

**HABITAT ASSESSMENT
&
FOCUSED BURROWING OWL SURVEY**

**CUTTING EDGE CONCRETE
P201100453
APN 0468-281-26**

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
(USGS Victorville, CA Quad., Township 6 North, Range 4 West, Section 29)

Owner/Applicant

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(Date report prepared.)**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The project proponent is proposing to construct an office building on a 5.63-acre parcel located at 18020 National Trails Highway in Section 29, Township 6 North, range 5 West in San Bernardino County. An existing metal building and office (previously converted from a single-family dwelling) are located in the northern portion of the site, and most of the rest of the site is used for parking various vehicles and storing materials. Very little native vegetation currently exists on the site due to past and on-going human activities. Only a few rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus depressus*) and saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*) plants were observed along with various annuals.

The site supports very marginal habitat for burrowing owls based on the Phase I survey (habitat assessment) conducted on the site; however, no owls or occupiable burrows were observed during the Phase II survey (burrow survey). Based on the results of the Phase I and Phase II surveys, a Phase III survey (i.e., census and mapping of owls) was deemed unnecessary as per the survey protocol guidelines established by The California Burrowing Owl Consortium. The following sections provide a discussion of the survey results.

Note: If burrowing owls are observed on the site in the future, the owls should not be removed, harassed, or in anyway disturbed regardless of the results of this survey. To do so may constitute a violation of State and City regulations. If owls are encountered during future development activities, all activities should cease and California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and San Bernardino County should be notified.

1.0 PROJECT AND PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The property consists of land which has been used for various human activities over the last several years. An existing metal building and an office building are located in the northern part of the site. Most of the remaining portion is utilized for parking various vehicles and/or storage of materials. In addition, gravel covers much of the eastern portion.

The parcel is located at 18020 National Trails Highway and is about 5.63-acres in size (gross). It is located in San Bernardino County (Township 6 North, Range 4 West, Section 29) at an elevation ranging from about 2660 to 2700 feet (MSL). Soils have been significantly disturbed; however, they appear to be primarily sandy loam. No water resources were observed on the site and the USGS Victorville Quadrangle (1956) does not show any blueline channels on the site. No sensitive wildlife habitats, sensitive wildlife species, or wildlife corridors were associated with the site. Weather conditions during the May 21, 2012 survey consisted of winds of 0 to 5 mph, temperatures in the low 50's to low 70's (AM, °F) with about 5 percent cloud coverage. The site is surrounded by vacant lands; although, there are a few single-family dwellings within about 0.5 miles of the site. The site supports very little native vegetation with only a few rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus depressus*) and saltbush (*Atriplex* sp.) shrubs observed primarily in the southwest portion of the site. Annuals consisted of erodium (*Erodium texanum*), schismus (*Schismus barbatus*), buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*) and brome grass (*Bromus* sp.). Section 4.0 provides a more detailed discussion of the biological resources. The project map is provided below (Figure 1), and the USGS quadrangle map is provided in Figure 2. Figure 3 provides photographs of the site.

The proponent is proposing to construct a new office building in the location where the current office building is located. The existing office building was previously used as a single-family dwelling and will be removed prior to the start of construction activities. Pavement will also be installed around the new building as depicted on Figure 1.

