



March 31, 2014

Joanna Callenbach
YCS Investments
170 Maiden Lane, Suite 800
San Francisco, CA 94108

Re: Young Ranch Golden Eagle Surveys

Dear Ms. Callenbach:

The purpose of this letter is to summarize the results of surveys for golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) at the Young Ranch property in San Jose, Santa Clara County, California. Surveys were conducted to determine if golden eagles are nesting within or near the proposed development area (Project Area) in 2014 following recommendations from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS; Pagel et al. 2010). The golden eagle is broadly protected from “take” by the federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, and is also considered a Fully Protected Species by California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).

Background

The golden eagle is a large raptor that occurs in open and semi-open areas from sea level to high elevation. Typical occupied habitats include grasslands, shrublands, deserts, woodlands, and coniferous forests. Breeding activity occurs broadly from January through August, and in California is usually initiated in January to March. The large stick nests of this species are reused across years and may be maintained throughout the year. Nests are most often placed on the ledges of steep cliffs, but also occur in trees and on tall manmade structures (e.g., utility towers). Golden eagles forage over wide areas, feeding primarily on medium-sized mammals (e.g., ground squirrels and rabbits), large birds, and carrion.

WRA biologists have observed golden eagles incidentally at the Young Ranch property on several occasions while conducting field activities. Most observations were made in late March and early April during butterfly surveys, conducted annually from 2008 to 2013, and consisted of birds soaring overhead. No behavior thought to be indicative of breeding or nesting by golden eagles was noted during any of these observations. While suitable cliff nesting habitat is not present within or adjacent to the Young Ranch property, trees and taller utility structures could be used for nesting. The open grasslands and oak woodlands of the Young Ranch property also provide suitable golden eagle foraging habitat. The nearest documented nesting occurrence in the CDFW’s Natural Diversity Database is approximately 4.5 miles southwest of the Young Ranch property, and dates from 1993 (CDFW 2014).

Methods

The survey methods for the Project Area were developed using the USFWS “Interim Golden Eagle Inventory and Monitoring Protocols; and Other Recommendations” document (Pagel et al. 2010).

Two observation points with far-reaching vistas were selected to search for and monitor golden eagle behavior (Figure 1). Specifically, all potential eagle nesting sites (trees and utility structures) within either (1) 0.25 mile of proposed construction and (2) 0.5 mile of proposed construction within the viewshed of the nest site (i.e., the potential nesting substrate and construction area are visible from one another) were visible from at least one of the observation points. Two surveys were conducted, the first on January 29 and the second on March 17, 2014. Surveys were four hours in duration and occurred primarily during AM hours. During each survey, a WRA wildlife biologist was present and continuously observing at each observation point, covering the entire respective viewsheds. The locations of all golden eagles observed were mapped, and behaviors noted, including any indication of breeding activity (e.g., courting or mating behavior or nest construction or maintenance). During the surveys, visible trees were also scanned carefully for the presence of large stick nests (even if unattended by eagles or other raptors). Observers used spotting scopes (with 60x magnification), binoculars, and the naked eye during both surveys. Observed focal areas of golden eagle activity were examined directly following the March 17 survey.

Results and Discussion

Survey data are provided in Table 1 below. Golden eagles were observed during both surveys. However, no golden eagle nesting behavior or potential nests were observed during the surveys (including in visible areas beyond the survey range, greater than 0.5 mile from the Project Area).

Table 1. Golden Eagle Survey Data at Young Ranch in 2014

Date	Survey time (continuous observation)	Weather	# golden eagles observed	Nesting behavior observed?
January 29	9:15 AM – 1:15 PM	partly cloudy (fog prior to survey start); wind 2 - 4 mph	2	no
March 17	9:05 AM – 1:15 PM	partly cloudy; wind variable, 4-12 mph	3	no

A summary of each specific golden eagle observation is provided below.

January 29

- From 11:30 AM to 12:00 PM, one golden eagle (age indeterminate) was observed perched in a relatively isolated, small oak tree located approximately 0.7 mile southeast of Observation Point 2. After flying off to the southwest, this bird joined a second golden eagle (in off-site air space) and was observed to continue soaring to the southwest for approximately 15 minutes until it was no longer visible.
- At 1:05 PM, an immature golden eagle (with substantial white markings in the tail and wings) was observed soaring over Silver Creek Valley Road to the north of Young Ranch. This bird then landed on an off-site rock outcrop located approximately 2.0 miles northwest of Observation Point 1, where it perched for approximately five minutes before flying out of sight to the north.

March 17

- From 10:05 to 10:40 AM, an immature golden eagle was intermittently perched on top of the off-site rock outcrop located approximately 2.0 miles northwest of Observation Point 1. This bird was likely the same bird observed on January 29 and appeared to be foraging.
- At 12:20 PM, an adult golden eagle was observed perched in an oak tree located approximately 0.5 mile east of Observation Point 2. At 12:35 PM, a second adult golden eagle was perched in the same tree. One bird left the area at approximately 1:00 PM, but the second remained in the tree at the end of continuous observation (1:15 PM) and later flew off to the west when the biologists arrived to examine the area (see below).

Following the end of continuous observation during the March 17 survey, three areas of observed golden eagle activity were examined directly. Two were the respective oak trees located to the east and southeast of Observation Point 2 where WRA observed perched eagles. No stick nests (partial or complete) or any indication of golden eagle nesting were observed in these trees, nor in other trees that were adjacent or visible from the area. The off-site rock outcrop to the west of Observation Point 1 was also examined, and no stick nests or other indications of golden eagle nesting were observed. The off-site rock outcrop was short in stature (approximately 15 feet high at the highest points, and averaging lower), with all potential eagle nesting substrates easily accessible to ground predators.

