

Biological Assessment Letter Report

for the

Wilson Avenue II

Redevelopment Project

City of Perris

Project #

Prepared For:

First Industrial Realty Trust, Inc.
C/O Advantage Environmental Consultants, LLC
145 Vallecitos De Oro, Suite 201
San Marcos, CA 92069

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Prepared By:



Michael K. Jefferson
Senior Biologist
BLUE Consulting Group

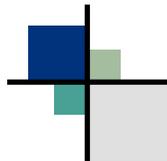


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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report documents the findings of an evaluation of biological resources conducted by BLUE for the proposed Wilson Avenue II Project (Project) located at 3175 Wilson Ave, City of Perris, CA 92571-4029. The proposed Project includes the development of an approximate 9.69-acre parcel within the City of Perris, County of Riverside, California. The Project is bound by undeveloped open areas to the south, East Rider Street to the north, Placentia Avenue to the south and Wilson Avenue to the west. The eastern property line is adjacent to the incised flood control channel, which conveys storm flows from north to south.

The Project is located within the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) Mead Valley Area Plan APN number 300-170-008. The Project is not located within any MSHCP designated Criteria Areas or Subunits. As such, the Project is not subject to Cell Criteria compliance under the MSHCP. The Project footprint does not fall within any Public/Quasi-Public (PQP) or other MSHCP Conserved Lands but is located approximately 1.9 miles west of the San Jacinto Wildlife Area and Lake Perris; both are PQP lands.

The Biological Study Area (BSA) includes the Project proposed ground disturbance footprint, plus a 500-foot buffer. The BSA is located within the United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute Perris Topographic Map. The Project falls within the San Bernardino Meridian, Section 5, Township 4 South, Range 3 West on the Perris, CA 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle map (USGS 1979) in the city of Perris, at an approximate elevation of 1,450 feet. The longitude and latitude coordinates near the center of the survey area are 33.8269 and 117.21196. The Project BSA is predominantly composed of disturbed vegetation with generally flat undeveloped terrain that receives frequent weed abatement (i.e., chain flail mowing, disking). Indications of off-road vehicle/motorcycle use of the parcel are also evident in and adjacent to the northeast corner of the parcel. The surrounding land use consists of residential development, disturbed open areas, and public infrastructure (including the adjacent flood control channel).

The intended use of this document is to disclose and evaluate habitat conditions and determine the potential for occurrence of common and special-status species and their habitats within survey area limits pursuant to the MSHCP. Special-status species refers to any species that has been afforded special protection by federal, state, or local resource agencies (e.g., U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS], California Department of Fish and Game [CDFW]) or resource conservation organizations (e.g., California Native Plant Society [CNPS]).

2.0 METHODS

Prior to beginning the field survey, a literature review was completed to determine locations and types of biological resources having the potential to exist within the region (USFWS Critical Habitat Mapper and File data [USFWS 2019a], USFWS Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC) [USFWS closed and not accessible], CDFW California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) [CDFW, 2018], and CNPS Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants [CNPS, 2015]). CNDDDB and CNPS file data was queried for records of occurrence of special-status species and habitats within the Perris quadrangle. The MSHCP Transportation and Land Management Agency Geographic Information Services Database and Riverside County Integrated Plan Conservation Summary Report Generator was also reviewed (County of Riverside, 2012a; County of Riverside, 2012b and 2019).

In addition to utilizing on-line databases and mapping tools, the Perris topographic map was reviewed to determine the locations of any potential special aquatic resource areas (e.g., wetlands or other Waters of the United States or Waters of the State) under regulatory jurisdiction of the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE),

CDFW, and Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), and Riparian/Riverine habitats prior to beginning field surveys of the BSA.

Additionally, the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) on-line Web Soil Survey tool (NRCS 2015) and Figure 2-4 of the MSHCP were reviewed to determine the types and percent cover of soils within the BSA.

Lands within the BSA that were potentially suspected of being potential special aquatic resource and Riparian/Riverine habitats were then assessed by visual observation during the field survey. Potential special aquatic resource areas and riparian/riverine habitats were further evaluated by determining the presence of definable channels and/or hydrophytic vegetation, riparian habitat, and hydrologic regime.

