December 28, 2021 5 Hutton Centre Drive, Suite 750 Santa Ana, California 92707

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#### Subject: Biological Resources Reconnaissance Assessment for the San Jacinto Cultivation Farm Project

Chambers Group, Inc. (Chambers Group) was retained by Roots Properties to conduct a literature review and biological reconnaissance-level survey for the San Jacinto Cultivation Farm Project (Project). The purpose of this survey was to document existing vegetation communities, identify special status species with a potential for occurrence, and map habitats that could support special status wildlife species as well as evaluate potential impacts of the Project to these resources.

# Project Site Location and Description

The approximately 67.72-acre Project site is located on parcels 1, 7, and 8, northwest of Sanderson Avenue and Cottonwood Avenue, in the City of San Jacinto, Riverside County, California. The Project site is surrounded by agriculture and the San Jacinto Valley Regional Water and a canal to the north. A dairy farm is located directly west of the site, and an open lot occurs south and southeast of the site. The elevation at the Project site is approximately 1,500 feet above mean sea level (amsl). Maps of the Project Location and Project Vicinity are provided in Attachment 1 (Figure 1 – Project Location and Vicinity Map). Roots Properties plans to develop an outdoor cultivation farm within lands previously used for agriculture.

# **Methods**

The Survey Area encompasses the Project Site which includes the entirety of the 67.72-acre parcel.

# Literature Review

Prior to performing the biological reconnaissance survey, Chambers Group staff conducted a literature review for soils, jurisdictional water features that contribute to hydrology, and special status species known to occur within the vicinity (approximately 5 miles) of the Survey Area.

#### Soils

Prior to performing the biological reconnaissance survey, soil maps for the Survey Area were referenced in accordance with categories set forth by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Soil Conservation Service and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Web Soil Survey (USDA 2021).

#### Hydrology

A general assessment of waters potentially regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), California Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) was conducted for the Survey Area. Pursuant to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, USACE regulates the discharge of dredged and/or fill material into waters of the United States. The State of California (State) regulates discharge of material into waters of the State pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act and the California Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (California Water Code, Division 7, §13000 et seq.). Pursuant to Division 2, Chapter 6, Sections 1600-1602 of the





California Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Code, CDFW regulates all diversions, obstructions, or changes to the natural flow or bed, channel, or bank of any river, stream, or lake, which supports fish or wildlife. A desktop assessment was conducted of available data prior to the biological reconnaissance survey in the field.

#### Special Status Habitats and Species

The most recent records of the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) managed by CDFW (2021) and the California Native Plant Society's Electronic Inventory (CNPSEI) of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California (CNPS 2021) were reviewed for the following quadrangles containing and surrounding the Project: *El Casco, Beaumont, Cabazon, Lakeview, San Jacinto, Lake Fulmor, Winchester, Hemet,* and *Blackburn Canyon,* California U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute quadrangles. These databases contain records of reported occurrences of federally or State-listed endangered or threatened species, California Species of Concern (SSC), or otherwise special status species or habitats that may occur within or in the immediate vicinity of the Survey Area (Attachment 1: Figure 3 – CNDDB Occurrences Map).

#### **Biological Reconnaissance Survey**

The biological reconnaissance survey was conducted on foot within the Project site. During the survey, the biologists identified and mapped all vegetation communities found within the Survey Area onto aerial photographs (Attachment 1: Figure 2 – Vegetation Communities Map). Plant communities were determined in accordance with the *Manual of California Vegetation, Second Edition* (Sawyer et al. 2009). Plant nomenclature follows that of *The Jepson Manual, Vascular Plants of California, Second Edition* (Baldwin et al. 2012). Plant and wildlife species observed or detected within the Survey Area were recorded (Attachments 2 and 3). In addition, site photographs were taken depicting current site conditions (Attachment 4).

# Results

Chambers Group biologists Heather Franklin and Mauricio Gomez conducted the biological reconnaissance survey within the Survey Area to identify vegetation communities, the potential for occurrence of special status species, and/or habitats that could support special status wildlife species. The survey was conducted on foot between 0900 and 1200 hours on December 15, 2021. Weather conditions during the survey included temperatures ranging from 41 to 54 degrees Fahrenheit, wind speeds between 0 and 1 mile per hour, with cloud cover ranging from 0 to 20 percent, and no precipitation.