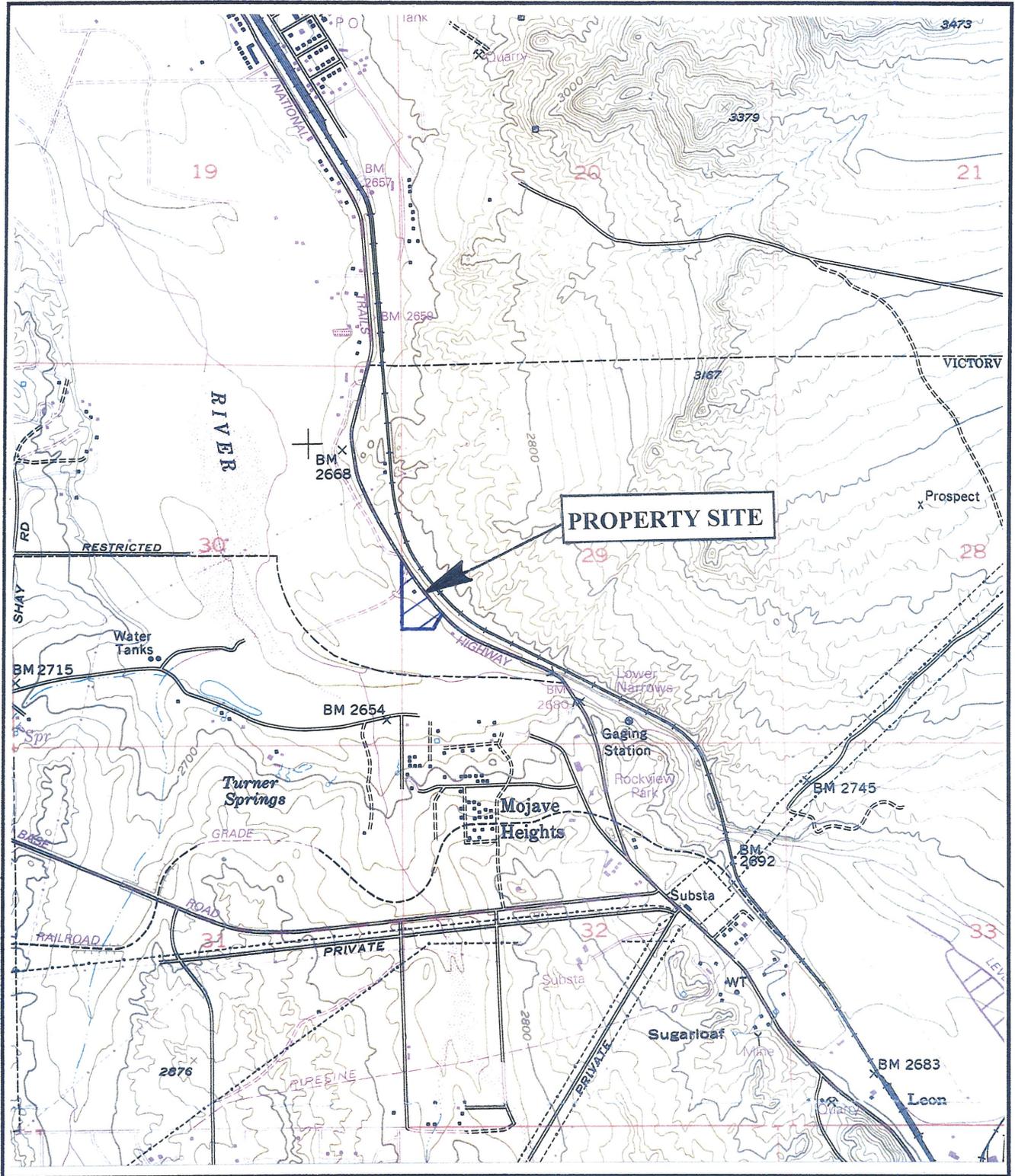
