A BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES SURVEY REPORT

for the

VIA HONDITA SUBDIVISION PROJECT

Escondido, California

Prepared for

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INTRODUCTION

This report addresses biological resources, anticipated project-related impacts, and recommended mitigation measures relating to biological resources associated with the approximately 3.39-acre Via Hondita Subdivision Project site in the City of Escondido in San Diego County, California (Figure 1). The project site consists of three existing parcels and an access road situated east of La Honda Drive in Escondido (Figure 2). Complete site development is anticipated, resulting in impacts to 100% of this small property.

SITE AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Via Hondita Subdivision Project ("Project") is located in the northeastern part of the City, a short distance east of La Honda Drive at the end of Via Hondita, an existing, unmaintained road which would be improved as a part of the Project. Ranridos Court, which is essentially a driveway, would be moved east to the western edge of proposed lot 6, providing access off Via Hondita to each of six proposed new lots. The Project site, which consists of 3.39 acres in three parcels (APNs 225-042-26, -27, & -28) including the aforementioned roads, is flat to gently sloping on the northern half. The property is currently vacant, although recent uses have included OHV activity, citrus production for several decades in the past (see Figure 3), and clear evidence of past grading and site terracing. Nearly one hundred percent of the Project site currently supports disturbance-responsive vegetation including many weedy, ruderal and naturalized horticultural species. Elevations on the property range between approximately 806 feet MSL at the northwest corner and 370 feet MSL at intersection of Via Hondita and La Honda Road. The soil-types found onsite are mapped as Visalia Sandy Loam (VaA) and Vista Course Sandy Loam (VsD) on slopes between 0 and 15 percent. These soil types are common and neither are known to support rare or endemic plants.

The Project as proposed would reconfigure the existing three parcels into a total of six new legal lots as a result of parcel subdivision. This would allow grading and construction of single-family homes, along with improvements to Via Hondita and Ranridos Court, and the construction of new infrastructure such as electrical lines, waterlines, gas lines, and other utilities.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to (1) assemble a species inventory of the subject property, identify and map all onsite habitats/plant communities, and identify and map any signs of any special status plants or animals that could occur onsite, and; (2) identify and quantify project-related impacts and proposed mitigation, as necessary, to bring the project into conformance with the

requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), the City's draft Multiple Habitat Conservation Program (MHCP) Subarea Plan, and other local, state, and federal regulations.

METHODS

A biological field survey of the Project site, including a general site survey, a species inventory, and a directed survey for sensitive plants and animals, was completed by the author on 20 June 2017 between the hours of approximately 08:30-11:30. Weather conditions during the survey were conducive to biological field work, with clear skies, temperatures in the mid 70^{o}s, and no significant wind.

All areas of the property were slowly walked, and all plants, animals, and habitats were noted and identified in the field. Because of the season of the surveys and the methods used (visual and auditory identifications only), some of the plants and many of the cryptic or migratory animals, which might have been observed at other times or by using other techniques, were not detected. Animal activity was moderate, although some of the animal detections were based on characteristic signs of inhabitance, rather than a visual sighting of the specimens themselves.

RESULTS

Habitats/Plant Communities

The Project site supports several ecotonal habitats or plant communities (Figures 3 and 4). These are: Non-native Vegetation - Ruderal and Ornamental, Non-native Grassland, Disturbed Habitat, and Southern Willow Scrub.

Non-native Vegetation - Ruderal (Holland Code 11000) - 1.13 acres
No-native Vegetation (NNV-R) in the form of ruderal growth, covers the northeastern and central portions of the project site. This very dense habitat is indicated by a thicket of tall annual weeds, including Yard Knotweed *(Polygonum aviculare ssp. depressum)*, Johnson Grass (*Sorghum halepense*), Wild Radish *(Raphanus sativus)* and many more ruderal species. The soils in this poorly-drained area appear to be very rich in nitrogen from decades of grove fertilizing. The biological resource value of the NNV-R currently found on the Project site is low.

Non-native Vegetation - Ornamental (Holland Code 11000) - 0.15 acre
A second type of Non-native Vegetation occurs on this site. This is an ornamental form of Non-native Vegetation (NNV-O). This habitat-type is represented by naturalized ornamental and other horticultural species, including Ngaio *(Myoporum laetum),* Peruvian Peppertree *(Schinus molle)* and a handful of remaining Citrus trees *(Citrus* sp.*),* presumably from the original planting

in the early 1940s (Figure 3). The biological resource value of the NNV-O currently found on the Project site is low.

