WIEMANN CRESTON PROPERTY
4300 STAGE SPRINGS ROAD, CRESTON, SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
(Assessor's Parcel Number 043-121-004)

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT

Prepared for:

Mr. Greg Wiemann
3400 Stage Springs Road
Creston, California 93432

Prepared by:

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P.O. Box 318
San Luis Obispo, California 93406

June 20, 2022

AUTHENTICITY AND SIGNATURE PAGE

As a County-approved biologist, I hereby certify that this Biological Resources Assessment was prepared according to the Guidelines established by the County of San Luis Obispo Department of Planning and Building and that the statements furnished in the report and associated maps are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief; and I further certify that I was present throughout the site visits associated with this report.

Kevin Merk
Principal Biologist

6/20/22
Date

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kevin Merk Associates, LLC conducted this biological resources assessment (BRA) for the proposed construction of a single-family residence and associated structures at 3400 Stage Springs Road, San Luis Obispo County, Creston, California ("project"; Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 043-121-004). The project is in an unincorporated area of eastern San Luis Obispo County near Creston, is zoned Rural Residential (C-R) and lies within the North County Planning Area, El Pomar-Estrella Sub Area. The purpose of this BRA is to assist Mr. Greg Wiemann with technical biological resources information for the County of San Luis Obispo's (County's) review of the project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This report evaluates the potential for the property to support special-status biological resources, and if special status biological resources could be adversely affected by the project. For any potentially significant impacts, mitigation is provided to reduce the level of effects.

The property is undeveloped and contains oak woodland, coastal scrub, grassland and barren/ruderal habitats. An existing driveway is present that leads to a cleared area used as an arena and burn pile area. The project impact area is entirely within the barren/ruderal habitat. No drainage features, riparian habitat or wetlands are present onsite as the property is located on hillside with proposed development situated on the knoll/ridgeline. No special-status plant species were found during spring surveys conducted in April and May 2022, and none are expected to occur in the impact area because of past and ongoing disturbance. No native oak trees are proposed for removal, but ground disturbance may occur within the critical root zone of oak trees, and trimming may be required for construction access and CalFire clearance. Standard avoidance and mitigation measures for potential oak tree impacts are provided herein and include protection fencing around oak trees and replacement planting for impacted individuals.

The property lies within the habitat area of the San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*; SJKF) and falls within a 1:1 mitigation area determined by the County. A *San Joaquin Kit Fox Habitat Evaluation* was completed for this project, which confirmed the 1:1 mitigation ratio. Although the area is considered to be within the species' former range, it is located at higher elevation with steeper topography than surrounding valleys that would more likely be used as movement corridors between the Carrizo Plain and Salinas Valley. In addition, the surrounding rural residences and oak woodland negatively influences the potential presence of SJKF on this site. This analysis determined that SJKF were unlikely to occur onsite but that mitigation consistent with current County standards is required because the property falls within the mapped range of the species. The proposed project would permanently affect 0.89 acre of potential SJKF habitat, and habitat loss can be mitigated through payment of an in-lieu fee in the amount of $2,225 or through purchase of 0.89 credits in an approved conservation bank.

Construction activities were determined to have the potential to impact the following special-status animal species: loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), Nuttall's woodpecker (*Picoides nuttallii*), oak titmouse (*Baeolophus inornatus*), yellow-billed magpie (*Pica nutalli*), and American badger (*Taxidea taxus*). There could also be impacts on common species of nesting birds and raptors protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Fish and Game Code. No designated critical habitat for federally listed species is present on the property. Mitigation measures described in this BRA to reduce the effects of construction activities on special-status animals to a level below significance under CEQA include pre-construction surveys, avoidance of occupied habitats, worker environmental awareness training, and biological monitoring. With the incorporation of compensatory mitigation measures, along with species-specific avoidance and minimization measures specified herein, there would be no significant effects of the project to biological resources onsite or in the area.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Kevin Merk Associates, LLC (KMA) conducted this biological resources assessment (BRA) for the proposed construction of a single-family residence and associated structures at 3400 Stage Springs Road, Creston, California ("project"). The project site is an approximately 15.25-acre parcel assigned Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 043-121-004, and is Lot 68 in Ramona Acres No. 3 3-MB-87 ("site" or "property"). It is located approximately 3.8 miles east-southeast of the unincorporated community of Creston off of La Panza Road (refer to Figure 1). The property is on the Shedd Canyon and Wilson Corner U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute topographic quadrangles (Figure 1; T 27 S, R 14 E; southwest ¼ of the southwest ¼ of Section10; 35.501182° N, -120.460042° W). It is in an unincorporated area of San Luis Obispo County outside of the Coastal Zone, is zoned Rural Residential (C-R) and lies within the North County Planning Area, El Pomar-Estrella Sub Area. The property is undeveloped except for a gravel-surfaced access road that connects to Stage Springs Road to the proposed development site. The surrounding area is rural residential with single-family homes and landscaped yards on properties generally over 10 acres in size that are grazed by horses and cattle. Undeveloped land in the region is rolling hills comprised of grassland with oak woodland and savannah. The Stage Springs Road area has coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) woodland and coastal scrub compared to the more arid surrounding zones dominated by blue oak trees (*Quercus douglasii*). Ephemeral streams also traverse the landscape (Figure 2).

The purpose of this BRA is to assist Mr. Greg Wiemann with technical biological resources information for the County of San Luis Obispo's (County's) review of the project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This BRA evaluates the site's existing environmental conditions to determine whether special-status biological resources (plants, animals, designated critical habitat and sensitive natural communities) and potentially jurisdictional drainages and wetlands may be present onsite and could be adversely affected by the project. Recommended mitigation measures are provided to avoid or reduce the level of project impacts under CEQA. This BRA also includes a County (2002) *San Joaquin Kit Fox Habitat Evaluation* to determine the appropriate mitigation ratio for this project.

1.1 Project Description

The project proposes to construct a single-family residence, agricultural storage building and detached carport (see Grading and Site Plans in Appendix A; Studio 2G Architects, LLP and Matrix Consulting Engineers, May 26, 2022). The residence would be two-story, three-bedroom, two- and one-half bathroom, with covered and uncovered balconies, comprising a total of 4,541 square feet (PMTR2022-00027). A septic and leach field would be installed as a component of the residential permit. A detached agricultural storage building would be 3,304 square feet and have electric and plumbing (PMTR2022-00028). A carport would be 484 square feet (PMTR2022-00026). The project would require major grading to create the pads for the structures consisting of 2,250 cubic yards cut and 250 cubic yards of fill (PMTG2022-00005), and the total area of disturbance would be 38,900 square feet (0.89 acre). An existing aggregate 16-foot wide driveway would remain and a concrete approach would be constructed connecting the structures and provide a fire truck turnaround. Two segments of the driveway would be paved with an asphalt surface. The site plans show that no trees would be removed and that grading would be outside of the dripline of oak trees. Other elements are a propane tank and solar panels that would be installed on the roof plus two power poles. Water would be from an existing well and stored in existing galvanized steel tanks to the southwest of the building pad. Erosion control measures have been incorporated into the project plans.

KMA
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1 inch = 8,000 feet

Wiemann Creston Property

Greg Wiemann

Figure 1

Site Location Map

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N W E S 1 inch = 2,000 feet

Wiemann Creston Property

Greg Wiemann

Figure 2

Aerial Overview Map

1.2 Regulatory Overview

1.2.1 Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act

The CEQA defines a *significant effect on the environment* as "a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in the environment." Projects that may have significant effects are required to be analyzed in an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Under CEQA Section 15065, a project's effects on biotic resources would have a mandatory finding of significance if the project would do any of the following:

- Have potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment; substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species; cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels; threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community; or substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of an endangered, rare or threated species.
- Have the potential to achieve short-term goals to the disadvantage of long-term environmental goals.
- Have possible environmental effects that are individually limited but cumulatively considerable. "Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of an individual project are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.

Prior to the public review of an environmental document, if a project proponent agrees to mitigation measures or project modifications that would avoid any significant effect or mitigate to a level below significance, and EIR would not be required. In addition to the criteria listed above that trigger mandatory findings of significance, *Appendix G* of the *CEQA Guidelines, Section IV Biological Resources*, includes six additional impacts to consider when analyzing the significance of project effects. A project's effects on biological resources could be deemed significant if the project would do the following:

a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).
b) 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.
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means.
d) 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 impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance.
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan.

If the project proponent agrees to mitigation measures or project modifications that would avoid all significant effects or would mitigate the significant effect(s) to a point below the level of significance, an EIR would not be required. The project proponent would be bound to implement

the mitigation measures to reduce the project effects to below a level of significance. Mitigation is not required for effects that are less than significant.

1.2.2 Special-status Species

For the purpose of this BRA, special-status species are those plants and animals listed, or Candidates for listing, as Threatened or Endangered by the USFWS under the federal Endangered Species Act (FESA); federal Birds of Conservation Concern (USFWS 2021); those listed as Threatened or Endangered under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA); animals designated as "Species of Special Concern," "Fully Protected," or "Watch List" by the CDFW; plants considered Endangered or Rare under the California Native Plant Protection Act; and, animals considered sensitive that do not have a specific listing status but which are recorded in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB; CDFW 2022a) and/or CDFW's (2022b) *Special Animals* list.

FESA provisions protect federally listed species and their habitats from unlawful take, which is defined as "to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any of the specifically enumerated conduct." Under these regulations, "harm" may include significant habitat modification or degradation that kills or injures wildlife. Candidate species are not afforded legal protection under FESA; however, Candidate species typically receive special attention during the CEQA environmental review process. CESA provides for the protection and preservation of native species of plants and animals that are experiencing a significant decline which if not halted would lead to a threatened or endangered designation. Habitat degradation or modification is not expressly included in the definition of take under CESA.

Rare plants are those defined as having a California Rare Plant Rank (CRPR) of 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, 3 or 4 (CDFW 2022a). Habitats that support plants with CRPR 1B or 2 (other than individual Monterey pine trees) are considered to be sensitive resources by the County (2012a; see Section 1.2.5). Rank 4 species are a watch list, and typically do not meet CEQA's rarity definition (Section 15380), but are included here because they may be of local concern. The CRPR definitions are as follows:

- *Rank 1A: Presumed extirpated in California and either rare or extinct elsewhere.* These species are presumed extirpated because they have not been recorded in the wild in California for many years.
- *Rank 1B: Rare, threatened or endangered in California and elsewhere.* Plants that are rare throughout their range and the majority in this rank are endemic to California.
- *Rank 2A: Presumed extirpated in California, but more common elsewhere.* These species are presumed extirpated because they have not been recorded in the wild in California for many years, but they are common outside of the state.
- *Rank 2B: Rare, threatened or endangered in California, but more common elsewhere.* Plants that have ranges that extend into California, where they are rare, but are common in areas outside of the state.
- *Rank 3: Plants needing more information - A review list.* Information necessary to assign the species to one of the lists or reject them is lacking. Most species in this rank are taxonomically unresolved.
- *Rank 4: Plants of limited distribution - A watch list.* Species of limited distribution or infrequent occurrence throughout their range in California but which their vulnerability to extirpation appears low at this time and should be monitored.

Additionally, the CRPR system further assigns threat codes as a decimal extension to the rank, ranging from 1 to 3. CRPR 3 species do not have a threat code due to insufficiency of information needed to assign it, and CRPR 1A and 2A also do not have threat codes because they not know to currently occur in California. The threat code extensions are as follows:

- *.1: Seriously threatened in California.* More than 80% of occurrences are threatened and there is high degree and immediacy of threat.
- *.2: Moderately threatened in California.* Approximately 20 to 80% of occurrences are threatened and there is a moderate degree of immediacy of threat.
- *.3: Not very threatened in California.* Less than 20% of occurrences are threatened and the is a low degree and immediacy of threat, or no current threats are known.

CDFW (2022b) maintains a list of Species of Special Concern for those animal species in which declining population levels, limited ranges, and/or continuing threats have made them vulnerable to extinction. The goal of designating species as special concern is to halt or reverse their decline early enough to secure their long-term viability. Species of Special Concern may receive special attention during environmental review, but do not have statutory protection. FESA and CESA emphasize early consultation to avoid impacts on Threatened and Endangered species. As part of the consultation process, project proponents are directed to develop appropriate mitigation plans to offset project effects on listed species and their habitats.

Raptors (e.g., eagles, hawks, and owls) and their nests are protected under both federal and state regulations. These birds of prey are protected in California under the California Fish and Game Code Section 3503.5. Disturbance that causes nest abandonment or loss of reproductive effort is considered take by CDFW. Eagles are protected under the federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. The federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) applies to many bird species, including common species, and prohibits killing, possessing, or trading in migratory birds, including whole birds, parts of birds, bird nests, and eggs. The act restricts construction disturbance during the nesting season that could result in the incidental loss of fertile eggs or nestlings or otherwise lead to nest abandonment. Under California Fish and Game Code Section 3503, it is also unlawful to take, possess or needlessly destroy the nest or eggs of any bird.

The project site falls within the geographic distribution of the federally Endangered and state Threatened San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*; SJKF), and is subject to mitigation under CEQA. The County has implemented a permit process for discretionary projects proposed within the SJKF habitat area, which involves pre-determined standard mitigation ratios based on the area in which the project is located or a SJKF Habitat Evaluation to be completed by a qualified biologist. This habitat evaluation is provided as a component of this BRA. The County will consult with CDFW based upon the results of the SJKF Habitat Evaluation to confirm the mitigation needed for the loss of habitat as a result of the project's total area of permanent disturbance.

1.2.3 Designated Critical Habitat

Critical habitat is designated for species listed under FESA, and are areas that contain the physical or biological features which are essential to the conservation of those species and may need special management or protection. A 2018 Supreme Court ruling further defined critical habitat as those areas that provide habitat for the relevant species, exempting areas that are not currently occupied. Critical habitat designations affect only federal agency actions or federally funded or permitted activities. Activities by private landowners are not affected if there is no federal nexus, but

biological studies generally address project effects on designated critical habitat when present at a particular project site.

1.2.4 Sensitive Natural Communities

Sensitive natural communities are those native plant communities listed in the CNDDB (CDFW 2022a) as rare or of limited distribution. They are evaluated using NatureServe's Heritage Methodology to assign global and state ranks based on rarity and threat, and these ranks are reviewed and adopted by CDFW's (2022b) *Vegetation Classification and Mapping Program* (VegCAMP). Evaluation with the state (S) level results in ranks ranging from 1 (very rare or threatened) to 5 (demonstrably secure). Those with ranks of S1 to S3 are to be addressed in the environmental review process under CEQA (CDFW 2022b).

2.0 METHODS

This investigation followed the County's (2016) *Guidelines for Biological Resources Assessments.* KMA conducted a desktop review of natural resources databases, maps, literature and online sources to identify special-status biological resources documented from the region that may be present on the property. Available online imagery was employed in coordination with field surveys to define the current extent of onsite and adjacent biotic conditions. Time-series and street view aerial photography (Google Earth) was also reviewed to obtain information on the history of land use on the site and immediate area.

KMA's Principal Biologist Kevin Merk conducted the initial survey of the site on April 7, 2022 to assess site conditions and search for special status plants and wildlife. The survey was conducted from 0800 to 1000 hours, and the weather was clear, temperature was cool at the start and warming quickly with calm wind. The study area was considered to be the limits of the parcel and was assessed in its entirety. A second survey was conducted on May 11, 2022 from 1030 to 1230 hours. The weather was clear, with air temperature 54 degrees Fahrenheit (° F) and there was north wind five to 10 miles per hour.

All plant and animal species observed during the surveys were recorded. Plant taxonomy followed the Jepson Flora Project (2022) and additional information on common names was from *Information on Wild California Plants* (Calflora 2022). No focused surveys for special status animals were conducted, but those seen incidentally during the surveys were recorded. Habitat types, representing land use and plant communities, were mapped on ESRI (2022) aerial imagery. Land use types followed *A Guide to Wildlife Habitats in California*, which is updated through the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR) System (CDFW 2022c). Designation of plant communities generally followed Holland's (1986) *Preliminary Descriptions of the Terrestrial Natural Communities of California.* Sawyer et al.'s (2009) *Manual of California Vegetation* and *VegCAMP* (CDFW 2022c) were also referenced. Plant communities were determined as to whether or not they met the criteria of sensitive natural communities. A photo plate was prepared of representative photographs of habitat types within the study area and site conditions.

The *Web Soil Survey* (Natural Resources Conservation Service [NRCS] 2022) was used to identify the soil mapping units present within the study area. The *National Wetlands Inventory* (NWI) was examined to evaluate the extent of any identified wetlands on the site and in the vicinity (USFWS 2022a). USGS topographic maps were also reviewed for information on hydrologic and topographic features.

A query of the CNDDB was conducted to identify occurrence records of special-status biological resources (plants, animals and sensitive natural communities) documented within the vicinity of the project site. This search included the quadrangle in which the site occurs and the abutting quadrangles: Shedd Canyon, Estrella, Shandon, Cholame, Camatta Canyon, Camatta Ranch, Wilson Corner, Santa Margarita, and Creston. CNDDB records of special-status plant and animal occurrences within a five-mile buffer from the study area were mapped. Those species that occur east of the Salinas River in low-lying areas and foothills were considered to be within the project vicinity and were listed in Appendix D. Species that are restricted to other biogeographical settings, such as mountainous areas of the La Panza Range and headwaters of the Salinas River were excluded. Based upon KMA's knowledge of the local area and other sources of species occurrence records (particularly observations recorded in Calflora [2022] and The Cornell Lab of Ornithology [2022a]), additional special-status biological resources that have been documented in the project vicinity were included. For the list of special-status species identified in the search, local distribution and ecological information was obtained from a variety of online and published sources (Jennings and Hayes 1994, Bolster 1998, Moyle et al. 2015, Thompson et al. 2016, Audubon 2022, Calflora 2022, California Native Plant Society [CNPS] 2022, California Herps 2022, The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022a, 2022b; CDFW 2022c). Designated critical habitat for plant and animal species listed under FESA was identified and mapped based upon information provided in *Environmental Conservation Online System* (USFWS 2022b).

Within the list compiled of special-status species known from the project vicinity, an evaluation of those species with potential to occur in the study area was performed based upon the suitability of habitat conditions on the property and the local distribution (geographical and elevational ranges) and specific requirements (plant communities and soils) of the species considered. We relied on existing information and known occurrence records in the region, coupled with our site-specific observations from other locations in the surrounding area, to make determinations for the probability of occurrence of each special-status species within the study area. If any special-status species had been observed during the site surveys, they would have been listed as "Present" in Appendix D. Those species considered as "Potential" met the following requirements: records in the site vicinity, appropriate plant community and/or soil associations onsite, and within the elevational range of the species. If any one of these elements was not met or considered to be marginal for the site, but the other elements were present, that species was considered "Unlikely". If onsite environmental conditions were clearly inappropriate, the particular plant was not observed during the surveys, or the species has a limited distribution that does not overlap the site, those species were considered "Not Expected". If the onsite conditions met the requirements of any lifestage or particular life history use (i.e., foraging) for wildlife while other aspects were inappropriate for certain functions (i.e., breeding), these species were considered to have Potential to occur and the likelihood of their occurrence onsite is summarized in the table and analyzed fully with regard to species ecology in the text.

We determined whether special-status plant and animal species, designated critical habitat, sensitive natural communities and potential jurisdictional drainages could or do occur on or the site. Potential impacts of the proposed project were evaluated for each of these biological resource issues, including the six additional impacts in CEQA Appendix G. Compliance with County regulations pertaining to biological resources is also detailed. An evaluation of significance as defined under CEQA is provided for each potential impact, and mitigation is proposed to reduce any potentially significant impact to a level below the significance threshold.

3.0 RESULTS

A list of plant and animal species observed during the surveys is provided in Appendix B. A plate of photographs taken during the site visits to characterize habitat types and onsite conditions is in Appendix C. Appendix D is a summary of the special-status species, designated critical habitat and sensitive plant communities recorded within the site vicinity, and KMA's evaluation of their potential presence onsite. Figure 1 is a site location map and Figure 2 is an aerial overview map with drainage features and wetland habitats recorded in the NWI in the site vicinity. Figure 3 is a soils map and Figure 4 is a habitat map of the study area delineating each of the habitat types observed. Figures 5 and 6 show the locations of special-status plants and animals, respectively, recorded in the CNDDB within five miles of the study area. No sensitive natural communities were reported in the CNDDB within five miles of the site, but those known to occur in the area were evaluated as to whether they were present onsite in Appendix D. Also, no designated critical habitat occurs within five miles of the study area (USFWS 2022b).

