

APPENDIX C – MSHCP BURROWING OWL SURVEY

August 8, 2024
(21492)

Vincent Lopez, Capital Projects
City of Beaumont
550 E 6th Street
Beaumont, California 92223

SUBJECT: MULTIPLE SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN (MSHCP) FOCUSED BURROWING OWL SURVEY

Dear Vincent Lopez,

The purpose of this report is to summarize the results of the focused burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*; BUOW) survey conducted on August 7, 2024, within the onsite and offsite footprints of the Cherry Channel Drainage Project (Project) in the City of Beaumont, Riverside County, California. Chambers Group was retained by the City of Beaumont (City) to conduct a focused BUOW survey for the Project in accordance with the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP). The survey was conducted in all areas containing suitable BUOW habitat to avoid direct take of BUOW and any occupied BUOW burrows/nests and to determine if passive relocation would be necessary. The survey was conducted within the approximately 3-acre Project site and an approximately 500-foot buffer around the Project site, where accessible (Survey Area; Attachment 1, Figure 1). Accessible/suitable habitat areas within the buffer were surveyed. Disturbed Goodding's willow riparian woodland, cattail marsh, disturbed wild tarragon patches and areas that have been developed are not suitable for BUOW and were excluded from the survey.

Survey conditions were moderate to good throughout the survey effort and the survey was not conducted with 5 days of rain or during rain. No BUOWs or BUOW signs were observed within the Survey Area during the focused survey. Since no potential burrows or BUOWs were detected, no further surveys are required.

PROJECT LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the Project is to remove the existing geo-mat lining, wingwall, and riprap channel and replace it with concrete along the slopes and channel bottom. This will improve channel flow conditions to alleviate the increasing level of maintenance by City staff. The Project is located in the San Timoteo Unit, Pass Area Plan, of the MSHCP and is not within an MSHCP criteria cell (Attachment 1, Figure 2). The Project site is within the United States Geological Survey (USGS) *Beaumont* 7.5-minutes topographic quadrangle and is found in Section 34 of Township 2 South, Range 1 West. The Project site is located along Cherry Avenue, between Cougar Way and Oak Valley Parkway. Residential communities are located along Cherry Avenue to the northeast, southeast, and southwest. Beaumont Adult School and San Gorgonio Middle School are located to the west of Cherry Avenue and Alber A. Chatigny Senior Community Center is located east of Cherry Avenue.

The Project consists primarily of developed, ruderal, and other disturbed habitat areas. The Project site is currently subject to human disturbances, trails, walkways, and runoff from the surrounding neighborhood. These activities have rendered the site highly disturbed which is apparent by the non-native species, trash, tracks from tilling/mowing, and compacted soils that were observed within the Project site (Attachment 2 -

Site Photographs). Few mammal burrows are present throughout the Project site and buffer that would be suitable for use by BUOW.

METHODS

Survey methods followed the *Burrowing Owl Survey Instructions* for Western Riverside County MSHCP (County of Riverside 2006) and CDFW Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation (CDFW 2012). The survey effort was not conducted within five days following rain, during rain, during winds greater than 20 miles per hour (mph), dense fog, or in temperatures over 90 degrees Fahrenheit (°F). The survey was conducted by walking transects no greater than 30 meters (m) wide (approximately 100 feet), depending on visual obstructions and vegetation densities, to achieve 100 percent visual cover within the Survey Area. The site was surveyed for the presence of BUOW and BUOW sign (e.g., whitewash, prey remains, pellets, burrows, scratch marks, decorations, or feathers). At the start of each transect, and at least every 100 m (approximately 320 feet) along transects, the Survey Area was scanned for BUOWs using binoculars. Binoculars were used to survey areas that were not safely accessible on foot or that were located on private property. All potential BUOW burrows encountered were examined for owl sign and any evidence of BUOW (e.g., pellets, prey remains, whitewash, or decoration). Any BUOWs, BUOW burrows, and/or other BUOW sign were documented including the GPS locations, observation details, and digital photographs as feasible (Attachment 3 - Burrowing Owl Focused Survey Form).

RESULTS

The preconstruction BUOW survey was conducted by Chambers Group biologists Austin Burke and Jessica Calvillo, on August 7, 2024, between the hours of 0645 and 1145. Weather conditions included temperatures from 73 to 88 °F, wind speeds from 3 to 8 mph, partly cloudy skies, and no precipitation. Overall bird activity was low. Wildlife species observed are included in Attachment 4. No BUOWs or BUOW signs were observed within the Survey Area.