Michael Jefferson, senior BLUE biologist, then conducted a pedestrian-based biological survey to observe, document, and evaluate plant and wildlife resources and determine the potential for occurrence of special-status plant and wildlife species. In addition, a burrowing owl assessment was completed. Approximately 100-foot wide meandering transects were utilized to provide visual coverage of the BSA.

Vegetation community type descriptions were based on observed dominant vegetation composition and derived from the criteria and definitions of vegetation classification systems (Holland, 1986; Sawyer and Keeler-Wolf, 1995; Sawyer et al., 2009). Plants were identified in the field to the lowest taxonomic level sufficient to determine positive identity and status. Plants of uncertain identity were subsequently identified using taxonomic keys, and scientific and common species names were recorded according to Baldwin (2012).

The presence of a wildlife species was based on direct observation or wildlife sign (e.g., tracks, burrows, nests, scat, or vocalization). Field data compiled for wildlife species included scientific name, common name, and evidence of sign when no direct observations were made. Wildlife of uncertain distinctiveness was documented and subsequently identified from field guides and related literature (Burt and Grossenheider, 1980; Halfpenny, 2000; Sibley, 2000; Elbroch, 2003; and Stebbins, 2003).

The BSA was also assessed for its potential to support special-status species, based on habitat suitability comparisons with reported occupied habitats.

The following definitions were used to determine the need for subsequent surveys and to assess project-related effects to special-status species:

- Absent (A): No habitat occurs within the survey area and no further surveys are necessary
- Habitat Present (HP): Habitat is present within the survey area
- Present (P): The species was observed within the survey area during the survey
- Critical Habitat (CH): The survey area is located within designated critical habitat

3.0 RESULTS

BLUE biologist Mike Jefferson conducted a biological survey for the Project on March 2, 2020; beginning at 8:45 and ending at 10:00. Weather conditions during the surveys were ideal and included clear skies, with temperatures ranging from 64° to 66° Fahrenheit, and winds from 1 to 3 miles per hour.

3.1 VEGETATION COMMUNITIES/LAND COVER TYPES

Development and a single vegetation community/land cover types was observed onsite; Agricultural/Disturbed. Offsite, and within the BSA is and Developed/Disturbed (paved roads, adjacent agricultural fields and the flood control channel (Table 1; Figure 3). No native plant species were located within the survey area.

Table 1: On-Site Vegetation

Community Type	Acres
Agricultural/Ruderal	7.36
Developed	2.33
Total	9.69

Communities/Land Cover Types Observed Onsite

3.1.1 AGRICULTURAL/DISTURBED/DEVELOPED

Agricultural/Disturbed lands dominant within the BSA. The existing agricultural area is actively utilized and maintained. The plant community consists of 100% cover of non-native weed species typically associated with agricultural activities and is dominated by the waist high non-native species, red brome (*Bromus madritensis*).

3.1.2 DEVELOPED/DISTURBED

Developed/Disturbed lands onsite consist of the paved areas onsite which includes the existing business operation, ornamental planting, roadway frontage to the west and the flood control channel/facility located to the east. No native/natural vegetation is present within this land cover type.

3.2 PLANT AND WILDLIFE SPECIES

Plant and wildlife species observed within the survey area were typical of developed and disturbed habitats. All plant and wildlife species observed within the survey area are listed in Table 2 and Table 3, respectively.

