

# **GENERAL BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT**

**TENTATIVE TRACT MAP 20280**

**VICTORVILLE, CALIFORNIA**

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## **TITLE PAGE**

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**Prepared for:** Lansing Companies

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## Table of Contents

Section	Page
1.0 Introduction and Summary	1
2.0 Existing Conditions	2
3.0 Methodologies	3
4.0 Literature Search	5
5.0 Results	6
5.1 General Biological Resources	6
5.2 Federal and State Listed Species	6
5.3 Wildlife Species of Concern and Sensitive Plants	7
6.0 Impacts and Mitigation Measures	8
6.1 General Biological Resources	8
6.2 Federal and State Listed Species and Species of Special Concern	8
7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations	9
8.0 Bibliography	10
Certification	12
Appendix A – Tables and Figures	

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Biological surveys were conducted on Tentative Tract Map 15083 on March 24, 2019. The site is located south of Hopland Street and east of Cahuenga Road in the City of Victorville, California (Township 5 North, Range 4 West, Section 7, USGS Victorville, California Quadrangle 1966) (Appendix A: Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4). As part of the environmental process, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) data sources were reviewed. Following the data review, biological surveys were performed on the site during which the biological resources on the property and in the surrounding areas were documented by biologists from RCA Associates, Inc. The property site and the adjoining lands were evaluated for the presence of native habitats which could potentially support populations of sensitive species. Focused surveys were also conducted for the desert tortoise and burrowing owl, and a habitat assessment was performed for the Mohave ground squirrel. The property was also evaluated for the presence of sensitive habitats including wetlands, vernal pools, riparian habitats, and jurisdictional areas.

Based on data from USFWS, CDFW, and a search of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB, 2019), there are twenty-five (25) special status wildlife species that have been documented in the region within approximately five miles of the project site. Seven special status plant species have also been documented within the Victorville quadrangle.

## 2.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS

The project site (Phase III) is approximately 20.6-acres in size and is located south of Hopland Street and east of Cahuenga Road the City of Victorville, California (Township 5 North, Range 4 West, Section 7, USGS Victorville, California Quadrangle 1966) (Appendix A: Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4). The site supports a semi-disturbed mixed desert shrub plant community dominated by creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), ephedra (*Ephedra nevadensis*), and yellow-green matchweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*). Annuals included erodium (*Erodium cicutarium*) brome grass (*Bromus* sp.), buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), bunchgrass (*Phleum* sp.), and schismus (*Schismus* sp.).

Residential homes border the site directly to the north and vacant lands are located east, west, and south of the site. No sensitive plant or wildlife species were observed during the March 26, 2019 field investigations.

### 3.0 METHODOLOGIES

Biological surveys were conducted on March 26, 2019 during which a biologist from RCA Associates, Inc. initially walked meandering transects throughout the site to collect data on the plant and animal communities. Following completion of the initial reconnaissance survey, focused surveys were also conducted for the burrowing owl and desert tortoise, and a habitat assessment was also performed for the Mohave ground squirrel. The applicable methodologies are summarized below. Surveys were performed on the site and in the surrounding area, where possible, from about 0700 to about 1200 hours. Weather conditions during the March 26, 2019 survey consisted of winds 0 to 5 mph, temperatures in the mid 50's (AM) to mid-70's (PM) (°F) with cloud cover at about 10 percent. All plants and animals detected during the field investigations were recorded and are provided in Tables 1 & 2 along with other species that have been documented in the area (Appendix A).

**Desert Tortoise:** The site was surveyed for desert tortoises and as required by the CDFW and USFWS survey protocol, 10 meter, parallel belt transects were walked in a north-south direction until the entire property had been checked for tortoises and/or tortoise sign (burrows, tracks, scats, etc.). Surveys in the zone of influence (ZOI) were also conducted in the vacant lands east, west, and south of the site. All transects were walked at a pace that allowed careful observations along the transect routes and in the immediate vicinity. Field notes were recorded regarding native plant assemblages, wildlife sign, and human affects in order to determine the presence or absence of suitable tortoise foraging habitat.

**Burrowing Owl:** A habitat assessment (Phase I) was conducted for the burrowing owl in conjunction with the general biological surveys to determine if the site supports suitable habitat for the species. Following completion of the habitat assessment, it was determined that the site does support suitable habitat for the burrowing owl; therefore, a focused burrow survey (Phase II) was conducted for burrowing owls and for occupiable (i.e., suitable) burrows which could potentially be utilized by owls. As part of the burrow

survey, transects were walked throughout the site during which any suitable burrows were evaluated for owls and owl sign. Burrowing owls typically utilize burrows which have been excavated by other animals (squirrels, coyotes, foxes, dogs, etc.) since owls cannot excavate their own burrows. CDFW protocol also requires surveys be conducted in the surrounding area out to a distance of about 500 feet; therefore, surveys were performed in the vacant area located north of the site.