DISCUSSION

BUOW are considered a California Species of Special Concern (SSC) and are one of the 146 species covered by the MSHCP. They nest in underground burrows, typically abandoned by other animals such as ground squirrels, and other large mammals. The BUOW prefers open, flat, and grassland habitat.

No BUOWs or BUOW sign were found within the Survey Area during the focused survey effort. Areas with a low potential for BUOW habitat were located outside of the Project site in the open space area of an existing Southern California Edison (SCE) easement following the powerlines. This area looks to be regularly maintained for access. Some of the open space grounds were tilled and possibly mowed in the recent past for fire resistance supporting the surrounding neighborhoods.

Although no BUOW were observed on site, if BUOWs are identified within the Project site or 500-foot buffer during construction, avoidance measures will be developed in compliance with the MSHCP and in coordination with the CDFW and/or Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority. Appropriate measures can include but are not limited to establishing avoidance buffers and/or biological monitoring. The Designated Biologist will inspect any burrow that exhibits typical characteristics of owl activity to verify whether BUOW are occupying or using areas within the Project site or buffer.

To minimize potential impacts to BUOW and nesting birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), any vegetation clearing should take place outside the general bird breeding season (February 15 to September 15), to the maximum extent practical. If this is not possible, prior to ground-disturbing activities, a qualified biologist should conduct and submit a migratory nesting bird and raptor survey report. The survey should occur no more than three days prior to initiation of Project activities, and any occupied passerine and/or raptor nests occurring within or adjacent to the Project site should be delineated. Additional follow-up surveys may be required by the resource agencies. To the maximum extent practicable, a minimum buffer zone around occupied nests should be maintained during physical ground-disturbing activities. The buffer zone should be sufficient in size to prevent impacts to the nest. Once nesting has ceased, the buffer may be removed.

Please contact me at (949) 261-5414 ext. 7212 or at the email below, if you have any questions or concerns regarding this letter report.

Sincerely,



Austin Burke

Biologist

aburke@chambersgroupinc.com

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – Figure 1 - Project Location and Vicinity Map
- Attachment 1 – Figure 2 - RCA Western Riverside County Criteria Area Cell
- Attachment 2 – Site Photographs
- Attachment 3 – Burrowing Owl Focused Survey Form
- Attachment 4 – Wildlife Species List

