

LKQ Adelanto Expansion (PROJ-2020-00030)

ENVIRA

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Subject: Updated Habitat Assessment of the 54.35-acre LKQ parcel in undeveloped land in the City of Adelanto Sphere of influence, San Bernardino County, California

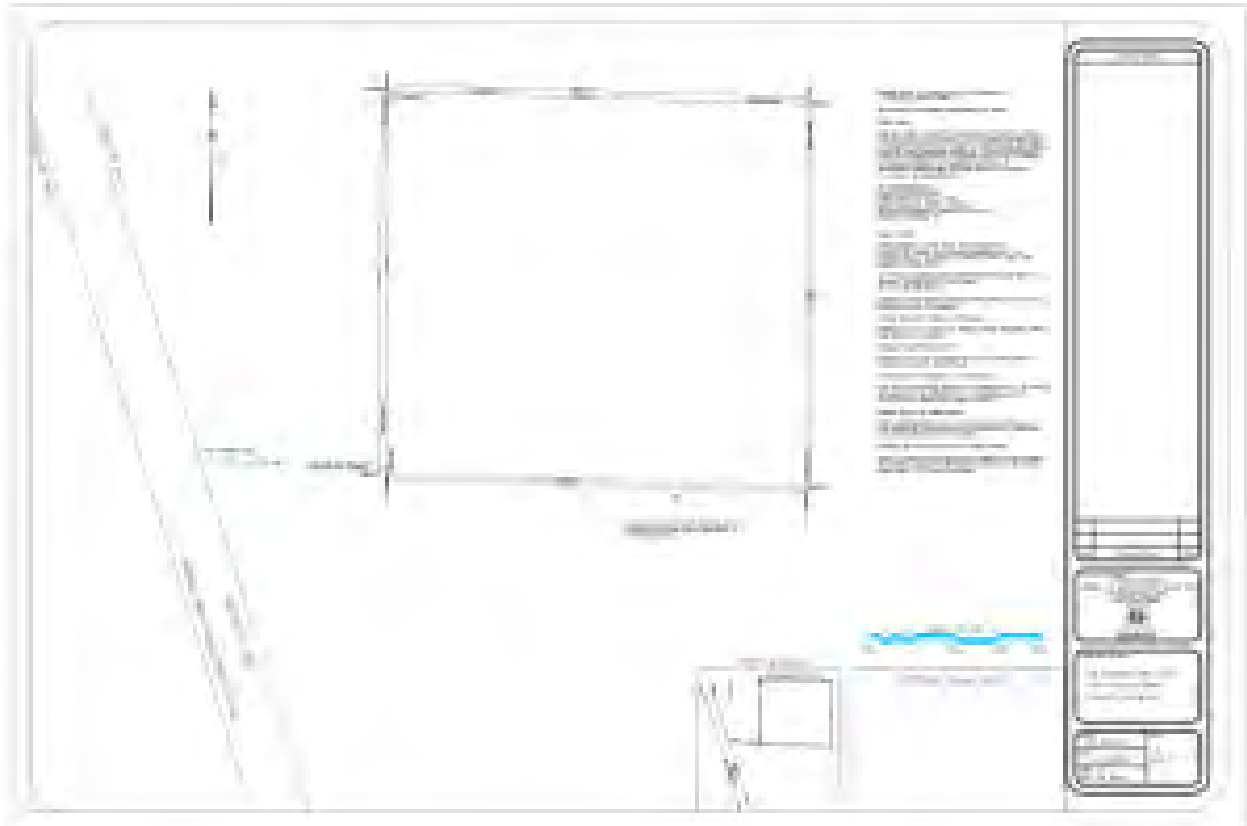
As requested, by Gyant Group, Philippe Vergne of ENVIRA completed a Phase One Habitat Assessment of the 54.35-acre LKQ Project Site, Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 0450-161-31, 32, 33, and 03. The Site is located within the City of Adelanto in San Bernardino County, California. ENVIRA conducted the Habitat Assessment to document the existing conditions on the Project Site and to determine potential occurrence of sensitive biological resources for sensitive habitats for any sensitive plant or wildlife species.

