

**Focused Survey for the Desert Tortoise
at
APN 0583-301-01
(Tentative Tract Map 17943)**

Prepared For:
Donna Yermen
P.O. Box 1410
Morongo Valley, CA 92256
(760) 363-6300

Prepared By:
Kent R. Beaman
Beaman Biological Consulting
11429 S. San Juan Dr.
Loma Linda, CA 92354
(909) 796-1861

Report Date:
August 3, 2006
Revised: October 24, 2006

Summary: A focused survey for the Desert Tortoise was performed at APN 0583-301-01 (Tentative Tract Map 17943), a 57 acre subject property, located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Maaccele Road and San Jacinto Road, Morongo Valley, San Bernardino County, California (USGS 7.5' Morongo Valley quadrangle, T.1S, R.4E, Section 28). The results of the survey indicate that the Desert Tortoise is absent from the site. Development of the property will **not** have a significant impact on the species or its habitat. No mitigation measures are recommended at this time and additional surveys are not considered necessary. The results of the focused survey are valid for a period of one year from the date of the survey.

Focused Survey for the Desert Tortoise

Project / Property Description

A focused survey for the Desert Tortoise was performed at APN 0583-301-01 (Tentative Tract Map 17943) on 2 August 2006. The 57 acre subject property is located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Maccele Road and San Jacinto Road, Morongo Valley, San Bernardino County, California (USGS 7.5' Morongo Valley quadrangle, T.1S, R.4E, Section 28; Maps 1 and 2).

The property is bordered by rural residential development and established dirt roads: Palo Verde Road (north), Maccele Road (south), Morongo Way (east) and San Jacinto Road (west); the property is bisected by West Road. Residential development is planned for the property (Map 3). This report documents the methods and results of the survey.

Vegetation

The plant community on the property is characterized as creosote scrub and is uniformly distributed on the site (Map 4; Exhibits 1-2). Plants observed include, creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), silver cholla (*Opuntia echinocarpa*), catclaw (*Acacia greggii*), Mohave yucca (*Yucca schidigera*), desert almond (*Prunus fasciculata*), bladder sage (*Salazaria mexicana*), desert senna (*Senna armata*), cheesebush (*Hymenoclea salsola*), ephedra (*Ephedra nevadensis*), California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum* var. *polifolium*), croton (*Croton californicus*), big galleta grass (*Hilaria rigida*), indigo bush (*Psoralea argophylla* var. *simplicifolia*), chaparral yucca (*Yucca whipplei*), beavetail cactus (*Opuntia basilaris*) and hedgehog cactus (*Echinocereus engelmannii*). The Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*) does not occur on the property.

Non-native, invasive grass species occur throughout the site, especially at the base of native shrubs and along existing roadways (e.g., *Bromus* and *Schismus*). Soils on the property are alluvial in composition.

Hydrology

Accept for areas showing evidence of seasonal runoff, no riparian/riverine habitat or drainages occur on the property.

Wildlife

Wildlife species detected or observed during the survey include, **Reptiles:** western whiptail (*Cnemidophorus tigris*); **Birds:** Gambel's quail (*Callipepla gambelii*), mourning dove (*Zenaidura macroura*), Costa's hummingbird (*Calypte costae*), loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), western scrub jay (*Aphelocoma californica*), cactus wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*), black-tailed gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila melanura*), northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), black-throated sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*), sage sparrow (*Amphispiza belli*) and house finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*); no ravens were observed during the survey; **Mammals:** antelope ground squirrel (*Ammospermophilus leucurus*), desert cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*), black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*), desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida*) and coyote (*Canis latrans*).

Anthropogenic Impacts

The property is bordered on all sides by rural residential development and established dirt roads: Palo Verde Road (north), Maccele Road (south), Morongo Way (east) and San Jacinto Road (west); the property is bisected by West Road. Wind blown and hand thrown trash is minimal on the property; scattered dumping occurs along the edges of the site.

