



June 3, 2024  
2023-005.07

Ms. Mitzi Kim Rios  
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**Re: Devil's Gate Reservoir Restoration Project – Phase 2 Restoration Qualitative Monitoring  
Conducted on February 8, 2024**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this letter report is to document the results of qualitative (horticultural) monitoring conducted for the Devil's Gate Reservoir Restoration Project (Project), located in the City of Pasadena, Los Angeles County, California. The qualitative monitoring was conducted in the planted and or seeded portions of the Phase 2 mitigation areas including DG-W-1 (Johnson Field), DG-2, DG-2 New Channels, DG-2 WOUS, DG-W-2 (Mining Pit), DG-W-2 Outlet, DG-4 Sheet Flow (northern), and DG-SF-1. Other areas initially included in Phase 2 include DG-4 Sheet Flow (southern), DG-4 WOUS, DG-4 Drainage, and DG-SF-2; however, due to the dynamic nature of these areas and/or uncertainty of hydrologic conditions prior to the completion of sediment removal for the Project, these areas were not planted or seeded during Phase 2. It is anticipated that most, if not all, of these areas will be planted with willow (*Salix* sp.) and mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*) stakes during future phases. The monitoring is being conducted in accordance with the Final Habitat Restoration Plan for the Project (HRP). The initial sediment removal in the reservoir was completed in 2021 and the first round of the annual maintenance removal phase was completed in October of 2022. Active sediment removal is occurring on an annual basis within the sediment removal areas for the Project and habitat restoration is being conducted onsite around the perimeter of the sediment removal areas.

ECORP is responsible for conducting qualitative monitoring and compliance review of restoration efforts in each of the mitigation areas. ECORP is also responsible for preparing monitoring reports, which typically include the following information:

- Overall health of container plants
- Observations and recommendations related to container plant establishment
- Germination of native plant species from seed application and natural recruitment
- Level of germination of nonnative plant species
- Soil condition
- Other observations and recommendations as appropriate

Qualitative monitoring was conducted by Carley Adams on February 8, 2024. Field data collected during the monitoring event is provided as Attachment A. This report documents the eighth quarterly qualitative monitoring visit for the Phase 2 mitigation areas.

## 2.0 QUALITATIVE MONITORING IN THE PHASE 2 MITIGATION AREAS

### 2.1 Brief Summary of Plant Installation

During the Phase 2 Installation effort, which was completed on May 5, 2021, a total of 11,440 one-gallon container plants were installed in the DG-W-1 (Johnson Field), DG-W-2 (Mining Pit), DG-W-2 Outlet, DG-2, DG-2 New Channels, DG-2 WOUS, DG-4 Sheet Flow (northern), and DG-SF-1 mitigation areas. Container plants were not installed in the DG-4 Sheet Flow (southern), DG-4 WOUS, DG-4 Drainage, or DG-SF-2 mitigation areas; however, these areas were included in the weed removal effort and will be planted with willow and mulefat stakes in the fall and winter of 2022/2023. Table 1 lists container plant species and the numbers installed in each of the Phase 2 mitigation areas.

Scientific Name	Common Name	DG-W-1 (Johnson Field)	DG-2/ DG-2 New Channels/ DG-2 WOUS	DG-W-2 (Mining Pit)	DG-W-2 Outlet	DG-4 Sheet Flow/ DG-SF-1	Total
<i>Artemisia douglasiana</i>	Mugwort	349	448	187	50	31	1,065
<i>Baccharis pilularis</i>	Coyote brush	349	375	187	50	31	992
<i>Baccharis salicifolia</i>	mulefat	673	827	228	61	37	1,826
<i>Populus fremontii</i>	Fremont's cottonwood	349	375	187	50	31	992
<i>Rosa californica</i>	California rose	349	375	187	50	31	992
<i>Rubus ursinus</i>	California blackberry	349	375	141	38	23	926
<i>Salix gooddingii</i>	Black willow	698	896	373	101	61	2,129
<i>Salix laevigata</i>	Red willow	349	375	187	50	31	992
<i>Salix lasiolepis</i>	Arroyo willow	349	375	187	50	31	992
<i>Sambucus mexicana</i>	Mexican elderberry	175	225	94	25	15	534
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,989</b>	<b>4,646</b>	<b>1,958</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>11,440</b>

All plants were installed according to the methods described in Section 4.11 of the HRP. Planting holes for all container plants were dug to a width twice the size of the root ball and to a depth slightly deeper than the depth of the root ball so that the root crown was one inch below grade following installation. Prior to installation, all plants were thoroughly watered in their containers and the soil in planting holes was wetted with at least one gallon of water. Planting holes were backfilled with native soil and irrigation

basins, approximately two feet in width, were formed around the base of each plant. Rocks greater than two inches in diameter were removed to the extent possible from the backfill soil. All container plants were irrigated with at least one gallon of water immediately following installation and basin creation.