PROJECT SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The subject properties of the study, Assessor's Parcel No 0460-161-31, 32, 33, & 03 and surrounding area for annexation of other parcels, is located on the northern end of Highway 395, between 11010 Calleja Road and Colusa Road, Adelanto Quadrangle of Section 8 T6N R5W Sec. 8, San Bernardino Baseline and Meridian.

The study is part of the environmental review process for the proposed annexation subdivision of the existing parcels into a total of Commercial lots and Industrial Auto & Truck Salvage Storage site, as outlined by Tentative Tract noted above and described in letter of intent. The City of Adelanto, as the lead agency for the Project Site, required the study in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The purpose of the study is to provide the City with the necessary information and analysis to determine whether the Project Site would cause a substantial adverse change to any "Biological Resources," as defined by CEQA, that may exist in or around the Project Site.

Figure 1 – Project Site Boundaries



The Project Site is flat and located at an elevation of approximately 2,786 to 2,777 feet above mean sea level. The site is located in an Unincorporated Disadvantaged Area of San Bernardino County and borders the City of Adelanto, therefore, within the Sphere of Influence of the City of Adelanto on the northern border of the City of Adelanto in the County of San Bernardino. The current site use of the 54.35-acres is a vehicle salvage storage facility and an 8'-0" high perimeter fence with the typical desert sandy silted soil, road chipping, and drainage with a storm water basin at the north west corner of the site. The existing use is made up of 4 parcels of vacant with no structures, roadway and/or walkways on land. No drainage feature was observed on Site. Land use adjacent to the Site consists of undeveloped lands immediately to the east, and west (600 feet prior to Highway 395), two rural houses to the north, and an existing wrecking yard and a Buddhist meditation temple to the south.

Photograph 1- Looking East Across Site



METHODOLOGY

Analysis of the biological resources associated with the Project Site began with a thorough review of relevant literature, including the City of Adelanto Land Incorporation report for 600 acres, prepared by Gyant Group in 2020, followed by our habitat assessment survey conducted on January 2 of 2021. One of the databases reviewed was the San Bernardino County Desert Native Plant Protection and Management Ordinance including all reference materials noted on last two (2) pages of this study.

Literature Review

The literature review provides a baseline from which to evaluate the biological resources potentially occurring on the Project Site of 54.35 acres, with a 15-miles radius of the Project Site in the surrounding area. A compilation of wildlife species recorded in the vicinity of the Project Site was derived over a 15-mile radius from (IPaC) Information for Planning & Consultation, and the (CDFW) California Department of Fish and Wildlife, (CNP) California Native Plant Society, (Calflora) Nonprofit Database providing information on Wild Plants, (CDFW) California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB), a sensitive species and plant community account database, and from pertinent documents on Mohave ground squirrel, desert tortoise, and burrowing owl surveys in the vicinity of the site (15-mile radius). Other information used was (USGS) U.S. Geological Survey, and (NHD) National Hydrography Dataset.

Habitat Assessment Survey

The Site was surveyed by Philippe Vergne of Envira in order to document existing conditions, identify any suitable habitat for sensitive plant or wildlife species, and analyze potential impacts to sensitive biological resources based on current Project Site plans using USGS, IPaC, and Calflora maps and an

over lay on maps between entities mentioned above for Habitat descriptions, plant communities, and a list of plant and wildlife species observed during the survey were recorded in a field notebook.

The Project Site was surveyed by walking transects (50 meters apart) and looking for small mammal activity, sign of ground squirrel, desert tortoise and burrowing owl. Walking transects occurred between the hours of 07:30 and 15:00 with the weather conditions sunny partial cloudy and completed the walk inside the 54.35 acres Project Site and outside walking a radius of 500-feet beyond the perimeter of the Project Site.

