

General Biological Resources Assessment for the Cottonwood and Edgemont Project

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Cottonwood and Edgemont Project General Biological Resources Assessment

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report describes the existing biological resources on the proposed Cottonwood and Edgemont Project site, which herein generally includes: 1) the on-site development of a warehouse facility; 2) off-site water line upgrades; and 3) a connection to, and new outlet within, the off-site Edgemont Channel. This report evaluates the potential impacts to the existing biological resources that may occur as a result of project implementation. This report is intended to provide the City of Moreno Valley with information necessary to assess significant impacts to biological resources under the Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP).

2.0 PROJECT LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

2.1 PROJECT LOCATION

The project site is located in the City of Moreno Valley, Riverside County, California on the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Riverside East Quadrangle in Section 10 of Township 3S, Range 4W (Figures 1 and 2). It is located between Old 215 Frontage Road to the west and Edgemont Street to the east. The site is within the MSHCP plan area but is not within a criteria cell area.

2.2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project would develop 7.4 acres with a warehouse facility and includes off-site utility improvements largely in adjacent roadways and a connection to the existing, concrete-lined Edgemont Channel.

More specifically, the project includes two warehouse buildings with office spaces and truck docks; passenger vehicle and trailer parking areas; and site improvements such as landscaping, walls/fences, lighting, signage, and utility infrastructure connections. The project's off-site utility improvements include water line upgrades largely within paved rights-of-way for Old 215 Frontage Road and Cottonwood Avenue. Moreover, the project includes off-site construction of a new storm drain line connection between the project and Edgemont Channel and provides for the construction of a new outlet within the Edgemont Channel to receive project flows. This report assumes a 10-foot-wide construction zone for each of the off-site project components. Access to the site would be from Old 215 Frontage Road.

3.0 METHODS

3.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Prior to conducting the biological fieldwork, background research was conducted to obtain information on the existing biological conditions within the project vicinity. Background research included a review of current local, State, and federal regulations, historical and current aerial imagery, USGS topography, U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service soil survey mapping (Figure 3), the National Hydrography Dataset, the National Wetlands Inventory, and the MSHCP.

Queries of the California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDDB) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) federal listed species database were made to identify sensitive biological resources reported in the project vicinity. The CNDDDB, which is administered by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), provides an inventory of vegetation communities, plant species, and wildlife species that are considered sensitive by State and federal resource agencies, academic institutions, and other conservation groups. Historical occurrences of sensitive species from the proposed project vicinity were used to determine species that may have potential to occur within or adjacent to the project site and should specifically be looked for.

3.2 BIOLOGICAL SURVEYS

3.2.1 Vegetation Mapping

Biologist Brian Leatherman conducted a site visit on February 3, 2022 to identify and map existing biological resources on the site. The site was walked; plant and animal species observed/detected were recorded (Appendices A and B, respectively); and representative site photographs were taken (Appendix C; Figure 4 [photo locations]). Vegetation communities were mapped according to Holland (1986) classifications.

3.2.2 Sensitive Plants

The site is not within or adjacent to the MSHCP Criteria Area Species Survey Area (CASSA) or the Narrow Endemic Plant Species Survey Area (NEPSSA; Figure 5), and focused sensitive plant surveys are not required. Additionally, the database queries did not return records of any sensitive plant species on site or in the project vicinity.

3.2.3 Burrowing Owl

A focused burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) survey was not conducted as the site is not in the MSHCP burrowing owl survey area (Figure 5).