Table 2: Plant Species Observed within the Survey Area

Species	Common Name
ANGIOSPERMAE -FLOWERING PLANTS	
DICOTYLEDONES	
ASTERACEAE (COMPOSITAE) -SUNFLOWER FAMILY	
<i>Lactuca serriola*</i>	prickly lettuce
CHENOPODIACEAE -GOOSEFOOT FAMILY	
<i>Salsola tragus*</i>	Russian thistle
POACEAE - GRASS	
<i>Bromus madritensis*</i>	Red brome
* non-native species	

Table 3: Wildlife Species Observed within the Survey Area

Scientific Name	Common Name
Birds	
Columbidae	Pigeons and Doves
<i>Columba livia</i>	rock dove (pigeon)
Corvidae	Jays and Crows
<i>Corvus corax</i>	common raven
Mammals	
<i>Otospermophilus beecheyi</i>	California ground squirrel (burrow)

3.2.1 SPECIAL-STATUS PLANTS

Eleven special-status plant species have been reported to occur within the Perris quadrangle (Appendix B) (CDFW 2015, CNPS 2015, County of Riverside 2003). Three species are designated with federal and/or state listing status: San Jacinto Valley crownscale (*Atriplex coronata* var. *notatior*), thread-leaved brodiaea (*Brodiaea filifolia*), and spreading navarretia (*Navarretia fossalis*).

All eleven special-status plant species were determined to have an “Absent” potential for occurrence within the survey area and no further survey is necessary to determine presence or absence of those species.

3.2.2 SPECIAL-STATUS WILDLIFE

Fifteen special-status wildlife species have been reported to occur within the Perris quadrangle (Appendix C) (CDFW 2015, County of Riverside 2003). Three species, Stephens’ kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys stephensi*), coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) and least Bell’s vireo (*Vireo belli pusillus*) are listed as federally and/or state threatened or endangered.

All fifteen special-status wildlife species were determined to have an “Absent” potential for occurrence within the survey area and no further survey is necessary to determine presence or absence of these species.

3.2.3 WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY MULTIPLE SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN (MSHCP)

The Project is located within the Mead Valley Area Plan outside of any MSHCP designated Criteria Cells or Cell Groups (Table 4) (County of Riverside, 2012a). The Project is not subject to Cell Criteria compliance under the MSHCP. The Project does not include any MSHCP Conserved Lands or PQP lands. Public and private development projects that are carried out within the Mead Valley Area Plan, but outside of the Criteria Areas and Public/Quasi-Public Lands (e.g., such as this Project), are permitted under the MSHCP subject to compliance with MSHCP policies that apply outside Criteria Areas.

Table 4: MSHCP Cell Group, Area Plan, and Sub-Unit within the Project

APN	Cell	Cell Group	Acres	Area Plan	Sub Unit
300-170-008	Not A Part	Independent	9.69	Mead Valley	Not A Part

The results of the Conservation Summary Report Generator are provided in Table 5. The Project does not occur within any Amphibian, Mammalian, or Special Linkage Areas identified by MSHCP Section 6.3.2 Additional Surveys Needs and Procedures. Applicable MSHCP policy areas include burrowing owl, Criteria Area Species, and Narrow Endemic Plant Species.

Table 5: Riverside County Integrated Project Conservation Summary Report Generator

APN	Amphibian Species	Burrowing Owl	Criteria Area Species	Mammalian Species	Narrow Endemic Plant Species	Special Linkage Area
300170008	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO

A burrowing owl assessment was completed (results: positive) according to the Burrowing Owl Survey Instructions for the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Area (County of Riverside 2006).

A single burrow that could potentially support burrowing owl(s) was located during the assessment. The burrow is located on the eastern edge of the Property (Figure 3), outside the farmed and maintained area and immediately adjacent to the Flood Control Channel. Due to the 100% weedy cover onsite, the presumed hunting area is offsite in the bare dirt flood control channel. The enlarged burrow was observed with droppings and feathers around the opening. No owl was observed. Due to the potential presence of burrowing owl, protocol burrowing owl surveys will be required to determine the onsite status.

A habitat assessment for nine potential Criteria Area Species was completed and there is no potential for occurrence. Species include: Coulter’s goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata* ssp. *coulteri*), Davidson’s saltscale (*Atriplex serenana* var. *davidsonii*), little mouestail (*Myosurus minimus* var. *apus*), mud nama (*Nama stenocarpum*), Parish’s brittlescale (*Atriplex parishii*), round-leaved filaree (*Erodium macrophyllum*), San Jacinto Valley crownscale (*Atriplex coronata* var. *notatior*), smooth tarplant (*Centromadia pungens* ssp. *laevis*), and thread-leaved brodiaea (*Brodiaea filifolia*).

