

Appendix B2

**Burrowing Owl Survey Report**

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November 11, 2022

Mr. Corey File  
Willis Development  
755 N. Peach Ave., Suite E6  
Clovis, CA 93611

Subject: 2022 Burrowing Owl (*Athene cucularia*) Survey Report the Temecula Assisted Living Project

Dear Corey File:

This letter report presents the results of the 2022 focused burrowing owl (*Athene cucularia*; BUOW) survey conducted by HELIX Environmental Planning, Inc. (HELIX) for the Temecula Assisted Living Project (project) located in the City of Temecula (City), Riverside County, California. The survey was conducted in accordance with the County's Burrowing Owl Survey Instructions for the Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP; County of Riverside [County] 2006). The MSHCP is a comprehensive planning effort that includes the County of Riverside and multiple cities. As part of the MSHCP implementation, enrolled jurisdictions are required to impose terms of the MSHCP, including appropriate surveys in accordance with Volume 1, Section 6. The study area is located within the MSHCP BUOW Survey Area; therefore, surveys are required if suitable habitat is present (County 2006). This letter report describes the methods used to perform the survey and the survey results.

### STUDY AREA LOCATION

The approximately 6.28-acre study area is generally located east of Interstate 215 and east of the Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve in the Santa Ana Mountains (Figure 1, *Regional Location*). The study area is located in the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute Temecula quadrangle map within Township 7 South, Range 3 West (Figure 2, *USGS Topography*). Specifically, the study area is bounded by State Route (SR) 79 to the west, Willows Avenue to the north, and Tualota Creek to the east and south (Figure 3, *Aerial Photograph*). The study area comprises Assessor's Parcel Number: 920-110-005.

### STUDY AREA DESCRIPTION

The study area primarily consists of interspersed non-native vegetation and patches of California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*). Based on aerial review, the study area has been used historically for agriculture since at least 1938 (Historic Aerials 1938). The topography of the study area is flat, with elevations ranging from approximately 1089 feet (332 meters) above mean sea level (AMSL) in the center of the study area to 1,120 feet (341 meters) AMSL in the along the eastern and western boundaries. Soils mapped within the study area include Hanford coarse sandy loam (0 to 2 percent

slopes), Ramona very fine sandy loam (0 to 8 percent slopes, eroded), Greenfield sandy loam (0 to 2 percent slopes), Hanford fine sandy loam (0 to 2 percent slopes), and riverwash.

Surrounding land uses include residential developments to the west and east, commercial development to the south and open space to the north (Figure 3). Representative photographs of the study area are depicted in Attachment A, *Representative Site Photographs*.

**METHODS**

A Step I Habitat Assessment was performed by HELIX Senior Regulatory Specialist Ezekiel Cooley and biologist Jessica Lee on February 15, 2022. Step II Locating Burrows and Burrowing Owls, including Part A: Focused Burrow Surveys and Part B: Focused Burrowing Owl Surveys, were conducted on the study area by HELIX biologists Jessica Lee and Cache Tucker between May 11 and August 10, 2022, in accordance with the County’s survey protocol (County 2006). The specific survey information is provided in Table 1, *Survey Information*. The habitat assessment and Part A: Focused Burrow Surveys and Part B: Focused Burrowing Owl Surveys are described in detail below.

**Table 1  
SURVEY INFORMATION**

Site Visit	Survey Date	Biologists	Start/Stop Time	Start/Stop Weather Conditions	Survey Results
1	05/11/22	Jessica Lee	0715-0845	45°F, wind 0-1 mph, 10% clouds 47°F, wind 0-1 mph, 10% clouds	Suitable habitat and no potential burrows were observed; no BUOW detected.
2	05/26/22	Cache Tucker	0630-0830	57°F, wind 0-1 mph, 0% clouds 64°F, wind 0-1 mph, 0% clouds	No BUOW detected.
3	07/14/22	Jessica Lee	0620-0745	62°F, wind 0-1 mph, 10% clouds 64°F, wind 1-2 mph, 10% clouds	No BUOW detected.
4	08/10/22	Jessica Lee	0630-0730	71°F, wind 0-1 mph, 10% clouds 73°F, wind 0-1 mph, 5% clouds	No BUOW detected.

