MSHCP 30-DAY PRE-CONSTRUCTION BURROWING OWL SURVEY

(Athene cunicularia hypugaea)

STOCKPILE PLAN GP16-025SP

APNS 327-320- 001, 327-320-010 AND 327-320-013

LOCATION:

Northwest corner of the intersection of State Highway 74 and Briggs Road in the City of Menifee, Riverside County, California. Mapped in a portion of Section 12, Township 5 South and Range 3 West of the USGS Topographic Map, 7.5 Minute Series, Romoland, California Quadrangle.

OWNER/APPLICANT:

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PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR AND REPORT PREPARER:

Paul A. Principe
PRINCIPE AND ASSOCIATES
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SURVEY CONDUCTED BY PAUL A. PRINCIPE ON:

October 1, 2016

ANTICIPATED START DATE OF GRADING:

October 30, 2016

REPORT DATE:

October 5, 2016

MSHCP 30-DAY PRE-CONSTRUCTION BURROWING OWL SURVEY

2) REPORT SUMMARY

To ensure direct mortality of burrowing owls is avoided, a pre-construction presence/absence survey was conducted at the site within thirty (30) days prior to the anticipated start date of grading. Based on the October 1, 2016 survey, the site is not occupied by the burrowing owl. The proposed project site is then consistent with Species Conservation Objective 6 of the Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP).

3) REPORT PREPARER

Paul A. Principe
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4) SITE VICINITY MAP

Northwest corner of the intersection of State Highway 74 and Briggs Road in the City of Menifee, Riverside County, California.

5) USGS LOCATION MAP

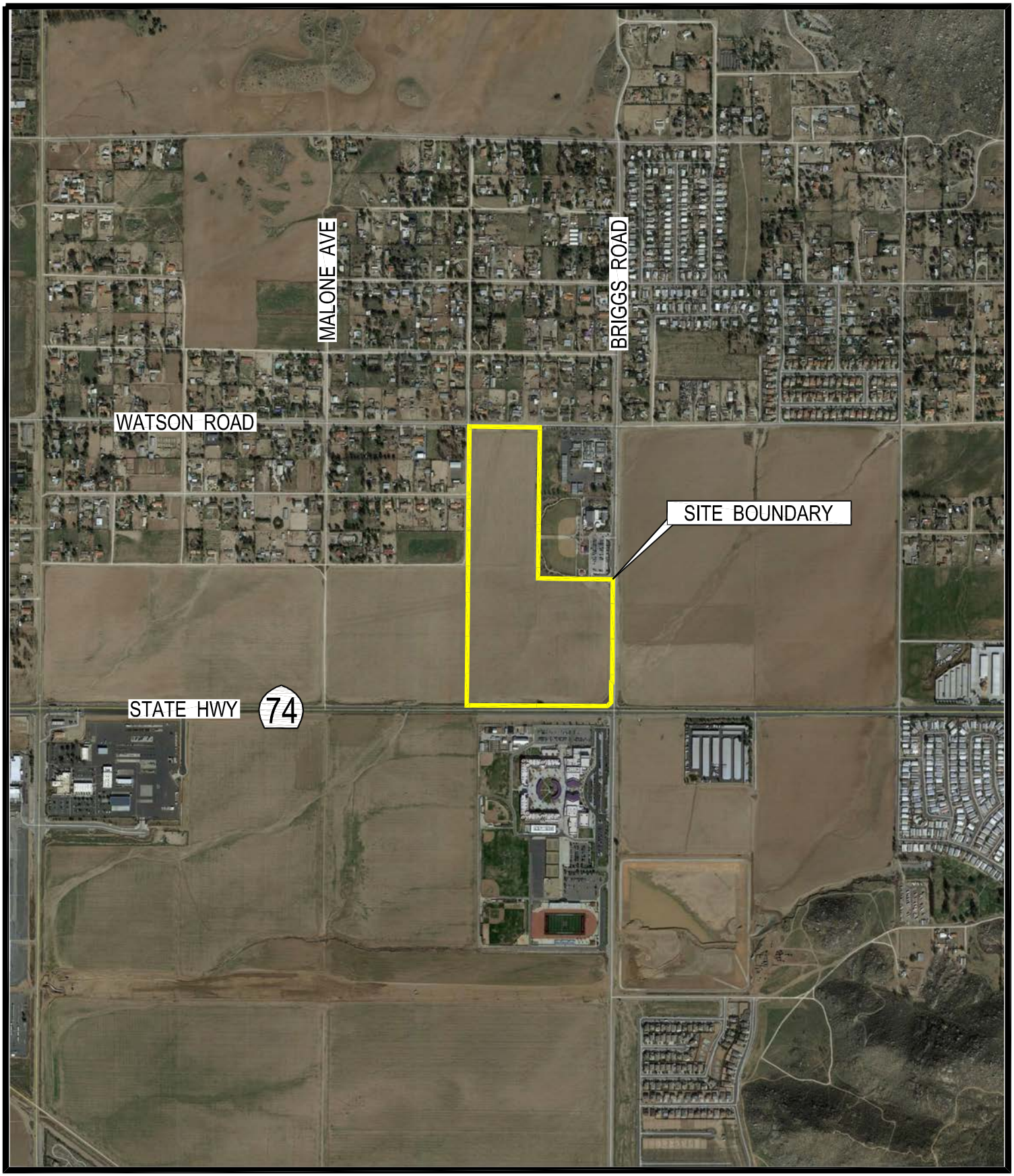
Section 12, Township 5 South and Range 3 West of the USGS Topographic Map, 7.5 Minute Series, Romoland, California Quadrangle.