Sensitive Species

The Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*; Mojave population) occurs in a variety of desert plant communities including creosote scrub, saltbush scrub, and Joshua tree woodland. The species is known to construct burrows in firm soil, usually at the base of shrubs (e.g., creosote bush) or in washes. Tortoises are herbivorous and feed on a variety of plants including annual herbs and perennial grasses. The species is most often detected by the presence of scats or burrows in an area. Other distinctive tortoise sign include tracks, shell fragments, pallets, courtship rings and drinking depressions.

The Mojave population of the desert tortoise is listed as a federally endangered species which prohibits the "take" (i.e., harm, harass, capture, collect or kill) of a listed species without obtaining necessary authority from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Any recommended mitigation measures do not constitute authorization for incidental take of the desert tortoise.

Survey Results

Focused Desert Tortoise Survey

The focused survey for the desert tortoise consisted of walking 30-foot transects (north/south; Map 5) across the property to determine the presence or absence of the tortoise (**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Survey Protocol, 1992**). The bases of creosote bushes and other perennial shrubs were checked since the species is known to burrow in these areas (Appendix 1). A Zone of Influence survey was performed: 100' (north/south; a 20 acre site adjacent to the property to the west was surveyed on 21 August 2006 and results were negative for the Desert Tortoise [e.g., tortoises, burrows, scat, pallets, drinking depressions]). The survey was conducted by Kent Beaman on 2 August 2006 (07:00-13:00 hrs); weather conditions during the survey were clear and sunny and a temperature range of 73-89 °F.

No tortoises or their sign (e.g., tortoises, burrows, scat, pallets, drinking depressions) were observed during the survey. The project site is within Category 3 Desert Tortoise Habitat but is not within a Desert Wildlife Management Area (DWMA; Desert Tortoise [Mojave Population] Recovery Plan, 1994).

Conclusions

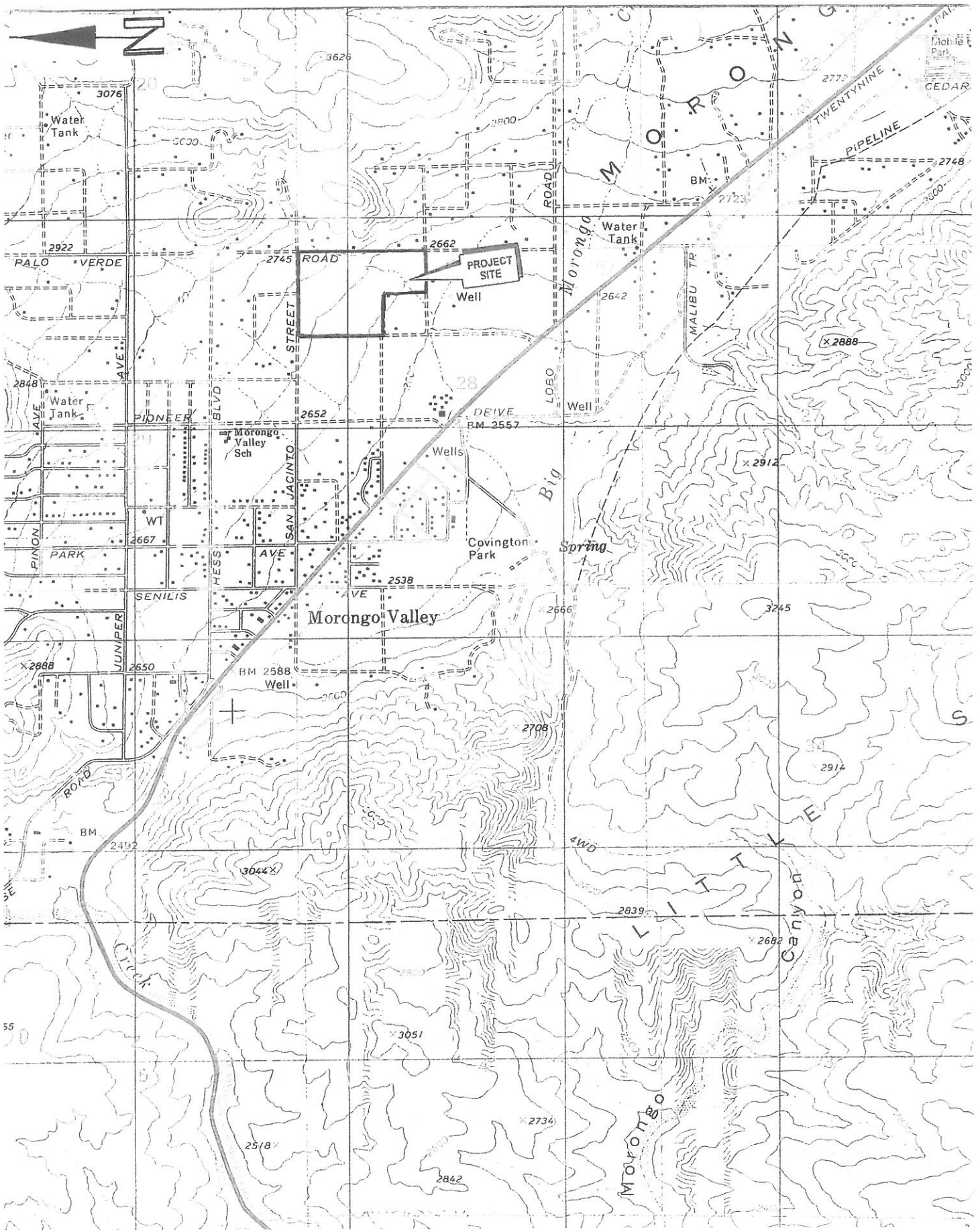
While the habitat on the property is suitable for the desert tortoise, the results of the survey indicate that the species is absent from the site. Development of the property will **not** have a significant impact on the species or its habitat. No mitigation measures are recommended at this time and additional surveys are not considered necessary. The results of the focused survey are valid for a period of one year from the date of the survey.

