

45-Day LBVI Survey Report (TE-19822D-1)

Date:	August 03, 2021
To:	Chris Kofron, USFWS
From:	Renee Richardson, ICF Wildlife Biologist
Subject:	Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA), LBVI 45-Day Report

In 2021, ICF biologist, Renee Richardson (TE-19822D-1) and MCWRA biologist, Marinn Browne conducted surveys for the least Bell's vireo (LBVI) in support of the Monterey County Water Resources Agency's preparation of a long-term Habitat Conservation Plan. The surveys were conducted in an effort to obtain data on habitat and if possible, presence of the least Bell's vireo. It was not the intention of the surveys to present data as protocol presence/absence surveys. Initially six survey areas were selected in the best possible habitat within our area of interest. Unfortunately, landowner permissions were not granted, and the survey areas were reduced to two locations along the Salinas River. The first location is within the City of Salinas, California at the Salinas River Diversion Facility (SRDF). The second location is within the San Lorenzo Park (SL Park) in King City, California. This memo summarizes the results of these surveys.

Methods

Renee Richardson conducted a total of three surveys at each of the two survey locations. The survey methods followed the United States Department of Interior, Least Bells Survey Guidelines survey protocol [LEAST BELL'S VIREO SURVEY GUIDELINES \(fws.gov\)](https://www.fws.gov/landmanagement/least-bells-survey-guidelines) with the exception of visit numbers. Suitable habitat within the each of the two study areas were visited once each month during April, May, and June. Survey areas were selected by using the USGS LBVI Habitat Suitability Model (USGS 2021). All surveys were conducted between the hours of dawn and 1100. As specified in permit number TE-19822D-1, recorded vocalizations were used to attempt to elicit responses of territorial vireos during surveys. Survey areas with the ratings of habitat suitability are depicted in Figure 1. Ms. Richardson and Ms. Browne walked a linear transect through all accessible suitable habitat, the protocol designated broadcast calls were played in areas which were believed to be suitable vireo territory. Impenetrable areas of poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*) and Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*) were avoided but surveyed from the best possible vantage points. Counts of Brown-headed cowbirds heard or seen were recorded during the surveys. A total of 59 auditory calls were played during the entire survey effort. Details of each of the surveys are presented below in Table 1.

Table 1. LBVI Survey Information

Date	Survey Location	Start Time	End Time	Weather Start	Weather End	LBVI detected/ Audio played	BHCO detections
4/29/2021	SRDF	0734	1057	46°F, 0-1 MPH wind, 0% cloud cover	64°F, 0-1 MPH wind, 10% cloud cover	0/10	2
4/30/2021	SL Park	0550	1010	46°F, 0-1 MPH wind, 10% cloud cover	62°F, 0-1 MPH wind, 0% cloud cover	0/15	3
5/27/2021	SRDF	0709	1100	52°F, 0-1 MPH wind, 90% cloud cover	57°F, 1-3 MPH wind, 10% cloud cover	0/9	4
5/28/2021	SL Park	0612	0943	52°F, 2-3 MPH wind, 100% cloud cover	66°F, 0-2 MPH wind, 90% cloud cover	0/8	2
6/24/2021	SRDF	0700	1100	60°F, 0-1 MPH wind, 100% cloud cover	67°F, 0-1 MPH wind, 50% cloud cover	0/10 YBCU detection	4
6/25/2021	SL Park	0800	1010	57°F, 1-3 MPH wind, 100% cloud cover	66°F, 0-2 MPH wind, 30% cloud cover	0/7	2

Results

Vegetation composition within both survey areas could be classified as Southern Willow Scrub (Holland) or a *Salix lasiolepis* Shrubland Alliance (CNPS 2021). Much of the vegetation around the river and within the survey areas were extremely dense but there were also more open areas which included wildlife trails, walking paths which lead to the river, and sandy washes with sparsely distributed vegetation. These less dense areas were scattered throughout the upland and river side of the survey areas and appeared to have the most suitability for nesting and foraging vireo.

Plants which dominated the SLPark Survey Area consisted of densely growing arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*), poison oak, giant reed (*Arundo donax*), and coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*). The SL Park Survey Area had large areas of sandy, evenly distributed, stands of mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*) and sandbar willow (*Salix exigua*) around the Salinas River, which could constitute moderate nesting and foraging LBVI habitat. Plants which dominated the SRDF Survey Area canopy consisted of arroyo willow, Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), Oregon ash (*Fraxinus latifolia*), and red willow (*Salix laevigata*). The lower shrub canopy is extremely dense and thicket-like, dominated by Himalayan blackberry and poison oak. Mulefat, coyote brush, and sandbar willow, were also present in less dense, sandy areas around the Salinas River but much of the land cover surrounding the SRDF Survey Area consisted of irrigated row crops. The combination of these two adjacent habitat types within the SRDF Survey Area created a thin, dense, riparian corridor directly adjacent to low growing or bare adjacent land which may not generally be considered preferred LBVI nesting or foraging areas.

