Appendix B.

Biological Resource Reports

Biological Resources Technical Report

Riverview Project

MARCH 2024

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym	Definition
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CESA	California Endangered Species Act
CNDDB	California Natural Diversity Database
CNPS	California Native Plant Society
CRPR	California Rare Plant Rank
CWA	Clean Water Act
Esri	Environmental Systems Research Institute
FESA	Federal Endangered Species Act
GIS	geographic information system
HCP	habitat conservation plan
IPaC	Information for Planning and Conservation System
ISA	International Society of Arboriculture
NCCP	natural community conservation plan
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
OHWM	ordinary high-water mark
SSC	California Species of Special Concern
SWPPP	Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey

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1 Introduction

This report presents the findings of a biological resources constraints assessment conducted by Dudek for the proposed Riverview Project (Project). The purpose of this assessment was to evaluate the existing biological conditions and potential impacts to sensitive biological resources associated with the proposed Project, including a 500-foot buffer (Study Area). This report is prepared at a level of detail sufficient to address California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements, specifically the biological thresholds of significance included in Appendix G, as well as identifying the potential need for permits for sensitive resources protected under federal and state regulations.

1.1 Project Location

The Project site is in the city of Santa Clarita, along the south side of Soledad Canyon Road directly east of its intersection with Commuter Way, in northwestern portion of Los Angeles County (Figure 1, Project Location). The site encompasses approximately 39.66 acres and is located on one parcel (Assessor Parcel Number 2836-011-018) at 22500 Soledad Canyon Road. The Project site is located on the U.S. Geologic Survey's (USGS) Newhall 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle (USGS 2018).

1.2 Project Description

The Project involves the construction and operation of a mixed-use development with 318 single-family units and 121,790 (sf) of light industrial space. A total of 819 residential and 143 light industrial parking spaces would be provided. The Project proposes 2.4 acres of park area (approximately 105,000 square feet). The Project will also construct a pedestrian boulevard through the center of the residential component that connects to the Metrolink Station. The pedestrian boulevard should provide a walkway between the residential component and Metrolink. Two drainage basins for stormwater management are proposed, one at the southeastern corner and one at the northwestern part. The Project also proposed three debris basins adjacent to the railroad tracks along the southeast corner of the site, which will be designed and constructed per Los Angeles County standards.

Offsite improvements are required to upgrade transportation and utility infrastructure along Soledad Canyon Road and Commuter Way and accommodate the Project and its proposed uses. The Project would encourage transit use and provide a bus stop along eastbound Soledad Canyon Road, including a permanent shelter structure with a bench, trash receptacle, and lighting. A new bus turnout and a cross-section along Soledad Canyon Road would also be provided at the proposed bus stop. A pedestrian path from the Project site to the bus stop will also be provided. Other street improvements include curbs and gutters, base paving, and 5-foot minimum sidewalks along Soledad Canyon Road and Commuter Way, as well as modification of the Soledad Canyon Road median.

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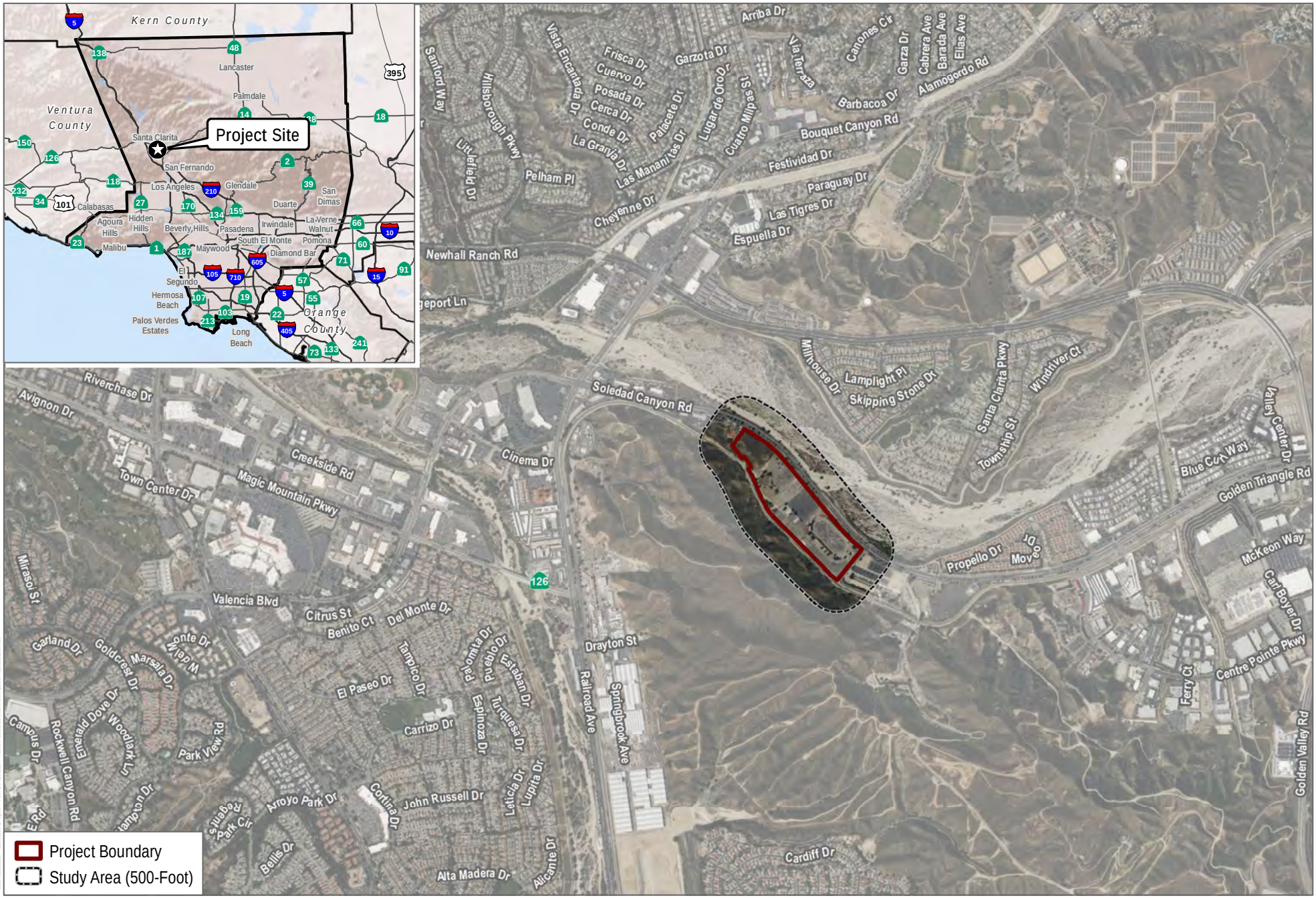

SOURCE: County of Los Angeles; Open Street Maps; Bing Maps

DUDEK

0 1,000 2,000 Feet

FIGURE 1

Project Location

Riverview Development Project

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2 Regulatory Context

This section describes the regulatory framework relevant to the Project.

2.1 Federal Regulations

2.1.1 Federal Endangered Species Act

The federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) of 1973 (16 USC 1531 et seq.), as amended, is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for most plant and animal species, and by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Marine Fisheries Service for certain marine species. FESA is intended to provide a means to conserve the ecosystems upon which endangered and threatened species depend, and to provide programs for the conservation of those species, thus preventing extinction of plants and wildlife. FESA defines an endangered species as "any species that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range." A threatened species is defined as "any species that is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range." Under FESA, it is unlawful to take any listed species; "take" is defined as "harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct."

FESA allows for the issuance of incidental take permits for listed species under Section 7, which is generally available for projects that also require other federal agency permits or other approvals, and under Section 10, which provides for the approval of habitat conservation plans on private property without any other federal agency involvement. Upon development of a habitat conservation plan, USFWS can issue incidental take permits for listed species.

2.1.2 Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act was originally passed in 1918 as four bilateral treaties, or conventions, for the protection of a shared migratory bird resource. The primary motivation for the international negotiations was to stop the "indiscriminate slaughter" of migratory birds by market hunters and others (16 USC 703–712). Each of the treaties protects selected species of birds and provides for closed and open seasons for hunting game birds. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act protects more than 800 species. Two species of eagles that are native to the United States—bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)—were granted additional protection within the United States under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 USC 668–668d) to prevent these species from becoming extinct.

2.1.3 Section 404 of the Clean Water Act

The objective of the Clean Water Act (CWA) is to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters. Under Section 404 of the CWA, the USACE has the authority to regulate activities that could discharge fill or dredge material or otherwise adversely modify wetlands or other waters of the United States. The USACE implements the federal policy embodied in Executive Order 11990, which, when implemented, is intended to result in no net loss of wetland values or function.

2.1.4 Section 401 of the Clean Water Act

The State Water Resources Control Board has authority over wetlands through Section 401 of the CWA, as well as the Porter–Cologne Act, California Code of Regulations Section 3831(k), and California Wetlands Conservation Policy. The CWA requires that an applicant for a Section 404 permit (to discharge dredge or fill material into waters of the United States) first obtain certification from the appropriate state agency stating that the fill is consistent with the state's water quality standards and criteria. In California, the authority to either grant certification or waive the requirement for permits is delegated by the State Water Resources Control Board to the nine regional boards. The Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board has authority for Section 401 compliance in the project area. A request for certification is submitted to the regional board at the same time that an application is filed with the USACE.

2.2 State Regulations

2.2.1 California Endangered Species Act

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) administers the California Endangered Species Act (CESA), which prohibits the take of plant and animal species designated by the Fish and Game Commission as endangered or threatened in California. Under CESA Section 86, "take" is defined as "hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill, or attempt to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill." CESA Section 2053 stipulates that state agencies may not approve projects that will "jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered species or threatened species, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of habitat essential to the continued existence of those species, if there are reasonable and prudent alternatives available consistent with conserving the species or its habitat which would prevent jeopardy."

CESA defines an endangered species as "a native species or subspecies of a bird, mammal, fish, amphibian, reptile, or plant which is in serious danger of becoming extinct throughout all, or a significant portion, of its range due to one or more causes, including loss of habitat, change in habitat, overexploitation, predation, competition, or disease." CESA defines a threatened species as "a native species or subspecies of a bird, mammal, fish, amphibian, reptile, or plant that, although not presently threatened with extinction, is likely to become an endangered species in the foreseeable future in the absence of the special protection and management efforts required by this chapter. Any animal determined by the Commission as rare on or before January 1, 1985, is a threatened species." A candidate species is defined as "a native species or subspecies of a bird, mammal, fish, amphibian, reptile, or plant that the Commission has formally noticed as being under review by the department for addition to either the list of endangered species or the list of threatened species, or a species for which the Commission has published a notice of proposed regulation to add the species to either list." CESA does not list invertebrate species.

2.2.2 California Fish and Game Code Sections 3503, 3511, 3513, 3801, 4700, 5050, and 5515

Section 2081(b) and (c) of the California Fish and Game Code authorizes take of endangered, threatened, or candidate species if take is incidental to otherwise lawful activity and if specific criteria are met. These provisions also require CDFW to coordinate consultations with USFWS for actions involving federally listed species that are also state-listed species. In certain circumstances, Section 2080.1 of CESA allows CDFW to adopt a federal incidental take statement or a 10(a) permit as its own, based on its findings that the federal permit adequately protects the species and is consistent with state law. A Section 2081(b) permit may not authorize the take of "fully

protected" species or "specified birds" (California Fish and Game Code Sections 3505, 3511, 4700, 5050, 5515, and 5517). If a project is planned in an area where a fully protected species or a specified bird occurs, an applicant must design the project to avoid take.

2.2.3 California Environmental Quality Act

CEQA requires identification of a project's potentially significant impacts on biological resources and ways that such impacts can be avoided, minimized, or mitigated. CEQA also provides guidelines and thresholds for use by lead agencies for evaluating the significance of proposed impacts.

Special-Status Plants and Wildlife

The CEQA Guidelines define endangered animals or plants as species or subspecies whose "survival and reproduction in the wild are in immediate jeopardy from one or more causes, including loss of habitat, change in habitat, overexploitation, predation, competition, disease, or other factors" (14 CCR 15380[b][1]). A rare animal or plant is defined in CEQA Guidelines Section 15380(b)(2) as a species that, although not currently threatened with extinction, exists "in such small numbers throughout all or a significant portion of its range that it may become endangered if its environment worsens; or … [t]he species is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range and may be considered 'threatened' as that term is used in the federal Endangered Species Act." Additionally, an animal or plant may be presumed to be endangered, rare, or threatened if it meets the criteria for listing as defined further in CEQA Guidelines Section 15380(c).

Special-Status Vegetation Communities

Section IV, Appendix G (Environmental Checklist Form) of the CEQA Guidelines (14 CCR 15000 et seq.) requires an evaluation of impacts to "any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations, or by the CDFW or the USFWS."

2.2.4 California Fish and Game Code, Sections 1600–1616

California Fish and Game Code, Sections 1600–1616, mandates that "it is unlawful for any person to substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow or substantially change the bed, channel, or bank of any river, stream, or lake designated by the department, or use any material from the streambeds, without first notifying the department of such activity."

CDFW jurisdiction includes ephemeral, intermittent, and perennial watercourses (including dry washes) and lakes characterized by the presence of (1) definable bed and banks and (2) existing fish or wildlife resources. CDFW takes jurisdiction to the top of bank of the stream, or the limit of the adjacent riparian vegetation, which may include oak woodlands in canyon bottoms. Historical court cases have further extended CDFW jurisdiction to include watercourses that seemingly disappear but reemerge elsewhere. Under the CDFW definition, a watercourse need not exhibit evidence of an ordinary high-water mark (OHWM) to be claimed as jurisdictional. The CDFW does not have jurisdiction over ocean or shoreline resources.

Under California Fish and Game Code, Sections 1600–1616, the CDFW has the authority to regulate work that will substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow of, or substantially change or use any material from, the bed, channel, or bank of any river, stream, or lake. The CDFW also has the authority to regulate work that will deposit or dispose of debris, waste, or other material containing crumbled, flaked, or ground pavement where it may pass into any river, stream, or

lake. This regulation takes the form of a requirement for a Lake or Streambed Alteration Agreement and is applicable to all projects. Applications to the CDFW must include a complete certified CEQA document.

2.2.5 Porter–Cologne Water Quality Control Act

Pursuant to provisions of the Porter–Cologne Act, the Regional Water Quality Control Board regulates discharging waste, or proposing to discharge waste, within any region that could affect a water of the state (California Water Code, Section 13260[a]). The State Water Resources Control Board defines a water of the state as "any surface water or groundwater, including saline waters, within the boundaries of the state" (California Water Code, Section 13050[e]).

2.3 Local Regulations

2.3.1 City of Santa Clarita Oak Tree Ordinance

The City of Santa Clarita approved Oak Tree Ordinance No. 89-10 as a means of regulating impacts and to preserve all Quercus species within the City limits. Per the Santa Clarita Oak Tree Preservation Section 17.51.040, impacts such as pruning, encroaching cutting, relocating or removal of any *Quercus* species without prior approval through an oak tree permit (17.23.170) will not be allowed. Conditions of the oak tree permit may include the payment of a fee or donation of boxed trees to the City or other approved public agency to be used elsewhere in the City.

For mitigation of oaks due to removal, and/or major encroachment of non-heritage oak trees on a property occupied by a single-family residence, any required tree replacements shall be based on a six (6) inch increment as follows:

- Eight inches to 12 inches = Two 24-inch box native oaks.
- 12 inches to 18 inches = Three 24-inch box native oaks.
- 18 inches to 24 inches = Four 24-inch box native oaks.
- 24 inches to 30 inches = Five 24-inch box native oaks.
- 30 inches to 36 inches = Six 24-inch box native oaks.
- One additional 24-inch box native oak per incremental increase of six inches.

Replacement trees shall be planted on the same property from which they were removed unless there is no appropriate place for planting. If an appropriate on-site location for replanting does not exist, mitigation trees may be donated to the City following the replacement schedule above or their monetary value may be paid to the City to the satisfaction of the Director.

3 Methods

Data regarding biological resources present within the Study Area were obtained through a review of pertinent literature, field reconnaissance, and tree survey; both are described in detail below.

3.1 Literature Review

The following data sources were reviewed to assist with the assessment of biological resources:

- CDFW California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) (CDFW 2022a)
- USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) (USFWS 2022a)
- California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants (Inventory) (CNPS 2022a)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture-National Resources Conservation Service Web Soil Survey (USDA 2022a)
- CDFW Biogeographic Information and Observation System (CDFW 2022b)

Prior to conducting the field investigation, the CNDDB and CNPS Inventory were queried based on the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle map for Newhall, California where the Study Area is located, as well as the surrounding eight USGS 7.5-minute quadrangle maps (i.e., Whitaker Peak, Warm Springs Mountain, Green Valley, Val Verde, Mint Canyon, Santa Susana, Oat Mountain, and San Fernando). The purpose of this review was to determine whether special-status plant and wildlife species are known to occur in the vicinity of or within the Study Area.

Other literature reviewed included A Manual of California Vegetation, Online Edition (CNPS 2022b); the California Natural Community list (CDFW 2022f); State and Federally Listed Endangered, Threatened, and Rare Plants of California (CDFW 2022c); State and Federally Listed Endangered and Threatened Animals of California (CDFW 2022d); and the CDFW California Wildlife Habitat Relationships Life History Accounts and Range Maps (CDFW 2022e).

The following available resources were reviewed to assess the potential for jurisdictional waters: aerial photographs (Google Earth 2022; NETR 2022); the USGS Newhall 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle map (USGS 2018); the National Hydrography Dataset and Watershed Boundary Dataset (USGS 2022); and the USFWS National Wetland Inventory (USFWS 2022b).

3.2 General Field Reconnaissance

Dudek biologist Eilleen Salas conducted a general biological reconnaissance survey of the Study Area on September 23, 2022. The purpose of the field surveys were to map existing vegetation communities and land covers, identify commonly occurring plant or wildlife species, identify plant or wildlife species protected under FESA and CESA, determine the likelihood of occurrence of any special-status plant or wildlife species, and identify aquatic resources potentially regulated under the CWA, Porter–Cologne Act, or California Fish and Game Code.

3.2.1 Vegetation Community and Land Cover Mapping

Vegetation communities and land uses within the Study Area were mapped in the field using the Environmental Systems Research Institute (Esri) Collector, a mobile data collection application, on a digital aerial-based background (Esri 2022). Following completion of the fieldwork, all vegetation linework was finalized using Esri ArcGIS software and GIS coverage was created. Once in ArcGIS, the acreage of each vegetation community and land cover type within the Study Area was determined. Vegetation communities within the Study Area were mapped using CDFW's List of Vegetation Alliances and Associations (or California Natural Community List) (CDFW 2022f), which is based on A Manual of California Vegetation, Second Edition (Sawyer et al. 2009) and A Manual of California Vegetation, Online Edition (CNPS 2022b), where feasible, with modifications made to accommodate the lack of conformity of the observed communities (e.g., developed/disturbed land cover types) using Oberbauer et al. (2008) and Jones and Stokes (1993). Vegetation communities were classified based on site factors, descriptions, distribution, and characteristic species present within an area. Each natural community was mapped to the association level, where feasible. Special-status vegetation communities are those communities identified as high priority for inventory in the California Natural Communities List (CDFW 2022f) by a state rarity ranking of S1, S2, or S3.

