GENERAL BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT

DOLORES LAKE PROJECT
NEWBERRY SPRINGS
SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Prepared for:

G & GF Enterprises, LLC
39 Hidden Trail
Irvine, CA 92603

Prepared by:

RCA Associates, Inc.
15555 Main Street, #D4-235
Hesperia, California 92345
Principal Investigators: Randall C. Arnold, Jr.
Parker Smith
Heidi Coduto

Report prepared by: R. Arnold, P. Smith & H. Coduto
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Prepared for: **G & GF Enterprises, LLC**
39 Hidden Trail
Irvine, CA 92603

Principal Investigators: **Randall C. Arnold, Jr., Senior Biologist**
Parker L. Smith, Biologist
Heidi Coduto, Biological Field Technician

Contact Information: **Randall C. Arnold, Jr.**
RCA Associates, Inc.
15555 Main Street, #D4-235
Hesperia, CA 92345
(760) 956-9212
rca123@aol.com
www.rcaassociatesllc.com

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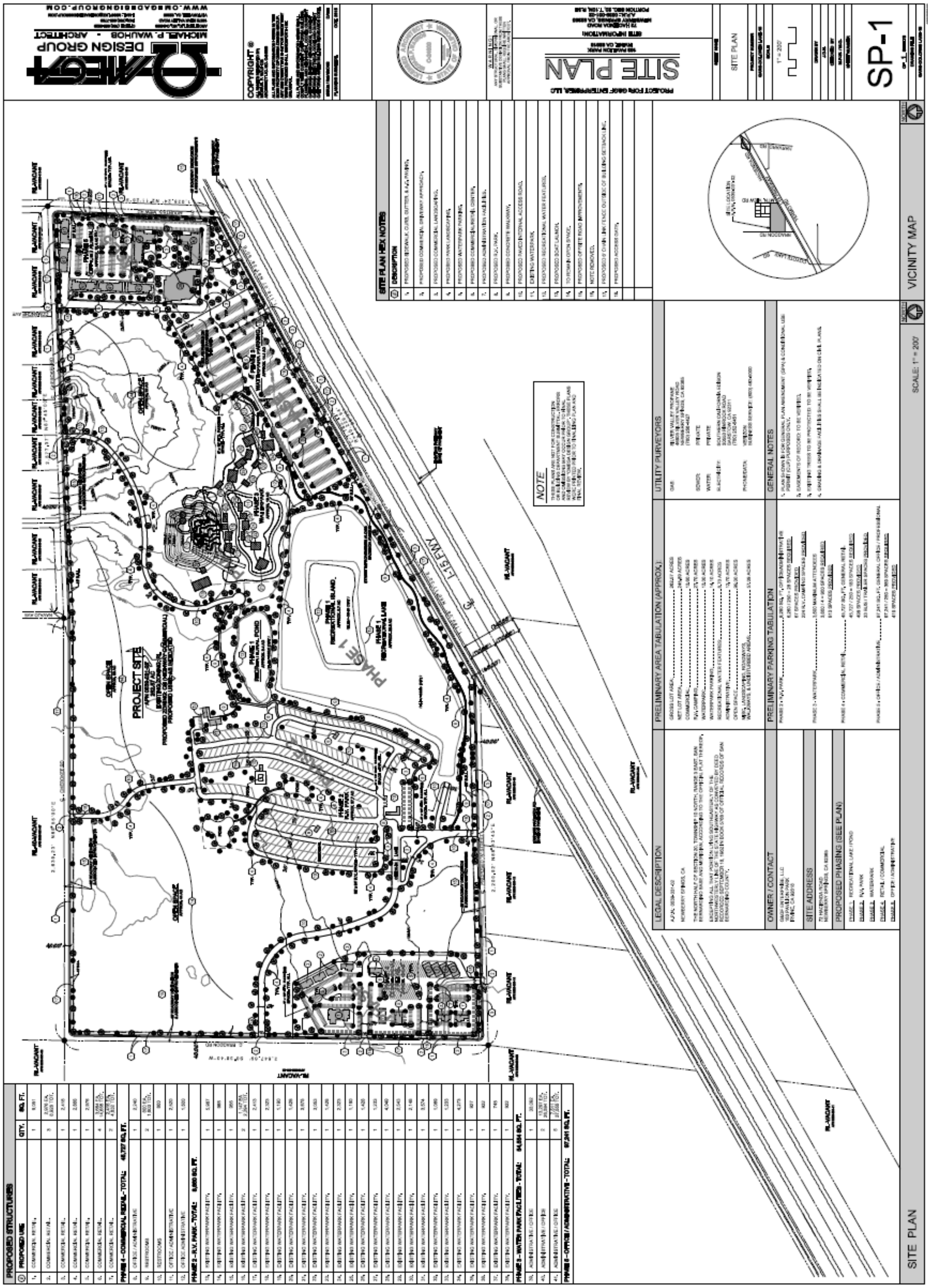
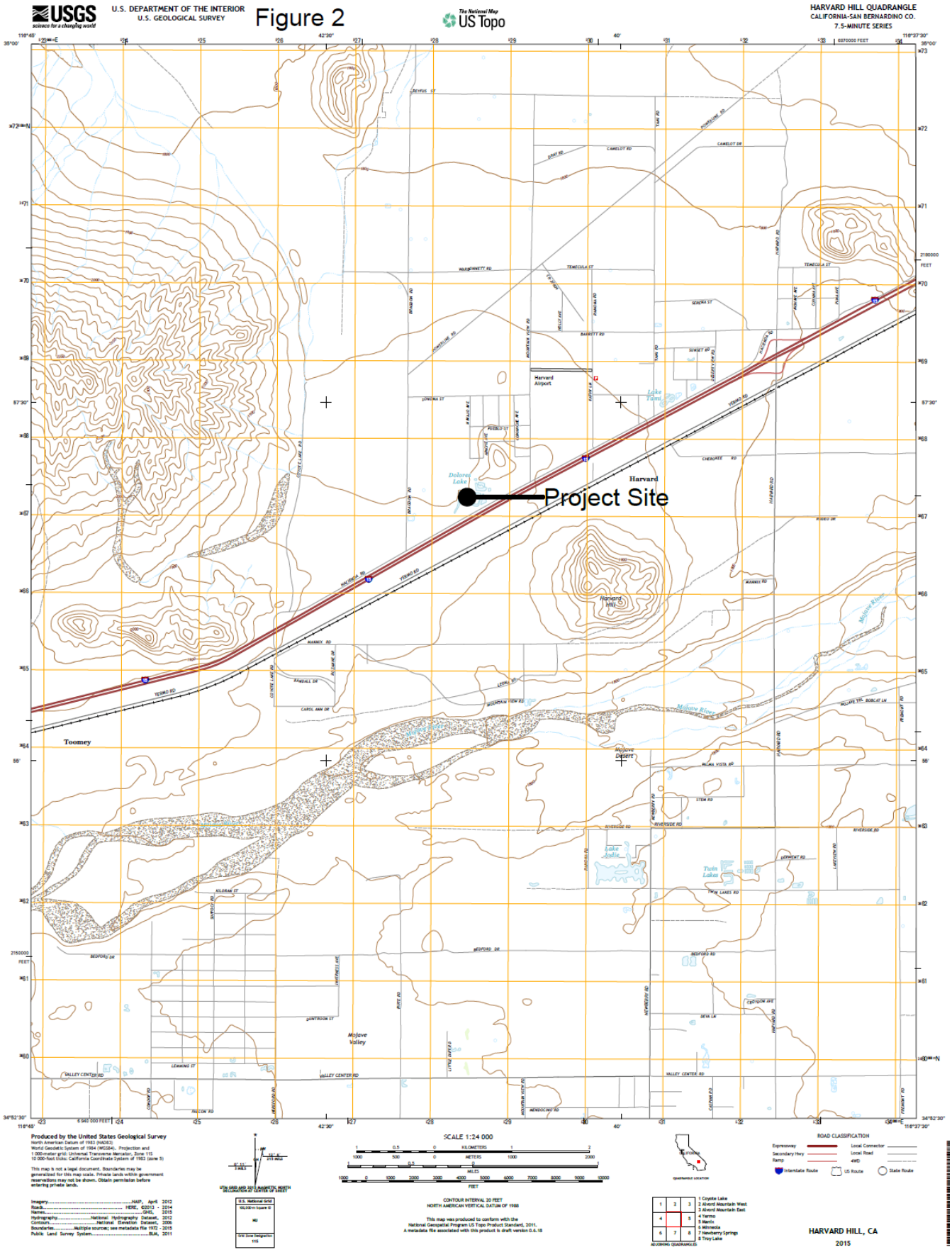
1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Biological surveys were conducted in January & February 2017 on a 260-acre parcel (approximate) located between Mountain View Road and Bragdon Road immediately north of the Interstate 15 freeway in the City of Newberry Springs, California (Township 10 North, Range 3 East, Section 20/17, USGS Harvard Hill, California Quadrangle 1993) (Appendix A: Figures 1, 2, and 3). As part of the environmental assessment process, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) data sources were reviewed.