Literature Cited

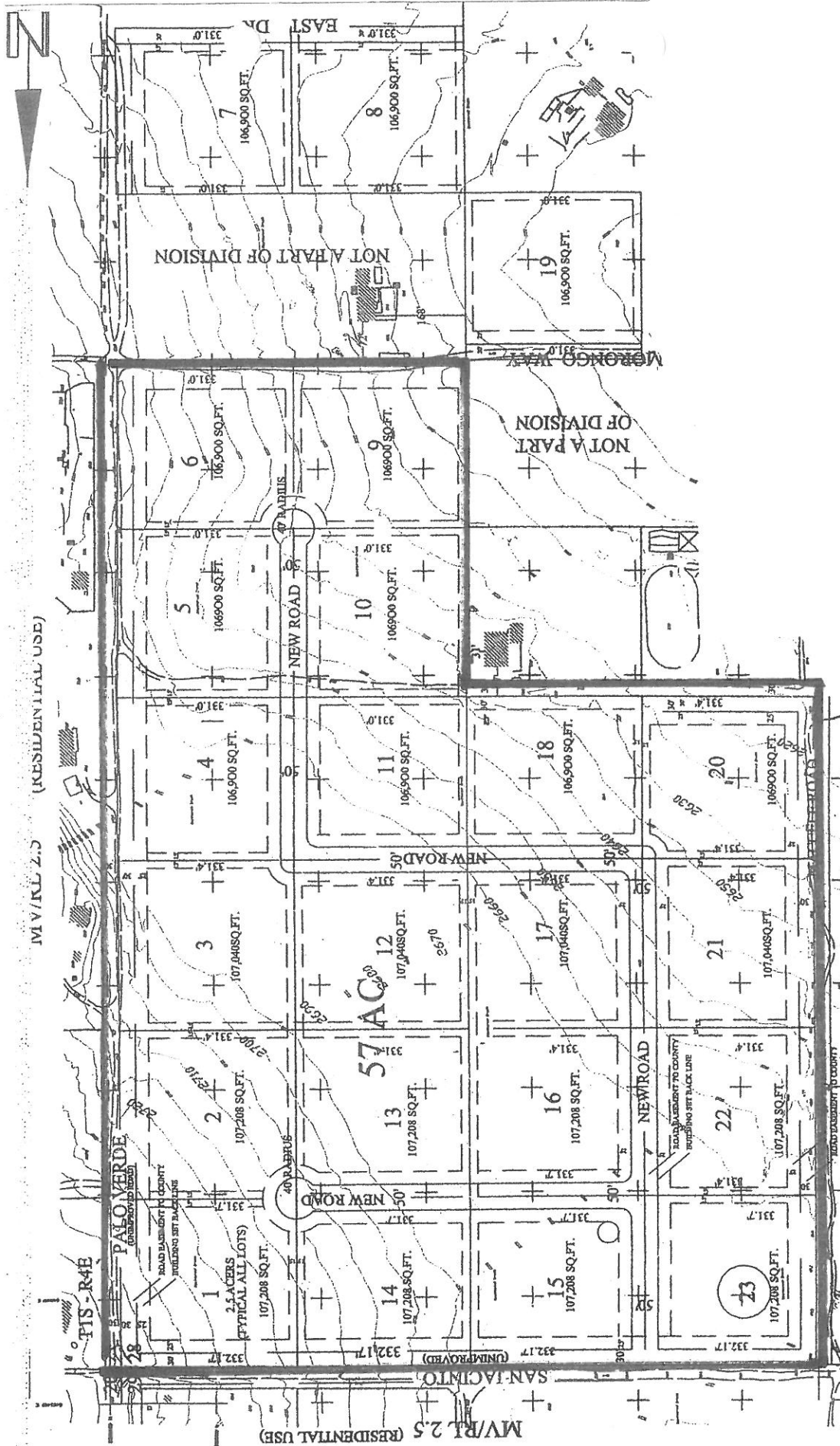
- Baldwin, B.G. (Ed). 2002. The Jepson Desert Manual: Vascular Plants of Southeastern California. University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Kays, R.W. and D.E. Wilson. 2002. Mammals of North America. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- National Geographic. 1999. Field Guide to the Birds of North America. Washington, D.C.
- Stebbins, R.C. 2003. A Field Guide to Western Reptiles and Amphibians. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, MA.
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. 1992. Field Survey Protocol for and Non-Federal Action that may occur within the Range of the Desert Tortoise.
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. 1994. Desert Tortoise (Mojave Population) Recovery Plan.