RESULTS

Vegetation

The Project Site has no sparse creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*) or presence of Joshua trees (*Yucca brevifolia*) and the land cover conditions onsite is “Bare Ground” devoid of vegetation. In 2022 there were Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*) present on the Project Site, they were removed under a San Bernardino County Joshua removal and replanting permit. There were no common species observed such as burro bush (*Ambrosia dumosa*), thistle sage (*Salvia carduacea*), ephedra (*Ephedra* sp.), fiddleneck (*Amsinckia menziesii*), and non-native grasses such as red brome (*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*), and barley (*Hordeum* sp.).

Photograph 2 - Looking North Across Site



Aerial Imagery of Surrounding area around Project Site with very little vegetation



General Wildlife

The observations of wildlife present in the Project Site and surrounding area (radius of 500-feet) for the Burrows Owl, Desert Tortoise, and Mohave Ground Squirrel were not present and/or any visual sightings. The Project Site provided no habitat for wildlife species commonly found in this community.

Sensitive Plant Species

The Project Site is located at the southern margin of the historical range encompasses an area between Antelope Valley and Lucerne Valley, in the south (Gustafson 1993) historical range. The Joshua tree is not a plant species of concern but is considered sensitive by the County of San Bernardino City of Adelanto. Joshua trees within the Project Site were mapped during a previous biological survey. In 2022 there were Joshua trees (*Yucca brevifolia*) present on the Project Site, they were removed under a San Bernardino County Joshua removal and replanting permit. Outside of the Project Site there are various Joshua trees in the surrounding area.

The Project Site does not contain any suitable habitat for any potentially occurring sensitive species occurring onsite, and extremely marginal potential habitat for the four plant species of special concern known to occur in the general Project Site vicinity as per CNDDDB/CNP's, including Booth's evening primrose (*Camissonia boothii* ssp. *boothii*), Mojave monkeyflower (*Mimulus mohavensis*), short-joint beavertail (*Opuntia basilaris* var. *brachyclada*), and small-flowered androstephium (*Androstephium breviflorum*). Mojave monkeyflower and short-joint beavertail are CNPS List 1B species, species that are considered rare, threatened, or endangered (but are not formally listed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS] or CDFW) in California and elsewhere. Booth's evening primrose and small-flowered androstephium are CNPS List 2 species, species that are considered rare, threatened, or endangered in California (but not formally listed) but more common elsewhere.

Impacts to CNPS plant species on the potential Project Site would not be expected to occur and would not be considered significant under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) due to parcel size and low probability of occurrence due to current road chipping added to the Project Site surface.

Sensitive Wildlife Species

The Project Site does not contain any suitable habitat for several sensitive wildlife species known to occur in the vicinity, including desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), Mohave ground squirrel (*Spermophilus mohavensis*), and burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) that are only reported by CNDDDB.

Desert Tortoise

The desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) is a desert dwelling reptile that occurs throughout the Mojave and Sonoran deserts. It is found in California, Nevada and Utah, occurring in almost every type of habitat except dry lakes or playas, sand dunes and sand sheets and rocky slopes.

Project Site habitation conditions for the desert tortoise are the lack of suitable friable soils due to road chipping compact in the ground. There are no foraging plants on the Project Site as it is bare ground. The refugia and absence of burrows indicates that there has been no trace of these species onsite for more than 25-years. There are no vegetation communities on this Project Site to support these species.

Tortoises construct underground burrows as living quarters, and spend most of the year down in the burrows. They forage in the early spring (February and March) and remain active above ground until

early June, when they retreat to their burrows for most of the summer, fall and winter months. They will emerge and be active during the fall months of September and October, depending upon late summer weather conditions. Although they stay underground for most of the year, tortoises can be found active above ground at all times of the year.

Tortoises forage on spring annual wildflowers and grasses. During the foraging season, they also breed and lay eggs in preparation for the next spring.