Non-native Grassland (Holland Code 42200) - 0.66 acre

The northeastern portion of the Project site supports Non-native Grassland (NNG) as indicated by Wild Oat *(Avena fatua)*, Ripgut Brome *(Bromus diandrus)*, Perennial Mustard *(Hirschfeldia incana)*, and other weeds. The NNG on this site is dissected by dirt roads and tracks, most originating from local residents who ride OHV motorcycles on this property on a continuous basis. The biological resource value of the NNG currently found on the Project site is low.

Disturbed Habitat (Holland Code 11300) - 1.11 acres

The northwestern and southern ends of the Project site support Disturbed Habitat (DH). This consists mostly of bare dirt, which has resulted from OHV use (northwest) and vehicle parking (south). Although most of the habitat is bare, a few sparse weedy annuals are present, including Stinkwort *(Dittrichia graveolens)*, Russian Thistle *(Salsola pestifer),* and others. The biological resource value of the DH currently found on the Project site is low.

Southern Willow Scrub (Holland Code 63320) - 0.34 acre

Southern Willow Scrub (SWS) vegetation is restricted to several large willow trees *(Salix)* that grow near the center of the Project site. These trees have naturalized due to the poor drainage of the site's soils and because the property has been fallow for several decades. The understory of these trees consists of mostly ruderal species, although a few natives are present beneath the canopy. The biological resource value of the SWS currently found on the Project site is moderate.

Flora and Fauna

The flora and fauna identified during the survey is typical of disturbed areas in the Escondido area. Nearly all of the plants and animals associated with the property are locally-common, although one commonly-reported and widely-distributed species of bird (Red-shouldered Hawk) and butterfly (Monarch) were observed flying across the property during the survey.

Fifty-eight species of plants and eighteen species of animals were detected during the field surveys of the project site (Table 3). The plants observed are expected to represent at least 80-90 percent of the naturalized species occurring on this property. Common plant species are those listed in the above habitat descriptions. The animals observed likely represent only about 10-20 percent of the total site fauna, as most of the animals (particularly invertebrates and nocturnal or burrowing species) are cryptic and difficult to detect.

Sensitive Vegetation Communities

Vegetation communities (habitats) are generally considered "sensitive" if they; *(a)* are recognized by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as being

locally depleted; *(b)* are considered rare within the region by local experts, *(c)* are known to support sensitive animal or plant species, including Listed Species; and/or *(d)* they are known to serve as important wildlife corridors. These sensitive habitats are typically depleted throughout their known ranges, or are localized and/or highly fragmented.

With the exception of the Non-native Grassland and the Southern Willow Scrub, the vegetation on the Project site is not sensitive and is not considered a significant biological resource for analysis purposes in this report.

Sensitive Plants and Animals

No sensitive plants and only two locally-common sensitive animals (Red-shouldered Hawk and Monarch) were observed on the Project site during the field surveys. Sensitive plants and animals are those listed as "Rare", "Endangered", "Threatened", "of Special Concern", or otherwise noteworthy by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Native Plant Society (CNPS), or other conservation agencies and related NGOs.

- Red-shouldered Hawk *(Buteo lineatus)* is a noisy, soaring raptor usually found in association with trees and forested areas. A single mature Red-shouldered Hawk was observed soaring and flying across the Project site during the site survey. Red-shouldered Hawk is listed as a Special Status Animal Species by the County of San Diego, although it is not considered sensitive by the City of Escondido. The hawk observed likely represents a wide-ranging specimen because the site does not support any significant roosting or foraging vegetation, although there are trees in the vicinity (offsite) that could be used as nesting or roosting sites.

- Monarch *(Danaus plexippus)* is a large and well-known species of butterfly. Two Monarchs were observed flying about the site's southeast corner and near the interesection of La Honda Drive and Via Hondita during the survey period. Monarchs fly in search of milkweed (*Asclepias)* plants upon which to lay their eggs. Milkweed does not occur on this site, so it is likely that these specimen would ultimately disperse to other areas. Monarch does not currently have legal protection, although the California Department of Fish and Wildlife recognizes it as a "Special-status Invertebrate" and it is currently a Candidate for federal listing as a "Threatened Species" under the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA). In any case, the subject project site does not support any Monarch habitat in terms of either foraging or overwintering.