Following completion of a comprehensive data review, 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. As part of the surveys, the property site and the adjoining lands were evaluated for the presence of native habitats which could potentially support populations of special status wildlife species. A focused survey was also conducted for the presence of any burrows which could potentially be utilized by burrowing owls, and a habitat assessment was also performed for the Mohave ground squirrel and desert tortoise. The property was also evaluated for the presence of sensitive habitats including stream channels, wetlands, vernal pools, riparian habitats, and jurisdictional areas.

Based on data from USFWS, CDFW, and a search of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB, 2017) for the USGS Harvard Hill, California quadrangle, there are four special status wildlife species and two special status plant species that have been documented within the USGS Harvard Hill quadrangle. Sensitive wildlife species include desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata),* Vermilion flycatcher *(Pyrocephalus rubinus),* and Mohave tui chub (*Siphateles bicolor mahavensis*). Special status plant species which have been documented in the immediate area include Parish's phacelia (*Phacelia parishii)* and Jackass-clover (*Wislezenia refacta ssp. refracta*).


SITE PLAN
SP-1
VICINITY MAP
PHASE 1
PROJECT SITE
I-15 FWY
SITE PLAN


USGS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
Figure 2
The National Map
US Topo
HARVARD HILL QUADRANGLE
CALIFORNIA-SAN BERNARDINO CO.
7.5-MINUTE SERIES
Project Site
Harvard
Toomey
Mojave Valley
Harvard Airport
Lake Tomi
Dolores Lake
Harvard Hill
Mojave River
Mojave Desert
Lake Jodie
Twin Lakes
Produced by the United States Geological Survey
SCALE 1:24 000
CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
NORTH AMERICAN VERTICAL DATUM OF 1988
ROAD CLASSIFICATION
HARVARD HILL, CA
2015

CENTER LOOKING NORTH

CENTER LOOKING EAST

FIGURE 3
SITE PHOTOS

CENTER LOOKING SOUTH

CENTER LOOKING WEST

FIGURE 3 Cont.
SITE PHOTOS

Scientific nomenclature for this report is based on the following references: Hickman (1993), Munz (1974), Stebbins (2003), Sibley (2000) and Whitaker (1980). An additional eleven special status wildlife species and eleven special status plant species also occur within the eight surrounding quadrangles within approximately eight miles of the project site, and these are listed in Table 4-1 and Table 4-2 (See Section 4).

The project proponent is proposing to enhance and restore the existing waterpark facilities. Proposed development activities would include a recreational lake/pond/island, RV parking, commercial/retail facilities, and office/administration buildings (Figure 1). Interior roads will also be constructed to provide access throughout the property and connect the various aspects of the park with the main access points along Hacienda Road.

2.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The property is approximately 260-acres in size and is located between Mountain View Road and Bragdon Road, just north of Hacienda Road in the City of Newberry Springs, California (T10N, R3E, Sections 17 & 20, USGS Harvard Hill, California quadrangle) (Figures 1 and 2). The property has been significantly altered by past development activities associated with the existing waterpark facilities and most of the site supports minimal vegetation. Some areas that have been minimal impacted currently support a sparse creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*) plant community.

