

**DESERT TORTOISE
PRESENCE/ABSENCE SURVEY
FOR THE
OMYA LUCERNE VALLEY PLANT EXPANSION**

Prepared for:

OMYA CALIFORNIA, INC.
Division of Omya Inc.
7225 Crystal Creek Road
Lucerne Valley, CA 92356

Prepared by:

LILBURN CORPORATION
1905 Business Center Drive
San Bernardino, CA 92408

September 2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Location	1
1.2 Project Description	1
2.0 METHODOLOGY	1
3.0 RESULTS	5
4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS	5
5.0 CONCLUSION	5
6.0 REFERENCES	6

LIST OF FIGURES

1	Project Vicinity	2
2	Project Location	3
3	Desert Tortoise Presence/Absence Survey Area.....	4

OMYA LUCERNE PLANT EXPANSION DESERT TORTOISE PRESENCE/ABSENCE SURVEY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Omya Incorporated (Omya) operates a calcium carbonate mining and processing operation in San Bernardino County, south of the town of Lucerne Valley (See Figure 1). Omya's Lucerne Valley processing plant is on Crystal Creek Road approximately 4 miles south of State Highway 18 (see Figure 2).

In 2007 Omya planned for the expansion of the existing stockpile area at the plant site to optimize management of the material. The conditions of approval established in 2007 have expired and the expansion has not taken place. At this time, Omya proposes to expand its plant site's stockpile area in the same location as approved in 2007.

1.1 LOCATION

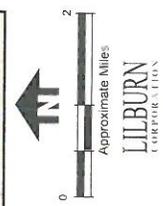
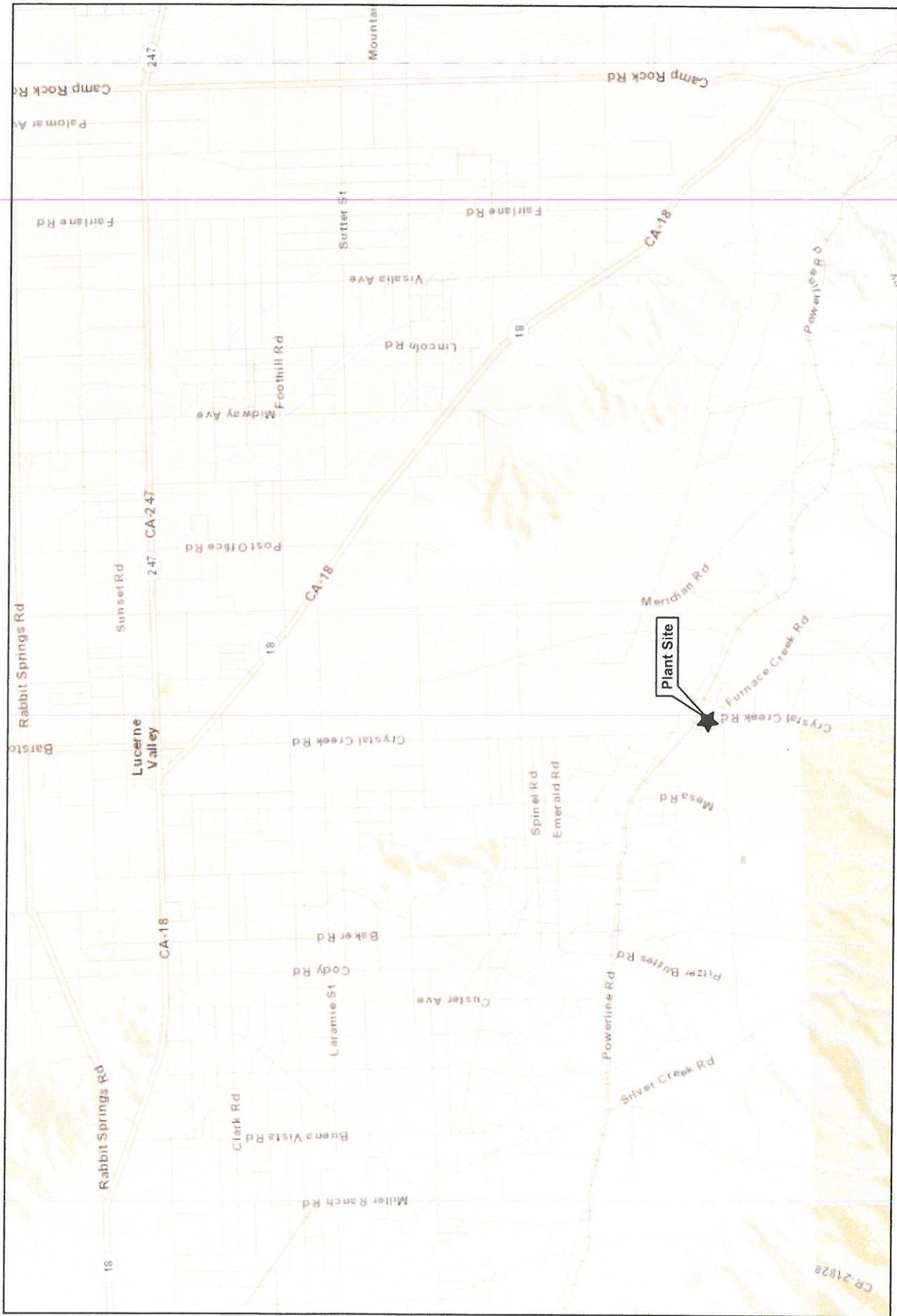
Omya's processing plant is on Crystal Creek Road approximately 4 miles south of State Highway 18 in San Bernardino County, south of the town of Lucerne Valley. Specifically, the plant site is located on Section 1, Township 3 North, Range 1 West, San Bernardino Baseline and Meridian. The plant is located in the Lucerne Valley 7.5-minute, USGS topographic quadrangle maps.