3.1 Existing Conditions

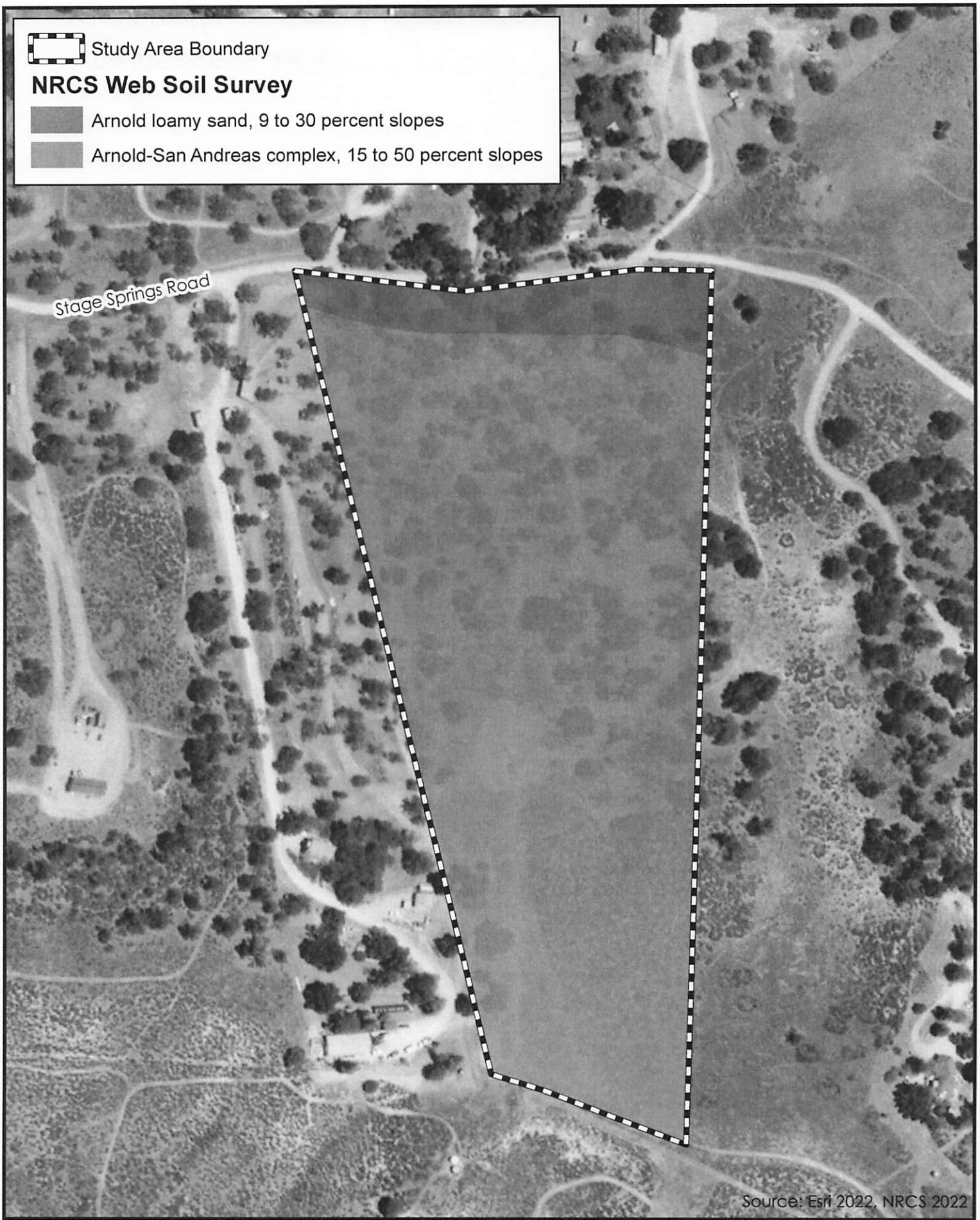
The property is located within the southeastern watershed of Huerhuero Creek on the northwestern flank of the La Panza Range. The surrounding area is composed of low rolling hills that are predominantly grassland with patches of blue oak woodland/savanna on north-facing slopes and ephemeral streams in gentle valleys. The Stage Springs Road area has patches of coast live oak woodland and coastal scrub on the southern slopes as it's in a transition zone between coastal influences and the more arid inland zone. Areas of intensive agriculture are north of Ryan Road, and the La Panza Road area to the south is rural residential. Stage Springs Road is unpaved and has a higher density of residential development compared to the surrounding area.

The project region has a Mediterranean climate with mild, moist winters and hot, dry summers. Measured at the Paso Robles Municipal Airport, approximately 15 miles to the northwest, the average maximum temperature is 76 °F and the average minimum temperature is 43 °F. The average annual precipitation is 12.53 inches and falls mainly between December and March (Western Regional Climate Center 2022; Paso Robles 7/1/1948 to 6/9/2016). Creston received 8.71 inches of rain from July 1, 2021 to June 8, 2022 (San Luis Obispo County Public Works Department).

The subject property is undeveloped and has a 16-foot wide aggregate-surfaced driveway that leads to a small knoll where there is a cleared area that formerly had an arena. It has been kept clear of vegetation to be used for storage of agricultural materials as well as burn piles. Portions of the driveway have a concrete curb along the upper slope and rocked swales along the shoulder. A basin was constructed on the road edge to collect surface runoff, and there was no evidence of seasonally-ponded water. An existing well is present that provides water to two 5,000-gallon water tanks located on the upper hillside. The property is surrounded by fencing (both barbed wire and steel pipe). There are no drainages onsite as it is located on a steep to gently sloping hillside/ridge. The highest point on the property is along its southeastern edge with an elevation of 1,615 feet (492 meters) above mean sea level (msl) sloping toward the north along Stage Springs Road with an elevation of about 1,400 feet (427 meters) above msl.

3.2 Soils

Only two soil types were mapped within the study area in the *Web Soil Survey*. The northern edge of the property is Arnold loamy sand, 9 to 30 percent slopes (Figure 3). This soil is found on hills



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1 inch = 200 feet

Wiemann Creston Property

Greg Wiemann

Figure 3

Soils Map

and is residuum weathered from sandstone (NRCS 2022). Most of the property is Arnold-San Andreas complex, 15 to 50 percent slopes, MLRA 15 (Figure 3). This soil unit occurs on terraces and also is residuum weathered from sandstone (NRCS 2022). Both of these two soils are loamy sand overlying weathered bedrock, somewhat excessively drained and are not considered to be hydric soils in this region. Observations in the field were consistent with the mapped units of light-colored, sandy loam soils.

3.3 Hydrologic Features, Wetlands and Riparian Habitats

The property is located in the upper headwaters of an unnamed tributary of Huerhuero Creek. No drainages are onsite as the site is generally on a hillside and ridge that slopes on the west, north and east sides. Due to nature of the sandy soils onsite, little surface runoff is expected and would be localized without draining into any nearby creeks or streams. The nearest drainage is an unnamed ephemeral stream along Ryan Road that joins with several other ephemeral drainages and empties into Huerhuero Creek north of Creston. The ephemeral drainages in the vicinity are mapped as Riverine habitat in the NWI (Figure 2). Huerhuero Creek flows in a northwesterly direction and empties into the Salinas River north of Paso Robles. The Salinas River flows in a northwesterly direction and discharges into the Pacific Ocean to the southwest of Castroville in the Monterey Bay area.

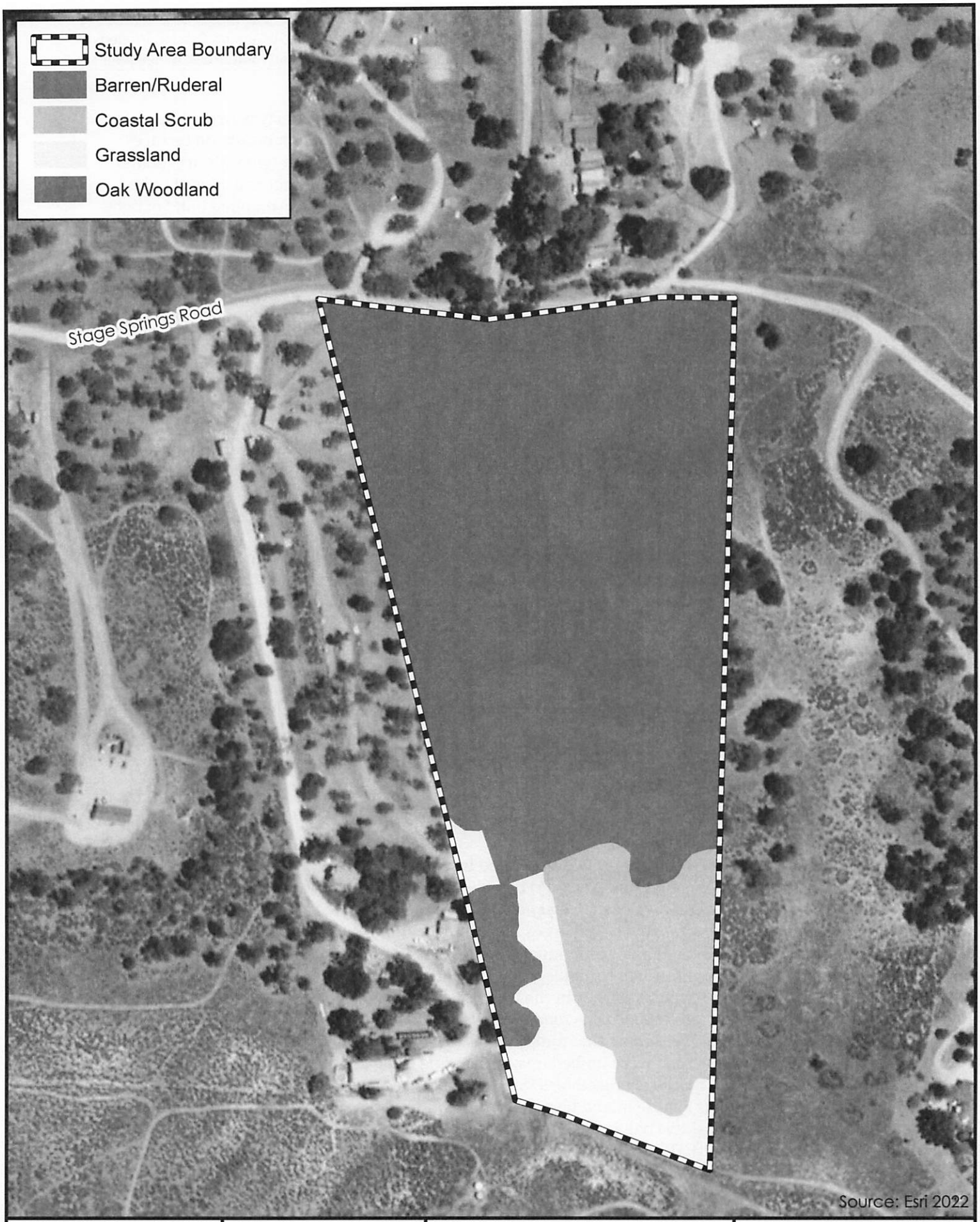
The study area is composed entirely of upland habitats and there were no wetlands or riparian habitats on or adjacent to the site. A basin recently constructed to collect runoff from the access road had bare soils and no evidence of past ponding. Offsite, farm ponds and irrigation reservoirs are visible on aerial photography and mapped in the NWI in the general area (Figure 2).

3.4 Habitat Types

Four habitat types were identified in the study area: 1) oak woodland, 2) coastal scrub, 3) grassland, and 4) barren/ruderal. The areas occupied by these habitat types are shown on Figure 4 and representative photographs are provided in Appendix C. Each of the habitat types are described below.

3.4.1 Oak Woodland

The northern portion of the property was vegetated by oak woodland with an understory of grassland (Figure 4). Coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) was the primary species in this community, and there were also several blue oak (*Q. douglasii*) trees, one valley oak (*Q. lobata*) and one western juniper (*Juniperus occidentalis*). The oak trees did not form a continuous canopy in all locations, and included small clusters of a few individual trees separated by grassland. Dominant species in the understory were ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*) and common fiddleneck (*Amsinckia intermedia*). Other less frequent species in the understory included California man-root (*Marah fabacea*) and bird's-foot fern (*Pellaea mucronata*). Several clusters of California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) were also present along the canopy edges. The trees around the proposed development site and along the access road were limbed up and showing signs of drought stress. The structure of this habitat type mostly closely resembles the Blue Oak Woodland community described by Holland (1986), which is a more inland tree assemblage intermediate between savanna and woodland. Because coast live oak is the dominant tree species onsite, it was classified as oak woodland consistent with the Coast Live Oak Woodland described by Holland (1986), but with a poorly developed understory composed of non-native grasses. This habitat is generally consistent with the Coast Live Oak Woodland alliance described by Sawyer et al. (2009), with a less continuous canopy.



KMA
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N
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1 inch = 200 feet

Wiemann Creston Property

Greg Wiemann

Figure 4

Habitat Map

3.4.2 Coastal Scrub

The upper slope on the southern portion of the property is vegetated by coastal scrub composed of California sagebrush and California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*). The shrubs were moderately dense, and generally low-growing with some mowing and clearing noted likely for fuel modification. One western juniper was also present along with scattered deerweed (*Acmispon glaber*) in the open, mowed areas. This habitat type was on a dry, exposed slope, and there were patches of bare soil with intervening areas dominated by red-stemmed filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*) instead of grasses. This community is a combination of the Central (Lucian) Coastal Scrub and Diablan Sage Scrub communities described by Holland (1986), since it is in a transition zone from the moist, fog incursion zone along the coast heading into the dry interior. It could be considered to be the California Sagebrush - California Buckwheat Scrub alliance described by Sawyer et al. (2009).

3.4.3 Grassland

Grassland onsite was on the southernmost slope and was predominantly red-stemmed filaree and ripgut brome with scattered small California buckwheat and deerweed small shrubs. Grassland also occurred in the understory of the oak woodland, and these areas were dominated by non-native grass species such as ripgut brome, slender wild oat (*Avena barbata*), and soft chess (*Bromus hordeaceus*). Native plants that were found in small isolated occurrences consisted of red spot clarkia (*Clarkia speciosa* ssp. *speciosa*), California cottonrose (*Logfia filaginoides*), and several patches of Johnny-jump-up (*Viola pedunculata*) and kotolo (*Asclepias eriocarpa*). This habitat type corresponds to the Non-native Grassland community described by Holland (1986) and the Wild Oats and Annual Brome Grasslands semi-natural alliance (CDFW 2022b).

3.4.4 Barren/Ruderal

The barren or ruderal areas onsite were the former arena, driveway, rocked swales along the driveway, and stormwater basin. Bare soils along the roadway were also included in this land type. The barren area where the residence is proposed to be located has been kept clear of vegetation to be used as a site to burn brush piles, stockpile materials and other agricultural uses. Ruderal (or disturbed) habitats around the former arena were mowed and appeared to be regularly cleared of vegetation. Other ruderal areas were pullouts along the driveway that were disturbed by vehicle use resulting in bare, loose sandy soils. Ruderal areas have a high proportion of bare soils and past or on-going disturbance favors weedy, non-native plant species. Species present were generally the same as those described under the grassland habitat type above, but were at a much lower density. Areas with less than two percent cover of vegetation would fall under the Barren habitat type in the CWHR system (CDFW 2022c). No corresponding habitat classification is provided under Holland or Sawyer et al. since it is a human-disturbance land type.

3.5 Special-status Biological Resources

The subject property is undeveloped with areas of oak woodland, scrub and grassland, but has areas of disturbance from past and ongoing activities, including the creation of the arena, limbing trees, construction of the access road and ongoing vegetation clearance for fuel modification. Although disturbed areas are present, the onsite habitats are contiguous with other such habitats offsite with more intensive development located to the north and west. No streams are present on or near the property, but agricultural ponds and reservoirs on neighboring properties to the north were visible on aerial imagery. The majority of wildlife that are expected to occur on the site are those commonly associated with similar habitat types in the region, including those species adapted to rural residential and agricultural settings.

3.5.1 Special-status Plants

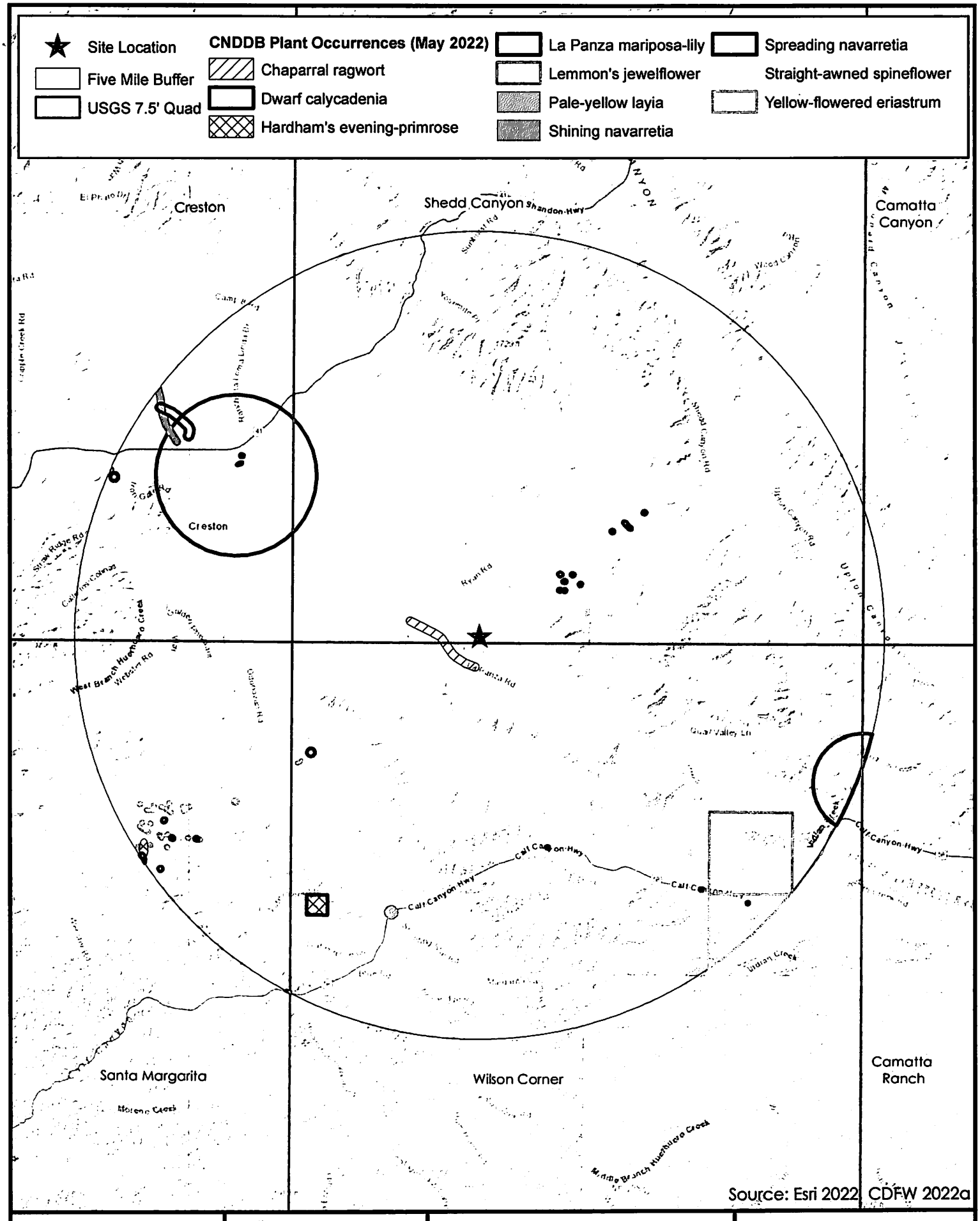
No special-status plant species were found during the field surveys. The nine-quadrangle CNDDB search produced a large number of rare plant species that are restricted to more native habitat types in the La Panza Range and Shell Creek area (refer to Figure 5). These rare plants have highly specific habitat requirements that are not present on the site. No serpentine rock outcrops or decomposed granitic soils are present onsite, nor are any wetlands or seasonal aquatic habitats present. Therefore, species known to occur in these specialized habitats would not occur on the project site, and were not expected to occur onsite. Rare plants documented from oak woodland, grassland and scrub habitats in the local area were placed on a target list prior to the field investigation, and were the focus of the surveys. Species associated with oak woodland, grassland and coastal scrub habitats on sandy loam soils in the region include:

- Dwarf calycadenia (*Calycadenia villosa*)
- La Panza mariposa-lily (*Calochortus simulans*)
- Lemmon's jewelflower (*Caulanthus lemmonii*)
- Pale-yellow layia (*Layia heterotricha*)
- Stinkbells (*Fritillaria agrestis*).

None of these species were observed onsite during surveys conducted within their respective bloom periods. All plants observed onsite were identified to the necessary level to determine rarity, and no rare or special status plants were observed on the property. The proposed project is sited in disturbed areas that have no suitable habitat for rare plants. The oak and scrub dominated areas of the property have also been disturbed to some degree over time as part of agricultural activities onsite and ongoing fuel modification. Still, these areas were searched and no special status plants were found. For further discussion and a list of all special status plants evaluated in this study, please refer to the Special-status Biological Resources Summary provided in Appendix D.

3.5.2 Special-status Animals

The CNDDB query identified numerous special status or rare wildlife documented from the project region (refer to Figure 6). One special-status species, an individual yellow-billed magpie (*Pica nuttalli*), was observed during the field surveys flying between oak trees on the site and moving between other properties in the area. No nests were observed on the subject property. Other wildlife species observed onsite were common species that occur in similar habitats in this region (see Appendix B). The evaluation determined that one invertebrate, one reptile, fourteen bird, and seven mammal species have potential to use the site at some point in time. No special-status vernal pool or fish species have potential to occur because there are no natural seasonal aquatic sites nor are there streams that could support fish. The SJKF was determined to be unlikely to occur as detailed in Section 4.0 since its historic range has been significantly reduced throughout the project area, and the presence of predators such as coyote (*Canis latrans*) and red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) also reduces their presence in the project area. Each of the species that were determined to have potential to occur onsite and the one species that was observed during the surveys are described in the Special-status Biological Resources Summary table provided in Appendix D and are detailed further below.



