Menifee Valley Specific Plan Project

Addendum to the Final Environmental Impact Report

SCH NO. 2022030233

LEAD AGENCY:

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January 2026

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Description of Approved Project

In February 2024, the City of Menifee approved the Menifee Valley Specific Plan Project (on 590.3 acres of land in the City of Menifee (Figure 1, *Regional Map*). The adopted Project proposes a master planned community comprising of a mix of uses, including residential neighborhoods accommodating up to 1,718 housing units, an elementary school site, a sports park, greenbelts, a passive park with preserved open space, a civic node/public facilities site, and employment uses including commercial, commercial business park, and business park. All areas inside the project site (on-site area) would be disturbed for development.

The City also approved an implementing project within the Specific Plan in July 2025, Tentative Tract Map No. PLN 24-0209 (also known as TTM 38994). TTM 38994 was approved for the subdivision of 448 single-family residential lots. The subdivision also created various open space lots, including lots for landscaping, trails, future residential development (allowed under the Specific Plan), a detention basin, private recreational center/park, a public sports park, and conservation open space.

Note that an approximately 7.27-acre area (Conservation Easement Area) northwest of the intersection of Matthews Road and Briggs Road (within the conservation open space in TTM 38994 described above) would remain in a natural condition as a passive park within a greater designated open space area of the specific plan, see Figure 2, *CBB Potential Impacts & Conceptual Mitigation*.

In addition to development proposed within the on-site area (590.3 acres), off-site infrastructure improvements include roadway improvements and subsurface utility line installations and connections along Briggs Road, Menifee Road, and California State Route 74 (CA-74); the installation of subsurface utility lines in the alignment of Matthews Road along segments of the on-site area's southern boundary; and the potential installation of a non-vehicular bridge across Matthews Road (a dirt road) and railroad tracks to connect the on-site area with the Heritage Lake community to the south. There are additional offsite areas of Right of Way improvements along McCall Boulevard, Matthews Road, and McLaughlin Road (84.2 acres).

This Addendum, as required by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), is to elaborate on and analyze record information on potential impacts to the Crotch's bumble bee (CBB) related to the proposed Project.

1.2 Purpose of Addendum

Since the Project EIR was certified by the City of Menifee, though consistent with existing information provided in Project EIR appendices, field surveys detected one Crotch's bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii*) [CBB]. Subsequently, the applicant submitted an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) application with CDFW.

Project activities are not expected to result in the incidental take of CBB individuals due to the minimal amount of disturbance to potential CBB habitat and the season in which work is scheduled to occur; however, consistent with current CDFW practice in light of the limited understanding of and "candidate" status of CBB, CDFW representatives recommended obtaining an ITP for Project activities to rule out the chance of an unanticipated take. Although it was recognized that the Project EIR included references to CBB as a potential species of concern, CDFW representatives requested more explicit recognition of potential CBB presence in the CEQA record in support of the adoption of an ITP for Project activities.

An ITP application was prepared and submitted to CDFW in May 2025.

1.3 Need for Addendum

The California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) tracks 6 bumble bees (Bombus sp.) that are identified as species of greatest conservation need. Four of these bumble bees, including the CBB, were petitioned to the State of California in 2018. The Fish and Game Commission advanced the CBB to a Candidate Endangered species under the CESA in June 2019. The CBB was listed by the California Fish & Game Commission as a candidate species for listing early in 2023. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife requested focus surveys be conducted for CBB as part of the Streambed Alteration Agreement processing.

1.4 Basis for an Addendum

CEQA Guidelines Section 15164 allows for the preparation of an Addendum to a certified EIR, "if some changes or additions are necessary but none of the conditions described in Section 15162 calling for the preparation of a subsequent or supplemental EIR have occurred." CEQA Guidelines Section 15162 identifies the following conditions that would require preparation of a subsequent EIR described in CEQA Guidelines Section 15162 or preparation of a supplemental EIR described in CEQA Guidelines Section 15163:

1) Substantial changes in the project are proposed which require major revisions to the EIR due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects;

2) Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken which require major revisions to the EIR due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects; or

3) New information of substantial importance, which was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time of EIR certification, shows any of the following:

   A. The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the EIR and will result in impacts substantially more severe than those disclosed in the EIR.