Certain other sensitive plants and animals are known from the vicinity of the property. Sensitive plants include the following: San Diego Thornmint *(Acanthomintha ilicifolia),* San Diego Ambrosia *(Ambrosia pumila),* Del Mar Manzanita *(Arctostaphylos glandulosa* ssp. *crassifolia),* Encinitas Baccharis *(Baccharis vanessae),* Thread-leaved Brodiaea *(Brodiaea filifolia)*, Orcutt's Brodiaea *(Brodiaea orcuttii),* Wart-stemmed Ceanothus *(Ceanothus verrucosus),* Summer Holly *(Comarostaphylis diversifolia* ssp. *diversifolia), Variegated Dudleya (Dudleya variegata)*, Sticky Dudleya

(Dudleya viscida), San Diego Barrel Cactus *(Ferocactus viridescens)*, San Diego Marsh-elder *(Iva hayesiana)*, San Diego Goldenstar *(Muilla clevelandii)*, Engelmann Oak *(Quercus engelmannii)* , and Parry's Tetracoccus *(Tetracoccus dioicus)*. Several dozen sensitive animals are known from the area, with a few occurring in habitat similar to that found onsite. These might include Coronado Skink *(Eumeces skiltonianus)*, Cooper's Hawk *(Accipiter cooperii)*, and various other wide-ranging species, including various native bats, and others. Nearly all of the sensitive plants and animals known from the area would not be anticipated on the Project site due to the nature of the onsite biological resources. Most of these sensitive species depend on habitat not found on this property, such as vernal pools, maritime chaparral, gabbro soils, etc.

Jurisdictional Wetlands and Waters

The Project site does not support any jurisdictional wetlands or "waters". Precipitation appears to sheet flow across the property during heavy rainfalls, but we saw no signs of a bed or bank or an ordinary high water mark. No areas on Project site qualifies as jurisdictional lands subject to regulation by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, or the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board. The site was graded prior to 1946 (see Figure 3), and any historic drainages would have been eliminated to that time.

PROJECT IMPACTS

Future development of the Project site, as currently proposed, will result in certain measurable losses of a biological resource values found in association with this property. These losses would be a direct result of site development and related activities, including fuel modification. The entire site will be subject to fuel modification. All anticipated losses would be associated with the conversion of vacant land to residential homesites, including grading to construct residential pads and City-required infrastructure (roads, etc.), ornamental landscaping, and other improvements. Impacts are assessed at a level which is either "significant" or "less than significant" as defined by CEQA. Also, an assessment is made as to whether or not project-related impacts are fully mitigable. In this instance, all anticipated Project impacts are considered "less than significant".

The project as proposed will directly impact:

- 1.13 acres of NNV-R. This impact is **less than significant.**
- 0.15 acre of NNV-O. This impact is **less than significant.**
- 1.11 acres of DH. This impact is **less than significant.**
- 0.66 acre of NNG. This impact is **significant but mitigable.**
- 0.34 acre of SWS. This impact is **significant but mitigable.**
- Two "low priority" sensitive species that were detected in low numbers. This impact is **less than significant.**

As stated, impacts to SWS and NNG are considered "significant" as defined by CEQA. Mitigation for impacts to these resource is required pursuant to the requirements of the City's Interim Take Authorization Agreement with the Wildlife Agencies (California Department of Fish and Wildlife and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), the MHCP, and CEQA.

Impacts to other site resources (NNV-R, NNV-O, DH, sensitive species) are considered "less than significant", as defined by CEQA. Mitigation for impacts to these resource is not required pursuant to the requirements of the City's Interim Take Authorization Agreement with the Wildlife Agencies (California Department of Fish and Wildlife and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), the MHCP, or CEQA.

An Impact/Mitigation Analysis for the Project is presented in Table 2.

RECOMMENDED MITIGATION

Offsite mitigation via the securement of mitigation credits from an approved conservation or mitigation bank is recommended to reduce impact to NNG and SWS to less than significant. The City of Escondido's Draft Subarea Plan recommends that the Daley Ranch Conservation Bank be used to offset land-development impacts. Daley Ranch has Water Dependent Habitat credits and NNG Habitat credits available that could be secured to offset Project impacts. This is because the Project will impact NNG and SWS, and because SWS is a Water Dependent Habitat-type. However, Water Dependent Habitat credits are apparently reserved for City Capital Improvement Projects, and therefore the use of Water Dependent Habitat credits to offset impacts to SWS will need to be approved by the City Council. If the use of Daley Ranch is not applicable for impacts to SWS, then mitigation should take place elsewhere offsite within the City's draft Focused Planning Area (FPA).