KEVIN MERK ASSOCIATES

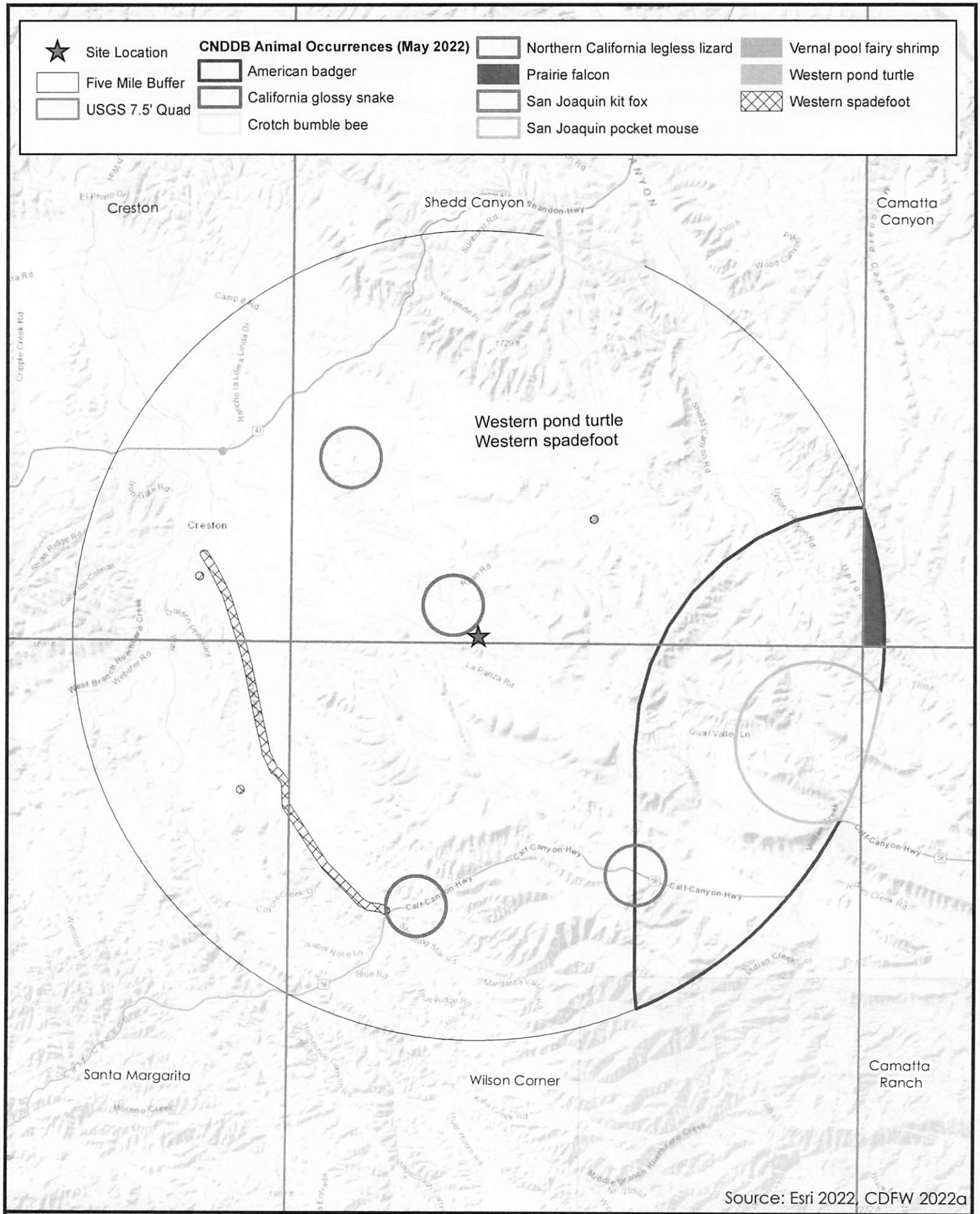
1 inch = 8,000 feet

Wiemann Creston Property

Greg Wiemann

Figure 5

CNDDB Plant Occurrences Map



KEVIN MERK ASSOCIATES

N W E S 1 inch = 8,000 feet

Wiemann Creston Property

Greg Wiemann

Figure 6

CNDDB Animal Occurrences Map

The **Crotch bumble bee** (*Bombus crotchii*) is a state Candidate species for Endangered status under CESA. It inhabits grasslands and scrub, especially hot and dry areas (The Xerces Society et al. 2018). They create nests underground for their colonies, which are composed of a queen, workers that collect nectar and pollen, and reproductive individuals that form at the end of the season (The Xerces Society et al. 2018). Food plants include milkweed, lupine, phacelia, sage, clarkia, poppy, and buckwheat (CDFW 2022a). They are generalist foragers, gathering pollen from a wide variety of flowering plants, and are important pollinators of many agricultural crops (The Xerces Society et al. 2018). They are active above ground from late-February to late-October, with activity peaking in spring and summer. They become inactive in winter using underground nests or are in soft, disturbed soil or leaf litter (The Xerces Society et al. 2018). This species occurs throughout the southwestern two-thirds of California, from the southern Sacramento Valley through the San Joaquin Valley to the central and southern coast (The Xerces Society et al. 2018). Little is known about the status of the species within the local area, and the only records in the vicinity are from the 1960s (CDFW 2022a). Potential host plants were observed onsite, particularly California buckwheat and red spot clarkia (*Clarkia speciosa* ssp. *speciosa*). There is a chance that this species could utilize the more grassy areas of the site, but less likely in the barren/ruderal areas where development is proposed.

The **northern California legless lizard** (*Anniella pulchra*) is a CDFW Species of Special Concern. This species occurs in a variety of habitats as long as there is soil moisture and cover, including beach dunes, chaparral, pine forest, oak woodland, riparian forest and scrub, coastal scrub and landscaped areas near residences (California Herps 2022). Although typically found near native shrubs such as silver bush lupine and mock heather in dune habitats, they also occur in a variety of forested habitats, including juniper woodland in desert areas, and under blackberry vines (Kuhnz 2000, Thompson et al. 2016). They are associated with sandy or loamy soils, and avoid gravel, greater than 10% clay content, serpentine and shale bedrock (Thompson et al. 2016). This species is fossorial and buries into loose soils, leaf litter, or is associated with cover objects that provide moisture (i.e., rocks, boards, and logs). They forage just beneath the surface of loose soil or in leaf litter during the morning or evening, and may rarely be active above the surface at dusk or at night (California Herps 2022). Their peak activity near the surface is from February through May (Yasuda 2012), but coastal and southern populations are likely active year-round (Thompson et al. 2016). They move through a system of persistent burrows and may be 0.5 meter below the surface of the ground (Kuhnz 2000). Their average home range size is 71 square meters (Kuhnz 2000). Individuals feed on larval insects, adult beetles, termites and spiders (Jennings and Hayes 1994). They are distributed from coastal areas from Monterey Bay south to the Baja California border and inland through the Central Valley to the Sierra Nevada foothills, central and southern California mountain ranges, to the Mojave Desert (Thompson et al. 2016). There are several records surrounding the site, including one from Old Goat Road very close to the study area (Occurrence No. 160; CDFW 2022a). Suitable habitat is present in the coastal scrub and oak woodland habitats, and sandy soils occur onsite.

The **American peregrine falcon** (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) is a CDFW Fully Protected species for nesting and a federal Bird of Conservation Concern. This species occurs in coastal areas and also uses inland wetlands and riparian habitats. Their breeding habitat is high cliffs, dunes or mounds, but they also use buildings in urban areas and cavities in trees or snags (CDFW 2022c, The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022b). Their diet is varied, and they prey largely on birds from the marine and terrestrial environments. They will also prey on bats, small mammals and invertebrates (CDFW 2022c, The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022b). Although they have declined substantially, they still breed along the coast from Santa Barbara northward (CDFW 2022c). They also occur in the Central Valley in winter, and migrating individuals from other areas occur along the coast (CDFW 2022c).

There are recent observations of this species close to the property (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022a). They could forage onsite or occur as a transient while moving through the area, but there is no suitable habitat for nesting on or near the site.

The **ferruginous hawk** (*Buteo regalis*) is on the CDFW Watch List for wintering sites, and it occurs in this area during the winter. They use lower elevation open grassland habitats, and also occur in sagebrush, desert scrub, and edges of pinyon-juniper (CDFW 2022c). Roosting is in open areas on a lone tree or utility pole. They prey on rabbits, ground squirrels, mice, amphibians and reptiles (CDFW 2022c). They have been recorded wintering in the Salinas River valley (CDFW 2022a) and there are sightings from the surrounding area (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022a). There is a chance that they could forage onsite during the winter, but they do not nest in this area.

The **golden eagle** (*Aquila chrysaetos*) is considered a Fully Protected species by CDFW and is on the Watch List for nesting and wintering. They are also a federal Bird of Conservation Concern. Golden eagles are long-lived, slowly reproducing species that require high adult survival for population stability (Driscoll 2010). They mature into adults during their fifth summer and can live 20 to 40 years (cited in Driscoll 2010). They prey on small to medium-sized small mammals such as hares, rabbits, ground squirrels, birds, badgers, fish and carrion (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022b). Black-tailed jackrabbits are the primary prey in many areas of the western United States and ground squirrels are the main part of their diet in central California (cited in Driscoll 2010). Nesting is in open to semi-open habitats, usually on cliffs, but large trees or structures such as electrical towers may also be used (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022b). High quality breeding habitat contains: 1) nesting substrate that offers protection from weather and predators; 2) sufficient prey populations to sustain the pair throughout the year; 3) updrafts and thermals for soaring and hunting; and 4) isolation from human disturbance and development (Driscoll 2010). Once a pair has established a breeding territory, they typically use that area each year. They build several alternate nests within their territory that they move between in different years (Driscoll 2010). The nests are flat or bowl-shaped platforms made of sticks that are lined with soft material (cited in Pagel et al. 2010). Eagles will abandon nests due to increased human activity and development or from events that affect prey populations (cited in Driscoll 2010). For a month or two before eggs are laid, eagle pairs are conspicuous when they perform courtship flights, undulating flights, vocalizations, and carry sticks to construct new nests or repair existing nests (Driscoll 2010). They may begin laying eggs in January but most begin in mid-February and ends by August 31 (Pagel et al. 2010). The incubation period is 45 days and fledging is between 8 and 10 weeks (Driscoll 2010). They have been recorded frequently throughout the general vicinity (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022a). They could forage, flyover or occur as a transient while moving through the area, but the woodland habitat is not open enough for ideal foraging habitat nor are the trees large enough for nesting or roosting. The amount human activity in the area further decreases the chance that they would occur, but because they are common in this area the chance cannot be ruled out.

Lawrence's goldfinch (*Spinus lawrencei*) is a federal Bird of Conservation Concern, is considered a sensitive species for nesting and may be a species of local concern, but does not have specific listing status (CDFW 2022c). This species occurs near sources of freshwater in open oak woodlands, chaparral, coastal scrub, riparian and weedy field habitats. They are also common in suburbs and on ranches. Outside of the breeding season, they use deserts, fields, orchards, gardens and parks (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022b). Nests are usually in oaks or sycamores near water. This species is migratory, and they occur in the central coast and central valley in the breeding season (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022b). There are numerous records from the surrounding area, particularly along drainage systems (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022a). They could forage

onsite periodically while moving through the area but they are unlikely to nest because there is no water source.

Lewis's woodpecker (*Melanerpes lewis*) is a federal Bird of Conservation Concern and is considered a sensitive species by CDFW for nesting. They inhabit oak savannah, deciduous woodlands, and coniferous forest, requiring open habitats with scattered trees and snags with cavities for nesting. They do no create their own holes but use those made by other woodpeckers or natural crevices in decaying trees. During the non-breeding season, they are nomadic and frequent riparian woodlands, orchards and oak woodlands (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022b). Individuals eat insects, nuts and fruits and store acorns and other foods in the crevices of cottonwood trees for the fall and winter (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022b). They do not nest in this area but occur only during the winter (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022b). There are numerous records of this species from along La Panza Road (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022a). The open oak woodland with several trees in poor condition is suitable for this species and they could occur onsite periodically as a transient during the fall and winter, but do not nest in this area.

The **loggerhead shrike** (*Lanius ludovicianus*) is a CDFW Species of Special Concern for nesting. This species occurs in variety of relatively open habitats with low vegetation and well-spaced shrubs or trees, such as coastal scrub, grasslands, agricultural fields, pastures, riparian areas, desert scrub, savannas, prairies, golf courses, and along roadsides. They prefer areas where there are objects to perch on such as fences, trees or shrubs (Audubon 2022). Nests are placed in dense and sometimes thorny trees or shrubs and brush piles (Audubon 2022). They prey on insects, amphibians, reptiles and small mammals, and may impale their prey on sharp objects. There are numerous observations of this species very close to the site and throughout the surrounding area (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022a). They could forage onsite but the oak woodland may be too open for nesting.

The **merlin** (*Falco columbarius*) is on the CDFW Watch List for wintering. They are a small falcon that preys on songbirds and shorebirds (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022b), and also small mammals and insects (CDFW 2022c). They occur in this area in winter, when they occupy coastal areas, grasslands, savannahs, woodlands, lakes, wetlands, and edges of coniferous forest (CDFW 2022c). There are a low number of records in the vicinity of the site (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022a). They could occur as a transient and forage onsite, but they do not nest in this region.

Nuttall's woodpecker (*Picoides nuttallii*) is a federal Bird of Conservation Concern at the regional scale. They occupy riparian and oak woodland habitats, where they forage by drilling for sap or gleaning from trunks or branches. They feed primarily on adult and larval insects, and also consume berries, nuts and fruits (CDFW 2022c). Nesting is in cavities that they excavate in riparian trees. They occur in this area year-round (CDFW 2022c). There are numerous observations of this species from the Salinas River and they are more rarely observed to the east (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022a). They could forage onsite and there is a slight possibility that they could nest in the oak trees but their preferred nesting habitat is riparian.

The **oak titmouse** (*Baeolophus inornatus*) is a federal Bird of Conservation Concern and is considered sensitive by CDFW for nesting. They are year-long residents of montane hardwood-conifer, montane hardwood, oak woodland (blue, valley and coast live), and montane and valley foothill riparian forests along most of the coast of California, foothills of the Sierra Nevada and the northeastern corner of the state (CDFW 2022c). They can be found periodically in residential areas. Nests are in cavities of trees and are often near water. They eat insects, spiders, berries, acorns and

seeds (CDFW 2022c). This species is commonly reported throughout the surrounding area and there are records very close to the site (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022a). The oak woodland onsite is highly suitable for foraging and nesting.

The **prairie falcon** (*Falco mexicanus*) is on the CDFW Watch List for nesting. This species forages in open grasslands, savannah, rangeland, scrublands, and agricultural areas, including feed lots (CDFW 2022c). They prey on small mammals, birds and reptiles. Nesting habitat is generally cliff ledges on rock formations overlooking open areas (CDFW 2022c). In San Luis Obispo County, they occur year-round in inland areas away from the coast (CDFW 2022c). There are several records from the surrounding area (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022a) and nesting has been documented in the vicinity to the east (CDFW 2022a). Transient individuals could forage onsite but there is no suitable nesting habitat on or near the site.

The **rufous hummingbird** (*Selasphorus rufus*) is a federal Bird of Conservation Concern and is considered sensitive for nesting by CDFW. This species occurs in riparian areas, open woodlands, scrub, chaparral, mountain meadows, gardens and orchards (CDFW 2022c). They breed in coniferous forests north of California from Oregon through Alaska and east to Montana (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022b). They feed on the nectar of flowering plants, insects, spiders and tree sap (CDFW 2022c). There are numerous records along the Salinas River, but they are rarely recorded in areas to the east (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022a). There is a low probability they could forage periodically onsite during migration but do nest in this area.

The **sharp-shinned hawk** (*Accipiter striatus*) is on the CDFW Watch List for nesting. This species generally occurs in semi-open woodlands, margins of open areas, coniferous forests, mixed woodlands and riparian habitats, and dense forest is required for nesting. They prey on birds, and may occur in residential areas preying on birds at bird feeders. During migration, it uses coastlines, lake shores and mountain ridges (Audubon 2022). It does not breed in San Luis Obispo County, and they are an uncommon transient and winter visitor. There are records very close to the site in eBird (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022a). They may forage onsite during winter or migration, but they do not nest in this area.

The **white-tailed kite** (*Elanus leucurus*) is a CDFW Fully Protected species for nesting sites. This species prefers open areas for foraging, including grasslands, river valleys, oak savanna, agricultural areas, deserts, and marshes (Audubon 2022). They nest in large isolated trees, and occasionally in riparian habitats (CDFW 2022c). During the non-breeding season, they roost communally in trees or tall shrubs at the edges of grasslands (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022b). There is a low number of observations in eBird in the vicinity of the study area (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022a, CDFW 2022a). The habitat onsite is suitable for foraging and they could roost in the oak woodland, but they are unlikely to nest due to the low height of the oak trees and the amount of on-going human disturbance on the property. No stick nests were observed.

The **yellow-billed magpie** (*Pica nuttalli*) does not have a specific listing status but is a federal Bird of Conservation Concern and is considered sensitive by CDFW for nesting and communal roosts on the Special Animals List (CDFW 2021b). It is endemic to California (i.e., its range is limited to California), and it is a non-migratory, permanent resident. It inhabits open oak woodland and savannah, riparian, and valley hardwood-conifer. It also occurs in human-modified habitats such as residential and agricultural areas, pastures and orchards. They feed on the ground on insects, invertebrates, trash, carrion, acorns, fruit, grain, nestlings, eggs, earthworms, ticks and live rodents (CDFW 2022c). They nest in small colonies, building stick nests at the tops of trees (Audubon 2022). Shortly before sunset, magpies aggregate and move to a communal roost site in which they

spend the night. This species is commonly recorded surrounding the study area (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022a). As stated above, one individual of this species was seen during the surveys. The oak woodland habitat is highly suitable for all life stages of the species and they are likely to be resident onsite throughout the year. No nest sites were observed in the oak trees onsite.

The **American badger** (*Taxidea taxus*) is a CDFW Species of Special Concern. This species occurs in a variety of open habitats, and prefers grassland, oak savannah and edges of shrubland. They are associated with friable soils in which they dig burrows. Although they frequently reuse old dens, they may dig a new den each night, especially in summer (CDFW 2022c). Young are born in maternity dens in March and April (CDFW 2022c). They tolerate some degree of human disturbance. California ground squirrels are a common prey species of badgers, and their burrows are often found to be enlarged by foraging badgers. In addition, badgers also eat pocket gophers, rats, mice and chipmunks (CDFW 2022c). There are pre-1950s records from the San Juan Valley (CDFW 2022a). The only relatively recent observations in the vicinity are from Santa Margarita (Occurrence No. 29, CDFW 2022a; personal observation). Despite the paucity of records, this species is believed to be distributed throughout the eastern part of the county (CDFW 2022c). The habitat in the study area is suitable for this species and the soils onsite are friable. No potential dens were observed during the survey, but California ground squirrels were observed on the site. Badgers are highly mobile and could move through the study area, and individuals could forage or den onsite.

The **fringed myotis** (*Myotis thysanodes*) does not have a specific status but is considered to be a sensitive species (CDFW 2021b). It occurs in a wide variety of forested habitats including coniferous forest, oak woodland, mixed deciduous forest and pinyon-juniper woodland as well as desert scrub. Foraging is in relatively open habitats with shrubs or low trees, and near water sources. They roost in caves, mines, buildings, and in tree cavities, using different roosts during the day and night (CDFW 2022c). They are sensitive to disturbance at roost sites. This species has not been recorded in the CNDDB from the vicinity of the site, but all of San Luis Obispo County is considered to be entirely within this species' year-round range (CDFW 2022c). Unless roost sites are found, bat species require specialized survey techniques for their detection and may be more common in the area than indicated by available records. The oak woodland habitat is potentially suitable for foraging and they could roost in cavities of large trees.

The **hoary bat** (*Lasiurus cinereus*) does not have a specific status but is recorded in the CNDDB and is on CDFW's (2021b) list of Special Animals, and therefore is considered sensitive. This species occurs in open habitats or habitat mosaics along woodland edges. They prey on moths and other flying insects (CDFW 2022c). Roost sites are in dense foliage of large trees, and maternity roosts are woodlands/forests with medium to large trees. They winter along the coast and in southern California, and breed inland and in northern parts of the state. During migration, males are found in foothills, deserts and mountains, and females in lowlands and coastal valleys (CDFW 2022c). There were no records of this species in the CNDDB in the vicinity, but the study area is within its year-round range (CDFW 2022c). Individuals could forage over the site and roost in the oak trees.

The **pallid bat** (*Antrozous pallidus*) is a CDFW Species of Special Concern. This species forages in a variety of dry, open habitats such as grassland, deserts, woodland, shrubland and coniferous forest. Maternity and winter roosting sites are cavities or caves in rock features, large trees or buildings, and these structures must substantially moderate temperature. Day roosts are in caves, crevasses, mines and occasionally hollow trees or buildings. Night roosts are in more open areas such as porches or agricultural buildings. They forage on beetles, moths, spiders, scorpions and Jerusalem crickets (CDFW 2022c). There were no records in the vicinity (CDFW 2022a), but the entire state except the highest elevations in the Sierra Nevada are within the species' year-round range (CDFW

2022c). Suitable foraging habitat is present onsite and they could roost in the oak trees if cavities are present although they generally prefer structures or caves.

Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*) is a CDFW Species of Special Concern. This species occurs in a variety of habitats, including dry upland areas, semidesert, coniferous forest, and riparian woodland. They prefer foraging along the edges of riparian vegetation and they drink water from ponds. They roost in caves, mines, abandoned buildings and under bridges (Gruver and Keinath 2006). They are considered to widespread throughout California except for high elevations in the Sierra Nevada and occur in the region in which the study area is located throughout the year (CDFW 2022c). Individuals have been documented at Santa Margarita Ranch (Occurrence No. 119) and Holland Canyon near Shandon (Occurrence No. 334; CDFW 2022a). This species could forage over the site but there are no structures for roosting.