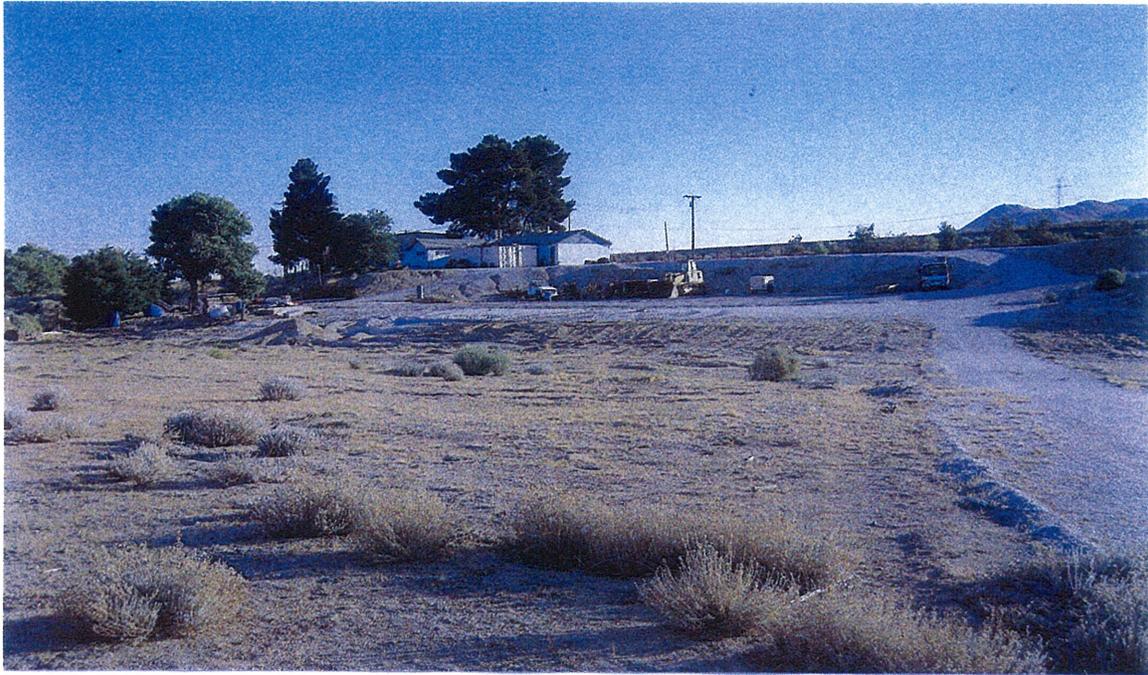