The desert tortoise hibernates or estivates underground for much of the year as an adaptation to the extreme temperature changes characteristic of desert winters and summers. As a result, determining whether desert tortoise is present in a particular area is generally restricted to locating sign, or evidence, of recent activity.

The tortoise has been undergoing a decline in population due to a number of factors. These include loss or destruction of habitat, killing or harming of animals in the wild, collection of individual animals, raven predation and disease.

The CDFW listed the tortoise as threatened on June 22, 1989. The tortoise was emergency listed as endangered by the USFWS on August 4, 1989. The USFWS listing was later changed to threatened. Both listings were made based on populations declining due to the factors listed above. The discovery that the tortoise was rapidly disappearing throughout its range as a result of a disease known as Upper Respiratory Disease Syndrome (URDS) was a critical part of the listing decisions.

Desert tortoise is a federally and state listed threatened species that has zero to low potential to occur on the Project Site due to proximity to other development and Highway 395. Although no sign of desert tortoise was observed during our phase one survey no suitable habitat exists on the Site for this species. Therefore, no focused survey for desert tortoise is required to determine the presence/absence of this species onsite.

Mohave Ground Squirrel

The MGS was listed as a rare species in 1971 under the authority of the California State Endangered Species Act of 1970 (CESA) and was re-designated as a state threatened species in 1985 (Gustafson 1993). The MGS is small, grayish, diurnal squirrel. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is the responsible agency that provides for its protection and management.

MGS are dormant in the fall and winter months, but emerge from hibernation in February and begin pair bonding and mating during March (Gustafson 1993). If rainfall is adequate, MGS will reproduce. If rainfall levels are not sufficient to support substantial annual plant growth, then MGS will merely forage on herbaceous perennials and shrubs until they gain ample body mass for another prolonged period of dormancy (Gustafson 1993). The adult males can enter dormancy as early as late May. Juveniles will remain above-ground until August in order to acquire generous fat reserves prior to entering dormancy.

The Site is within the historic range of the Mohave ground squirrel. MGS occur in the western half of the Mojave Desert. Its historical range encompasses an area between Antelope Valley and Lucerne Valley, in the south (Gustafson 1993). However, MGS occurrences in the southern portion of its range are very unusual. The northern limits of the range are near Owens Dry Lake bed, in the north, and through China Lake Naval Weapons Station and Fort Irwin Military Base in the east (Gustafson 1993). The eastern limit of the species range extends to Barstow and south along the Mojave River. The western limits loosely follow State Highway 14 and the foothills of the southern Sierra Nevada escarpment (Gustafson 1993). Several other common squirrels occur within their range; antelope ground squirrel (AGS; *Ammospermophilus leucurus*), round-tailed ground squirrel (RTGS; *Xerospermophilus tereticaudus*) and the California ground squirrel (CGS; *Spermophilus beecheyi*).

The MGS occurs in sandy to rocky soils of relatively flat, sparse, desert scrub habitat, including creosote brush scrub, desert salt-brush scrub, desert sink scrub, desert greasewood scrub, shadscale scrub, and Joshua tree woodland (Gustafson 1993). It can occur in abandoned agricultural lands located adjacent to MGS populations.

An additional survey would not be required for the Mohave ground squirrel on Project Site due to the lack of potential habitat on the land supporting desert shrub vegetation within or adjacent to the geographic range of the species.

A Project Site is an action that results in temporary or permanent removal or degradation of potential habitat. CDFW considers a Project Site to be an area of land controlled by the Project Site proponent, including but not limited to the portion proposed for removal or degradation of potential habitat. The CDFW considers a Project Site to be occupied by the Mohave ground squirrel, if an individual of this species is observed, or is captured on any sampling grid, on the Project Site.

Project Site habitation conditions showed no suitable habitat found for the Mohave ground squirrel due to the lack of suitable friable soils that has a road chipping compact into the ground. The foraging plants which there are no plants on the Project Site as it is bare ground, and the refugia, absence of there has been no trace of these species' activities onsite for more than 12-years. There are no vegetation communities on this Project Site to support this species.