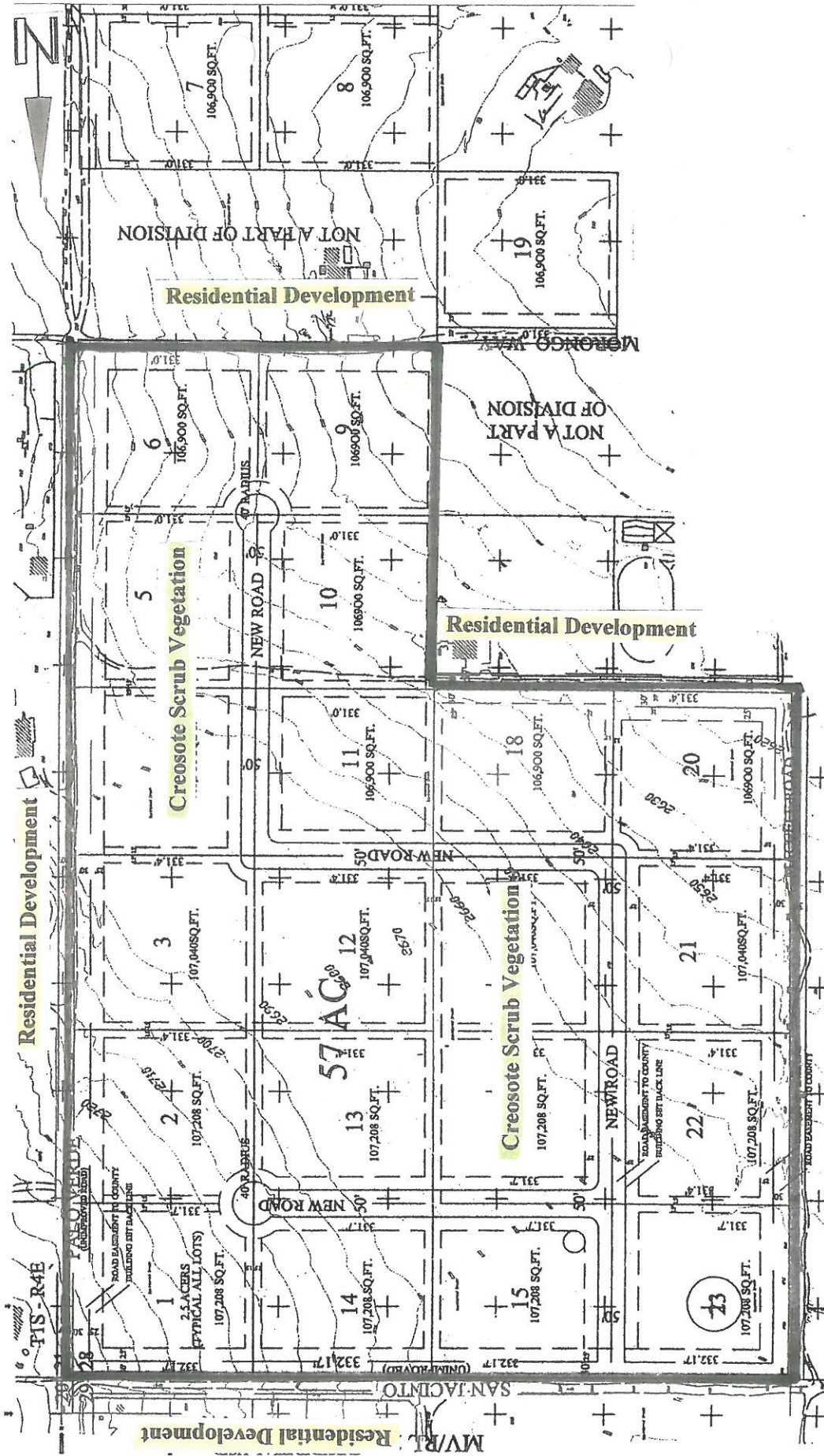
Map 1. Vicinity: APN 0583-301-01 (Tentative Tract Map 17943).



