

## INFORMATION SUMMARY



- A. Report Date: May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021 (Updated February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022)
- B. Report Title: Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) Focused Burrowing Owl Surveys for the 24.73-Acre Dauchy Avenue Project Site including 3.31-acre Offsite Impact Area, City of Riverside, Western Riverside County, California.
- C. Case #: PR-2021-001030
- D. APN#s: 276-040-011, 276-040-012, and 276-050-029. Offsite portions of 276-050-030, -031, 276-040-007, -008, -009, -010, and Right-of-Ways
- E. Project Location: USGS 7.5' Series Riverside East Quadrangle, Township 3 South, Range 4 West, Section 18, Southwest of Dauchy Avenue and Ferrari Drive intersection as shown in Attachment A, *Project Site Map*.
- F. Applicant: Signature Reality Capital Corporation  
1901 Newport Boulevard, Suite 350  
Costa Mesa, CA 92627  
Contact: Al Cohen (949) 636-7261
- G. MOU Principal: Cadre Environmental  
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Contact: Ruben S. Ramirez, Jr. (949) 300-0212  
USFWS permit #TE780566-14, CDFW permit #02243
- H. Date of Surveys: November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020, March 24<sup>th</sup>, April 20<sup>th</sup>, May 5<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021.
- I. Summary: The 24.73-acre project site including 3.31-acre offsite impact area (28.04-acre total) is located within the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) Lake Mathews/Woodcrest Plan Area. The project site is not located within an MSHCP criteria area cell, group, or linkage area. The project site is dominated by disturbed/non-native grassland, Riversidean sage scrub, and giant reed/southern willow scrub habitat as shown in Attachment, B *Biological Resources Map*, and Attachments C to F, *Current Project Site Photographs*.

The MSHCP has determined that all of the sensitive species potentially occurring onsite have been adequately covered (MSHCP Table 2-2 Species Considered for Conservation Under the MSHCP Since 1999, 2004). However, additional surveys may be required wildlife species if suitable habitat is documented onsite and/or if the property is located within a predetermined “Survey Area” (MSHCP 2004).

The project site occurs completely within a predetermined Survey Area for the burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*). Suitable burrowing owl burrows potentially utilized for refugia and/or nesting were documented within the property including foraging habitat documented throughout the project site. Therefore, focused surveys were conducted by Cadre Environmental during the spring of 2021.

No burrowing owl or characteristic sign such as white-wash, feathers, tracks, or pellets were detected within or immediately adjacent to the project site during the 2021 survey effort.

At a minimum, an MSHCP 30-day preconstruction survey will be required immediately prior to the initiation of construction to ensure protection for this species and compliance with the conservation goals as outlined in the MSHCP.

**SUBJECT**

## **Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Focused Burrowing Owl Surveys for the 24.73-acre Dauchy Road Project Site, City of Riverside, Western Riverside County, California.**

This report presents the findings of focused Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) burrowing owl surveys conducted for the 24.73-acre Dauchy Avenue project site including adjacent 3.31-acre offsite impact area (28.04-acre total) located within assessor's parcel numbers (APNs) onsite 276-040-011, 276-040-012, and 276-050-029, offsite portions of 276-050-030, -031, 276-040-007, -008, -009, -010, and Right-of-Ways (Project Site).

The Project Site is located within United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' Series Riverside East Quadrangle, Riverside County, Township 3 South, Range 4 West, Section 18, extending southwest of the Dauchy Avenue and Ferrari Drive intersection, as shown in Attachment A, *Project Site Map*.

The Project Site is located within the MSHCP Lake Mathews/Woodcrest Plan Area and is not located within an MSHCP criteria area cell, group, or linkage area.

This report incorporates the findings of a literature review, compilation of existing documentation, and a field reconnaissance and focused surveys conducted on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020, March 24<sup>th</sup>, April 20<sup>th</sup>, May 5<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

This documentation is consistent with accepted scientific and technical standards and the requirements of the MSHCP. When appropriate, general biological resources are described in summary form in an effort to provide the reader with adequate background information.

### **METHODS OF STUDY**

#### **APPROACH**

Prior to visiting the Project Site, a review of all available and relevant data on the biological characteristics, sensitive habitats, and species potentially present on or adjacent to the Project Site was conducted. Additionally, aerial photography, and USGS topographic map data were examined. After reviewing the available information, Cadre Environmental conducted a physical site assessment/burrow and focused survey.