6) SURVEY TRANSECT MAP

Typical survey transects were not walked at this site because the surface of the agricultural field consists of loose sandy loams that made it difficult to walk in most areas without sinking deep into the soils and impossible to walk in other areas. Because the site surface is flat-lying and featureless, the four transects allowed 100 percent visual coverage of the ground surface.

7) SURVEYOR NAME

The survey was conducted by Paul A. Principe. Principe has a current agreement on file with the Riverside County Planning Department, Environmental Programs Division as an Authorized Biological Consultant, and has been conducting biological surveys in the Temecula area since 1980.



Source of Aerial Photo: Google Earth 2/9/2016

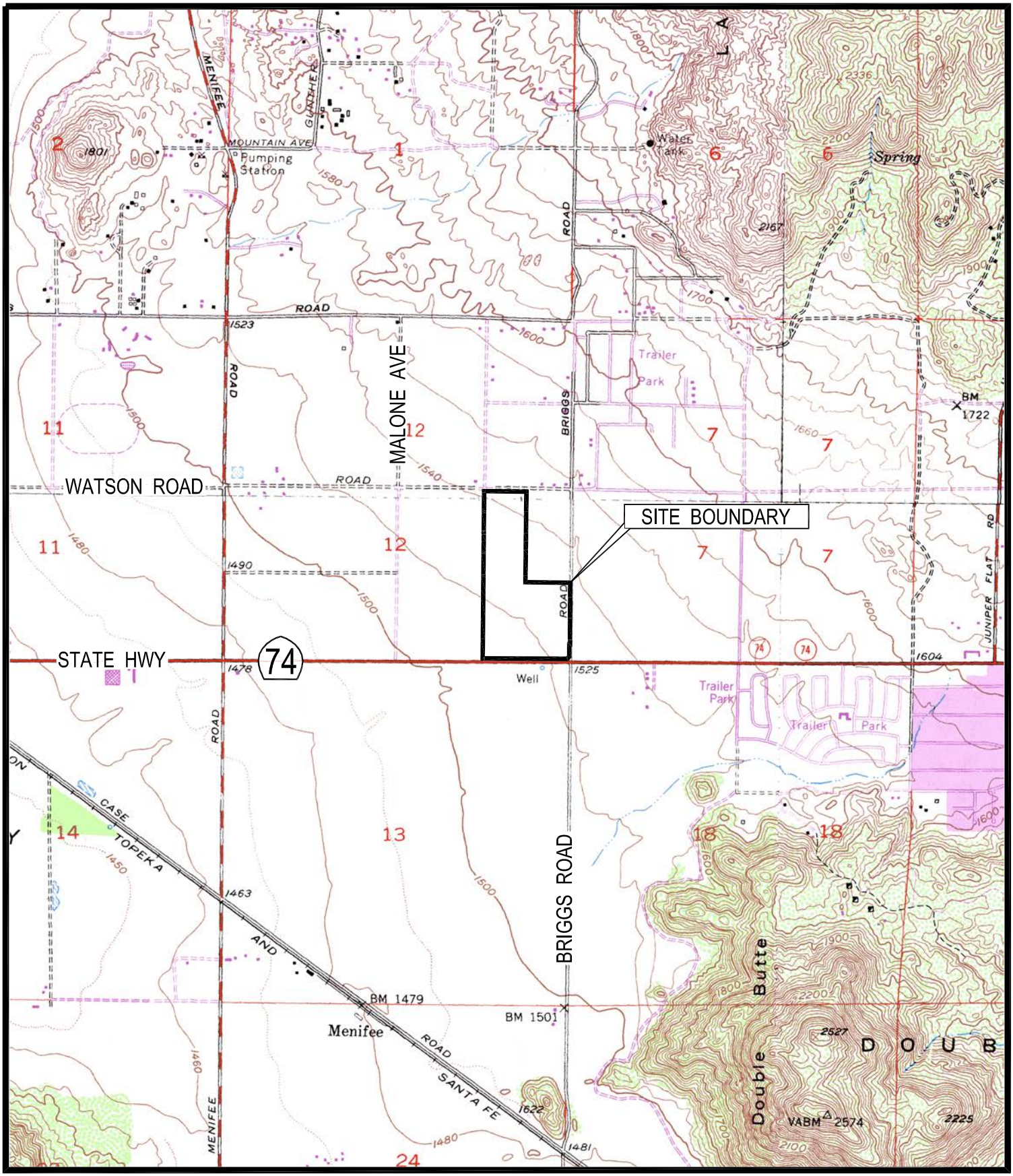
Scale: 1"= 1200'