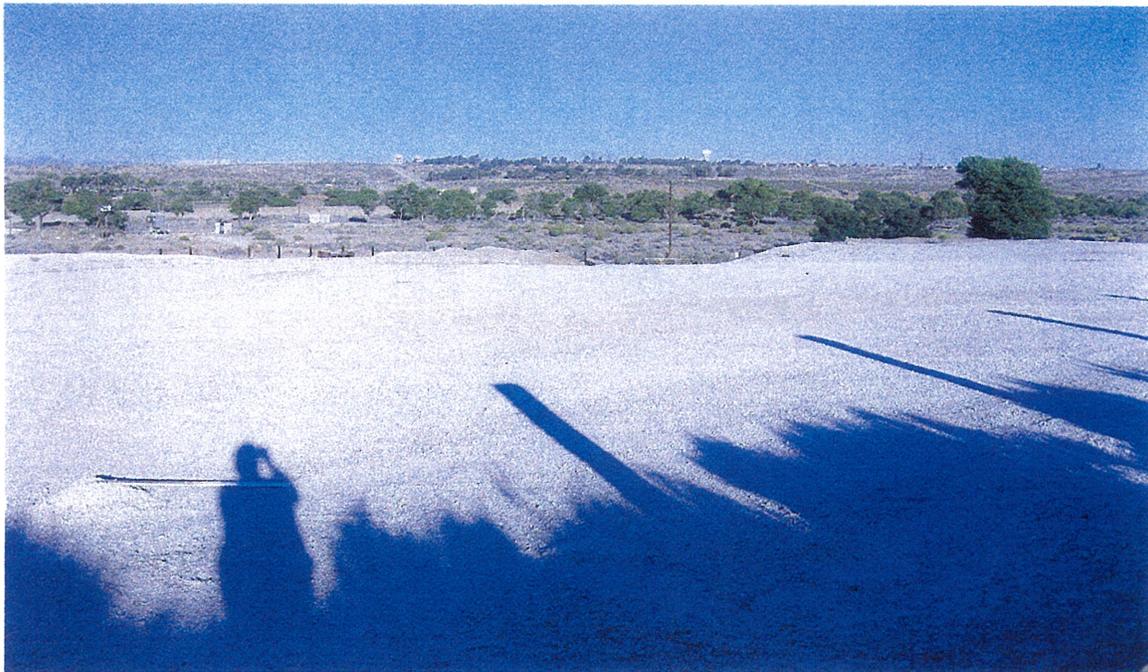
FIGURE 2

USGS Victorville, CA Quadrangle
 (Cutting Edge Concrete, APN 0468-281-26)
 (Source: USGS)





SW CORNER LOOKING NE



SE CORNER LOOKING NW

FIGURE 3

SITE PHOTOGRAPHS
(CUP, Cutting Edge Concrete APN 0468-281-26)



NW CORNER LOOKING SE



NE CORNER LOOKING SW

FIGURE 3, cont.