The **western mastiff bat** (*Eumops perotis californicus*) is a CDFW Species of Special Concern. It occurs in coniferous and deciduous woodlands, coastal scrub, grasslands, chaparral, deserts and urban areas (CDFW 2022c). They roost in cliff faces, tunnels, on buildings or in trees. Maternity roosts are restricted to crevices in rock formations or buildings (CDFW 2022c). This species is resident year-round throughout San Luis Obispo County, and are active nocturnally throughout the year (CDFW 2022c). There were no records in the CNDDB from the vicinity, but they are known to occur in the general area. This species could forage onsite. No rock formations are present on or near the site, and suitable structures for roosting are not present, but there is a slight possibility that they could roost in the oak woodland.

The **Yuma myotis** (*Myotis yumanensis*) does not have a specific listing status but is considered sensitive by the CDFW (2021b). This species forages in open forests and woodlands, usually over water sources such as ponds and streams (CDFW 2022c). They prey on flying insects as well as ants. They roost in buildings, mines, caves, crevices and under bridges (CDFW 2022c). This species is considered to be common and widespread throughout all but the deserts of California, and they are known to occur year-round in the county (CDFW 2022c). They could forage onsite and night roost in the oak trees but there are no structures for maternity or winter roosts.

3.5.3 Designated Critical Habitat

No federally designated critical habitat is on or within five miles of the property.

3.5.4 Migratory Birds and Raptors

Special-status and common bird species protected under the MBTA and California Fish and Game Code could nest in the oak woodland, coastal scrub and grassland habitats on the property. Although bald and golden eagles may forage onsite, they are unlikely to nest due to only intermediate height of the oak trees and amount of human disturbance from surrounding residential development and current site uses.

3.5.5 Sensitive Natural Communities

No sensitive natural communities were recorded in the CNDDB within the nine-quadrangle search, as the communities are no longer updated and mapping is incomplete in this region. Therefore, we evaluated sensitive natural communities known from the general area as to whether or not any occur in the study area (Appendix D). Coast Live Oak Woodland and Blue Oak Woodland have a State Rarity Rank of S4, which does not meet the threshold for consideration under CEQA. The grassland onsite would be considered the Non-native Grassland community or Wild Oats and

Annual Brome Grasslands semi-natural alliance, and since it is dominated by non-native species, it would not be considered a sensitive natural community.

The coastal scrub habitat depicted on Figure 4 is an intermediate scrub transitioning away from the Central (Lucian) Coastal Scrub community along the immediate coast (State Rarity Rank of S3.3) into a more arid Diablan Sage Scrub in the county's arid interior. As discussed above, this habitat type would fall under the Sawyer et al. (1992) classification system as California sagebrush – California buckwheat scrub, which has a State Rarity Rank of S4. As such this alliance would not be considered rare or special status under CEQA.

4.0 SAN JOAQUIN KIT FOX HABITAT EVALUATION

The purpose of the SJKF habitat evaluation is to characterize the extent of potential SJKF habitat that would be affected by the implementation of the proposed project. The habitat evaluation process is used to confirm whether the standard mitigation ratio developed by the County (2007) is appropriate for this project, and as a basis for coordination with CDFW to determine the final mitigation ratio for the in-lieu fee. The project plans developed by Studio 2G Architects, LLP (Appendix A) and the project description detailed in Section 1.1 above were used for this analysis.

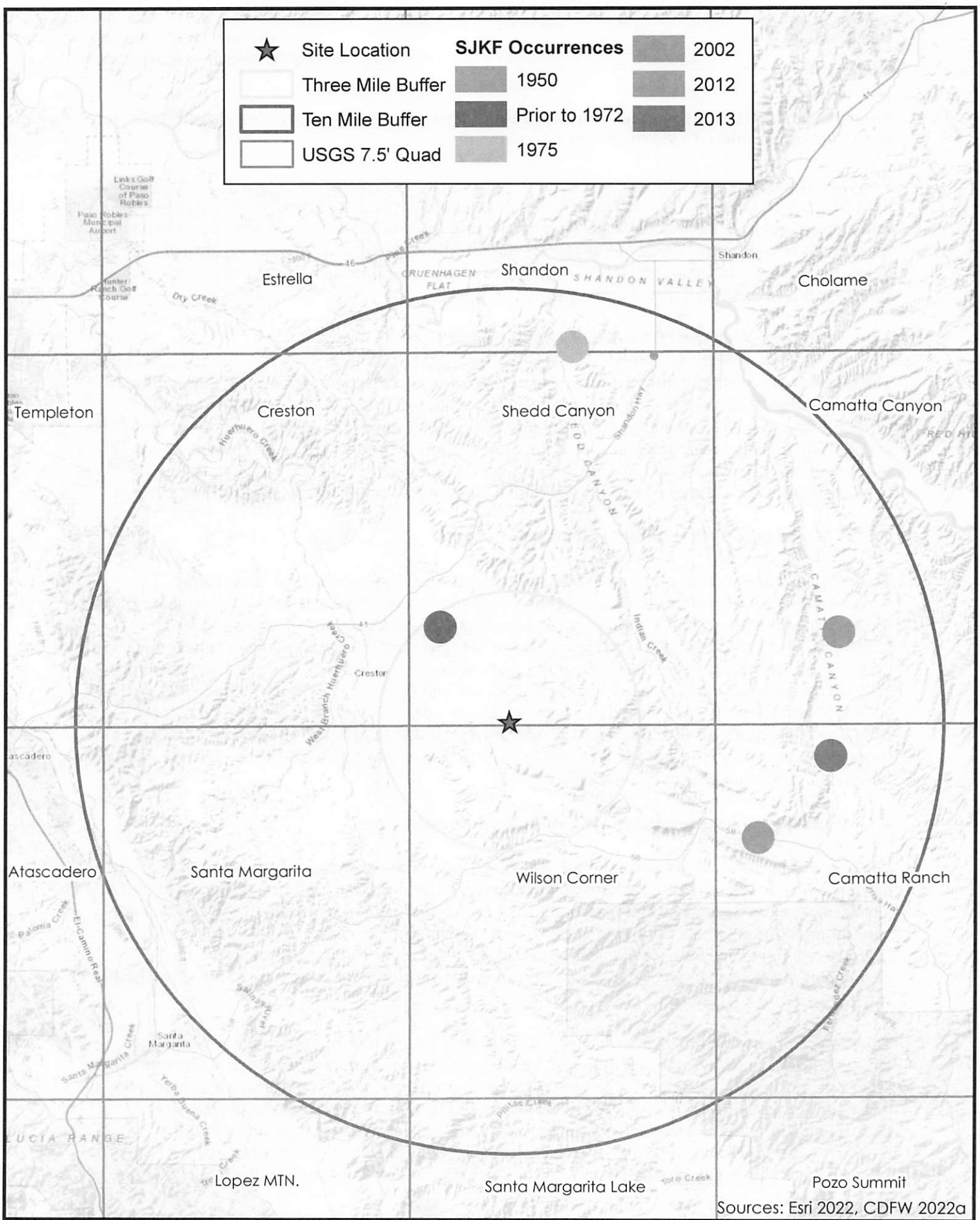
4.1 Methods of SJKF Habitat Evaluation

The evaluation followed the County's (2002) *Guidelines for Completing the Kit Fox Habitat Evaluation Form.* We also incorporated our knowledge of other SJKF Early Evaluation and Northern Range Protocol Surveys in the area (including Entrada de Paso Robles and Continental Vineyards/Whitley Gardens), as well as numerous other biological investigations conducted in the Creston and interior San Luis Obispo County region. The CNDDB (CDFW 2022a) was queried for SJKF occurrences within three and ten miles of the site and these records were mapped based upon year of observation (refer to Figure 7). As stated above, KMA's Principal Biologist Kevin Merk conducted field work for this investigation on April 7 and May 11, 2022 to characterize habitat types and search for sign of kit fox. The methods for the surveys and classification of onsite habitat types are as described above in Section 2.0.

4.2 Results and Discussion of SJKF Habitat Evaluation

The proposed project would permanently affect 0.89 acre of disturbed ground including areas of marginal SJKF habitat that are regularly maintained. The project is sited in mostly barren land (i.e., a bare dirt area that was a former arena and has been maintained unvegetated for burn piles and agricultural storage) and a ruderal area surrounding it that has previously been cleared and is composed of bare soils with weedy, sparse grassland vegetation. Habitat effects would be permanent as the site would be converted to residential development consisting of the single block category.

The project site lies within an area that is gentle to steep rolling hills of predominantly grassland with patches of coast live oak and blue oak woodland/savanna, scrub, and ephemeral streams. The Stage Springs Road area is developed with residential properties and agricultural uses, many with horses and other animals. Marginal- to low-quality kit fox habitat surrounds the project site because of the degree of human activity, domesticated dogs, hilly topography, and density of woodland and scrubland. Although the area is considered to be within the species' historic range, it is located at a higher elevation than surrounding stream corridors and valleys that would be more



KMA
KEVIN MERK ASSOCIATES

N W E S 1 inch = 15,000 feet

Wiemann Creston Property

Greg Wiemann

Figure 7

SJKF Occurrences Map

suitable as a movement corridor, such as San Juan Creek, Shell Creek/Camatta Canyon, Shedd Canyon and Huerhuero Creek. In the context of past SJKF uses of the area, the low-lying valleys in the surrounding region were considered to be within a corridor linking the Carrizo Plain Core Area and the Salinas Valley satellite area (USFWS 2020). However, the population in the Salinas Valley has dramatically declined to the point that it appears to be extirpated (USFWS 2020). SJKF has not been observed on Camp Roberts for over 10 years (personal communication with Michael Moore). Only when a thriving population is present on Camp Roberts do individuals move into the Hunter Liggett area compared to dispersing individuals out of the San Benito and Monterey County areas.

There is one record of SJKF within three miles of the site, a roadkill presumably from Highway 41, and it is from "prior to 1972" (Occurrence No. 984; CDFW 2022a; Figure 7). Other records within ten miles of the site are from the Shell Creek/Camatta Canyon area — Highway 58 west of Shell Creek Road from 2002 (Occurrence No. 52), Shell Creek from 2013 (Occurrence No. 1133), and Camatta Canyon from 1950 (Occurrence No. 983; CDFW 2022a; Figure 7). The most recent records from the Shandon area are from 2014. Several sightings from 2017 are from the eastern edge of the Cholame Valley at the California Flats Solar Project site (CDFW 2022a). SJKF sightings from 2000 and earlier from San Juan Valley and 2013 in Palo Prieto Canyon have also been recorded (CDFW 2022a). These observations suggest that movement between the Carrizo Plain Core Population and the Kettleman Hills satellite population may still exist, although is rare, and is likely to be via Shell Creek/Camatta Canyon, San Juan Valley and Bitterwater Canyon through the Shandon area. The project area lies beyond these more direct, low-lying, and lesser developed valley corridors. Additionally, the density of woodland and shrubland habitat on the site and on-going human disturbance make it highly improbable that SJKF would move through the area. The presence of domesticated dogs, coyote, and red fox further decrease the chance that they would occur. Soils were sandy and friable, and California ground squirrels were observed just offsite, but these factors alone would not attract SJKF to the area when more highly suitable habitats are in the corridor area.

This analysis determined that while the project is located in the historic corridor, SJKF are unlikely to occur onsite based on the lack of suitable habitat and separation from known occurrences by extensive agriculture (i.e., vineyards) and steep terrain. No suitable habitat is present in the proposed disturbance footprint since the project will be constructed in a barren/ruderal area. Still, the project site is not isolated and is surrounded by contiguous kit fox, even though the density of the scrub and wooded areas (and steep topography along Stage Springs Road) are typically not suitable for this arid grassland species. However, as stated in the instructions for the habitat evaluation form, projects constructing single residences are to be considered to have "unknown" mortality effects because there is potential for vehicle strikes, should foxes be present. Mitigation for the loss of habitat and measures to avoid any potential effects on individuals are recommended prior to and during construction because the site falls within the County's SJKF habitat area, as detailed in Mitigation Measures BIO-1a through -1d below. This involves implementation of measures to avoid impacts on SJKF detailed in USFWS (2011) *Standardized Recommendations For Protection of the Endangered San Joaquin Kit Fox Prior To Or During Ground Disturbance* and County (2022) *Guide to San Joaquin Kit Fox Mitigation Procedures under California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).* These measures would be sufficient to ensure that no take of SJKF occurs pursuant to the FESA or CEQA. In addition, implementing these measures would help avoid impacts to other wildlife including special status species such as the American badger. Please refer to the SJKF Habitat Evaluation form in Appendix E and the SJKF occurrence map included as Figure 7 for further information.

4.3 Conclusions of SJKF Habitat Evaluation

Completion of the SJKF Habitat Evaluation process generated a score of 61 out of 100 for the proposed project. This equates to a 1:1 mitigation ratio consistent with the mitigation ratio shown on the current San Joaquin Kit Fox Standard Mitigation Ratio Areas map produced by the County (2007). Because the project size is less than 40 acres, the applicant may utilize the in-lieu fee program with the Nature Conservancy or purchase credits from an approved conservation bank. Habitat set aside as mitigation is unlikely given the small amount of site disturbance, but may still be an option. Additional information about the mitigation requirements is described in Mitigation Measure BIO-1d below.

5.0 IMPACT ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDED MITIGATION

The types of project effects (or impacts) described below follow the guidelines in CEQA *Appendix G* to aid in the environmental review process conducted by the County. Direct effects are caused by a project at the same time and place, and occur as a direct result of project activities. Indirect effects are caused by a project, but occur at a different time or place, such as in an adjacent area and occurring incidental to project activities. Cumulative effects are those that result from when the effects of the subject project combine with effects from other unrelated projects to compound environmental harm. Mitigation measures to reduce impacts of future construction to a level below significance under CEQA are provided below.

5.1 Direct and Indirect Effects

The site plans show that the residence and associated structures would be clustered in a 0.89-acre area (Appendix A). Habitat that would be directly affected and lost by the development would be barren and ruderal where previous site uses have cleared vegetation. The existing driveway would be used for access, and while some sections would be surfaced with asphalt, it would not be widened outside of the existing footprint. No oak trees would be removed and the limits of grading would stay outside of the dripline of several oak trees. Indirect effects could result from increasing human presence in the area, and associated uses common to rural residences would extend beyond the construction footprint. These effects are considered to be below the level of significance under CEQA as the project is small in scale. Fuel clearance to meet CalFire standards would affect oak woodland immediately around the residence, but there would be no new impacts because fuel modification and limbing of oak trees has already been conducted throughout the property. No impacts on water quality or wetland and riparian habitats are anticipated because there are no streams or wetlands within at least 0.5 mile of the site.

5.1.1 Potential Adverse Effects on Candidate, Sensitive or Special-status Species

A suite of special-status plant and animal species that are known to occur in the site vicinity were evaluated to determine their potential to occur in the study area. Not all species with potential to occur onsite may be directly or indirectly affected by the project. Evaluating the level of significance of effects under CEQA involves an assessment of how a particular species may use the site, what features may be used, and when they would occur relative to when project activities take place.

No special-status plant species were found during the two spring surveys, and none are expected to occur onsite and be affected by the project. As such, no mitigation is needed for special status plants. Many of the special-status animal species with potential to occur onsite are mobile species

that would only use the site periodically while foraging or moving through the site, without using the area for breeding or other key life history traits. Species considered to be mobile include foraging invertebrates, birds and bats. Individuals of these mobile species that use the site for foraging or on a transitory basis are expected to move away from any temporary disturbance during construction activities. Although disruption of normal activities would be a temporary "effect", the level of the effect would not be considered to be significant under CEQA as long as they are not injured or killed.

The project footprint is located entirely in a disturbed and cleared area that would not provide habitat for wildlife species. Even though a number of species were determined to have potential to occur on the property, a large majority would not occur in the project footprint or along the access road, and would not be affected by construction activities. For example, the northern California legless lizard would only occur under the canopy of oak trees or within the coastal scrub habitat, and no grading is proposed in these locations. No trees will be removed; therefore, bats that roost in tree cavities would not be affected. Additionally, construction activities would occur during the day and would not affect nocturnal foraging of bats. Individuals of special-status animal species that could be present onsite on a transitory basis, are nocturnal, or that if present on the property would occur in areas outside of the project footprint and for which the effects of project activities are expected to be less than significant include: Crotch bumble bee, northern California legless lizard, American peregrine falcon, ferruginous hawk, golden eagle, Lawrence's goldfinch, Lewis's woodpecker, merlin, prairie falcon, rufous hummingbird, sharp-shinned hawk, white-tailed kite, fringed myotis, hoary bat, pallid bat, Townsend's big-eared bat, and Yuma myotis. Because potential project effects on these species would be below the level of significance, even if they are present on the property, no mitigation is needed.

No potential dens of the American badger or SJKF were seen within the project footprint, or elsewhere on the property, and any transitory individuals would likely avoid construction activities. The SJKF was determined to be unlikely to occur onsite as described above in Section 4.0, but because the site falls within the mapped habitat area (San Luis Obispo County 2007), the chance that they could occur cannot be ruled out. Although they are not expected to occur within the project footprint because it is a disturbed area and no dens were seen during the surveys, there is a chance that they could move onto the site, create dens in the surrounding area prior to construction and be in close enough proximity to construction activities that impacts may occur. Similarly, American badgers could occupy future dens in the surrounding area and may be impacted. Mitigation for these two species is required as described below.

Due to the lack of nesting substrates and low cover in the ruderal area within the project impact area, no direct effects on nesting birds are expected. However, special-status avian species (i.e., loggerhead shrike, Nuttall's woodpecker, oak titmouse, and yellow-billed magpie), as well as common species protected under the MBTA and California Fish and Game Code, could nest in the oak trees and be in close enough proximity that construction disturbance could affect nesting bird activity resulting in nest abandonment. Project effects on nesting birds or communal roosts of the yellow-billed magpie could be considered to be significant under CEQA, and mitigation to avoid effects on nesting/roosting birds would be required as described below.

Loss of less than 1 acre of barren ground and ruderal habitat would be considered to have no effect on habitat loss because this area would not support wildlife species and no mitigation is needed. Additionally, mitigation for the loss of potential SJKF habitat through payment into an in-lieu fee or credits in a conservation bank would benefit higher quality wildlife habitat offsite at an approved conservation area.

Impact Bio-1. Construction of the project could potentially impact American badger and SJKF including individuals occupying dens. This is a potentially significant but mitigable impact.

The American badger and SJKF may occupy dens in close enough proximity to the project impact area that they could be adversely affected. Individuals using dens could be flushed by disturbance into the path of construction equipment, and they may be killed or injured during the work, or construction disturbance may alter their behavior. In the event that American badger or SJKF have natal dens in the area and the work takes place during the pupping season, construction disturbance could affect the ability of the adults to care for the young. Impacts on either of these species would be significant under CEQA, and mitigation is required to avoid or reduce these effects. Focused surveys using established survey protocols are needed to determine if any of these species are present adjacent to the project area in order to determine appropriate mitigation, such as establishing buffers around active burrows or collapsing inactive burrows. Established techniques to avoid impacts on individuals during construction shall also be employed even if the survey results are negative, in the event that individuals move onto the site after work commences.

Mitigation Measure BIO-1a: Conduct a preconstruction den survey and establish no-work buffers around potential dens. The proposed limits of disturbance plus a 250-foot buffer into potentially suitable habitat shall be surveyed by a qualified biologist. USFWS (2011) *Standardized Recommendations for Protection of the Endangered San Joaquin Kit Fox Prior to and During Ground Disturbance* shall be implemented to establish no-disturbance exclusion zones around all potential and known dens identified during the protocol survey. Fenced exclusion zones shall be established by the biologist around all known and potential SJKF dens, as described below. Exclusion zone fencing shall consist of survey laths or wooden stakes prominently flagged with survey ribbon, silt fencing or orange construction fence. The status of the burrow/den shall be determined using the methods in Mitigation Measure BIO-1b. Each exclusion zone shall be roughly circular in configuration with a radius of the following distance measured outward from the den entrances:

a) Potential kit fox den: 50 feet
b) Atypical den: 50 feet
c) Known or active kit fox den: 100 feet
d) Natal/pupping den: to be determined by USFWS, but at least 200 feet minimum.

Concurrent to the den surveys for SJKF, the qualified biologist shall also search for excavations made by the American badger and determine den status using the methods in Mitigation Measure BIO-1b. Exclusion zones for American badger dens shall be 50 feet for individual badgers and at least 200 feet for dens with young. Any potential dens found shall be identified with flagging or stakes, and the no-work buffer shall be flagged. All foot and vehicle traffic, as well as all construction activities, including storage of supplies and equipment, shall remain outside of exclusion zones. Exclusion zones shall be maintained until all project-related disturbances have been terminated, and then shall be removed. If it is not possible to avoid all known and potential dens with the above-stated exclusion zones, they must be monitored to determine whether they are active, and inactive dens destroyed as described below in Mitigation Measure BIO-1b.

Mitigation Measure BIO-1b: If any potential dens are found that cannot be avoided including buffer area, employ wildlife trail cameras and/or a tracking medium around dens to determine whether they are active, and excavate inactive dens to prevent re-occupation. A qualified biologist shall install wildlife trail cameras and/or tracking medium outside any potential dens that cannot be avoided and/or to determine the status of the den to implement the appropriate buffer. These methods shall be used to monitor those sites daily for at least three days to determine whether they are

currently occupied. Any unoccupied dens shall be excavated to prevent the animals from re-entering. If the work takes place in the late-spring or summer, measures shall be employed to determine whether dens are occupied by badger or SJKF young. No dens with young shall be disturbed, and no work shall be conducted within 200 feet of maternal American badger or SJKF dens until the young have left the den. Note that SJKF natal dens that have been vacated cannot be destroyed without a take authorization/permit (USFWS 2011). If any active dens occupied by a single adult are found, CDFW or USFWS (for SJKF) shall be consulted to determine whether the animal(s) should be evicted from the burrow. All other possible avoidance and minimization measures shall be considered before the closure of burrows is implemented. State and/or federal incidental take authorization may be needed. Eviction procedures for mammals involve blocking the den incrementally by placing sticks and debris over the entrance for three to five days to discourage the animal from using the den. Only after the animal has left the den, as determined by the qualified biologist implementing the wildlife camera and/or tracking medium methods, can the burrow be excavated and work proceed.