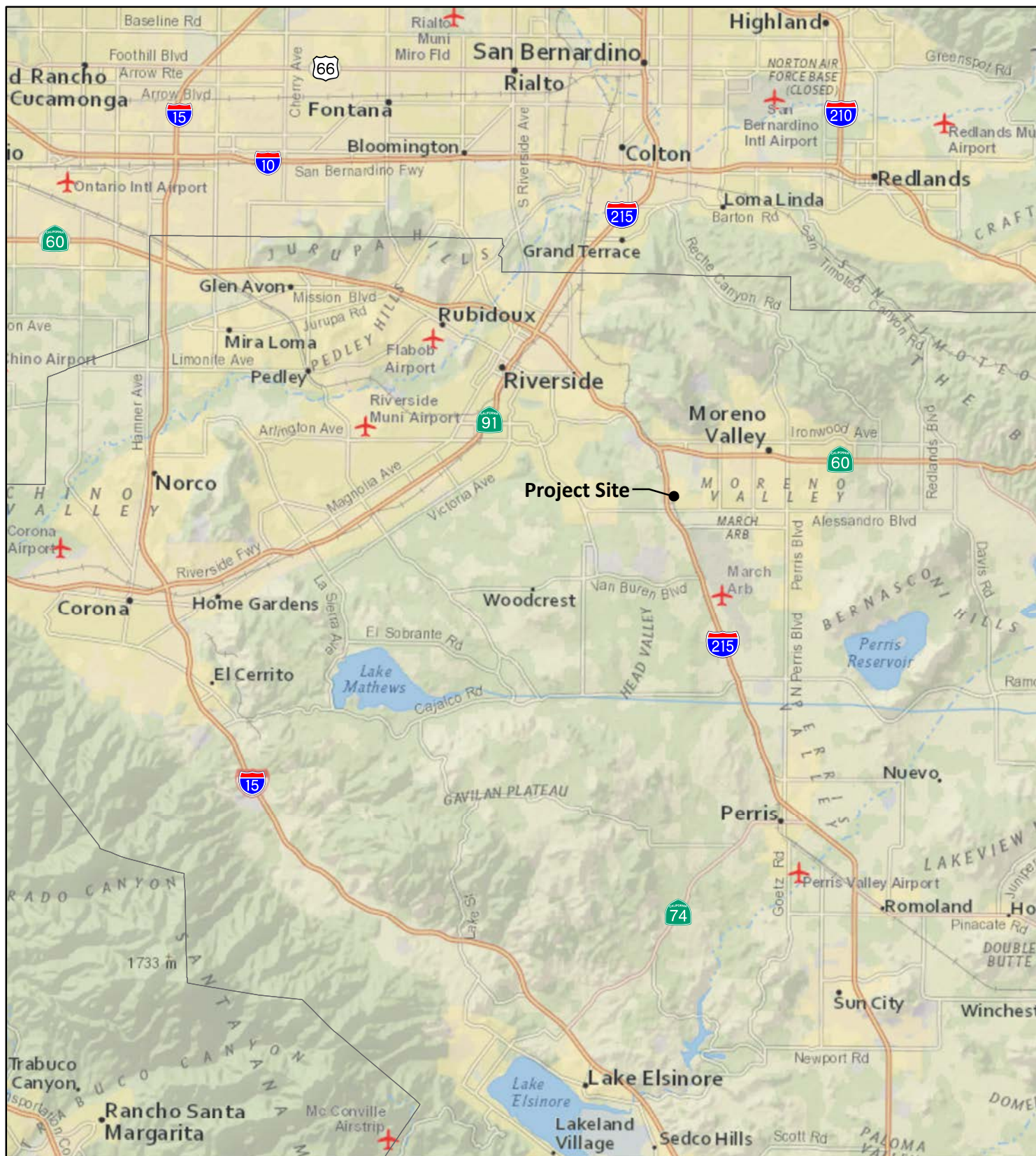
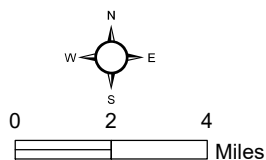