In 1962, Lake Dolores Waterpark was constructed which significantly altered the natural habitat on the site. The waterpark closed down in the late eighties and over the next ten years no commercial activities occurred on the site. In 1998, the site was converted to the Rock-A-Hoola Waterpark facility under new ownership, but closed down again soon after. The site was re-open briefly and operated from 2002 to 2004; however, the site was closed in 2004 and has remained closed over the last thirteen years. A significant amount of vandalism and decay has occurred since the park was closed in 2004, which has resulted in significant impacts throughout the site. The natural habitat of the land has been highly disturbed by past development activities which has resulted in the introduction of nonnative species. The property is surrounded by vacant land with Interstate 15 immediately south of the site, with a few residential dwellings to the north and east.

The dominant perennials on the site consists of creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), saltbush (*Atriplex californica*), mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*), and tamarisk (*Tamarix ramosissima*). Other plants sparsely distributed throughout the site included California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), brome grass (*Bromus sp.*), Russian thistle (*Salsola kali*) and schismus (*Schismus sp.*). Common reeds *(Phragmites australis)* and cattails (*Typha latifolia*) were also noted around the edges of the ponds. A small windbreak, consisting of pines (*Pinus* sp.), mesquite, and tamarisk, is located in the central portion of the site. Table 1 provides a list of all plants occurring on the site.

The site supports a variety of wildlife species with jackrabbits (*Lepus californicus*) and desert cottontails (*Sylvilagus auduboni*) common on the property and frequently observed during the field investigations. Reptile observations were somewhat limited with western whiptails (*Cnemidophorus tigris*) and side-blotched lizards (*Uta stansburiana*) the only species observed. Birds observed in association with the ponds included mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and American coot (*Fulica Americana*); however, numerous other aquatic birds and shorebirds are likely to utilize the ponds, especially during fall and spring migration periods, and are listed in Table 2.

Other bird species observed during the field investigations included mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), western kingbird *(Tyrannus verticalis),* western bluebird *(Sialia Mexicana),* pigeon (*Columba livia domestica),* and common raven (*Corvus corax*). Table 2 provides a comprehensive compendium of wildlife which has been observed in the area or which is known to occur in the region. No sensitive habitats such as blueline channels, vernal pools, or critical habitats for sensitive species were noted during the field investigations.

3.0 METHODOLOGIES

General biological surveys were conducted in January and February 2017 during which biologists from RCA Associates, Inc. initially walked meandering transects throughout the site to collect data on the plant and wildlife communities. Following completion of the initial reconnaissance surveys, comprehensive surveys were performed throughout the site to document the vegetation present on the property and the wildlife species which inhabit the area. In addition to the general biological investigations, a focused survey was conducted to determine if there were any suitable burrows (i.e., "occupiable") for burrowing owls present on the site. In addition, habitat assessments were also performed for the Mohave ground squirrel and desert tortoise. The applicable methodologies for the various field investigations performed are summarized below.

Surveys were normally performed on the site and in the surrounding area from approximately 0900 to about 1500 hours each survey day. The initial reconnaissance surveys were conducted on January 4 & 5, 2017, with extensive field investigations conducted on January 12, February 7, 8, and 14, 2017. During the extensive field investigations, focused burrow surveys were performed for burrowing owls and the habitat present on the site was evaluated for the presence of Mohave ground squirrel and desert tortoise. Weather conditions during the surveys consisted of winds ranging from 0 to 10 mph, temperatures from the low 60's (F) (AM) to high-80's (PM) (^{o}F) with cloud cover ranging from 5 - 50 percent. All plants and wildlife 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).

3.1 General Plant and Animal Surveys: Meandering transects were walked throughout the site at a pace that allowed for careful documentation of the plant and animal present on the site. All plants observed were identified in the field and wildlife were identified through visual observations and/or by vocalizations. Tables 1 and 2 (Appendix A) provide a comprehensive compendium of the species observed and those

expected to occur in the region. Private property borders the site, therefore, no Zone of Influence (ZOI) surveys were conducted in adjacent areas; however, binoculars and spotting scopes were used to evaluate adjacent areas as much as possible.

3.2 Burrowing Owl: The site was initially evaluated in January and February 2017 for the presence of suitable habitat for the species. Owls utilize a variety of natural and modified habitats for nesting and foraging where the vegetation is low-growing. Typical habitats for the species includes native and non-native grasslands, interstitial grassland within shrub lands, shrubs lands with low density cover, drainage ditches, earthern berms, pasture lands, and fallow fields (CDFW, 1992). Burrowing owls typically utilize abandoned fossorial burrows which have been excavated by various mammals such as coyotes, foxed, ground squirrels, badgers, and dogs. Owls may also use man-made structures such as electrical vaults, cement culverts, man-made structures, and large debris piles. The existing waterpark has numerous man-made structures which are suitable for use by burrowing owls.

As part of the habitat assessment, the site was also surveyed for potential (i.e., occupiable) owl burrows by biologists from RCA Associates, Inc. As required by CDFW survey protocol, 30 meter, parallel belt transects were walked in an east-west direction until the entire property had been checked for burrows, as well as the presence of any burrowing owls, and/or owl signs (burrows, tracks, whitewash, etc.). All transects were walked at a pace that allowed careful observations along the transect routes and in the immediate vicinity. Burrowing owls typically utilize burrows which have been excavated by other animals (squirrels, coyotes, foxes, dogs, etc.) since owls cannot dig their own burrows. Field notes were recorded regarding native plant assemblages, wildlife sign, and human affects in order to determine the presence or absence of suitable burrowing owl habitat. Given the presence of suitable areas for use by burrowing owls, focused surveys for owls should be conducted during the breeding season (i.e., March 1 – August 31). The focused surveys during the breeding season should be performed to

determine if any owls are present on the site and to determine if any breeding activities are occurring. Thirty-meter transects should be utilized to provide 100 percent coverage of the property.