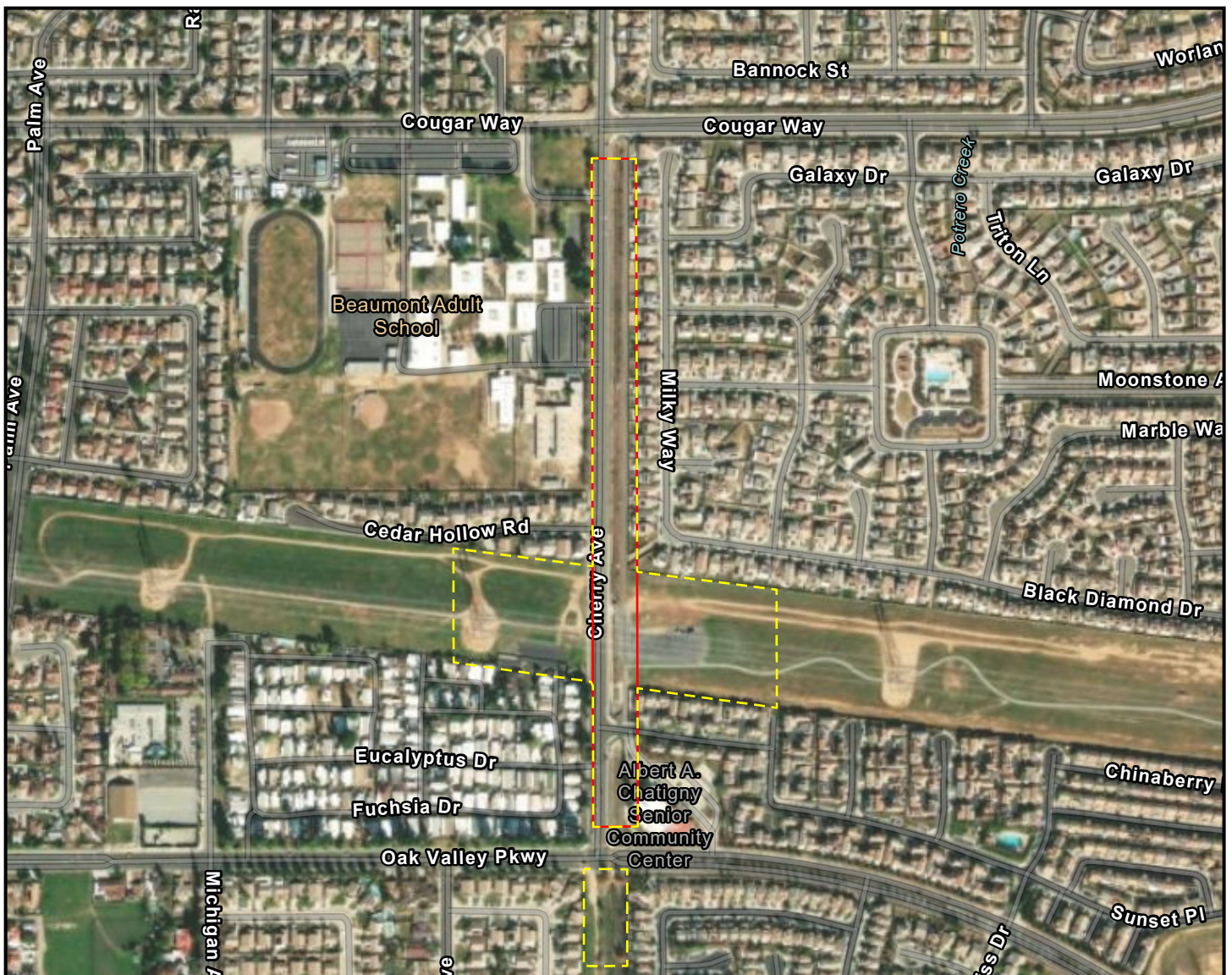
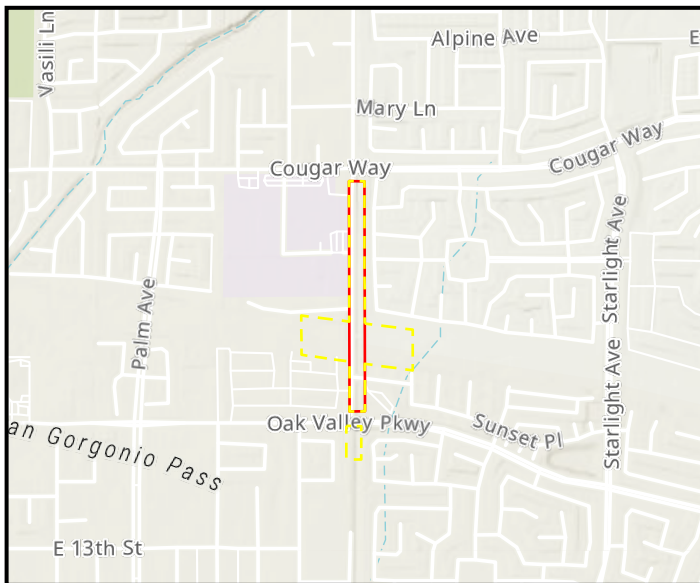
References

County of Riverside Environmental Programs Department

2006 *Burrowing Owl Survey Instructions for the Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Area*. March 29, 2006.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife

2012 Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation. State of California Natural Resources Agency. California Department of Fish and Wildlife. March 2012.