No habitat-based or species-based mitigation for direct impacts to NNV-R, NNV-O, DH, or sensitive species is recommended.

In order to protect and avoid impacts to potential wildlife nursery sites, standard seasonal restrictions on clearing and grading should be implemented. Therefore, site brushing, grading, and/or the removal of vegetation within 300 feet of any potential migratory songbird nesting location, including nesting locations for ground-nesting birds, will not be permitted during the spring/summer migratory songbird breeding season, defined as from 15 February to 31 August of each year. This is required in order to ensure compliance with the Sections 3503, 3503.5, 3511, and 3513 of the California Fish and Game Code and the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Limiting activities to the non-breeding season will minimize chances for the incidental take of migratory songbirds or raptors. Should it be necessary to conduct brushing, grading, or other site activities during the songbird breeding season, a preconstruction nesting survey of all areas within 300 feet of the proposed activity will be required. The results of the survey will be provided in a report to the

Director, City of Escondido Planning Department, for concurrence with the conclusions and recommendations.

Table 1. Habitat Impact/Mitigation Analysis – The Via Hondita Subdivision Project

Biological Resource	Pre-development Resource	Resource Impacts (Post-development)	Mitigation Required [1]
Non-native Vegetation - Ruderal (NNV-R)	1.13 acres	1.13 acres	none
Non-native Vegetation - Ornamental (NNV-O)	0.15 acre	0.15 acre	none
Non-native Grassland (NNG)	0.66 acre	0.66 acre	0.33 acre @ 0.5:1
Disturbed Habitat (DH)	1.11 acres	1.11 acres	none
Southern Willow Scrub (SWS)	0.34 acre	0.34 acre	0.34 acre @ 1:1
Totals	**3.39 acres**	**3.39 acres**	**0.67 acre offsite**

2

[1] *The purchase of Habitat Credits from the Daley Ranch Conservation Bank is adequate and appropriate mitigation per the City's draft Subarea MHCP Plan.*

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Figure 1. Vicinity: The Via Hondita Subdivision Project, Escondido