3.3 Desert Tortoise: A habitat assessment was conducted for the desert tortoise in conjunction with the general biological surveys. The purpose of the habitat assessment was to evaluate the habitat present on the site and to determine if the site supports suitable habitat for the species. USFWS and CDFW specify when protocol surveys for protocol surveys for tortoises should be conducted (i.e., April through May and September through October). The January surveys were conducted outside of the typical survey season for tortoises; however, data collected from the habitat assessment does provide data on the presence or absence of the species on the site.

As part of the habitat assessment, belt transects were walked throughout the site during which the site was evaluated for the presence of any undisturbed areas which might support vegetation typically associated with the desert tortoise. Data was collected on plant species observed as well as the presence of any burrows which might have been excavated by tortoises. Zone of influence surveys were not performed due to the presence of private property immediately surrounding the site and the absence of permission to conducted surveys in the adjacent area.

3.4 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. If a site supports suitable habitat for the Mohave ground squirrel, CDFW will require payment of a mitigation fee for acquisition of mitigation lands to compensate for impacts to the species. In lieu of payment of mitigation fees, the proponent may conduct a live trapping survey to definitively determine the presence/absence following consultations with CDFW.

4.0 LITERATURE SEARCH

As part of the environmental process, a search of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB, 2017) was performed. The data base search included the USGS Harvard Hill, California quadrangle and the eight surrounding quadrangles in order to fully evaluate the existing conditions in the region in regards to special status species. Based on this review, it was determined that four special status wildlife species and two special status plants have been documented within the USGS Harvard Hill in which the site is located and eleven additional special status wildlife and plants also occur within the surrounding eight quadrangles within a radius of approximately eight miles. The following tables provide data on each special status species.

Table 1: Special status plant species documented in the region (Source: CNDDB, 2017)

NAME	STATUS	HABITAT REQUIREMENTS	PRESENCE/ABSENCE ON PROPERTY
PLANTS			
Within Harvard Hill Quad			
Parish's phacelia(*Phacelia parishii)*	Fed: None State: None CNPS: 1B.1	Mojavean desert scrub, alkali playa	Nearest documented observations within 3.7 miles sw of the site (CNDDB, 2017).
Jackass-clover *(Wislezenia refracta ssp. refracta)*	Fed: None State: None CNPS: 2B.2	Desert scrub, desert washes, desert dunes	Nearest documented observations within 3.8 miles nw of the site (CNDDB, 207).
Surrounding Eight Quads			
Small-flowered androstephium *(Androstephium breviflorum)*	Fed: E State: None CNPS: 2B.1	Mojavean desert scrub, Desert dunes	Suitable habitat absent from site. Not expected to occur on the site.
Clokey's cryptantha *(Cryptantha clokeyi)*	Fed: None State: None CNPS: 1B.2	Mojavean desert scrub	Suitable habitat absent from site. Not expected to occur on the site.
Purple-nerve monkeyflower *(Cymopterus multinervatus)*	Fed: None State: None CNPS: 1B.2	Mojavean desert scrub	Suitable habitat absent from site. Not expected to occur on the site.
Mojave menodora *(Menodora spinescens var. mohavensis)*	Fed: None State: None CNPS: 1B.2	Mojavean desert scrub	Suitable habitat absent from site. Not expected to occur on the site.
Darlington's blazing star *(Mentzelia puberula)*	Fed: None State: None CNPS: 2B.2	Desert scrub	Suitable habitat absent from site. Not expected to occur on the site.
Emory's crucifixion-thorn(Castela emoryi)	Fed: None State: None CNPS: 2B.2	Mojavean desert scrub, sonoran desert scrub, desert wash.	Suitable habitat absent from site. Not expected to occur on the site.
Mohave monkeyflower (*Diplacus mohavensis)*	Fed: None State: None CNPS: 1B.2	Desert wash, mojavean desert scrub, Joshua tree woodland.	Suitable habitat absent from site. Not expected to occur on the site.
Creamy blazing star(*Mentzelia tridentata)*	Fed: None State: None CNPS: 1B.3	Mojavean desert scrub	Suitable habitat absent from site. Not expected to occur on the site.
Beaver Dam breadroot (*Pediomelum castoreum)*	Fed: None State: None CNPS: 1B.2	Desert wash, mojavean desert scrub, Joshua tree woodland	Suitable habitat absent from site. Not expected to occur on the site.
White-margined beardtongue *(Penstemon albomarginatus)*	Fed: None State: None CNPS: 1B.1	Mohavean desert scrub, desert dunes, desert wash	Suitable habitat absent from site. Not expected to occur on the site
Parish's popcornflower *(Plagiobothrys parishii)*	Fed: None State: None CNPS: 1B.1	Great basin scrub, Joshua tree woodland	Suitable habitat absent from site. Not expected to occur on the site

Legend: CNPS = California Native Plant Society; E = Endangered; T = Threatened

Table 2: Special status wildlife documented in the region (Source: CNDDB, 2017)