# **Biological Site Conditions**

#### Soils

According to the results from the USDA NRCS Web Soil Survey (USDA 2021), the Project Site is located in the Western Riverside Area, CA679 part of the soil map. Six soil types are known to occur within and/or adjacent to the Project site (Attachment 1: Figure 5 – USDA Soils Map). These soil types are described below.

- Grangeville loamy fine sand (GoB) occurs in the western portion of the Survey Area. The parent material is alluvium derived from granite. The available water storage is classified as moderate (approximately 7.4 inches) with a depth to the water table of 0 inches.
- Grangeville sandy loam drained, saline-alkali (GpB) occurs in the northwestern portion of the Survey Area. The parent material is alluvium derived from granite. The available water storage is classified as moderate (approximately 7.2 inches) with a depth to the water table of 0 inches.





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- Traver loamy fine sand eroded (Tp2) occurs in the western, middle and southern portions of the Survey Area. The parent material is alluvium derived from granite. The available water storage is classified as moderate (approximately 6.2 inches) with a depth to the water table of more than 80 inches.
- Traver loamy fine sand saline-alkali eroded (Tr2) occurs in the middle portion and throughout the boundaries of the Survey Area. The parent material is alluvium derived from granite. The available water storage is classified as moderate (approximately 6.2 inches) with a depth to the water table of more than 80 inches.
- Traver fine sandy loam, saline alkali (Ts) occurs in northeastern portion of the Survey Area. The available water storage is classified as moderate (approximately 6.4 inches) with a depth to the water table of more than 80 inches.
- Traver fine sandy loam, strongly saline-alkali eroded (Tt2) occurs in the northeastern, northwestern and southern portions of the Survey Area. The available water storage is classified as moderate (approximately 6.4 inches) with a depth to the water table of more than 80 inches.

#### Hydrology

No jurisdictional features such as drainages or swales were observed within the Survey Area (Attachment 1: Figure 6 – Jurisdictional Waters Map). A canal runs parallel to the northern boundary outside of the Project site just south of the San Jacinto Valley Regional Water Plant and a roadside ditch occurs between Sanderson Avenue and the Project site. Both features are located outside of the Project boundary and no work will occur within or adjacent to either feature. The non-jurisdictional roadside ditch located between Sanderson Avenue and the Project site directs surface flow during rain events and runs under an existing access road as the entrance to the Project site. However, this area can be avoided during construction with the uses of best management practices (BMP's) during ingress/egress to the Project site. Therefore, no impacts to waters of the United States or waters of the State are anticipated to occur as a result of this Project.

#### Vegetation Communities and Other Areas

Two vegetation communities or land types were found within the Survey Area during the biological reconnaissance survey: Ruderal and Developed Landscape. The majority of the Project site is developed with some portions of ruderal vegetation occurring along the outer edges of the site. The communities are described in the following subsections.

#### Ruderal

Areas classified as Ruderal tend to be dominated by pioneering herbaceous species that readily colonize disturbed ground, and that are typically found in temporary, often frequently disturbed habitats (Barbour et al. 1999). The soils in ruderal areas are typically characterized as heavily compacted or frequently disturbed. The vegetation in these areas is adapted to compact soils where water does not readily penetrate the soil. Ruderal areas are often dominated by species of the *Centaurea*, *Brassica*, *Malva*, *Salsola*, *Eremocarpus*, *Amaranthus*, and *Atriplex* genera.

Areas with Ruderal vegetation were present along the fence surrounding the Survey Area. Native plant species identified within this community on site included two dry big saltbush individuals (*Atriplex lentiformis*). Non-native plant species identified within this community on site included Russian-thistle (*Salsola australis*) and cheeseweed (*Malva parviflora*).

#### Developed

Developed areas are areas that have been altered by humans and now display man-made structures such as urban areas, houses, paved roads, buildings, parks, and other maintained areas (Gray and Bramlet 1992). Developed areas are present throughout the Survey Area, including graded soils, assembled frames for greenhouses, and portions





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surrounding the greenhouse frames were unvegetated. Based on information provided, the site was graded by a previous owner.