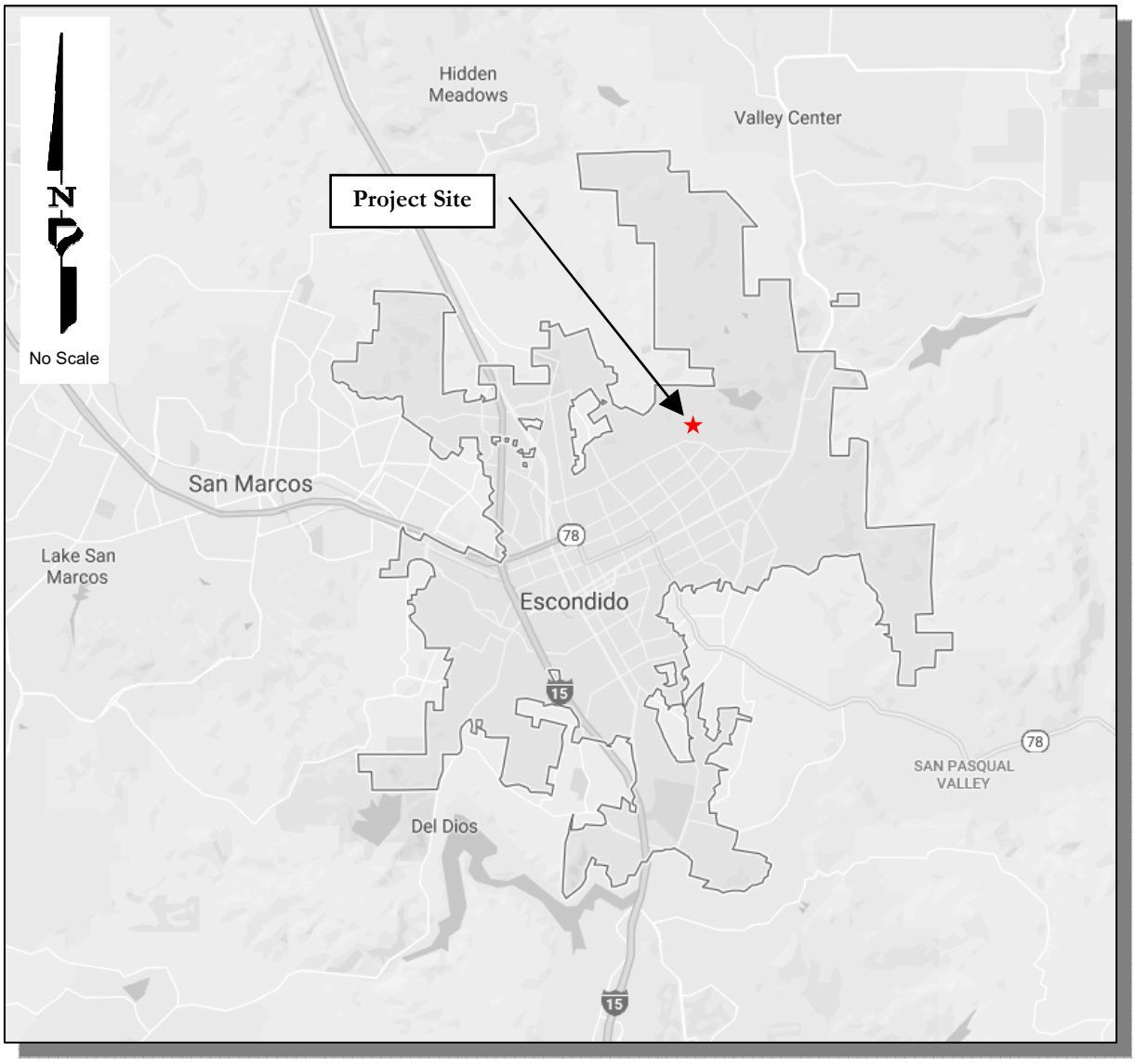

Figure 2. Regional Location: The Via Hondita Subdivision Project

Portion of the U.S.G.S. "Valley Center, CA" 7.5′ Quadrangle Map