1.2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

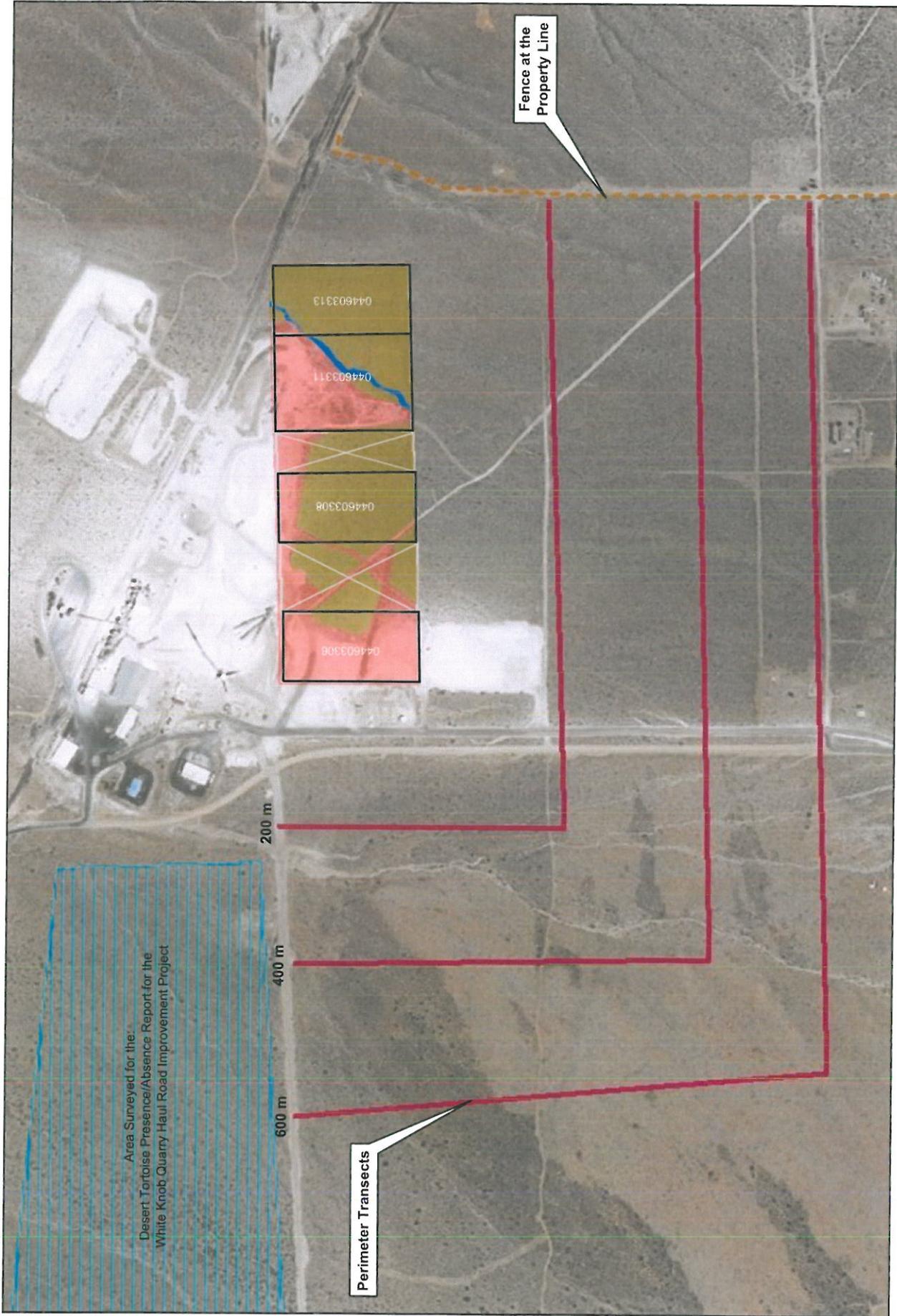
Omya proposes to expand the material stockpile area in its Lucerne Valley Plant site. The proposed expansion would allow for optimized management of the material. The area proposed for the expansion of the stockpile area is located immediately south of the existing stockpile area and is defined as Assessor Parcel Numbers 0446-033-07, 0466-033-09, 0466-03-11, 0446-033-13 totaling approximately 21.6 acres. The subject parcels occur in the immediate vicinity of parcels with existing conditional use permits for the Plant's operation.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The proposed stockpile expansion area was surveyed in accordance with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2010 pre-project field survey protocol for potential desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) habitat on September 12, 2012 by Lilburn Corporation. Sign such as scat, burrows, shell fragments, prints, or live animals were documented when found. When no tortoise or tortoise sign were observed in the project area, three perimeter transects parallel to the expansion project area were surveyed at 200, 400, and 600 meters. The additional transects were surveyed in order to determine if the project area is part of a tortoise's home range. An approximately 30-acre area was surveyed and was mapped using GPS (see Figure 3).