NAME	STATUS	HABITAT REQUIREMENTS	PRESENCE/ABSENCE ON PROPERTY
ANIMAL			
Within Harvard Hill Quad			
Western pond turtle(*Emys marmorata)*	Federal: None State: None CDFW: SSC	Aquatic turtles of ponds, marshes, rivers, streams, along with aquatic vegetation.	Nearest documented observations within 3.9 miles southwest of the site (CNDDB, 2017).
Desert tortoise(*Gopherus agassizii)*	Federal: T State: T IUCN: Vulnerable	Desert shrub	Nearest documented observations within 4.6 miles west of the site (CNDDB, 2017).
Vermilion flycatcher *(Pyrocephalus rubinus)*	Federal: None State: None CDFW:SSC	Marshes, riparian, woodland, scrub, wetlands.	Nearest documented observations within 4.1 miles southeast of the site (CNDDB, 207).
Mohave tui chub(*Siphateles bicolor mohavensis)*	Federal: E State: E CDFW: Fully Protected	Aquatic, deep pools and ponds with vegetation.	Nearest documented observations within 7.7 miles southwest of the site (CNDDB, 2017).
Surrounding Eight Quad			
Prairie falcon(*Falco mexicanus)*	Federal: None State: None CDFW: Watch List	Great basin grassland, desert scrub	Suitable habitat absent from site. Not expected to occur on the site.
Desert bighorn sheep *(Ovis canadensis nelsoni)*	Federal: None State: None CDFW: Fully Protected	Chaparral, desert scrub, riparian, woodland	Suitable habitat absent from site. Not expected to occur on the site.
Pallid bat *(Antrozous pallidus)*	Federal: None State: None CDFW: SSC	Chapparral, scrub, grassland, riparian woodland	Suitable habitat absent from site. Not expected to occur on the site.
Le Conte's thrasher(*Toxostoma lecontei)*	Federal: None State: None CDFW: SSC	Desert scrub	Suitable habitat absent from site. Not expected to occur on the site.
Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*)	Federal: None State: None CDFW: SSC	Open grassland areas where the owls utilize abandoned mammal burrows.	Suitable habitat present on the site. Not expected to occur on the site, and none observed during survey.
Townsend's big-eared bat(*Corynorhinus townsendii)*	Federal: None State: None CDFW: SSC	Broadleaved upland forests, chaparral, chenopod scrub, and grasslands.	Suitable habitat absent from site. Not expected to occur on the site.
Yellow breasted chat(*Icteria virens)*	Federal: None State: None CDFW: SSC	Riparian forests, scrubs and woodlands.	Suitable habitat absent from site. Not expected to occur on the site.

Mojave fringe-toed lizard *(Uma scoparia)*	Federal: None State: None CDFW:SSC	Desert dunes, desert washes, Mojave desert scrub	Suitable habitat absent from site. Not expected to occur on the site.
Mojave ground squirrel *(Xerospermophilus mohavensis)*	Federal: None State: T CDFW:SSC	Mojave desert scrub, Joshua tree woodland, chenopod scrub	Suitable habitat absent from site. Not expected to occur on the site.
Golden Eagle(*aquila chrysaetos*)	Federal: None State: None CDFW:Fully Protected	Rolling foothills, mountain areas, sage-juniper flats and deserts.	Suitable habitat absent from site. Not expected to occur on the site.
Tricolored blackbird (Agelaius tricolor)	Federal: None State: Candidate Endangered CDFW: SCC	Freshwater marshes, wetlands.	Suitable habitat absent from site. Not expected to occur on the site.

Legend: T = Threatened
E = Endangered
SSC = Species of Special Concern

5.0 RESULTS

5.1 General Biological Resources

The site has been significantly disturbed over the last fifty years due to past utilization of the property as a recreational water park (Figure 4). As previously discussed, the site was initially developed in 1962 and was open to the public until the late eighties, and was re-opened in 1998 before being closed again in 2004. Although some re-vegetation has occurred since 2004, the site still supports sparse desert scrub vegetation with most shrubs about 2 to 3 feet in height (Figure 3).

Vegetation is most prevalent in the western half of the site with creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*), and Russian thistle (*Salsola gtragus*) the most common species observed. Other species noted included California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), brome grass (*Bromus sp.*), and schismus (*Schismus sp.*). Pine trees (*Pinus* sp.), tamarisk (*Tamarix ramosissima*), and mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*) are also present in the central portion of the site and were planted as a wind break. The property includes a 30-acre lake and a few other small ponds which support a few mesic plants along the edge of the ponds such as common Reed (*Phragmites australis*), cattail (*Typha latifolia*), and sedge (*Carex* sp.). A few other species were also planted as part of on-site landscaping associated with the previous commercial operation and include palms (*Washingtonia filifera*) and cottonwood (*Populous* sp.). Table 1 provides a compendium of all plants identified on the site.

Various wildlife species were observed during the 2017 field investigations. Birds observed included ravens (*Corvus corax*), mourning doves (*Zenaida macroura*), western kingbirds (*Tyrannus verticalis*), western bluebirds (*Sialia Mexicana*), and pigeons (*Columba livia domestica*). The aquatic featurs on the site provide habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds, and mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and American coots (*Fulica Americana*) were frequently observed. Numerous other birds dependent upon aquatic areas are likely to utilize the on-site ponds especially during migration periods.

Figure 4
Aerial View

5.2 Federal and State Listed Species

The Federal and State listed species which have been documented in the surrounding region within approximately ten miles of the site include the desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), Mohave tui (*Siphateles bicolor mohavensis*), and Mohave ground squirrel (*Xerospermilus mohavensis*). These three species are discussed below.

Desert Tortoise: Desert tortoises have been documented in the region; although, no tortoises have been recently documented in the immediate area. The nearest documented sighting is about 4.6-miles west of the site (Occurrence #216, Yermo Quad., California Quad., CNDDB, 2017). A site habitat assessment was performed in January to determine if the site supports suitable habitat for the desert tortoise, and it is the opinion of RCA Associates, Inc. that the site does not support suitable habitat for the species. This conclusion is due in large part to disturbances which have occurred throughout the site since the initial water park was constructed in 1962. Virtually all of the native vegetation which may have been present on the site in 1962 was removed during construction activities and only a minimal amount of re-vegetation has occurred. Furthermore, no tortoises or any potential tortoise burrows or tortoise sign (scats, etc.) were noted during the field investigations conducted on the site in January and February 2017.

Mohave Tui Chub: The Mohave tui chub populations have been documented in the area with the nearest population about 7.7-miles southwest of the property (Occurrence #17, USGS Harvard Hill Quad., California Quad., CNDDB, 2017). This population was recorded in 2005. Habitats associated with this species include deep ponds with vegetation; however, the existing ponds on the site have never been connected to any ponds with Mohave tui chub populations; consequently, none of the ponds on the property are expected to support populations of the Mohave tui chub.

Mohave Ground Squirrel: Mohave ground squirrel populations have been documented in the region and the nearest observation was recorded in 2006 about 9.5 miles northwest

of the property (CNDDB, 2017). This species is dependent upon undisturbed Mojave desert scrub, Joshua tree woodlands, and chenopod scrub communities. As previously noted, the site has been disturbed over several decades and currently supports very minimal vegetation. Consequently, no portions of the site have vegetation which would be conducive to supporting populations of the Mohave ground squirrel. Based on its behavior, the species is infrequently observed above ground except during a small window in the spring, but is should be noted that no Mohave ground squirrels were visually observed during the field investigations. It is the opinion of RCA Associates, Inc. that the site does not support populations and this assumption is based on the following criteria.