- Project Location
- Survey Area

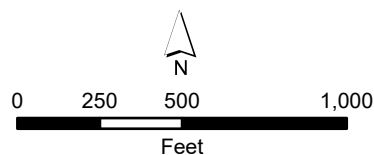
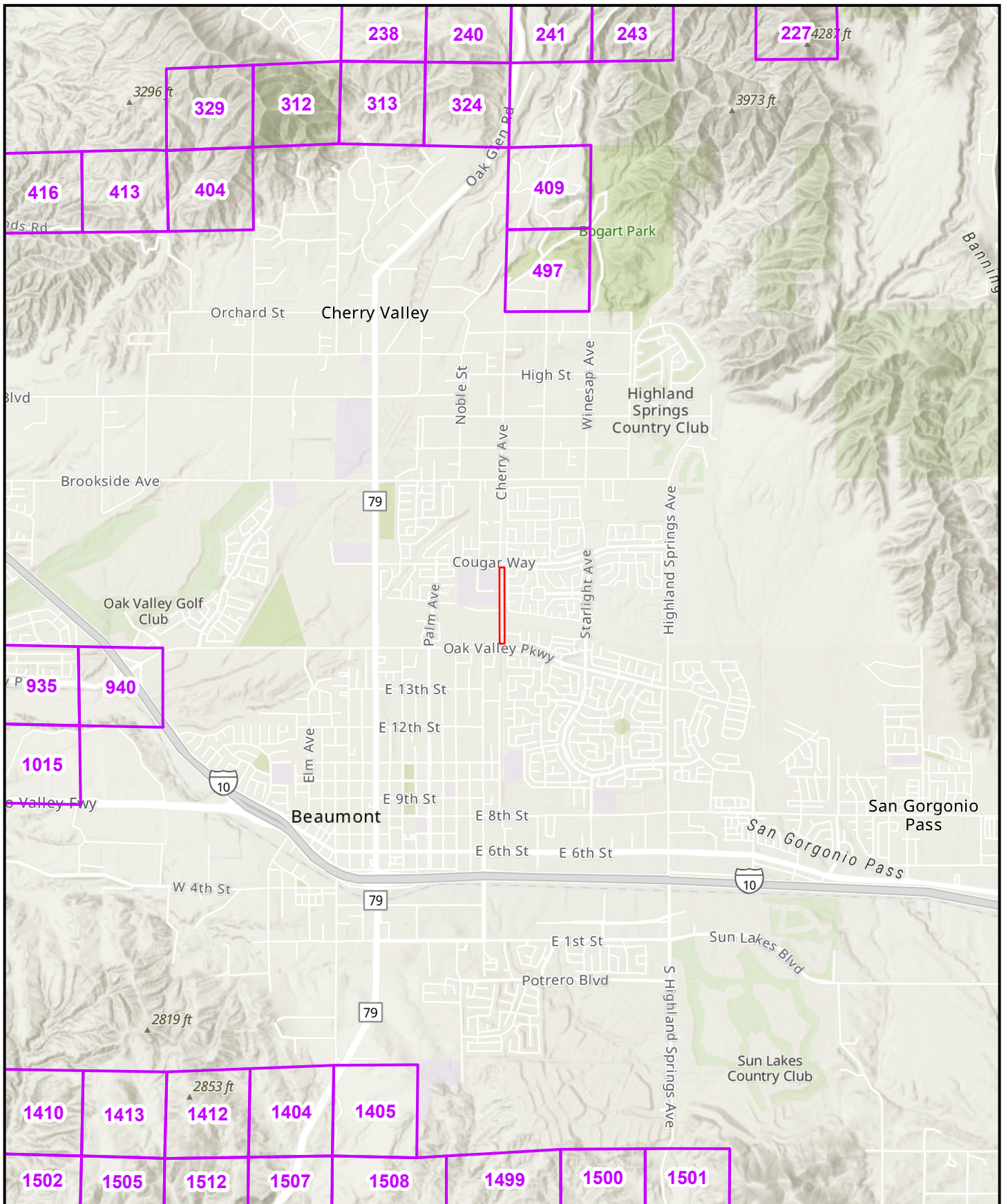


Figure 1
Cherry Channel Drainage
Project Location and Vicinity



Project Location

Criteria Cell



0 0.38 0.75 1.5
Miles

Figure 2
Cherry Channel Drainage
RCA Western Riverside County Criteria Area Cells

ATTACHMENT 2 – SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1.

Photo depicting the disturbed disc-mowed soils that were observed on the eastern side of the Survey Area in the open space area that runs along the SCE power lines. Photo is facing west.



Photo 2.

Photo showing dirt trails and access roads along with disturbed disc-mowed soils that were observed on the eastern side of the Survey Area. Photo is facing west.



Photo 3.

Ruderal vegetation on the western side of the Survey Area was less disturbed but still contains access roads to the power lines and very few ground squirrel burrows that could be used for BUOW. Photo is facing east.



Photo 4.

Paved trail along with vehicle tracks going through the disturbed ruderal vegetation on the western side of the Survey Area. Photo is facing east.



Photo 5.

Overview of the southern portion of the Survey Area that also contains ruderal vegetation on the outside of the channel that looks to be maintained and mowed. Photo is facing northwest.



Photo 6.

Overview of the Project site taken from the south end facing north. The Project site does not contain suitable habitat for BUOW.