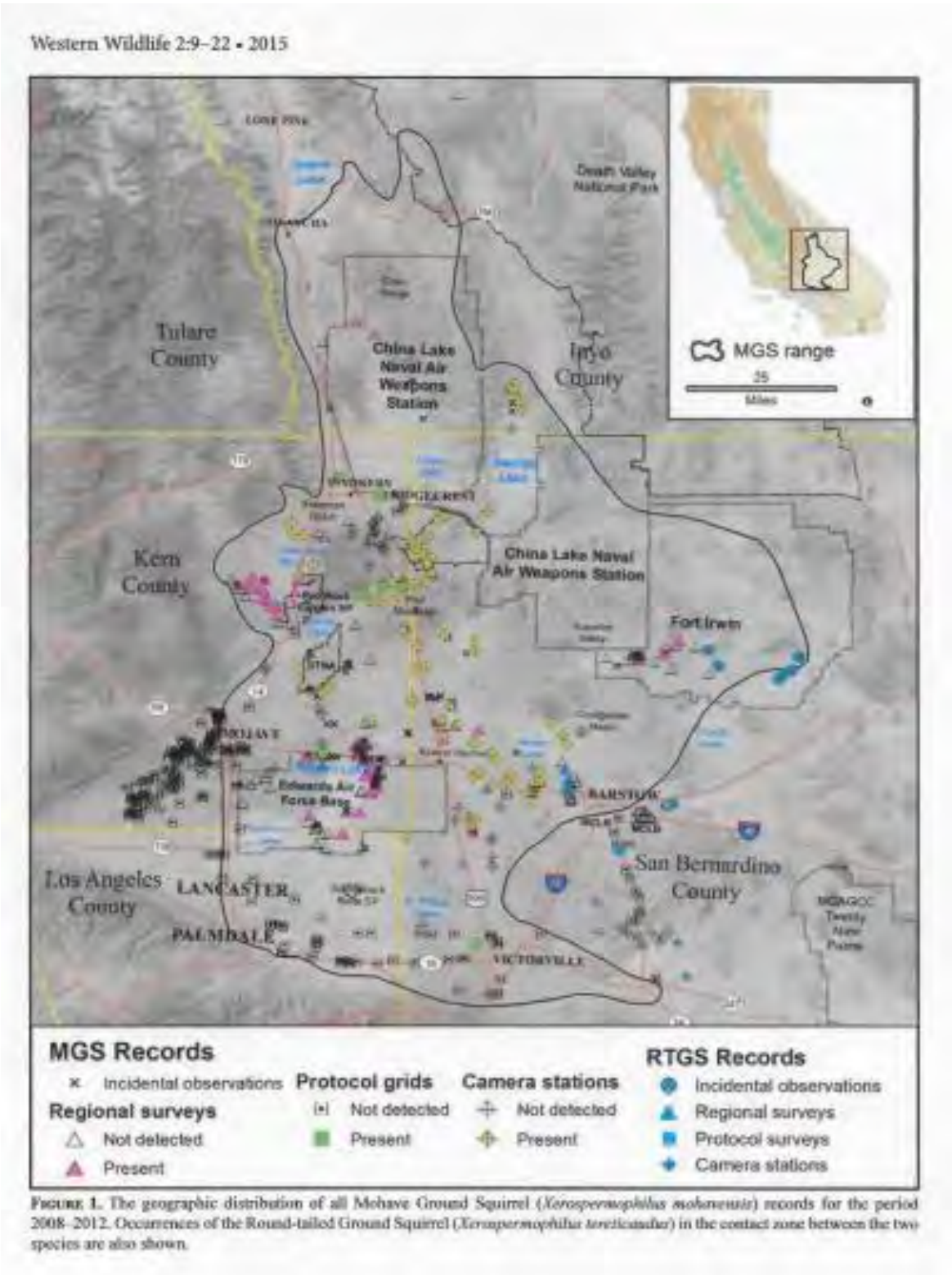
Based on habitat and location, The Mohave ground squirrel has a low potential to occur on the Project Site.