**Step I – Habitat Assessment**

The study area is located within an MSHCP BUOW survey area; therefore, a Step I Habitat Assessment was conducted to determine whether the study area supports suitable BUOW habitat. The habitat assessment was conducted prior to commencement of the Step II surveys described below. The assessment was conducted on the study area and within a 150-meter (approximately 500-foot) buffer zone around the periphery study area (collectively, the survey area). The survey area was slowly walked and assessed for suitable BUOW habitat, including:

- disturbed low-growing vegetation within grassland and shrublands (less than 30 percent canopy cover);
- gently rolling or level terrain;

- areas with abundant small mammal burrows, especially California ground squirrel burrows (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*);
- fence posts, rocks, or other low perching locations; and
- man-made structures, such as earthen berms, debris piles, and cement culverts.

Inaccessible areas of the buffer zone were visually assessed using binoculars.

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

Since suitable habitat was observed during the habitat assessment, Step II surveys were conducted within the survey area. Step II surveys, which consist of a focused burrow survey (Part A) and four focused BUOW surveys (Part B), were conducted to determine whether the survey area supports suitable burrows and/or BUOW. The focused burrow survey was conducted concurrently with the first BUOW survey.

All potential burrows were checked for signs of recent owl occupation. Signs of occupation include:

- pellets/casting (regurgitated fur, bones, and/or insect parts);
- white wash (excrement); and/or
- feathers.

Since suitable burrows were observed within the survey area, three additional BUOW surveys were conducted. The biologists walked transects spaced no greater than 30 meters apart (approximately 100 feet) to allow for 100 percent visual coverage of all suitable habitat within the survey area. The biologists walked slowly and methodically, closely checking suitable habitat within the survey area for suitable burrows, BUOW diagnostic sign (e.g., molted feathers, pellets/castings, or whitewash at or near a burrow entrance), and individual BUOW. Inaccessible areas of the survey area were visually assessed using binoculars. All suitable burrows, burrow surrogates, BUOW sign, and/or BUOW observations were recorded using a handheld Global Positioning System unit (Figure 4, *Suitable Burrow and Transect Locations*).

## **RESULTS**

Suitable BUOW habitat was observed within the survey area, including non-native grassland and disturbed habitat (Attachment A). Suitable burrows that could potentially be used by BUOW were observed within and adjacent to the survey area. No BUOW or sign of BUOW occupation were observed during the four focused surveys. Therefore, BUOW does not currently occupy the study area. Transects walked are shown on Figure 4.

## **CONCLUSION**

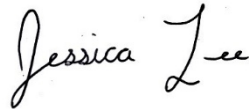
No BUOWs or potential burrows were observed or detected within the survey area during the focused surveys. A pre-construction survey is required 30 days prior to ground disturbance pursuant to the County's survey protocol (County 2006). If ground-disturbing activities are delayed more than 30 days after the pre-construction survey has been completed, the study area must be resurveyed.

If you have any questions regarding the information presented in this letter report, please contact Ezekiel Cooley (EzekielC@helixepi.com) at (949) 234-8770.