Destruction of a burrow is typically done by incrementally excavating the burrow until it is confirmed that no animals are occupying the burrow. Excavation using hand tools is the recommended method for destroying a burrow. Use of excavating equipment can be done with extreme caution and while being monitored by a qualified biologist. After the burrow is destroyed, the excavation should be filled with dirt and compacted to make sure that burrowing animals cannot re-enter or use the burrow during construction. If an American badger or SJKF is discovered inside the den during the excavation activities, excavation should cease immediately and monitoring of the den re-initiated. Den destruction may proceed once it is determined that the animal has left the den.

The surveys shall be repeated for each phase of construction scheduled to commence upon a different date. A survey report detailing the methods to survey for dens, techniques used to determine whether they are active, establishment of buffers, and destruction of burrows shall be submitted to the County as an addendum to this BRA.

Mitigation Measure BIO-1c: Incorporate measures to avoid impacts on individual SJKF. To avoid impacts on individual SJKF, the USFWS (2011) *Standardized Recommendations for Protection of the Endangered San Joaquin Kit Fox Prior to and During Ground Disturbance* and County (2022) *Standard Kit Fox CEQA Mitigation Measures* shall be implemented. These measures will also avoid impacts on American badgers as follows:

1. A qualified biologist shall prepare a Worker Environmental Awareness Program that will be presented to all project personnel. This program shall detail measures to avoid and minimize impacts on biological resources. It should include a description of special-status species potentially occurring on the project site and their natural history; the status of the species and their protection under environmental laws and regulations; and, the penalties for take. Recommendations shall be given as to actions to avoid take should a special-status species be found on the project site.
2. A qualified biologist shall be present onsite to monitor all initial vegetation removal, excavation or any other ground disturbance. The biologist shall stand at a safe distance and use binoculars to monitor earth-moving activities for animals that may be uncovered during the work. The biologist shall have the authority to stop the work should any special-status wildlife species be found, and work can commence only after these individuals have left the work area.
3. If any SJKF are found onsite, work shall be halted until the USFWS and CDFW are contacted. No work shall be done until appropriate approvals are received, and while monitored by the

qualified biologist. In the case of accidental mortality of SJKF on the project site, the appropriate USFWS field office and CDFW shall be notified in writing within three working days.

4. Project activities shall be limited to daytime hours, and all construction activities must cease at dusk.
5. Vehicles shall observe a speed limit of 20 miles per hour on the project site, and be restricted to established access routes and roadways.
6. All excavations deeper than two feet deep shall be covered at the end of each workday by plywood or similar materials, or contain earthen escape ramps. Before excavations are filled, they shall be thoroughly inspected for trapped animals.
7. All construction materials that SJKF may enter or become trapped in shall be capped or thoroughly inspected before moving or burying, if stored onsite for one or more overnight periods. These materials include pipes, culverts, or similar structures with a diameter of at least 4 inches.
8. All food-related trash shall be stored in securely closed containers and removed at least once per week from the project site.
9. No pets are permitted on the work site.
10. If pesticides or herbicides are used, they must be used according to local, state, and federal regulations to prevent secondary poisoning of SJKF. If rodent control must be conducted, zinc phosphide should be used.
11. SJKF protection measures shall be included on project plans.
12. New sightings of SJKF shall be reported to the CNDDB.

The qualified biologist shall conduct weekly site visits during site disturbance activities that proceed longer than 14 days for the purpose of monitoring compliance with the SJKF Standard Recommendations. The biologist shall document the site visits through weekly monitoring reports that will be submitted to the County. The above measures shall be included on all land use, grading, and building plans for the construction of the residence and accessory structures.

Mitigation Measure BIO-1d: Provide mitigation for the loss of SJKF habitat. Mitigation is required for the loss of potential SJKF habitat, and is calculated as a function of the project's total area of permanent disturbance, which has been estimated at 0.89 acre. A SJKF Habitat Evaluation for this project was prepared, which determined a score of 61 points out of 100, equating to the low end of a 1:1 mitigation ratio (Appendix E). The CDFW typically reviews the Habitat Evaluation at the County's request to confirm they are in agreement with the final mitigation ratio. Mitigation may be in the form of protection in perpetuity of 0.89 acre of suitable SJKF habitat onsite or offsite within the kit fox corridor area; payment into the in-lieu fee program administered by The Nature Conservancy in the amount of $2,225.00 (e.g., 0.89 acre of impact x $2,500/acre = $2,225); or, by purchasing 0.89 credits in an approved conservation bank in San Luis Obispo County (County 2007). Given the small area of impact, it is envisioned that the applicant would pay the in-lieu fee or purchase credits at a conservation bank rather than attempt to preserve and manage suitable kit fox habitat in perpetuity.

Implementation of these mitigation measures would reduce project effects on American badger and SJKF to a level below significance.

Impact Bio-2. Project construction activities could potentially impact nesting of special-status bird species as well as common avian species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and California Fish and Game Code. This is a potentially significant but mitigable impact.

If construction activities are initiated during the nesting season (identified as the time period from February 1st to August 31st), impacts on protected nesting birds could occur. Project plans show that no trees will be removed, but construction activities may be in close enough proximity that noise and disturbance could affect the behavior of nesting birds. Also, any project-related tree trimming to provide clearance could remove a nest resulting in the loss of eggs or nestlings. To reduce potential project impacts to a level below significance, Mitigation Measure BIO-2 is required. If construction commences outside of the nesting season (September 1st to January 31st).

Mitigation Measure BIO-2: Conduct a preconstruction nesting bird survey and avoid active nests. For any initial construction scheduled to start between February 1 and August 31, a qualified biologist shall conduct a preconstruction survey for nesting birds within 250 feet of the limits of disturbance. The survey shall be conducted within seven days before the initiation of construction within the nesting season. During this survey, the qualified biologist shall search for birds exhibiting nesting behavior and inspect all potential nest substrates (including grassland habitat) in or adjacent to the impact area. Any nests identified will be monitored to determine if they are active. If no active nests are found, construction may proceed. If an active nest is found within 50 feet (250 feet for raptors) of the construction area, the biologist, in consultation with the County, shall determine the extent of a no disturbance buffer to be established around the nest. The buffer should be delineated with flagging, and no work shall take place within the buffer area until the young have left the nest, as determined by the qualified biologist. Once nesting has ceased and the young are no longer reliant on the nest, project activities can commence in the buffer zone.

Implementation of this mitigation measure would reduce project effects on protected nesting birds and CDFW special-status bird species to a level below significance.

5.1.2 Adverse Effects on Riparian Habitat or Sensitive Natural Communities

No riparian habitat or CDFW sensitive natural communities are located on or immediately adjacent to the property; therefore, there would be no effects of the proposed project on riparian habitat or sensitive natural communities and no mitigation is required.

5.1.3 Protected Wetlands

No wetland habitat is present on or near the site. The project plans have incorporated erosion control measures and construction best management practices (BMPs) to be implemented during construction that will avoid or minimize sedimentation of any offsite waterways (see Appendix A). Implementation of these BMPs would avoid any potential project-related effects on offsite wetlands, should they be present, to a level below significance.

5.1.4 Interference with Movement of Native Fish or Wildlife, Wildlife Corridors, and Wildlife Nursery Sites

There are no streams onsite that could support fish, nor are any streams present immediately adjacent to the site. The proposed project does not include any solid walls or other linear structures that would restrict the movement of wildlife post-development. The residence and

accessory structures have been clustered together in the least environmentally sensitive area of the property. Wildlife that currently moves through the property will continue to do so after the project is built as there will be at least 14 acres that will remain as potentially suitable movement habitat. Additionally, the site is not expected to be used as a wildlife corridor due to the lack of aquatic resources or other specialized habitats, as well as the surrounding residential development in the area. A variety of wildlife species could breed in the oak woodland and coastal scrub habitats onsite, but the project footprint is entirely within a disturbed area that would not support breeding activity.

The effects of the proposed project on the movement of native fish or wildlife, wildlife corridors and wildlife nursery sites are expected to be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

5.1.5 Conflicts with Local Policies or Ordinances, Such as Tree Preservation

The property lies within the within the North County Planning Area, El Pomar-Estrella Sub Area. No Sensitive Resource Area Combining Designations are mapped within the study area (County 2017a). Within the *General Plan Open Space and Conservation Element,* "Policy 3.1 Native Tree Protection" pertains to "biologically valuable trees, oak woodlands, trees with historical significance, and forest habitats", and "Implementation Strategy 3.1.1" calls for a countywide native tree protection ordinance (County 2015). San Luis Obispo County's *Oak Woodland Ordinance* (Chapter 22.58, effective May 2017) establishes criteria to regulate clear-cutting of oak woodland and protects "Heritage Oaks" in inland portions of the county outside of urban or village areas. Covered species are blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*), coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), interior live oak (*Quercus wislizenii*), valley oak, and California black oak (*Quercus kelloggii*). Clear-cutting, which is defined as the removal of 1 acre or more of contiguous oak trees on slopes of at least 30%, is prohibited. Residential development that requires a discretionary permit, such as for a land division or activities that require a Conditional or Minor Use Permit, is subject to evaluation under CEQA.

No oak tree removal is planned as part of this project (see Site Plans in Appendix A). However, grading may be required within the critical root zone (defined as 1.5 times the distance from the trunk to the outer edge of the canopy) of several coast oak trees adjacent to the barren/ruderal development site. Impacts within the critical root zone proposed under discretionary land use permits and land division applications are subject to mitigation under CEQA.

Impact Bio-3. Project construction may result in impacts to onsite oak trees including ground disturbance within the critical root zone. This is a potentially significant but mitigable impact.

Construction of the project has been designed to avoid tree removal, however grading would occur up to the edge of mapped oak tree canopies and may encroach into the critical root zones of several oak trees. In addition, the Erosion Control Plan (Sheet No. C-9) shows the installation of silt fence under the canopy of several oak trees that would require trenching and soil disturbance in the critical root zone. The Overall Site Plan (G-101) also has an "approximate location of propane tank" under the canopy an oak tree. Limbs may need to be trimmed to provide clearance for work to build the structures and in the long-term for CalFire clearance. No heritage trees were observed on the site and no oak trees are proposed for removal, however, temporary and permanent impacts within the critical root zone of native oak trees may occur during construction. Should extensive trimming (i.e., removal of 25% or more of the canopy) be required to provide space for construction equipment to work onsite, trimmed trees would be "impacted" and mitigation required at a 2:1 ratio (e.g., 2 trees planted for each tree impacted). Should any tree require

removal, mitigation would be required at a 4:1 ratio consistent with current County standards. To avoid and minimize impacts to onsite oak trees adjacent to the development site, the following mitigation measures shall be employed.

Mitigation Measure BIO-3a: *Install protective fencing and silt fencing around the outer drip lines of oak trees and avoid disturbance to the canopy and critical root zone during construction.* Within two weeks prior to the initiation of ground disturbance for any phase of the project, protective fencing, including any silt fencing shall be installed around outer perimeters of oak trees within 30 feet of project activities. Fencing does not need to surround each tree but form a buffer from construction activities. Protected areas should be shown on all construction plans. The protective fencing shall be orange plastic construction fencing or similar material, and staked into the ground delineating each tree's protective buffer zone, and silt fencing should be installed as needed on the disturbance side of the orange fencing and as directed by a qualified engineer. Fencing or stakes should be maintained throughout construction and removed only after there is no potential for construction-related impacts to trees. Should large roots be encountered during grading near oak trees, a certified arborist should be contacted to oversee any cutting of roots to maintain the health of the specimen. To further avoid impacts to trees onsite, it is recommended that all trenching or placement of fill or structures not be located within five feet of a tree's canopy. For any construction activity that cannot be repositioned outside the oak tree canopy and will result in trimming 25% or greater of the canopy and/or disturb the critical root zone, Mitigation Measure BIO-3b is required.

Mitigation Measure BIO-3b: *Prepare and implement an Oak Tree Mitigation Plan.* An Oak Tree Mitigation Plan shall be prepared by a qualified botanist or arborist for all impacted native oak trees, and submitted to the County for approval. The plan shall follow current County guidelines and describe the methods and techniques to be used to mitigate impacted trees from extensive trimming (i.e., over 25% of the canopy) and/or grading or placement of fill or structures under their canopies within the critical root zone. A mitigation ratio of 2:1 shall be employed for impacted trees. Should any tree require removal for project-related activities, the replacement ratio shall be 4:1 (number of trees planted for each tree removed). Replacement trees shall be the same species removed and planted in areas of the property that will not be affected by future development or other site uses. The boundaries of the mitigation site shall be identified through appropriate flagging or fencing. The mitigation plan shall include the details on how container plants will be installed, maintenance techniques and methods to monitor their establishment. An As-built Planting Plan shall be prepared to track the replacement trees and included with the first monitoring report. Annual Reports detailing monitoring of the mitigation effort shall be prepared by a qualified botanist/arborist and submitted to the County by December 31st of each year following planting. All replacement trees shall be maintained and monitored for a minimum of five years to ensure successful establishment. If replacement trees die or do not successfully establish, then additional trees shall be installed and monitored accordingly to meet the plan's success criteria. It may also be possible to pay an in-lieu mitigation fee for native trees impacted or removed. In coordination with the County, the applicant may pay an estimated fee of $485 for each tree impacted and $970 for each tree removed to the CDFW Oak Mitigation Fund.

Incorporation of the above mitigation measures would reduce project impacts on oak trees to a less than significant level.

5.1.6 Conflicts with Conservation Plans

No local, regional or state conservation plans have been prepared for the area in which the project is located. There would be no conflicts with conservation plans, and no mitigation is required.

5.2 Cumulative Effects

The project site is located within a rural residential area outside of Creston in eastern San Luis Obispo County. As seen on time series aerial photography, the majority of development along Stage Springs Road was constructed prior to 1994 with the subject property remaining vacant over this time. The property is surrounded on all four sides by rural residences with extensive development occurring to the west and north. No other projects in the immediate area were identified during this investigation that could contribute to increased residential development in the region. The rural residential zoning in this area maintains the general character of the large lots allowing for a human-wildlife interface and coexistence, at least for some species. This type of development does not result in significant barriers to wildlife movement and some site improvements, such as farm ponds, are a valuable resource in this arid region.

The project is less than an acre in size and located in a disturbed area. It would not significantly affect the oak woodland and coastal scrub habitats onsite, which represent the highest value as native plant and animal habitat. In the context of the land use in the surrounding area, the project would be consistent with the character of the area and would not present any additional restraints on natural resources. Because project effects on individual wildlife species with potential to occur adjacent to the impact area will be fully mitigated under CEQA, the project will not contribute significantly to cumulative effects on biological resources in the area.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

The approximately 15-acre study area is composed of oak woodland that has been disturbed in the understory, a patch of coastal scrub, and weedy grassland on a hillside in the Creston area. The property has an existing driveway/access road, and development will occur in a barren/ruderal area that has been used for agricultural activities including storage of materials and burning vegetation piles. The proposed residence and accessory structures would be clustered in the least sensitive part of the property with no significant native habitat value. No special-status plants were found during the spring surveys, and no rare plants or special status habitats are expected to occur. In addition, the site does not provide any extraordinary wildlife habitat, and the high level of human activities in the general area (including presence of dogs and farm animals) further reduces the native wildlife habitat value onsite. This analysis determined that the proposed project does not meet any of the criteria that would trigger mandatory findings of significance under CEQA. With the incorporation of the mitigation measures and guidance as described herein, development of the project would not result in significant impacts on biological resources.

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APPENDIX A

Site Plans

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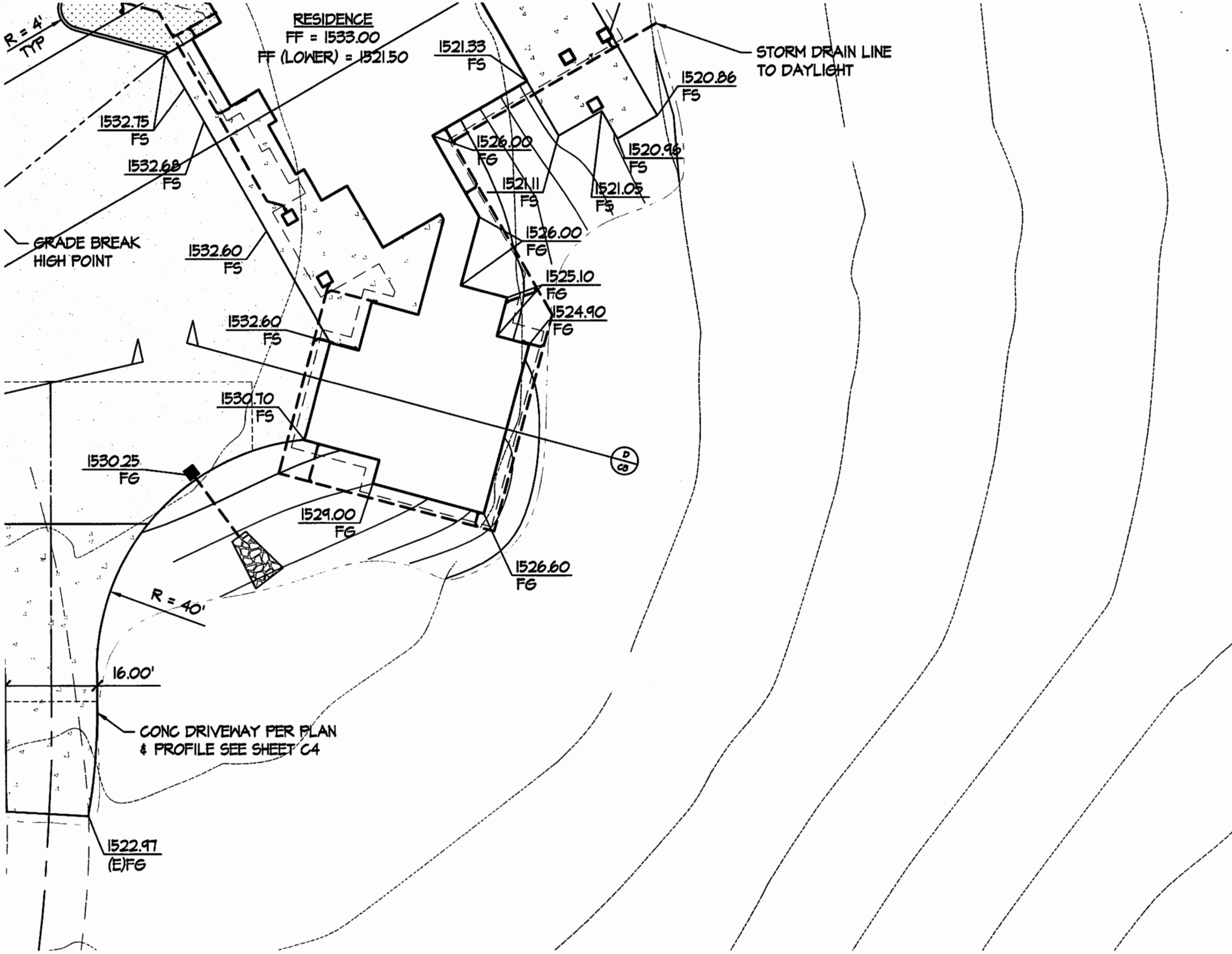
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STORM DRAIN LINE TO DAYLIGHT
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1521.11 FS
1521.05 FS
GRADE BREAK HIGH POINT
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APPENDIX B

List of Plants and Animals Observed Onsite During the Site Visits

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Appendix B. List of Plants and Animals Observed During the Surveys

Scientific Name	Common Name
Plants	
Acmispon glaber	Deeweed
Amsinckia intermedia	Common fiddleneck
Amsinckia menziesii	Small-flowered fiddleneck
Artemisia californica	California sagebrush
Asclepias eriocarpa	Kotolo
*Avena barbata**	Slender wild oat
*Bromus diandrus**	Ripgut brome
*Bromus hordeaceus**	Soft chess
*Bromus rubens**	Red brome
Clarkia speciosa ssp. *speciosa*	Red spot clarkia
Crassula connata	Pygmy-weed
Erigeron canadensis	Horseweed
Eriogonum fasciculatum	California buckwheat
*Erodium cicutarium**	Red-stemmed filaree
Festuca microstachys	Small fescue
*Hypochaeris glabra**	Smooth cat's-ear
Juniperus californica	California juniper
Logfia filaginoides	California cottonrose
*Malva neglecta**	Common mallow
Marah fabacea	Man-root
Pellaea mucronata	Bird's-foot fern
Pinus sabiniana	Gray pine (near property line)
Psilocarphus tenellus	Slender woolly-marbles
Quercus agrifolia	Coast live oak
Quercus douglasii	Blue oak
Quercus lobata	Valley oak
Viola pedunculata	Johnny-jump-up
Animals	
Aphelocoma californica	California scrub jay
Buteo jamaicensis	Red-tailed hawk (flyover)
Callipepla californica	California quail
*Canis familiaris**	Domesticated dog
Canis latrans	Coyote (scat)
Cathartes aura	Turkey vulture
*Felis catus**	Feral cat
Junco hyemalis	Dark-eyed junco
Melanerpes formicivorus	Acorn woodpecker
*Meleagris gallopavo**	Wild turkey
Odocoileus hemionus californicus	California mule deer (with fawns)
Otospermophilus beecheyi	California ground squirrel
Pica nutalli	**Yellow-billed magpie (flyover)**
Sciurus griseus	Western gray squirrel
Sialia mexicana	Western bluebird
Sylvilagus bachmani	Brush rabbit
*Vulpes vulpes**	Red fox (scat)

*Non-native species
Bold indicates special-status species

APPENDIX C

Photo Plate

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Appendix C. Photo Plate

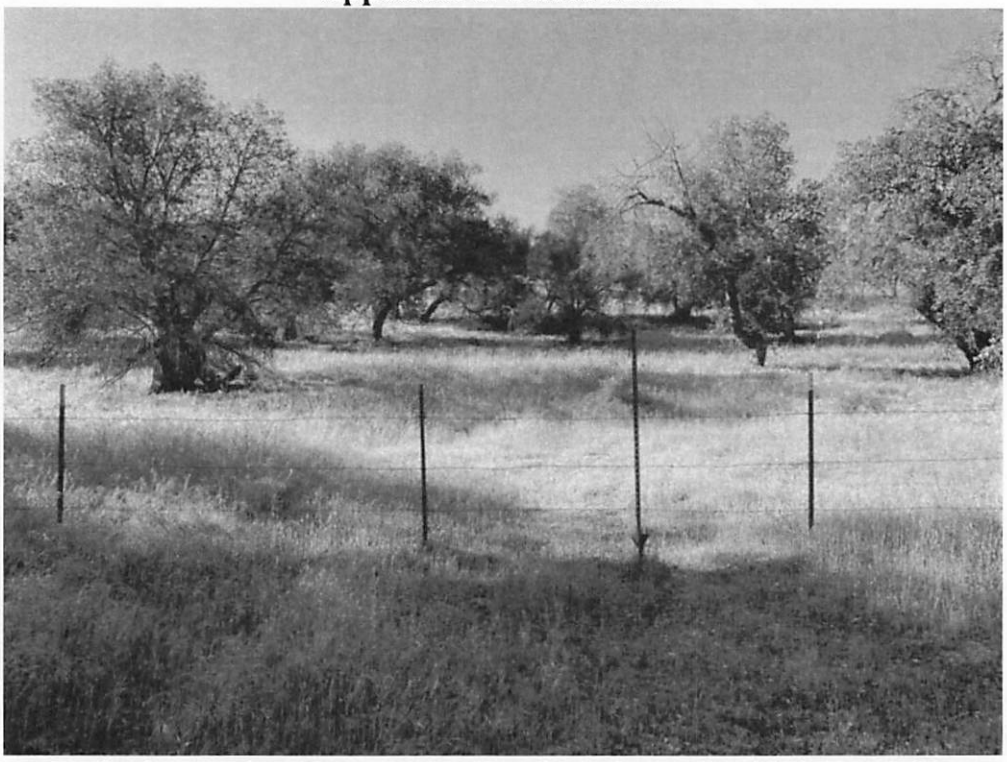

Photo 1. Southerly view from Stage Springs Road at oak woodland habitat on the property. Small open grassy areas were included in this habitat. Also seen is the perimeter fence.