**Mohave Ground Squirrel:** A habitat assessment was performed for the Mohave ground squirrel as per CDFW protocol including an analysis of the on-site habitat, evaluation of local populations, and assessment of connectivity with habitats in the surrounding area which might support populations of the Mohave ground squirrel.

#### **4.0 LITERATURE SEARCH**

As part of the environmental process, a search of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB, 2019) was performed. Based on this review, it was determined that twenty-five (25) special status wildlife species have been documented within approximately 5-miles of the property. In addition, seven (7) special status plant species have been documented with the surrounding area (CNDDDB, 2019) (See CNDDDB Table - Appendix A).

## 5.0 RESULTS

### 5.1 General Biological Resources

A disturbed mixed desert shrub community covers most of the property. Most of the creosote bushes were from 2 to 4 feet in height, and the property may have been cleared of vegetation several years ago. Numerous piles of stockpiled dirt were also present in the northern portion of the site. Perennials scattered throughout the property included creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), ephedra (*Ephedra nevadensis*), and yellow-green matchweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*). Annuals observed included brome grass (*Bromus sp.*), schismus (*Schismus sp.*), buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), erodium (*Erodium cicutarium*), and bunchgrass (*Phleum sp.*). Birds identified during the surveys were limited to ravens (*Corvus corax*), sage sparrows (*Artemisiospiza nevadensis*), and mourning doves (*Zenaida macroura*).

The only mammals observed were black-tailed jackrabbits (*Lepus californicus*); however, California ground squirrels (*Spermophilus beecheyi*), and cottontails (*Sylvilagus auduboni*) are known to occur in the area and likely occur on the site. Also, numerous small mammal burrows were also noted and some of these may indicate the presence of Merriam's kangaroo rats (*Dipodomys merriami*) and Antelope ground squirrels (*Ammospermophilus leucurus*), which are both common in the area. Reptiles observed were limited to western whiptail lizards (*Cnemidophorus tigris*) and side-blotched lizards (*Uta stansburiana*). Coyotes (*Canis latrans*) also traverse the site during hunting activities as indicated by the scats. No distinct wildlife corridors were identified on the site or in adjacent areas.

### 5.2 Federal and State Listed Species

**Mohave Ground Squirrel:** Mohave ground squirrel populations have been documented in the area with the nearest observation about 4.5-miles northwest of the property (Occurrence #11, Adelanto, California Quad), and this observation was recorded in 1977 (CNDDDB, 2019). There are no recent observations of the species in the immediate area

surrounding the site (CNDDDB, 2019) and the species is unlikely to occur on the site based on the following criteria:

1. Presence of developments immediately adjacent to the site on three sides;
2. Limited number of recent documented observations in the general region;
3. Limited connectivity with prime habitats in the region; and
4. A significant level of past disturbance (i.e., shrub clearing and stockpiles of soil, etc.) which has eliminated native vegetation on the site.

**Desert Tortoise:** Desert tortoises have been documented in the area with the nearest observation about 4-miles northwest of the property (Occurrence #12, Adelanto, California Quad), and this observation was recorded in 2007 (CNDDDB, 2019). In addition, no tortoises or tortoise sign (i.e., burrows, scats, tracks, etc.) were observed on the site during the protocol surveys conducted on March 26, 2019, and the site does not provide prime habitat for the species due to past disturbances and the stockpiling of soils in the northern portion of the site.

### **5.3 Wildlife Species of Special Concern & Special Status Plants**

**Burrowing Owl:** There are owl colonies that have been observed in the general region, and there are documented owl colonies within about five miles of the site (CNDDDB, 2019). However, no owls were observed during the field investigations, and no suitable (i.e., “occupiable”) burrows or burrowing owl sign (whitewash, castings, etc.) were identified on the site. Based on the results of the field investigations and the absence of suitable burrows and any owl sign, the species is not expected to inhabit the property at the present time.