   B. Mitigation measures or alternatives previously found not to be feasible would in fact be feasible and would substantially reduce one or more significant effects of the project, but the project proponent declines to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative;

   C. Significant effects previously examined will be substantially more severe than shown in the previous EIR;

   D. Mitigation measures or alternatives that are considerably different from those analyzed in the EIR would substantially reduce one or more significant effects on the environment, but the project proponent declines to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative.

The Addendum need not be circulated for public review (CEQA Guidelines Section 15164[c]); however, an Addendum must be considered by the decision-making body prior to making a decision on the project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15164[d]).

This Addendum documents that the environmental analysis, impacts, and mitigation requirements identified in the previously certified EIR remain substantively unchanged despite the augmentation of avoidance/minimization measures for the CBB.

The Project's Environmental Impact Report (EIR) (State Clearinghouse [SCH] No. 2022030233) was certified on 02/07/24 as stated in the Notice of Determination (NOD) dated and posted 02/22/24. According to the EIR's supporting documentation, CBB occurrence has been historically recorded within 2 miles of the Project site per review of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB), but potential presence of CBB at the Project site was considered low due to the mostly-disturbed existing nature of the Project's proposed development area. CBB was noted in the EIR's documentation as follows:

- Appendix D1: *Menifee Valley Project - Biological Resources and MSHCP Consistency Report*, Figure 2A, *CNDDB Pants and Wildlife*, Rocks Biological Consulting, January 24, 2022, Revised December 8, 2022.
- Appendix D2: *Menifee Valley Project – Off-Site Improvements Footprint Biological Resources and MSHCP Consistency Report*, Figure 2A, *CNDDB Plants and Wildlife*, Rocks Biological Consulting, October 2023.
- Appendix D7: *Addendum to the Determination of Biologically Equivalent or Superior Preservation (DBESP) for the Menifee Valley Project (Additional Offsite Areas and Additional Jurisdictional Feature)*, Figure 5, *CNDDB Occurrences Map* and Appendix C – *Special Status Species Potential Occurrence*, VCS Environmental, September 18, 2023.
- Appendix D8: *Biological Technical Report and MSHCP Consistency Analysis, Menifee Valley Project (Additional Offsite Areas)*, Figure 5, *CNDDB Occurrences Map*, Appendix C – *Special Status Species Potential Occurrence*, VCS Environmental, September 2023.

Pursuant to the Project's EIR, Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP), under Mitigation Measure MM BIO-5, which requires that applicable permits be obtained from CDFW and that permit conditions/mitigation be fully satisfied for impacts to jurisdictional features, "The Applicant shall be obligated to implement/comply with the permit conditions and mitigation measures required by the resource agencies regarding impacts on their respective jurisdictions." As an extension of the Project's 1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement's Avoidance and Minimization Measures, the Project is in compliance.

The Project is also in compliance with the 1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement (EPIMS-RIV-36172-R6) Avoidance and Minimization Measures for the Crotch's Bumble Bee measures 2.14 through 2.15. The measures require CBB surveys prior to any activities that occur with 100 feet of suitable habitat. Pursuant to the Agreement, suitable habitat has been defined as the presence of plants (e.g., *genera Antirrhinum, Phacelia, Clarkia, Cordylanthus, Dendromecon, Eschscholzia, Eriogonum, Hypericum, Lantana, Lupinus, Salvia, Asclepias, Cirsium, Monardella, Keckiella, Acmispon, Euthamia*, *Ehrendorferia,* *Vicia*, and/or *Trichostema*) or other suitable habitat (i.e. nesting, foraging, and overwintering habitat). Such areas are located in the southeastern portion of the Project site near Granite Hill and the offsite roadway improvement area along the eastern segment of McCall Boulevard. The Project's regional location is shown in Figure 1, *Regional Map*, and the CBB occurrence and suitable habitat is shown in Figure 2, *CBB Potential Impacts & Conceptual Mitigation*.