During the surveys no least Bell's vireo were detected. Brown-headed cowbirds were detected on all surveys with a maximum number of four detections during a survey. The four detections were made at the SRDF facility on 06/24/2021. A single Yellow-billed cuckoo was detected on the SRDF Survey Area on June 24th. The YBCU was detected calling twice on the western side of the Salinas River at 0725 and 0735 (36°42'50.32"N, 121°45'36.95"W and 36°42'49.33"N, 121°45'33.88"W). At 1050 (36°42'24.89"N, 121°44'53.11"W) the bird was heard again, approximately a mile south on the eastern side of the Salinas River. The bird was never seen but both biologists on the surveys were able to positively identify the call. This information was relayed to Chris Kofron from USFWS within 24 hours of detection.

I certify that the information in this survey report and attached exhibits fully and accurately represents my work.

Sincerely,

Renee Richardson

Renee Richardson

Wildlife Biologist

References

CNPS 2021. A Manual of California Vegetation, Online Edition. <http://www.cnps.org/cnps/vegetation/>; searched on [August 02, 2021]. California Native Plant Society, Sacramento, CA.

USGS 2021. USGS LBVI Habitat Suitability Model
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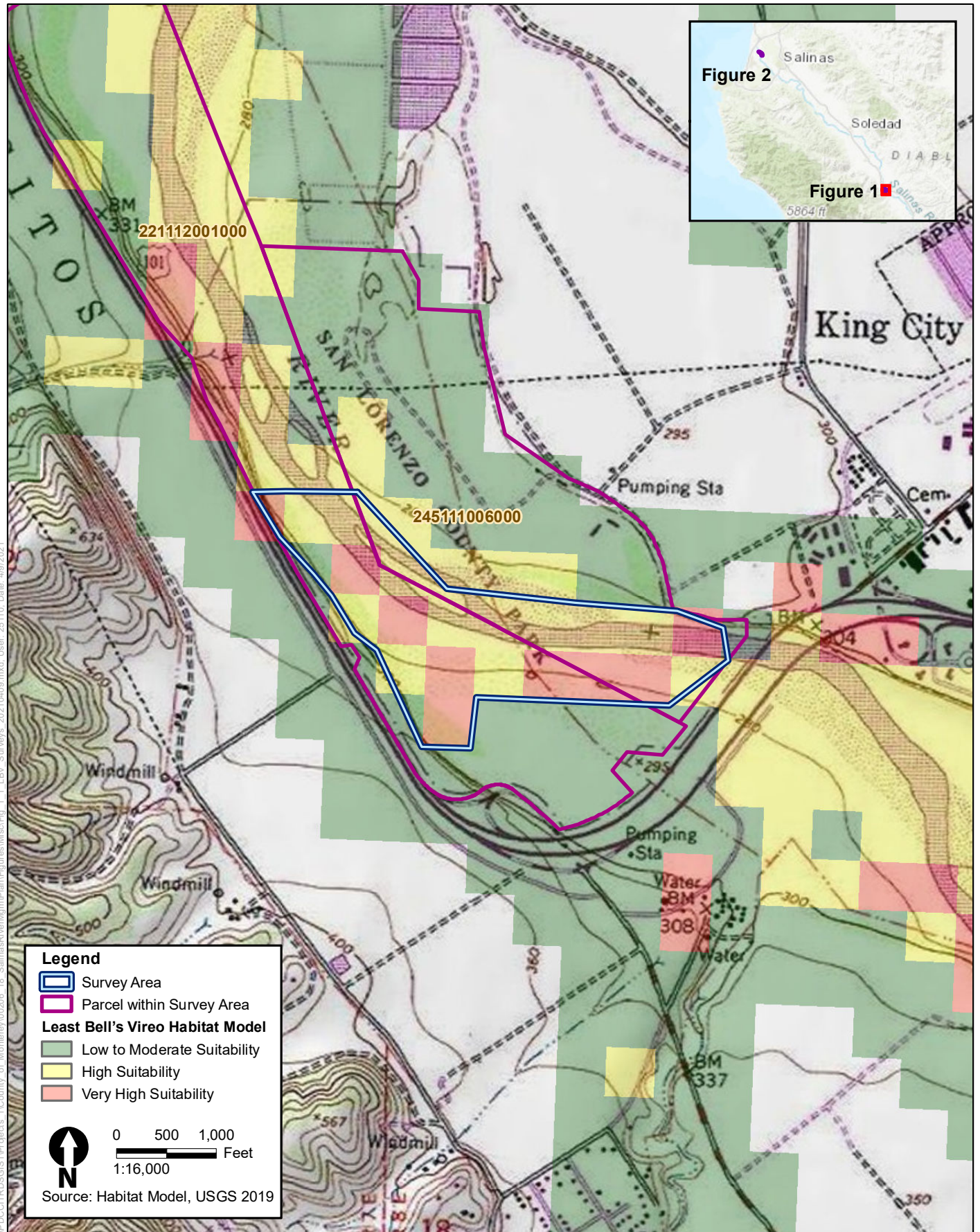