3.2.2 Plants

All plant species encountered during the field surveys were identified and recorded. Latin and common names for plant species with a California Rare Plant Rank (CRPR) follow the CNPS Inventory (CNPS 2022a). For plant species without a CRPR, Latin names follow the Jepson Interchange List of Currently Accepted Names of Native and Naturalized Plants of California (Jepson Flora Project 2022), and common names follow the USDA NRCS Plants Database (USDA 2022b). Potential for special-status plant species to occur within the Study Area was assessed based on known geographic and elevation ranges as well as habitat and soil conditions that are known to support species occurring in the region.

3.2.3 Wildlife

All wildlife species, as detected during the field survey—by sight, calls, tracks, scat, or other signs—were identified and recorded. Binoculars were used to aid in the identification of observed wildlife. No trapping or focused surveys for special-status species or nocturnal species was conducted. In addition to species observed, expected wildlife usage of the Study Area was determined according to known habitat preferences of regional wildlife species and knowledge of their relative distributions in the area. Latin and common names for wildlife species referred to in this report follow Crother (2017) for reptiles and amphibians, American Ornithologists' Union Checklist (AOU 2018) for birds, Wilson and Reeder (2005) for mammals, and Moyle (2002) for fish. Potential for special-status wildlife species to occur within the Study Area was assessed based on known geographic ranges, the presence/absence of suitable habitat, and other natural history elements that might predict their occurrence.

3.2.4 Jurisdictional Delineation

A formal wetlands delineation following the methodology described in USACE's A Field Guide to the Identification of the Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM) in the Arid West Region of the Western United States (USACE 2008a), 1987 Wetlands Delineation Manual (USACE 1987), and the Regional Supplement to the Corps of Engineers Wetland Delineation Manual: Arid West Region (USACE 2008b) was not conducted. However, the Study Area was evaluated

for the potential to support jurisdictional aquatic resources regulated under the federal Clean Water Act, California Fish and Game Code, and Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act.

3.3 Special-Status Plant and Wildlife Species Assessment

Special-Status Plant Species

Endangered, rare, or threatened plant species as defined in Section 15380(b) of the CEQA Guidelines (14 CCR 15000 et seq.) are referred to as "special-status plant species" and, as used in this report, include (1) plant species listed, proposed for listing, or candidates for listing as endangered or threatened recognized in the context of CESA and the FESA (CDFW 2022c); and/or (2) plant species with a CRPR 1 or 2 as designated by the CNPS (2022a). Species with CRPR 3 or 4 generally do not qualify for protection under CEQA; therefore, are not analyzed in this report. For each special-status plant species known to occur in the vicinity of or within the Study Area, a determination was made regarding the potential for the species to occur within the Study Area based on site-specific information gathered during the field reconnaissance, such as the location of the site, vegetation communities and soils present, current site conditions, and each species' known range, habitat associations, preferred soil substrate, life form, elevation, and blooming period.

Special-Status Wildlife Species

Endangered, rare, or threatened wildlife species as defined in CEQA Guidelines, Section 15380(b) (14 CCR 15000 et seq.), are referred to as "special-status wildlife species" and, as used in this report, include (1) wildlife species listed, proposed for listing, or candidates for listing as endangered or threatened recognized in the context of CESA and FESA (CDFW 2022d); (2) California Species of Special Concern (SSC) as designated by CDFW (2022g); and (3) mammals and birds that are fully protected species as described in the California Fish and Game Code, Sections 4700 and 3511 (CDFW 2022h). For each special-status wildlife species listed, a determination was made regarding potential use within the Study Area based on site-specific information gathered during the field reconnaissance, such as the location of the site, vegetation communities and soils present, current site conditions, and each species' known range, habitat preferences, and knowledge of the species' relative distributions in the area.

3.3.1 Survey Limitations

Binocular surveys were conducted in areas outside of the Project site due to trespassing concerns. The survey was conducted in September, so many botanical resources were not blooming. Additional potential limitations of the field survey include a diurnal bias for most wildlife species and the absence of focused trapping for mammals and reptiles since trapping is generally only performed for select listed species. Surveys were conducted mostly during the daytime to maximize visibility and detection of plants and most animals. As such, birds represent the largest component of vertebrate fauna recorded during the surveys, as they are usually most active during daytime hours. In contrast, daytime surveys usually result in few observations of mammals, many of which may only be active at night, particularly rodent and bat species. Therefore, identification of mammals primarily relied on detection of surface sign such as scat, burrows, and tracks. Many species of reptiles and amphibians are similarly nocturnal and/or secretive in their habits and are difficult to observe using standard meandering transects. However, despite these limitations, the survey work conducted in the Study Area provides an adequate overall assessment of floral and faunal resources for purposes of evaluating potential biological constraints.

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4 Environmental Setting

4.1 Land Use

The Project site was previously the Saugus Speedway until 1995. The track is currently used to host swamp meets and special events. The Project site is located on a parcel that is primarily developed and encompasses undeveloped hillsides with native vegetation in the north western corner of the site. The site is bordered on the north side by an outpatient services clinic and Soledad Canyon Road, to the east by Soledad Canyon Road and the Santa Clara River, to the south by the Santa Clarita Metrolink Station, and to the west by the Metrolink rail line and undeveloped open space with public trails. Climate

4.2 Climate

The Project region has a Mediterranean climate with cool, wet winters and hot, dry summers. August is the average warmest month with an average high temperature of 92 degrees Fahrenheit (˚F) and December is the coolest month on average with a low of 42˚F. Rainfall occurs primarily between October and April, with the maximum average precipitation occurring in January. The mean annual rainfall for the region is approximately 17.35 inches of rain per year (LACPW 2022).

4.3 Topography

The centralized portion of the Study Area is largely flat with previously paved and compact soils. The Study Area also contains moderately steep hillsides to the northwest and western areas. The Santa Clara River lies to the east of the Project Site. Elevations in the Study Area range from approximately 1,185 feet above mean sea level at the Santa Clara River wash in the eastern side to 1,298 feet above mean sea level in the western hills side.

4.4 Soils

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Web Soil Survey (USDA 2022a) has mapped four soil series within the Study Area (Figure 2, Soils) and are described by the NRCS as follows:

- **Hanford Series.** The Hanford series consist of very deep, well drained soils that formed in moderately coarse textured alluvium dominantly from granite. Hanford soils are fine sandy loam and found on stream bottoms, floodplains, and alluvial fans. Vegetation in uncultivated and undeveloped areas is mainly annual grasses and associated herbaceous plants.
- **Riverwash** is a land mapping unit that describes soils associated with rivers and streams that contain a mix of sand, loam, and cobbles that are typically scoured out from stormflows and may be inundated with water during all or a portion of the year.
- **Sandy alluvial land** is a land mapping unit that describes areas containing a mix of sandy alluvial substrate that does not have an official NRCS soils series description. Soils associated with this land mapping unit are nondescript and may have been significantly altered and are now compacted with concrete or asphalt.
- **Saugus Series**. The Saugus series consist of deep, well drained soils that formed from weakly consolidated sediments. Saugus soils are found on dissected terraces and foothills. Native vegetation is chamise and other shrubs plus small amounts of perennial grasses.

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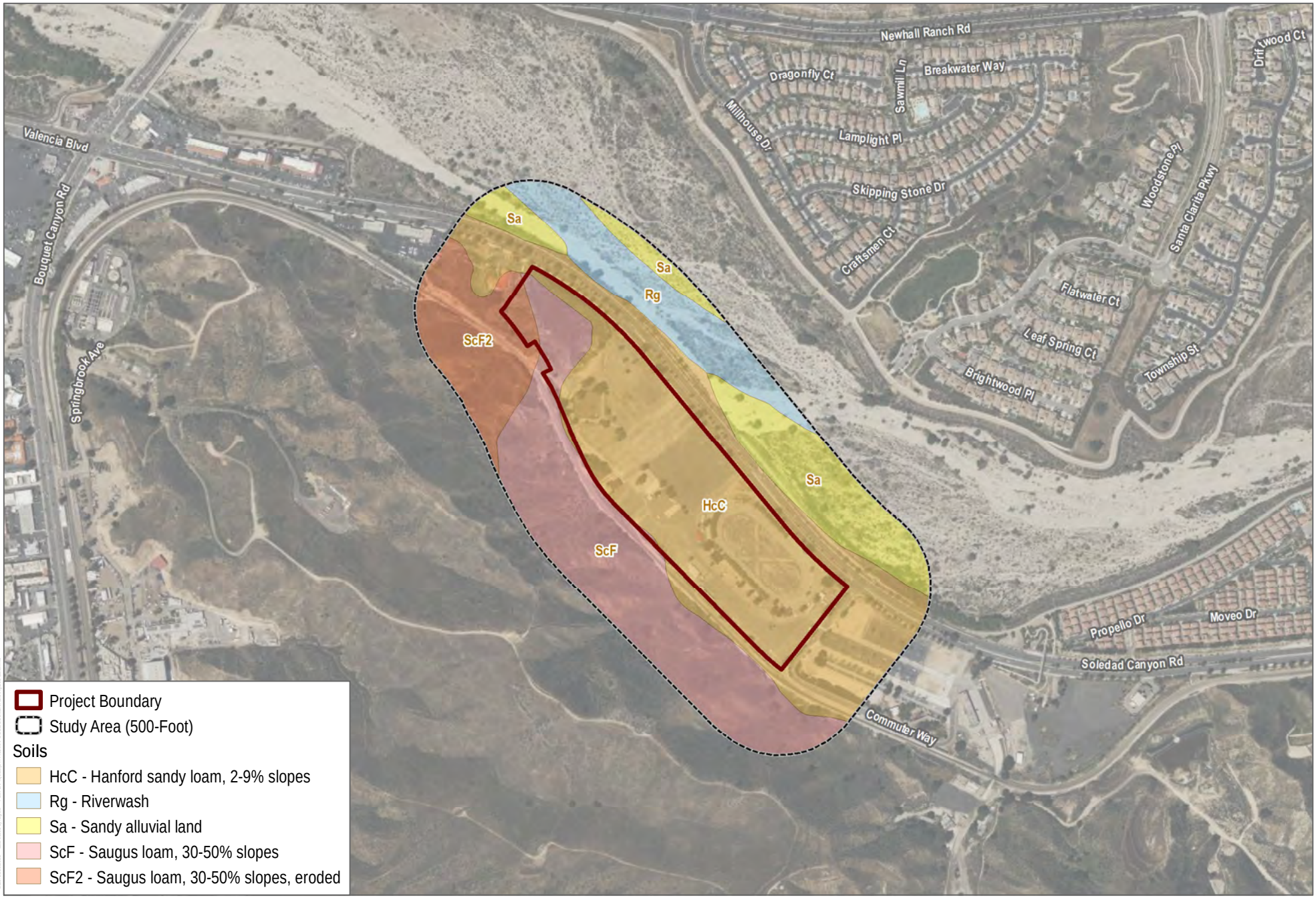

SOURCE: USDA NRCS; County of Los Angeles; Open Street Maps; Bing Maps

DUDEK

FIGURE 2

Soils

Riverview Development Project

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5 Results

Representative photos of the Study Area and the biological resources described in this chapter are included in Appendix A.

5.1 Vegetation Communities and Land Covers

Most of the Project site has been previously developed and disturbed. The remaining undeveloped areas are in the northwestern and western portion of the Study Area and consist of native vegetation and the Santa Clara River. Nine vegetation communities and four land covers were identified within the Study Area and are presented in Table 1, and their spatial distributions are presented on Figure 3, Vegetation Communities and Land Cover. Descriptions of these vegetation communities and land cover types are provided in detail below.

Table 1. Vegetation Communities and Land Covers in the Study Area

Common Name	Alliance[1]	Association	Ranking[2] (Global/State)	Project Site (Acres)	Study Area (Acres)
Native Vegetation Communities					
California Buckwheat Scrub	*Eriogonum fasciculatum* Shrubland	*Eriogonum fasciculatum* var. *foliolosum-Hesperoyucca whipplei*	G5S5	0.10	0.10
California Sagebrush Scrub	*Artemisia californica* Shrubland	*Artemisia californica*	G4S4	5.23	22.23
		Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum	G4S4	4.71	6.85
Chamise Chaparral	*Adenostoma fasciculatum* Shrubland	*Adenostoma fasciculatum-Eriogonum fasciculatum*	G4S4	0.97	0.99
Coast Live Oak Woodland and Forest	*Quercus agrifolia* Forest and Woodland	*Quercus agrifolia*	G5S4	—	6.42
Fremont cottonwood forest and woodland	*Populus fremontii-Fraxinus velutina-Salix gooddingii* Forest and Woodland Alliance	*Populus fremontii-Salix laevigata*	G4S3	—	13.24
Scale broom scrub	*Lepidospartum squamatum*	*Eriogonum fasciculatum*-Lepidospartum *squamatum* alluvial fan	G3S3	—	8.22
			Total Native Vegetation[3]	*11.01*	*58.05*
Naturalized Vegetation Communities					
Eucalyptus-tree of heaven- black locust groves	*Eucalyptus spp.-Ailanthus altissima-Robinia pseudoacacia*	*Eucalyptus* (*globulus, camaldulensis*)	NA	0.30	0.30
Pepper tree or Myoporum groves	*Schinus* (*molle, terebinthifolius*)-*Myoporum laetum*	*Schinus molle*	NA[4]	0.71	0.71

Table 1. Vegetation Communities and Land Covers in the Study Area

Common Name	Alliance[1]	Association	Ranking[2] (Global/State)	Project Site (Acres)	Study Area (Acres)
Upland Mustards or Star-Thistle Fields	*Brassica nigra*–*Centaurea* (*solstitialis, melitensis*) Herbaceous Semi-Natural	*Hirschfeldia incana* Provisional Semi-natural	NA	0.76	1.25
			Total Naturalized Vegetation	*1.77*	*2.26*
Land Cover Type					
Disturbed Habitat	NA	NA	NA	0.19	4.23
Parks and Ornamental Plantings	NA	NA	NA	0.00	0.54
Urban/Developed	NA	NA	NA	31.66	52.43
Non-vegetated Channel	NA	NA	NA	0.00	7.78
			Total Land Cover Type	*31.85*	*64.98*
			Totals	**39.66**	**125.28**

Notes:

1 The term semi-natural stands vs. alliance is used in the Manual of California Vegetation to distinguish between natural vegetation communities and vegetation types dominated by non-native plants (Sawyer et al. 2009).

2 The conservation status of a vegetation community is designated by a number from 1 to 5, preceded by a letter reflecting the appropriate geographic scale of the assessment (G = global, N = national, and S = subnational). The numbers have the following meaning (NatureServe 2022): 1 = critically imperiled; 2 = imperiled; 3 = vulnerable to extirpation or extinction; 4 = apparently secure; 5 = demonstrably widespread, abundant, and secure;

3 Totals may not sum due to rounding

4 NA = not applicable

5.1.1 Native Vegetation Communities

California Buckwheat Scrub

California buckwheat scrub communities (*Eriogonum fasciculatum* Shrubland Alliance) include California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*) or chaparral yucca (*Hesperoyucca whipplei*) as dominant or co-dominant species in the shrub canopy. This alliance has a continuous or intermittent shrub canopy less than 7 feet (2 meters) in height with a variable, sometimes grassy ground layer. Species associated with the alliance include California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), coyotebrush (*Baccharis pilularis*), bush monkeyflower (*Diplacus aurantiacus*), California brittle bush (*Encelia californica*), Menzies' goldenbush (*Isocoma menziesii*), deerweed (*Acmispon glaber*), bush mallow (*Malacothamnus fasciculatus*), white sage (*Salvia apiana*), or black sage (*Salvia mellifera*). These communities typically occur on upland slopes, intermittently flooded arroyos, channels and washes, and rarely flooded terraces in coarse well-drained soils (CNPS 2022b). One association within the alliance was mapped in the Study Area, *Eriogonum fasciculatum-Hesperoyucca whipplei* Association, and it is found on a southwest facing slope near the Metrolink railroad tracks.

SOURCE: County of Los Angeles; Open Street Maps; Bing Maps

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FIGURE 3

Vegetation Communities and Land Cover Types

Riverview Development Project

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California Sagebrush

California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica–Eriogonum fasciculatum* Association) has California sagebrush and California buckwheat as co-dominant species in the shrub canopy and can include chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), coyote brush, bush monkeyflower, California brittle bush, brittle bush (*Encelia farinosa*), Menzies' goldenbush, deerweed, bush mallow, white sage, or black sage (CNPS 2022b). This community typically occurs on variable slopes usually steep and rarely flooded (CNPS 2022b). This California sagebrush alliance was mapped as one association within the Study Area: *Artemisia californica–Eriogonum fasciculatum* Association and is mapped on the large area of undeveloped hills in the western portion of the Study Area, as well as the northwestern portion of the Project site (Figure 2). Inland scrub oak (*Quercus berberidifolia*) and blue elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*) were also observed within this vegetation community.

Chamise Chaparral

Chamise chaparral (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*) alliance includes chamise as the dominant species in the shrub canopy and can include manzanitas (*Arctostaphylos* spp.), ceanothus (*Ceanothus* spp.), bush monkeyflower, California yerba santa (*Eriodictyon californicum*), California buckwheat, chaparral yucca, toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), inland scrub oak (*Quercus berberidifolia*), interior live oak (*Quercus wislizeni*), white sage, purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*), black sage, and poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*) (CNPS 2022b). This community can be found widely throughout the state, commonly in areas with shallow soils over colluvium or bedrock (CNPS 2022b). This community was mapped to the *Adenostoma fasciculatum* association on the northwestern undeveloped slopes of the Project site portion of the Study Area. Other species observed include California sagebrush, blue elderberry, Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus*), Maltese star thistle (*Centaurea melitensis*), and compact brome (*Bromus madritensis*).

Coast Live Oak Woodland

Coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) woodland alliance includes coast live oak as the dominant or co-dominant in the upland tree canopy. Coast live oak communities are characterized by an open to continuous canopy under 30 m tall. Other species can include big leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*), Southern California black walnut (*Juglans californica*), Blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*), Engelmann oak (*Quercus engelmannii*), California black oak (*Quercus kelloggii*), Valley oak (*Quercus lobata*), and California bay (*Umbellularia californica*) (CNPS 2022b). This coast live oak woodland alliance was mapped out to the *Quercus agrifolia* association and mapped along the western hills of the Study Area, outside of the Project site boundaries.

Fremont Cottonwood Forest and Woodland

Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii- Fraxinus velutina- Salix gooddingii*) forest and woodland alliance is dominated by Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*) in the tree canopy. Some other species that can co-dominated include box elder (*Acer negundo*), coast live oak, narrowleaf willow (*Salix exigua*), Goodding's black willow (*Salix gooddingii*), Red willow (*Salix laevigata*), and arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*) (CNPS 2022b). Fremont cottonwood forest and woodland are considered a sensitive natural vegetation community according to CDFW (CDFW 2022f). This community was mapped to the *Populus fremontii- Salix laevigata* association and was observed in the Santa Clara River, in the eastern portion of the Study Area, outside of the Project site. Within the Study Area, the community was composed of sparse and immature trees and shrubs, and historical aerial imagery shows that one of the low flow channels of the Santa Clara River regularly removes the vegetation when higher flows are present (Google 2023, NETR 2023).