## **2.2 Qualitative Monitoring Methods**

Qualitative monitoring occurs monthly following the 120-day Plant Establishment Period (PEP) for the remainder of Year 1 (8 months). Following Year 1, qualitative monitoring will occur quarterly during Years 2 and 3 and twice per year during Years 4 through 10. The purpose of the qualitative monitoring is to assess container plant health and vigor and monitor the success of the mitigation areas.

During the February 8, 2024 visit, all Phase 2 mitigation areas were walked, the health and vigor of container plants were documented, germination from seeding and natural recruitment was noted, and the irrigation lines were inspected for functionality. In addition, the level of nonnative and invasive weed cover was estimated for each of the Phase 2 mitigation areas.

## **2.3 Qualitative Monitoring Results**

### **2.3.1 DG-W-1 (Johnson Field)**

The overall health of the container plants in DG-W-1 was noted as being good. Approximately less than 5 percent of the container plants in DG-W-1 were noted as showing varied levels of stress and a negligible number were noted as being dead or missing. This is approximately the same percentage of plants that were showing stress during the last monitoring event. Stress may be occurring as a result of 1) competition from nonnative and invasive weeds, 2) misplaced emitters, or 3) recreational traffic through the mitigation areas. In addition, some of the Fremont's cottonwoods (*Populus fremontii*) and willows were starting to show signs of seasonal dieback. Evidence of dieback from *Phytophthora cactorum*, including wilting, stunted growth, leaf spotting, and/or browning along leaf margins and tips, was typically not observed on the container plants; however, leaf spotting was observed on some of the Fremont's cottonwoods and these trees should be monitored closely during the growing season to determine if the dieback was seasonal. Formal mortality counts were taken for DG-W-1 during the 2021, 2022, and 2023 quantitative monitoring events. Some of the container plants were noted as lacking well defined basins and should have their basins properly constructed and/or repaired. The irrigation line appeared to be functioning properly for the mitigation area during the monitoring visit. The installation of plants in the DG-W-1 mitigation area appears to have been completed successfully. The current issues identified during the monitoring visit are not expected to have an effect on the continued growth of the plants in the mitigation area. Photos 1 through 3 in Attachment B document the mitigation area during the monitoring visit.

Native plant growth was noted throughout the DG-W-1 mitigation area, likely from both natural recruitment and from seeding. Native plants such as mugwort (*Artemisia douglasiana*), coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*), mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), Spencer primrose (*Camissoniopsis micrantha*), tall flatsedge (*Cyperus eragrostis*), and singing nettle (*Urtica dioica*) were observed sprouting in the DG-W-1

mitigation area. Native cover was estimated to be approximately 80 percent in the DG-W-1 mitigation area.

Nonnative weed cover in DG-W-1 was estimated at approximately less than 5 percent, which is approximately 4 percent higher than the level of weed cover that was observed during the previous monitoring visit. Black mustard (*Brassica nigra*) and poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) were the only nonnative species observed in DG-W-1. Most of the nonnative weeds observed in this mitigation area were still vegetative and just beginning to germinate.

