



Memorandum

Date: August 21, 2020

To: Jeremy Krout, EPD Solutions, Inc.

From: Shawn Gatchel-Hernandez, Principal Regulatory Specialist

Subject: Focused Burrowing Owl Survey Report for Assessor's Parcel Numbers 951-050-001, 951-020-002, 951-060-001, and 951-060-002

This memorandum provides the methods and results of a Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) (BUOW) survey for Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APNs) 951-050-001, 951-020-002, 951-060-001, and 951-060-002 located within unincorporated Riverside County, California.

Project Location

The project site is located southwest of the intersection of Rancho California Road and La Serena Way within unincorporated Riverside County, California. The project site consists of Riverside County APNs 951-020-001, 002, 951-060-001, and 002. Specifically, the project site is located within the *Bachelor Mountain* United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' topographic quadrangle. The center point latitude and longitude for the project site are 33°31'17.2954" North and 117°05'07.4808" West (Figures 1 and 2).

The study area included APNs 951-050-001, 951-020-002, 951-060-001, 951-060-002 and a 150-meter (500-foot) buffer around the site, where accessible (Figure 3).

Project Contact Information

Owner/Applicant: Mexin Teme Agriculture Development, Inc.
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Duarte, CA 91010

Principal Investigator: Juan J. Hernandez
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Field Survey Methods

HES implemented the three steps as described in the *Burrowing Owl Survey Instructions for the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Area*. The “General Biological Assessment and Western Riverside MSHCP Consistency Analysis” prepared for the project, determined that focused surveys for BUOW would be required due to the presence of suitable habitat documented during the March 17, 2020 habitat assessment. In accordance with the *Burrowing Owl Survey Instructions for the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Area*, focused burrow and focused BUOW surveys (Part A and Part B, respectively) were conducted on four separate days during the breeding season: July 28, July 30, August 4, and August 6, 2020. Survey times, weather, and sunrise/sunset information is described in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Survey Information

Survey	Date	Survey Start Time	Sunrise/Sunset	Weather
1	July 28, 2020	0630 hours	0559 hours	57 degrees Fahrenheit, clear, winds 0-1 miles per hour from the south
2	July 30, 2020	0650 hours	0601 hours	63 degrees Fahrenheit, clear, winds 0-1 miles per hour from the south
3	August 4, 2020	0702 hours	0602 hours	63 degrees Fahrenheit, clear, winds 0-1 miles per hour from the southwest
4	August 6, 2020	0715 hours	0605 hours	63 degrees Fahrenheit, cloudy, winds 0-2 miles per hour from the south

Surveys were conducted from one hour before sunrise to two hours after sunrise or two hours before sunset to one hour after sunset and during weather that was conducive to observing owls outside their burrows and detecting BUOW sign. The surveys were not conducted during rain, high winds (> 20 miles per hour), dense fog, or temperatures above 90 degrees Fahrenheit. Surveys involved walking through potentially suitable habitat within the survey area. The pedestrian survey transects were spaced approximately 30 to 50 feet apart to allow 100 percent visual coverage of the ground surface. Special attention was paid to those habitat areas that appeared to provide suitable habitat for BUOW. Where permission to access the buffer areas could not be obtained, the biologist visually inspects adjacent habitats with binoculars.

All encountered burrows or structure entrances were checked for the presence of BUOW, molted feathers, cast pellets, prey remains, eggshell fragments, tracks, or excrement. Natural or man-made structures and debris piles that could support BUOW were also surveyed. The locations of all suitable BUOW habitat, potential burrows, BUOW sign, and any BUOW observed was recorded and mapped with a handheld Global Positioning System (GPS) unit.

All wildlife species encountered visually or audibly during the field survey were identified and recorded in field notes. Binoculars were used to aid in the identification of observed wildlife. Photographs were taken to document existing conditions within the survey area.