## **6.0 Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

### **6.1 General Biological Resources**

Future development of the site will impact the general biological resources present on the site, and most of the vegetation will be removed during future development activities. However, wildlife on the site is somewhat limited given past human disturbances and the presence of limited native vegetation. Future activities will generate minimal impacts on wildlife species known to occur in the area. Species with limited mobility (i.e., small mammals and reptiles) will experience some increases in mortality during the construction phase; although, more mobile species (i.e., birds, large mammals) will be displaced into adjacent areas and will likely experience negligible impacts. Loss of about 20.6-acres of disturbed desert vegetation is not expected to have a significant cumulative impact on the overall biological resources in the region given the presence of similar habitat throughout the surrounding region.

### **6.2 Federal and State Listed and Species of Special Concern**

Development of the property is not expected to impact any special status animal or plant species that have been documented in the area (CNDDDB, 2019). As noted in Section 5.3, no desert tortoises or tortoise sign were observed on the site or in the zone of influence, nor were any burrowing owls observed on the property during the protocol surveys. In addition, suitable owl burrows and burrowing owl sign (whitewash, castings, etc.) were not observed on the site or in the zone of influence (ZOI). The site has been disturbed by past various human activities (e.g., shrub clearing, stockpiling of soil, etc.); therefore, Mohave ground squirrels are not expected to inhabit the site given the presence of more suitable habitat in the surrounding region.

## **7.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Future on-site activities will result in the removal of about 20.6-acres of disturbed desert scrub vegetation; however, any future activities are not expected to have a significant cumulative impact on the general biological resources in the surrounding region. In addition, development of the site is not expected to have an impact on any State or Federal listed wildlife species, and no other special status animal or plant species (i.e., State “species of special concern” and CNPS classification) are expected to be impacted.

If any special status species are observed on the property during future development activities, CDFW and USFWS (as applicable) should be contacted to discuss specific mitigation measures which may be required for the individual species. CDFW and USFWS are the only agencies which can grant authorization for the “take” of any sensitive species.

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## CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the statements furnished above and in the attached exhibits, present the data and information required for this biological evaluation, and that the facts, statements, and information presented are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. Field work conducted for this assessment was performed by me or other biologists under my direct supervision. I certify that I have not signed a non-disclosure or consultant confidentiality agreement with the project applicant or applicant's representative and that I have no financial interest in the project.

Date: 7-24-2019 Signed:   
Report Author

Field Work Performed By: Randall Arnold  
Principal Biologist

**Appendix A**  
**Tables and Figures**

**Table 1 - Plants observed on the site and known to occur in the area.**

<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Scientific Name</b>	<b>Location</b>
Schismus	<i>Schismus barbatus</i>	On-site
Brome grass	<i>Bromus ps.</i>	“
Paperbag plant	<i>Salazaria Mexicana</i>	Surrounding area
Ephedra	<i>Ephedra nevadensis</i>	On-site
Buckwheat	<i>Eriogonum sp.</i>	On-site
Anderson’s thornbush	<i>Lycium andersonii</i>	Surrounding area
Creosote bush	<i>Larrea tridentate</i>	On-site
Rubberbrush	<i>Chrysothamnus naueosus</i>	Surrounding area
Russian thistle	<i>Salsola tragus</i>	“
Bur-sage	<i>Ambrosia dumosa</i>	“
Sage	<i>Salvia sp.</i>	“
Joshua tree	<i>Yucca brevifolia</i>	“
Cholla	<i>Opuntis acanthocarpa</i>	“
Erodium	<i>Erodium cicutarium</i>	“

**Table 2 - Wildlife observed on the site and those species expected to the area.**

<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Scientific Name</b>	<b>Location</b>
Common raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	On-site & surrounding area.
Sage sparrow	<i>Amphispiza belli</i>	“
Mourning dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	“
Jackrabbit	<i>Lepus Californicus</i>	“
Side-blotched lizard	<i>Uta stansburiana</i>	“
Western whiptail lizard	<i>Cnemidophorus tigris</i>	“
Antelope ground squirrel	<i>Ammospermophilus leucurus</i>	Surrounding area
American kestrel	<i>Falco sparverius</i>	“
Cactus wren	<i>Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus</i>	“
California ground squirrel	<i>Spermophilus beecheyi</i>	“
Brewer’s blackbird	<i>Euphagus cyanocephalus</i>	“
Gambel’s quail	<i>Callipepla gambelii</i>	“
Desert cottontail	<i>Sylvilagus auduboni</i>	“
Coyotes	<i>Canis latrans</i>	“
Merriam’s kangaroo rat	<i>Dipodomys merriami</i>	“
Song sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>	“
Desert spiny lizard	<i>Sceloporus magister</i>	“
Rock pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	“

Note: The above Tables are not comprehensive lists of every plant or animal species which may occur in the area, but are a list of those common species which have been identified on the site or in the region by biologists from RCA Associates, Inc.