2.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

2.1 Scope of Analysis

The focus of this analysis is to augment the certified EIR's Section 4.4 Biological Resources discussion, resulting from implementation of the Project's MMRP mitigation measure *MM-BIO-5*, and from the extension of the Project's environmental commitments resulting from the subsequent CDFW-issued SAA and ITP.

No substantial changes to the Project Description have occurred since the EIR was certified; therefore, the analysis focuses on augmenting discussion related only to the CBB and does not require augmented discussion or analysis related to other environmental issue areas or alternatives presented in the certified EIR.

Specifically, the CBB discussion is relevant to the following significance threshold questions found in the EIR Section 4.4:

> *<u>Threshold 1</u>: Would the project have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the CDFW or USFWS?*
>
> *<u>Threshold 4</u>: Would the project interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?*

Pertinent documents relating to this Addendum have been cited in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15150. The Addendum incorporates by reference Certified EIR SCH No. 2022030233. The Certified EIR is available for review at City of Menifee Community Development Department 29844 Haun Rd, Menifee, CA 92586.

2.2 Crotch's Bumble Bee (CBB) Characteristics

The CBB is characterized as a short- or medium- tongue length species. Males are generally present from May to September with their peak occurring in July. Workers of this species are active from April to August and queen bees are active for only two months from March until May; the peak of worker activity is between May and June, while queens reach maximum activity in April.

The CBB lives primarily in California in the United States. The CBB is extant but uncommon in Baja California, Mexico, and Nevada. Most observations of this species occur in southern California in coastal areas. The CBB inhabits grassland and scrub areas, requiring a hotter and drier environment than other bumble bee species, and can only tolerate a very narrow range of climatic conditions. The CBB nests underground, often in abandoned rodent dens and it is a nonmigratory species of bumble bee.

The CBB is characterized as a dietary generalist due to the wide range of host plants visited. Important food plants include: milkweeds, dusty maidens, lupines, medics, phacelias, and sages. The CBB also feeds on snapdragons, Clarkia, poppies, and wild buckwheat. Milkweed is a favorite nectar source of the CBB. Pursuant to the CBB survey results, the entomologist observed the CBB foraging in *Salvia mellifera, Astragalus, Eriodyction californicum, Lathyrus vestitus, Vicia sativa* (an exotic weed), and *Acmespon glaber*. A couple of other species that have potential importance but seem relatively rarely used are *Eriogonum fasiculatum* (but this may be more important in summer and late summer) and *Salvia apiana. Salvia carduaceae, Salvia columbaria*, and *Phacelia distans* may also be beneficial to the CBB.

According to the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, agricultural intensification in California's northern Central Valley and rapid urbanization in the southern Central Valley are threats that may have impacted the CBB. This species was historically common in the Central Valley, but now it appears to be absent from much of its historic range, especially in the central part of its range. Note, however, that in the more northern parts of this species range, this species has been detected in agricultural landscapes in Yolo County and Contra Costa County in recent years. Climate change, specifically increasing aridity, is an additional threat because this species has a very narrow climatic specialization compared to most bumble bees. Bumble bees are threatened by several additional factors including pesticide use, pathogens from managed pollinators, and competition with non-native bees. Reduced genetic diversity resulting from any of these threats can be particularly concerning for bumble bees, since their method of sex-determination can be disrupted by inbreeding, and since genetic diversity already tends to be low in this group due to the colonial life cycle (i.e., even large numbers of bumble bees may represent only one or a few queens).

2.3 Environmental Impact Analysis

Threshold 1: Would the project have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the CDFW or USFWS?