1. Site has been significantly disturbed over a time period of about 50 years and there is limited native vegetation present on the site.
2. Limited connectivity with suitable habitat in the surrounding area;
3. Absence of small mammal burrows which may be utilized by the species; and
4. No recent documented observations in the immediate area.

5.3 Wildlife Species of Special Concern and Special Status Plants

There are two special status wildlife species and two special status plants species which have been documented within a about 4-miles of the site. These species include western pond turtle, vermilion flycatcher, Parish's phacelia, and jackass-clover. These species are discussed below

Western Pond Turtle: Western pond turtle populations have been documented in the area with the nearest observations was seen in 2005 and is about 3.9-miles southwest of the site (Occurrence #454, USGS Coyote Lake Quad., California quad., CNDDB, 2017). Although suitable habitat is present on the site in the form of the various ponds, it is unlikely the on-site ponds support any populations of western pond turtles. None of the

ponds have ever been connected to any ponds which support populations of the species, not are any of these occupiable ponds near enough to the site to allow migration of turtles on to the site. The only way the western pond turtle could be present on the site is if it was introduced by humans; however, no turtles were observed during the field investigations.

Vermilion Flycatcher: Vermilion flycatcher populations have been documented in the region including a 2005 observation about 4.1-miles southwest of the property (Occurrence #7, Harvard Hill Quad., California quad., CNDDB, 2017). Vermilion flycatchers are typically found in association with marshes, riparian woodland areas, and ponds, and there is a possibility that the species could infrequently occur on the site. However, no vermilion flycatchers were observed during the field surveys conducted as part of the biological investigations for the project.

Parish's Phacelia: Parish's phacelia is associated with Mojavean desert scrub and alkali playa habitats. The species was documented in 1992 about 3.7-miles southwest of the site (Occurrence #5, Harvard Hill Quad., California Quad., CNDDB, 2017) recorded in 1992. The site does not support suitable habitat for this plant species due to past disturbances and development activities.

Jackass-Clover: The Jackass-clover is typically found in desert scrub communities, and in desert washes and desert dunes. The species was observed in 2004 about 3.9-miles northwest of the site (Occurrence #5, Harvard Hill Quad., California quad., CNDDB, 2017). Based on the existing conditions presence throughout the site, the species is not expected to occur on the property.

5.4 Other Special Status Species

In addition to the species discussed above, there are eleven special status plants and

eleven special status wildlife species which have also been document in the surrounding region within approximately 10 miles of the site (Table 1). All of the plant species are listed as CNPS List 1B or 2B species, all of which are normally found in desert scrub habitats. The site does not support suitable habitat for any of the special status plants and none of these species are expected to inhabit the site.

Of the eleven special status wildlife species known to occur in the surrounding region, there are six bird species which could potentially occur on the site. These species include prairie falcon, LeConte's thrasher, yellow-breasted chat, golden eagle, burrowing owl, and tricolored blackbird. All of these species are very mobile and occur in a variety of habitats. In the case of the prairie falcon and golden eagle, both of these raptors range over large areas during hunting activities and could infrequently forage over the site. Likewise, the burrowing owl occurs in a variety of habitats and could potentially utilize some of the man-made structures as burrow; however, no burrowing owls were observed during any of the general field investigations conducted in January and February 2017.

The LeConte's thrasher occurs in undisturbed desert wash and desert scrub habitats, and is therefore, unlikely to utilize the site. The yellow breasted chat and the tricolored blackbird are frequently associated with riparian woodlands and freshwater marches respectively, and both species could potentially occur on the site given the presence of the ponds.

None of the above special status were observed during the field investigations conducted in January and February 2017. In addition, the low quality desert habitat present on the site minimizes the possibility of any special status species from occurring on the site, except for those species typically associated with aquatic habitats. Ponds such as those present on the site are significant attractions to wildlife and could be frequented by various bird species, some of which are special status species.

6.0 IMPACTS

Potential impacts to biological resources present on the site are summarized below and are based on California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines. The project as proposed is expected to have a negligible impact on the biological resources and the specific impacts are analyzed below.

6.1 SIGNIFICANT CRITERIA

CEQA Guidelines define "significant effect in the environment" as a "substantial or potentially substantial adverse change in the environment." The CEQA Guidelines further indicate that there may be a significant effect on biological resources if the project will:

- Cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels (CEQA Guidelines, Sections 15065(a))
- Threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15065 (a))
- Substantially affect, reduce the number, or restrict the range of unique, rare, or endangered species of animal or plant, or the habitat of the species (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15065 (a), Appendix G (c), Appendix I (II.4b) and (II.5b))
- Substantially diminish affect, reduce the habitat for fish, wildlife, or plants (CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G (d))
- Change the diversity of species, or number of any species of plants (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants) or animals (birds, land animals including reptiles, fish and shellfish, benthic organisms, or insects) (CEQA Guidelines, Appendix I (II.4.1) and (II.5.a))
- Introduce new species of plants or animals into an area, or act as a barrier to the normal replenishment of existing species (CEQA Guidelines, Appendix I (II.4.c) and (II.5.c))
- Deteriorate existing fish or wildlife habitat (CEQA Guidelines, Appendix I (II.5d)
- Conflict with any approved regional Habitat Conservation Plan.

6.2 CEQA ANALYSIS

Would the proposed project cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels or threaten to eliminate a plant of animal community (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15065 (a))??

The proposed project would not cause any fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels due to the proposed project. A recreational development was previously developed on the site; consequently, virtually all of the property has been significantly disturbed. The site supports minimize vegetation and wildlife communities and implementation of the proposed development plans would have negligible impacts on biological resources. Furthermore, the proposed project is not expected to decrease the overall potential carrying capacity for wildlife species in the area or eliminate any plant or animal community. In addition, no special status species are expected to experience any mortality.