SITE PHOTOGRAPHS
(CUP, Cutting Edge Concrete APN 0468-281-26)

2.0 LITERATURE/RECORD REVIEW - BURROWING OWL

As part of the environmental process, California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) data sources were reviewed prior to initiation of field surveys to determine if burrowing owls have been documented on the site or in the area surrounding the property. Based on the literature review and evaluation of the CNDDDB database for the area, it was determined that the site is located within the general distribution of the burrowing owl. However, populations of owls have not been identified in the immediate surrounding area according to CNDDDB (2012). The nearest documented owl populations are about 1.5 miles southwest of the site (Occurrence #663) according to CNDDDB (2012).

The burrowing owl is a year-long resident of open, dry grassland and desert habitats. The species was formerly common throughout central and southern California; however, the species has seen a significant reduction over the last few decades due to development activities; farming activities, predation by dogs and cats, and habitat destruction (Zeiner 1990). Conversions of grassland and desert habitats to agricultural fields and residential developments have contributed to the greatest amount of habitat destruction in recent decades. The reduction in population levels was noted as early as the 1940s. Burrowing owls primarily prey upon insects; although, small mammals, lizards, birds, and carrion make up a portion of the owl's diet (Zeiner 1990). Burrowing owls typically utilize abandoned rodent burrows for roosting and nesting.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

A Phase I survey was conducted for burrowing owls by Randall Arnold on May 21, 2012 to determine if suitable habitat was present on the site. Burrowing owls are typically found in a wide variety of habitats including disturbed grassland and agricultural areas; therefore, a Phase II survey was conducted to determine if any owls or occupiable burrows were present on the site. As required by survey protocol, 30 meter, parallel belt transects were walked in a north-south direction until the property had been checked for owls and/or owl sign (burrows, tracks, scats, etc.). The survey protocol also requires that zone of influence (ZOI) surveys be conducted in the surrounding area out to a distance of 500-feet; however, no ZOI surveys were performed due to the presence of existing private property and posted areas. All transects were walked at a pace that allowed careful observations along the transect routes and in the immediate vicinity. Field notes were recorded regarding native plant assemblages, wildlife sign, and human affects in order to determine the presence or absence of suitable owl habitat. Surveys were performed on the site from about 0630 to about 0930 hours in conjunction with a focused survey performed for the desert tortoise.

Phase I and Phase II surveys combined with identification of the habitat on the site and in the surrounding area will provide data on the potential presence or absence of burrowing owls. Temperatures during the May survey were in the low 50's to low 70's (°F), wind speeds of about 0 to 5 mph, and cloud coverage of about 5 percent. No precipitation was recorded during the survey.

Limitations:

The results of this report do not constitute authorization for the “take” of burrowing owls or any other listed or sensitive wildlife species. The authorization to impact the burrowing owl can only be granted by CDFG. If owls are observed during future project activities, project activities should cease immediately and CDFG and San Bernardino County should be contacted to discuss mitigation measures which may be required for the species.

4.0 GENERAL BIOLOGICAL SURVEY RESULTS

The site has been significantly disturbed by past activities, and currently supports very little native vegetation (Figure 4). Only a few native shrubs were noted during the field investigations and included rabbitbrush and saltbush primarily in the southwestern portion of the site. A few yellow-green matchweed shrubs (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*) and buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*) were also observed. Annuals were composed primarily of erodium (*Erodium txanum*), schismus (*Schismus barbatus*), and bromus grass (*Bromus* sp.). A few eucalyptus trees (*Eucalyptus globulus*) have been planted along the eastern edge of the property and a few large deciduous trees were also present adjacent to the existing office. Table 1 provides a compendium of plants observed on the property (Appendix A).