Several smaller stick nests were observed on-site and in adjacent off-site areas during the surveys, primarily on utility line structures; two of these nests were located within 0.5 mile of the Project Area. All of these nests were of the size typical of smaller raptors (e.g., red-tailed hawk [*Buteo jamaicensis*]) or the common raven (*Corvus corax*), and most featured perched red-tailed hawks in close proximity. No nests of the diameter and bulk typical of golden eagles were observed.

Summary

Two golden eagle surveys were conducted in 2014 at the Young Ranch property to determine whether eagles are nesting within or near the property's proposed development area. Surveys were conducted in January and March. Although golden eagles were observed foraging, perching, and/or soaring over the survey area during the surveys, no eagle nests or indication of nesting within the survey area was observed. These results are consistent with incidental observations at the site made by WRA biologists in the course of other field activities over the previous six years.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



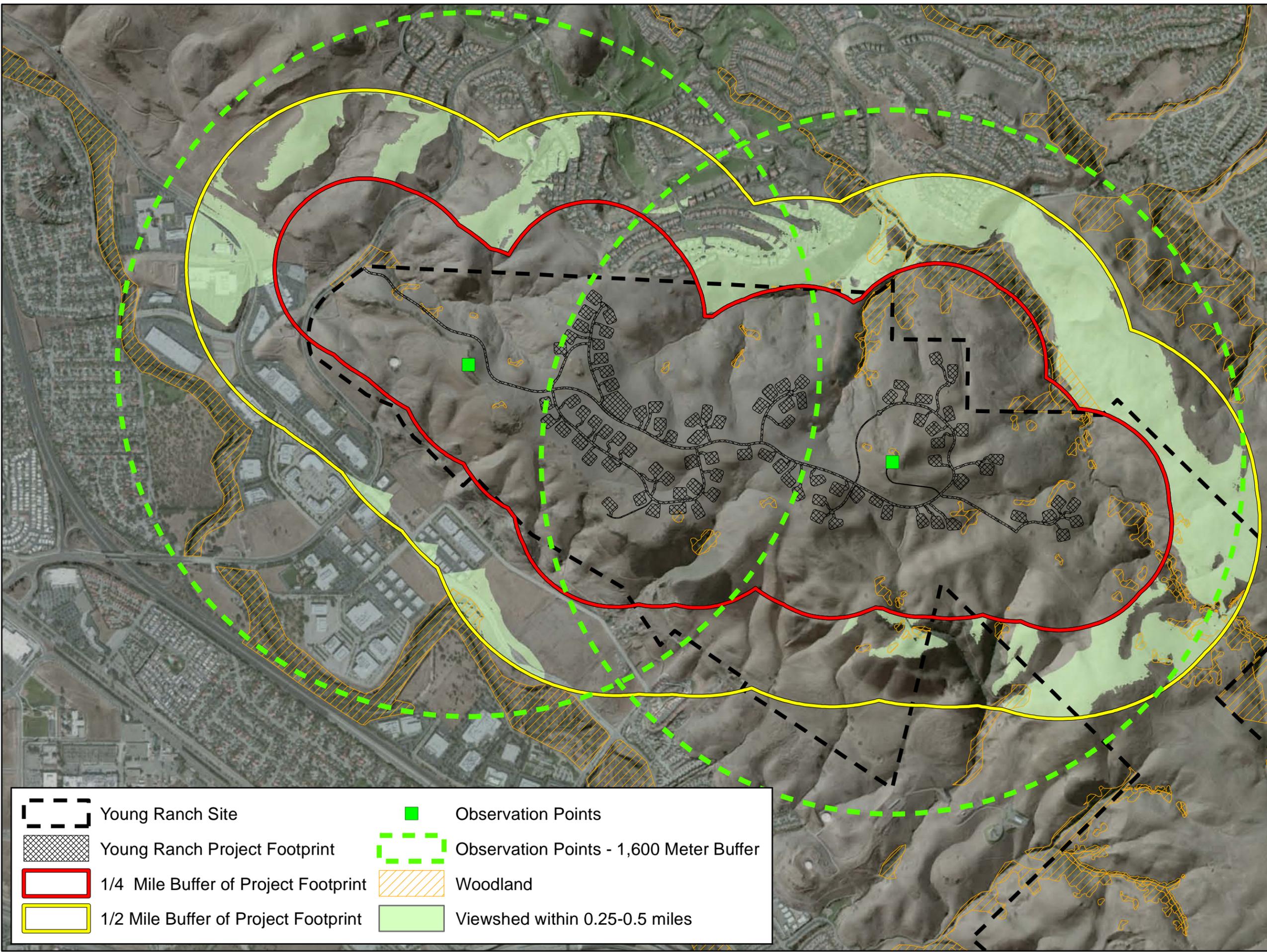
Jason Yakich
Wildlife Biologist

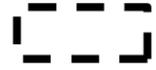
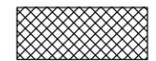
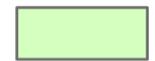
References

- [CDFW] California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2014. California Natural Diversity Database, Wildlife and Habitat Data Analysis Branch. Sacramento. Accessed: March.
- Pagel, J. E., D. M. Whittington and G. T. Allen. 2010. Interim Golden Eagle Inventory and Monitoring Protocols; and Other Recommendations. Division of Migratory Bird Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. February.

Young Ranch
 Santa Clara County,
 California

Figure 1
 Golden Eagle Survey Area
 and Observation Points



	Young Ranch Site		Observation Points
	Young Ranch Project Footprint		Observation Points - 1,600 Meter Buffer
	1/4 Mile Buffer of Project Footprint		Woodland
	1/2 Mile Buffer of Project Footprint		Viewshed within 0.25-0.5 miles