Figure 3. Historical Aerial Photo (1946) - The Via Hondita Subdivision Project

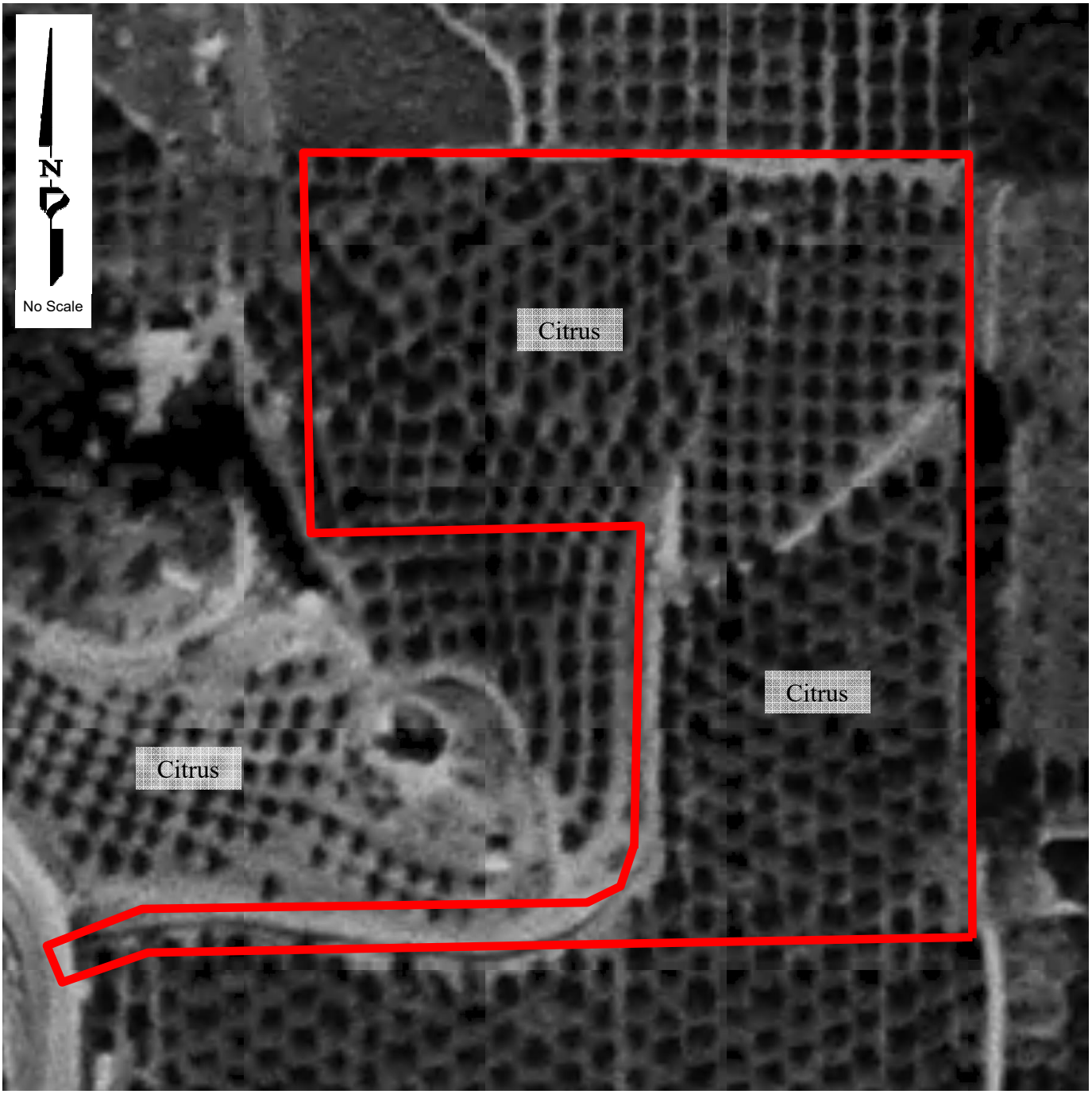

Figure 4. Recent Aerial Photo showing Biological Resources: The Via Hondita Subdivision Project