Photo 2. Additional view of oak-dominated habitat as it interfaces with annual grassland. Coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) trees were dominant and some blue oak (*Q. douglasii*) was also present. The understory was composed of non-native annual grasses and forbs.

Photo 3. Northeasterly view across the property, which is located on a hillside/ridge. Coastal scrub habitat is shown in the foreground, dominated by California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) and California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*). The proposed development area can be seen in the distance where bare soils are present.

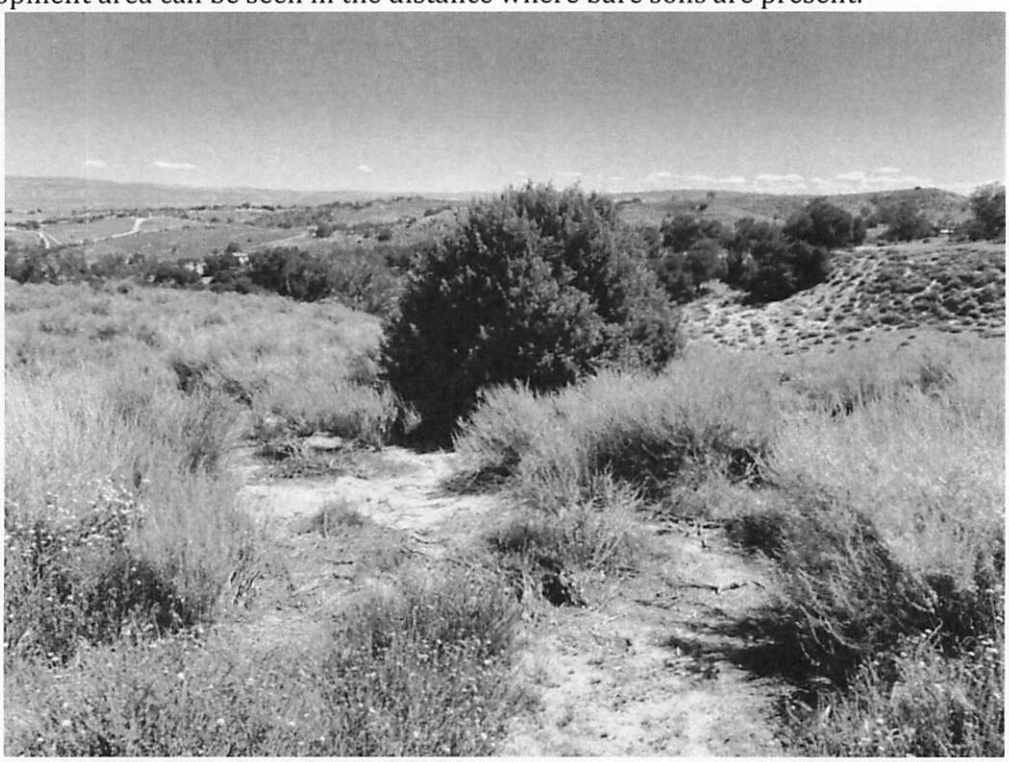

Photo 4. Additional view of coastal scrub habitat with one lone western juniper (*Juniperus occidentalis*).

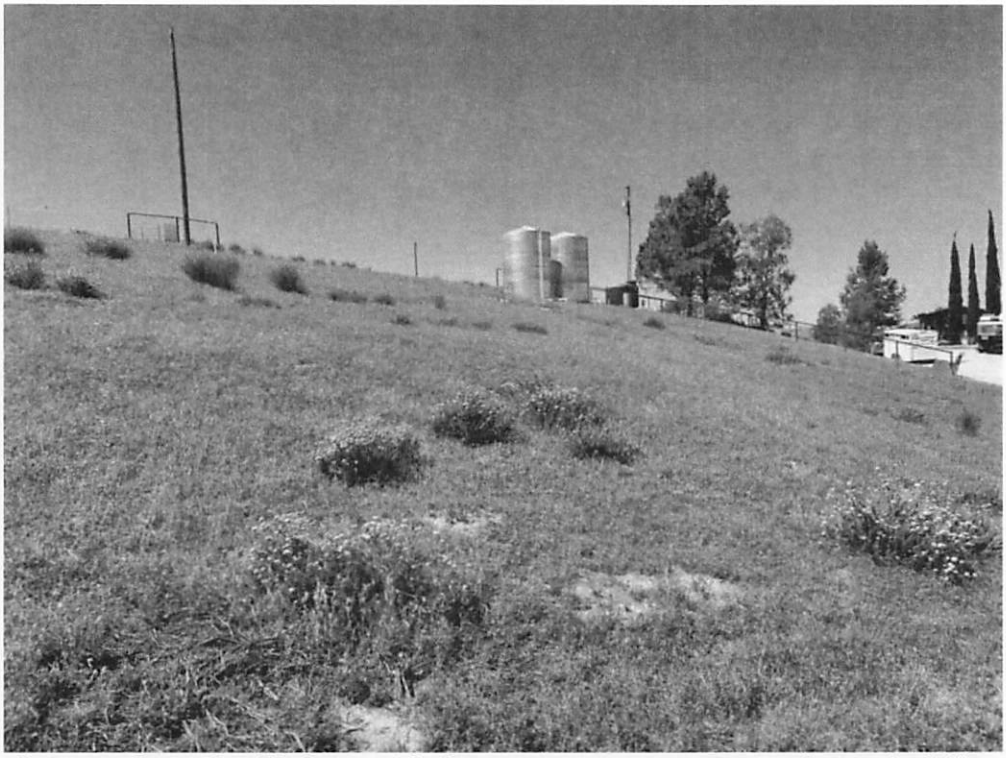

Photo 5. View of grassland habitat with the existing water storage tanks on the hill near the ridgeline.

Photo 6. Northerly view from the southern portion of the property with grassland habitat dominated by weedy annual grasses and red-stemmed filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*) in the foreground. Also seen are the area of coastal scrub and the former arena where the residence would be located.

Photo 7. Example of oak and grassland mosaic where there was a dominance of non-native grass species such as ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), slender wild oat (*Avena barbata*), and soft chess (*Bromus hordeaceus*) in open areas and in the understory.

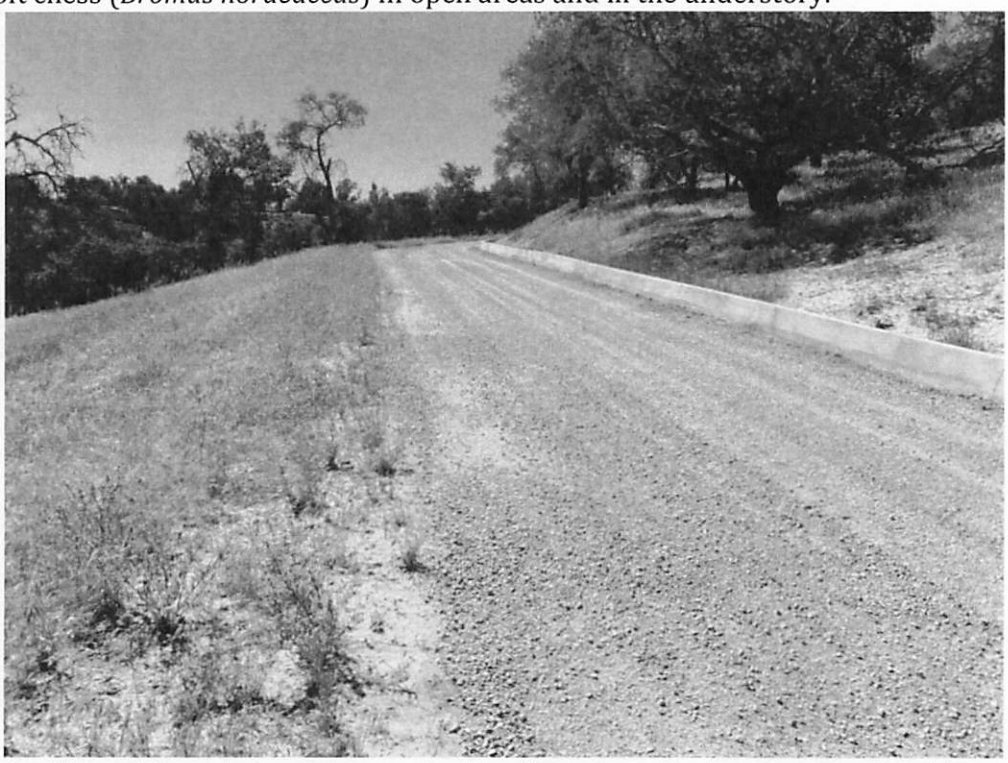

Photo 8. View of the existing driveway leading from Stage Springs Road to the old arena area proposed for development. Disturbed areas along the margin had been seeded with an erosion control seed mix of varying species.

Photo 9. View of the access road upon its approach to the former arena. This section would be improved and have a concrete surface near the structures.

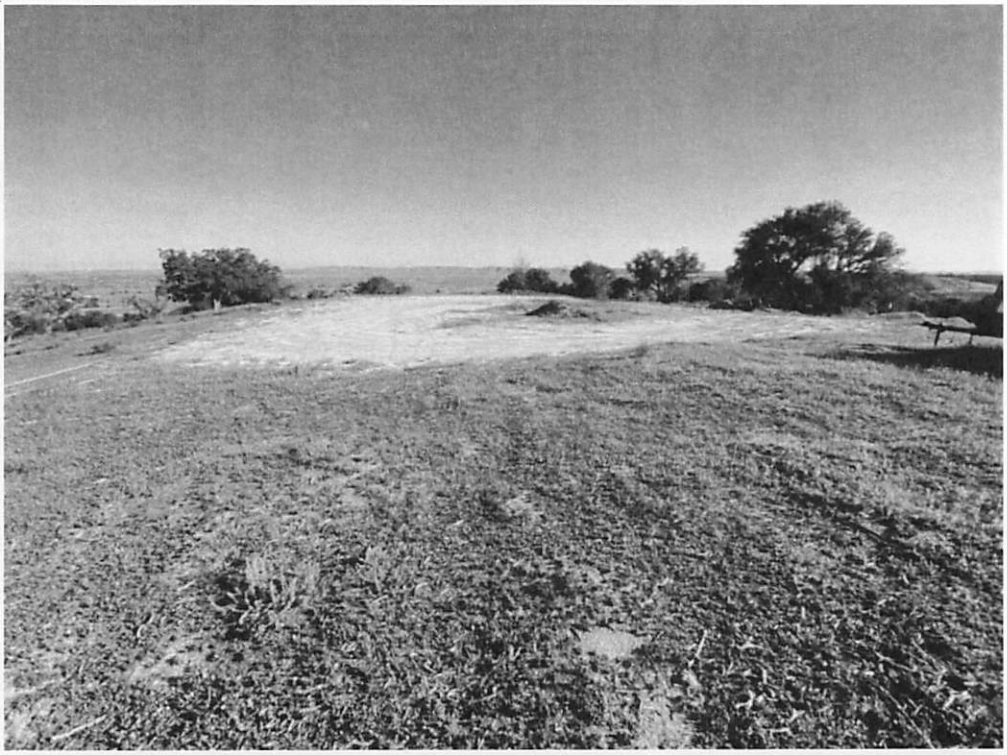

Photo 10. A single-family residence, agricultural storage barn, and carport are proposed to be located on this knoll where there was a former arena. The site appeared to have been disked and mowed in the past and was mapped as ruderal based on the bare soils and weedy species composition.

Photo 11. Additional view of the proposed home site with surrounding oak woodland. Ruderal habitat that was previously disturbed and disked/mowed surrounds the project site.

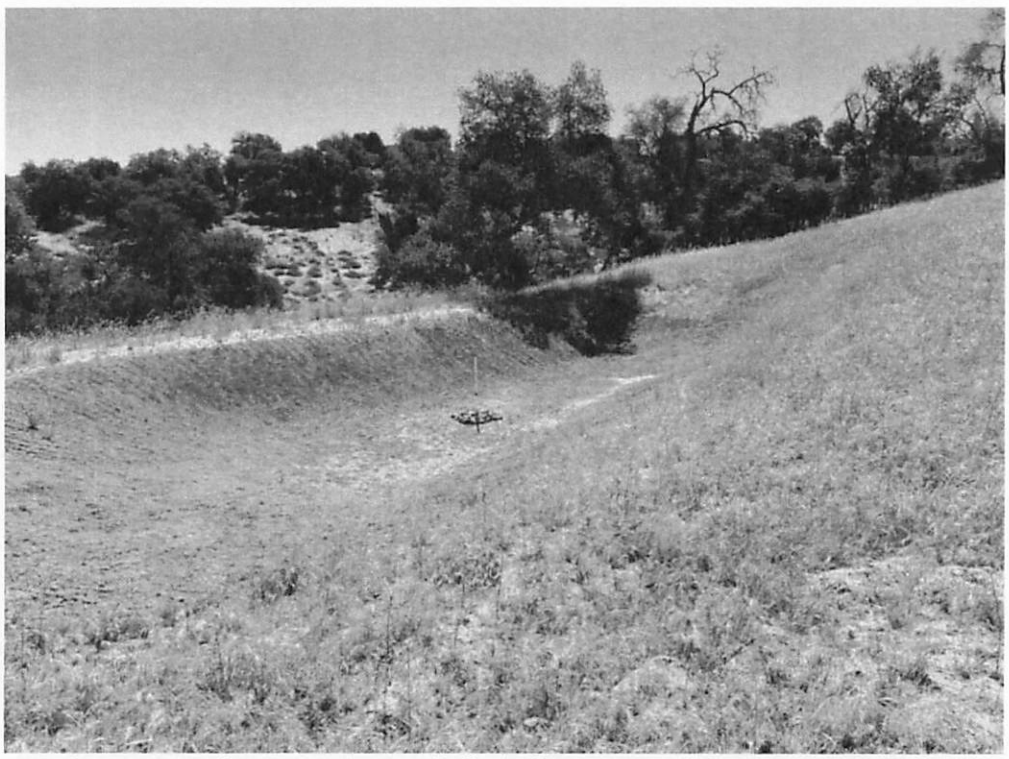

Photo 12. Stormwater basin constructed along the access road collects runoff from the driveway. There was no sign of past ponded water or hydrophytic vegetation and the entire area was mapped as ruderal due to disturbance.

APPENDIX D

Special-status Biological Resources Summary

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Appendix D. Special-status Biological Resources Summary

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fed	CA	CRPR	Ecological Information	Evaluation of Occurrence/ Site Suitability / Distribution
PLANTS/LICHENS/BRYOPHYTES						
Brewer's spineflower	*Chorizanthe breweri*	—	—	1B.3	Annual herb; coniferous forest, chaparral, cismontane woodland and coastal scrub on serpentinite or gravelly soils; 45-800 meters in elevation; blooms April to August.	**Not expected.** No suitable soils are present and the site is outside of the species' local distribution. Occurs in hills and mountains surrounding San Luis Obispo on serpentine soils. Range extends through the Santa Lucia Range north to Cerro Alto. The only record in the vicinity is from 1938 and "needs fieldwork". Not observed during field work.
Camatta Canyon amole	*Hooveria purpurea* var. *reducta* (=*Chlorogalum purpureum* var. *reductum*)	T	R	1B.1	Perennial bulbiferous herb; openings in blue oak woodland and chaparral specifically on hard, rocky red soils—sandy clay to loamy clay soils that are well-drained on the surface and overlain with fine gravel (Arbuckle sandy loam); 305-630 meters in elevation; blooms April to May.	**Not expected.** No suitable habitat or soils are present and the site is outside of the highly restricted range of the subspecies. Restricted to ~90 acres along Red Hill Rd. and near Navajo Cr. where there is the specific soil type having a cryptobiotic soil crust.
Chaparral ragwort	*Senecio aphanactis*	—	—	2B.2	Annual herb; chaparral, cismontane woodland, coastal scrub in drying alkaline flats; 15-800 meters in elevation; blooms January to April.	**Not expected.** Although woodland and coastal scrub habitats are present, species was not observed during field work conducted in blooming period. Project site is located in disturbed area with no suitable habitat. Species has a relatively wide range in the central and southern CA coast ranges, generally in more mountainous areas. The only record nearby, along La Panza Rd., is from 1967, has an imprecise location and "needs fieldwork".