Figure 1

Regional Location

COTTONWOOD & EDMONT
MORENO VALLEY, CA



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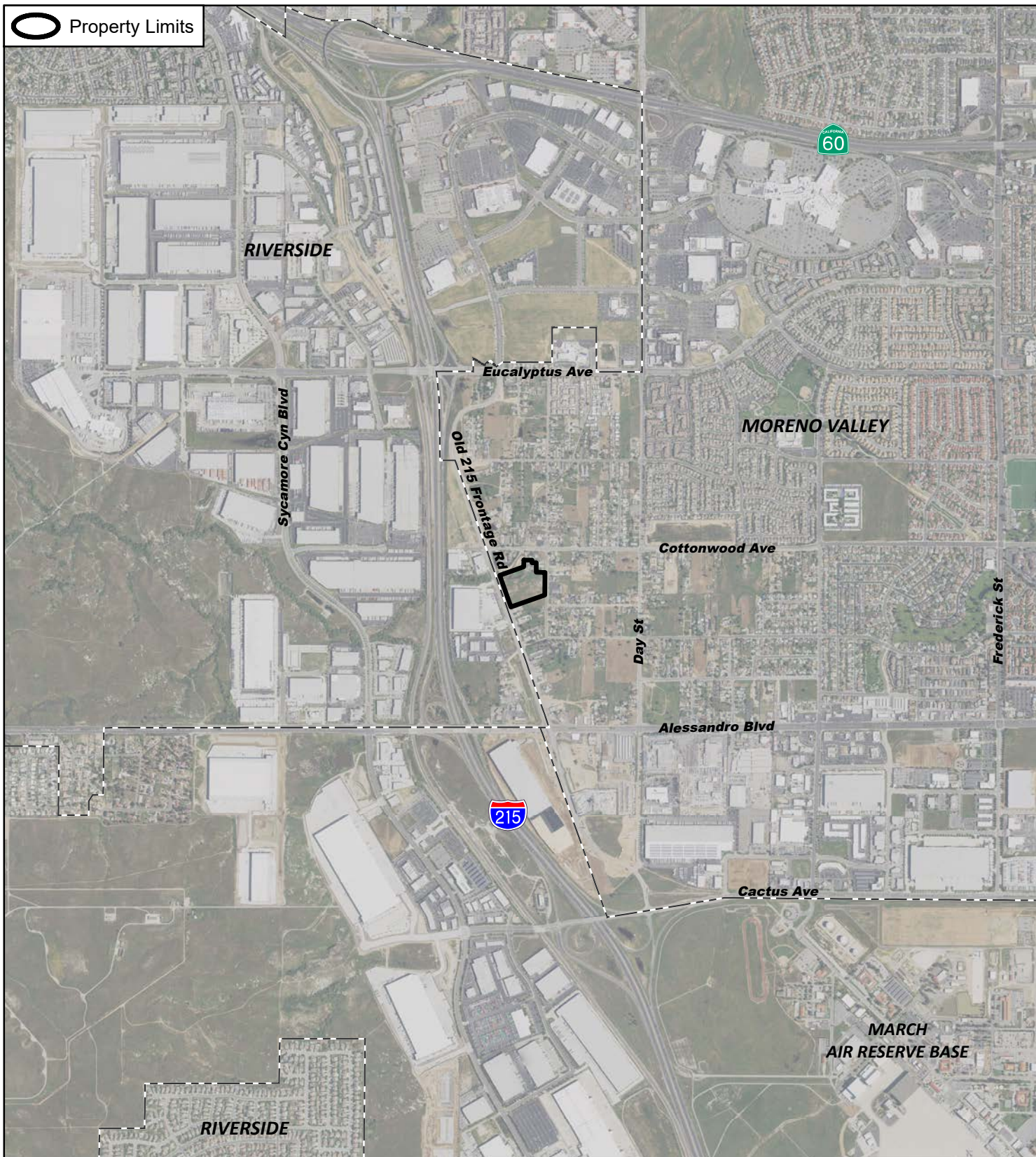
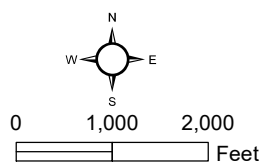


Figure 2

Project Location

COTTONWOOD & EDMONT
MORENO VALLEY, CA



 **ALDEN**
ENVIRONMENTAL, INC

- Property Limits
- Soils**
- Cieneba rocky sandy loam, 15 to 50 percent slopes, eroded
 - Monserate sandy loam, 0 to 5 percent slopes
 - Monserate sandy loam, 5 to 8 percent slopes, eroded

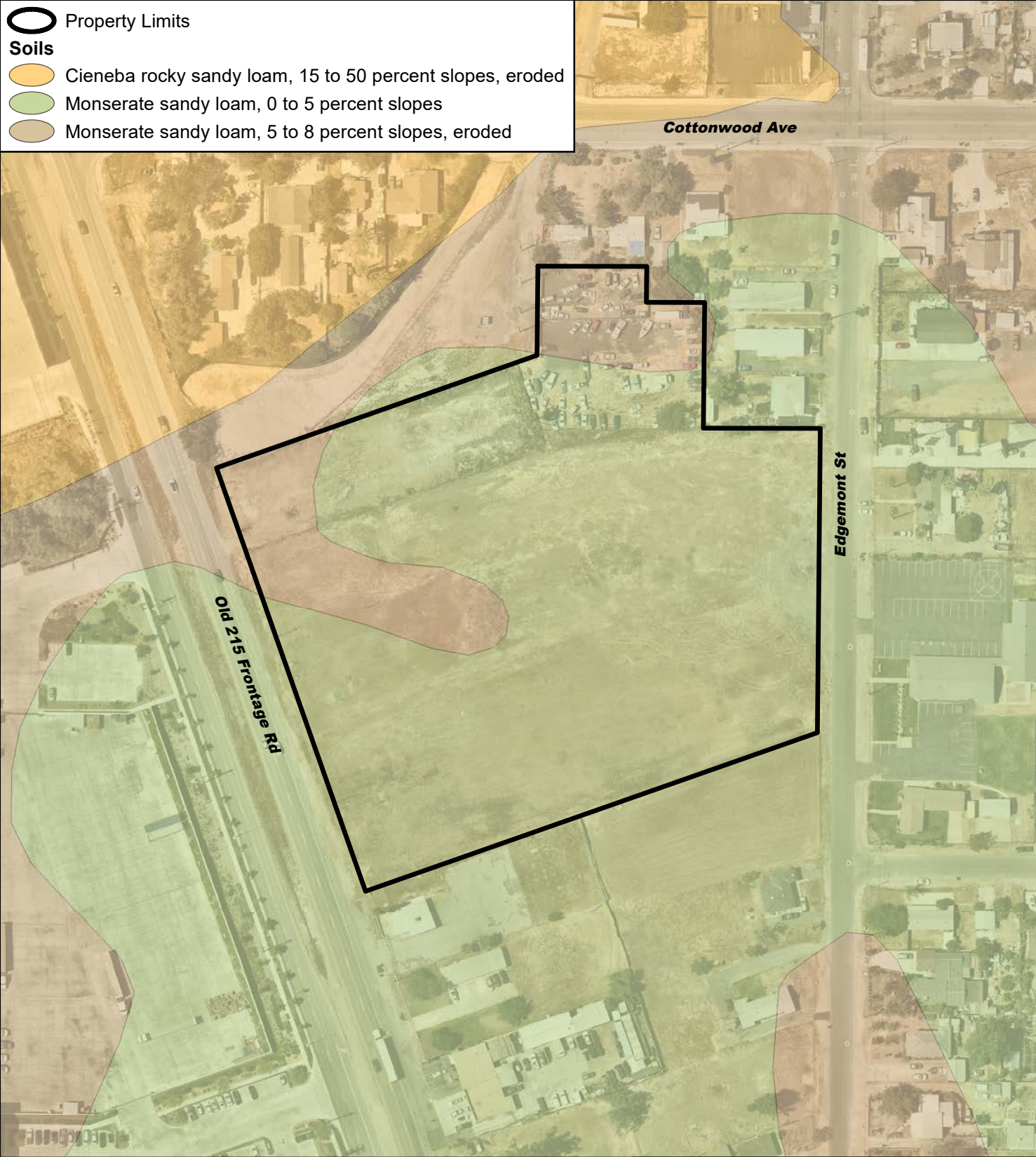
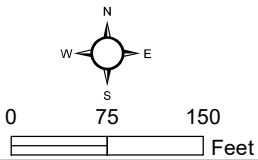