Would the proposed project substantially diminish or reduce habitat for fish, wildlife, or plants (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15065 (a), Appendix G (t))?

The site has been significantly disturbed since 1962 and the site provides no suitable habitat for the desert tortoise or Mohave ground squirrel given the various development and operational activities which have occurred over the last 50-years. Furthermore, other special status species which have been documented in the region (See Section 4.0, Tables 1 & 2) are not expected to be impacted due primarily to the absence of suitable habitat. The only species which could potentially occur on the site as infrequently visitors include the vermilion flycatcher, burrowing owl, prairie falcon, yellow-breasted chat, and tri-colored; however, impacts to these species are not expected to be significant or substantially cause a reduction in the population levels.

Ravens, which are a relatively common bird in the desert, are frequently associated with human activities and developments. Consequently, the population levels of ravens in the

surrounding area may increase due to the presence of garbage and other waste products which may attract ravens. Ravens due prey upon tortoise hatchlings; therefore, an increase in the number of ravens could potentially cause an indirect increase in impacts to tortoises in the surrounding region.

Would the proposed project interfere substantially with the movement of resident or migratory fish or wildlife species?

Although 260-acres will be directly impacted by the proposed project, these impacts will not substantially interfere with the movement of resident or migratory fish and wildlife. The site does not support undisturbed native habitat and the site is not a significant migratory corridor. However, all migratory and non-game native breeding bird species are protected by international treaty under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), and the ponds present on the site do provide habitat for a variety of waterfowl and shorebirds, especially during migratory periods in Spring and Fall. Potential impacts to waterfowl and nesting birds can be avoided by limiting vegetation clearing and expansion activities associated with the ponds to the non-breeding season (August to February).

Would the proposed project introduce new species of plants or animals into an area, or act as a barrier to the normal replenishment of existing species?

The proposed Project will import various materials (including plants for landscaping, etc.) to the site from a variety sources. The possibility exists that new species of plants could be introduced to the area. However, implementation of appropriate mitigations should help keep impacts to less than significant.

Would the proposed project conflict with any approved regional Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs)?

The proposed project is not expected to have any impact on any approved regional Habitat Conservation Plans.

Would the proposed project change the diversity of species, or number of any species of plants?

The project site does not support native plant community due to past development activities and various human activities over the last 50-years. The limited amount of native vegetation which present on-site is similar to that in the surrounding area. therefore, the proposed project is not expected to change the diversity of species, or the number of any species.

Would the proposed project deteriorate existing fish or wildlife habitat (CEQA Guidelines, Appendix I (II.5.d))?

The proposed project will not cause any deterioration of existing fish and wildlife habitat, due to the level of disturbance which has occurred on the site and the absence of native habitat within the boundaries of the site. Metal toxicity from air-borne particulate matter generated on the site during the construction and operational phases is not expected to have a significant impact on wildlife in the region.

6.3 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Given the level of impacts that have occurred on the site over the last 50-years and the minimal amount of biological resources present on the site, the proposed project is expected to cause a negligible incremental reduction in desert scrub vegetation and a negligible loss of native biological resources in the region. Furthermore, landscaping that will be implemented as part of the proposed project may create additional habitat for local wildlife species and enhancement activities associated with the on-site ponds may provide additional habitat along the edges of the ponds.

7.0 MITIGATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed project is not expected to generate any significant impacts; however to minimize indirect and direct impacts, the following mitigation measures are recommended to ensure compliance with the requirements of the County of San Bernardino General Plan. In addition, Best Management Practices (BMPs) and mitigation measures that have been developed by the County will be incorporated as mitigation for this project. Incorporation of these measures will reduce indirect and direct impacts associated with the project.

1. All employees, subcontractors, construction personnel, and other individuals who work on-site shall participate in a desert tortoise awareness program. The program shall be administered by the Project Biologist or Environmental Monitor. The program may be given in the field prior to the start of construction activities, and shall include truck drivers, delivery personnel, and other project-related to personnel who have attended the training.

2. An authorized biological monitor shall be present, as needed, during construction to ensure that tortoises or any other special status species enter the construction area and to remove or rescue any individuals that may be injured. Mortality of any tortoise shall be reported to wildlife agency staff.

3. Where practicable, native vegetation will be utilized for on-site landscaping.

4. Focused surveys should be conducted for the burrowing owl during the breeding season (March 1 – August 31) due to the presence of man-made structures which could be utilize by the species as burrows. In addition, waterfowl surveys may be required by CDFW and USFWS

5. All trash and discarded foot items generated by construction and operation

activities shall be promptly contained and regularly removed from the project site to reduce the attractiveness of the area to ravens and other potential predators.

6. The project site must maintain an adequate water supply and delivery capacity as well as clear roadways for easy access in case of fire on the property.

7. If any other special status wildlife 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: _____ Signed: _____
Report Author

Field Work Performed By: Randall Arnold
Senior Biologist

Field Work Performed By: Parker Smith
Biologist

Field Work Performed By: Heidi Coduto
Biological Field Technician

Appendix A

Tables and Additional Figures

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

Common Name	Scientific Name	Location
Creosote bush	*Larrea tridentata*	On-Site
Saltbush	*Atriplex californica*	“
Mesquite	*Prosopis glandulosa var. torreyana*	“
Tamarisk	*Tamaricaceae.*	“
Common reed	*Phragmites australis*	“
Russian thistle	*Salsola kali*	“
Brome grass	*Bromus sp.*	“
California buckwheat	*Eriogonum fasciculatum*	“
Schismus	*Schismus barbatus.*	“
Pine tree	*Pinus sp.*	“
Palm	*Arecaceae arecales*	“
Palm	*Arecaceae palmae*	“
Cottonwood	*Populus sp.*	“
Gilia	*Gilia sp.*	Known to occur in surrounding area
Yellow-green matchweed	*Gutierrezia sarothrae*	“
Lycium	*Lycium cooperi*	“
Anderson’s thornbush	*Lycium andersonii*	“
Joshua tree	*Yucca brevifolia*	“
Burrobush	*Ambrosia dumosa*	“
Cheesebush	*Hymenoclea salsola*	“
Spiny hopsage	*Graysia spinosa*	“
Fiddleneck	*Amsinckia tessellata*	“
Rabbitbrush	*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*	“
Goldenbush	*Ericamertia sp.*	“
Vinegar-weed	*Lessingia lemmonii*	“
Mustard	*Descurainia pinnata*	“
Cholla	*Opuntia echinocarpa*	“
Winterfat	*Krascheninnikovia lanata*	“
Filaree	*Erodium cicutarium*	“

Note: The above list is not intended to be a comprehensive list of every plant which may occur on the site or in the surrounding area.