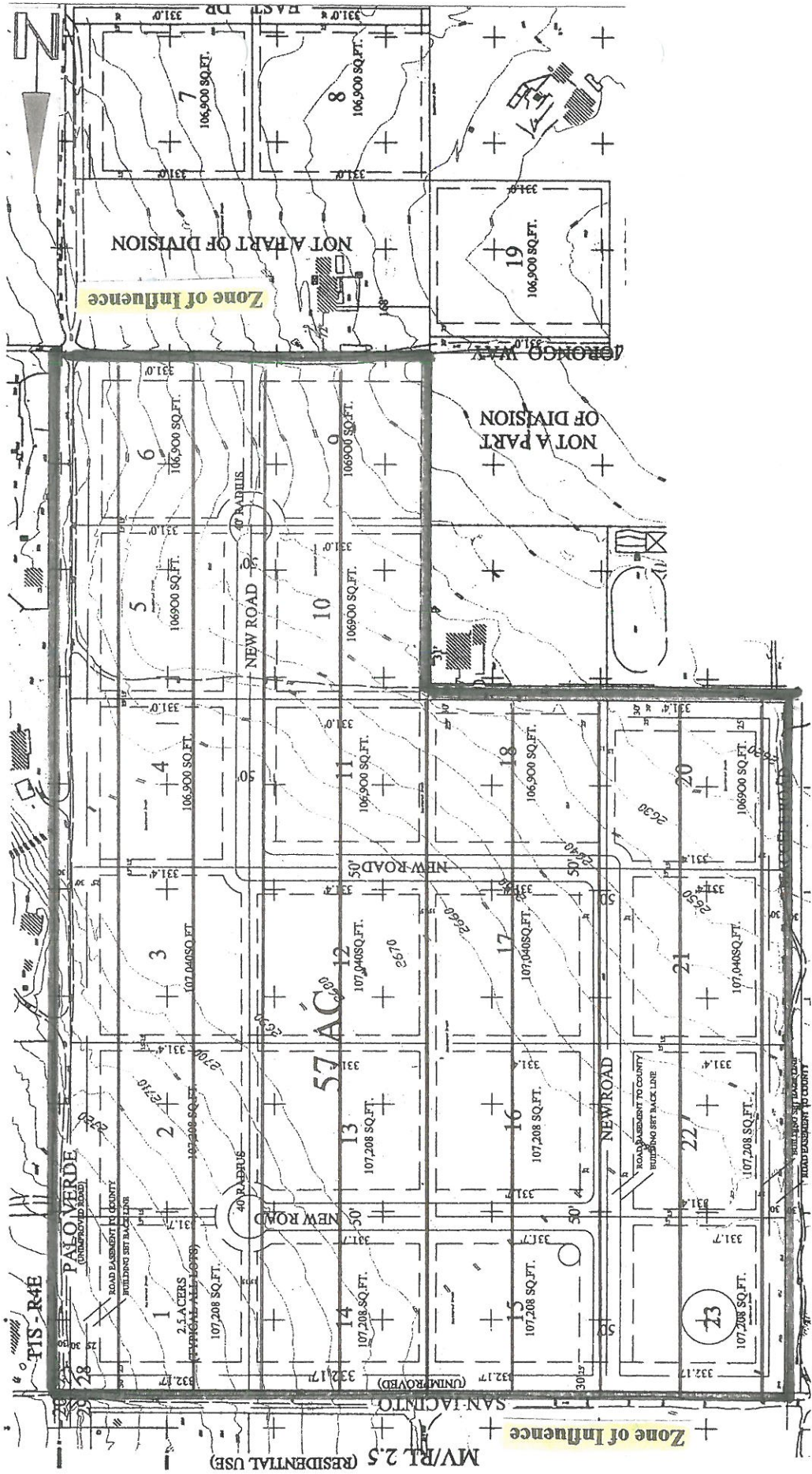
Map 2. Location: APN 0583-301-01 (Tentative Tract Map 17943; USGS: Morongo Valley quad).