Project activities and their resulting impacts are not expected to result in the incidental "take" of CBB individuals. However, the incidental take of individuals could occur during vegetation removal, grading, filling, excavation, operation and staging of vehicles and heavy equipment, and installation and/or construction of Project facilities.

Incidental take of individuals could occur in the form of mortality ("kill") because of crushing of individuals, injury to individuals, soil disturbance, and compaction due to installation and construction of Project facilities. The areas where authorized take of the CBB, though highly unlikely, are expected to occur include those identified as Project Site Impact Area on Figure 2.

The Project is expected to cause the permanent loss of 2.55 acres of potential habitat for the CBB. Impacts of the authorized take also include adverse impacts to the Covered Species related to temporal losses, increased habitat fragmentation and edge effects, and the Project's incremental contribution to cumulative impacts (indirect impacts). These impacts include long-term effects due to decreased habitat; however, CBB are known to be generalist foragers and will visit a wide variety of flowering plants to collect nectar and pollen. This would include plants within the proposed Conservation Easement Area as well as ornamentals (for example) within the new development area. Nesting in the future could also occur within the Conservation Easement Area or other opportunistic areas within the development area. No substantial changes to the Project, in circumstances, or in new information of substantial importance have occurred.

Threshold 4: Would the project interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

The CBB is a non-migratory species of bumble bee and the site is not a native wildlife nursery site. Mass grading of the Project site is currently underway; a construction avoidance area with a 100-foot buffer between grading operations and suitable CBB habitat located within the proposed Conservation Easement Area has been established. Project construction is expected to last approximately 4 years, ending in 2029; however, vegetation removal within the proposed Conservation Easement Area is anticipated to be completed outside of CBB flight season at Project initiation. No substantial changes to the Project, in circumstances, or in new information of substantial importance have occurred.

3.0 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

1. The Project description has not changed from what was proposed and described in the certified EIR.

2. The Project description has not changed, and the environmental setting is the same. The CBB was noted after the completion of the EIR, and since that time, it is reasonable to believe that the CBB may have always been within range of the site prior to it receiving a recent change in legal status. CBB has a general foraging range of 1-2 kilometers but can forage up to 11 km away from a nesting site. The City considers protections for the CBB as an extension of permit compliance, not a "substantial" change in circumstances.