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fed	CA	CRPR	Ecological Information	Evaluation of Occurrence/ Site Suitability / Distribution
Dwarf calycadenia	*Calycadenia villosa*	—	—	1B.1	Annual herb; chaparral, cismontane woodland, valley and foothill grassland and meadows and seeps on rocky or fine soils; 0-1,130 meters in elevation; blooms May to October.	**Not expected.** Suitable habitat and soils are present, and there are several records within 5 miles. Site is within the local distribution of the species, which is from San Miguel through Creston to the La Panza Range. However, not seen during the surveys within the blooming period of the species, and project is located in disturbed part of property.
Hardham's evening-primrose	*Camissoniopsis hardhamiae*	—	—	1B.2	Annual herb; occurs in disturbed or burned areas, chaparral and cismontane woodland on sandy soils or decomposed carbonate; 140-945 meters in elevation; blooms March to May.	**Not expected.** Species is highly associated with burned chaparral and appropriate habitat is not present onsite. Distributed to the east of Santa Margarita and near Lake Nacimiento into southern Monterey Co.
Hooked popcornflower	*Plagiobothrys uncinatus*	—	—	1B.2	Annual herb; chaparral, cismontane woodland, valley and foothill grassland, and coastal bluff scrub in sandy soils or sandstone outcrops; often in burned or disturbed areas; 300-730 meters in elevation; blooms April to May.	**Not expected.** Although oak woodland and grassland habitats are present onsite, the study area is outside of the species' local distribution. Species is known from only a few disjunct areas of the county—Camp Roberts, Cuesta Ridge and La Panza Range, and is not recorded in lower elevation areas east of the Salinas River. Not observed during field work.
Kern mallow	*Eremalche parryi* ssp. *kernensis*	E	—	1B.2	Annual herb; often on the edge of balds in chenopod scrub, pinyon and juniper woodland, and valley and foothill grassland on dry, open sandy or clay soils; 70-1290 meters in elevation; blooms January to May.	**Not expected.** Although grassland habitat with a few junipers is present, the site is outside of the restricted distribution of the species. Occurs in the southern San Joaquin Valley, extending into Carrizo Plain. Two historic records are in the vicinity from La Panza Rd. and Shell Cr., but there are no recent records this far west into the Creston area.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fed	CA	CRPR	Ecological Information	Evaluation of Occurrence/ Site Suitability / Distribution
La Panza mariposa-lily	*Calochortus simulans*	—	—	1B.3	Perennial bulbiferous herb; chaparral, cismontane woodland, lower montane coniferous forest, and valley and foothill grassland on sandy and often granitic soils and sometimes on serpentine; 325-1150 meters in elevation; blooms April through June.	**Not expected.** Oak woodland, grassland and scrub habitats are present on the larger property, and the site supports sandy soils and is within close proximity to numerous records. Species is generally distributed in the La Panza Range with other occurrences at Lake Nacimiento and the Santa Lucia Range. Surveys conducted in April and May did not observe this species onsite and proposed development is in disturbed area with no suitable habitat.
Lemmon's jewelflower	*Caulanthus lemmonii*	—	—	1B.2	Annual herb; pinyon and juniper woodland, and valley and foothill grassland; ranges from 80 to 1,220 meters in elevation; blooms March to May.	**Not expected.** Grassland habitat onsite is very disturbed, and the species was not observed during field surveys conducted in April and May within known bloom period. The site is within the local distribution, however no known occurrences in the immediate area. Species has a wide distribution in inland areas of CA, ranging from west of Tracy to mountainous areas of Ventura Co. Locally from Lake Nacimiento through eastern San Luis Obispo Co. Record within 5 miles of the site is from 1937 and has an imprecise locality and is likely mapped incorrectly.
Mason's neststraw	*Stylocline masonii*	—	—	1B.1	Annual herb; chenopod scrub and pinyon and juniper woodland on sandy soils; 100-1200 meters in elevation; blooms March to May.	**Not expected.** No suitable habitat is present onsite and species not observed during surveys conducted in bloom period. Species is recorded in Shell Creek area and is known from areas further east of the site.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fed	CA	CRPR	Ecological Information	Evaluation of Occurrence/ Site Suitability / Distribution
Pale-yellow layia	*Layia heterotricha*	—	—	1B.1	Annual herb; cismontane woodland, coastal scrub, pinyon and juniper woodland, and valley & foothill grassland on alkaline or clay soils; 300-1705 meters in elevation; blooms March to June.	**Not expected.** No suitable alkaline or clay soils present, and species was not observed during surveys in Aril and May during the heart of its typical bloom period. Within SLO Co., species is mostly distributed throughout the eastern half. Nearby records are from Hwy. 58 and Fernandez Creek with no reported occurrences in the immediate project area.
San Luis Obispo owl's-clover	*Castilleja densiflora* var. *obispoensis*	—	—	1B.2	Annual herb; meadows, seeps, and valley and foothill grassland sometimes on serpentine; 10-400 meters in elevation; blooms March to May.	**Not expected.** Although grassland habitat is present, the site is outside of the distribution of the subspecies. Endemic to the county occurring throughout the western half. Nearest record is from Rocky Canyon, but otherwise species typically occurs to the west of the Salinas River. Not observed during surveys conducted in April and May.
Santa Lucia dwarf rush	*Juncus luciensis*	—	—	1B.2	Annual herb; chaparral, Great Basin scrub, lower montane coniferous forest, meadows and seeps, and vernal pools; ranges from 300 to 2,040 meters in elevation; blooms April to July.	**Not expected.** No suitable mesic habitat is present and the species generally occurs at higher elevations. The only nearby record is from 1958 and the locality is imprecise. Species is distributed in the coastal and inland mountain ranges from Monterey Co. to Ventura Co., with disjunct locations in northeastern and southern CA. Locally occurs in the La Panza Range and Camp Roberts.
Shining navarretia	*Navarretia nigelliformis* ssp. *radians*	—	—	1B.2	Annual herb; cismontane woodland, valley & foothill grassland; usually occurs in vernal pools or wetlands; sometimes in clay; 65-1000 meters in elevation; blooms March to July.	**Not expected.** No suitable vernal pool or wetland habitat is present and grassland is highly disturbed. Recorded in Carrizo Plain, Cholame Valley, and Creston but more common from Paso Robles into eastern Monterey County and the Central Valley.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fed	CA	CRPR	Ecological Information	Evaluation of Occurrence/ Site Suitability / Distribution
Spiny-sepaled button-celery	*Eryngium spinosepalum*	—	—	1B.2	Annual/perennial herb; vernal pools in valley and foothill grassland; 80-975 meters in elevation; blooms April to June.	**Not expected.** No vernal pools are onsite as the project is located on a ridge with sandy soils and site is outside of the species' range. Distributed in foothill areas surrounding the San Joaquin Valley. In SLO Co., occurs in the Carrizo Plain, Bitterwater, and Shell Creek area.
Spreading navarretia	*Navarretia fossalis*	T	—	1B.1	Annual herb; hardpan vernal pools, chenopod scrub, shallow freshwater marshes & swamps, and playas; 30-665 meters in elevation; blooms April to June.	**Not expected.** No suitable habitat is present and the property is greatly outside of the species' range. Occurs from west of Lancaster through Temecula and the coast of San Diego County. The only record in the vicinity is from 1953, lacks an exact location, and appears intermediate between two species.
Stinkbells	*Fritillaria agrestis*	—	—	4.2	Perennial bulbiferous herb; chaparral, cismontane woodland, pinyon and juniper woodland and valley and foothill grassland; 10-1555 meters in elevation; blooms March to June.	**Not expected.** Site is within the the species' range, but was not found during surveys within the blooming period. Species has a wide range in the state and reported from disjunct locations in the county. The only CNDDB record in the vicinity is from 1981 in "black oak" woodland, which does not occur in this region. Reported in Calflora along Hwy. 58 near La Panza Rd. and Shell Creek.
Straight-awned spineflower	*Chorizanthe rectispina*	—	—	1B.3	Annual herb; openings in chaparral, cismontane woodland, coastal scrub on granite sand or disintegrating shale and tolerates disturbance; 85-1035 meters in elevation; blooms April to July.	**Not expected.** Sandy soils are present, but the species typically occurs in more mountainous areas on granitic sands, and is not in the Creston/Shandon area. Occurs in the Santa Lucia Range from southern Monterey Co. to Huasna.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fed	CA	CRPR	Ecological Information	Evaluation of Occurrence/ Site Suitability / Distribution
Yellow-flowered eriastrum	*Eriastrum luteum*	—	—	1B.2	Annual herb; occurs in broad-leafed upland forest, chaparral, cismontane woodland in disturbed/burned areas or clearings with sandy or gravelly soils ; ranges from 240 to 1000 meters in elevation; blooms May to June.	**Not expected.** Although suitable habitat and soils are present, site is slightly outside of the local distribution of the species. Occurs in the Santa Lucia Range from southern Monterey Co. to the La Panza Range to the east of Santa Margarita. Not recorded from low-lying areas of Creston and Shandon. Not found during present surveys of the site or past surveys for the aqueduct that were close to the site.

**E = Endangered; T = Threatened; R = Rare; '—' = no status; CRPR: Rank 1A - Presumed extirpated in California and either rare or extinct elsewhere; Rank 1B – Rare, threatened or endangered in California and elsewhere; Rank 2A – Presumed extirpated in California, but more common elsewhere; Rank 2B – Rare, threatened, or endangered in California, but more common elsewhere; Rank 3 - Plants needing more information, a review list; Rank 4 – Limited distribution, a watch list. Sources: California Natural Diversity Database (California Department of Fish and Wildlife 2022a); Special Vascular Plants, Bryophytes, and Lichens List (California Department of Fish and Wildlife 2021a); Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California (California Native Plant Society 2022); Information on Wild California Plants for Conservation, Education, and Appreciation (Calflora 2022); Jepson eFlora (Jepson Flora Project 2022); The Vascular Plants of San Luis Obsipo County, California (Hoover 1970).*

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fed	CA	CDFW	Ecological Information	Evaluation of Occurrence/ Site Suitability / Local Records
ANIMALS						
INVERTEBRATES						
California linderiella	*Linderiella occidentalis*	—	—	—	Seasonal pools or vernal pools in grasslands or in sandstone depressions. Can occur in very small pools and are heat tolerant.	**Not expected.** Site is located on a ridge with sandy soils that would not pool water. No vernal pools are present. Stormwater basin onsite is recently created and there was no evidence of past ponding. In San Luis Obispo Co., recorded only near Santa Margarita and Camp SLO.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fed	CA	CDFW	Ecological Information	Evaluation of Occurrence/ Site Suitability / Local Records
Crotch bumble bee	*Bombus crotchii*	—	CE	—	Inhabits grasslands and scrub, especially hot and dry areas. It nests and overwinters underground. Food plants include milkweed, lupine, phacelia, sage, clarkia, poppy, and buckwheat as well as agricultural crops.	**Potential.** Potential food plants are onsite, particularly buckwheat that was common in the coastal scrub habitat. Site is within the historic range of the species although little is known about its current distribution, and overall, native bumble bees have declined substantially. The only records in the vicinity are from the 1960s.
Vernal pool fairy shrimp	*Branchinecta lynchi*	T	—	—	Grasslands with temporary ponded water. Inhabits small clear-water depressions in rock, vernal pools and swales, as well as anthropogenic habitats such as tire ruts, dozer scrapes and railroad pools. Needs standing water for at least 18 days to complete its lifecycle.	**Not expected.** Site is located on a ridge with sandy soils that would not pool water. No vernal pools are present. Basin feature along road was constructed for stormwater, there was no evidence of ponding. Occurs in disjunct locations within the county - Camp Roberts, Paso Robles/Creston, Tank Farm SLO, Carrizo Plain and SE La Panza Range. The only record in the vicinity is from a low-lying grassland area with natural vernal pools 3.8 miles to the northwest.
AMPHIBIANS/REPTILES						
California glossy snake	*Arizona elegans occidentalis*	—	—	SSC	Arid scrub, rocky washes, grasslands and chaparral. Prefers open areas with loose soils for burrowing. During daytime, remains in burrows that it excavates, in small mammal burrows or under rocks and is active at night.	**Not expected.** The ridge location with dense grasses under the oak woodland are unsuitable for this species. In San Luis Obispo County, found only in the eastern half of the county in more arid, open habitats. The only records in the vicinity are from 1981 and earlier. Further, site has been disked and disturbed from agricultural activities and no small mammal burrows were observed in project footprint.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fed	CA	CDFW	Ecological Information	Evaluation of Occurrence/ Site Suitability / Local Records
California red-legged frog	*Rana draytonii*	T	—	SSC	Forages and breeds in streams with deep slow-moving pools, stock ponds, reservoirs, springs, lagoons, and marshes; usually with emergent or riparian vegetation but also found at sites lacking vegetation. Uses riparian and various upland habitats in winter and for dispersal.	**Not expected.** No suitable aquatic habitat is present onsite. The stormwater basin along the road does not have a connection to streams or groundwater; thus, would be highly ephemeral if any water runs off into it. There are no records within 5 miles, or anywhere east of Creston. Nearest records are from tributaries of the Salinas River at the town of Santa Margarita, and not likely to be extant at these localities. Although farm ponds nearby may have suitable aquatic habitat, there are no localities in the area that frogs could disperse from and permanent ponds often have predatory fish planted that eliminate tadpoles.
Coast patch-nosed snake	*Salvadora hexalepis virgultea*	—	—	SSC	Arid, dense chaparral and coastal scrub, with canyons and rocky hillsides. Climbs shrubs for basking. Burrows into loose soil and uses gopher burrows and woodrat nests. Preys on lizards, small mammals, birds amphibians and reptile eggs.	**Unlikely.** Marginally suitable coastal scrub habitat is present as this species is generally associated with more arid inland areas. Although southeast San Luis Obispo Co. is considered to be within the range of the subspecies, there are no CNDDB records from the county and only one museum record was located from the Cuyama area.
Northern California legless lizard	*Anniella pulchra*	—	—	SSC	Beach dunes, chaparral, pine-oak woodlands, desert scrub, sandy washes, oak woodland, and stream terraces with riparian vegetation. Fossorial species requires moist, loose soils or leaf litter with plant cover or surface objects (rocks, boards, logs, etc.). Can occur in residential areas.	**Potential.** Suitable habitat is present onsite in coastal scrub and oak woodland habitats outside of the ruderal area proposed for development. The site has sandy soils and several occurrences are nearby including one close proximity to the site. Proposed development is within a disturbed area that has lower potential to support this species, but still could occur.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fed	CA	CDFW	Ecological Information	Evaluation of Occurrence/ Site Suitability / Local Records
San Joaquin coachwhip	*Coluber (=Masticophis) flagellum ruddocki*	—	—	SSC	Valley grassland and saltbush scrub with little cover. Uses rodent burrows, shade under vegetation and surface objects for cover. Can tolerate high temperatures.	**Not expected.** No saltbush scrub habitat is onsite and area is not arid enough for this species. Range is the San Joaquin Valley extending westward to the eastern 1/3 of San Luis Obispo Co. No records were in the CNDDB in the vicinity, but has been documented at Camp Roberts, Shandon and Carrizo Plain.
Southwestern (=western) pond turtle	*Actinemys pallida (=Emys marmorata)*	—	—	SSC	Ponds, lakes, rivers, streams, marshes, brackish lagoons, and irrigation ditches with a mosaic of vegetation and open areas for basking. Uses upland areas for nesting and in winter, including woodland, forest, grassland, chaparral, and grasslands.	**Unlikely.** No suitable aquatic habitat exists onsite. A potentially suitable pond is visible on aerial photography offsite well over 200 feet north of the property. If turtles occupied this pond, there is a very low probability that they would pass through the study area on a transitory basis while undergoing overland movements in the winter. Still, there is no cover in the understory of the oak woodland, and there are no observable ponds to the south that would support the species. Grass in the understory of the oak woodland is too dense to facilitate movement, and the area (including dense oak canopy) are not suitable for nesting. The only record within 5 miles is from 1995 and was along a creek.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fed	CA	CDFW	Ecological Information	Evaluation of Occurrence/ Site Suitability / Local Records
Western spadefoot	*Spea hammondii*	— (under review)	—	SSC	Grassland, open woodland/savanna, coastal scrub, and chaparral habitats where it primarily occupies underground burrows that it digs in a variety of soils but often associated with sand. Breeds in vernal pools, ephemeral ponds, stock ponds and streams that dry to isolated pools which lack aquatic vertebrate predators.	**Unlikely.** The stormwater basin along the access road was constructed on a hillside in a very dry area with no surrounding vernal pool habitats that could support this species. While there are several records near the site, they are in flatter drainage areas with historic seasonal pools. Ponds seen on aerial photographs appear to have been constructed in upland areas and would not be expected to support this vernal pool species.
BIRDS						
American peregrine falcon	*Falco peregrinus anatum*	BCC	—	FP (nesting)	Various open habitats, coastal areas, inland wetlands, and desert mountains. Feeds mainly on birds, but also eats bats, fish, rodents and insects. Nests on high cliffs, dunes or mounds near water from coastal areas north of Santa Barbara. Also uses buildings, cavities in trees or snags or old raptor nests. Occurs in this area year-round.	**Potential.** Could forage periodically while moving through the area. No cliffs are present for nesting. Has been observed recently in eBird close to the site.
Bald eagle	*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*	BCC	E	FP (nesting & wintering)	Open areas near water where they mainly feed on fish, and may also eat birds, amphibians, reptiles, small mammals, and crabs. Nests are in large mature trees such as ponderosa pine or occasionally on cliffs or the ground, often within 1 mile of a large water source.	**Unlikely.** Woodland onsite is likely not open enough for foraging and there are no major sources of water nearby. Recorded along major drainages in the vicinity in eBird. No large stick nests observed in onsite trees indicative of eagle or raptor nests.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fed	CA	CDFW	Ecological Information	Evaluation of Occurrence/ Site Suitability / Local Records
Burrowing owl	*Athene cunicularia*	BCC	—	SSC (burrow sites & some wintering sites)	Open treeless areas with low sparse vegetation such as grasslands, deserts, pastures, agricultural fields, airports, and artificial embankments where they prey on small vertebrates and various invertebrates. Nests in burrows created by other animals with nearby lookouts such as fence posts or shrubs. Formerly occurred year-round in this area, but now restricted to winter.	**Not expected.** The ridge location and woodland habitat is unsuitable for this species, and the amount of grassland is too small to support this species. There are recent records eBird close to the site from within in the past few years. Not expected to stopover at the site while moving through the region due to lack of open level grassland.
California horned lark	*Eremophila alpestris actia*	—	—	WL	Areas with sparse vegetation or bare ground in prairies, deserts, tundra, beaches, dunes, airports, plowed fields and heavily grazed pastures where they eat seeds and insects. Nesting is on bare ground. Occurs year-round in this area.	**Not expected.** Site is too densely vegetated to support this species. Has been recorded in eBird at more open habitats in the vicinity.
Cooper's hawk	*Accipiter cooperii*	—	—	WL (nesting)	Mature and open woodlands including oak forest, conifers and riparian; may also be found in suburban areas with tall trees. Feeds on birds, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Nesting is in dense woodlands. Occurs in this area year-round.	**Unlikely.** Woodland onsite may not be dense enough to support this species. No records are in the area between Creston and Shandon in eBird except for along stream corridors. Very low probability to occur as a transient.
Ferruginous hawk	*Buteo regalis*	BCC	—	WL (wintering)	Open country such as grasslands, sagebrush, saltbush shrubland, and edges of pinyon-juniper forest where they prey on small mammals. Nests on lone trees, cliffs, utility poles, and shrubs from ground-level to 65-feet high. Occurs in this area during winter.	**Potential.** Could forage onsite but does not nest in this area. Has been recorded throughout the general vicinity in eBird.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fed	CA	CDFW	Ecological Information	Evaluation of Occurrence/ Site Suitability / Local Records
Golden eagle	*Aquila chrysaetos*	BCC	—	FP, WL (nesting & wintering)	Uncommon resident of mountainous and valley-foothill areas. Foraging typically occurs in open terrain where they prey on small mammals. Nesting usually occurs on cliff ledges, and less commonly in large trees or on structures such as electrical towers. Occurs in this area year-round.	**Potential.** Could forage onsite periodically, but woodland habitat may not be open enough as is preferred by this species. Not expected to nest because trees are medium height and there is a substantial amount of human disturbance in the area. There are numerous records eBird from the general area and they are likely to flyover or occur rarely as a transient.
Great blue heron	*Ardea herodias*	—	—	— (nesting colony)	Freshwater and saltwater marshes, also foraging in grasslands and agricultural fields. Nesting colonies are near lakes, ponds and wetlands bordered by forests. Nests are placed mainly in trees, but may also nest on the ground, in bushes or artificial structures. Occurs year-round in this area.	**Unlikely.** There is no aquatic habitat for foraging or nesting, and does not use woodland for periodic upland foraging. Records in the area are from along drainages or in floodplain grassland habitats.
Great egret	*Ardea alba*	—	—	— (nesting colony)	Forages in marshes, swamps, streams, rivers, ponds, lakes, lagoons, tidal flats, canals, ditches, flooded fields, and sometimes in upland where they prey on fish, amphibians, reptiles, crustaceans, and invertebrates. Roosts communally in trees. Nesting colonies are on lakes, ponds, marshes, and estuaries, but does not nest in this area. Occurs in this area during non-breeding season.	**Unlikely.** There is no aquatic habitat for foraging, and does not use woodland for periodic upland foraging. Records in the area are from along drainages or in floodplain grassland habitats.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fed	CA	CDFW	Ecological Information	Evaluation of Occurrence/ Site Suitability / Local Records
Lawrence's goldfinch	*Carduelis lawrencei*	BCC	—	— (nesting)	Nests in oak woodland, chaparral, weedy fields, coastal scrub, pine-juniper woodland, riparian, suburban and rural residential areas near a water source. Outside of breeding season, uses same habitats as in the nesting season plus desert arroyos, river floodplains, mesquite, roadsides, agricultural areas, orchards and parks. Migratory and occurs in this area during the breeding season.	**Potential.** Suitable foraging habitat is present onsite and they could occur during migration. Unlikely to nest due to absence of water source. Numerous records are in eBird from the general vicinity.
Lewis's woodpecker	*Melanerpes lewis*	BCC	—	— (nesting)	Oak savannah, deciduous woodlands, and coniferous forest. Requires open habitats with scattered trees and snags with cavities. Occurs in central and southern CA during the winter.	**Potential.** Could forage onsite during winter. Does not nest in this area. There are several observations close to the site in eBird.
Loggerhead shrike	*Lanius ludovicianus*	BCC	—	SSC (nesting)	Open country with low vegetation and well-spaced shrubs or trees such as coastal scrub, grasslands, agricultural fields, pastures, riparian areas, desert scrub, savannas, prairies, golf courses, and along roadsides where they prey on insects, amphibians, reptiles and small mammals. Nests in trees, shrubs, or brush piles. Occurs in this area year-round.	**Potential.** Suitable foraging and marginally suitable nesting habitat is present onsite. There are numerous observations in eBird from near the study area.
Merlin	*Falco columbarius*	—	—	WL (wintering)	Coastlines, open grasslands, savannas, woodlands, lakes, wetlands, and montane conifer forests where they prey on small birds, small mammals and insects. Nests in existing corvid or hawk nest but does not nest in California. Occurs in this area during winter.	**Potential.** Suitable foraging habitat is present in the study area but does not nest in this region. There are a low number of observations in eBird from the general area.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fed	CA	CDFW	Ecological Information	Evaluation of Occurrence/ Site Suitability / Local Records
Northern harrier	*Circus cyaneus*	—	—	SSC (nesting)	Large areas of wetlands and grasslands with low vegetation where they prey on small mammals, amphibians, reptiles and birds. Nesting is in marshes, grazed meadows, and desert shrubland where they nest on the ground in a dense clump of vegetation such as willows, grasses, sedge, bulrushes or cattails. Occurs year-round in this area.	**Unlikely.** Oak woodland onsite is too dense for foraging and there are no wetlands on or near the site. Recorded in eBird from the surrounding area, including a couple observations close to the site. Low probability to fly over the site while moving through the area.
Nuttall's woodpecker	*Picoides nuttallii*	BCC	—	—	Riparian deciduous and oak woodland. Excavates nesting cavities in dead willows, sycamores, cottonwoods, and alders. Occurs year-round in this region.	**Potential.** Suitable foraging and marginal nesting habitat is present in the oak woodland. There is a high number of observations in eBird along the Salinas River and more rarely recorded to the east.
Oak titmouse	*Baeolophus inornatus*	BCC	—	— (nesting)	Montane hardwood-conifer, montane hardwood, oak woodland (blue, valley and coast live), and montane and valley foothill riparian. Ventures into residential areas. Nests are in cavities often near water. Eats insects, spiders, berries, acorns and seeds. Yearlong resident.	**Potential.** Highly suitable foraging habitat and nesting is present onsite. There are numerous records in the vicinity including very close to the site.
Prairie falcon	*Falco mexicanus*	BCC	—	WL (nesting)	Grasslands, desert shrubland, tundra, coastal scrub, feedlots, and agricultural fields where they feed on small mammals, insects and birds. Nests on high cliff ledges and steep bluffs overlooking open areas. Occurs year-round in inland areas of this region, rarely on the coast.	**Potential.** Could forage in the open shrub and grassland habitats onsite but there is no nesting habitat. Nesting has been documented in the vicinity and individuals have been recorded surrounding the site in eBird.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fed	CA	CDFW	Ecological Information	Evaluation of Occurrence/ Site Suitability / Local Records
Purple martin	*Progne subis*	—	—	SSC (nesting)	Forages in developed areas, parks, fields, dunes, streams, meadows, and riparian and coniferous woodland where they prey on insects. Nests in coniferous woodlands in tall isolated trees or snags using woodpecker holes, or in artificial structures such as bird houses, traffic lights or oil pumps. Occurs in this area during the breeding season.	**Not expected.** No suitable habitat is present. There are numerous recent observations from the area surrounding Atascadero but they generally remain in localized areas.
Rufous hummingbird	*Selasphorus rufus*	BCC	—	— (nesting)	Riparian areas, open woodlands, scrub, chaparral, mountain meadows, gardens and orchards. Feeds on nectar of flowering plants, insects, spiders and tree sap. Breeds in coniferous forests north of California; does nest in this area and occurs during migration.	**Potential.** Could forage onsite during migration. Does not nest in this area. However, rarely reported in eBird from areas east of the Salinas River. Low probability to occur as a transient.
Sharp-shinned hawk	*Accipiter striatus*	—	—	WL (nesting)	Forages along the edges of dense mixed woodlands and forests where they prey on birds. Nests are in dense coniferous forests with closed canopies, but not in this region. Occurs only in winter in this area.	**Potential.** Could forage onsite but does not nest in this area. Has been recorded very close to the site in eBird.
Tricolored blackbird	*Agelaius tricolor*	BCC	T	SSC (nesting colony)	Forages in a variety of habitats including pastures, agricultural fields, rice fields, and feedlots. Nests colonially in freshwater marshes with tules or cattails, or in other dense thickets of willow, thistle, blackberry, or wild rose in close proximity to open water. Occurs year-round in this area.	**Not expected.** Woodland and scrubland habitats are unsuitable for foraging and nesting. Recorded in the vicinity where there are ponds with emergent vegetation.
White-tailed kite	*Elanus leucurus*	—	—	FP (nesting)	Savannas, open woodlands (oak or pine), riparian forest, marshes, desert grasslands, and fields where they prey on small mammals, birds, lizards, and insects. Nests and roosts in the edges of forests or in tall isolated trees. Occurs in this area year-round.	**Potential.** Could forage onsite and roost in the woodland habitat. Not likely to nest due to low height of the trees and amount of human activity. There are a low number of observations in eBird in the general vicinity of the site.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fed	CA	CDFW	Ecological Information	Evaluation of Occurrence/ Site Suitability / Local Records
Yellow-billed magpie	*Pica nutalli*	BCC	—	— (nesting & communal roosts)	Permanent residents of open oak woodland and savannah, riparian, valley hardwood-conifer, residential and agricultural areas, pastures and orchards. Feed on the ground on insects, invertebrates, trash, carrion, acorns, fruit, grain, nestlings, eggs, earthworms, ticks and live rodents. Nests and roosts in small colonies high in large trees. Occurs year-round in this area.	**Present.** One individual observed onsite during the April survey moving through oak trees and onto adjacent properties. Observations in eBird show this species is common in the surrounding area. No nest sites observed.
MAMMALS						
American badger	*Taxidea taxus*	—	—	SSC	Open grasslands, fields and the edge of scrub and woodland habitats; requires dry loose soils for burrowing and shelter and feeds on a variety of small mammals such as California ground squirrel and pocket gopher. Young are born in dens in March and April.	**Potential.** Suitable habitat is present onsite and could be used for foraging, movement between other sites, and denning. No dens were seen during the surveys, but ground squirrels were present offsite to the east. The only recent records in the vicinity are from Santa Margarita, and there are pre-1950 records from the San Juan Valley.
Fringed myotis	*Myotis thysanodes*	—	—	—	High elevation coniferous forest, oak woodland, mixed deciduous forest and pinyon-juniper woodland. Roosts in caves, buildings, mines and cavities of large trees. Occurs in San Luis Obispo County year-round.	**Potential.** Oak woodland habitat may be suitable for foraging and roosting. There were no records in the CNDDB from the vicinity, but their year-round range includes all of San Luis Obispo County.
Giant kangaroo rat	*Dipodomys ingens*	E	E	—	Annual grassland and sparse alkali scrub in areas with low slope. Burrows are constructed in sandy loam soils. Feeds on seeds of grasses and herbs that it caches in burrows, and green plant matter in spring. Occurs in colonies called precincts.	**Not expected.** No suitable habitat is present. Site is outside of the distribution of this species, which is restricted in the county to the Cholame Valley, San Juan Valley, Carrizo Plain, and Cuyama Valley. No signs of kangaroo rat activity observed during surveys.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fed	CA	CDFW	Ecological Information	Evaluation of Occurrence/ Site Suitability / Local Records
Hoary bat	*Lasiurus cinereus*	—	—	—	Open habitats or habitat mosaics along woodland edges. Roosts in dense foliage of large trees. Maternity roosts are woodlands/forests with medium to large trees. Winters along the coast and in southern CA, and breeds inland and in northern CA.	**Potential.** Suitable open foraging and roosting habitat is present at the site. There were no records in the CNDDB but the site is in the species' yearlong range.
Pallid bat	*Antrozous pallidus*	—	—	SSC	Open dry habitats including deserts, grasslands, shrublands, woodlands, and forests. Roosts in rocky outcrops, caves, crevasses, mines, hollow trees, and buildings that moderate temperature. Night roosts on porches and open buildings. The entire state of CA except the highest elevations in the Sierra Nevada are within the species' year-round range.	**Potential.** Could forage or roost in the oak woodland. There were no records in the vicinity in the CNDDB, but known to occur in the county year-round.
San Joaquin kit fox	*Vulpes macrotis mutica*	E	T	—	Annual grassland, valley sink scrub, valley saltbush scrub, and some agricultural areas. Open, level areas with loose textured, sandy soils for burrowing. Prey base consists of kangaroo rats, rabbits, ground squirrels, birds and insects. Nocturnal and active throughout the year. Pups are born in dens.	**Unlikely.** Site is located on a hillside and ridge in a more mountainous and tree-lined area than the typical habitat for this species. In general, the site is too hilly for this species with dense oak canopy cover and tall grasses. Presence of red fox onsite and domesticated dogs further decrease the chance that this species would occur. Surrounding rural residence development and wooded nature are unsuitable. There is one historic (pre-1972) record 2.2 mi NE of Creston, but the most recent record (2013) is ~7.5 miles away in Camatta Cyn. Property is within the County's mapped habitat area for the species as along the outer edge of the historic movement corridor between the Carrizo Plain and Camp Roberts.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fed	CA	CDFW	Ecological Information	Evaluation of Occurrence/ Site Suitability / Local Records
San Joaquin pocket mouse	*Perognathus inornatis*	—	—	—	Dry, open grasslands, savanna, blue oak woodland, or scrub habitats on fine-textured soils, where it consumes mainly seeds and digs burrows for cover. Locally, occurs only in the eastern part of SLO County.	**Not expected.** Although open oak woodland is present, the site is outside of the current local distribution of the species. The only recent records from the county are from Carrizo Plain and Cuyama Valley. Records in the vicinity are from the 1940s.
Townsend's big-eared bat	*Corynorhinus townsendii*	—	—	SSC	Desert scrub, grassland, sagebrush, chaparral, oak woodlands, riparian and coniferous forests; prefers mesic habitats and closely tied to rock cliffs with crevasses. Roosts in caves, cliffs, mines, tunnels, abandoned buildings and bridges. The year-round range of the species is considered to be all of California except high elevations in the Sierra Nevada.	**Potential.** Could forage onsite, but no structures for roosting are present. There are a few records of individuals in the vicinity.
Tulare grasshopper mouse	*Onychomys torridus tularensis*	—	—	SSC	Low, open alkali desert scrub, desert scrub, valley sink, saltbush scrub and valley grassland on compact soils with sparse grasses. Primarily nocturnal and active year-round feeding on invertebrates, seeds, spiders, lizards, salamanders and frogs. Typically nest in burrows abandoned by other rodents but may construct their own burrows.	**Not expected.** No suitable habitat is present. Only three records exist from northeastern San Luis Obispo County, and they are from 1947 and 1950. Species has not been documented in this area since.
Western mastiff bat	*Eumops perotis californicus*	—	—	SSC	Desert scrub, coastal scrub, chaparral, oak woodland, and coniferous forest. Roosts colonially in rock crevasses, buildings, tunnels and in trees. Does not undergo seasonal migrations or prolonged hibernation, and is present in this area year-round.	**Potential.** Suitable foraging habitat is present onsite, but there are no rock formations or buildings that offer adequate protection for roosting. Potentially could roost in oak woodland if large cavities are present. No records are in the CNDDB from the vicinity, but known to occur in the area.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Fed	CA	CDFW	Ecological Information	Evaluation of Occurrence/ Site Suitability / Local Records
Western red bat	*Lasiurus blossevillii*	—	—	SSC	Grasslands, riparian forest, shrublands, open woodlands, and orchards. Roosts in forests and woodlands in trees or occasionally shrubs. Roost sites are in the foliage of riparian trees or in urban areas. Occurs throughout the state in summer, and in winter in coastal areas south of San Francisco.	**Unlikely.** May forage over the site on occasion, but generally found in riparian habitats where they roost. No records were recorded in the vicinity in the CNDDB, but known to occur in this area.
Yuma myotis	*Myotis yumanensis*	—	—	—	Open forests and woodlands and forages over water sources such as ponds, streams, and stock tanks. Roosts in buildings, mines, caves, crevices and under bridges; night roosts in more open areas such as under tree bark or tree cavities. Occurs in this region yearlong.	**Potential.** Oak woodland is suitable for foraging and there are water sources at offsite farm ponds. Could night roost in trees but there are no structures for maternity or winter roosts. There were no records in the CNDDB, but their year-round range includes all of San Luis Obispo County.