Figure 3

Soils

COTTONWOOD & EDMONT
MORENO VALLEY, CA



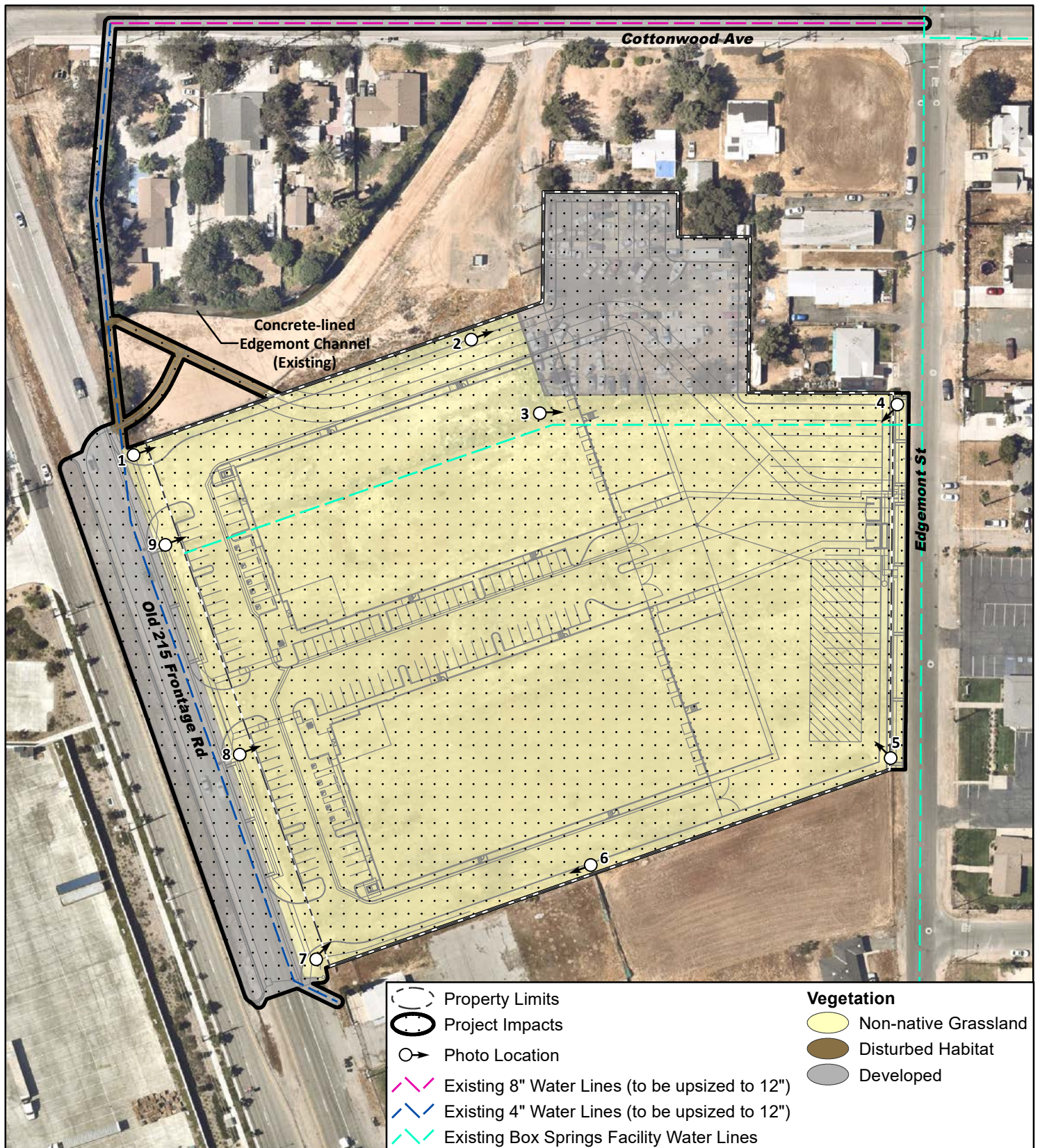
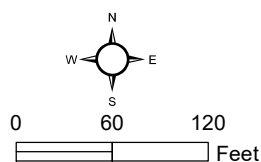