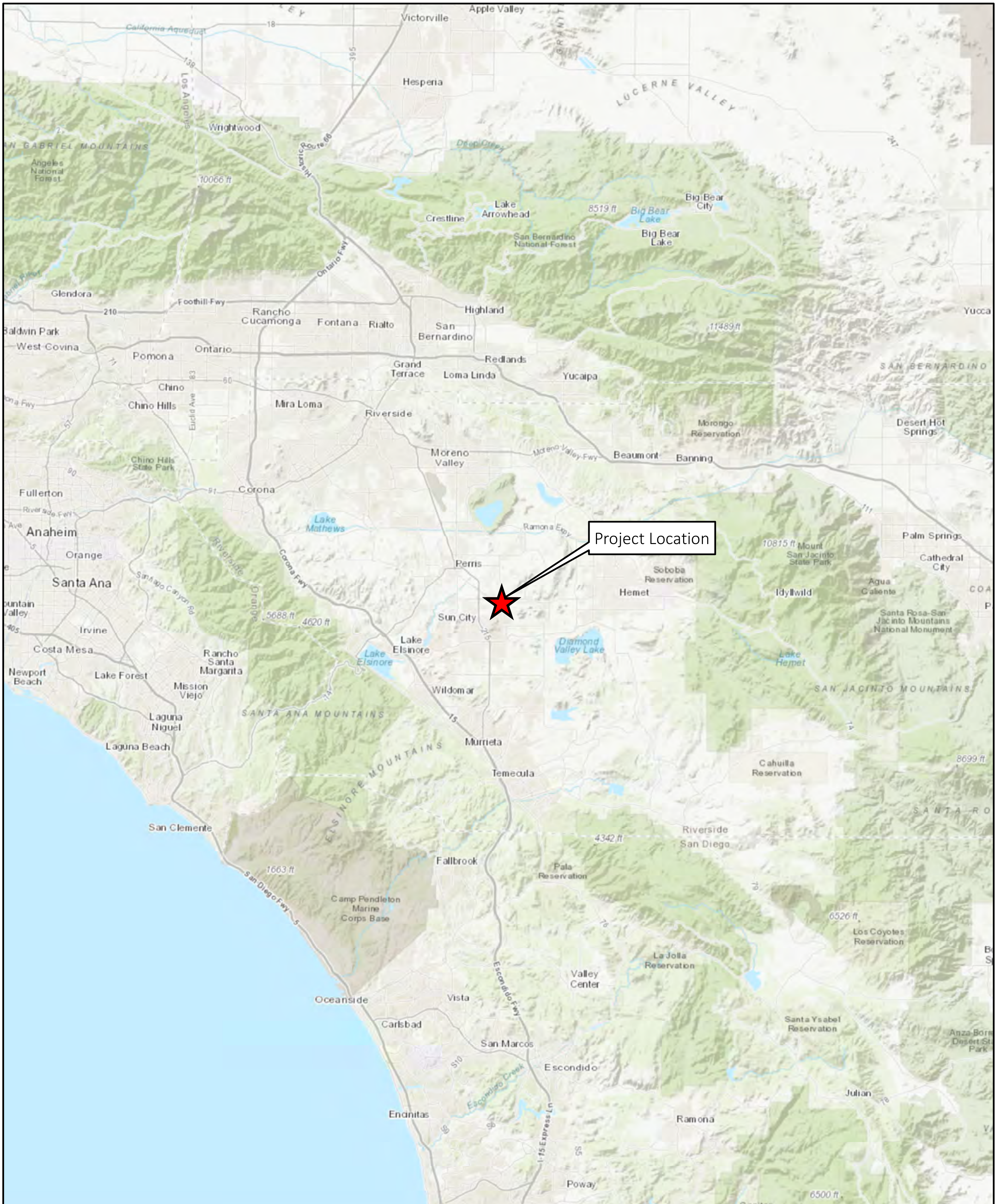
3. Before initiation of construction activities with potential to impact the limited areas containing potentially suitable CBB habitat (Figure 2), all vegetation within the impact limits will be cleared in accordance with applicable Conservation Measures provided in the ITP for the Project.

4. An approximately 7.27-acre Conservation Easement Area (Figure 2), which would preserve a projected 7.27 acres of Riversidean Sage Scrub (RSS) habitat, will serve as mitigation for the Project's potential impacts to CBB, as mentioned in the ITP.

5. A CEQA Addendum is the appropriate environmental documentation. A subsequent EIR or supplemental EIR is not required since none of the conditions described in Section 15162 of the CEQA Guidelines calling for the preparation of a subsequent or supplemental EIR have occurred.

Figure 1

Regional Map



Prepared By:

VCS Environmental

Map Created: May 2025
Data Sources: Rocks Biological, Hunsaker

Service Layer Credits: Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

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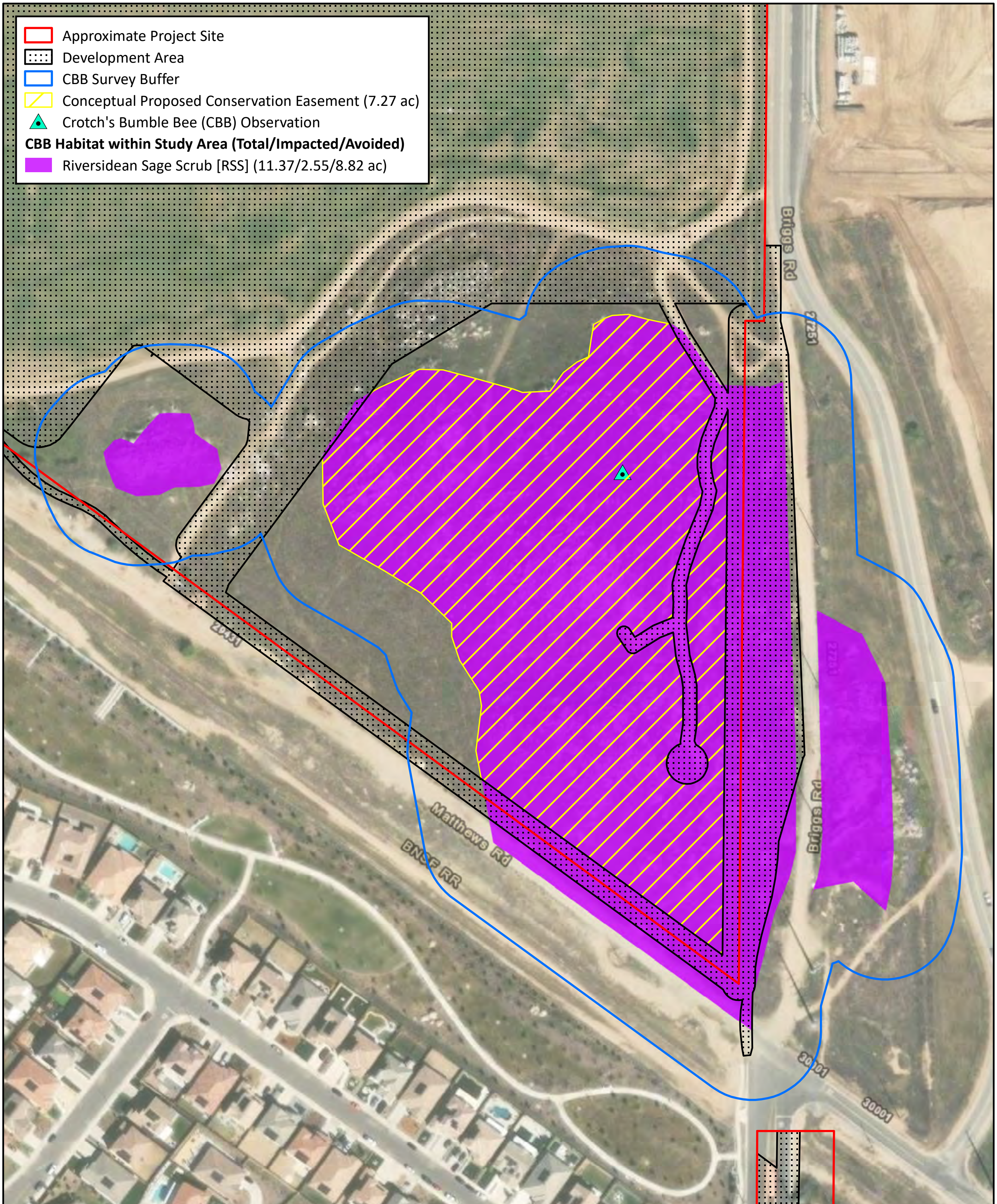
Menifee Valley Specific Plan

Figure 1 Regional Map

Figure 2

CBB Potential Impacts & Conceptual Mitigation Map



Prepared By:
VCS Environmental

Map Created: May 2025
Data Sources: Rocks Biological, Hunsaker

Service Layer Credits: Esri, HERE, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors
Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics, and the GIS User Community

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Menifee Valley Specific Plan