Results

The site is located within unincorporated Riverside County, California. It is bordered by wineries to the north, southwest and west, residential development to the southeast, and a vacant lot to the east. Rancho California Road borders the project site to the north. The project site is primarily developed and disturbed by residential structures and previous agricultural use. The site is on a hillside with onsite elevations ranging from 1,269 feet above mean sea-level (AMSL) in the northwest portion of the site to 1,394 feet AMSL in the southeast portion of the site.

The western portion of the site is developed with a single-family residence and associated ornamental vegetation. The project site contains five different habitat types, including ruderal, disturbed coastal sage scrub, ornamental trees. A disturbed ephemeral drainage crosses the northern portion of the site from east to west. The dominant species on site are mustards (*Brassica sp.*), foxtail barley (*Hordeum murinum*), and stinknet (*Oncosiphon piuliferum*). Soils at the project site are classified as Arlington and Greenfield fine sandy loam (AtD2), 8 to 15 percent slopes, eroded; Gorgonio loamy sand (GhC), 0 to 8 percent slopes; Hanford coarse sandy loam (HcC), 2 to 8 percent slopes; Ramona and Buren loams (RnE3), 5 to 25 percent slopes, severely eroded, and Rough broken land (RuF).

Based on the results of the focused burrow survey conducted on March 17, 2020, it was determined that the project site provides suitable burrows/nesting opportunities for BUOW. One suitable burrow measuring six inches in diameter was checked and recorded (Figure 4). The burrow was found on the western project site boundary adjacent to the culverts at the end of the ephemeral drainage. The identified burrow was made by a small mammal and appeared to be inactive. Ground squirrels were observed on site. Evidence of ground squirrels and ground squirrel activities were observed on both project sites. Although the project site supports fossorial mammal burrows, debris piles, and non-natural substrates capable of supporting BUOW, no BUOW or BUOW sign was observed at the entrance or adjacent to these burrows within the study area.

Despite systematic searches of the project site and 150-meter buffer area, no BUOW or evidence (i.e., including scat, pellets, feathers, tracks, and prey remains) was found which suggest recent

or historical use of the study area by BUOW. Therefore, it can be concluded that BUOW are not currently present within the study area.

Recommendations

Due to the fact that the project site is located within the Western Riverside County MSHCP burrowing owl survey area, a 30-day preconstruction survey is required prior to the commencement of project activities (e.g. vegetation clearing, clearing and grubbing, tree removal, site watering) to ensure that no owls have colonized the site in the days or weeks preceding project activities. If BUOW are found to have colonized the project site prior to the initiation of construction, the project proponent will immediately inform RCA and the Wildlife Agencies and will need to prepare a Burrowing Owl Protection and Relocation Plan for approval by RCA and the Wildlife Agencies prior to initiating ground disturbance.

Certification

I hereby certify that the statements furnished above and in the attached exhibits present 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.

Date: August 21, 2020



Shawn Gatchel-Hernandez
Principal Regulatory Specialist

Enclosures:

Figure 1: Project Location Map
Figure 2: Project Vicinity Map
Figure 3: Survey Area and Results Map
Site Photographs



Figure 1

Location Map
 APNs 951-020-001 951-020-002
 951-060-001 & 951-060-002
 Riverside County, California

Legend



Project Site Boundary (18.14 Acre)