A habitat assessment for five Narrow Endemic Plant Species was completed and there is no potential for occurrence. Species include: San Diego ambrosia (*Ambrosia pumila*), many-stemmed dudleya (*Dudleya multicaulis*), spreading navarretia (*Navarretia fossalis*), California Orcutt grass (*Orcuttia californica*), and Wrights

trichocoronis (*Trichocoronis wrightii* var. *wrightii*).

3.2.4 RIPARIAN/RIVERINE

Section 6.1.2 of the MSHCP defines Riparian/Riverine areas as “lands which contain Habitat dominated by trees, shrubs, persistent emergents, or emergent mosses and lichens, which occur close to or which depend upon soil moisture from a nearby fresh water source; or areas with fresh water flow during all or a portion of the year.” Riparian/Riverine areas as defined by the MSHCP are not present within the survey area and will not be impacted by the Project.

3.2.5 VERNAL POOL AND FAIRY SHRIMP

Vernal pools, vernal swales, alkali scalds or flats, or other seasonal wet habitats were not identified within the BSA during field surveys conducted in January by a qualified biologist. The BSA lacks suitable habitat for fairy shrimp species or other vernal pool species, including plants.

Upon review of the 2016 USDA Web Soil Survey and Figure 2-4 of the MSHCP, one sensitive soil type is located within the BSA; Domino silt loam, saline-alkali (Dv).

3.3 AQUATIC RESOURCES

The BSA does not contain any special aquatic resource area such as wetlands or other Waters of the United States or Waters of the State under regulatory jurisdiction of the USACE, CDFW, or RWQCB.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

The literature review and field assessment data confirm that there is the potential for a single special-status species to currently utilize the BSA; burrowing owl. Excluding the potential onsite burrowing owl presence, the BSA lacks suitable habitat that would typically support special-status species or receive state or federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections.

Although no burrowing owl was directly observed, they could potentially inhabit the survey area as described above. As a result, protocol burrowing owl surveys are required to determine the on-site status. The results of the protocol surveys will determine whether any mitigation will be required to avoid a potentially significant impact to the potentially occurring owl. Mitigation can potentially include pre-construction surveys if no owls are observed during the protocol surveys. If an owl(s) is observed during the protocol surveys, the City, federal and state agencies would be notified and a plan to capture and move the resident owl(s) to an appropriate offsite location would be required.

No Narrow Endemic Plant Species/Criteria Area plant species were observed on site during the habitat assessment. Given the site’s exposure to recurring surface disturbances associated with vegetation management, these species are not expected to occur on site. The BSA supports no riparian/riverine/vernal pool habitats or species associated with these habitat types were observed on site.

No special aquatic resource areas were discovered within the BSA and none are expected to be impacted by the Project.

To comply with the California Fish and Wildlife Code (e.g., Sections 3503, 3503.4, 3544, 3505, et seq.), vegetation clearing should take place outside of the typical avian nesting season (i.e., February 1st -August 31st), to the maximum extent practical.

The services performed by BLUE and documented in this report have been conducted in a manner consistent with the level of care and skill ordinarily exercised by other professional consultants under similar circumstances. No other representations are either expressed or implied, and no warranty or guarantee is included in this report. Opinions relating to presence, absence, or potential for occurrence of biological resources are based on limited data and actual conditions may vary from those encountered at the times and locations where the data were obtained despite due professional care. The services provided have been performed in accordance with the negotiated scope of work. Any reliance on this report by any other party shall be at such party's sole risk unless that party has written authorization from BLUE to use this work product.

5.0 CERTIFICATION

The following individual completed the field surveys and preparation of this report:

Michael Jefferson; University of California at San Diego, B.A., Biological Anthropology and Sociobiology, 1996
USACE Protocol Wetland Assessment Specialist
CHRIS Registered Archaeologist
Qualified County of San Diego Biologist
Qualified County of Riverside Biologist and CEQA Specialist

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