Sincerely,



Ezekiel Cooley  
Biology Project Manager



Jessica Lee  
Assistant Biology Project Manager

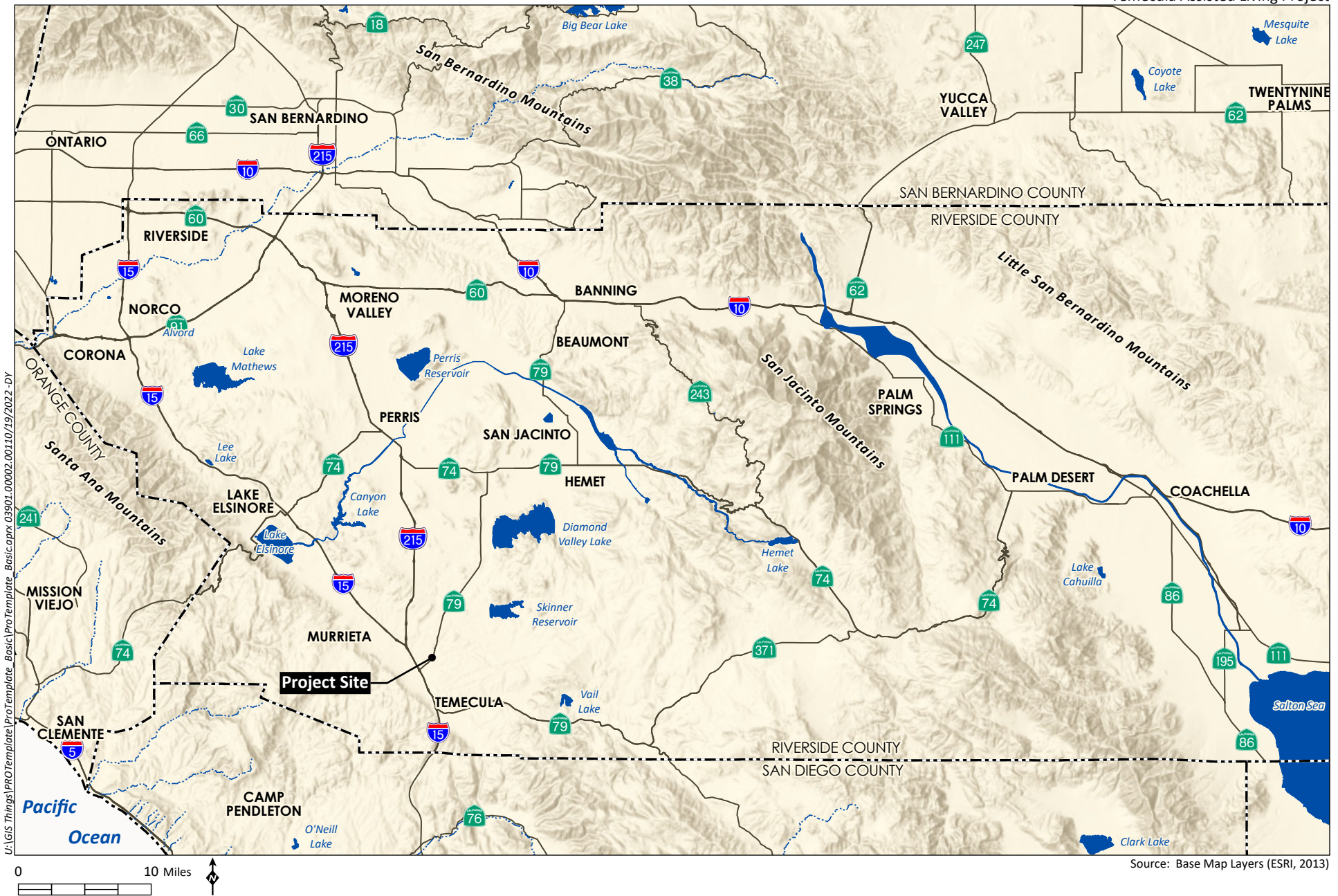
**Attachments:**

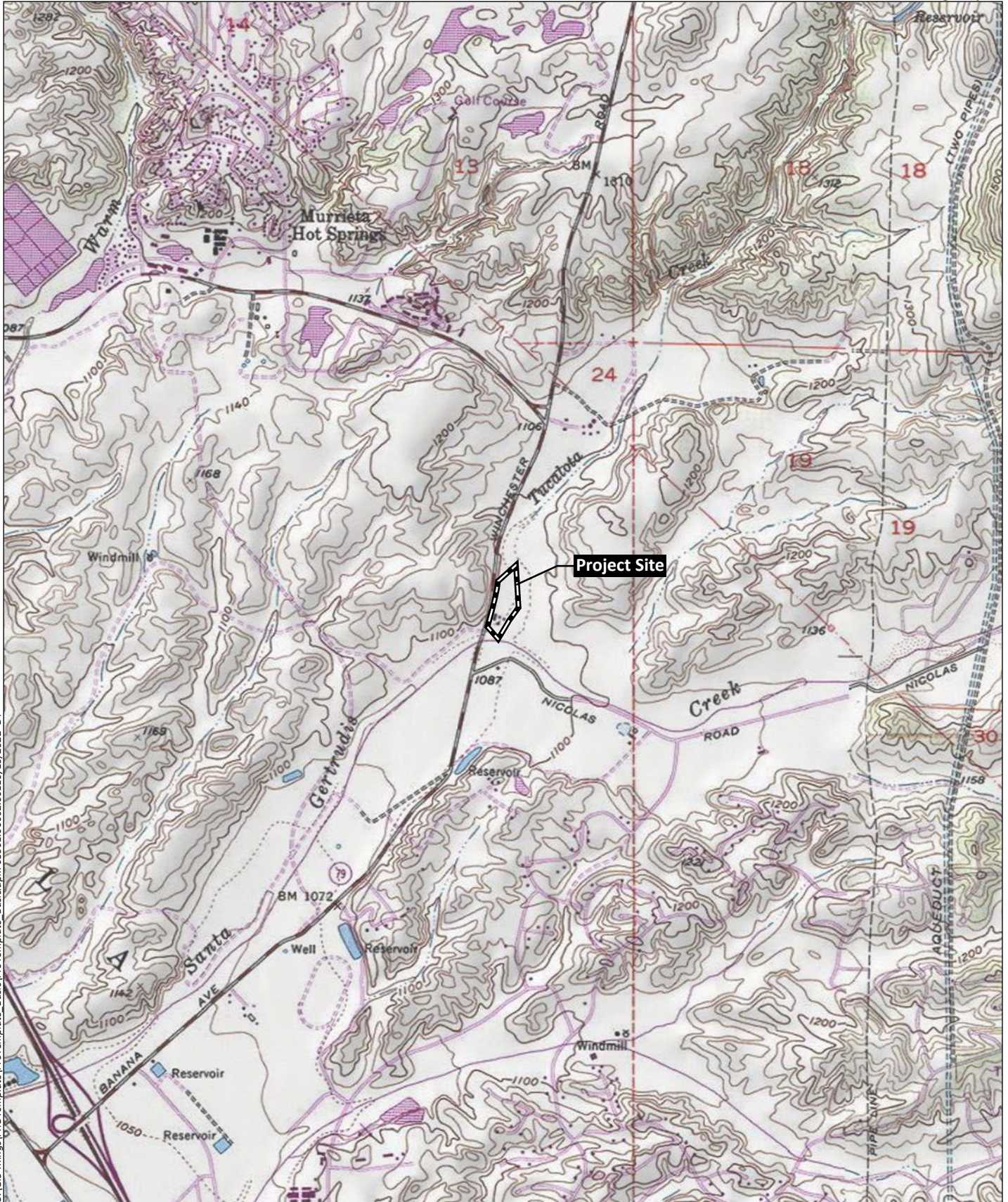
- Figure 1: Regional Location
- Figure 2: USGS Topography
- Figure 3: Aerial Photograph
- Figure 4: Transect Locations
- Attachment A: Representative Site Photographs

## REFERENCES

Dudek and Associates. 2003. Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) Final MSHCP Volume I. Prep. for County of Riverside, Transportation and Land Management Agency.

Riverside, County of. 2006. Environmental Programs Department. Burrowing Owl Survey Instructions for the Western Riverside Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Area. Retrieved from: [http://www.wrc-rca.org/species/survey\\_protocols/Birds/Burrowing%20Owl%20Survey%20Instructions%20complete.pdf](http://www.wrc-rca.org/species/survey_protocols/Birds/Burrowing%20Owl%20Survey%20Instructions%20complete.pdf). March 29. Accessed August 20, 2019.





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Source: MURRIETA 7.5' Quad (USGS)





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Source: Aerial (RCIT, 2020)



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Photo 1. View of the native and non-native vegetation on the project site adjacent to Winchester Road located along the western site boundary, looking northwest taken near southerly extent of the eastern boundary.



Photo 2. View of the native and disturbed habitats located within in the eastern portion of the project site, facing northeast.

# Site Photographs



Photo 3. View of the central portion of the project site facing north. Photograph taken from a dirt path that runs along the eastern boundary of the project site and west of Tocalota Creek.



Photo 4. View of the non-native and native vegetation in the southeastern portion of project site, facing west, taken from the southern extent of the western boundary.

# Site Photographs