Scale Broom Scrub

Scale broom (*Lepidospartum* squamatum) scrub alliance is dominated by scale broom (*Lepidospartum squamatum*) and often occurs in semi-alluvial environments. The alliance usually displays an open to continuous two-tiered shrub canopy less than 2 meters (6.5 feet) tall; the herbaceous layer is variable and may be grassy (CNPS 2022). Species associated with this alliance include cheesebush (*Ambrosia Salsola*), California sagebrush, mulefat, bladderpod (*Cleome isomeris*), California cholla (*Cylindropuntia californica*), California buckwheat, chaparral yucca, poison oak, and other arid scrub and wash species. Emergent trees or tall shrubs may be present at low cover and include mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus montanus*), California juniper (*Juniperus californica*), California sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), Fremont cottonwood, or blue elderberry (CNPS 2022b). Scale broom scrub is considered a sensitive natural vegetation community according to CDFW (CDFW 2022f). Scale broom scrub was mapped to the *Eriogonum fasciculatum- Lepidospartum squamatum* alluvial fan association. This community was found in the eastern portion of the Study Area, in the Santa Clara River, outside of the Project site.

5.1.2 Naturalized Vegetation Communities

Eucalyptus- Tree of Heaven- Black Locust Groves

Eucalyptus–tree of heaven–black locust (*Eucalyptus* spp.-*Ailanthus altissima-Robinia pseudoacacia* semi-natural alliance) is dominated by either eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus* spp.), tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), or black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) in the tree canopy. This semi-natural community has an open to continuous tree canopy less than 197 feet (60 meters) in height with a sparse to intermittent shrub and herbaceous layer (Sawyer et al. 2009). Within the Study Area this semi-natural alliance occurs along Soledad Canyon Road and is composed of red ironbark (*Eucalyptus sideroxylon*).

Pepper Tree or Myoporum Groves

Pepper tree or myoporum groves (*Schinus molle*, *Schinus terebinthifolius* or *Myoporum laetum* semi-natural alliance) are characterized by areas strongly dominated by pepper tree (*Schinus* spp.) or ngaio tree (*Myoporum laetum*) in the tree canopy. The semi-natural community has an open to continuous cover less than 59 feet (18 meters) in height with infrequent shrub cover and simple herbaceous layer (Sawyer et al. 2009). Within the Study Area, this semi-natural alliance occurs in the central portion of the Study Area in a circular pattern along the former racetrack.

Upland Mustards or Star-Thistle Fields

Upland mustards or star-thistle fields communities feature black mustard (*Brassica nigra*), field mustard (*Brassica rapa*), Italian plumeless thistle (*Carduus pycnocephalus*), Maltese star-thistle, yellow star-thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*), cardoon (*Cynara cardunculus*), Geraldton carnation weed (*Euphorbia terracina*), shortpod mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*), Dyer's woad (*Isatis tinctoria*), or cultivated radish (*Raphanus sativus*), among other similar ruderal forbs, as the dominant species in the herbaceous layer. These communities typically occur in fallow fields, rangelands, grasslands, roadsides, levee slopes, disturbed coastal scrub, disturbed riparian areas, and generally within disturbed areas (CNPS 2022b). One association within the alliance, *Hirschfeldia incana* Provisional Semi-natural Association was identified in the Study Area in the northwestern portion. Other species in this community included Russian thistle), Maltese star thistle, and buckwheat occurring infrequently throughout.

5.1.3 Disturbed and Developed Land Cover Types

Disturbed Habitat

Although not recognized by the Manual of California Vegetation, Online Edition (CNPS 2022b) or the Natural Communities List (CDFW 2022f), disturbed habitat is described in the Draft Vegetation Communities of San Diego County (Oberbauer et al. 2008). Disturbed habitat is described as areas generally lacking vegetation due to high levels of existing or historical human disturbance and are no longer recognizable as a native or naturalized vegetation association. Areas mapped as disturbed habitat may include unpaved roads, trails, and graded areas (Oberbauer et al. 2008). Vegetation in these areas, if present at all, is usually sparse and dominated by non-native weedy herbaceous species (Oberbauer et al. 2008). Areas mapped as disturbed habitat in the Study Area were found throughout the Project site. Native species included infrequent California buckwheat. Non-native species present included shortpod mustard, Maltese star-thistle, Russian thistle, sweet alyssum (*Lobularia maritima*), wild oat (*Avena* spp.), compact brome, redstem stork's bill (*Erodium cicutarium*), spiny sowthistle (*Sonchus asper*), cheeseweed mallow (*Malva parviflora*), sweetclover (*Melilotus officinalis*), tree tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*), lambsquarters (*Chenopodium album*), puncturevine (*Tribulus terrestris*), sacred thorn-apple (*Datura wrightii*), golden crownbeard (*Verbesina encelioides*), Mexican tea (*Dysphania ambrosioides*), and nettleleaf goosefoot (*Chenopodium murale*). This land cover type was mapped in two separate areas. The first was in the northwestern portion, west of the Metrolink railroad tracks. This area was recently burned and had no distinguishing vegetation on site. The second area was on the eastern portion of the Project site just west of Soledad Canyon Road.

Non-Vegetated Channel

Natural flood channel, also described as non-vegetated channel or floodway (Oberbauer et al. 2008), is the sandy, gravelly, or rocky fringe of waterways or flood channels that are earthen-bottom and unvegetated on a relatively permanent basis. Vegetation may be present but is usually less than 10% total cover and grows on the outer edge of the channel. Natural flood channel was mapped within the Santa Clara River, outside of the Project site, eastern portion of the Study Area.

Parks and Ornamental Plantings

Although not recognized by the Manual of California Vegetation (CNPS 2022b) or the Natural Communities List (CDFW 2022f), parks and ornamental plantings (or ornamental vegetation) is described in Methods Used to Survey the Vegetation of Orange County Parks and Open Space Areas and The Irvine Company Property (Jones and Stokes 1993). This mapping unit is described as vegetation comprised of non-native trees, shrubs, flowers, and turf grass introduced for landscaping purposes. This mapping unit type typically occurs in greenbelts, parks, and horticultural plantings (Jones and Stokes 1993). Areas mapped as parks and ornamental plantings in the Study Area were located along the Metrolink right-of-way.

Urban/Developed

Although not recognized by the Manual of California Vegetation (CNPS 2022b) or the Natural Communities List (CDFW 2022f), the urban/developed mapping unit (or developed land) is described in Draft Vegetation Communities of San Diego County (Oberbauer et al. 2008). This mapping unit is described areas supporting human-made structures, including homes, yards, sidewalks, and other highly modified lands supporting structures associated with dwellings or other permanent structures. Vegetation in these areas, if present at all, is typically associated with ornamental

landscaping that has been included in the development footprint (Oberbauer et al. 2008). Most of the developed lands in the Study Area included the large, paved parking area in the central portion along with the railroad and roads.

5.2 Plants

A total of 28 plant species were observed onsite, 16 native and 12 non-native species. The majority of the native plant species recorded were observed in the undeveloped hills on the northwestern portion of the Project site The developed and graded parking lot area supported ornamental trees such as river redgum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), and native trees including California sycamore and Fremont cottonwood. Other riparian species were observed in the Santa Clara River, east of the Project site. The description of the plant species found can be found in the vegetation community descriptions and Appendix B, Plant Compendium. The open space portions of the Study Area to the east of the Project site are also expected to support some additional herbaceous annuals (Calflora 2022).

5.2.1 Special-Status Plant Species Assessment

Appendix C, Special-Status Plant Species Potentially Occurring in the Study Area, lists special-status plant species known to occur in the USGS 7.5-minute Newhall quadrangle and the surrounding eight USGS 7.5-minute quadrangles, as well as plant species included within the USFWS IPaC list generated for the Study Area (CDFW 2022a; CNPS 2022a; USFWS 2022a). No special-status plant species were observed within the Study Area during the general biological reconnaissance survey. One species, slender mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*), has a moderate potential to occur in the Study Area. Table 2 summarizes the regulatory status, ecological associations, and potential for the species to occur. The species not expected to occur or have low potential are assessed in Appendix C. No critical habitat for plants has been designated within the Study Area (USFWS 2022a).

Table 2. Special-Status Plant Species Potentially Occurring in the Study Area

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status[1] (Federal/State/ CRPR)	Primary Habitat Associations/ Life Form/ Blooming Period/ Elevation Range (feet)	Potential to Occur[2]
Calochortus clavatus var. *gracilis*	slender mariposa lily	None/None/1B.2	Chaparral, Coastal scrub, Valley and foothill grassland/perennial bulbiferous herb/Mar–June (Nov)/1045–3280	Moderate potential to occur. Suitable chaparral and coastal sage scrub habitat are present in the north and western portion of Study Area. The density of the shrub vegetation in that area is expected to limit the number of individuals that could be present.

Notes:
[1] Status Abbreviations
CRPR: California Rare Plant Rank
CRPR 1B: Plants rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere
.2 – Moderately threatened in California (20% - 80% of occurrences threatened/moderate degree and immediacy of threat)

5.3 Wildlife

Twelve species of wildlife were observed during the survey. Some common bird species observed were American crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), lesser goldfinch (*Spinus psaltria*), Northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), European starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), Anna's hummingbird (*Calypte anna*), and house finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*). No amphibian species were observed. One reptile species was observed: western fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*). One mammal species, California ground squirrel (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*), was observed. Other common mammal species that could occur within the Study Area include coyote (*Canis latrans*), common raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), and Virginia opossum (*Didelphis virginica*), with the possibility of bats foraging over the Study Area. A comprehensive list of wildlife species observed during the site visit is available in Appendix D, Wildlife Compendium.

5.3.1 Special-Status Wildlife Species Assessment

Appendix E, Special-Status Wildlife Species Potentially Occurring in the Study Area, lists special-status wildlife species that are known to occur in the USGS 7.5-minute Newhall quadrangle and the surrounding eight USGS 7.5-minute quadrangles, as well as wildlife species included within the USFWS IPaC list generated for the Study Area (CDFW 2022a; CNPS 2022a, USFWS 2022a). No special status bird species were observed within the Study Area during the survey. Eleven species have a moderate or high potential to occur within the Study Area, with five of those species with potential to occur within the Project site. Table 3 summarizes the regulatory status, ecological associations, and potential for each of the twelve species.

Table 3. Special-Status Wildlife Species Potentially Occurring in the Study Area

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status[1] (Federal/State)	Habitat	Potential to Occur[2]
Invertebrates				
Bombus crotchii	Crotch bumble bee	None/CSE	Open grassland and scrub communities supporting suitable floral resources.	Moderate potential to occur in the Study Area. The species may forage in the California buckwheat vegetation in the northern portion of the Project site, but the Project site has limited potential for nesting for the species in the undeveloped northwestern portion due to the lack of burrows observed during the survey.

Table 3. Special-Status Wildlife Species Potentially Occurring in the Study Area

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status[1] (Federal/State)	Habitat	Potential to Occur[2]
Fish				
Catostomus santaanae	Santa Ana sucker	FT/None	Small, shallow, cool, clear streams less than 7 meters (23 feet) in width and a few centimeters to more than a meter (1.5 inches to more than 3 feet) in depth; substrates are generally coarse gravel, rubble, and boulder	Not expected to occur in the Project site. Moderate potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the eastern portions of the Study Area; however, there is no suitable habitat within the Project site.
Gasterosteus aculeatus williamsoni	unarmored threespine stickleback	FE/FP, SE	Slow-moving and backwater areas	Not expected to occur in the Project site. Moderate potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the eastern portions of the Study Area; however, there is no suitable habitat within the Project site.
Gila orcuttii	arroyo chub	None/SSC	Warm, fluctuating streams with slow-moving or backwater sections of warm to cool streams at depths >40 centimeters (16 inches); substrates of sand or mud	Not expected to occur in the Project site. Moderate potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the eastern portions of the Study Area; however, there is no suitable habitat within the Project site
Amphibians				
Spea hammondii	western spadefoot	None/SSC	Primarily grassland and vernal pools, but also in ephemeral wetlands that persist at least 3 weeks in chaparral, coastal scrub, valley–foothill woodlands, pastures, and other agriculture	High potential to occur within the Study Area. Low potential to occur within the Project site. This species could occur in the Santa Clara River, east of the Project site; However, due to Soledad Canyon Road and it associated high volume of traffic being a large barrier for the terrestrial movement of this species, it is not expected on the Project site. The nearest CNDDB occurrence is 0.6 miles south east of the Study Area (CDFW 2022).

Table 3. Special-Status Wildlife Species Potentially Occurring in the Study Area

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status[1] (Federal/State)	Habitat	Potential to Occur[2]
Reptiles				
Anniella stebbinsi	southern California legless lizard	None/SSC	Coastal dunes, stabilized dunes, beaches, dry washes, valley–foothill, chaparral, and scrubs; pine, oak, and riparian woodlands; associated with sparse vegetation and moist sandy or loose, loamy soils	Moderate potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the northwestern portions of the Project site. The nearest CNDDB occurrence is 0.8 miles northwest of the Study Area (CDFW 2022).
Arizona elegans occidentalis	California glossy snake	None/SSC	Commonly occurs in desert regions throughout southern California. Prefers open sandy areas with scattered brush. Also found in rocky areas.	Moderate potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the northwestern portions of the Project site. The nearest CNDDB occurrence is 0.8 miles northwest of the Study Area (CDFW 2022).
Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri	coastal whiptail	None/SSC	Hot and dry areas with sparse foliage, including chaparral, woodland, and riparian areas.	High potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the northwestern portions of the Project site.
Phrynosoma blainvillii	Blainville's horned lizard	None/SSC	Open areas of sandy soil in valleys, foothills, and semi-arid mountains including coastal scrub, chaparral, valley–foothill hardwood, conifer, riparian, pine–cypress, juniper, and annual grassland habitats	Moderate potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the northwestern portions of the Project site.

Table 3. Special-Status Wildlife Species Potentially Occurring in the Study Area

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status[1] (Federal/State)	Habitat	Potential to Occur[2]
Birds				
Polioptila californica californica	coastal California gnatcatcher	FT/SSC	Nests and forages in various sage scrub communities, often dominated by California sagebrush and buckwheat; generally avoids nesting in areas with a slope of greater than 40%; majority of nesting at less than 1,000 feet above mean sea level	Moderate potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the northwestern portion of the Project site; however, some of the slopes in this area may be steeper than 40%, limiting the available suitable habitat for the species. There are few recent records of the species from the Santa Clarita Valley, which is at the northern limits of the species range, but there is a 2019 record located approximately one mile to the southeast of the study area.
Mammals				
Neotoma lepida intermedia	San Diego desert woodrat	None/SSC	Coastal scrub, desert scrub, chaparral, cacti, rocky areas	Moderate potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the northwestern portions of the Project site.
Puma concolor (Southern California/ Central Coast Evolutionarily Significant Unit)	mountain lion	None/CST	Scrubs, chaparral, riparian, woodland, and forest; rests in rocky areas and on cliffs and ledges that provide cover; most abundant in riparian areas and brushy stages of most habitats throughout California, except deserts	Moderate potential to occur in the Study Area as a transient. Not expected to occur in the Project site. The species is expected to occur in the Study Area, specifically the western portion as a transient during foraging, movement through its home range, or during the dispersal of young. Natal dens of the species are not expected since females typically avoid areas of human activity (Center for Biological Diversity and the Mountain Lion Foundation 2019).

Notes:

[1] Status Abbreviations

FE: Federally listed as endangered
FT: Federally listed as threatened
SE: State listed as endangered
CSE: Candidate for State Endangered
CST: Candidate for State Threatened
SSC: California Species of Special Concern
FP: California Fully Protected Species

[2] Refers to records within the Newhall, California U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute quadrangle and eight surrounding quadrangles (i.e., Santa Susana, Oat Mountain, San Fernando, Whitaker Peak, Warm Springs Mountain, Green Valley, Val Verde, and Mint Canyon)

5.3.2 Wildlife Corridors and Habitat Linkages

Wildlife corridors are linear features that connect large patches of natural open space and provide avenues for the migration of animals. Corridors can also be aquatic resources that provide passage for fish. Habitat linkages are small patches that join larger blocks of habitat and help reduce the adverse effects of habitat fragmentation; they may be continuous habitat or discrete habitat islands that function as steppingstones for wildlife dispersal.

On a regional level, the Study Area does not occur within any designated wildlife corridors or habitat linkages identified in the South Coast Missing Linkages analysis conducted by South Coast Wildlands (2008) or CDFW's California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project (Spencer et al. 2010), as shown in the CDFW BIOS (CDFW 2022b).

On a local level, the eastern portion of the Study Area contains the Santa Clara River which provides fish passage when water is flowing and terrestrial wildlife movement. Areas to the north and west contain hillsides with habitat potentially used by wildlife in transit. However, the native habitat within the Project site is isolated by the Metrolink Railroad to the west, Soledad Canyon Road to the north and east, and the previously developed parking lot to the south. This isolation would make the hillsides difficult to be used by wildlife.

5.3.3 Native Wildlife Nursery Sites

There are numerous mature native and ornamental trees found throughout the Study Area. One red-tailed hawk was observed using the onsite trees as a perch. No diagnostic signs of bird rookeries (e.g., numerous nests, whitewash) or large maternal or overwintering bat roosts (e.g., large concentrations of guano or guano odors) were identified in the Study Area. The dominance of sparse ornamental vegetation and the lack of habitat to provide substantial foraging opportunities for birds on site or in the immediate area make rookeries unlikely. The lack of typical urban roosting habitat (bridges and older buildings with structural deficiencies) makes it unlikely for the Study Area to support native wildlife nursery sites. Vegetation located within and adjacent to the Project site does provide suitable nesting habitat for birds.

5.4 Jurisdictional Wetlands and Waters

No potential wetlands, streams, or lakes that could be regulated under state and federal laws were identified in the Study Area. There is a culvert located along the northwest boundary of the Project site that is located at the lowest elevation of the Project site and it is expected that rainfall sheet flows across the developed portion of the Project site to the culvert, as shown in the hydrology report for the Project (Alliance Land Planning and Engineering 2022). The culvert directs the water from the Project site and water from Soledad Canyon Road via a storm drain into the Santa Clara River. Historical imagery does not show any natural drainages associated with the culvert since at least 1947, when portions of the Project site were already developed, and Soledad Canyon Road was constructed sometime between 1959 and 1969 (SCV History 2022, Google 2022, NETR 2023). As such, the culvert is expected to have been constructed to convey stormwater from the existing developed portions of the Project site under Soledad Canyon Road.

5.5 Local Policies or Ordinances–City of Santa Clarita Oak Tree Ordinance No. 89-10

A protected Tree report was prepared for the Project by a third-party company, Arbor Essence (Appendix F). A total of 10 protected trees were identified. Species included coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), valley oak (*Quercus lobata*), and scrub oak (*Quercus berberidifolia*). Out of the 10 oak trees, nine will be removed, including one heritage. Appendix F presents further details on each tree.