Figure 4

Biological Resources

COTTONWOOD & EDMONT
MORENO VALLEY, CA



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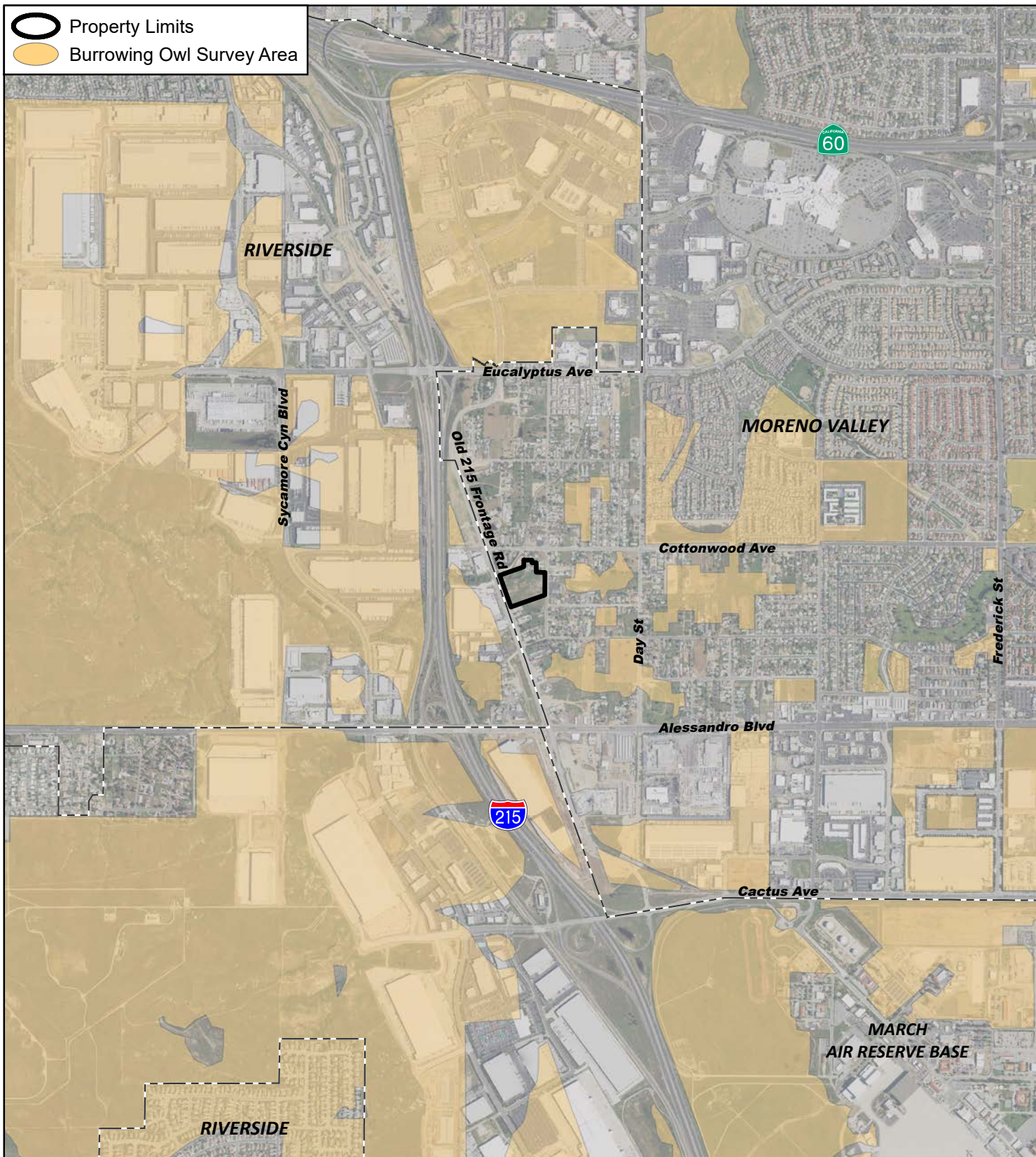
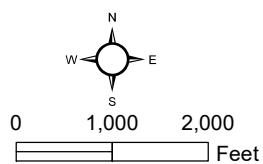


