

Joseph M. Szewczak, Ph.D.  
3156 Deer Fern Ct.  
Arcata, CA 95521

13 November 2014

Tom Lippe  
Law Offices of Thomas N. Lippe APC  
201 Mission St. 12th Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94105

Dear Tom,

I reviewed the Walt Ranch Draft EIR, Application No. P11-00205-ECPA, including Appendices. I could find no indication or evidence of an adequate biological survey for bats that supported the conclusions and recommendations for bats as described in the report. Most any bat biologist would consider it a red flag to simply report for each of the bat species of concern, "was not observed onsite during the biological surveys" especially without a description of the survey methods used to assess for bats. Surveying for bats requires specialized methods to detect nocturnal bat activity such as capture surveys (mist netting) or acoustic recording with expert interpretation. At best I can speculate that the bat survey initiative for this report looked for bat roosts. A complete survey for bats should include a roost survey, but in most situations and for most bat species assessing occurrence from roost searching fails as bats roost out of reach (and observation) in protected and inaccessible locations. Locating a bat roost typically entails capturing foraging bats, attaching a radio transmitter, and tracking them to locate a roost. Anyone that has done such work will report that in nearly every instance that once found, the roost revealed no outward indication of bat occupancy.

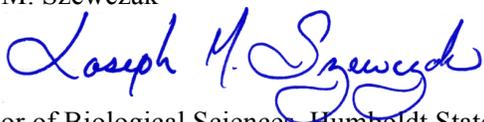
Appendix A-1, pg. A1-1 (Walt Ranch Draft EIR\_Appendices Volume II.pdf) lists all mammal species observed during the course of the survey work and does not include a single bat observation, *of any species*. That just simply could not happen on that landscape as a result of any adequate bat survey work by anyone with expertise in the methods used to survey for bats. In the absence of a description of bat survey methods used, I can speculate that such a result could follow if the extent of the bat survey occurred in the course of walking about surveying for birds, herps, and other species, and that the survey crews (not surprisingly) encountered no bats. I could produce a similar result of absence for most of the incidental bird and herp species listed if I relied on incidental observations during the course of nocturnal bat surveys.

With the results as presented, and no indication of due diligence in performing any specialized survey methods necessary to assess bats in the project area, in my opinion this report reached an indefensible conclusion of absence for any bat species in the project area, sensitive or non-sensitive.

Please also note that CDFW now has Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*) under consideration for state listing. During this period this species must be considered as a listed species. The absence of caverns, mines, or structures on the project site makes its occurrence less likely but does not eliminate its presence on the site as this species will also roost in tree cavities.

Sincerely,

Joseph M. Szewczak



Professor of Biological Sciences, Humboldt State University