#### **General Plants**

A total of three plant species were observed within the Survey Area during the biological reconnaissance survey (Attachment 2: Plant Species Observed). Plant species observed during the survey were representative of the existing Survey Area conditions. No special status plant species were observed during the survey.

#### General Wildlife

A total of 15 wildlife species were observed within the Survey Area during the biological reconnaissance survey. Wildlife species observed or detected during the survey were characteristic of the existing Survey Area conditions. A complete list of wildlife species observed or detected is provided in Attachment 3 – Wildlife Species Observed/Detected List.

#### **Sensitive Species**

#### **Special Status Species**

The following information is a list of abbreviations used to help determine special status biological resources potentially occurring in the Survey Area.

#### **CNPS California Rare Plant Rank (CRPR)**

	1A	=	Plants presumed extinct in California.
	1B	=	Plants rare and endangered in California and throughout their range.
	2	=	Plants rare, threatened or endangered in California but more common elsewhere in their
	2		range.
	h	_	5
	3	=	Plants about which we need more information, a review list.
	4	=	Plants of limited distribution; a watch list.
		CRPF	t Extensions
		0.1	<ul> <li>Seriously endangered in California (greater than 80 percent of occurrences</li> </ul>
			threatened/high degree and immediacy of threat).
		0.2	<ul> <li>Fairly endangered in California (20 to 80 percent occurrences threatened).</li> </ul>
		0.3	= Not very endangered in California (less than 20 percent of occurrences threatened).
Federa	-		
	FE	=	Federally listed; Endangered
	FT	=	Federally listed; Threatened
State			
	ST	=	State listed; Threatened
	SE	=	State listed; Endangered
	RARE	=	State listed; Rare (Listed "Rare" animals have been re-designated as Threatened, but Rare
	NAIL	-	plants have retained the Rare designation.)
	SSC	_	
		=	State Species of Special Concern
	WL	=	CDFW Watch List
	FP	=	CDFW Fully Protected



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The following information was used to determine biological resources potentially occurring within the Survey Area. The criteria used to evaluate the potential for special status species to occur within the Survey Area are outlined in Table 1.

es is restricted to habitats or environmental conditions that do not occur within the Project rical records for this species do not exist within the vicinity (approximately 5 miles) of the ct site, and/or habitats or environmental conditions needed to support the species are of quality. r a historical record exists of the species within the vicinity of the Project site oximately 5 miles) and marginal habitat exists on the Survey Area, or the habitat
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es was detected within the Survey Area at the time of the survey.
-

#### Table 1: Criteria for Evaluating Special Status Species Potential for Occurrence (PFO)

# Special Status Plant Species

Database searches (CDFW 2021; CNPS 2021) resulted in a list of 18 federally and/or state-listed threatened, endangered, or otherwise special status plant species documented to historically occur within the vicinity of the Survey Area. Of the 18 plant species that resulted from the database search, it was determined that all 18 are considered absent from the Survey Area. No special status plant species were found during the biological reconnaissance survey.

The following 18 plant species are considered **Absent** from the Survey Area due to lack of suitable habitat or because they grow outside the elevation range of the Survey Area:

- California satintail (*Imperata brevifolia*) CRPR 2B.1
- California screw moss (Tortula californica) CRPR 1B.2
- chaparral sand-verbena (Abronia villosa var. aurita) CRPR 1B.1
- Coulter's goldfields (Lasthenia glabrata ssp. coulteri) CRPR 1B.1
- Davidson's saltscale (Atriplex serenana var. davidsonii) CRPR 1B.2
- Jaeger's milk-vetch (Astragalus pachypus var. jaegeri) CRPR 1B.1
- Little mousetail (*Myosurus minimus* ssp. *apus*) CRPR 3.1
- long-spined spineflower (Chorizanthe polygonoides var. longispina) CRPR 1B.2
- Mojave tarplant (Deinandra mohavensis) SE, CRPR 1B.3
- Parish's brittlescale (*Atriplex parishii*) CRPR 1B.1
- Parry's spineflower (Chorizanthe parryi var. parryi) CRPR 1B.1