Table 2 - Wildlife observed on the site during the field investigations.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Location
American coot	*Fulica americana*	On-site and in the surrounding area.
Mallard	*Anas platyrhynchos*	"
Domestic pigeon	*Columba livia domestica*	"
Common raven	*Corvus corax*	"
Western kingbird	*Tyrannus verticalis*	"
Western bluebird	*Sialia mexicana*	"
Mourning dove	*Zenaida macroura*	"
Desert cottontail	*Sylvilagus auduboni*	"
Jackrabbit	*Lepus californicus*	"
Antelope ground squirrel	*Ammospermophilus leucurus*	Known to occur in surrounding area
Coyotes	*Canis latrans*	"
California ground squirrel	*Spermophilus beecheyi*	"
Sage sparrow	*Amphispiza belli*	"
Song sparrow	*Melospiza melodia*	"
House sparrow	*Passer domesticus*	"
House finch	*Carpodacus mexicanus*	"
Northern mockingbird	*Mimus polyglottus*	"
Western flycatcher	*Tyrannus verticalis*	"
Cactus wren	*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*	"
Gambel's quail	*Callipepla californicus*	"
Horned lark	*Eremophila alpestris*	"
Burrowing owl	*Athene cunicularia*	"
Desert spiny lizard	*Sceloporus magister*	"
Western whiptail lizard	*Cnemidophorus tigris*	"
Side-blotched lizard	*Uta stansburiana*	"

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

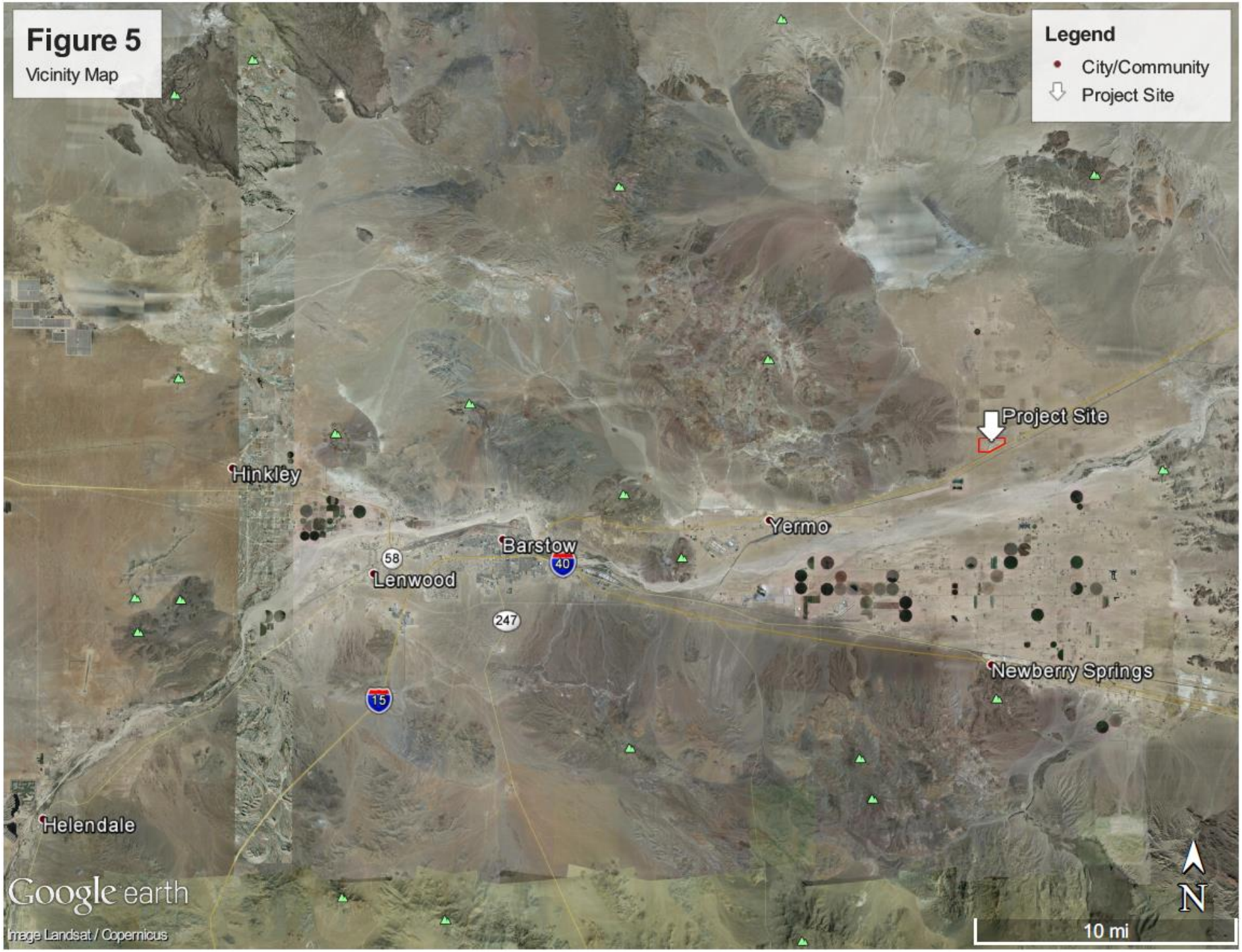
Figure 5
Vicinity Map
Legend
City/Community
Project Site
Project Site
Hinkley
Barstow
Yermo
Lenwood
58
40
247
15
Newberry Springs
Helendale
Google earth
Image Landsat / Copernicus
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