Only a few wildlife species were identified during the field investigations conducted on May 21, 2012 from 0630 to 0930 hours. Birds observed were limited to morning doves (*Zenaida macroura*), ravens (*Corvus corax*), song sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) and western kingbirds (*Tyrannus verticalis*). No reptiles were observed, although, side-blotched lizards (*Uta stansburiana*) and western whiptail lizards (*Cnemidophorus tigris*) are relatively common in the area and may occur on the property. In addition, no mammals were identified but small mammals such as antelope ground squirrels (*Ammospermophilus leucurus*), desert cottontail rabbits (*Sylvilagus auduboni*), and Merriam's kangaroo rats (*Dipodomys merriami*), may occur on the site as well. No wildlife corridors were identified on the site or in the immediate surrounding area, and no breeding activities were observed among any of the wildlife species. Table 2 (Appendix A) provides a compendium of wildlife species observed on the site and other species known to occur in the region.

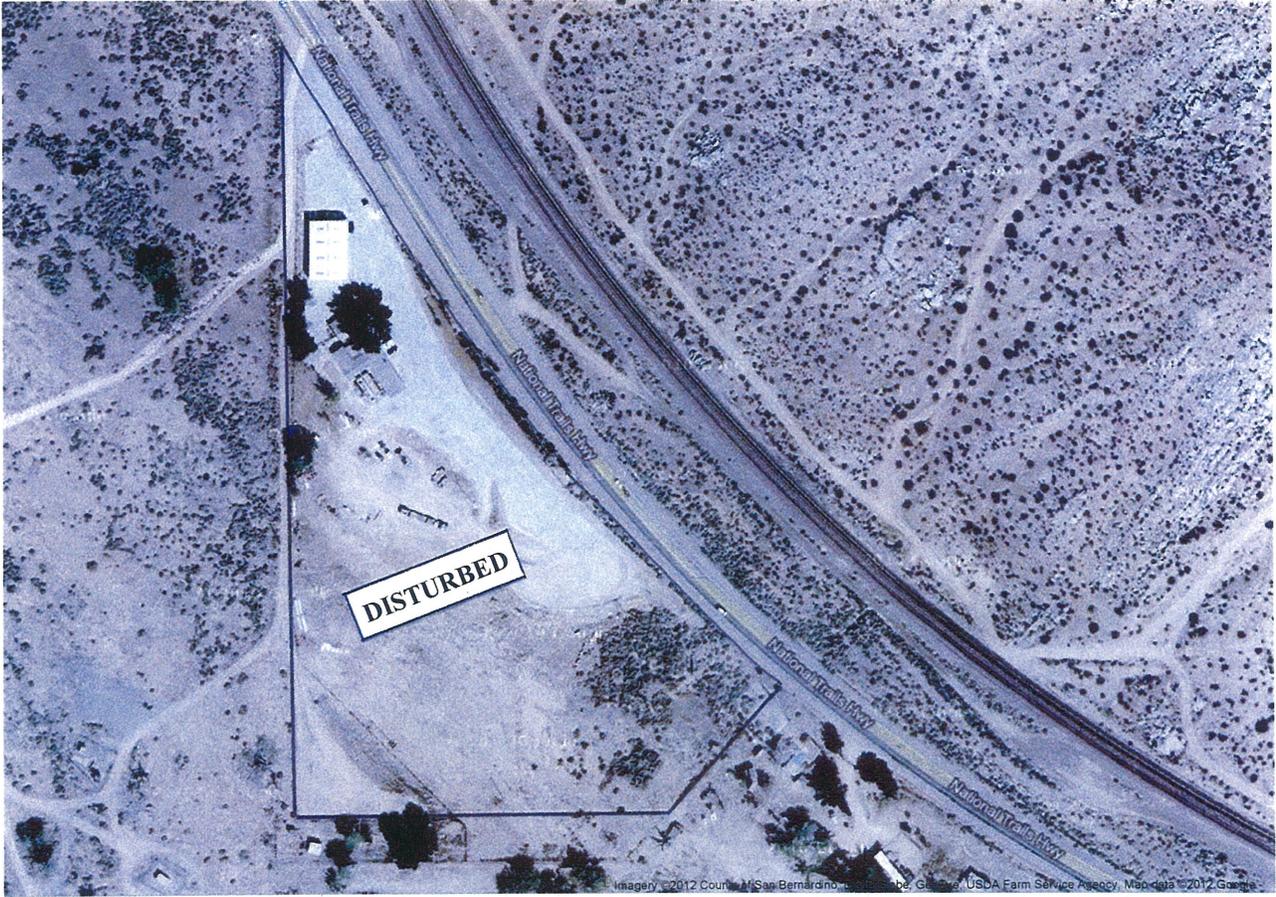


FIGURE 4

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES MAP
(Cutting Edge Concrete, APN 0468-281-26)
(Source: Google Maps, 2012)



5.0 RESULTS – BURROWING OWL

The site supports very marginal habitat for burrowing owls based on the results of the Phase I surveys. However, the Phase II survey did not identify any owls or occupiable burrows on the site. Therefore, no Phase III surveys (i.e., owl surveys, census, and mapping) were conducted as per the survey protocol outlined in the “Burrowing Owl Survey Protocol and Mitigation Guidelines” (The California Burrowing Owl Consortium, April 1993) based on the results of the owl surveys conducted on May 21, 2012.

6.0 IMPACTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Construction of the proposed project is not expected to have any direct or indirect impacts on burrowing owls or occupied habitat based on the results of the Phase I and Phase II surveys. No additional investigations are recommended at this time; however, CDFG and the County will require the proponent to conduct a 30-day pre-construction survey immediately prior to the start of construction activities. This survey will be required to determine if any owls have moved onto the site since the May 21, 2012 surveys.

7.0 PROPOSED MITIGATION MEASURES

The site does not support any burrowing owls at the present time. However, if owls or any other sensitive species are observed on the site during future construction activities, CDFG and the County should be contacted to discuss mitigations which may be required. CDFG is the only agency which can grant authorization for the “take” of any sensitive species, including the burrowing owl.