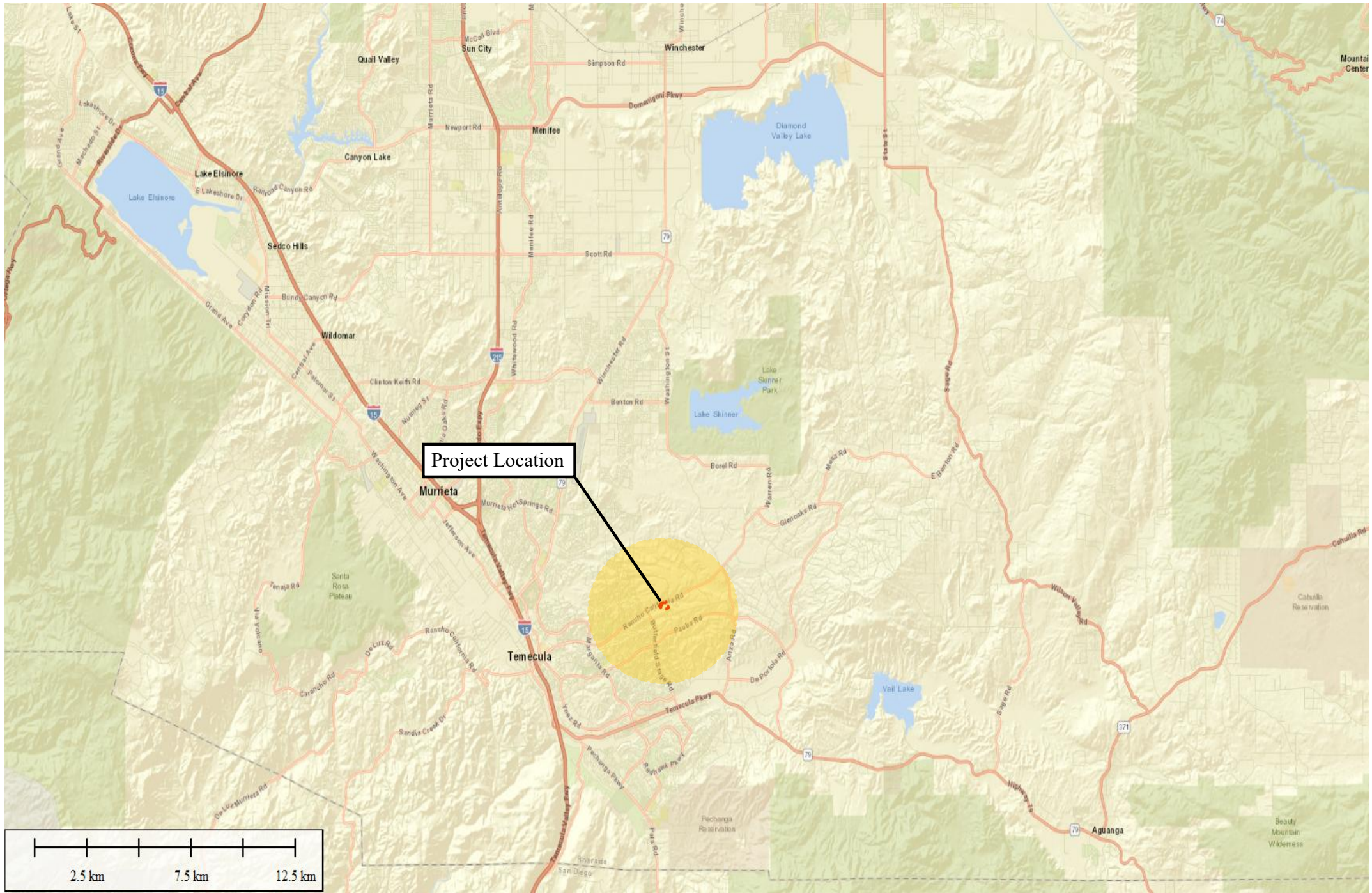


Figure 2
 Vicinity Map
 APNs 951-020-001 951-020-002
 951-060-001 & 951-060-002
 Riverside County, California

Legend

Project Site Boundary (18.14 Acres)





Figure 3

Survey Area and Results Map
 APNs 951-020-001 951-020-002
 951-060-001 & 951-060-002
 Riverside County, California

Legend

- - - Project Location
- 150 Meter (500 foot) Buffer Area
- Transect Locations





View of disturbed, non-native vegetation in northeast portion of the study area.



View of eastern portion of the study area.



View of disturbed coastal sage scrub habitat on northwest portion of study area.



View of empty field located to the east of the study area.



View of culverts at western border of study area.



View of inactive burrow along western border of study area.