Map 3. Land Use Plan: APN 0583-301-01 (Tentative Tract Map 17943).



Map 4. Biological Resources: APN 0583-301-01 (Tentative Tract Map 17943) - No tortoises or their sign (e.g., tortoises, burrows, scat, pallets, drinking depressions) were observed during the survey. Vegetation is characterized as creosote scrub. The Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*) does not occur on the property.



Map 5. Survey Transects / Zone of Influence: A sample of the survey transects used for the focused desert tortoise survey - APN 0583-301-01 (Tentative Tract Map 17943).



Exhibits 1-2. Vegetation / Habitat Value: APN 0583-301-01 (Tentative Tract Map 17943; Top: View looking North; Bottom: View looking South).

Appendix I

Focused Desert Tortoise Survey Form

DESERT TORTOISE/MOJAVE GROUND SQUIRREL SURVEY FORM

Project Name APN 0583-111-06

State CA County San Bernardino

Quad Name Morongo Valley T 15 R 4E Section(s) 28

Survey Biologist Kent Beaman Date of Survey _____

Time: Begin 07:00 am Temperatures: Begin 73°F
 End 13:00 pm End 89°F

General Weather Condition: clear/sunny

Elevation: _____ Land Forms: _____ Soils: alluvial

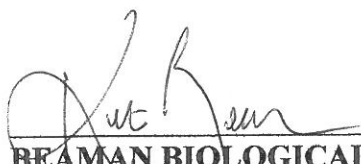
Adjacent Land Uses: residential / open space

Perennial Plants Annual Plants Reptiles Birds Mammals

See report 

transect numbers and observations													
OBSERVATION	1/2	3/4	5/4	7/8	9/10	11/12	13/14	15/16	17/18	19/20	21/22	23/24	25
OHV TRACKS													
DIRT ROADS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
DUMPING	X												
CANINES													
RAVEN													
FOOT TRACKS													
SHOOTING				X					X				
BRUSHING/GRADING													
EQUINE													
FENCE POSTS													
BURROW (DT-MAP)													
SCATS (DT)													
OTHER BURROW													
TRASH	X	X	X				X				X	X	X

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 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.



BEAMAN BIOLOGICAL CONSULTING
Kent R. Beaman
Consulting Biologist

10/24/06
DATE