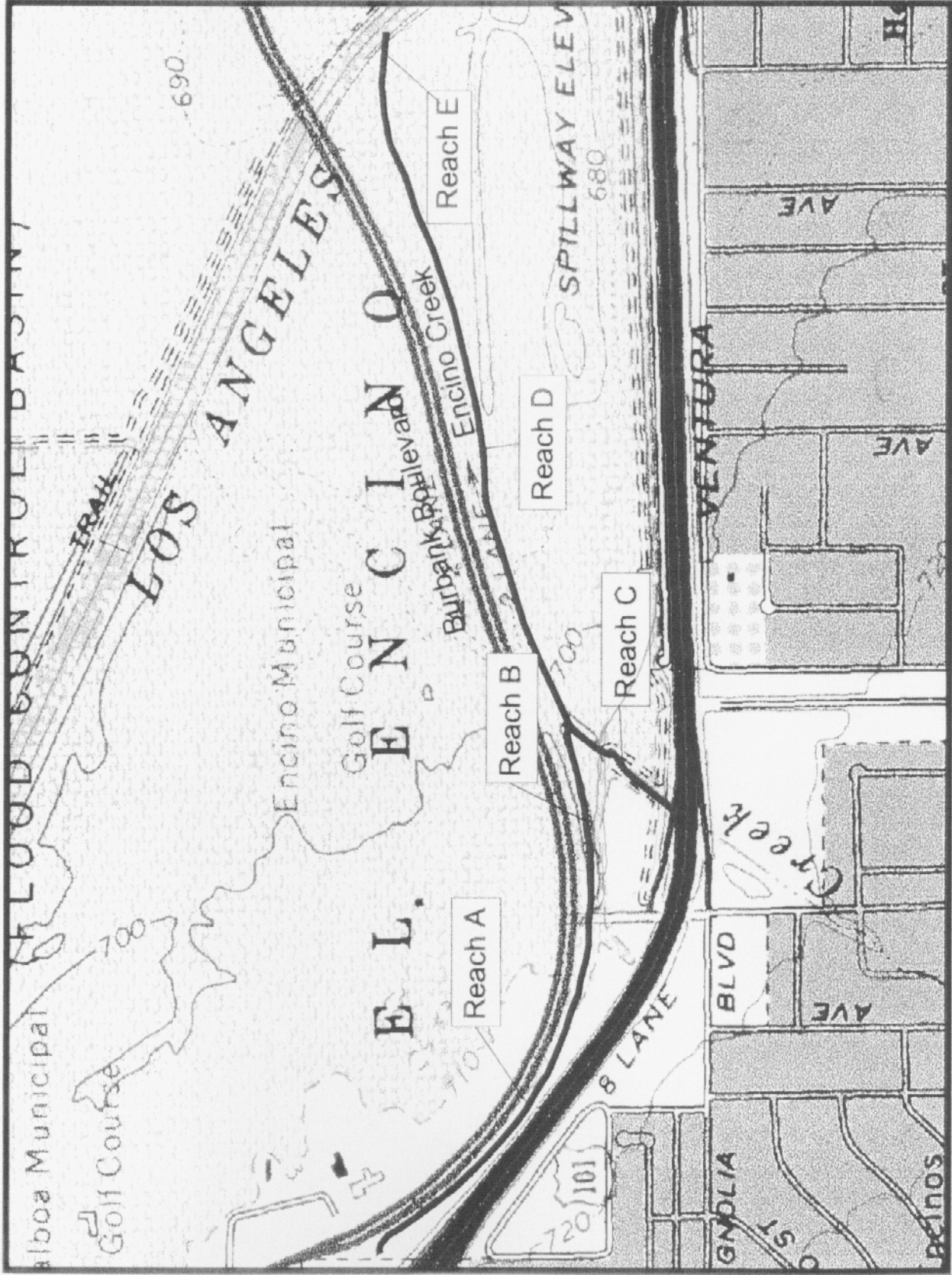


Figure 3-1
 Reaches of Encino Creek
 Burbank Boulevard Trunk Line Project

Reach C due to apparent trimming of riparian trees for agricultural operations, trash and other debris in the channel, and low water quality apparently resulting from low flows and high eutrophication.