8.0 REFERENCES

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TABLES

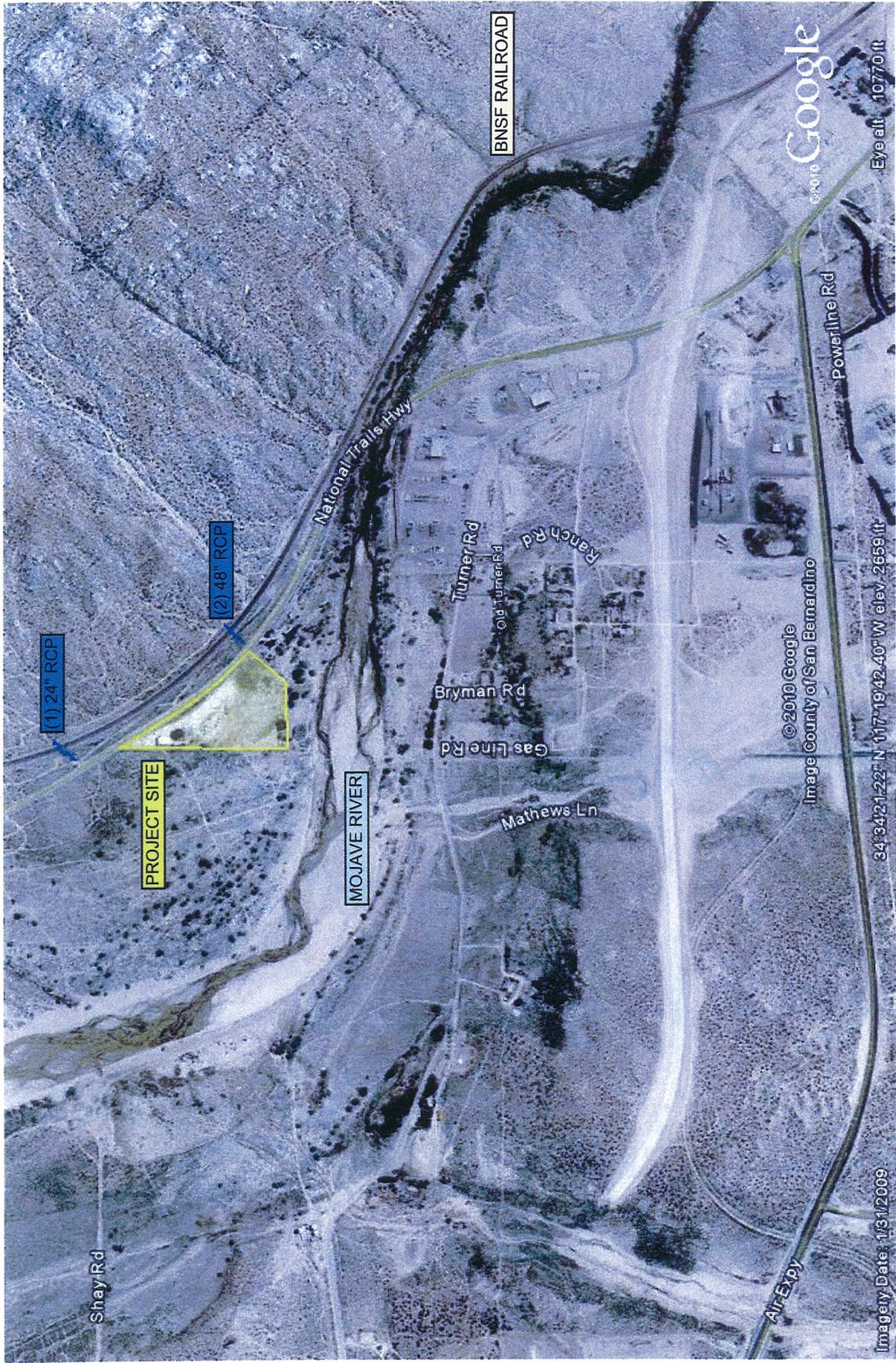
Burrowing Owl Occurrences

Burrowing Owl occurrences within 5 miles of the site based on California Diversity Data Base (2012). (SC = Species of special concern)

Name	Listing Status	Habitat Requirements	Presence/Absence	Comments
Burrowing owl <i>(Athene cunicularia)</i>	CDFG: SC	Various: desert scrub, agricultural lands, disturbed areas	Site support very marginal habitat.	A. Occurrence #663; 1.5 miles to SW. B. Occurrence #449; 3-miles to NW C. Occurrence #450; 3.5-miles to NW