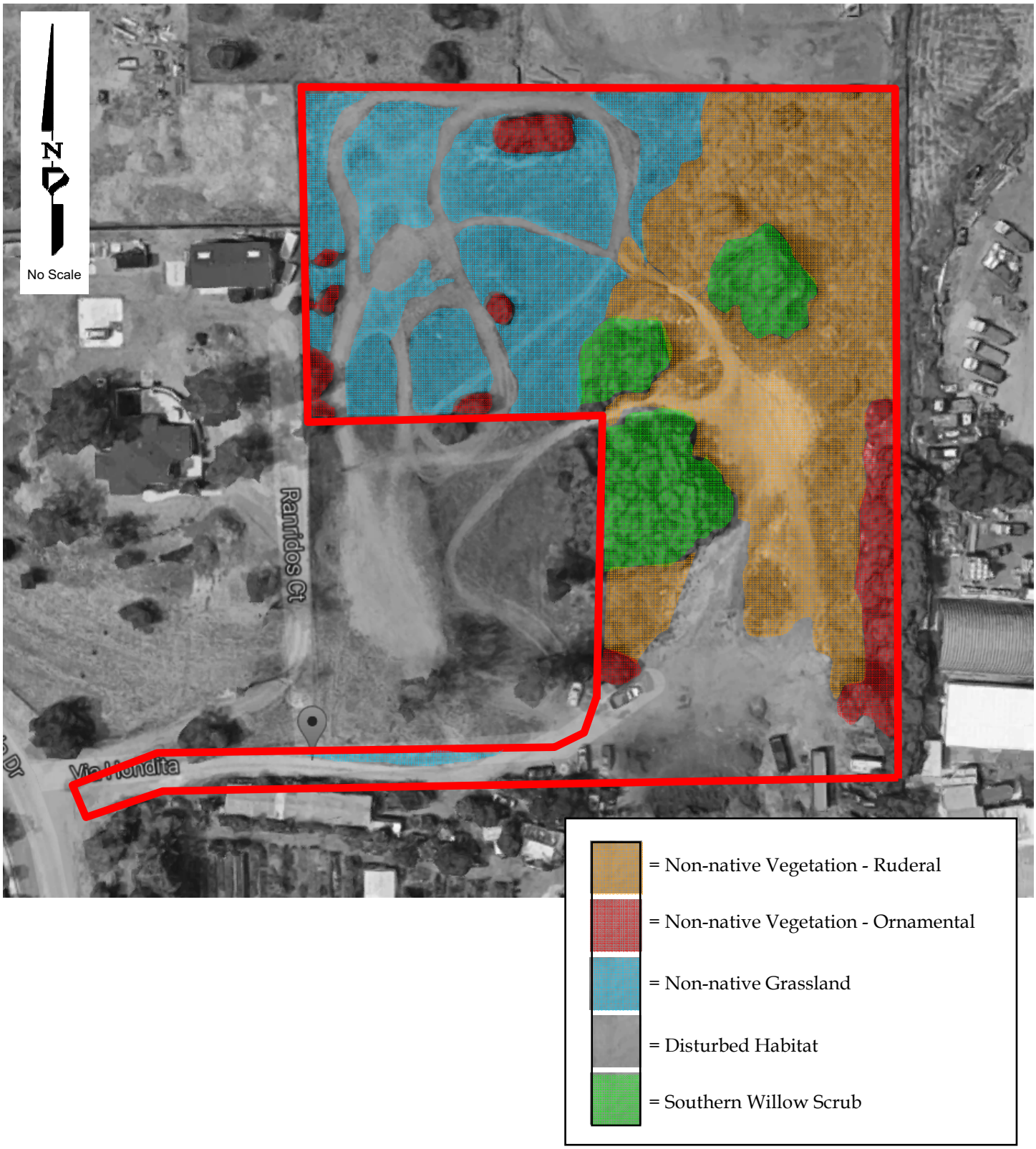

Figure 5. Site Plan with Biological Resources: The Via Hondita Subdivision Project