As required by the MSHCP, and during the initial property assessment process, the Project Site APN was searched using the Regional Conservation Authority (RCA) GIS database to determine if additional surveys for wildlife not adequately covered by the MSHCP may be required. The Project Site is located completely within a predetermined Survey Area for the burrowing owl.

#### **Plant Community/Habitat Classification and Mapping**

Plant communities were preliminarily mapped with the aid of an aerial photograph using the MSHCP uncollapsed vegetation communities classification system. When a vegetation community could not be accurately characterized using this classification system, an updated community classification code was developed to more accurately represent onsite habitat types.

### **General Wildlife Inventory**

All animals identified during the reconnaissance survey by sight, call, tracks, scat, or other characteristic sign were recorded onto a 1:200 scale orthorectified color aerial photograph or documented using a global positioning system (GPS). In addition to species actually detected, expected use of the site by other wildlife was derived from the analysis of habitats on the site, combined with known habitat preferences of regionally occurring wildlife species.

Vertebrate taxonomy followed in this report is according to the Center for North American Herpetology (2021 for amphibians and reptiles), the American Ornithologists' Union (1988 and supplemental) for birds, and Baker et al. (2003) for mammals. Both common and scientific names are used during the first mention of a species; common names only are used in the remainder of the text.

### **Burrowing Owl Surveys**

In accordance with the MSHCP Burrowing Owl Survey Instructions (2006), survey protocol consists of two steps, Step I – Habitat Assessment and Step II – Locating Burrows and Burrowing Owls. Step II is comprised of two parts, Part A: Focused Burrow Surveys and Part B: Focused Burrowing Owl Surveys.

Each step is briefly outlined below, followed by the methodology and results of each survey conducted within the Project Site. All initial habitat assessment, burrow and focused surveys were conducted by Ruben Ramirez.

Surveys were conducted during weather that is conducive to observing owls outside their burrows and detecting burrowing owl sign. Surveys were not conducted during rain, high winds (> 20 mph), dense fog, or temperatures over 90 °F. None of the surveys were conducted within five (5) days of measurable precipitation.

In addition to the MSHCP guidelines, field notes were taken daily. These notes recorded the date, location, animal species observed, and general habitat characteristics of each area and habitat examined that day.

#### **Step I – Habitat Assessment**

Step 1 of the MSHCP habitat assessment for burrowing owl consists of a walking survey to determine if suitable habitat is present onsite. Cadre Environmental conducted the habitat assessment on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Upon arrival at the Project Site, and prior to initiating the assessment survey, Cadre Environmental used binoculars to scan all

suitable habitats on and adjacent to the property, including perch locations, to ascertain owl presence.

All suitable areas of the Project Site were surveyed on foot by walking slowly and methodically while recording/mapping areas that may represent suitable owl habitat onsite. Primary indicators of suitable burrowing owl habitat in western Riverside County include, but are not limited to, native and non-native grassland, interstitial grassland within shrub lands, shrub lands with low density shrub cover, golf courses, drainage ditches, earthen berms, unpaved airfields, pastureland, dairies, fallow fields, and agricultural use areas. Burrowing owls typically use burrows made by fossorial mammals, such as ground squirrels (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*) or badgers (*Taxidea taxus*), but they often utilize man-made structures, such as earthen berms, cement culverts, cement, asphalt, rock, or wood debris piles, or openings beneath cement or asphalt pavement. Burrowing owls are often found within, under, or in close proximity to man-made structures.

According to the MSHCP guidelines, if suitable habitat is present the biologist should also walk the perimeter of the property, which consists of a 150-meter (approximately 500 feet) buffer zone around the Project Site boundary. If permission to access the buffer area cannot be obtained, the biologist shall not trespass, but visually inspect adjacent habitats with binoculars.

Results from the habitat assessment indicated that suitable burrowing owl burrows potentially utilized for refugia and/or nesting were documented within the property including foraging habitat documented throughout the Project Site. Accordingly, if suitable habitat is documented onsite, both Step II surveys and the 30-day pre-construction surveys are required in order to comply with the MSHCP guidelines.

## **Step II – Locating Burrows and Burrowing Owls**

Concurrent with the initial habitat assessment, a detailed focused burrow survey was conducted and included documentation of appropriately sized natural burrows or suitable man-made structures that may be utilized by burrowing owl - as part of the MSHCP protocol, which is described below under Part A. Focused Burrow Survey. The MSHCP protocol indicated that no more than 100 acres should be surveyed per day/per biologist.