Table 4. Protected Trees in the Study Area

Tree #	Species	Largest Trunk Diameter (inches)[1]	Height (feet)	Canopy (feet)	Condition	Comments/Impact
180	Coast live oak	37.70	18	18	B	Tree in stable condition with no apparent pest problems. Proposed for removal, located in building footprint
181	Coast live oak	34.56	20	20	B	Tree in stable condition with no apparent pest problems. Proposed for removal, located in building footprint
182	Scrub oak	12.60	12	15	C-	1 of 3 stems dead. Proposed for removal, located in building footprint
183	Scrub oak	15.70	15	20	C	Tree in stable condition with no apparent pest problems. Proposed for removal, located in grading area
184	Scrub oak	15.70	10	8	C	Tree in stable condition with no apparent pest problems. Proposed for removal, located in building footprint
185	Scrub oak	12.57	6	8	B	Tree in stable condition with no apparent pest problems. Proposed for removal, located in grading area
186	Coast live oak (Heritage)	94.24	40	30	health: C structure: D	History of large stem failures and contains defects in large limbs. Proposed for removal, located in grading area
187	Coast live oak	44	30	30	B	Tree in stable condition with no apparent pest problems. Proposed for removal, located in grading area

Table 4. Protected Trees in the Study Area

Tree #	Species	Largest Trunk Diameter (inches)[1]	Height (feet)	Canopy (feet)	Condition	Comments/Impact
188	Coast live oak	34.55	30	30	B	Tree in stable condition with no apparent pest problems. Proposed for removal, located in grading area
189	Valley oak	18.85	25	8	B	Tree in stable condition with no apparent pest problems. Preserve in place, no encroachment or development within 135 feet

Source: Arbor Essence 2021 (Appendix F)
Notes: [1] measured at 54 inches above soil grade (Arbor Essence 2021)

Tree Condition Rating System (Appendix F)
A – Outstanding: A healthy, sound and vigorous tree characteristic of its species and reasonably free of any visible signs of stress, structural problems, disease or pest infestation
B – Above average: A healthy, sound and vigorous tree with minor signs of stress, disease and or pest infestation
C – Average: Although healthy in overall appearance there exists an abnormal amount of stress, pest infestation or visual signs of minor structural problems.
D – Below Average/Poor: This tree is characterized by exhibiting a great degree of stress, pests or diseases, and appears to be in a rapid state of decline. The degree of decline can vary greatly and may include dieback or advanced stages of pests or diseases. There may also be visual signs of structural problems such as cavities, decay or damaged roots
F – Dead: This tree exhibits no sign of life whatsoever

5.6 Local, Regional, or State Habitat Conservation Plans

The Study Area is not within any habitat conservation plan (HCP), natural community conservation plan (NCCP), or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan (CDFW 2019). The Study Area is not located within a County of Los Angeles designated Significant Ecological Area (County of Los Angeles 2022).

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6 Project Impacts

This chapter addresses direct and indirect impacts to biological resources that would result from implementation of the proposed project.

6.1 Definition of Impacts

6.1.1 Direct Permanent Impacts

Direct permanent impacts refer to the absolute and permanent physical loss of a biological resource due to clearing, grading, and/or construction of structures, which can be determined in four ways: (1) permanent loss of vegetation communities, land covers, and general wildlife and their habitat; (2) permanent loss of or harm to individuals of special-status plant and wildlife species; (3) permanent loss of suitable habitat for special-status species; and (4) permanent loss of wildlife movement and habitat connectivity.

6.1.2 Direct Temporary Impacts

Direct temporary impacts refer to a temporal loss of vegetation communities and land covers resulting from vegetation and land cover clearing. The main criterion for direct temporary impacts is that impacts would occur for a short period of time and would be reversible. Areas currently supporting native vegetation temporarily disturbed by construction activities would be restored and revegetated with a native species mix similar to that which existed prior to disturbance following completion of work in the area such that full biological function can be restored. Areas not currently supporting native vegetation would be adequately restored to prevent adverse effects such as erosion or establishment of invasive species following construction.

6.1.3 Indirect Impacts

Indirect impacts are reasonably foreseeable effects caused by project implementation on remaining or adjacent biological resources outside the direct construction disturbance zone that may occur during construction (i.e., short-term construction related indirect impacts) or later in time as a result of the development (i.e., long-term, or operational, indirect impacts). Indirect impacts may affect areas within the defined Study Area, but outside the construction disturbance zone. Indirect impacts include short-term effects immediately related to construction activities and long-term or chronic effects related to the human occupation of developed areas (i.e., development-related long-term effects) that are adjacent to naturalized areas.

For the proposed Project, it is assumed that the potential indirect impacts resulting from construction activities include fugitive dust from earthmoving activities, leaks or spills from construction equipment, noise from construction activities, and general human presence that may temporarily disrupt species and habitat vitality, as well construction-related soil erosion and runoff that could affect downstream resources.

6.1.4 Explanation of Findings of Significance

Impacts to sensitive vegetation communities or riparian habitat, special-status plant species, special-status wildlife species, wildlife corridors and habitat connectivity, and regional resource planning must be analyzed to determine

whether such impacts are significant. CEQA Guidelines Section 15064(b) states that an ironclad definition of "significant" effect is not possible because the significance of an activity may vary with the setting. However, CEQA Guidelines Section 15065(a) lists impacts that are helpful in defining whether a project may have a significant effect on the environment. Mandatory findings of significance occur when there is substantial evidence that a project could: (1) substantially degrade the quality of the environment, (2) substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, (3) cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, (4) threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, or (5) reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal.

The following are the significance thresholds for biological resources provided in the CEQA Appendix G environmental checklist, which states that a project would potentially have a significant effect if it:

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

Impact BIO-2. Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by CDFW or USFWS?

Impact BIO-3. Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including but not limited to marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?

Impact BIO-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 impedes the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

Impact BIO-5. Would the project conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

Impact BIO-6. Would the project conflict with the provisions of an adopted habitat conservation plan, natural community conservation plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?

The evaluation of whether an impact to a particular biological resource is significant must consider both the resource itself and the role of that resource in a regional context. Substantial impacts are those that contribute to, or result in, permanent loss of an important resource, such as a population of a rare plant or animal. Impacts may be important locally because they result in an adverse alteration of existing site conditions but considered not significant because they do not contribute substantially to the permanent loss of that resource regionally. The severity of an impact and the offsetting benefits of mitigation are the primary determinants of whether that impact can be mitigated to a less-than-significant level.

6.2 Impact BIO-1: Special-Status Species

Three special status fish species (Santa Ana Sucker, unarmored threespine stickleback, and arroyo chub) have a moderate potential to occur and one amphibian (western spadefoot) has a high potential to occur within the Study Area, in the Santa Clara River. However, fish species and breeding habitat for western spadefoot are not found within the Project footprint due to lack of aquatic resources and no impact would occur. Western spadefoot has a low potential to occur within the Project footprint during winter and summer aestivation, but due to a high trafficked road being a large barrier for movement of this species, the direct impact would be less than significant. Crotch bumblebee is not expected to nest on the Project site due to the limited amount of onsite nesting opportunities (i.e., small mammal burrows), so direct impacts are not expected. The species may occur on the Project site during foraging but abundant undeveloped open space to the south of the Project would continue to provide foraging opportunities, so indirect impacts would be less than significant. Mountain lion natal dens are not expected due to this species avoiding areas with high human activity, so direct impacts are not expected. The species is expected to occur in the Project site and Study Area, primarily using the western portion as a transient during foraging and range movement, but remaining open space to the northwest of the Project site would remain for wildlife movement, so indirect impacts would be less than significant.

6.2.1 Direct Impacts

Special-Status Plants

One special-status plant species, slender mariposa lily, has a moderate potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the undeveloped northwest portion of the Project site. The species could be directly impacted during vegetation removal and grading; however, this portion of the Project site is not expected to support a large population of the species due to the limited suitable habitat present (approximately 11 acres) and the density of the shrubs that compose those habitats limiting interspatial potential for the species to occur. As such, impacts to slender mariposa lily would be less than significant with the implementation of Mitigation Measure- (MM-) BIO-1 (Pre-Construction Rare Plant Survey and Seed Collection).

Special-Status Terrestrial Wildlife

Four species have a moderate potential to occur (Southern California legless lizard, California glossy snake, Blainville's horned lizard, and San Diego desert woodrat) and one has a high potential to occur in the Project site (coastal whiptail). One mammal species (San Diego woodrat) has a moderate potential to occur. These species are all designated as CDFW SSC. Due to the presence of suitable habitat, and/or documented occurrences for these species within the vicinity of the Project site, there is potential for these species to occur on site. If these species are determined to occur on the Project site prior to construction, Project-related impacts could be considered significant if the impact causes the greater population of either species to drop below self-sustaining levels. These species are vulnerable to mortality or injury during vegetation and ground disturbing activities associated with construction in the native vegetation communities. It is highly unlikely that short-term construction activities could cause the greater population of these special-status species to drop below self-sustaining levels due to the relatively small area of construction activity and the short-term nature of the construction schedule. However, mortality or injury to individual species is a reasonable possibility, so direct permanent impacts are possible and would be significant. Implementation of MM-BIO-2 (Pre-construction Wildlife Survey) and MM-BIO-3 (Biological Monitoring) would reduce impacts to less than significant.

Coastal California Gnatcatcher

Coastal California gnatcatcher has the potential to occur in the California sagebrush scrub in the Project site and adjacent parcels. Active nests and occupied habitat of the species could be directly impacted due vegetation removal. These impacts would be significant without mitigation. With the implementation of MM-BIO-4 (Protocol Coastal California Gnatcatcher Survey and Offsite Habitat Mitigation), project impacts to Coastal California gnatcatcher would be less than significant.

6.2.2 Indirect Impacts

Construction noise and vibration may disturb bird breeding activities (including coastal California gnatcatcher), potentially resulting in nest abandonment or reduced productivity. Noise can raise the level of stress hormones, interfering with sleep and other activities. Chronic vehicle noise can also affect birds by masking calls, affecting behaviors such as mate attraction and territory defense. Mammals may generally avoid noisy areas due to increased stress and associated human activities. Vibration may also directly disturb terrestrial species that occupy burrows, dens, and depressions, including reptiles and some amphibians, or cause collapse of burrow systems and dens of fossorial (burrowing) species in areas with highly friable soils.

Indirect short-term and long-term impacts to special-status wildlife species may include both habitat degradation and effects on individuals. Indirect construction impacts to wildlife habitat may include fugitive dust; runoff, sedimentation, chemical pollution, and erosion; litter; and accidental clearing, grading, and trampling, as well as attracting predators such as American crows, common ravens, and coyotes, and mesopredators such as raccoons and striped skunks. Trash and other garbage associated with construction activities can degrade vegetation communities and wildlife habitat and can attract nuisance and pest species that affect several of the wildlife guilds. Trash and debris include discarded construction-related materials, such as packaging materials, which may be dispersed into natural areas by wind. Trash generated by construction personnel, such as food packaging and cigarette butts, also can be dispersed by wind and water into natural areas. Additionally, invasive plant species could be introduced by the Project during construction and installing the landscaping that could alter the habitat for special-status wildlife.

Following the completion of construction, the Project could have long-term indirect impacts to special-status wildlife due to lighting for homes and streets that could disrupt nocturnal wildlife activities in the adjacent open space areas to the north (Santa Clara River wash) and south (undeveloped open space). This indirect impact could result in the special-status wildlife losing potential habitat that is adjacent to the Project that could be significant.

Implementation of MM-BIO-5 (Demarcation of Disturbance Limits) and MM-BIO-6 (Invasive Plant Species Prevention) would reduce impacts to less than significant.

6.3 Impact BIO-2: Riparian Habitat and Sensitive Communities

6.3.1 Direct Impacts

Riparian habitats or sensitive vegetation communities were not identified on the Project site, and no impacts would occur, as shown in Table 1 and Figure 3.

6.3.2 Indirect Impacts

Potential temporary indirect impacts to the Santa Clara River and the riparian and sensitive communities (*Populus fremontii-Salix laevigata* and *Eriogonum fasciculatum- Lepidospartum squamatum* alluvial fan) it supports could result from construction activities. This is due to water sheet flowing through the Project site and passing through the culvert under Soledad Canyon Road and into the river. Erosion and chemical pollution (releases of fuel, oil, lubricants, paints, release agents, and other construction materials) produced during construction may affect wetlands and jurisdictional waters downstream of the Project site. The release of chemical pollutants can reduce the water quality downstream and degrade adjacent habitats. As such, indirect impacts to riparian habitat and sensitive communities would be significant. The implementation of MM-BIO-7 (Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan Preparation and Implementation) would reduce the impacts to less than significant.

6.4 Impact BIO-3: Jurisdictional Wetlands and Waters

6.4.1 Direct Impacts

Jurisdictional wetlands and waters were not identified on the Project site. Therefore, there would be no direct impacts to jurisdictional wetlands and waters.

6.4.2 Indirect Impacts

See Section 6.3.2 for potential indirect impacts to the Santa Clara River. Indirect impacts to the Santa Clara River, which has been previously classified as a water of the U.S. by USACE, would be significant. The implementation of MM-BIO-7 would reduce the impacts to less than significant. Additionally, the project design includes a

6.5 Impact BIO-4: Wildlife Corridors and Nurseries

The Project site does not function as a wildlife corridor or habitat linkage and does not occur within any designated wildlife corridors of habitat linkages. The Project would not limit or prohibit the use of the Santa Clara River wash for movement of fish and terrestrial wildlife species. Direct impacts to wildlife corridors and habitat connectivity are not anticipated; and would therefore, be less than significant. Lighting associated with the completed development could cause indirect impacts to wildlife movement in the Santa Clara River wash and adjacent open space areas that could be significant. The implementation of MM-BIO-8 would reduce impacts to less than significant.

The Project would be required to comply with the MBTA and sections 3503, 3503.5, and 3513 of the California Fish and Game Code by preventing the disturbance of nesting birds during construction activities. This would generally involve clearing a project site of all vegetation outside the nesting season (from September 1 through January 31) or if construction would commence within the nesting season (which generally runs from February 1 through August 31 and as early as February 1 for raptors), conducting a pre-construction nesting bird survey to determine the presence of nesting birds or active nests at a construction site. Any active nests and nesting birds must be protected from disturbance by construction activities through buffers between nest sites and construction activities. The buffer areas may be removed only after the birds have fledged. Compliance with the MBTA would ensure that the implementation of the Project would not interfere with the nesting of any native bird species. Therefore, direct and indirect impacts would be less than significant due to compliance with regulations. The implementation of MM-BIO-9 (Nesting Bird Avoidance) would reduce impacts to less than significant.

6.6 Impact BIO-5: City Protected Trees

The City of Santa Clarita's Oak Tree Ordinance (Ordinance 88-34) is the only local policy or ordinance that protects biological resources within the City. The Protected Tree report (Appendix F) found 9 of the 10 protected oak trees are set for removal as part of this Project. The remaining protected oak tree would not be encroached upon. There are Direct impacts to trees protected under City of Santa Clarita's Oak Tree Ordinance would be significant. Implementation of MM-BIO-10 (Protected Tree Replacement) would reduce impacts to less than significant.

6.7 Impact BIO-6: HCP/NCCP

The Study Area is not within any HCP, NCCP, or other approved local, regional, or state HCP (CDFW 2019). The Study Area is not located within a County of Los Angeles designated Significant Ecological Area (County of Los Angeles 2022). Therefore, there is no impacts to HCP, NCCP, or other approved local, regional, or state HCP.

7 Mitigation Measures

The following mitigation measures shall be implemented during the proposed Project to reduce the significant impacts identified in Chapter 6 to a less-than-significant level. Significant direct and indirect impacts to special-status species and sensitive vegetation communities can be mitigated to less than significant with implementation of the following measures:

Direct Impacts to Special-Status Plants

MM-BIO-1 **Pre-Construction Rare Plant Survey and Seed Collection.** Prior to issuance of a grading permit, the Applicant shall have a qualified biologist (the Applicant shall submit the qualifications of the biologist to the City for review and approval) conduct a focused rare plant survey for slender mariposa lily within the undeveloped portion of the Project site during the appropriate blooming period (March through June). The survey will consist of three passes, with one in April, May, and June. Reference site checks will be made for the species to determine if the species are blooming in the Project vicinity. The surveys will conform to CNPS' Botanical Survey Guidelines; CDFW's Protocols for Surveying and Evaluating Impacts to Special Status Native Plant Populations and Natural Communities; and USFWS' Guidelines for Conducting and Reporting Botanical Inventories for Federally Listed, Proposed, and Candidate Plants. The results of the surveys will be documented in a report and submitted to the City.

Should any of the species be found at a count of 20 or higher, then construction of the occupied location shall be delayed until the individuals have gone to seed. Seeds shall be collected once the seed has matured, but prior to the seed capsules opening to disperse the seed. Seeds shall be stored in breathable paper bags in a cool, dry, and dark place. The seeds will then be donated to a City-approved local conservation organization (e.g., Friends of the Santa Clara River) to be used in restoration projects.

Direct Impacts to Special-Status Wildlife

MM-BIO-2 **Pre-construction Wildlife Survey.** Prior to issuance of a grading permit, a qualified Biologist (the Applicant shall submit the qualifications of the biologist to the City for review and approval) shall conduct a survey of the proposed impact areas and 50-foot buffer within 72 hours of the proposed activities. Any coastal whiptail, Southern California legless lizard, California glossy snake, or Blainville's horned lizard found will be relocated to a City-approved offsite location in suitable habitat for each species. If a San Diego woodrat midden is discovered during the survey, then the biologist will methodically relocate the midden material to suitable habitat (dense shrubs) within 50-feet of its location and outside of the project disturbance limits. The procedure will be done at a rate that would allow for the woodrat to flush from the midden. The results of the survey will be documented in letter report that will be submitted to the City.

M-BIO-3 **Biological Monitoring.** Prior to the issuance of a grading permit, the Applicant shall submit the qualifications of the biologist(s) to the City for review and approval. The Applicant shall fund a City-approved, Biological Monitor during Project construction to monitor construction activities and to ensure compliance with all mitigation measures. The Biological Monitor shall be present on site during all native vegetation removal and initial ground disturbance activities in

undeveloped areas. Each day prior to the commencement of activities, the Biological Monitor shall be responsible for conducting a pre-construction clearance survey and any wildlife (common or special-status) will be relocated offsite to a City-approved area.

MM-BIO-4 **Protocol Coastal California Gnatcatcher Surveys, Nesting Season Avoidance, and Offsite Habitat Mitigation.**

Protocol Surveys: Prior to the release of the CEQA document for public review, the applicant will fund a FESA section 10(a)(1)(A)-permitted biologist to conduct a protocol level survey for the coastal California gnatcatcher. The surveys will be conducted per the USFWS protocols (USFWS 1997) and will be conducted during the breeding season of the species (March 15 through June 30). Six surveys will all be conducted at least one week apart within the suitable habitat on the Project site. The adjacent private parcels will be surveyed from the Project site using binoculars. Results of the surveys will be submitted in a report to the USFWS and City. If the results of the survey are negative for coastal California gnatcatcher, then the suitable habitat on the Project site is considered not occupied and no further mitigation regarding the species is required.