**Selected Elements by Common Name**  
**California Department of Fish and Wildlife**  
**California Natural Diversity Database**



Query Criteria: QuadIS (Victorville (3411753))

Species	Element Code	Federal Status	State Status	Global Rank	State Rank	Rare Plant Rank/CDFW SSC or FP
<b>arroyo toad</b> <i>Anaxyrus californicus</i>	AAABB01230	Endangered	None	G2G3	S2S3	SSC
<b>Beaver Dam breadroot</b> <i>Pediomelum castoreum</i>	PDFAB5L050	None	None	G3	S2	1B.2
<b>Booth's evening-primrose</b> <i>Eremothera boothii</i> ssp. <i>boothii</i>	PDONA03052	None	None	G5T4	S3	2B.3
<b>burrowing owl</b> <i>Athene cunicularia</i>	ABNSB10010	None	None	G4	S3	SSC
<b>California red-legged frog</b> <i>Rana draytonii</i>	AAABH01022	Threatened	None	G2G3	S2S3	SSC
<b>coast horned lizard</b> <i>Phrynosoma blainvillii</i>	ARACF12100	None	None	G3G4	S3S4	SSC
<b>Cooper's hawk</b> <i>Accipiter cooperii</i>	ABNKC12040	None	None	G5	S4	WL
<b>desert tortoise</b> <i>Gopherus agassizii</i>	ARAAF01012	Threatened	Threatened	G3	S2S3	
<b>golden eagle</b> <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	ABNKC22010	None	None	G5	S3	FP
<b>hoary bat</b> <i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>	AMACC05030	None	None	G5	S4	
<b>Le Conte's thrasher</b> <i>Toxostoma lecontei</i>	ABPBK06100	None	None	G4	S3	SSC
<b>least Bell's vireo</b> <i>Vireo bellii pusillus</i>	ABPBW01114	Endangered	Endangered	G5T2	S2	
<b>loggerhead shrike</b> <i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	ABPBR01030	None	None	G4	S4	SSC
<b>Mohave ground squirrel</b> <i>Xerospermophilus mohavensis</i>	AMAFB05150	None	Threatened	G2G3	S2S3	
<b>Mohave river vole</b> <i>Microtus californicus mohavensis</i>	AMAFF11031	None	None	G5T1	S1	SSC
<b>Mohave tui chub</b> <i>Siphateles bicolor mohavensis</i>	AFCJB1303H	Endangered	Endangered	G4T1	S1	FP
<b>Mojave monkeyflower</b> <i>Diplacus mohavensis</i>	PDSCR1B1V0	None	None	G2	S2	1B.2
<b>pallid San Diego pocket mouse</b> <i>Chaetodipus fallax pallidus</i>	AMAFD05032	None	None	G5T34	S3S4	SSC
<b>San Bernardino aster</b> <i>Symphotrichum defoliatum</i>	PDASTE80C0	None	None	G2	S2	1B.2
<b>San Emigdio blue butterfly</b> <i>Plebulina emigdionis</i>	IILEPG7010	None	None	G1G2	S1S2	