Figure 5

MSHCP Survey Areas

COTTONWOOD & EDMONT
MORENO VALLEY, CA



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3.2.4 Riparian/Riverine and Vernal Pool Resources

Mr. Leatherman inspected the site for Riparian/Riverine and Vernal Pool Resources, as well as any features that have potential to be considered Waters of the U.S. or Waters of the State under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and/or CDFW, respectively. Waters of the U.S. and Waters of the State encompass wetlands but also may include ephemeral and intermittent streams that may or may not be vegetated. The entire site was surveyed on foot for these resources.

Aerial imagery (current and historic), topographic maps, and soils maps were also reviewed for any sign of potential for flowing or ponded water, topographic depressions, and drainage features. The on-site field evaluation consisted of a directed search for field characteristics indicative of riparian/riverine or vernal pool resources. Field indicators may include wetland/riparian plant species, drainage courses, drainage patterns, ponded water, changes in soil character, changes in vegetation character, or water-borne debris deposits. The National Hydrography Dataset and National Wetlands Inventory were also queried to determine if wetland/streambed features had been mapped on site or adjacent in the past.

3.3 SURVEY LIMITATIONS

Few survey limitations exist for the project site. Since the site visit was conducted during daylight hours, the presence of nocturnal animals such as coyote (*Canis latrans*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), and some rodents could be determined only by indirect sign (e.g., tracks, scat, or burrows). A complete list of these species would require night surveys and trapping, but that is not warranted because the sensitivity of the animals that might be detected is low.

3.4 NOMENCLATURE

Nomenclature used follows Holland (1986) for vegetation community classifications. Plant names follow and sensitive plant status follows the California Native Plant Society (2022). Animal nomenclature is taken from Crother (2008) for amphibians and reptiles, American Ornithological Society (2020) for birds, and Baker, et al. (2003) for mammals. Sensitive animal status follows CDFW (2022).

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION AND LAND USE

The project site is relatively flat with an average elevation of approximately 1,525 feet above mean sea level. Soils on site are mapped as Monserate sandy loam 0-5% slope and 5-8% slopes, eroded (Figure 3).

The northeastern section of the site is disturbed with asphalt and concrete and was used for vehicle and boat parking/storage as shown on August 5, 2021 Google Earth imagery. Otherwise, the northern portion of the site includes fill material that, based on historic aerial imagery, appears to have potentially been placed in 2008 (Nationwide Environmental Title Research, LLC 2022). The rest of the project site appears to be plowed periodically.

4.2 VEGETATION COMMUNITIES AND LAND COVER TYPES

The project site (including both on-site and off-site components) is approximately 8.3 acres in size comprised of 6.5 acres of non-native grassland, 0.08 acre of disturbed habitat, and 1.7 acres of developed (Figure 4). The site does not support sensitive vegetation, and no sensitive vegetation communities were returned in the CNDDDB query for the site.

4.2.1 Upland Habitats

Non-native Grassland

Non-native grassland occurs where the fill material was placed and in the portion of the site that is periodically plowed. It is dominated by a suite of grass species that have been introduced to California including red brome (*Bromus madritensis*), hare barley (*Hordeum murinum*), and wild oat (*Avena fatua*). Most of the grasses were just germinating at the time of the site visit, so it is expected that more non-native grass species are present. The non-native grassland also supports some native and non-native annual plant species such as fiddleneck (*Amsinckia* sp.), red maids (*Calandrinia ciliata*), and shortpod mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*).

Disturbed Habitat

Disturbed habitat typically includes land cleared of vegetation (e.g., dirt roads), land containing a preponderance of non-native plant species such as ornamentals or ruderal exotic species that take advantage of disturbance (previously cleared or abandoned landscaping), or land showing signs of past or present animal usage that removes any capability of providing viable habitat. Disturbed habitat occurs adjacent to the existing Edgemont Channel within an area kept cleared of vegetation.

Developed

Areas with asphalt and concrete are considered developed, although some patches of non-native grasses and some ornamental plantings occur there. Developed also includes the area behind the homes where the existing 4-inch water lines would be upsized to 12-inch lines. And, developed occurs as Old 215 Frontage Road.