**E = Endangered; T = Threatened; C = Candidate; BCC = Birds of Conservation Concern; SSC = Species of Special Concern; FP = Fully Protected; WL = Watch List; '—' = no status; California Natural Diversity Database (California Department of Fish and Wildlife 2022a); Special Animals List (California Department of Fish and Wildlife 2022b); California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System (CDFW 2022c); A Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of California (California Herps 2022); eBird (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022a); All About Birds (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology 2022b); Guide to North American Birds (Audubon 2022); Birds of Conservation Concern (USFWS 2022).*

SENSITIVE NATURAL COMMUNITIES	
Central Coast Arroyo Willow Forest — State Rarity Rank S3.2	**Absent.** Dense closed-canopy forest characterized by arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*) and/or Pacific willow (*S. lasiandra*). Occurs on moist to saturated sandy or gravelly soil in floodplains, low-gradient stream reaches and dune slack ponds. No willows occur on this arid site.
Central Coast Cottonwood-Sycamore Riparian Forest — State Rarity Rank S3.2	**Absent.** Moderately closed broadleafed riparian forest dominated by California sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) and Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), with lower cover by coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*). The understory is usually dense thickets of willows (*Salix* spp.), mulefat (*Baccharis pilularis*) and nettles (*Urtica* spp.). No riparian habitat habitat occurs on this arid site.
Central Coast Riparian Scrub — State Rarity Rank S3	**Absent.** A dense, shrubby streamside thicket dominated by any of several species of willows (*Salix* spp.) and has coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*) as a secondary component. Occurs on sand or gravel bars along rivers and streams with ground water close to the surface. Also occurs around dune slack ponds. No willows occur on this arid site.

SENSITIVE NATURAL COMMUNITIES	
Central (Lucian) Coastal Scrub — State Rarity Rank S3.3	**Absent.** Characterized by dense shrubs dominated by coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*), California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), seaside wild buckwheat (*Eriogonum latifolium*), mock heather (*Ericameria ericoides*), saw-toothed goldenbush (*Hazardia squarrosa*), and dune lupine (*Lupinus chamissonis*). It occurs on the ocean side of the Santa Lucia Range from Monterey and Point Conception on exposed, often south-facing slopes with shallow soils. This community occurs in coastal locations and although scrub habitat is present onsite, it more closely aligns with the California Buckwheat Scrub or California Juniper Woodland alliances found in more inland areas.
Cismontane Juniper Woodland and Scrub — State Rarity Rank S2.1	**Absent.** An open community of scattered, shrubby California juniper (*Juniperus californica*) with a grassland understory. Occurs in xeric sites in the Inner South Coast Ranges. There were only two California juniper shrubs in the study area, which would not meet the definition of a woodland or scrub community dominated by this species. Study area occurs in an outlying area where scattered junipers are intermixed with other communities.
Coastal and Valley Freshwater Marsh — State Rarity Rank S2.1	**Absent.** Occurs in permanently flooded sites with freshwater and lacking significant flow, dominated by perennial, emergent vegetation such as bulrushes (*Scirpus* sp. and *Schoenoplectus* sp.) and cattails (*Typha* sp.). No wetland vegetation is onsite.
Freshwater Seep — State Rarity Rank S3.2	**Absent.** Occurs in permanently moist or wet soil that seeps from surfacing groundwater or water table, usually within grassland or meadow communities. Composed of mainly perennial herbs, especially sedges (*Carex* spp.) and rushes (*Juncus* spp.). No wetland vegetation is onsite.
Northern Vernal Pool — State Rarity Rank S2.1	**Absent.** Seasonally wet depressions often underlain by hardpan or claypan soils that may have a hummocky topography with mounds intervening between the depressions. They fill after winter rains and dry completely after the rains have ceased. Herbaceous community is comprised of herbs and grasses adapted to seasonal inundation and grow in rings as pools dry. The principal endemic vernal pool plant species in this region is shining navarretia (*Navarretia nigelliformis* ssp. *radians*), coyote thistle (*Erygium vaseyi*) with lower occurrence of Hoover's button celery (*Eryngium aristulatum* var. *hooveri*). Northern Vernal Pools occur in the Sierra Valley, from Mendocino to Livermore, and the Central Coast Vernal Pool Region, which includes the Monterey Bay area, the inner coast ranges of San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles and Camatta. The site is within the area generally mapped for the vernal pool region but occurs on a hillside/ridge with well-drained soils that would not pond water. No natural topographic depressions or characteristic plant species of this habitat are present.

SENSITIVE NATURAL COMMUNITIES	
Valley Needlegrass Grassland — State Rarity Rank S3.1	**Absent.** Often occurs on clay soils that are moist or saturated in winter and very dry in the summer. It is dominated by purple needle grass (*Stipa pulchra*), but may have higher percent cover overall by native and introduced annual grassland species. No purple needle grass or areas of native bunchgrasses occur onsite.
Valley Oak Woodland — State Rarity Rank S2	**Absent.** Valley oak (*Quercus lobata*) is usually the only tree species and is an open savanna with grassland understory. Most stands have large trees with open canopies. Occurs on well-drained alluvial soils usually in valley bottoms below 2000 feet (610 meters) in elevation. Only one valley oak tree was present as a component of the Oak Woodland onsite, and does not constitute this habitat type.
Vernal Marsh — State Rarity Rank S2	**Absent.** Vegetated by low, annual herbs such as sedges (*Carex* spp.) and rushes (*Juncus* spp.). Has marshy conditions or standing water following winter rains but is reduced or completely dry by summer. Often found at the transition between Coastal and Valley Freshwater Marsh and drier upland grassland. No wetland vegetation is present onsite.

Sources: Preliminary Descriptions of the Terrestrial Natural Communities of California (Holland 1986); California Natural Diversity Database (California Department of Fish and Wildlife 2022a); California Sensitive Natural Communities (California Department of Fish and Wildlife 2022b).

APPENDIX E

SJKF Habitat Evaluation Form

KMA

Kit Fox Habitat Evaluation Form

Cover Sheet

Project Name Wiemann Creston Property **Date** June 8, 2022

Project Location* 3400 Stage Springs Road, Creston, CA 93432 (southeast of the intersection of La Panza Road with Highway 41, east of Creston), APN 043-121-004

*Please refer to the Site Vicinity Map on U.S.G.S. 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle.

U.S.G.S. Quad Map Name Shedd Canyon and Wilson Corner (T 27 S, R 14 E)

Lat/Long or UTM coordinates (if available)

Latitude 35.501182° N Longitude -120.460042° W

Project Description: Construction of a single-family residence, agricultural storage building and detached carport.

Project Size 1.0 **Acres** **Amount of Kit Fox Habitat Affected** 0.89 **Acres**

Quantity of WHR Habitat Types Impacted (i.e. - 2 acres annual grassland, 3 acres blue oak woodland)

WHR type Barren (Ruderal) ~0.79 Acres

WHR type Coastal Scrub ~0.06 Acres

WHR type Oak Woodland ~0.04 Acres

Comments: Project impact area is located in a cleared area on the top of a hillside/ridge that has been used for agricultural activities, including an arena, staging materials and burning brush piles. Larger property is composed of gentle to steep hills with coast live oak woodland, scrub, and grassland habitats. It is surrounded by rural residential development in a mostly chaparral and scrub setting with scattered coast live oak woodland that segues into the drier blue oak woodland of the interior. A very small amount of coastal scrub is present along the margin of the disturbance area and a small amount of area mapped as oak woodland is adjacent to the construction area, but no individual trees are proposed for removal.

Form Completed By: Kevin Merk, Kevin Merk Associates LLC

San Joaquin Kit Fox Habitat Evaluation form

Is the project area within 10 miles of a recorded San Joaquin kit fox observation or within contiguous suitable habitat as defined in question 2 (A-E)

Yes - Continue with evaluation form
No - Evaluation form/surveys are not necessary

1. Importance of the project area relative to Recovery Plan for Upland Species of the San Joaquin Valley, California (Williams et al., 1998)

A. Project would block or degrade an existing corridor linking core populations or isolate a subpopulation (20)
B. Project is within core population (15)
C. Project area is identified within satellite populations (12)
D. Project area is within a corridor linking satellite populations (10)
E. Project area is not within any of the previously described areas but is within known kit fox range (5)

2. Habitat characteristics of project area.

A. Annual grassland or saltbush scrub present >50% of site (15)
B. Grassland or saltbush scrub present but comprises<50% of project area (10)
C. Oak savannah present on >50% of site (8)
D. Fallow ag fields or grain/alfalfa crops (7)
E. Orchards/vineyards (5)
F. Intensively maintained row crops or suitable vegetation absent (0)

3. Isolation of project area.

A. Project area surrounded by contiguous kit fox habitat as described in Question 2a-e (15)
B. Project area adjacent to at least 40 acres of contiguous habitat or part of an existing corridor (10)
C. Project area adjacent to <40 acres of habitat but linked by existing corridor (i.e., river, canal, aqueduct) (7)
D. Project area surrounded by ag but less than 200 yards from habitat (5)
E. Project area completely isolated by row crops or development and is greater than 200 yards from potential habitat (0)

4. Potential for increased mortality as a result of project implementation. Mortality may come from direct (e.g., - construction related) or indirect (e.g., - vehicle strikes due to increases in post development traffic) sources.

A. Increased mortality likely (10)
B. Unknown mortality effects (5)
C. No long-term effect on mortality (0)

Form Revised 03-02

5. Amount of potential kit fox habitat affected.

A. >320 acres (10)
B. 160 - 319 acres (7)
C. 80 - 159 acres (5)
D. 40 - 79 acres (3)
E. < 40 acres (1)

6. Results of project implementation.

A. Project site will be permanently converted and will no longer support foxes (10)
B. Project area will be temporarily impacted but will require periodic disturbance for ongoing maintenance (7)
C. Project area will be temporarily impacted and no maintenance necessary (5)
D. Project will result in changes to agricultural crops (2)
E. No habitat impacts (0)

7. Project Shape

A. Single Block (10)
B. Linear with > 40 foot right-of-way (5)
C. Linear with < 40 foot right-of-way (3)

8. Have San Joaquin kit foxes been observed within 3 miles of the project area within the last 10 years?

A. Yes (10)
B. No (0)

Scoring

Recovery importance	20
Habitat condition	0
Isolation	15
Mortality	5
Quantity of habitat impacted	1
Project results	10
Project shape	10
Recent observations	0

TOTAL 61