0 1200 2400 Feet

SITE VICINITY MAP

GP16-025SP

PRINCIPE AND ASSOCIATES



Base Map Source: USGS 7.5 Min.
Romoland and Perris, Calif. Quads.

Feet

0 2000 4000

USGS LOCATION MAP

GP16-025SP

PRINCIPE AND ASSOCIATES

Source of Aerial Photo: Google Earth 2/9/2016

Scale: 1"= 340'

0 340 680 Feet

SURVEY TRANSECT MAP

GP16-025SP

PRINCIPE AND ASSOCIATES

8) SURVEY DATE AND TIME

October 1, 2016, between 7:30 and 8:30 AM PDT. Sunrise was at 6:44 AM PDT.

9) SURVEY WEATHER CONDITIONS

Weather conditions included clear skies, temperatures between 64 and 71°F with 1-2 mile per hour winds (shaded temperature in degrees Fahrenheit includes the wind chill factor, and wind speed in miles per hour is given as the range measured over a few moments with a Kestrel ® 2000).

The survey was conducted during weather that was conducive to observing burrowing owls outside of their burrows, and detecting burrowing owl sign. Surveys were not conducted within five days of rain or during high winds (> 20 mph), dense fog, or temperatures over 90°F.

10) METHODOLOGY

Pursuant to the Burrowing Owl Survey Instructions for MSHCP Area (March 29, 2006), a pre-construction presence/absence survey was conducted at the site within thirty (30) days prior to the anticipated start date of grading. The methodology involved conducting a complete visual and walk-over field survey to determine if the site is occupied by burrowing owls at this time. The entire site surface was surveyed on October 1, 2016.

Typical survey transects were not walked at this site because the surface of the agricultural field consists of loose sandy loams that made it difficult to walk in most areas without sinking deep into the soils and impossible to walk in other areas. Because the site surface is flat-lying and featureless, the four transects allowed 100 percent visual coverage of the ground surface **(see Survey Transect Map)**.

The survey was conducted by Paul A. Principe, Principal, Principe and Associates. Principe held a Federal Fish and Wildlife Permit (TE 786497-7) for 14 years (being renewed) and California Resident Scientific Collecting Permit (#801108-03 and Permanent ID #SC-002215) for 14 years (also being renewed), and is an authorized Biological Consultant, Riverside County Planning Department, Environmental Programs Division. He has been conducting biological surveys in Riverside County since 1980.

Burrowing owls may use a site for breeding, wintering, foraging, and/or migration stopovers. Occupancy of a site can be verified by an observation of at least one burrowing owl, or alternatively, its molted feathers, cast pellets, prey remains, eggshell fragments, or excrement at or near a burrow entrance. Burrowing owls exhibit high site fidelity, reusing burrows year after year. A site should be assumed occupied if at least one burrowing owl has been observed occupying a burrow there within the last 3 years.