### **2.3.2 DG-2/DG-2 New Channels/DG-2 WOUS**

The overall health of the container plants in DG-2, DG-2 New Channels, and DG-2 WOUS was noted as being good. Approximately less than 5 percent of the container plants were noted as showing varied levels of stress and a negligible number were noted as being dead or missing. This is approximately the same percentage of plants that were showing stress during the last monitoring event. Stress may be occurring due to similar reasons described for DG-W-1. In addition, some of the Fremont's cottonwoods and willows were starting to show signs of seasonal dieback. Evidence of dieback from *Phytophthora cactorum*, including wilting, stunted growth, leaf spotting, and/or browning along leaf margins and tips, was typically not observed on the container plants; however, leaf spotting was observed on some of the Fremont's cottonwoods and these trees should be monitored closely during the growing season to determine if the dieback was seasonal. Formal mortality counts were taken for DG-2, DG-2 New Channels, and DG-2 WOUS during the 2021, 2022, and 2023 quantitative monitoring events. Some of the container plants were noted as lacking well defined basins and should have their basins properly constructed and/or repaired. The irrigation line appeared to be functioning properly during the monitoring visit. During the monitoring visit, the grade control structure that was installed at the northern end of DG-2 New Channels where the channels connect to DG-W-1 was inspected for erosion. Minor erosion was observed, mostly towards the western end of the structure; however, no major erosion issues were observed, and the structure appears to be functioning properly. In addition, erosion to the western-most portion of DG-2 that was previously noted was observed to have been repaired following the recontouring of the side slope on the west side of the reservoir. The installation of plants in the DG-2, DG-2 New Channels, and DG-2 WOUS mitigation areas appears to have been completed successfully. The current issues identified during the monitoring visit are not expected to have an effect on the continued growth of the plants in the mitigation area. Photos 4 through 7 in Attachment B document the mitigation areas during the monitoring visit.

Native plant growth was noted throughout the DG-2, DG-2 New Channels, and DG-2 WOUS mitigation areas, likely from both natural recruitment and from seeding. Native plants such as mugwort, mulefat, tall flatsedge, common phacelia (*Phacelia distans*), ladies' tobacco (*Pseudognaphalium californica*), and stinging nettle were observed sprouting in the mitigation areas. Native cover was estimated to be approximately 80 percent in the DG-2, DG-2 New Channels, and DG-2 WOUS mitigation areas.

Nonnative weed cover in the DG-2, DG-2 New Channels, and DG-2 WOUS mitigation areas was estimated at approximately 3 to 5 percent, which is approximately 2 to 4 percent higher than the percentage that was observed during the last monitoring visit. Poison hemlock and perennial pepperweed (*Lepidium*

*latifolia*) were the only nonnative species observed in this mitigation area. Most of the nonnative weeds observed in this mitigation area were vegetative and just starting to germinate.

### **2.3.3 DG-W-2 (Mining Pit)**

The overall health of the container plants in mitigation area DG-W-2 was noted as being good. Approximately less than five percent of the container plants were noted as showing varied levels of stress and a negligible number were noted as being dead or missing. This is approximately the same percentage of plants that were showing stress during the last monitoring event. Stress may be occurring due to similar reasons described for DG-W-1. In addition, some of the Fremont's cottonwoods and willows were starting to show signs of seasonal dieback. Evidence of dieback from *Phytophthora cactorum*, including wilting, stunted growth, leaf spotting, and/or browning along leaf margins and tips, was typically not observed on the container plants; however, leaf spotting was observed on some of the Fremont's cottonwoods and these trees should be monitored closely during the growing season to determine if the dieback was seasonal. Formal mortality counts were taken for DG-W-2 during the 2021, 2022, and 2023 quantitative monitoring events. Some of the container plants were noted as lacking well defined basins and should have their basins properly constructed and/or repaired. The irrigation line appeared to be functioning properly during the monitoring visit. The installation of plants in the DG-W-2 mitigation area appears to have been completed successfully and the issues noted during the monitoring are not expected to have an impact on the continued growth of the plants. Photos 8 and 9 in Attachment B document the mitigation area during the monitoring visit.

During the monitoring visit, it was noted that many of the remaining mature black willows (*Salix gooddingii*) in this mitigation area were continuing to show signs of recovery, such as sprouting vigorously from the base, from the polyphagous shot-hole borer (PSHB) infestation that was confirmed by the Los Angeles County Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights & Measures in December of 2021. The majority of the dead and hazardous black willows in this mitigation area were removed in October of 2022. Black willows that were determined to have the potential to recover were left in place and will continue to be monitored during the qualitative monitoring visits.

Native plant growth was noted throughout the DG-W-2 mitigation area, and what was present is likely from both natural recruitment and from seeding. Native plants such as mugwort, mulefat, tall flatsedge, and stinging nettle were observed sprouting in the DG-W-2 mitigation area. Native cover was estimated to be approximately 60 percent in the DG-W-2 mitigation area.