### **Part A: Focused Burrow Survey**

A systematic survey for burrows, including burrowing owl sign, was conducted by walking across all suitable habitats mapped within the Project Site on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Pedestrian survey transects were spaced to allow 100% visual coverage of the ground surface. The distances between transect centerlines were no more than 20 meters (approximately 66 ft.) apart, and owing to the terrain, often much smaller. Transect routes were also adjusted to account for topography and in general ground surface visibility.

All observations of suitable burrows or dens, natural or man-made, or sightings of burrowing owl, were recorded and mapped during the survey.

## **Part B: Focused Burrowing Owl Surveys**

Four (4) focused burrowing owl surveys (in addition to the initial focused burrow survey – Step II, Part A) were conducted on March 24<sup>th</sup>, April 20<sup>th</sup>, May 5<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021 from one hour before sunrise to two hours after sunrise as outlined in Table 1, *Burrowing Owl Survey Schedule*. During visual surveys, all potentially suitable burrow or structure entrances were investigated for signs of owl occupation, such as feathers, tracks, or pellets, and carefully observed to determine if burrowing owls utilize these features, when present. All burrows are monitored at a short distance from the entrance, and at a location that would not interfere with potential owl behavior, when present. In addition to monitoring potential burrow locations, all suitable habitats in the Project Site were walked along transects averaging 20 meters (approximately 66 feet) between centerlines as shown in Attachment G, *Burrowing Owl Survey Area Map*.

An existing residence is located in the northwest corner of the Project Site. This area was adequately surveyed from the boundaries for the presence/absence of individuals within and adjacent to this region.

**Table 1  
 Burrowing Owl Survey Schedule**

Survey	Dates (Conditions) 2021 Start – End Times	Results
1	<b>March 24<sup>th</sup></b> 52°F to 62°F, winds 4-12 mph, no rain 6:30am – 9:30am	No burrowing owls or characteristic sign detected within the Project Site.
2	<b>April 20<sup>th</sup></b> 54°F to 68°F, winds 2-8 mph, no rain 6:30am – 9:30am	No burrowing owls or characteristic sign detected within the Project Site.
3	<b>May 5<sup>th</sup></b> 58°F to 75°F, winds 0-4 mph, no rain 6:30am – 9:30am	No burrowing owls or characteristic sign detected within the Project Site.
4	<b>May 14<sup>th</sup></b> 55°F to 74°F, winds 4-10 mph, no rain 6:30am – 9:30am	No burrowing owls or characteristic sign detected within the Project Site.

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The Project Site and offsite impact area are characterized as rolling hilltops at approximately 1,500 feet elevation primarily dominated by disturbed/non-native grassland, Riversidean sage scrub and a blue-line drainage (Prenda Arroyo) located within and adjacent to the southwestern Project Site boundary as outlined in Table 2, *Project Site Vegetation Community Acreages and Impacts*, and illustrated in Attachment B, *Biological Resources Map*, and Attachment D to G, *Current Project Site Photographs*.

**Table 2.**  
**Project Site Vegetation Community Acreages and Impacts**

Vegetation Community	Project Site Acres	Offsite Impact Area Acres	Total Acres
Disturbed/Non-Native Grassland	20.38	2.83	23.21
Riversidean Sage Scrub	2.60	0.21	2.81
Giant Reed ( <i>Arundo donax</i> )	0.58	--	0.58
Southern Willow Scrub	0.56	--	0.56
Developed	0.53	0.26	0.79
Blue Elderberry Scrub	0.05	--	0.05
Mule Fat Scrub	0.01	0.01	0.02
Coyote Brush Scrub	0.01	--	0.01
Ornamental	0.01	--	0.01
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24.73</b>	<b>3.31</b>	<b>28.04</b>

Source: Cadre Environmental 2021

### **Disturbed/Non-Native Grassland**

The majority of the Project Site is characterized as disturbed/non-native grassland vegetation. Dominant species documented within this vegetation community include slender wild oat (*Avena barbata*), ripgut grass (*Bromus diandrus*), foxtail chess (*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*), wild oat grass (*Avena fatua*), prickly lettuce (*Lactuca serriola*), black mustard (*Brassica nigra*), stinknet (*Oncosiphon piluliferum*), tumbling pigweed (*Amaranthus albus*), Pomona milk vetch (*Astragalus pomonensis*), rattlesnake sandmat (*Euphorbia albomarginata*), doveweed (*Croton setigerus*), and fascicled tarweed (*Deinandra fasciculata*).