Figure 2
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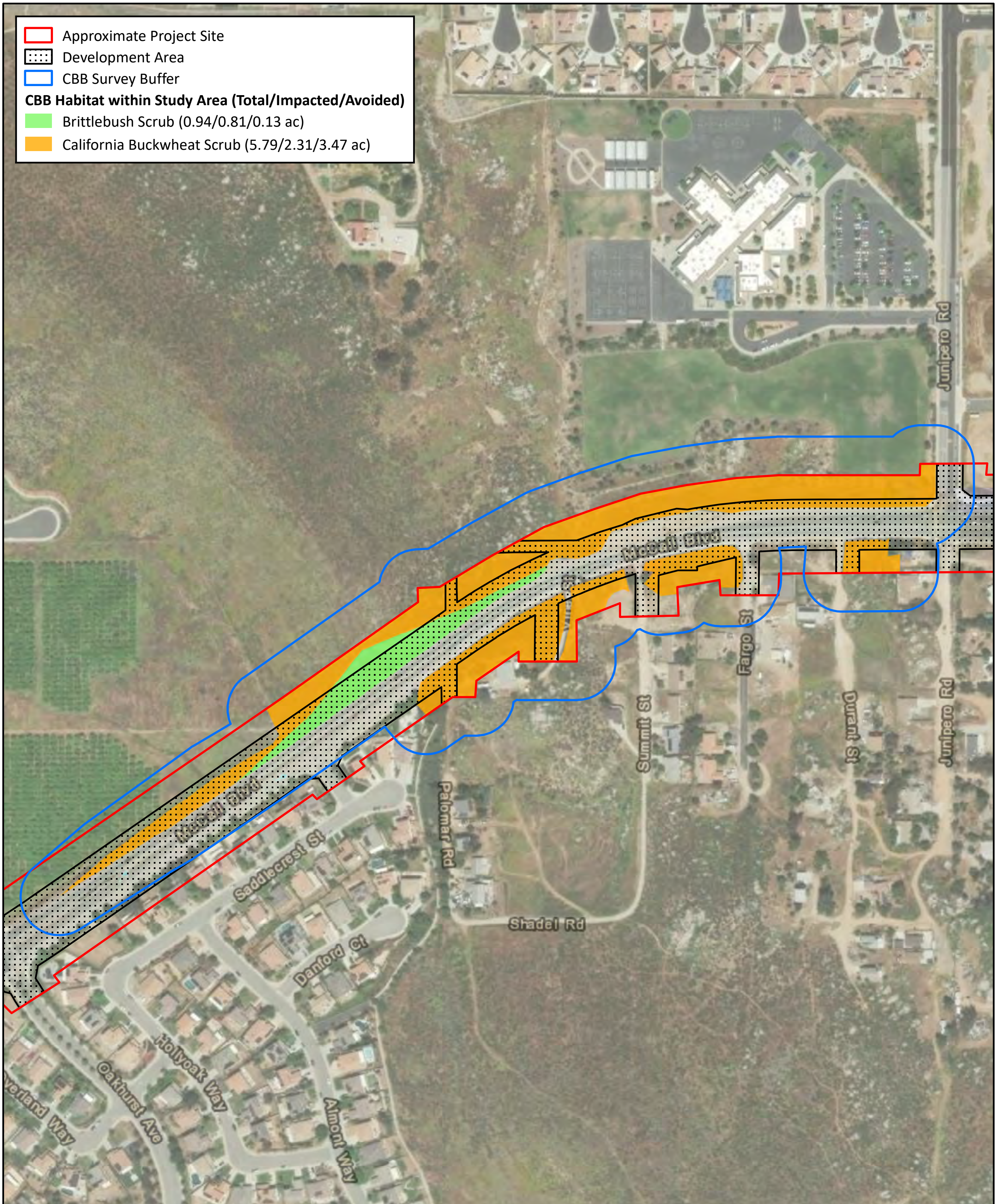
Crotch's Bumble Bee (CBB) Suitable Habitat



Prepared By:

VCS Environmental

Map Created: May 2025
Data Sources: Rocks Biological, Hunsaker

Service Layer Credits: Esri, HERE, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors
Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics, and the GIS User Community

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Menifee Valley Specific Plan

Figure 2
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Crotch's Bumble Bee (CBB) Suitable Habitat