Nonnative weed cover in DG-W-2 was estimated at approximately 25 to 30 percent in the mitigation area, which is approximately 10 percent more than the level of nonnative cover that was observed during the last monitoring event. Nonnative species observed in DG-W-2 included black mustard, poison hemlock, and perennial pepperweed. Most of the nonnative weeds observed in this mitigation area were vegetative and just starting to germinate; however, some were going to flower and seed and should be removed as soon as possible.

### 2.3.4 DG-W-2 Outlet

The overall health of the container plants in mitigation area DG-W-2 Outlet was noted as being good. Approximately 5 percent of the container plants were noted as showing varied levels of stress and a negligible number were noted as being dead or missing. This is approximately 5 percent less than the percentage of plants that were showing stress during the last monitoring event. Stress may be occurring due to similar reasons described for DG-W-1. In addition, some of the Fremont's cottonwoods and willows were starting to show signs of seasonal dieback. Evidence of dieback from *Phytophthora cactorum*, including wilting, stunted growth, leaf spotting, and/or browning along leaf margins and tips, was typically not observed on the container plants; however, leaf spotting was observed on some of the Fremont's cottonwoods and these trees should be monitored closely during the growing season to determine if the dieback was seasonal. Formal mortality counts were taken for DG-W-2 Outlet during the 2021, 2022, and 2023 quantitative monitoring events. Some of the container plants were noted as lacking well defined basins and should have their basins properly constructed and/or repaired. The irrigation line appeared to be functioning properly for most areas of the mitigation area during the monitoring visit. The installation of plants in the DG-W-2 Outlet mitigation area appears to have been completed successfully and the issues noted during the monitoring are not expected to have an impact on the continued growth of the plants. Photos 10 through 13 in Attachment B document the mitigation area during the monitoring visit.

Native plant growth was noted throughout the DG-W-2 Outlet mitigation area, and what was present is likely from both natural recruitment and from seeding. Native plants such as mugwort, mulefat, tall flatsedge, Hooker's evening primrose (*Oenothera elata*), and stinging nettle were observed sprouting in the DG-W-2 Outlet mitigation area. Native cover was estimated to be approximately 70 percent in the DG-W-2 Outlet mitigation area.

Nonnative weed cover in DG-W-2 Outlet was estimated to be approximately 15 to 20 percent, which is approximately 5 percent more than the percentage of weed cover that was observed during the previous monitoring visit. Nonnative species observed in DG-W-2 included black mustard, poison hemlock, and perennial pepperweed. Most of the nonnative weeds observed in this mitigation area were vegetative and just starting to germinate.

### 2.3.5 DG-4 Sheet Flow/DG-SF-1

The overall health of the container plants in mitigation areas DG-4 Sheet Flow (northern) and DG-SF-1 was noted as being good. Approximately less than 5 percent of container plants were showing varied levels of stress which is approximately the same percentage of container plants that were showing stress during the previous monitoring event. Stress may be occurring due to similar reasons described for DG-W-1. Evidence of dieback from *Phytophthora cactorum*, including wilting, stunted growth, leaf spotting, and/or browning along leaf margins and tips, was not observed on any of the container plants. Similar to the other mitigation areas, the willows and Fremont's cottonwoods in this mitigation area were starting to show signs of seasonal dieback. Formal mortality counts were taken during the 2021, 2022, and 2023 quantitative monitoring events. Some of the container plants were noted as lacking well defined basins and should have their basins properly constructed and/or repaired. The irrigation line appeared to be functioning properly during the monitoring visit. The installation of plants in the DG-4 Sheet Flow and

DG-SF-1 mitigation areas appears to have been completed successfully and the issues noted during the monitoring are not expected to have an impact on the continued growth of the plants. Photo 14 in Attachment B document the mitigation area during the monitoring visit.

Minimal native plant germination was noted throughout the DG-4 Sheet Flow and DG-SF-1 mitigation area, and what was present is likely from both natural recruitment and from seeding. Native plants such as mugwort, tall flatsedge, and Douglas' nightshade (*Solanum douglasii*) were observed sprouting in the DG-4 Sheet Flow and DG-SF-1 mitigation areas. Native cover was estimated to be approximately 55 percent in the DG-4 Sheet Flow/DG-SF-1 mitigation area.