11) ACREAGE OF SITE

Recorded lot sizes total 55.84 acres

12) TOTAL ACREAGE SURVEYED

55.84 acres

13) CURRENT SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is currently vacant and undeveloped with structures. Until recently, the majority of it was an active/in-use agricultural field without natural or remnant inclusions of native vegetation. Cultivated wheat *(Triticum aestivum)* was the dry crop being grown there for decades. The southern portion of the site is used for flood control.

Site topography is basically flat-lying and featureless. It has been altered in the past by agricultural land uses (i.e., plowing, discing, harvesting, etc.). The site slopes gently downward in a northeast-to-southwest direction, with very little change in elevation. There are no natural topographic irregularities or rock and boulder outcrops on the site surface. Sandy loams were previously mapped on the site.

Natural watercourses or wetlands are not present on the site. As reported in the 2008 MSHCP Compliance Report and Burrowing Owl Habitat Assessment prepared by Principe and Associates, a manmade drainage course developed along the south property line as the result of the construction of temporary flood control facilities by the Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District. Based on Google Earth Images, this occurred sometime between June 2002 and June 2003. Drainage on the majority of the site is by sheet flow in the direction of slope, or along the manmade drainage course in an east-to-west direction along the site's south property line.

There is basically no vegetation growing on the majority of the site (±54 of 55.84 acres). A few invasive species have succeeded onto the agricultural field, but they do not possess the characteristics of a Vegetation Association, nor do they provide habitat. Prostrate pigweed *(Amaranthus blitoides),* annual burweed *(Ambrosia acanthicarpa),* *lamb's quarters *(Chenopodium album),* *watermelon *(Citrullus colocynthis* var. *citroides),* nutgrass *(Cyperus esculentus),* *common purslane *(Portulaca oleracea),* *Russian thistle *(Salsola tragus)* and *puncture vine *(Tribulus terrestris) w*ere identified.

A small area of disturbed Non-native grasslands is growing along the site's south property line adjacent to State Highway 74 (<2 acres). It is confined to a rather narrow strip situated between the agricultural field and State Highway 74. Due to drought

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*Denotes non-native species

Nomenclature after Roberts, White, Sanders, Bramlet, and Boyd. 2004. T*he Vascular Plants of Western Riverside County, California, An Annotated Checklist.*

conditions, the condition and vigor of the Non-native grasslands has deteriorated since this area was first surveyed (by me) in 2008. It now appears to be an abandoned area adjacent to the roadside. Species include prostrate pigweed, western ragweed *(Ambrosia psilostachya* var. *californica),*, common fiddleneck *(Amsinckia menziesii* var. *intermedia),* *shortpod mustard *(Brassica geniculata),* *rescue grass *(Bromus catharticus),* *tocalote *(Centaurea melitensis),* *lamb's quarters, common horseweed *(Conyza canadensis),* *Australian brass-buttons *(Cotula australis),* *Bermuda grass *(Cynodon dactylon),* jimsonweed *(Datura wrightii),* *filarees *(Erodium botrys* and *B. cicutarium),* *red gum *(Eucalyptus camaldulensis),* western sunflower *(Helianthus annuus),* *kikuyu grass *(Pennisetum clandestinum),* *Russian-thistle *(Salsola tragus),* *Mediterranean tamarisk *(Tamarix ramosissima),* and cocklebur *(Xanthium strumarium* var. *canadense).*

Due to the lack of viable native habitats, only a few wildlife species were observed on the site. Species included the mourning dove *(Zenaida macroura)* and common raven *(Corvus corax)*. Mounds of Botta's pocket gophers *(Thomomys bottae)* were discovered in the edges of the agricultural field, but the loose sandy loams are not suitable for fossorial mammals that dig burrows. A few California ground squirrel burrows *(Spermophilus beecheyi)* were discovered around the storm drains. A few of these burrows have been present in this area since the site was first surveyed (by me) in 2008.

14) DISTURBANCES

Approximately 54 of 55.84 acres of the site surface is unvegetated bare soils. The loose sandy loams indicate that the agricultural field was recently disced or plowed. A few compacted dirt roads provide access around the perimeter of the agricultural field, and the easterly extension of Varela Lane actually crosses through it.