BURROWING OWL FOCUSED SURVEY FORM

| | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| BIOLOGIST(S): Austin Burke and Jessica Calvillo | | DATE: 8-7-24 | |
| PROJECT NAME AND NUMBER: Cherry Channel #21492 | | | |
| PROJECT LOCATION: Cherry Ave., North of E Oak valley Pkwy and South of Cougar Way. Beaumont, CA 92223 | | | |
| SURVEY TYPE: Burrow Survey <input type="checkbox"/> BUOW Focused Survey <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUOW Precon Survey <input type="checkbox"/> | | TIME OF DAY: Dawn <input type="checkbox"/> Dusk <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| | | FOCUSED SURVEY: 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| START TIME: 0645 | | END TIME: 1145 | |
| Temperature Start: 73F End: 88F | Cloud Cover Start: 40% End: 30% | Wind Speed/Direction Start: 3-8 mph End: 3-8 mph | Precipitation Start: 0% End: 0% |
| Adjacent Land Uses: mostly residential housing, community center, and school. Small section of a parking lot and disturbed dirt lot following electrical lines. Dirt lots look tilled/mowed. | | | |
| General Site Conditions (topography, soils, vegetation/plant communities): Relatively flat. Site channel flows north to south. Soils are dry and hard. Plant communities include ruderal, ornamental, developed, cattail marsh, disturbed wild terrigon/cyperus, and disturbed willow communities. | | | |
| Animal Species Present (observed, detected, activity): Common Raven, lesser goldfinch, rock Pigeon, house finch, Annas hummingbird, Song Sparrow, mourning dove, western kingbird Cassins Kingbird, cabbage butterfly | | | |
| Plant Species Present: Willow sp., cattail, non-native weeds (mustard, thistle, tumbleweed) | | | |
| Existing structures present? Visible site disturbances? If yes, describe. Geo lined channel w/ drainages/culverts. No site disturbances. No BUOW or BUOW sign | | | |

BURROW/BURROWING OWL OBSERVATIONS

Sign ID: _____ 0 N/A _____

General location: _____

GPS coordinates: Lat _____ Long _____ Aspect: _____

Dimensions: H _____ W _____ D _____ Can you see the end of the burrow? Yes ☐ No ☐

Sign: Whitewash ☐ Pellets ☐ Feathers ☐ Prey remains ☐ Shell fragments ☐ Decoration ☐ Other ☐

Number of BUOWs: Adult _____ Juvenile _____ Pair observed? Yes ☐ No ☐

Behaviors: Foraging ☐ Feeding ☐ Resting ☐ Preening ☐ Courtship ☐ Alarm ☐ Territorial defense ☐ Other ☐

Added to Collector? Yes ☐ No ☐ Photos taken? Yes ☐ No ☐

Additional details/Notes:

Sign ID: _____ 0 N/A _____

General location: _____

GPS coordinates: Lat _____ Long _____ Aspect: _____

Dimensions: H _____ W _____ D _____ Can you see the end of the burrow? Yes ☐ No ☐

Sign: Whitewash ☐ Pellets ☐ Feathers ☐ Prey remains ☐ Shell fragments ☐ Decoration ☐ Other ☐

Number of BUOWs: Adult _____ Juvenile _____ Pair observed? Yes ☐ No ☐

Behaviors: Foraging ☐ Feeding ☐ Resting ☐ Preening ☐ Courtship ☐ Alarm ☐ Territorial defense ☐ Other ☐

Added to Collector? Yes ☐ No ☐ Photos taken? Yes ☐ No ☐

Additional details/Notes:

Sign ID: _____ 0 N/A _____

General location: _____

GPS coordinates: Lat _____ Long _____ Aspect: _____

Dimensions: H _____ W _____ D _____ Can you see the end of the burrow? Yes ☐ No ☐

Sign: Whitewash ☐ Pellets ☐ Feathers ☐ Prey remains ☐ Shell fragments ☐ Decoration ☐ Other ☐

Number of BUOWs: Adult _____ Juvenile _____ Pair observed? Yes ☐ No ☐

Behaviors: Foraging ☐ Feeding ☐ Resting ☐ Preening ☐ Courtship ☐ Alarm ☐ Territorial defense ☐ Other ☐

Added to Collector? Yes ☐ No ☐ Photos taken? Yes ☐ No ☐

Additional details/Notes:

ATTACHMENT 4 – WILDLIFE SPECIES OBSERVED OR DETECTED

| Scientific Name | Common Name |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| CLASS AVES | BIRDS |
| CORVIDAE | JAYS & CROWS |
| <i>Corvus corax</i> | common raven |
| TROCHILIDAE | HUMMINGBIRDS |
| <i>Calypte anna</i> | Anna's hummingbird |
| FRINGILLIDAE | FINCHES |
| <i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i> | house finch |
| <i>Spinus psaltria</i> | lesser goldfinch |
| COLUMBIDAE | PIGEONS & DOVES |
| <i>Zenaida macroura</i> | mourning dove |
| <i>Columba livia</i> | rock pigeon |
| EMBERIZIDAE | EMBERIZIDS |
| <i>Melospiza melodia</i> | song sparrow |
| TYRANNIDAE | TYRANT FLYCATCHERS |
| <i>Tyrannus vociferans</i> | Cassin's kingbird |
| CLASS INSECTA | INSECTS |
| PIERIDAE | WHITES & SULPHURS |
| <i>Pieris rapae</i> | cabbage white |