Figure 1-1
2021 Least Bell's Vireo Surveys
for the Monterey County Water Resources Agency



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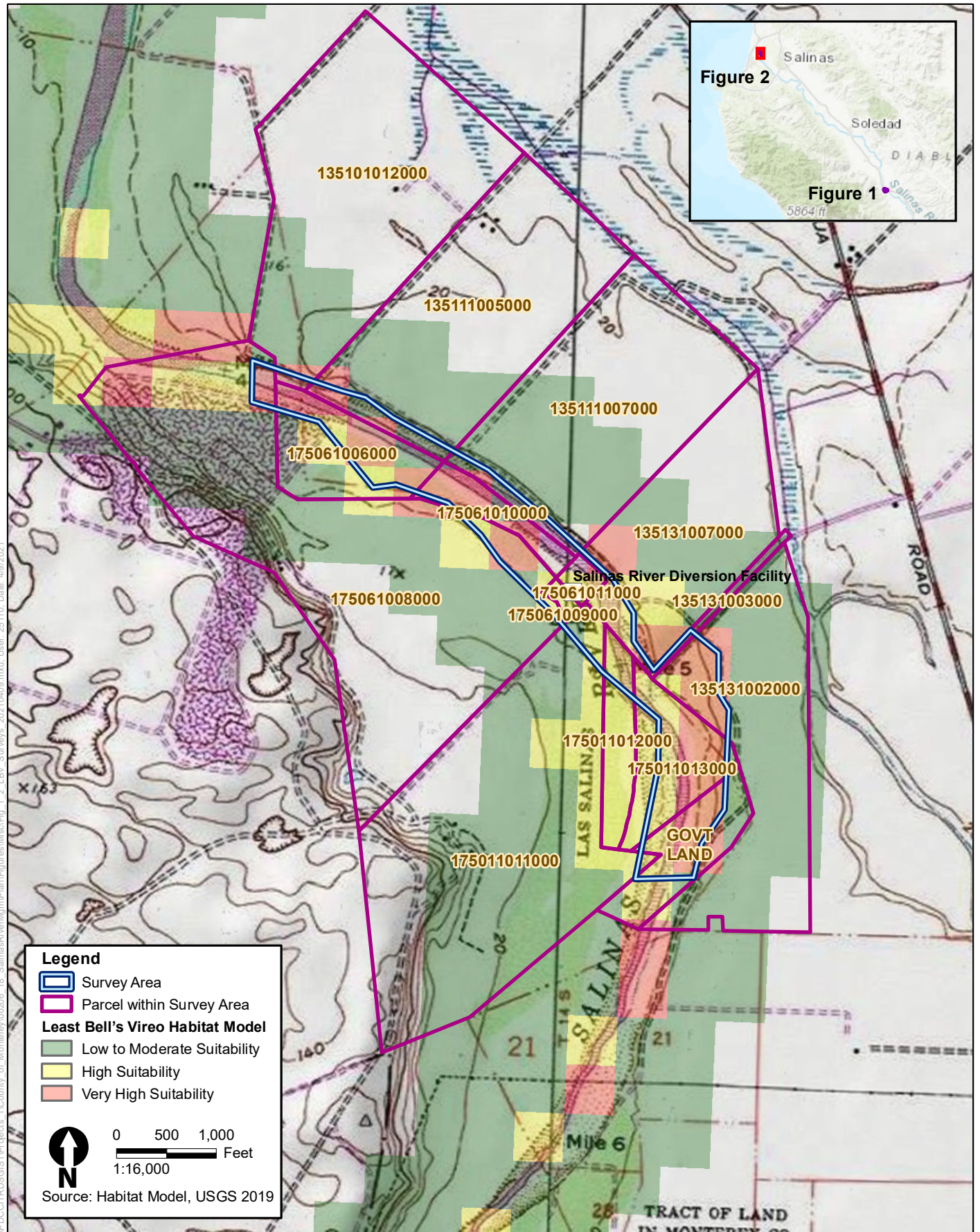


Figure 1-2
2021 Least Bell's Vireo Surveys
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