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September 23, 2022

Ms. Marie Estrada

Re: Re: Joshua Tree Survey for 18.77-acre parcel, APN: 0463-231-06 in Apple Valley, California RCA#2022-152 JT

Dear Ms. Estrada,

At your request, RCA Associates, Inc. conducted a site survey for Joshua trees on September 19, 2022 on the 18.77-acre parcel located on the northwest intersection of Navajo Road and Lafayette Street in Apple Valley, California (Figure 1 and 2). The site is specifically located in the SE ¼ of the NE ¼ of Section 21, Township 6 North, Range 3 West in the USGS Apple Valley North 7.5-minute California quadrangle. The survey was conducted as per the survey methodology required by California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) as outlined below.

The property is bounded in all directions by commercial developments and warehousing, with areas of undeveloped properties scattered throughout the area. The site shows some forms of disturbance from past human activity and supports a desert scrub community consisting of mainly creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), white bursage (*Ambrosia Dumosa*), western tansy mustard (*Descurainia pinnata*), fiddleneck (*Amsinckia tessellata*) and non-native grasses (i.e., cheat grass (*Bromus tectorum*)). Wildlife species seen were limited to the common raven (*Corvus corax*) and jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*).

### **Methodologies**

Pedestrian surveys were walked throughout the site and biologists from RCA Associates, Inc. evaluated each Joshua tree to determine which trees were suitable for relocation/transplanting based on a general health assessment. Surveys were performed on September 19, 2022 from 0900 to 1000. Temperatures during the survey were in the mid 70's to high 70's (°F), wind speeds of about 5-10 mph, 0% (percent) cloud cover. Each Joshua tree within the property boundary received a metal numbered tag which was affixed on the north side of each tree for orientation purposes during future transplanting. Surveyor flagging was also placed around those trees suitable for transplanting to facilitate future identification. The precise location and

assessment of each tree was recorded using a Juniper Systems Cedar CT8X2 GPS tablet and a Nikon Forestry Pro II rangefinder was utilized to determine the extent of the property boundaries and accurate tree height. Those Joshua trees which occur on the property site are locations are provided in Figure 3. Joshua Trees offsite were identified visually to assess the impacts to the species as a whole (Figure 4). Joshua trees occur throughout the Mojave Desert in Southern California and are typically found at an elevation of 400 to 1,800 meters (~1,200 to ~5,400 feet). Joshua trees within the western portion of the Mojave Desert typically receive more annual precipitation during the “normal” years; consequently, cloning occurs more often resulting in numerous trunks sprouting from the same root system (Rowland, 1978). Joshua tree habitats provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species including desert wood rats (*Neotoma* sp.) and night lizards (*Xantusia* sp.) both of which utilize the base of the trees. A variety of birds also utilize Joshua trees for nesting such as hawks, common ravens, and cactus wrens. CDFW consider Joshua tree woodlands as areas that support relatively high species diversity and as such are considered to be a sensitive desert community. Joshua trees are also considered a significant resource under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and are included in the Desert Plant Protection Act, Food and Agricultural Code (80001-80006), and have recently been given a temporary threatened species status by CDFW on September 22, 2020 until a final decision is made in 2022.

### **Results**

Based on the results of the September 19, 2022 field investigations, there is one Adult Joshua tree (Tag# 451) in good condition present throughout the site which was 13 feet tall with a single trunk, five branches and two panicles (Figure 3). This single tree does not meet the criteria to be deemed as transplantable. Any attempt to move or discard the Joshua tree, dead or alive, will require an Incidental Take Permit (ITP).

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the results of the field investigations, please contact me at (760) 596-0017 (Main Office).

Sincerely,

*Brian Bunyi*

Environmental Scientist & Biologist

## Figures