Project Location
 Omya Stockpile Expansion Area
 San Bernardino County, California
Figure 2



Desert Tortoise Presence/Absence Survey Area

Omya Stockpile Expansion Area
 San Bernardino County, California

Figure 3

- Disturbed Habitat
- Black Bush Series
- Streambed
- Project Parcels

↑
 Approximate Feet
 0 652
LILBURN
 CORPORATION

3.0 RESULTS

No desert tortoise or tortoise sign was observed to occur in the project action area or in the influence area up to 600 meters from the perimeter. The haul road and existing catchment basins are highly disturbed and regularly used by heavy equipment traveling between the Omya Plant and the quarry site. Vegetation occurring in the project area is described as black bush scrub. The black bush series is described in the California Native Plant Society's *Manual of California Vegetation* as occurring at transitional elevations between the Mojave Desert and Great Basin at elevations ranging from 1,200 to 1,800 feet above mean sea level. The series tends to occur in alluvial slopes and bajadas with shallow soils often dolomitic limestone-derived. Species observed to occur at the site include: black bush (*Coleogyne ramosissima*), Mojave yucca (*Yucca schidigera* Roetzl ex ortigies), pencil cholla (*Cylindropuntia ramosissima*), silver cholla (*Cylindropuntia* sp.), Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*), California juniper (*Juniperus californica*), chaparral yucca (*Hesperoyucca whipplei*), Cooper's goldenbush (*Ericameria cooperi*), Davidson's buckwheat (*Eriogonum davidsonii*), California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), Anderson's thornbush (*Lycium andersonii*). A portion of the proposed stockpile expansion area is already disturbed by the plant operations. A small drainage traverses the two eastern parcels. The drainage is vegetated by upland vegetation as described for the black bush scrub series.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

No desert tortoise or sign were found during the presence/absence surveys. Even though the survey produced no sign of desert tortoise, habitat in the vicinity of the project is suitable for desert tortoise. A low probability exists for the presence of desert tortoise; therefore, the following recommendations should be implemented during construction activities.

- Flag the limits of the expansion area and restrict all work related activities within the limits of the flagged areas;
- Provide desert tortoise training for all personnel involved with the project;
- Check for desert tortoise underneath all heavy equipment before moving equipment;
- Dispose of trash in approved containers with lids to minimize the attraction of tortoise predators such as ravens and coyotes;
- Do not allow domestic dogs on the site during construction activities;
- No firearms should be used within the flagged areas; and
- Have an on-call biologist ready to assist the project manager should any tortoise-related issues arise.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The desert tortoise survey of the Omya haul road improvement project was conducted on September 12, 2012. The survey yielded no desert tortoise or desert tortoise sign. Although no desert tortoise or sign were documented, the above recommended measures should be implemented during the plant stockpile area expansion to fully avoid potential impacts to desert tortoise.

6.0 REFERENCES

USFWS (United States Fish and Wildlife Service). Desert Tortoise Field Manual, Chapter 4: General Ecology and Survey Protocol for Determining Presence/Absence and Abundance for the Desert Tortoise – Mojave Population. U.S. Fish and Wild Life Service, Ventura, California. 24 pages.

USFWS (United States Fish and Wildlife Service). 2008. Draft revised recovery plan for the Mojave population of the desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*). U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California and Nevada Region, Sacramento, California. 209 pp.

USFWS (United States Fish and Wildlife Service). Tortoise Pre-project Survey Protocol 2010 Field Survey Season