### **Riversidean Sage Scrub**

Several patches of Riversidean sage scrub are concentrated along the western and eastern Project Site boundaries. Dominant plant species documented within this vegetation community include California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), sweetbush (*Bebbia juncea*), bush sunflower (*Encelia californica*), white sage (*Salvia apiana*), deerweed (*Acmispon glaber*), coast cholla (*Cylindropuntia prolifera*), coast goldenbush (*Isocoma menziesii*), and pinebush (*Ericameria pinifolia*).

### **Giant Reed (*Arundo donax*)**

Several large patches of giant reed (*Arundo donax*) are located within the floodprone area of the drainage located within and adjacent to the southwestern Project Site boundary.

### **Southern Willow Scrub**

Several patches of southern willow scrub are located within the floodprone area of the drainage located within and adjacent to the southwestern Project Site boundary. Dominant species documented within this vegetation community include arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*) and mule fat (*Baccharis salicifolia*).

### **Developed/Ornamental**

An existing residence and associated ornamental vegetation, tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) is located within the northwest region of the Project Site.

### **Blue Elderberry Scrub**

A single patch of blue elderberry scrub (*Sambucus nigra* ssp. *caerulea*) was documented within the swale located in the eastern region of the Project Site adjacent to Dauchy Avenue.

### **Mule Fat Scrub**

A single patch of mule fat scrub was documented within the swale located in the eastern region of the Project Site adjacent to Ferrari Drive.

### **Coyote Brush Scrub**

A single patch of coyote brush scrub (*Baccharis pilularis*) was documented within the swale located in the eastern region of the Project Site adjacent to Dauchy Avenue.

## **RESULTS**

No burrowing owl or characteristic sign such as white-wash, feathers, tracks, or pellets were detected within or immediately adjacent to the Project Site during the spring 2021 MSHCP focused survey effort.

General wildlife species documented onsite or within the vicinity during the site visit include turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*), red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), rock dove (*Columba livia*), mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), American crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), Cassin's kingbird (*Tyrannus vociferans*), Say's phoebe (*Sayornis saya*), bushtit (*Psaltriparus minimus*), western meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*), ash-throated flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*), lark sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*), European starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*), red-winged blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*), northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), lesser goldfinch (*Spinus psaltria*), house finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*), and California ground squirrel (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*).

## **MSHCP CONSERVATION MEASURE (CONDITION OF APPROVAL)**



A 30-day pre-construction survey for burrowing owls is required prior to initial ground-disturbing activities (e.g. vegetation clearing, clearing and grubbing, tree removal, site watering) to ensure that no owls have colonized the site in the days or weeks preceding the ground-disturbing activities. If burrowing owls have colonized the project site prior to the initiation of ground-disturbing activities, the project proponent will immediately inform the Wildlife Agencies and the Regional Conservation Authority (RCA), and will need to coordinate further with RCA and the Wildlife Agencies, including the possibility of preparing a Burrowing Owl Protection and Relocation Plan, prior to initiating ground disturbance. If ground-disturbing activities occur but the site is left undisturbed for more than 30 days, a pre-construction survey will again be necessary to ensure burrowing owl has not colonized the site since it was last disturbed. If burrowing owl is found, the same coordination described above will be necessary.

## **REFERENCES**

- Cadre Environmental. 2021. Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Compliance Analysis for the 24.73-Acre Dauchy Avenue Project Site, City of Riverside, Western Riverside County, California.
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDDB). 2021a. Sensitive Element Record Search for the Riverside East. California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Sacramento, California. Accessed May 2021.
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). 2021b. Special Animals. Natural Heritage Division, Natural Diversity Data Base.
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2012. Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation, State of California Natural Resources Agency.
- County of Riverside. 2006. Burrowing Owl Survey Instructions – Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Area.
- Riverside County Integrated Project (RCIP) Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP), March 2004.


**ATTACHMENTS**

- A – Project Site Map
- B – Biological Resources Map
- C – Current Project Site Photographs
- D – Current Project Site Photographs
- E – Current Project Site Photographs
- F – Current Project Site Photographs
- G – Burrowing Owl Survey Map

**Certification**

*“I hereby certify that the statements furnished above and in the attached exhibits present the data and information required for this biological evaluation, and that the facts, statements, and information presented are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief”*