Nonnative weed cover in DG-4 Sheet Flow and DG-SF-1 was estimated at approximately 15 to 20 percent, which is approximately 5 to 10 percent more than the level of weed cover that was observed during the previous monitoring visit. Nonnative species observed in DG-4 Sheet Flow and DG-SF-1 included black mustard, poison hemlock, and perennial pepperweed. Most of the nonnative weeds observed in this mitigation area were vegetative and just starting to germinate.

## **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **3.1 Nonnative Plant Control**

Nonnative weed cover was found to be approximately 3 percent to 30 percent for the Phase 2 mitigation areas. In addition, evidence of recent weed abatement activities was present in some of the Phase 2 mitigation areas and the weeds in these areas were just beginning to germinate. Regular maintenance and removal of nonnative weeds is of the highest priority for all mitigation areas to reduce competition between native and nonnative plants. In addition, eucalyptus stumps that are starting to re-sprout should be trimmed back frequently. A focus should be placed on removing the weeds and nonnatives from the basins of each of the container plants and cuttings; however, nonnative weeds just outside of the planting areas can migrate into the planting areas via seed dispersal. Outside of the nesting bird season, a focus should also be made to remove nonnative weeds in areas where least Bell's vireos are likely to nest during the breeding season (i.e. in the vicinity of the least Bell's vireo nest that was active in 2020). Nonnative plants and weeds that have gone to seed should be bagged and removed from the mitigation area. Without the use of herbicides, control of the nonnatives will be extremely difficult so the frequency and level of effort will need to be increased to provide control until the native plants and seedlings have a chance to grow and outcompete the nonnatives. In particular, it is important to maintain long-term perennial pepperweed management to reduce competition and allow native plants to germinate. In addition, dodder should be removed from container plants in the mitigation areas. Although many species of dodder are native, this parasitic plant can be harmful to younger shrubs and trees that are not yet established and can even cause mortality.

### **3.2 Irrigation**

The irrigation system was inspected for functionality and appeared to be properly installed. Irrigation was not actively occurring during the monitoring visit; however, the soil for most container plants was found to be wet at and below the surface. Some of the basins in mitigation area DG-W-2 Outlet were found to

be dry and the irrigation in this area should be checked for functionality. This is especially important during periods of drought and high temperatures. Some of the emitters were observed to be outside of the container plant basins, likely due to erosion, water flow, and/or public interference. Once per week watering events should be conducted for the container plants unless adequate rainfall occurs. After watering, the container plant basins should have at least 0.5 inch of saturation depth. Continual maintenance of the irrigation system should be conducted to ensure all plants are evenly watered and the tube emitters are placed at the base of the container plants. Watering of the seeded only areas is not recommended.

### **3.3 Herbivory**

Rabbit herbivory of container plants was generally not observed in the Phase 2 mitigation areas. Minor herbivory generally will not kill the plants, but continued monitoring should be conducted during future visits to determine the level of the herbivory isn't such that plants are dying. As the plants are becoming more established, they have become less susceptible to the effects of herbivory. It should be noted that the cages installed by Nature's Image around container plants following container plant installation have been removed for container plants that have outgrown the cages and no longer require protection; however, if browsing by rabbits or other animals begins to worsen, additional caging around affected and/or favored container plants may be warranted.

### **3.4 Erosion**

New erosional issues were not observed within the Phase 2 mitigation areas during the monitoring visit. Significant erosion that was observed along the western section of DG-2 and portions of the Side Slopes during the previous monitoring visit was observed to have been repaired following the recontouring of the side slope on the west side of the reservoir. Until more native perennial plants become established in these areas, there is the potential that intense rainfall may continue to create erosion problems. During future monitoring events, erosion should continue to be monitored in all planted areas and if warranted, erosion Best Management Practices (BMPs) should be installed in appropriate areas. This may only require the installation of straw wattles at select sites to prevent existing rills from becoming larger.

If you have any questions about the information presented in this letter, please contact me at [Cadams@ecorpconsulting.com](mailto:Cadams@ecorpconsulting.com) or (714) 648-0630.

Sincerely,



Carley Adams  
Senior Biologist



## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

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Appendix A – Field Notes

Appendix B – Photo Documentation

## **ATTACHMENT A**

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Field Notes

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**ATTACHMENT B**

Photo Documentation