3.2.2 Environmental Impacts

Most of the riparian communities occurring along the proposed route would potentially be considered wetlands under the provisions of the Clean Water Act (CWA), and would be subject to jurisdiction by the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) under Section 404 of the CWA.

Wetlands temporarily impacted by the proposed pipeline include the crossing located at the main branch (Figure 3-1, Reach C) of Encino Creek just north of Ventura Freeway, adjacent to agricultural fields in the Sepulveda Basin. Here the degraded riparian community is approximately 20 to 30 feet wide.

The pipeline crossing would consist of a 54-inch buried pipe, constructed with conventional cut and cover techniques. A temporary dam of sandbags and a diversion channel or lateral piping would be used to dewater the channel during construction. The pipeline trench would be approximately 10 feet deep, allowing for a minimum of 4 feet of cover once the stream channel is restored. The sideslope ratio in the pipeline trench would be 1:1; alternatively, if the soil will not support a 1:1 sideslope, sheet pile may be driven to provide additional stability. Topsoil would be removed initially from the construction area in the stream channel and stockpiled. Spoils from the main pipeline trench would be stockpiled outside the wetland area. The maximum linear extent along the stream channel impacted by construction activities, including the dam and diversion channel, would be 100 feet or roughly 0.07-acre of wetland impact. This would include up to 30 feet for the actual trench width, a 15- to 20-foot work area, and additional areas for construction of the temporary dam and diversion structures.

Additional potential wetland impacts from the project could occur at the mouth of Encino Creek where it empties into the Los Angeles River (Figure 3-1, Reach E). A road crosses Encino Creek at this location; and, although disturbed, considerable wetland vegetation occurs at this location. Vegetation consists of emergent herbaceous growth. The project proposes enhancing this road for improved construction vehicle access. Enhancements may include grading or construction of a temporary crossing bridge approximately 20 feet wide and 100 feet long. Potential impacts would occur to approximately 0.05-acre of herbaceous wetland growth along and within the existing road. It is worth noting that vegetation in the creek mouth is regularly scraped out by the USACE to maintain flow.

3.3 Wildlife

3.3.1 Affected Environment

Approximately 25 percent of the proposed project is within the Sepulveda Basin, which is known for a rich presence of bird species. The Los Angeles River provides a convenient fly-away for many birds crossing Los Angeles County, and many migratory birds reportedly use the small lakes at Sepulveda Basin as a stopover for food and rest. Over 200 species of birds have been seen in the Sepulveda Basin.

The Sepulveda Basin contains a wide variety of potential wildlife habitat, including lacustrine and riverine open water habitat, coastal and valley freshwater marsh, mule fat and southern willow scrub, riparian woodlands, and non-native annual grassland. Lacustrine and riverine open water habitat supports many species of waterfowl, including Canada goose. Freshwater wetlands are frequented by bullfrog and muskrat, while scrub communities provide foraging and nesting habitat for a number of bird species. Riparian woodlands provide important foraging and breeding habitat for several vertebrates, including Cooper's hawk and red shouldered hawk. Non-native annual grasslands generally support large populations of small- and mid-sized mammals, and species of birds that prey on small mammals, including red-tailed hawk and barn owl.

3.3.2 Environmental Impacts

The proposed project may temporarily affect local wildlife in the Sepulveda Basin. However, the trunk line route has been designed to avoid disruption to the wildlife area in the Sepulveda Basin, and instead traverses the Sepulveda Basin where it abuts Ventura Freeway. Impacts to wildlife from the proposed project are anticipated to be less than significant.

3.4 Endangered/Threatened Species and Candidate/ Special-Status Species

3.4.1 Affected Environment

Species listed as threatened or endangered under the state or federal Endangered Species Acts (ESAs), with potential to occur along the proposed pipeline route, are listed here.

Least Bell's Vireo: Suitable habitat may exist for this species in the more extensive willow riparian areas in the Sepulveda Basin. However, riparian habitat in the immediate vicinity of the proposed project is degraded due to encroaching human and agricultural activities, and is not suitable for this species. Database searches of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) for this species in the area were also negative. For the reasons stated above, no impacts to this species are anticipated from project construction.