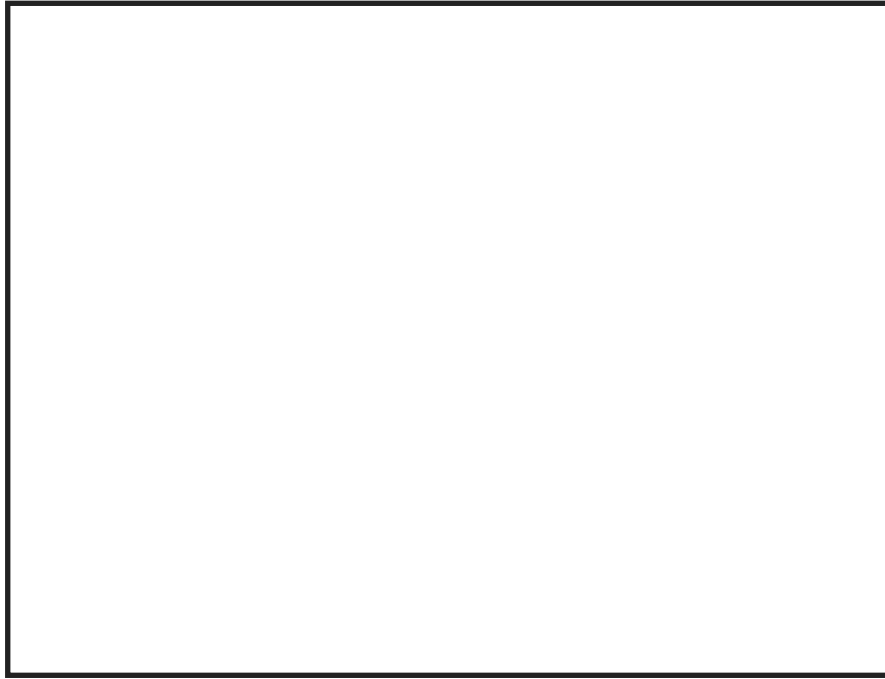
Author:  Date: February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022

Fieldwork Performed By:  Date: February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022

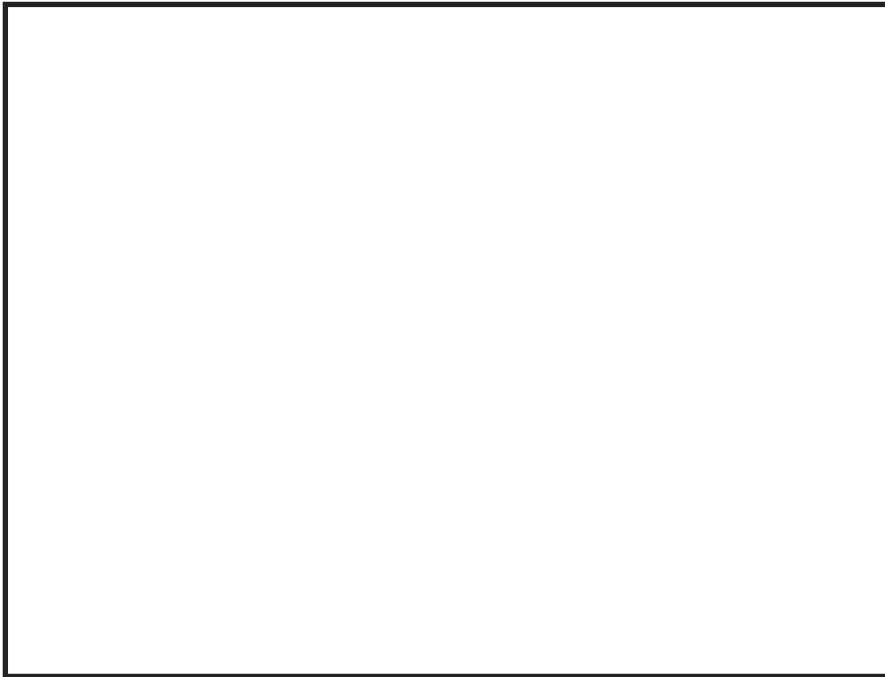








PHOTOGRAPH 3 - Westward view of Project Site from north-central boundary. The Project Site is dominated by disturbed/non-native grassland.



PHOTOGRAPH 4 - Northwest view of Project Site from central region of property. The Project Site is dominated by disturbed/non-native grassland.

Refer to Attachment A for Photo Key



PHOTOGRAPH 5 - Northwest view of Project Site from central region of property. The Project Site is dominated by disturbed/non-native grassland.



PHOTOGRAPH 6 - Westward view of blue-line drainage located along the southwestern boundary. Large patches of giant reed (*Arundo donax*) dominate the drainage.