Compensatory Habitat Mitigation: If coastal California gnatcatcher is found to be occupying the suitable habitat on site, then the applicant will consult with the USFWS on the need for permitting for the species under FESA. The Project does not have a federal nexus, so it is expected that Section 10 of FESA would be the permitting pathway and an HCP would need to be developed. The 9.94 acres of suitable habitat (*Artemisia californica* and *Artemisia californica- Eriogonum fasciculatum* associations) will require a minimum of 1:1 replacement of in-kind habitat that is occupied by the species in the vicinity of the Project site. Since there are no mitigation banks in the Project vicinity, a property containing at least 9.94 acres of *Artemisia californica* and *Artemisia californica- Eriogonum fasciculatum* associations would be purchased within the Santa Clarita Valley, have a conservation easement placed on it, with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority or similar entity holding the conservation easement, and the applicant would fund an endowment for the management of the property in perpetuity. The establishment of the conservation area is expected to be done in conjunction with the HCP process with USFWS, both of which must be completed Prior to issuance of a grading permit for the Project.

Nesting Season Avoidance: If coastal California gnatcatcher is found to be occupying the suitable habitat on site, then all vegetation removal must occur from July 1 to March 14 to avoid the direct take of nests with eggs or young.

Indirect Impacts to Special-Status Wildlife

MM-BIO-5 **Demarcation of Disturbance Limits.** Prior to commencement of earthwork in the undeveloped portion of the Project site, the construction limits shall be clearly demarcated (e.g., installation of flagging or temporary high visibility construction fence), as recommended by Biological Monitor. All construction activities including equipment staging and maintenance shall be conducted within the marked disturbance limits to prevent inadvertent disturbance to sensitive vegetation communities outside the limits of work. The flagging shall be maintained throughout construction.

MM-BIO-6 **Invasive Plant Species Prevention.** The Project shall not include invasive plant species listed on the California Invasive Plant Council inventory in Project landscaping palettes. Project landscape palettes shall be reviewed and approved by the City to ensure that invasive plant species are excluded. In addition, to prevent the spread of invasive plant species during construction and until the establishment of common landscaped areas associated with the Project (for a period of up to five years):

- All equipment shall be washed prior to entering and prior to leaving the Project site in an upland location where any seed material from invasive species will be contained.
- All vegetative material removed from the Project impact footprint shall be transported in a covered vehicle and will be disposed of at a certified disposal site.

MM-BIO-7 **Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan.** Prior to issuance of a grading permits for construction activity that would require more than one acre of earthwork, the Project Applicant shall develop a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) to require erosion and sediment control Best Management Practices (BMPs) to be implemented during construction and submit the SWPPP to the City for review and approval. For construction activities on individual lots that are less than one acre in size, a site-specific listing of BMPs shall be prepared utilizing the appropriate and feasible measures included in the primary SWPPP document and shall be submitted to the City for review and approval prior to the issuance of a grading permit. The site-specific SWPPP shall include but not be limited to: (1) the regular use of water trucks or other means of site irrigation to minimize fugitive dust during earthmoving and prevent fugitive dust from escaping the property boundary; (2) prohibition of vehicle fueling on-site; and (3) requirement that secondary containment be utilized for the temporary use all hazardous materials during construction activities and such containment shall be located as far as feasible from jurisdictional resources.

At the culvert in the northwest portion of the Project site, a silt fence barrier will be constructed around it prior to the start of construction activities. Wooden posts supporting the silt fence will be spaced 2 to 3 feet apart and driven securely into the ground; a minimum of 18 to 20 inches deep. The bottom edge of the silt fence will extend across the bottom of the trench and the trench will be backfilled and compacted to prevent stormwater and sediment from discharging underneath the silt fence. Silt fences will be inspected weekly and immediately after storm events to ensure it is intact and that there are no gaps where the fence meets the ground or tears along the length of the fence. If gaps or tears are found during the inspection, the fabric will be repaired or replaced immediately.

MM-BIO-8 **Exterior Permanent Lighting.** Following the completion of construction, the Project could have long-term indirect impacts to special-status wildlife due to lighting for homes and streets that could disrupt nocturnal wildlife activities. This indirect impact could result in the special-status wildlife losing potential habitat that is adjacent to the Project that could be significant.

MM-BIO-9 **Nesting Bird Avoidance.** Project construction shall be conducted in compliance with the conditions set forth in the MBTA and California Fish and Game Code to protect active bird/raptor nests. To the maximum extent feasible, vegetation removal shall occur during the non-breeding season for nesting birds (generally late September to early March) and nesting

raptors (generally early July to late January) to avoid impacts to nesting birds and raptors. If the project requires that work be initiated during the breeding season for nesting birds (March 1–September 30) and nesting raptors (February 1–June 30), in order to avoid direct impacts on active nests, a pre-construction survey shall be conducted in the Study Area by qualified Biologists (someone who has more than three years of experience of conducting nesting bird surveys in the project region) for nesting birds and/or raptors within three days prior to project activities. If the Biologist does not find any active nests within or immediately adjacent to the impact areas, the vegetation clearing/construction work shall be allowed to proceed.

If the Biologist finds an active nest within or immediately adjacent to the construction area and determines that the nest may be impacted or breeding activities substantially disrupted, the Biologist shall delineate an appropriate buffer zone around the nest depending on the sensitivity of the species and the nature of the construction activity. To protect any nest site, the following restrictions to construction activities shall be required until nests are no longer active, as determined by a qualified Biologist (someone who has more than three years of experience of conducting nesting bird surveys and monitoring active nests during construction): (1) clearing limits shall be established within a buffer around any occupied nest; and (2) access and surveying shall be restricted within the buffer of any occupied nest, unless otherwise determined by a qualified Biologist (someone who has more than five years of experience of conducting nesting bird surveys and monitoring active nests during construction). The buffer shall be up to 300 feet for non-raptor nesting birds and up to 500 feet for nesting raptors, based upon the Biologist's determination of potential effect of project activities on the nest. Construction can proceed into the buffer when the qualified Biologist has determined that the nest is no longer active.

MM-BIO-10 **Protected Tree Replacement.** The applicant will comply with the City of Santa Clarita Oak Tree Ordinance and will obtain an oak tree permit prior to the issuance of the grading permit for the Project. Conditions of the oak tree permit may include the payment of a fee, planting of replacement trees on the Project site, or donation of boxed trees to the City or other approved public agency to be used elsewhere in the City.

The nine trees to be removed shall be replaced by a tree of the same species at a ratio determined by the Urban Forestry Division of the City of Santa Clarita, with a minimum of 55 replacement trees required, as shown in Table 5. All replacement trees shall be at least a 24-gallon specimen in size and measure two inches or more in diameter, as measured from approximately four feet above the base. Replacement trees shall be certified as being grown from a seed source collected in Los Angeles County.

Table 5. Replacement Trees Required

Species	Largest Trunk Diameter (inches)	Required Number of Replacement Trees[1]
Coast live oak	37.70	7
Coast live oak	34.56	6
Scrub oak	12.60	3
Scrub oak	15.70	3

Table 5. Replacement Trees Required

Species	Largest Trunk Diameter (inches)	Required Number of Replacement Trees[1]
Scrub oak	15.70	3
Scrub oak	12.57	3
Coast live oak	94.24	16
Coast live oak	44.00	8
Coast live oak	34.55	6
	Total:	**55**

Note: Per City of Santa Clarita approved Oak Tree Ordinance No. 89-10

For replacement trees planted on the Project site, the applicant shall be responsible for submitting quarterly tree inspection reports to the City prepared by a certified oak tree expert that document the conditions of the trees. The inspection and reporting will be done for two years following the planting of the replacement trees. Any tree that fails during the two-year period will be replaced by a 24-gallon specimen of the same and then monitored for an additional

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Appendix A
Photo Exhibit

Photo 1: Facing southwest. Representative photo of *Artemisia californica* Association.

Photo 2: Representative photo of *Eriogonum fasciculatum* var. *foliosum-Hesperoyucca whipplei* Association along the Metrolink railroad tracks.

Photo 3: Facing east. Representative photo of *Hirschfeldia incana* Provisional Semi-natural Association in the foreground and *Avena barbata–Avena fatua* Association in the background.

Photo 4: Facing south. Representative photo of developed and graded central area and with mature trees throughout.

Photo 5: Facing west. Representative photo of the remnant walkway which collects sheet flow towards a culvert along the eastern boundary of the Project site.

Photo 6: Facing east. Representative photo of the *Populus fremontii-Salix laevigata* association in the eastern portion of the Study Area.

Photo 7: Facing north. Representative photo of some of the abandoned buildings/housing in the Urban/Developed portion of the Project site.

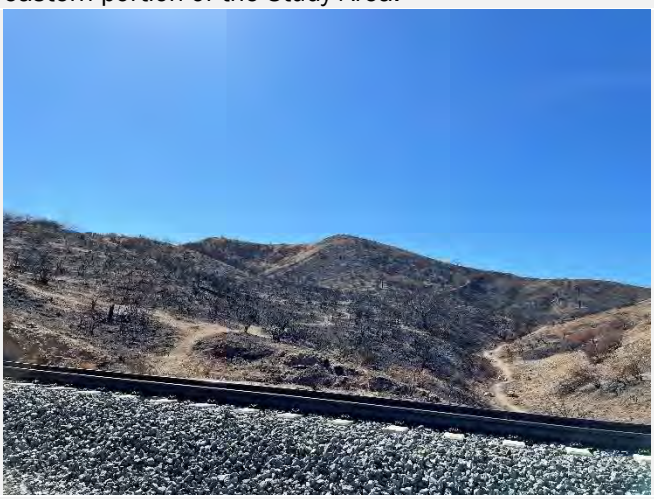

Photo 8: Representative photo of the disturbed burned area in the background with the Metrolink railroad tracks in the foreground.

Appendix B
Plant Compendium

Angiosperms (Dicots)

ANACARDIACEAE—SUMAC FAMILY

* *Schinus molle*—Peruvian pepper tree

APOCYNACEAE—DOGBANE FAMILY

* *Nerium oleander*—oleander

ASTERACEAE—SUNFLOWER FAMILY

Artemisia californica—California sagebrush

Baccharis salicifolia—mulefat

* *Centaurea melitensis*—tocalote

Lepidospartum squamatum—scale-broom

Stephanomeria exigua– small wirelettuce

BRASSICACEAE—MUSTARD FAMILY

* *Hirschfeldia incana*—short-pod mustard

CHENOPODIACEAE—GOOSEFOOT FAMILY

Atriplex canescens—fourwing saltbush

* Salsola tragus—prickly Russian thistle

FAGACEAE—OAK FAMILY

Quercus agrifolia—coast live oak

Quercus berberidifolia—Inland scrub oak

JUGLANDACEAE—WALNUT FAMILY

Juglans californica—Southern California black walnut

LAMIACEAE—MINT FAMILY

Salvia apiana—white sage

MYRTACEAE—MYRTLE FAMILY

* *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*—river redgum

PLATANACEAE—PLANE TREE, SYCAMORE FAMILY

Platanus racemosa—California sycamore

POLYGONACEAE—BUCKWHEAT FAMILY

Eriogonum fasciculatum—California buckwheat

ROSACEAE—ROSE FAMILY

Adenostoma fasciculatum—chamise

SALICACEAE—WILLOW FAMILY

Populus fremontii—Fremont cottonwood

SOLANACEAE—NIGHTSHADE FAMILY

* *Nicotiana glauca*—tree tobacco

VIBURNACEAE—MUSKROOT FAMILY

Sambucus mexicana—blue elderberry

MONOCOTS

AGAVACEAE—AGAVE FAMILY

Hesperoyucca whipplei—chaparral yucca

ARECACEAE—PALM FAMILY

* *Washingtonia robusta*—Washington fan palm

POACEAE—GRASS FAMILY

* *Arundo donax*—giant reed
* *Avena barbata*—slender oat
* *Bromus madritensis*—compact brome
* *Cynodon dactylon*—Bermudagrass

Appendix C

Assessment of Special-Status Plant Species Potentially Occurring in the Study Area

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status[1] (Federal/State/CRPR)	Primary Habitat Associations/ Life Form/ Blooming Period/ Elevation Range (feet)	Potential to Occur[2]
Allium howellii var. *clokeyi*	Mt. Pinos onion	None/None/1B.3	Great Basin scrub, Meadows and seeps (edges), Pinyon and juniper woodland/perennial bulbiferous herb/Apr–June/4,265–6,065	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Arenaria paludicola	marsh sandwort	FE/SE/1B.1	Marshes and swamps (freshwater or brackish); sandy, openings/perennial stoloniferous herb/May–Aug/5–560	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Astragalus brauntonii	Braunton's milk-vetch	FE/None/1B.1	Chaparral, Coastal scrub, Valley and foothill grassland; recent burns or disturbed areas, usually sandstone with carbonate layers/perennial herb/Jan–Aug/10–2100	Not expected to occur. Suitable micro-habitat (sandstone with carbonate layers) for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Berberis nevinii	Nevin's barberry	FE/SE/1B.1	Chaparral, Cismontane woodland, Coastal scrub, Riparian scrub; sandy or gravelly/perennial evergreen shrub/(Feb)Mar–June/225–2,705	Not expected to occur. This species is a conspicuous perennial shrub that would have been observed, if present, during the site visit.
Calochortus clavatus var. *gracilis*	slender mariposa lily	None/None/1B.2	Chaparral, Coastal scrub, Valley and foothill grassland/perennial bulbiferous herb/Mar–June (Nov)/1045–3280	Moderate potential to occur. Suitable chaparral and coastal sage scrub habitat are present in the north and western portion of Study Area. The density of the shrub vegetation in that area is expected to limit the number of individuals that could be present.
Calochortus fimbriatus	late-flowered mariposa lily	None/None/1B.3	Chaparral, Cismontane woodland, Riparian woodland; often serpentinite/perennial bulbiferous herb/June–Aug/900–6,250	Not expected to occur. Suitable micro-habitat (serpentinite) for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Calochortus palmeri var. *palmeri*	Palmer's mariposa lily	None/None/1B.2	Chaparral, Lower montane coniferous forest, Meadows and seeps; mesic/perennial bulbiferous herb/Apr–July/2,325–7,840	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status[1] (Federal/State/CRPR)	Primary Habitat Associations/ Life Form/ Blooming Period/ Elevation Range (feet)	Potential to Occur[2]
Castilleja gleasoni	Mt. Gleason paintbrush	None/SR/1B.2	Chaparral, Lower montane coniferous forest, Pinyon and juniper woodland; granitic/perennial herb (hemiparasitic)/May–June (Sep)/ 2,180–7,115	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Chorizanthe parryi var. *fernandina*	San Fernando Valley spineflower	None/SE/1B.1	Coastal scrub (sandy), Valley and foothill grassland/annual herb/ Apr–July/490–4,000	Not expected to occur. Marginal habitat is present in the Study Area, but the density of the shrubs is expected to be a limiting factor. The species does not have any modern records east of Interstate 5 despite numerous modern development projects occurring that would have had rare plants surveys. Additionally, the herbarium records in the Santa Clarita region are associated with grasslands or sparse coastal sage scrub, which are not found on site.
Chorizanthe parryi var. *parryi*	Parry's spineflower	None/None/1B.1	Chaparral, Cismontane woodland, Coastal scrub, Valley and foothill grassland; sandy or rocky, openings/annual herb/Apr–June/900–4,000	Low potential to occur. Marginal habitat is present in the northwestern portion of Study Area; however, the Project site is at the northwestern limits of the range of the species and there are few records of the species in the region.
Deinandra minthornii	Santa Susana tarplant	None/SR/1B.2	Chaparral, Coastal scrub; rocky, often on sandstone /perennial deciduous shrub/July–Nov/915–2495	Not expected to occur. Suitable micro-habitat (sandstone) for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Dodecahema leptoceras	slender-horned spineflower	FE/SE/1B.1	Chaparral, Cismontane woodland, Coastal scrub (alluvial fan); sandy or gravelly/annual herb/Apr–June/655–2,490	Not expected to occur within the Project site. Low potential to occur within the Study Area. Suitable habitat (alluvial fans) for the species can be found on the eastern portion of the Study Area.; However, there is no suitable habitat within the Project site.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status[1] (Federal/State/CRPR)	Primary Habitat Associations/ Life Form/ Blooming Period/ Elevation Range (feet)	Potential to Occur[2]
Galium grande	San Gabriel bedstraw	None/None/1B.2	Broadleafed upland forest, Chaparral, Cismontane woodland, Lower montane coniferous forest/perennial deciduous shrub/Jan–July/1,390–4,920	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Helianthus inexpectatus	Newhall sunflower	None/None/1B.1	Marshes and swamps, Riparian woodland; freshwater seeps/perennial rhizomatous herb/Aug–Oct/1,000–1,000	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Helianthus nuttallii ssp. *parishii*	Los Angeles sunflower	None/None/1A	Marshes and swamps (coastal salt and freshwater)/perennial rhizomatous herb/Aug–Oct/30–5,000	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Horkelia cuneata var. *puberula*	mesa horkelia	None/None/1B.1	Chaparral (maritime), Cismontane woodland, Coastal scrub; sandy or gravelly/perennial herb/ Feb–July (Sep)/225–2,655	Low potential to occur. Suitable chaparral and coastal scrub habitat is present within the Study Area.
Lepechinia rossii	Ross' pitcher sage	None/None/1B.2	Chaparral/perennial shrub/May–Sep/1,000–2,590	Low potential to occur. Suitable chaparral and coastal scrub habitat is present within the Study Area.
Lupinus paynei	Payne's bush lupine	None/None/1B.1	Coastal scrub, Riparian scrub, Valley and foothill grassland; Sandy/perennial shrub/Mar–Apr (May–July)/720–1,375	Low potential to occur. Suitable chaparral and coastal scrub habitat is present within the Study Area; however, this conspicuous shrub was not observed.
Malacothamnus davidsonii	Davidson's bush-mallow	None/None/1B.2	Chaparral, Cismontane woodland, Coastal scrub, Riparian woodland/perennial deciduous shrub/June–Jan/605–3,740	Low potential to occur. Suitable chaparral and coastal scrub habitat is present within the Study Area; however, this conspicuous shrub was not observed.
Nasturtium gambelii	Gambel's water cress	FE/ST/1B.1	Marshes and swamps (freshwater or brackish)/perennial rhizomatous herb/Apr–Oct/15–1,080	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Navarretia fossalis	spreading navarretia	FT/None/1B.1	Chenopod scrub, Marshes and swamps (assorted shallow freshwater), Playas, Vernal pools; alkali or clay soil with hydrological regimes similar to vernal pools/annual herb/Apr–June/95–2,145	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status[1] (Federal/State/CRPR)	Primary Habitat Associations/ Life Form/ Blooming Period/ Elevation Range (feet)	Potential to Occur[2]
Navarretia ojaiensis	Ojai navarretia	None/None/1B.1	Chaparral (openings), Coastal scrub (openings), Valley and foothill grassland; clay/annual herb/May–July/900–2,030	Low potential to occur. Suitable chaparral and coastal scrub habitat is present within the Study Area.
Navarretia setiloba	Piute Mountains navarretia	None/None/1B.1	Cismontane woodland, Pinyon and juniper woodland, Valley and foothill grassland; depressions in clay or gravelly loam/annual herb/Apr–July/935–6,885	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Opuntia basilaris var. *brachyclada*	short-joint beavertail	None/None/1B.2	Chaparral, Joshua tree woodland, Mojavean desert scrub, Pinyon and juniper woodland/perennial stem succulent/Apr–June(Aug)/1,390–5,905	Low potential to occur. Suitable chaparral and coastal scrub habitat is present within the Study Area; however, this conspicuous cacti was not observed.
Orcuttia californica	California Orcutt grass	FE/SE/1B.1	Vernal pools/annual herb/Apr–Aug/45–2,165	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Pseudognaphalium leucocephalum	white rabbit-tobacco	None/None/2B.2	Chaparral, Cismontane woodland, Coastal scrub, Riparian woodland; sandy, gravelly benches, dry stream bottoms, canyon bottoms/perennial herb/(July)Aug–Nov(Dec)/0–6,885	Not expected to occur on Project site. Low potential to occur in the Study Area. Suitable habitat (dry stream bottoms) for the species can occur on the eastern portion of the Study Area. No suitable habitat is present within the Project site.
Senecio aphanactis	chaparral ragwort	None/None/2B.2	Chaparral, Cismontane woodland, Coastal scrub; alkaline flats or dry open rocky areas/annual herb/Jan–Apr(May)/45–2,620	Not expected to occur. Suitable micro-habitat (alkaline flats or dry open rocky areas) for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Streptanthus campestris	southern jewelflower	None/None/1B.3	Chaparral, Lower montane coniferous forest, Pinyon and juniper woodland; rocky/perennial herb/(Apr)May–July/2,950–7,545	Low potential to occur. Suitable chaparral and coastal scrub habitat is present within the Study Area.
Stylocline masonii	Mason's neststraw	None/None/1B.1	Chenopod scrub, Pinyon and juniper woodland; Open, loose sand in washes and flats/annual herb/ Mar–May/325–3,935	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status[1] (Federal/State/CRPR)	Primary Habitat Associations/ Life Form/ Blooming Period/ Elevation Range (feet)	Potential to Occur[2]
Symphyotrichum greatae	Greata's aster	None/None/1B.3	Broadleafed upland forest, Chaparral, Cismontane woodland, Lower montane coniferous forest, Riparian woodland; mesic/perennial rhizomatous herb/June–Oct/980–6,590	Low potential to occur. Suitable chaparral and coastal scrub habitat is present within the Study Area.