4.2.2 Wetland/Riparian Vegetation Communities

There are no wetland/riparian communities located on the site. The property is relatively flat and does not support any aquatic features necessary for the development of these habitats. The National Hydrography Dataset and National Wetlands Inventory do not show any wetland/riparian resources on site.

4.3 PLANT SPECIES OBSERVED

The site is not located within a NEPSSA or CASSA (Figure 5), and no sensitive plant species were observed on the site. The CNDDDB and USFWS database queries did not return any records of sensitive plant species on or adjacent to the site. A list of plant species observed on site is presented in Appendix A

4.4 ANIMAL SPECIES OBSERVED OR DETECTED

No sensitive animal species were observed or detected on site. The CNDDDB and USFWS database queries did not return any records of sensitive animal species on or adjacent to the site. A list of animal species observed or detected is included as Appendix B.

4.5 JURISDICTIONAL FEATURES

The site is relatively flat and does not support any natural drainages, swales, creeks, ponds, streambeds, or other riparian or wetland habitat features. The National Hydrography Dataset and National Wetlands Inventory do not show any wetland/riparian resources on the project site. See Section 5.4 of this report, *Riparian/Riverine and Vernal Pool Requirements*, for more information.

5.0 MSHCP COMPLIANCE

5.1 MSHCP SURVEY REQUIREMENTS

The project site is located within the boundaries of the Reche Canyon/Badlands Area Plan but is not within or adjacent to any Criteria Cells. Required species survey areas for the project site were identified using the MSHCP Survey Areas (Figure 5).

5.1.1 Sensitive Plant Species

The site is not located within the NEPSSA or CASSA (Figure 5); therefore, a sensitive plant species survey is not required.

5.1.2 Burrowing Owl

The site is not within the MSHCP burrowing owl survey area (Figure 5); therefore, a burrowing owl survey is not required.

5.2 URBAN/WILDLANDS INTERFACE GUIDELINES

According to the Section 6.1.4 of the MSHCP, the Urban/Wildlands Interface Guidelines are intended to address indirect effects associated with locating development in proximity to MSHCP conservation areas (Riverside County 2003). The project site is not adjacent to any MSHCP conservation area. Consequently, the Urban/Wildlife Interface Guidelines do not apply to the project.

5.3 MSHCP AND RESERVE ASSEMBLY CRITERIA

The project site is not located within any Criteria Cells, nor is it identified for potential use for the MSHCP Reserve Assembly. Therefore, the project will not conflict with MSHCP conservation objectives for the area.

5.4 RIPARIAN/RIVERINE AND VERNAL POOL REQUIREMENTS

Section 6.1.2 of the MSHCP describes the process to protect species associated with Riparian/Riverine and Vernal Pool Resources. As defined in the MSHCP, riparian/riverine areas are lands that contain habitat dominated by trees, shrubs, persistent emergents, or emergent mosses and lichens that occur close to or depend on a nearby freshwater source or areas that contain a freshwater flow during all or a portion of the year. As defined in the MSHCP, vernal pools are seasonal wetlands that occur in depression areas that have wetlands indicators of all three parameters (soils, vegetation and hydrology) during the wetter portion of the growing season but normally lack wetlands indicators of hydrology and/or vegetation during the drier portion of the growing season. Riparian/Riverine and Vernal Pool Resources may support one or more of the species listed in Section 6.1.2 of the MSHCP.

No Riparian/Riverine or Vernal Pool Resources were observed on site, and the National Hydrography Dataset and National Wetlands Inventory do not show any of these resources there. They do, however, show a stream/river resource immediately north of the site. But, this resource is now a concrete-lined, unvegetated channel (i.e., there is no suitable riparian habitat present). The MSHCP requires focused surveys for sensitive riparian bird species when suitable riparian habitat would be affected. Given that there are no riparian/riverine features on site, and no suitable riparian habitat adjacent to the site, surveys for sensitive riparian bird species are not required.

6.0 MITIGATION MEASURES

Compliance with the requirements of Section 6.0 of the MSHCP is intended to provide full mitigation under CEQA, the National Environmental Policy Act, the California Endangered Species Act, and the federal Endangered Species Act for impacts on species and habitats covered by the MSHCP, pursuant to agreements with the USFWS and the CDFW, as set forth in the implementing agreement for the MSHCP.