Refer to Attachment A for Photo Key



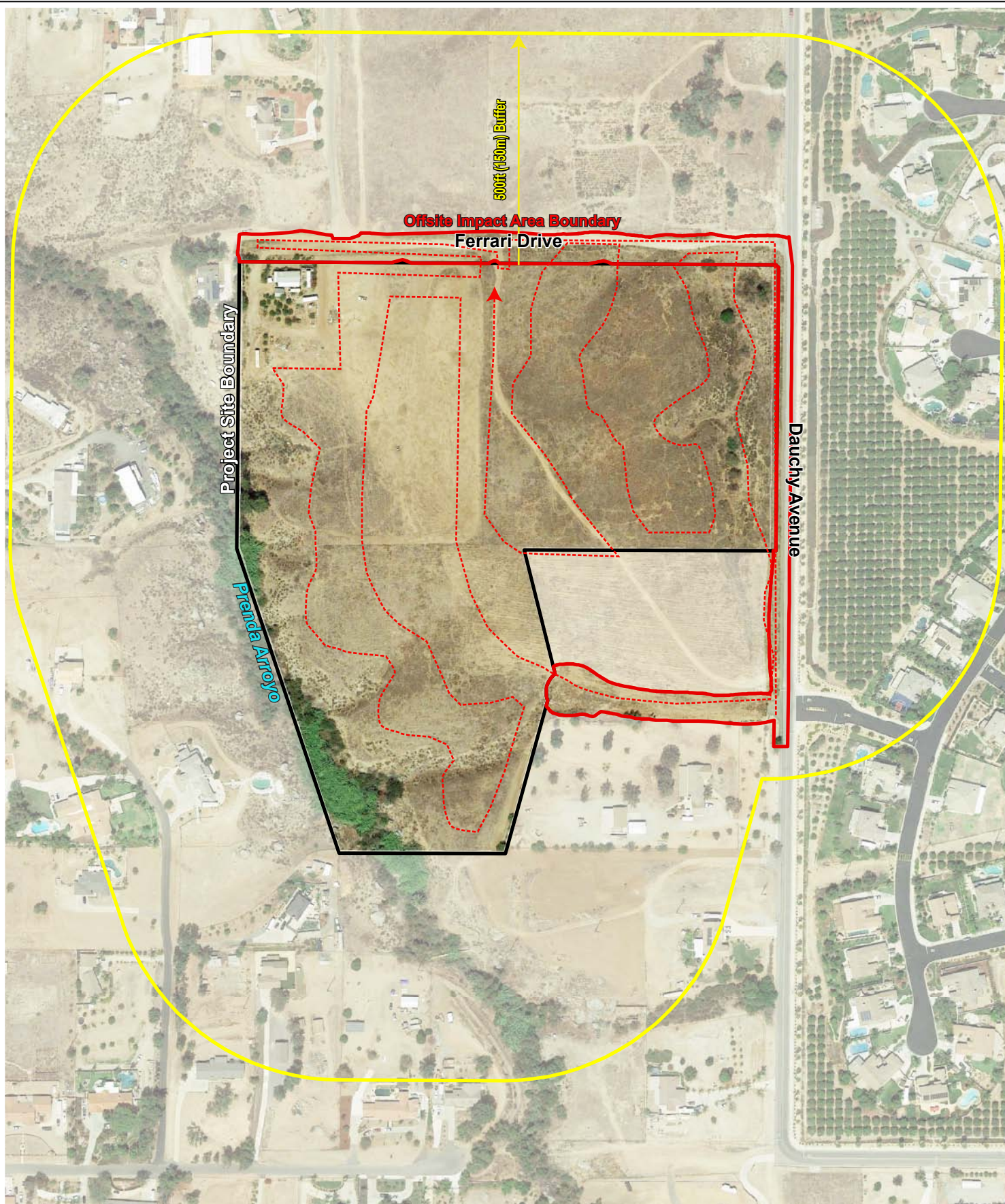
PHOTOGRAPH 7 - Southward view of blue-line drainage located along the southwestern boundary. Patches of southern willow scrub are located within the drainage.



PHOTOGRAPH 8 - Northward view from southeastern Project Site boundary adjacent to Dauchy Avenue.

Refer to Attachment A for Photo Key





Onsite APNs 276-040-011, 276-040-012, and 276-050-029  
 Offsite APNs Portions of 276-050-030, -031, 276-040-007, -008, -009, -010, ROW

----- Survey Transects

**Attachment G Burrowing Owl Survey Area Map**  
*MSHCP Burrowing Owl Surveys*  
*Dauchy Avenue Project Site*