Notes:

[1] **Status Abbreviations**

Federal and State Statuses

FE: Federally listed as endangered
FT: Federally listed as threatened
SE: State listed as endangered
ST: State listed as threatened
SR: State designated as rare

CRPR: California Rare Plant Rank

CRPR 1A: Plants presumed extirpated in California and either rare or extinct elsewhere
CRPR 1B: Plants rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere
CRPR 2A: Plants presumed extirpated in California but common elsewhere
CRPR 2B: Plants rare, threatened, or endangered in California but more common elsewhere
- Seriously threatened in California (over 80% of occurrences threatened/high degree and immediacy of threat)
- Moderately threatened in California (20% - 80% of occurrences threatened/moderate degree and immediacy of threat)
- Not very threatened in California (less than 20% of occurrences threatened/low degree and immediacy of threat)

[2] Refers to records within the Newhall U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute quadrangle and surrounding eight quadrangles (i.e., Santa Susana, Oat Mountain, San Fernando, Whitaker Peak, Warm Springs Mountain, Green Valley, Val Verde, and Mint Canyon)

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Appendix D
Wildlife Compendium

Wildlife Species

Reptiles

PHRYNOSOMATIDAE—IGUANID LIZARDS

Sceloporus occidentalis—western fence lizard

Birds

ACCIPITRIDAE—HAWKS

Buteo jamaicensis—red-tailed hawk

CATHARTIDAE—NEW WORLD VULTURES

Cathartes aura—turkey vulture

COLUMBIDAE—PIGEONS AND DOVES

Zenaida macroura—mourning dove

CORVIDAE—JAYS AND CROWS

Aphelocoma californica—California scrub-jay

Corvus brachyrhynchos—American crow

FRINGILLIDAE—FINCHES

Carpodacus mexicanus—house finch

Carduelis psaltria—lesser goldfinch

MIMIDAE—MOCKINGBIRDS & THRASHERS

Mimus polyglottos—northern mockingbird

TROCHILIDAE—HUMMINGBIRDS

Calypte anna—Anna's hummingbird

Mammals

SCIURIDAE—SQUIRRELS

Otospermophilus beecheyi—California ground squirrel

* signifies introduced (non-native) species

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Appendix E

Assessment of Special-Status Wildlife Species Potentially Occurring in the Study Area

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status[1] (Federal/State)	Habitat	Potential to Occur[2]
Invertebrates				
Bombus crotchii	Crotch bumble bee	None/CSE	Open grassland and scrub communities supporting suitable floral resources.	Moderate potential to occur in the Study Area, , The species may forage in the California buckwheat vegetation in the northern portion of the Project site.
Branchinecta lynchi	vernal pool fairy shrimp	FT/None	Vernal pools, seasonally ponded areas within vernal swales, and ephemeral freshwater habitats	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Euphydryas editha quino	quino checkerspot butterfly	FE/None	Annual forblands, grassland, open coastal scrub and chaparral; often soils with cryptogamic crusts and fine-textured clay; host plants include *Plantago erecta, Antirrhinum coulterianum*, and *Plantago patagonica* (Silverado Occurrence Complex)	Not expected to occur. The Study Area does not contain host plant species. In addition, this species is considered extirpated from Los Angeles County by the USFWS (CDFW 2021a; USFWS 2019).
Streptocephalus woottoni	Riverside fairy shrimp	FE/None	Vernal pools, non-vegetated ephemeral pools	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Fish				
Catostomus santaanae	Santa Ana sucker	FT/None	Small, shallow, cool, clear streams less than 7 meters (23 feet) in width and a few centimeters to more than a meter (1.5 inches to more than 3 feet) in depth; substrates are generally coarse gravel, rubble, and boulder	Not expected to occur in the Project site. Moderate potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the eastern portions of the Study Area; however, there is no suitable habitat within the Project site.
Gasterosteus aculeatus williamsoni	unarmored threespine stickleback	FE/FP, SE	Slow-moving and backwater areas	Not expected to occur in the Project site. Moderate potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the eastern portions of the Study Area; however, there is no suitable habitat within the Project site.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status[1] (Federal/State)	Habitat	Potential to Occur[2]
Gila orcuttii	arroyo chub	None/SSC	Warm, fluctuating streams with slow-moving or backwater sections of warm to cool streams at depths >40 centimeters (16 inches); substrates of sand or mud	Not expected to occur in the Project site. Moderate potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the eastern portions of the Study Area; however, there is no suitable habitat within the Project site
Rhinichthys osculus ssp. 3	Santa Ana speckled dace	None/SSC	Headwaters of the Santa Ana and San Gabriel Rivers; may be extirpated from the Los Angeles River system	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Amphibians				
Anaxyrus californicus	arroyo toad	FE/SSC	Semi-arid areas near washes, sandy riverbanks, riparian areas, palm oasis, Joshua tree, mixed chaparral and sagebrush; stream channels for breeding (typically third order); adjacent stream terraces and uplands for foraging and wintering	Not expected to occur in the Project site. Low potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the Santa Clara River, east of the Project site; however, there is no suitable breeding habitat within the Project site. The undeveloped portions of the Project site are not expected to be upland habitat used by the species due to the high volume of traffic on Soledad Canyon Road.
Rana boylii	foothill yellow-legged frog	None/SE, SSC	Rocky streams and rivers with open banks in forest, chaparral, and woodland	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Rana draytonii	California red-legged frog	FT/SSC	Lowland streams, wetlands, riparian woodlands, livestock ponds; dense, shrubby or emergent vegetation associated with deep, still or slow-moving water; uses adjacent uplands	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Rana muscosa	mountain yellow-legged frog	FE/SE	Lakes, ponds, meadow streams, isolated pools, and open riverbanks; rocky canyons in narrow canyons and in chaparral	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status[1] (Federal/State)	Habitat	Potential to Occur[2]
Spea hammondii	western spadefoot	None/SSC	Primarily grassland and vernal pools, but also in ephemeral wetlands that persist at least 3 weeks in chaparral, coastal scrub, valley–foothill woodlands, pastures, and other agriculture	High potential to occur within the Study Area. Low potential to occur within the Project site. This species could occur in the Santa Clara River, east of the Project site; However, due to Soledad Canyon Road and it associated high volume of traffic being a large barrier for the terrestrial movement of this species, it is not expected on the Project site. The nearest CNDDB occurrence is 0.6 miles south east of the Study Area (CDFW 2022).
Taricha torosa (Monterey Co. south only)	California newt	None/SSC	Wet forests, oak forests, chaparral, and rolling grassland	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Reptiles				
Actinemys pallida	southwestern pond turtle	None/SSC	Slow-moving permanent or intermittent streams, ponds, small lakes, and reservoirs with emergent basking sites; adjacent uplands used for nesting and during winter	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Anniella stebbinsi	southern California legless lizard	None/SSC	Coastal dunes, stabilized dunes, beaches, dry washes, valley–foothill, chaparral, and scrubs; pine, oak, and riparian woodlands; associated with sparse vegetation and moist sandy or loose, loamy soils	Moderate potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the northwestern portions of the Project site. The nearest CNDDB occurrence is 0.8 miles northwest of the Study Area (CDFW 2022).
Arizona elegans occidentalis	California glossy snake	None/SSC	Commonly occurs in desert regions throughout southern California. Prefers open sandy areas with scattered brush. Also found in rocky areas.	Moderate potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the northwestern portions of the Project site. The nearest CNDDB occurrence is 0.8 miles northwest of the Study Area (CDFW 2022).
Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri	coastal whiptail	None/SSC	Hot and dry areas with sparse foliage, including chaparral, woodland, and riparian areas.	High potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the northwestern portions of the Project site.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status[1] (Federal/State)	Habitat	Potential to Occur[2]
Phrynosoma blainvillii	Blainville's horned lizard	None/SSC	Open areas of sandy soil in valleys, foothills, and semi-arid mountains including coastal scrub, chaparral, valley–foothill hardwood, conifer, riparian, pine–cypress, juniper, and annual grassland habitats	Moderate potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the northwestern portions of the Project site.
Thamnophis hammondii	two-striped gartersnake	None/SSC	Streams, creeks, pools, streams with rocky beds, ponds, lakes, vernal pools	Not expected to occur in the Project site. Low potential within the Study Area Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Project site, but the species could occur in the Study Area when water is present in the Santa Clara River.
Birds				
Ammodramus savannarum (nesting)	grasshopper sparrow	None/SSC	Nests and forages in moderately open grassland with tall forbs or scattered shrubs used for perches	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Athene cunicularia (burrow sites and some wintering sites)	burrowing owl	BCC/SSC	Nests and forages in grassland, open scrub, and agriculture, particularly with ground squirrel burrows	Not expected to occur in the Study Area. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area. Area.
Buteo swainsoni (nesting)	Swainson's hawk	BCC/ST	Nests in open woodland and savanna, riparian, and in isolated large trees; forages in nearby grasslands and agricultural areas such as wheat and alfalfa fields and pasture	Not expected to occur for nesting in the Study Area but may occur as a transient during migration.
Coccyzus americanus occidentalis (nesting)	western yellow-billed cuckoo	FT/SE	Nests in dense, wide riparian woodlands and forest with well-developed understories	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Elanus leucurus (nesting)	white-tailed kite	None/FP	Nests in woodland, riparian, and individual trees near open lands; forages opportunistically in grassland, meadows, scrubs, agriculture, emergent wetland, savanna, and disturbed lands	Not expected to occur for nesting but may forage in the Study Area. The nearest CNDDB occurrence is 2.8 miles northwest of the Study Area (CDFW 2022)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status[1] (Federal/State)	Habitat	Potential to Occur[2]
Empidonax traillii extimus (nesting)	southwestern willow flycatcher	FE/SE	Nests in dense riparian habitats along streams, reservoirs, or wetlands; uses variety of riparian and shrubland habitats during migration	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Gymnogyps californianus	California condor	FE/FP, SE	Nests in rock formations, deep caves, and occasionally in cavities in giant sequoia trees (Sequoiadendron giganteus); forages in relatively open habitats where large animal carcasses can be detected	Not expected to occur for breeding or foraging but may be transient over the Study Area.
Icteria virens (nesting)	yellow-breasted chat	None/SSC	Nests and forages in dense, relatively wide riparian woodlands and thickets of willows, vine tangles, and dense brush	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Lanius ludovicianus (nesting)	loggerhead shrike	BCC/SSC	Nests and forages in open habitats with scattered shrubs, trees, or other perches	Low potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the north western portions of the Project Site.
Polioptila californica californica	coastal California gnatcatcher	FT/SSC	Nests and forages in various sage scrub communities, often dominated by California sagebrush and buckwheat; generally avoids nesting in areas with a slope of greater than 40%; majority of nesting at less than 1,000 feet above mean sea level	Moderate potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the northwestern portion of the Project site; however, some of the slopes in this area may be steeper than 40%, limiting the available habitat for the species. Additionally, there are few recent records of the species from the Santa Clarita Valley, which is at the northern limits of the species range, but there is a 2019 record located approximately one mile to the southeast of the study area.
Pyrocephalus rubinus (nesting)	vermilion flycatcher	None/SSC	Nests in riparian woodlands, riparian scrub, and freshwater marshes; typical desert riparian with cottonwood, willow, mesquite adjacent to irrigated fields, ditches, or pastures	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Riparia riparia (nesting)	bank swallow	None/ST	Nests in riparian, lacustrine, and coastal areas with vertical banks, bluffs, and cliffs with sandy soils; open country and water during migration	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status[1] (Federal/State)	Habitat	Potential to Occur[2]
Setophaga petechia (nesting)	yellow warbler	BCC/SSC	Nests and forages in riparian and oak woodlands, montane chaparral, open ponderosa pine, and mixed-conifer habitats	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Spinus lawrencei (nesting)	Lawrence's goldfinch	BCC/None	Nests and forages in open oak, arid woodlands, and chaparral near water	Not expected to occur. Suitable habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Vireo bellii pusillus (nesting)	least Bell's vireo	FE/SE	Nests and forages in low, dense riparian thickets along water or along dry parts of intermittent streams; forages in riparian and adjacent shrubland late in nesting season	Not expected to occur. *Populus fremontii- Salix laevigata* was mapped in the Study Area; however, the community is sparse and immature and is not expected to support breeding by the species. The species is known from the Santa Clara River, so it may be a transient in the Study Area during migration and foraging.
Mammals				
Antrozous pallidus	pallid bat	None/SSC	Grasslands, shrublands, woodlands, forests; most common in open, dry habitats with rocky outcrops for roosting, but also roosts in man-made structures and trees	Low potential to occur for roosting and may forage over the Study Area. Suitable roosting habitat (trees) for the species is present in the Study Area.
Corynorhinus townsendii	Townsend's big-eared bat	None/SSC	Mesic habitats characterized by coniferous and deciduous forests and riparian habitat, but also xeric areas; roosts in limestone caves and lava tubes, man-made structures, and tunnels	Not expected to occur for roosting but may forage over the Study Area. Suitable roosting habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Euderma maculatum	spotted bat	None/SSC	Foothills, mountains, desert regions of southern California, including arid deserts, grasslands, and mixed-conifer forests; roosts in rock crevices and cliffs; feeds over water and along washes	Not expected to occur for roosting but may forage over the Study Area. Suitable roosting habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status[1] (Federal/State)	Habitat	Potential to Occur[2]
Eumops perotis californicus	western mastiff bat	None/SSC	Chaparral, coastal and desert scrub, coniferous and deciduous forest and woodland; roosts in crevices in rocky canyons and cliffs where the canyon or cliff is vertical or nearly vertical, and tunnels	Not expected to occur for roosting but may forage over the Study Area. Marginal suitable roosting habitat for the species occurs in the northwestern portion of the study area near the Metrolink railroad tracks.
Lepus californicus bennettii	San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit	None/SSC	Arid habitats with open ground; grasslands, coastal scrub, agriculture, disturbed areas, and rangelands	Low potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the north western portions of the Project site; however, the area is isolated by Soledad Canyon Drive and the Metrolink railroad tracks and the previously paved parking lot.
Macrotus californicus	Californian leaf-nosed bat	None/SSC	Riparian woodlands, desert wash, desert scrub; roosts in mines and caves, occasionally buildings	Not expected to occur for roosting but may forage over the Study Area. Suitable roosting habitat for the species is not present in the Study Area.
Neotoma lepida intermedia	San Diego desert woodrat	None/SSC	Coastal scrub, desert scrub, chaparral, cacti, rocky areas	Moderate potential to occur in the Study Area. The species could occur in the northwestern portions of the Project site.
Onychomys torridus ramona	southern grasshopper mouse	None/SSC	Grassland and sparse coastal scrub	Low potential to occur in the Study Area. Marginal habitat occurs in the northwestern portion of the Project site.
Puma concolor (Southern California/ Central Coast Evolutionarily Significant Unit)	mountain lion	None/CST	Scrubs, chaparral, riparian, woodland, and forest; rests in rocky areas and on cliffs and ledges that provide cover; most abundant in riparian areas and brushy stages of most habitats throughout California, except deserts	Moderate potential to occur in the Study Area as a transient. Not expected to occur in the Project site. The species is expected to occur in the Study Area, specifically the western portion as a transient during foraging, movement through its home range, or during the dispersal of young. Natal dens of the species are not expected since females typically avoid areas of human activity (Center for Biological Diversity and the Mountain Lion Foundation 2019).

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status[1] (Federal/State)	Habitat	Potential to Occur[2]
Taxidea taxus	American badger	None/SSC	Dry, open, treeless areas; grasslands, coastal scrub, agriculture, and pastures, especially with friable soils	Low potential to occur in the Study Area. Marginal habitat occurs in the northwestern portion of the Project site; however, the area is isolated by Soledad Canyon Drive and the Metrolink railroad tracks, and the developed portions of the Project site and the human activities associated. Additionally, no suitable burrows were observed during the September 2022 site visit.

Notes:

[1] **Status Abbreviations**

BCC: Bird of Conservation Concern (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)
FE: Federally listed as endangered
FT: Federally listed as threatened
SE: State listed as endangered
ST: State listed as threatened
CSE: Candidate for State Endangered
CST: Candidate for State Threatened
SSC: California Species of Special Concern
FP: California Fully Protected Species

[2] Refers to records within the Newhall, California U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute quadrangle and eight surrounding quadrangles (i.e., Santa Susana, Oat Mountain, San Fernando, Whitaker Peak, Warm Springs Mountain, Green Valley, Val Verde, and Mint Canyon)

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Appendix F
Protected Tree Report

Arbor Essence

December 30, 2021

Integral Communities
c/o Peter Vanek
888 San Clemente, Suite 100
Newport Beach, CA 92660

Regarding: Riverview Project
22500 Soledad Canyon Road
Santa Clarita, CA

To Whom It May Concern:

At the request of the property owner I visited the above referenced site December 20, 2021. I was asked to perform an inventory and evaluation of protected oak trees on the property and prepare a Protected Oak Tree Report.