The following standard mitigation conditions would reduce project-related impacts to MSHCP covered species and other biological resources to less than significant:

1. The project shall comply with City of Moreno Valley Municipal Code Title 3, Chapter 3.48, Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Fee Program, which requires a per-acre local development impact and mitigation fee. The project applicant shall pay Western Riverside County MSHCP development impact and mitigation fees to the City prior to the issuance of a building permit.
2. As a condition of approval for all grading permits, vegetation clearing and ground disturbance shall be prohibited during the migratory bird nesting season (February 1 through September 15), unless a migratory bird nesting survey is completed in accordance with the following requirements:
 - a. A migratory nesting bird survey of the project's impact footprint shall be conducted by a qualified biologist within three (3) days prior to initiating vegetation clearing or ground disturbance.
 - b. A copy of the migratory nesting bird survey results report shall be provided to the City of Moreno Valley Planning Division. If the survey identifies the presence of active nests, then the qualified biologist shall provide the City of Moreno Valley Planning Division with a copy of maps showing the location of all nests and an appropriate buffer zone around each nest sufficient to protect the nest from direct and indirect impact. The size and location of all buffer zones, if required, shall be subject to review and approval by the City of Moreno Valley Planning Division and shall be no less than a 300-foot radius around the nest for non-raptors and a 500-foot radius around the nest for raptors. The nests and buffer zones shall be field checked weekly by a qualified biological monitor. The approved buffer zone shall be marked in the field with construction fencing, within which no vegetation clearing or ground disturbance shall commence until the qualified biologist and City Planning Division verify that the nests are no longer occupied and the juvenile birds can survive independently from the nests.

7.0 REFERENCES

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Appendix A
PLANT SPECIES OBSERVED – COTTONWOOD & EDMONT

<u>FAMILY</u>	<u>SCIENTIFIC NAME</u>	<u>COMMON NAME</u>
ANGIOSPERMS – MONOCOTS		
Agavaceae	<i>Agave americana</i> ¹	century plant
Arecaceae	<i>Washingtonia robusta</i> ¹	fan palm
Poaceae	<i>Avena fatua</i> ¹	wild oat
	<i>Bromus diandrus</i> ¹	ripgut grass
	<i>Bromus madritensis</i> ¹	red brome
	<i>Bromus rubens</i> ¹	foxtail chess
	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i> ¹	Bermuda grass
	<i>Hordeum murinum</i> ¹	hare barley
ANGIOSPERMS – DICOTS		
Anacardiaceae	<i>Schinus molle</i> ¹	Peruvian pepper tree
Apocynaceae	<i>Nerium oleander</i> ¹	common oleander
Asteraceae	<i>Helianthus annuus</i>	western sunflower
	<i>Lactuca serriola</i> ¹	prickly-lettuce
Boraginaceae	<i>Amsinckia</i> sp.	rigid fiddleneck
Brassicaceae	<i>Brassica tournefortii</i> ¹	Sahara mustard
	<i>Hirschfeldia incana</i> ¹	shortpod mustard
Cactaceae	<i>Opuntia ficus-indica</i> ¹	mission prickly-pear
Chenopodiaceae	<i>Chenopodium album</i> ¹	lamb's quarters
	<i>Salsola tragus</i> ¹	Russian thistle
Fabaceae	<i>Caesalpinia gilliesii</i> ¹	desert bird of paradise
Malvaceae	<i>Malva parviflora</i> ¹	cheeseweed
Montiaceae	<i>Calandrinia ciliata</i>	red maids
Plumbaginaceae	<i>Limonium</i> sp.	statice
Polygonaceae	<i>Eriogonum fasciculatum</i>	California buckwheat
	<i>Rumex crispus</i> ¹	curly dock
Punicaceae	<i>Punica granatum</i> ¹	pomegranate
Salicaceae	<i>Populus fremontii</i> ssp. <i>fremontii</i>	Fremont cottonwood
Solanaceae	<i>Solanum elaeagnifloium</i> ¹	white horse-nettle

¹Non-native species

Appendix B
ANIMAL SPECIES OBSERVED/DETECTED – COTTONWOOD & EDGEMONT

SCIENTIFIC NAME

COMMON NAME

Birds

Haemorhous mexicanus

house finch

Corvus brachyrhynchos

American crow

Corvus corax

common raven

*Eremophila alpestris actia*¹

California horned lark

Passer domesticus

house sparrow

Psaltiriparus minimus

bushtit

Sayornis saya

Say's phoebe

Sturnus vulgaris

European starling

Zonotrichia leucophrys

white-crowned sparrow

Mammals

Otospermophilus beecheyi

California ground squirrel

Thomomys bottae

Botta's pocket gopher

¹A California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Watch List species. Watch List species are considered in need of conservation help (January 2022 CDFW Special Animals List--
<https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=109406&inline>).

Appendix C Representative Photographs



Photo Point 1. 2/3/22



Photo Point 2. 2/3/22



Photo Point 3. 2/3/22



Photo Point 4. 2/3/22



Photo Point 5. 2/3/22



Photo Point 6. 2/3/22



Photo Point 7. 2/3/22



Photo Point 8. 2/3/22



Photo Point 9. 2/3/22