I asked Ms. Hohman if the USFWS was agreeable to the Energy Commission requirement that surveys be conducted within 1000 feet on either side of the proposed gas pipeline along Neuralia Road. She said that the USFWS desert tortoise protocol calls for complete surveys within the project footprint, then conducting 30-foot wide survey transects within the area of project influence at 100, 300, 600, 1200, and 2400 feet from the project boundary. The purpose of these surveys to provide information for the USFWS to: (1) assess the potential for tortoises to enter the construction zone and to develop avoidance/minimization measures accordingly, and (2) to understand the level of take that might occur, and develop the appropriate compensatory mitigation ratio.

If the applicant plans to do surveys only within 1000 feet from the pipeline rather than up to 2400 feet, they will need to talk to the USFWS and explain why the smaller survey area would be adequate to provide this needed information.