My inspection was visual only and performed from ground level. I did not employ and extensive or invasive diagnostics for this trees study. Trunk are measured at 54 inches above soil grade, height is visually estimated. Trees are rated using the condition rating system provided by the city of Santa Clarita. The trees included in this study are identified by number, where a tag is typically attached to the of the trunk. Tree location, and location of protective fencing are indicated on site plans as needed.

Summary

A total of (10) protected trees are included as part of this report and are identified as coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), valley oak (*Quercus lobata*), and scrub oak (*Quercus bereridifolia*).

The site contains 1 *heritage* size tree, coast live oak #186. A heritage oak tree is defined as any oak tree measuring one hundred eight (108) inches in circumference or, in the case of a multiple trunk tree, two (2) or more trunks measuring seventy-two (72) inches each or greater in circumference, measured four and one-half (4 1⁄2) feet above the natural grade surrounding such tree.

A total of 9 protected oaks are proposed for removal as part of this project, including 1 Heritage tree.

Photos are provided for all inventoried trees in this study.

Project Description

The approximately 35.4-acre property is located at 22500 Soledad Canyon Road, Santa Clarita, 91350 (Assessor Parcel No. 2827-011-018). The project site is located within the MX-C zone.

The project includes the redevelopment of the project site with mixed use development comprised of 196 single family attached units, 122 single family detached units on the east end of the project site. The west end will have approximately 66,000 sq. feet of studio stages with parking structure holding 300 autos along with surface parking and truck parking. Required parking for the residential units and the commercial site would be per the City of Santa Clarita Municipal Code and would include a combination of garages and surface spaces.

Appraisal

Appraised tree values are based on calculations using the "Trunk Formula" and or "Replacement Cost" method from the 9th edition of "Guide for Plant Appraisal".

Several methods are utilized to determine the value of landscape plants. The two most common methods are the "Trunk Formula" and "Replacement Cost" methods. One of the most common practices is the "Trunk Formula Method" used when a tree is larger than what is commonly available in the industry. The "Replacement Cost" is based on the cost of replacing a plant of the same or comparable species and size in the same area, and "Cost of Repair" can be used when repairing a damaged plant in a timely and satisfactory manner may help to return the plant to near its former condition. For this study the appropriate methods to be used are the "Trunk Formula" and "Replacement Cost" methods to determine the value of trees.

Four primary factors are used to help determine the value of landscape plants; these include tree species, condition, size and location. Size is determined by measurement, while the other factors are subjective. Species rating often varies geographically; this rating is determined by the CTLA. Condition factors include health and structure of roots, trunk, scaffold branches, small branches and twigs, foliage and buds.

Location involves the site of a property or landscape, a plants unique functional and aesthetic contribution, and the placement of the individual plant in a specific landscape. The location rating is the average of the site, contribution, and placement percentage ratings.

A base value is established/extrapolated using current nursery and nursery grower costs, and then some depreciation is factored in based on species, and condition of the plant.

Observations

The property is a large primarily vacant site containing a few old structures.

The site is mostly level terrain with hills at the southwest end of the site.

Most of the trees on this site are in average condition. Heritage tree #186 appears to be in stable health but has severe structural defects that have resulted in the loss of about 50% of its crown, the tree also contains notable cavities and areas of decay on large scaffold limbs.

Tree Evaluations

Refer to included spreadsheets for specific tree information, specifications, condition rating and relative comments. An appraisal value has been calculated for all protected trees, individual appraisal work sheets are provided for all proposed tree removals and encroachments.

Proposed Construction and Potential Tree Impacts

Proposed development includes major grading, and construction of studio buildings, residential homes and parking structure/lots.

Proposed development will involve the removal of 9 of the 10 protected trees on site, including Heritage oak #186; valley oak #189 will be preserved in place with no encroachment, as the nearest development is approx.. 135 feet away from the tree.

Trees #180-188 are located in footprint of grading or buildings.

Conclusion/Justification statement

I believe that proposed development is reasonable use of the property and will enhance the community. Heritage oak #186 although healthy, has suffered large stem failures and contains significant structural defects leaving it at risk for additional limb failures.

Mitigation

The owner is more than willing to mitigate the removal of oak trees by planting replacement trees on or off-site.

Tree Condition Rating System

A – Outstanding: A healthy, sound and vigorous tree characteristic of its species and reasonably free of any visible signs of stress, structural problems, disease or pest infestation

B – Above average: A healthy, sound and vigorous tree with minor signs of stress, disease and or pest infestation

C – Average: Although healthy in overall appearance there exists an abnormal amount of stress, pest infestation or visual signs of minor structural problems.

D – Below Average/Poor: This tree is characterized by exhibiting a great degree of stress, pests or diseases, and appears to be in a rapid state of decline. The degree of decline can vary greatly and may include dieback or advanced stages of pests or diseases. There may also be visual signs of structural problems such as cavities, decay or damaged roots

F – Dead: This tree exhibits no sign of life whatsoever

Actions and mitigation measures

- No changes in soil grade shall be made within the tree protection zone other than in the approved work area
- No heavy equipment shall be moved within the protected zone of any preserved tree
- Construction debris shall not be stored or disposed of within the protected zone of any tree.
- Any required pruning of trees shall be supervised and performed to meet ISA and ANSI 300 pruning standards
- No landscaping or irrigation shall be installed within the protected zone of any oak tree, or closer than 15 feet to the trunk
- Planting of mitigation trees shall be done in compliance with city mandate
- Landscaping near oaks shall be limited to drought tolerant or native plants only. No irrigation shall be installed closer than 15 feet to an oak tree and shall not wet trunks. No turf shall be planted within the dripline of any oak

It should be noted that the study of trees is not an exact science and arboriculture does not detect or predict with any certainty. The arborist therefore is not responsible for tree defects or soil conditions that cannot be identified by a prudent and reasonable inspection.

If you have any questions or require other services please contact me at the number listed below.

Respectfully,
Arbor Essence

Kerry Norman
ASCA, Registered Consulting Arborist #471
ISA Board-Certified Master Arborist #WE-3643B
ISA Tree Risk Assessor Qualification, exp. 2020

Enclosed
Oak tree report
Spreadsheets/Tree Specs
Tree appraisal works sheets
Site plan/tree map
Tree photos

Date: December 30, 2021
Job name: Riverview Project
22500 Soledad Cyn Rd
Santa Clarita, CA

Arbor Essence Tree Survey

Tree #	Description	Circumf.	Ht	Canopy	Condition	Comments/Impact
180	Coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*)	37.70"	18'	18'	B	Tree in stable condition with no apparent pest problems. Proposed for removal, located in building footprint
181	Coast live oak	34.557"	20'	20'	B	Tree in stable condition with no apparent pest problems. Proposed for removal, located in building footprint
182	Scrub oak (*Quercus berberidifolia*)	12.6"/ 12.6"/ 12.6"	12'	15'	C-	1 of 3 stems dead. Proposed for removal, located in building footprint
183	Scrub oak 9 stems	1-9.42" 3-12.57" 5-15.7"	15'	20'	C	Tree in stable condition with no apparent pest problems. Proposed for removal, located in grading area
184	Scrub oak	15.7"	10'	8' N/W	C	Tree in stable condition wtih no apparent pest problems. Proposed for removal, located in building footprint
185	Scrub oak	1-12.57". 1-9.42"	6'	8' W	B	Tree in stable condition wtih no apparent pest problems. Proposed for removal, located in grading area
186	Coast live oak, Heritage 3 stems	1-50.26" 1-78.54" 1-94.24"	40'	30'	C health D structure	History of large stem failures and contains defects in large limbs. Proposed for removal, located in grading area
187	Coast live oak	44"	30'	30'	B	Tree in stable condition wtih no apparent pest problems. Proposed for removal, located in grading area

Date: December 30, 2021
Job name: Riverview Project
22500 Soledad Cyn Rd
Santa Clarita, CA

Arbor Essence
Tree Survey

Tree #	Description	Circumf.	Ht	Canopy	Condition	Comments/Impact
188	Coast live oak 4 stems	2-25" 1-31.4" 1-34.55"	30'	30'	B	Tree in stable condition wtih no apparent pest problems. Proposed for removal, located in grading area
189	Valley oak (*Quercus lobata*)	18.85"	25'	8'	B	Tree in stable condition with no apparent pest problems. Preserve in place, no encroachment or develpoment within 135'
	Heritge tree					

Date: December 30, 2021
Job name: Riverview Project
22500 Soledad Cyn Rd.
Santa Clarita, CA

Arbor Essence
Tree Appraisals

Tree #	Description	Appraised Trunk area sq. in.	Unit Cost	Basic Tree Cost, incl replacment	Species	Condition	Location	Appraised cost
180	Coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*)	89.25	$109	15,018	90%	80%	100%	$10,800
181	Coast live oak	71.25	$109	13,038	90%	80%	100%	$9,400
182	Coast live oak	15.25	$109	6,878	90%	60%	100%	$3,700
183	Scrub oak (*Quercus berberifdifolia*)	122.25	$109	18,525	90%	40%	100%	$12,500
184	Scrub oak, Replacement cost	5"		5,200	90%	75%	100%	$3,700, incl $200 clean up
185	Scrub oak, Replacement cost	6"		5,200	90%	75%	100%	$3,700, incl $200 clean up
186	Coast live oak, Heritage tree	1375.3	$109	155,102	90%	50%	100%	$69,800
187	Coast live oak	130.25	$109	19,397	90%	80%	100%	$14,000
188	Coast live oak	250.25	$109	32,477	90%	80%	100%	$23,400
189	Valley oak (*Quercus lobata*) Replacement cost	6"		5,200	90%	80%	100%	$3,944, incl $200 clean up cost
	Heritage Tree							

DUDEK
621 CHAPALA STREET
SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA 93101
T 805.963.0651 F 805.963.2074

July 31, 2023 14744

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Attn: Recovery Permit Coordinator
Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office
2493 Portola Road, Suite B
Ventura, California 93003

Subject: Focused California Gnatcatcher Survey Results for the Riverview Development Project, City of Santa Clarita, California

Dear Recovery Permit Coordinator:

This report documents the results of protocol-level presence/absence surveys for the coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*; hereafter, gnatcatcher) for the Riverview Development Project (Project) located in the city of Santa Clarita in Los Angeles County (Figure 1, Project Location). Focused surveys were conducted across all areas of suitable habitat within the Project site plus a 500-foot buffer (Study Area).There are approximately 25 acres of suitable habitat for gnatcatcher in the Study Area (Figure 2).

The gnatcatcher is a federally listed threatened species and a California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Species of Special Concern (SSC). It is closely associated with coastal sage scrub habitat and typically occurs below 950 feet elevation and on slopes less than 40% (Atwood 1990), but gnatcatchers have been observed at elevations greater than 2,000 feet. The species is threatened primarily by loss, degradation, and fragmentation of coastal sage scrub habitat, and is also impacted by brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) nest parasitism (Braden et al. 1997).

1 Location and Existing Conditions

The Project site is in the city of Santa Clarita, along the south side of Soledad Canyon Road directly east of its intersection with Commuter Way, in northwestern portion of Los Angeles County (Figure 1, Project Location). The site encompasses approximately 39.66 acres and is located on one parcel (Assessor Parcel Number 2836-011-018) at 22500 Soledad Canyon Road. The Project site is located on the U.S. Geologic Survey's (USGS) Newhall 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle (USGS 2018).

The Project would include construction and operation of a mixed-use development with 391 single-family units and 69,692 sf of commercial space on an approximately 35.4-acre site. A total of 819 residential and 412 commercial parking spaces would be provided. Commercial use would include studio buildings and office space. The Project would involve construction of new internal roadways and infrastructure improvements along Soledad Canyon Road and Commuter Way. Access to the Project would be provided via two driveways along Soledad Canyon Road, one of which provides access to the commercial portion of the site, and one driveway entrance off Commuter Way.

Two drainage basins for stormwater management are proposed, one at the southeastern corner and one at the northwestern part. The Project also proposed three debris basins adjacent to the railroad tracks along the southeast corner of the site, which would be designed and constructed per Los Angeles County standards. A new bus turnout and a cross-section along Soledad Canyon Road would also be provided at a proposed bus stop. A pedestrian path from the Project site to the bus stop would also be provided. Other street improvements include curbs and gutters, base paving, and 5-foot minimum sidewalks along Soledad Canyon Road and Commuter Way.

The Project would involve demolition of existing onsite structures, site preparation and grading, building construction, utility and infrastructure improvements, paving, and landscaping. It is anticipated that the Project would be constructed in phases over five years, beginning in Winter 2023 and concluding in Summer 2028.

Grading would consist of lowering the isolated hill area at the western part of the site and raising most of the remaining site. The hilltop would be lower by up to 100 feet and the area to the east would be raised the by up to approximately 10 to 11 feet. Cut slopes at a gradient of 2:1 acre proposed at the southern side of the site to a maximum height of approximately 25 feet. Fill slopes are proposed at a gradient of 2:1 to a maximum height of approximately 10 feet. A five-foot-high retaining wall is proposed along the northern part of the site, south of Soledad Canyon Road.

The centralized portion of the Study Area is largely flat with previously paved and compact soils. The Study Area also contains moderately steep hillsides to the northwest and western areas. The Santa Clara River lies to the east of the Project Site. Elevations in the Study Area range from approximately 1,185 feet above mean sea level at the Santa Clara River wash in the eastern side to 1,298 feet above mean sea level in the western hills side. The Project region has a Mediterranean climate with cool, wet winters and hot, dry summers. Rainfall occurs primarily between October and April (LACPW 2022).

2 Vegetation Communities

Vegetation communities and land uses within the Study Area were mapped in the field using the ESRI Collector mobile application. Following completion of the fieldwork, all vegetation polygons were digitized using ESRI ArcGIS software and a geographic information system (GIS) coverage was created. Once in ArcGIS, the acreage of each vegetation community and land cover present on site was determined. Natural vegetation communities were classified using the California Natural Community List (CDFW 2023), which is based on A Manual of California Vegetation, Second Edition (Sawyer et al. 2009) and A Manual of California Vegetation, Online Edition (CNPS 2023), where feasible, with modifications to accommodate the lack of conformity of the observed communities.

The Study Area includes a variety of native and non-native upland vegetation communities and developed areas. Thirteen vegetation communities and land covers were identified within the Study Area, which are shown in Figure 3 and summarized in Table 1. Four of these vegetation communities were identified as potentially suitable gnatcatcher habitat, including California buckwheat scrub, California sagebrush scrub, California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub, and chamise chaparral-California buckwheat scrub. Suitable habitat within the Study Area is described in Table 1 and detailed below.

Table 1. Suitable Vegetation Communities in the Study Area[1]

Vegetation Community/Land Cover Type	Alliance	Association	Ranking[2] (Global/State)	Study Area Acreage	Project Site Acreage
Native Vegetation Communities					
Scrub					
California Buckwheat Scrub	*Eriogonum fasciculatum* Shrubland Alliance	*Eriogonum fasciculatum* var. *foliolosum-Hesperoyucca whipplei*	G5/S5	0.10	NA
California Sagebrush (Purple Sage) Scrub	*Artemisia californica* Shrubland	*Artemisia californica*	G4/S5	22.12	0.10
		Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum	G4/S4	2.54	4.31
Chaparral					
Chamise Chaparral	*Adenostoma fasciculatum* Shrubland	*Adenostoma fasciculatum-Eriogonum fasciculatum*	G4/S4	0.24	0.74
			Total[2]	*25.01*	*5.15*

Table 1 Notes:

[1] Study Area includes the Project site plus a 500-foot buffer.

[2] The ranking of a vegetation community is designated by a number from 1 to 5, preceded by a letter reflecting the appropriate geographic scale of the assessment (G = global and S = State). The numerical component of the rankings are described below. Natural Communities with ranks of S1-S3 are considered Sensitive Natural Communities (CDFW 2022b). Vegetation communities and land covers not identified in A Manual of California Vegetation (Sawyer et al. 2009) are not assigned a rarity rank.

1 = critically imperiled
2 = imperiled
3 = vulnerable to extirpation or extinction
4 = apparently secure
5 = demonstrably widespread, abundant, and secure

[3] Totals may not sum due to rounding.

NA = not applicable

California Buckwheat Scrub

California buckwheat scrub communities (*Eriogonum fasciculatum* Shrubland Alliance) include California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*) or chaparral yucca (*Hesperoyucca whipplei*) as dominant or co-dominant species in the shrub canopy. This alliance has a continuous or intermittent shrub canopy less than 7 feet (2 meters) in height with a variable, sometimes grassy ground layer. Species associated with the alliance include California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), coyotebrush (*Baccharis pilularis*), bush monkeyflower (*Diplacus aurantiacus*), California brittle bush (*Encelia californica*), Menzies' goldenbush (*Isocoma menziesii*), deerweed (*Acmispon glaber*), bush mallow (*Malacothamnus fasciculatus*), white sage (*Salvia apiana*), or black sage (*Salvia mellifera*). These communities typically occur on upland slopes, intermittently flooded arroyos, channels and washes, and rarely flooded terraces in coarse well-drained soils (CNPS 2023). One association within the alliance was mapped in the Study Area, *Eriogonum fasciculatum-Hesperoyucca whipplei* Association, and it is found on a southwest facing slope near the Metrolink railroad tracks.

California Sagebrush Scrub

California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica–Eriogonum fasciculatum* Association) has California sagebrush and California buckwheat as co-dominant species in the shrub canopy and can include chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), coyote brush, bush monkeyflower, California brittle bush, brittle bush (*Encelia farinosa*), Menzies' goldenbush, deerweed, bush mallow, white sage, or black sage (CNPS 2023). This community typically occurs on variable slopes usually steep and rarely flooded (CNPS 2023). This California sagebrush alliance was mapped as one association within the Study Area: *Artemisia californica–Eriogonum fasciculatum* Association and is mapped on the large area of undeveloped hills in the western portion of the Study Area, as well as the northwestern portion of the Project site (Figure 2). Inland scrub oak (*Quercus berberidifolia*) and blue elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*) were also observed within this vegetation community.

Chamise Chaparral

Chamise chaparral (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*) alliance includes chamise as the dominant species in the shrub canopy and can include manzanitas (*Arctostaphylos* spp.), ceanothus (*Ceanothus* spp.), bush monkeyflower, California yerba santa (*Eriodictyon californicum*), California buckwheat, chaparral yucca, toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), inland scrub oak (*Quercus berberidifolia*), interior live oak (*Quercus wislizeni*), white sage, purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*), black sage, and poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*) (CNPS 2023). This community can be found widely throughout the state, commonly in areas with shallow soils over colluvium or bedrock (CNPS 2023). This community was mapped to the *Adenostoma fasciculatum* association on the northwestern undeveloped slopes of the Project site portion of the Study Area. This community included California sagebrush in the understory and was included in the Survey Area.