FIGURES

Vicinity Map
Aerial Photograph



(1) 24' RCP

(2) 48' RCP

PROJECT SITE

MOJAVE RIVER

BNSF RAILROAD

National Trails Hwy

Turner Rd

Old Turner Rd

Ranch Rd

Bryman Rd

Gas Line Rd

Mathews Ln

Shay Rd

Air Expy

Powerline Rd

Google

Eye alt: 10770 ft

© 2010 Google

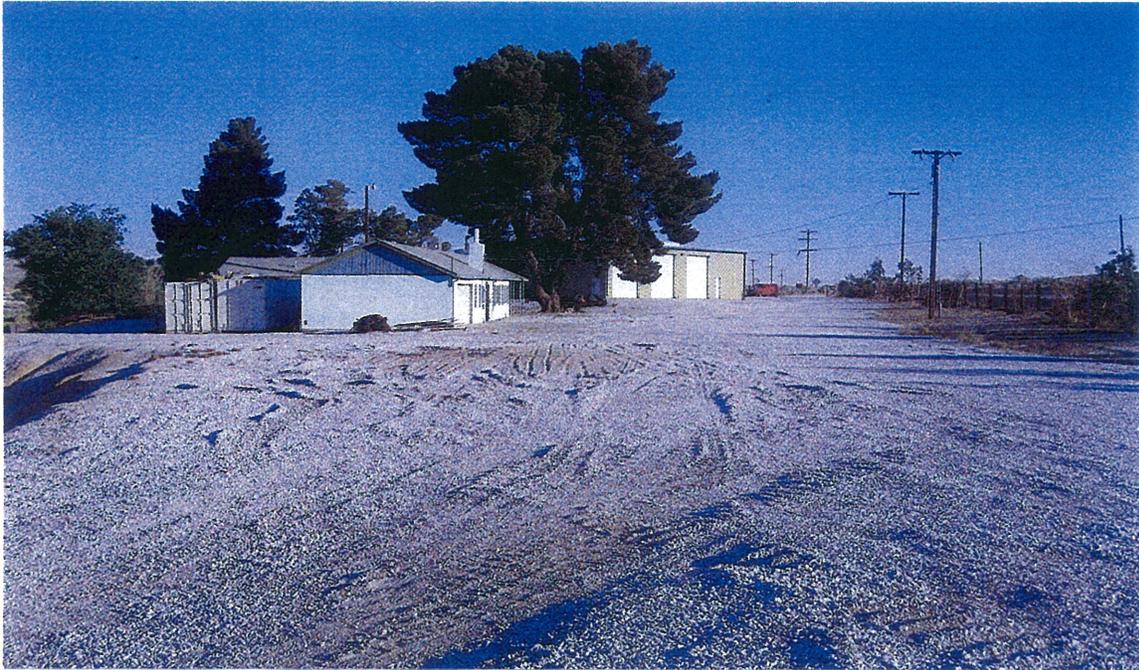
Image County of San Bernardino

34° 34' 21.22" N 117° 19' 42.40" W elev. 2659 ft

Imagery Date: 1/31/2009

CUTTING EDGE CONCRETE, INC.
ORO GRANDE PROJECT SITE

SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



CENTER OF SITE LOOKING NORTH



CENTER OF SITE LOOKING SOUTH

SITE PHOTOGRAPHS
(CUP, Cutting Edge Concrete APN 0468-281-26)



CENTER OF SITE LOOKING EAST



CENTER OF SITE LOOKING WEST

SITE PHOTOGRAPHS
(CUP, Cutting Edge Concrete APN 0468-281-26)

APPENDIX A

Flora and Fauna Compendia

Table 1 - Plants observed on the site.

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Erodium	<i>Erodium texanum</i>	On-site
Schismus	<i>Schismus barbatus</i>	“
Buckwheat	<i>E. fasciculatum</i>	“
Brome grass	<i>Bromus sp.</i>	“
Fiddleneck	<i>Amsinckia tessellata</i>	“
Rabbitbrush	<i>Chrysothamnus depressus</i>	“
Saltbush	<i>Atriplex canescens</i>	“
Eucalyptus	<i>Eucalytus globulus</i>	“
Deciduous trees		“

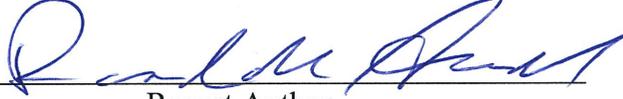
Table 2 - Wildlife observed on the site and those species expected to occur in surrounding area.

<u>Common Name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Common raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Observed on-site
Song sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>	“
Mourning dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	“
Western kingbird	<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>	“
Western whiptail lizard	<i>Cnemidophorus tigris</i>	May occur on site
Side-blotched lizard	<i>Uta stansburiana</i>	“
Antelope ground squirrel	<i>Ammospermophilus leucurus</i>	“
Desert spiny lizard	<i>Sceloporus magister</i>	“
California ground squirrel	<i>Spermophilus beecheyi</i>	“
Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>	“
Merriam's kangaroo rat	<i>Dipodomys mohavensis</i>	“

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

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. Fieldwork conducted for this assessment was performed by me or 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: 6-1-2012 Signed: 
Report Author

Field Work Performed By: Randall Arnold
Senior Biologist