Coastal California Gnatcatcher: No suitable habitat for this species was observed along the proposed route. CNDDDB records occur in the vicinity of the proposed project, but are from areas in the adjacent Santa Monica mountains with suitable coastal sage scrub habitat. No impacts are anticipated to this species from pipeline construction.

Southwestern Willow Flycatcher: Suitable habitat may exist for this species in the more extensive willow riparian areas near the proposed pipeline route. However, no records of this species exist anywhere in the immediate vicinity of the proposed project. Database searches of the CNDDDB for this species in the area were negative. The Audubon Society has no records of breeding for this species in the area. The species probably does not occur in the vicinity of the proposed project. Therefore, no impacts to this species are anticipated.

California Red-legged Frog: Encino Creek and its tributaries may provide suitable habitat for this species; however, there is a large population of bullfrogs in this area, and generally red-legged frog populations react negatively to the presence of bullfrogs. Additionally, no

records of this species exist in the CNDDDB in the vicinity of the proposed project. No impacts are anticipated to this species from pipeline construction.

Braunton's milkvetch: This perennial plant species is a member of the pea family. It generally occurs in disturbed areas in chaparral, but may also be found in grasslands or coastal sage scrub. Very limited and marginal habitat for this species exists in grassland areas along the proposed route. Records for this species exist in the CNDDDB, but come from natural vegetation areas in the adjacent Santa Monica Mountains. There are no records in the immediate vicinity of the proposed project, and no impacts are anticipated to this species.

In addition to the state and federal endangered and threatened species listed above, a number of special-status species have recorded occurrence or the potential to occur in the project area. These species are listed below.

Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia*): This species is listed as a Species of Special Concern with California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). It is a year-long resident of open, dry grasslands and deserts. It nests in old ground squirrel burrows or other small mammal burrows, as well as pipes, culverts, and other artificial structures. Breeding occurs in March through August, with the peak activity in April and May. It has a moderate potential of occurring in open grassland and agricultural areas in the vicinity of the Sepulveda Basin.

San Diego Horned Lizard: This species is listed as a Species of Special Concern with CDFG. It occupies coastal sage scrub and chaparral and other open habitats, including sandy washes. It prefers areas with friable, rocky, or shallow sandy soils. The preferred food of this species is ants. It has a low potential to occur in grasslands and other vegetated areas along the proposed route.

Southwestern Pond Turtle: This species breeds and forages in perennial watercourses with ample pool habitats, and basking sites. It generally prefers watercourses with pools 2 or more feet deep. It lays eggs in upland areas adjacent to watercourses, and spends summer aestivation periods in dense vegetation, shallow pits, or leaf litter in uplands areas.

Two-striped Garter Snake: This species is highly aquatic, found in or near permanent and ephemeral fresh water, often in streams with rocky beds and riparian vegetation. It is sensitive to the presence of exotic species, including bullfrog.

Arroyo Chub: This species occurs in permanent watercourses, especially in slow moving streams with mud and sand bottoms; it feeds heavily on invertebrates associated with dense aquatic vegetation.

Santa Ana Sucker: This species is endemic to the Los Angeles Basin coastal streams. It is a habitat generalist, but prefers sand, cobble, or boulder bottoms and cool, clear water with ample algae growth.

3.4.2 Environmental Impacts

Limited potential exists for the occurrence of Least Bell's vireo and California Red-legged Frog within the area that may be disturbed by the proposed project. Based on the results of site inspections and database reviews conducted, the potential for impacts to Endangered and Threatened Species is considered less than significant.

Potential for impacts to San Diego horned lizard would result from soil disturbing activities in occupied habitat in upland grasslands and riparian areas, including take of individuals and habitat. Potential impacts to the burrowing owl would occur in occupied grassland habitats, including take of individuals and habitat. Potential impacts to southwestern pond turtle, two-striped garter snake, arroyo chub, and Santa Ana sucker would occur from construction activities in stream crossings occupied by these species, including take of individuals and habitat, or disruption of spawning sites for Santa Ana sucker or arroyo chub.