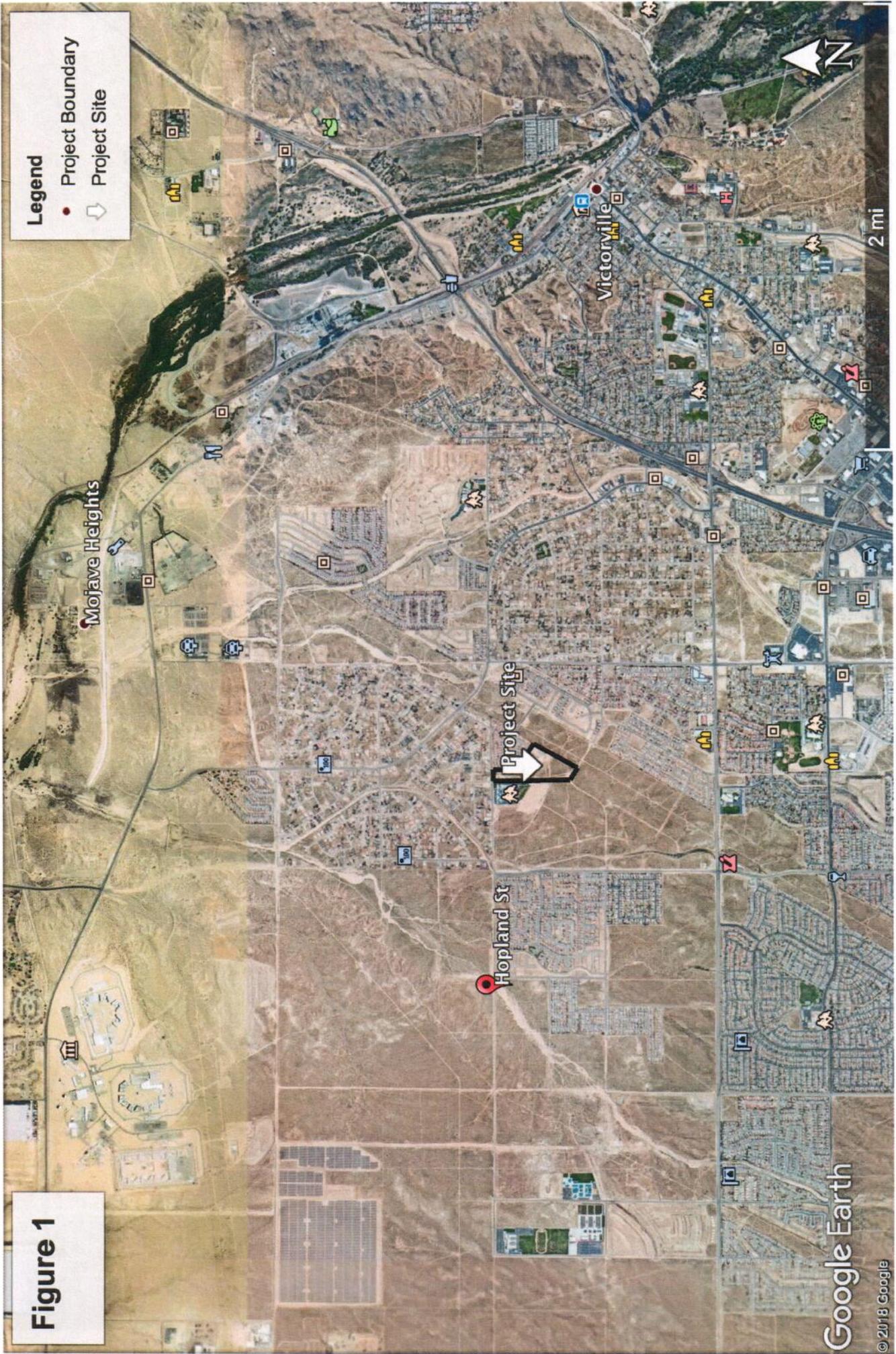
Selected Elements by Common Name  
California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
California Natural Diversity Database



Species	Element Code	Federal Status	State Status	Global Rank	State Rank	Rare Plant Rank/CDFW SSC or FP
southern mountains skullcap <i>Scutellaria bolanderi</i> ssp. <i>austromontana</i>	PDLAM1U0A1	None	None	G4T3	S3	1B.2
southwestern willow flycatcher <i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>	ABPAE33043	Endangered	Endangered	G5T2	S1	
summer tanager <i>Piranga rubra</i>	ABPBX45030	None	None	G5	S1	SSC
Swainson's hawk <i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	ABNKC19070	None	Threatened	G5	S3	
Townsend's big-eared bat <i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>	AMACC08010	None	None	G3G4	S2	SSC
tricolored blackbird <i>Agelaius tricolor</i>	ABPBXB0020	None	Candidate Endangered	G2G3	S1S2	SSC
Victorville shoulderband <i>Helminthoglypta mohaveana</i>	IMGASC2340	None	None	G1	S1	
western pond turtle <i>Emys marmorata</i>	ARAAD02030	None	None	G3G4	S3	SSC
western yellow-billed cuckoo <i>Coccyzus americanus occidentalis</i>	ABNRB02022	Threatened	Endangered	G5T2T3	S1	
white pygmy-poppy <i>Canbya candida</i>	PDPAP05020	None	None	G3G4	S3S4	4.2
yellow warbler <i>Setophaga petechia</i>	ABPBX03010	None	None	G5	S3S4	SSC
yellow-breasted chat <i>Icteria virens</i>	ABPBX24010	None	None	G5	S3	SSC

Record Count: 32

Figure 1



**Figure 2**

Aerial View of project site





VIEW FROM SOUTHERN BOUNDARY LOOKING NORTH



VIEW FROM NORTHERN BOUNDARY LOOKING SOUTH

FIGURE 3  
SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