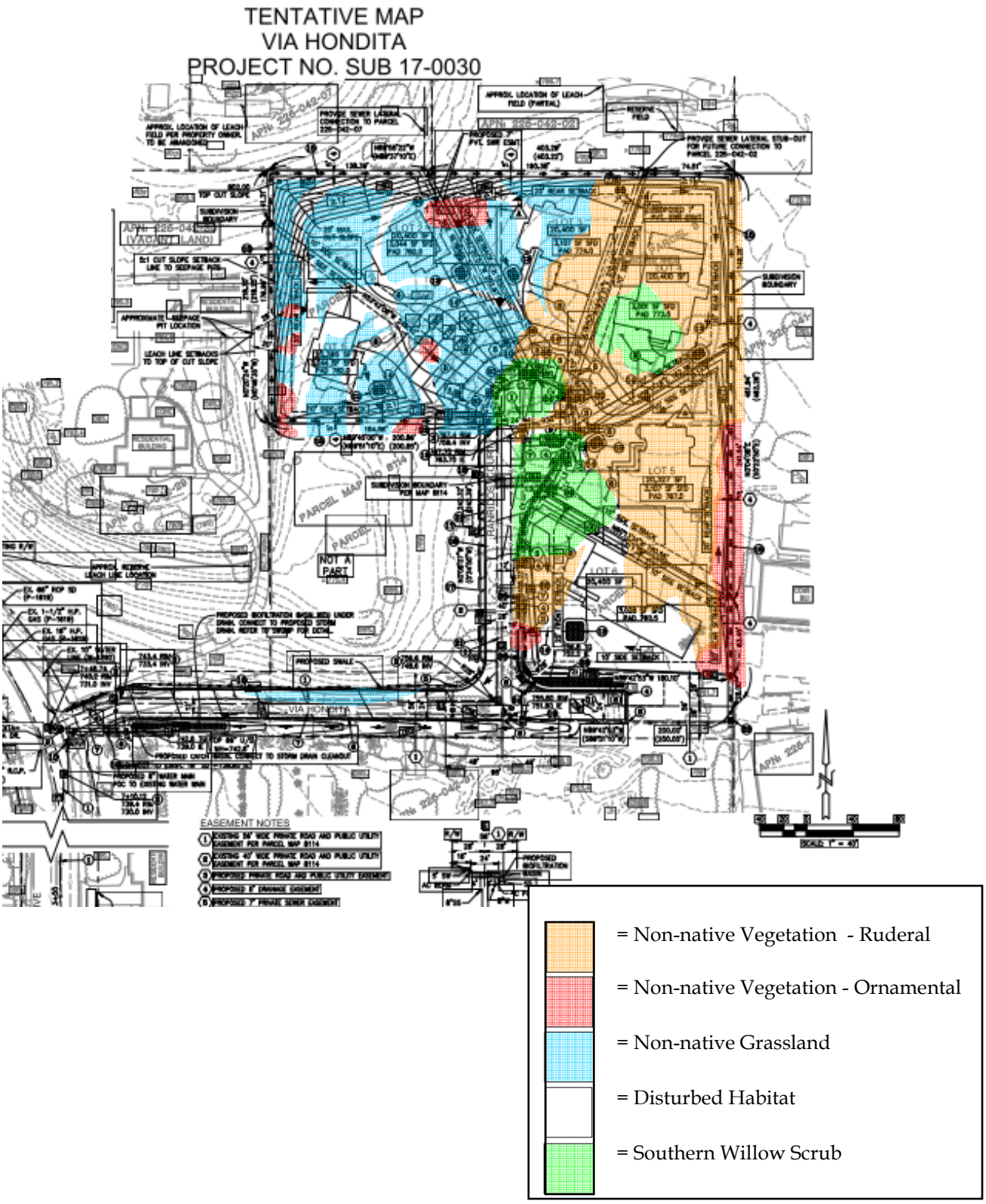

Table 2. Flora and Fauna Detected – The Via Hondita Subdivision Project

Scientific Name	Common Name
Plants	
Amaranthus albus	Prostrate Pigweed
Amsinckia sp.	Fiddlenecks
Asparagus asparagoides *	Cape Smilax
Atriplex suberecta *	Peregrine Saltbush
Avena fatua *	Wild Oat
Baccharis salicifolia	Mule Fat
Bromus diandrus *	Ripgut Brome
Bromus hordeaceus *	Soft Brome
Bromus catharticus *	Prairie Grass
Carpobrotus edulis *	Sea-Fig
Centaurea melitensis *	Maltese Star-Thistle
Chenopodium murale	Nettle-Leaved Goosefoot
Citrus sp. *	Citrus
Cynodon dactylon *	Bermuda Grass
Cyperus sp.	Flatsedges
Ehrharta erecta *	Veldt Grass
Geranium sp.	Geraniums
Erigeron bonariensis	Flax-Leaved Horseweed
Erigeron canadensis	Horseweed
Euphorbia maculata *	Spotted Spurge
Euphorbia peplus *	Petty Spurge
Euphorbia serpens	Matted Sandmat
Fraxinus sp. *	Ash
Glebionis coronaria *	Garland Daisy
Hedypnois cretica *	Crete Weed
Helminthotheca echioides *	Bristly Ox-Tongue
Hirschfeldia incana *	Shortpod Mustard
Hordeum murinum *	Wild Barley
Lactuca serriola *	Prickly Lettuce
Lamarckia aurea *	Goldentop Grass
Lepidium didymum *	Lesser Swine-Cress
Logfia gallica *	Narrowleaf Cottonrose
Lolium multiflorum *	Italian Ryegrass
Malva parviflora *	Cheeseweed Mallow
Malva pseudolavatera *	Cretan Mallow
Myoporum laetum *	Ngaio
Oxalis articulata *	Pink-Sorrel
Pectocarya linearis ssp. ferocula	Narrow-Toothed Pectocarya
Polycarpon tetraphyllum *	Fourleaf Manyseed
Polygonum aviculare ssp. depressum *	Yard Knotweed
Polypogon monspeliensis *	Rabbitfoot Grass
Portulaca oleracea *	Common Purslane
Prunus persica *	Peach
Quercus agrifolia	Coast Live Oak
Raphanus sativus *	Wild Radish
Ricinus communis *	Castor Oil Plant
Rumex crispus	Curly Dock

Table 2. Flora and Fauna Detected – The Via Hondita Subdivision Project

Scientific Name	Common Name
Plants	
Salix lasiolepis	Arroyo Willow
Salix laevigata	Red Willow
Salsola tragus *	Prickly Russian Thistle
Schinus molle *	Peruvian Peppertree
Solanum lycopersicum *	Tomato
Solanum americanum	Black Nightshade
Sonchus oleraceus *	Common Sowthistle
Sorghum halepense *	Johnson Grass
Stipa miliacea *	Smilo Grass
Tamarix sp.*	Salt Cedars
Washingtonia robusta *	Mexican Fan Palm
Birds	
Archilochus anna	Anna's Hummingbird
Buteo lineatus	**Red-shouldered Hawk**
Carpodacus mexicanus	Housefinch
Geothlypis trichas	Common Yellowthroat
Mimus polyglottos	Northern Mockingbird
Pipilo crissalis	California Towhee
Zenaida macroura	Mourning Dove
Reptiles	
Sceloporus occidentalis	Western Fence Lizard
Mammals	
Canis latrans	Coyote
Sylvilagus audubonii	Desert Cottontail Rabbit
Thomomys bottae	Valley Pocket Gopher
Butterflies	
Danaus plexippus	**Monarch**
Junonia coenia	Buckeye
Limenitis lorquini	Lorquin's Admiral
Phoebis sennae	Cloudless Sulphur
Pieris rapae	Cabbage White
Pontia protodice	Checkered White
Vanessa cardui	Painted Lady

58 plants, 18 animals detected

* - Denotes non-native taxon

BOLD - Denotes sensitive species