3 Methods

The focused surveys for gnatcatcher were conducted between April 12 and June 16, 2023, by Melissa Blundell (TE-97717A) (Table 2). The surveys were conducted following the currently accepted protocol of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) *Coastal California Gnatcatcher (Polioptila californica californica) Presence/Absence Survey Protocol* (USFWS 1997). The surveys included six survey passes at a minimum of 7-day intervals during the breeding season.

In accordance with the protocol, no more than 80 acres of suitable habitat were surveyed by a single permitted biologist during each site visit conducted. Survey routes are shown on Figure 3 and were performed within legally accessible parcels and public access ways. The survey aimed for complete audible and visual coverage of all suitable gnatcatcher habitat on site, to the extent feasible. The biologist walked the length of the western boundary of the Project site in order to detect individuals off-site audibly or visually, should they occur. Birding binoculars (e.g., 8x42 magnification) were used to aid in detecting and identifying bird species. Recorded vocalizations were used frequently in order to elicit a response from the species. The tape was played approximately every 50 to 100 feet. If gnatcatchers would have been detected, the playing of the tape would have ceased to avoid harassment.

A digital aerial map overlain with vegetation polygons and the site area was used for the survey. The digital mobile map was also utilized during the surveys to assist in navigating and mapping any gnatcatchers present. Weather conditions, time of day, and season were appropriate for the detection of gnatcatchers and are provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Survey Dates and Conditions

Survey Pass	Date	Biologist's Initials[1]	Time	Survey Conditions[2]
1	4/12/2023	MB	0630-0845	56°F; 100% cc; 0–2 mph wind
2	4/26/2023	MB	0630-0900	50–57°F; 0–10% cc; 0–2 mph wind
3	5/12/2023	MB	0600-0800	53–62°F; 0% cc; 0–1 mph wind
4	5/19/2023	MB	0600-0800	58–60°F; 100% cc; 0–2 mph wind
5	6/02/2023	MB	0915-1100	62–75°F; 20–40% cc; 0–2 mph wind
6	6/16/2023	MB	0945-1130	70°F; 30–60% cc; 0–8 mph wind

[1]Biologist Initials: MB = Melissa Blundell
[2]Survey Conditions: °F = degrees Fahrenheit; % cc = percent cloud cover; mph = mile per hour

4 Results

No California gnatcatchers were observed during the focused surveys. Six special-status species were observed during the surveys including Costa's hummingbird (*Calypte costae*; USFWS Bird of Conservation Concern [BCC]), wrentit (*Chamaea fasciata*; BCC), Bullock's oriole (*Icterus bullockii*; BCC), Lawrence's goldfinch (*Spinus lawrencei*, BCC), California thrasher (*Toxostoma redivivum*, BCC), and Nuttall's woodpecker (*Dryobates nuttallii*; BCC). Overall, 34 avian species were observed during the surveys. A full list of avian species observed during the survey is provided in Attachment A. Photo documentation of the survey area is provided in Attachment B.

Please feel free to contact me at mblundell@dudek.com or (760) 214-1878 (cell) with questions or if you require additional information regarding this survey. I certify that the information in this survey report and attached exhibits fully and accurately represent my work.

Sincerely,

Melissa Blundell, MS
Biologist (TE-97717A)

Att.: *Figures 1 – 3*
A – List of Bird Species Observed
B – Photo Log

cc: *Mike Cady (mcady@dudek.com)*
Chelsea Ohanesian (cohanesian@dudek.com)

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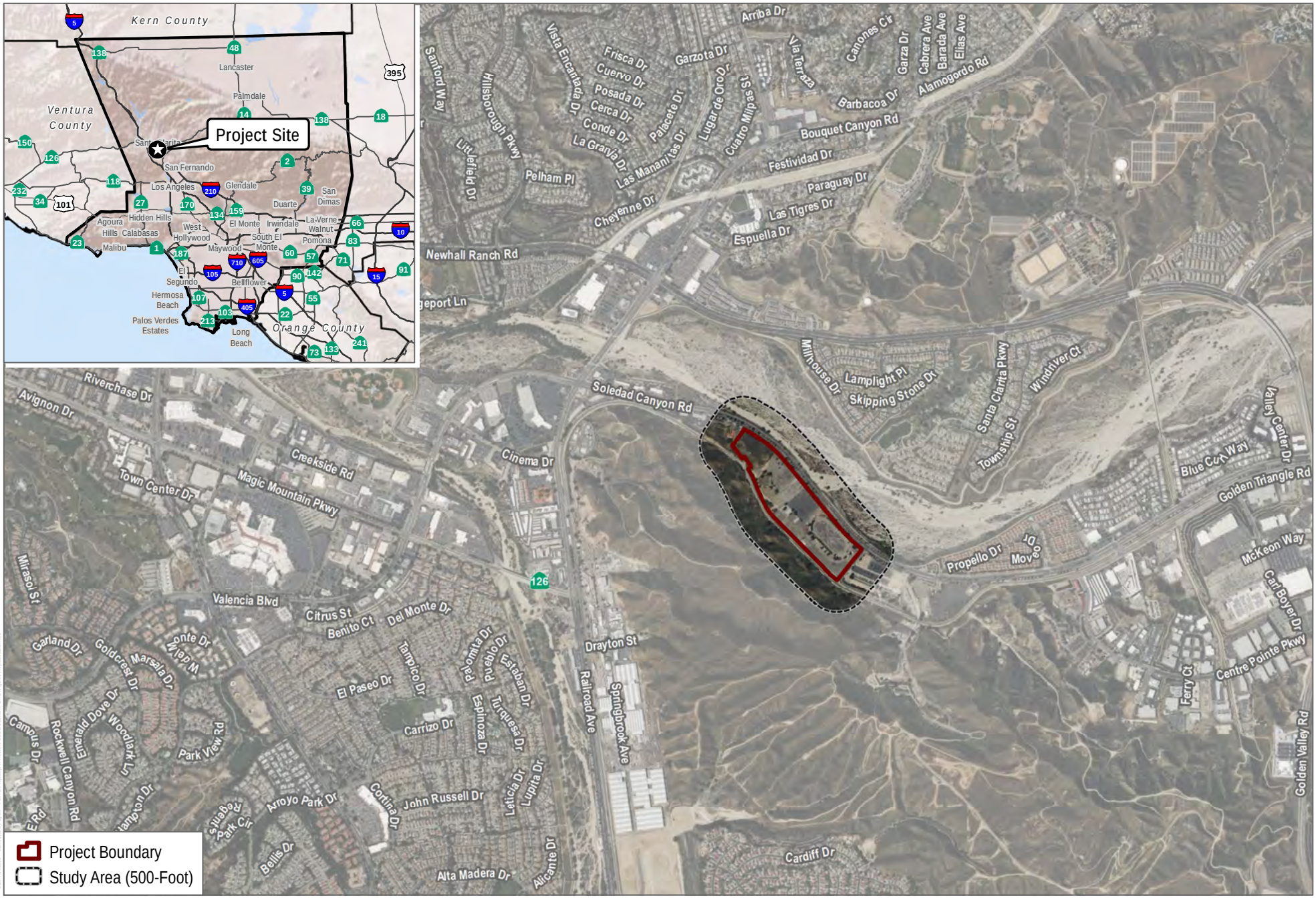


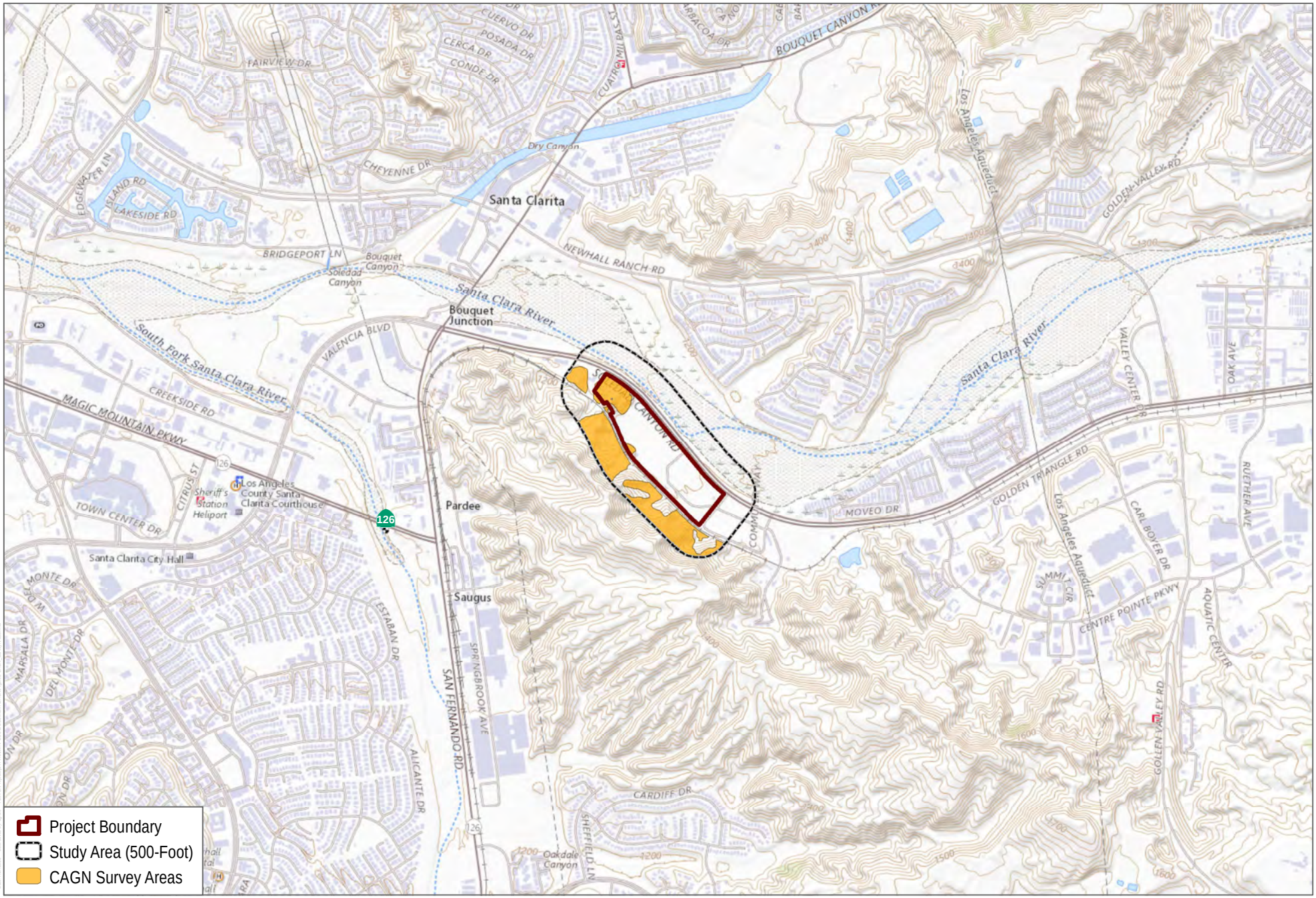
SOURCE: County of Los Angeles; Open Street Maps; Bing Maps

DUDEK

FIGURE 1

Project Location

Riverview Development Project



SOURCE: USGS National Map-Newhall Quadrangle; County of Los Angeles

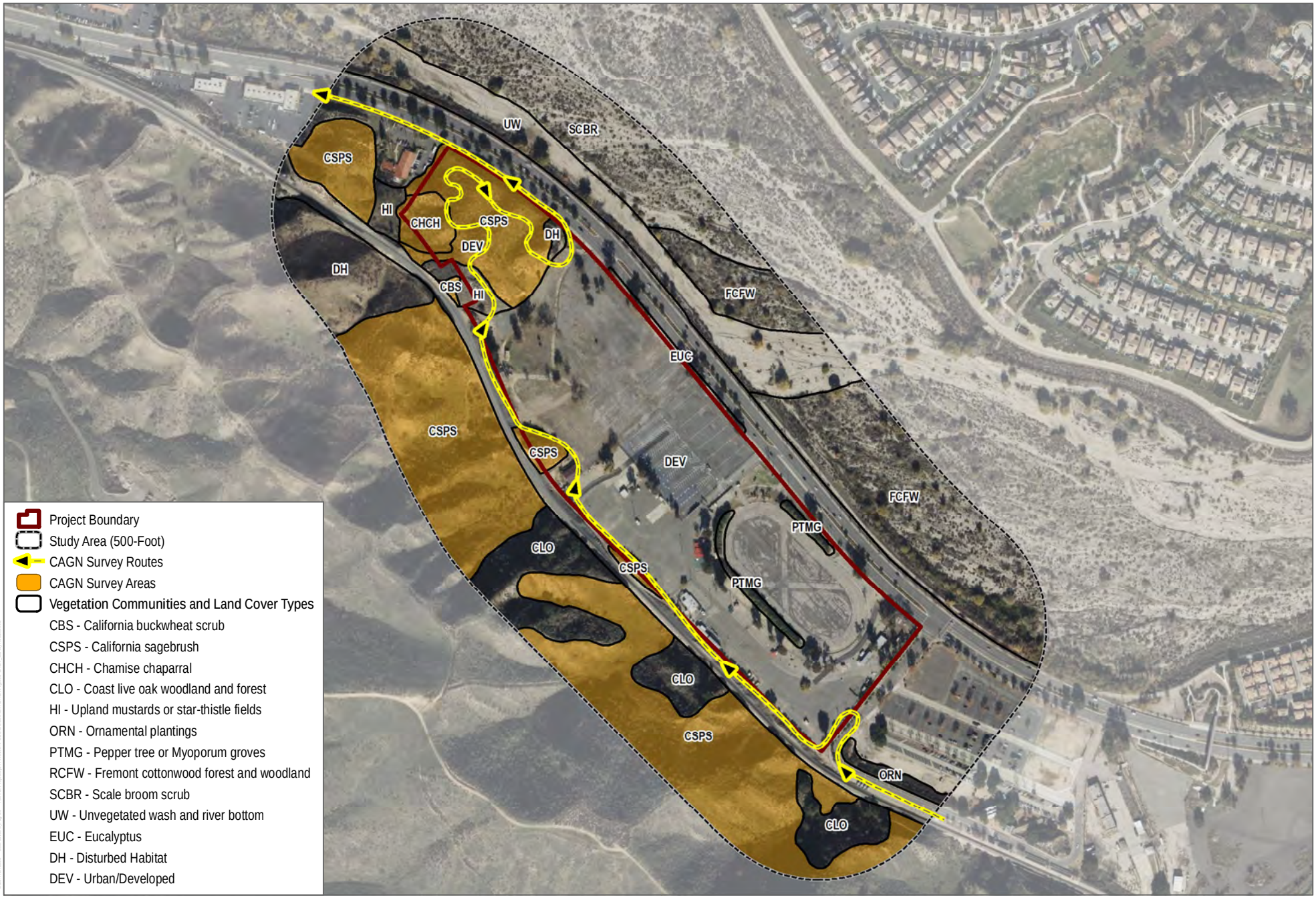
DUDEK

0 1,000 2,000 Feet

FIGURE 2

CAGN Survey Areas

Riverview Development Project



SOURCE: County of Los Angeles; Open Street Maps; Bing Maps

DUDEK

0 300 600 Feet

FIGURE 3

CAGN Survey Results

Riverview Development Project

Attachment A

List of Bird Species Observed

Bird Species Observed

ACCIPITRIDAE—HAWKS, KITES, EAGLES, & ALLIES

Buteo jamaicensis—red-tailed hawk

BOMBYCILLIDAE—WAXWINGS

Bombycilla cedrorum—cedar waxwing

CARDINALIDAE—CARDINALS, GROSBEAKS & ALLIES

Pheucticus melanocephalus—black-headed grosbeak

Piranga ludoviciana—western tanager

CHARADRIIDAE—LAPWINGS & PLOVERS

Charadrius vociferus—killdeer

COLUMBIDAE—PIGEONS & DOVES

Zenaida macroura—mourning dove

Streptopelia decaocto—Eurasian collared-dove*

CORVIDAE—CROWS & JAYS

Aphelocoma californica—California scrub-jay

Corvus brachyrhynchos—American crow

FRINGILLIDAE—FRINGILLINE & CARDUELINE FINCHES & ALLIES

Haemorhous mexicanus—house finch

Spinus lawrencei—Lawrence's goldfinch

Spinus psaltria—lesser goldfinch

ICTERIDAE—BLACKBIRDS, ORIOLES & ALLIES

Icterus bullockii—Bullock’s oriole

Icterus cucullatus—hooded oriole

Molothrus ater—brown-headed cowbird*

MIMIDAE—MOCKINGBIRDS & THRASHERS

Mimus polyglottos—northern mockingbird

Toxostoma redivivum—California thrasher

PASSERELLIDAE—NEW WORLD SPARROWS

Aimophila ruficeps—rufous-crowned sparrow

Melospiza melodia—song sparrow

Melozone crissalis—California towhee

Pipilo maculatus—spotted towhee

Pipilo maculatus—spotted towhee
Zonotrichia leucophrys—white-crowned sparrow

PICIDAE—WOODPECKERS & ALLIES

Melanerpes formicivorus—acorn woodpecker
Dryobates nuttallii—Nuttall's woodpecker

PTILOGONATIDAE—SILKY-FLYCATCHERS

Phainopepla nitens—phainopepla

STURNIDAE—STARLINGS

Sturnus vulgaris—European starling*

SYLVIIDAE—SYLVIID WARBLERS

Chamaea fasciata—wrentit

TROCHILIDAE—HUMMINGBIRDS

Calypte anna—Anna's hummingbird
Calypte costae—Costa's hummingbird

TROGLODYTIDAE—WRENS

Troglodytes aedon—house wren
Thryomanes bewickii—Bewick's wren

TYRANNIDAE—TYRANT FLYCATCHERS

Myiarchus cinerascens—ash-throated flycatcher
Sayornis nigricans—black phoebe
Sayornis saya—Say’s phoebe
Tyrannus vociferans—Cassin’s kingbird

* signifies introduced (non-native) species

Attachment B

Photo Documentation

Photo 1. View of California sagebrush scrub in the northern portion of the Project site. Photo facing east. April 12, 2023

Photo 2. View of California sagebrush scrub in the northern portion of the Project site. Photo facing north. April 12, 2023

Photo 3. View of California sagebrush scrub in the northern portion of the Project site. Photo facing west. April 12, 2023

Photo 4. View of California sagebrush scrub along the western Project site. Photo facing west. April 12, 2023

Photo 5. View of California sagebrush scrub in the northern portion of the Project site. Photo facing west. October 13, 2022

Photo 6. View of the developed Project site with California sagebrush scrub hills off-site and west of the existing railroad. Photo facing west. October 13, 2022

Photo 7. View of the developed Project site with California sagebrush scrub hills off-site and west of the existing railroad. Photo facing south. April 26, 2023

Photo 8. View of the developed Project site with California sagebrush scrub hills off-site and west of the existing railroad. Photo facing southeast. April 26, 2023