Two storm drain facilities have been constructed in the southeast corner of the site, including both box and pipe culverts. The bottom and sides of the drainage course have been stabilized with concrete and rip-rap around the intersection of State Highway 74 and Briggs Road. The less than two acres of disturbed Non-native grasslands growing along the site's south property line has deteriorated to an abandoned area growing adjacent to State Highway 74 and Briggs Road.

15) SITE PHOTOGRAPHS (see attached)

16) SURVEY RESULTS

The site is not occupied by the burrowing owl and also does not provide suitable and/or critical habitats for this species. During the October 1, 2016 survey, burrowing owls were not observed. Natural burrows dug by California ground squirrels, other similarly-sized burrows or manmade structures capable of being used for roosting or nesting were not discovered in the large agricultural field. Animal sign diagnostic of burrowing

owls that is sometimes overlooked was not discovered in the southern portion of the site in or around the burrows and existing culverts (*e.g.,* molted feathers, cast pellets, prey remains, eggshell fragments, and/or excrement at or near a burrow entrance). There was no evidence of either active habitats presently being used by burrowing owls, or habitats abandoned within the last year.

With completion of this MSHCP 30-Day Pre-Construction Burrowing Owl Survey, the proposed project site is consistent with Species Conservation Objective 6 of the MSHCP.

17) REFERENCES

County of Riverside, Transportation and Land Management Agency, Environmental Programs Department. Revised August 17, 2006. Burrowing Owl Survey Instructions for Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Area, March 29, 2006.

County of Riverside, Transportation and Land Management Agency, Environmental Programs Department. Revised August 17, 2006. MSHCP 30-day Pre-Construction Burrowing Owl Survey Report Format.

Dudek & Associates, Inc. June 17, 2003. Riverside County Integrated Project. Final Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan. Volume I, The Plan.

Dudek & Associates, Inc. June 17, 2003. Riverside County Integrated Project. Final Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan. Volume 2, The MSHCP Reference Document.

Google Earth Search: Menifee, California.
Imagery Dates: 9/29/1996, 6/5/2002, 6/27/2003, and 2/9/2016
Image Sources: U.S. Geological Survey, NASA and © 2016 DigitalGlobe
http://www.google.earth.com

Principe and Associates. June 20, 2008. "MSHCP Compliance Report and Burrowing Owl Habitat Assessment *(Athene cunicularia hypugaea),* Plot Plan 22628, Portion of APN 327-320-007".

Riverside County Information Technology. 2016. Map My County – Riverside County.

Roberts, Jr., Fred M., Scott D. White, Andrew C. Sanders, David E. Bramlet, and Steve Boyd. 2004. *The Vascular Plants of Western Riverside County, California, An Annotated Checklist.* F.M. Roberts Publications, San Luis Rey, California.

18) CERTIFICATION

Date: October 5, 2016

I hereby certify that the statements furnished above and in the attached exhibits present the data and information required for this MSHCP 30-Day Pre-Construction Burrowing Owl Survey to the best of my ability, and that the facts, statements and information presented are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Sincerely,
PRINCIPE AND ASSOCIATES

Paul A. Principe

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Paul A. Principe
Principal

ATTACHMENTS

Site Photographs 1-4

Approximately 54 of 55.84 acres of the site surface is now unvegetated bare soils. These loose sandy loams are not suitable for fossorial mammals that dig burrows. Looking from the southeast corner of the site in a northwest direction toward Watson Road.

SITE PHOTOGRAPH 1

GP16-025SP

PRINCIPE AND ASSOCIATES

The disturbed Non-native grasslands growing along the site's south property line has deteriorated into an abandoned area. Looking in a east-to-west direction from the southeast corner of the site at the intersection of State Highway 74 and Briggs Road.

SITE PHOTOGRAPH 2

GP16-025SP

PRINCIPE AND ASSOCIATES

The agricultural field was recently disced or plowed. These loose sandy loams made it difficult to walk in most areas without sinking deep into the soils. Visibility on the surface was unlimited. Looking in an east-to-west direction throuigh the southern portion of the site from Briggs Road.

SITE PHOTOGRAPH 3

GP16-025SP

PRINCIPE AND ASSOCIATES

The site is not occupied by the burrowing owl and also does not provide suitable and / or critical habitats for this species. During the October 1, 2016 survey, burrowing owls were not observed. Looking north-to-south along the site's west property line from Watson Road to State Highway 74.

SITE PHOTOGRAPH 4

GP16-025SP

PRINCIPE AND ASSOCIATES