The Project Site is located at the southern margin of the historical range for the Mohave ground squirrel, Desert Tortoise, and the burrowing owl. There are several MGS records in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) in the Project Site vicinity. There have been approximately twenty (20) occurrences in the Mohave Desert vicinity over the past sixty years (60) that includes capture of one male and one juvenile Mohave ground squirrel in the past twenty-eight years (28). There have been no occurrences recorded within an eight-mile radius of the Project Site.

Leitner (2008), in a review of the status of the MGS, examined the results of MGS trapping surveys throughout the species' range for the period 1998-2007. There have been a number of MGS surveys in

the vicinity of the City of Adelanto (Figure 2). Results of 2020 survey by Leitner are not published yet but shows captures in the region.

Figure 2 -MGS Distribution from Lightner 2012



Burrowing Owl

The burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia, hypugaea*) is a resident species in lowland areas of southern California (Garrett & Dunn 1980). It prefers open areas for foraging and burrowing, and is found widely scattered in open desert scrub. This species is scarce in coastal areas, being found mainly in agricultural and grassland habitats. The largest remaining numbers are in the Imperial Valley, where it is common in suitable habitat adjacent to the agricultural fields.

The burrowing owl prefers large flat open areas for nesting and hunting (Garrett & Dunn 1981). This species lives in burrows constructed by other ground-dwelling species in grassy or sparse shrubby habitat. Burrowing owls also take over other types of burrows, including manmade objects such as pipes. This species forages low over the ground surface for insect prey, and seldom flies very high in the air.

The CDFW has designated the burrowing owl as a candidate for state listing. These species are so designated because “declining population levels, limited ranges and/or continuing threats have made them vulnerable to extinction.” (CDFW 2012b).

Burrowing owl is a California species of concern that is protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and CDFW Code.

A habitat assessment with protocols for the Project Site was completed and the habitation conditions for the desert tortoise, Mohave ground squirrel, burrowing owl, and any nesting have no potential suitable habitat due to the lack of suitable friable soils that has a road chipping compact into the ground. The foraging plants which there are no plants on the Project Site as it is bare ground, and the refugia, absence of burrows that there has been no trace of these species onsite for more than 25-years. There are no vegetation communities on the Project Site to support these species. No sign or direct observations of the BUOW were found during the phase one survey.

Jurisdictional Waters and Wetlands

The Project Site is barren. On the surrounding undeveloped land there is limited aquatic resources: vegetation (Joshua Trees and wild grass). The non-living materials (water, minerals, energy) found in water-based environments is not present. These resources are generally categorized by habitat—freshwater (rivers, lakes, wetlands, groundwater), marine (oceans, seas, estuaries), and coastal areas—offering vital ecosystems and industrial materials not anywhere near the Project Site.

The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) regulate discharge of fill into waters of the United States under Section 404 and 401 of the CWA, respectively. The CDFW regulates alterations to stream courses including adjacent riparian habitat areas under Section 1600 of the California Fish and Game Code. During the habitat assessment survey, no jurisdictional drainages were observed. The final determination will come from resource regulatory agencies.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ENVIRA's assessment determined that no further analysis of the Project Site will be required before development of the Project Site can proceed.

The Desert Tortoise, Mohave Ground Squirrel, Burrowing owl, and bird nesting habitat assessment area was 500-feet beyond the Project Site with a 15-mile radius for a literature review providing a baseline from which to evaluate the biological resources potentially occurring of all known species on the 54.35-acre Project Site and surrounding area. There are no real offsite impacts as the undeveloped land surrounding Project Site is very barren with some Joshua trees and desert grass that show no signs of habitat species and nesting in the area.

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