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- Payson's jewelflower (Caulanthus simulans) CRPR 4.2
- Plummer's Mariposa-Lily (Calochortus plummerae) CRPR 4.2
- salt spring checkerbloom (Sidalcea neomexicana) CRPR 2B.2
- San Jacinto Valley crownscale (Atriplex coronata var. notatior) FE, CRPR 1B.1
- Smooth tarplant (Centromadia pungens ssp. laevis) CRPR 1B.1
- spreading navarretia (*Navarretia fossalis*) FT, CRPR 1B.1
- white rabbit-tobacco (Pseudognaphalium leucocephalum) CRPR 2B.2

#### Special Status Wildlife Species

Database searches (CDFW 2021; USFWS 2021) resulted in a list of 31 federally and/or state listed endangered or threatened, State Species of Concern, or otherwise special status wildlife species documented to occur within the Survey Area. After a literature review and the assessment of the various habitat types within the Survey Area, it was determined that 30 special status wildlife species are considered absent and one species has a low potential to occur.

The following 30 wildlife species are considered **Absent** from the Survey Area due to the absence of suitable habitat present within the site:

- American badger (Taxidea taxus) SSC
- Bell's sage sparrow (Artemisiospiza belli belli) WL
- California glossy snake (Arizona elegans occidentalis) SSC
- coast horned lizard (Phrynosoma blainvillii) SSC
- coastal cactus wren (Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus sandiegensis) SSC
- coastal California gnatcatcher (Polioptila californica californica) FT, SSC
- Cooper's hawk (Accipiter cooperii) WL
- ferruginous hawk (Buteo regalis) WL
- least Bell's vireo (Vireo bellii pusillus) FE, SE
- loggerhead shrike (Lanius ludovicianus) SSC
- Los Angeles pocket mouse (Perognathus longimembris brevinasus) SSC
- northwestern San Diego pocket mouse (Chaetodipus fallax fallax) SSC
- orange-throated whiptail (Aspidoscelis hyperythra) WL
- red-diamond rattlesnake (Crotalus ruber) SSC
- San Bernardino kangaroo rat (Dipodomys merriami parvus) FE, SSC
- San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit (Lepus californicus bennettii) SSC
- San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*) SSC
- southern California legless lizard (Anniella stebbinsi) SSC
- southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (Aimophila ruficeps canescens) WL
- southwestern willow flycatcher (Empidonax traillii extimus) FE, SE
- Stephen's kangaroo rat (Dipodomys stephensi) FE, ST
- Townsend's big-eared bat (Corynorhinus townsendii) SSC







- tricolored blackbird (Agelaius tricolor) ST
- vernal pool fairy shrimp (Branchinecta lynchi) FT
- western spadefoot (Spea hammondii) SSC
- western yellow bat (Lasiurus xanthinus) SSC
- western yellow-billed cuckoo (Coccyzus americanus occidentalis) FT, SE
- white-faced ibis (Plegadis chihi) WL
- yellow warbler (Setophaga petechia) SSC
- yellow-headed blackbird (Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus) SSC

Although the ferruginous hawk has no potential for nesting within the Project site, there is a potential for foraging within the Survey Area and the adjacent areas. One adult ferruginous hawk was observed foraging within the Project site and then flew north to the San Jacinto Valley Regional Water Plant.

The analysis of the CNDDB search and field survey resulted in one species with a low potential to occur on the Project site. The burrowing owl has a low potential to occur and is described below:

#### Burrowing Owl (Athene cunicularia) - SSC

• The burrowing owl inhabits dry, open, native, or non-native grasslands, deserts, and other arid environments with low-growing and low-density vegetation. Moderate quality habitat for this species occurs within the open lot located south and southeast outside of the Project site. The area is disturbed and consists primarily of non-native vegetation; however, no burrows or ground squirrels were observed within the field. In addition, a large open space is located east of the Project site; however, the open space is separated by N Sanderson Avenue (Highway 79). This species has been recorded within 0.5 miles of the Project site, in the open fields located just north of the San Jacinto Valley Regional Water Plant. However, the potential habitat for this species within the Project site is a very small area, and no burrows or ground squirrels were observed during the survey. Therefore, the burrowing owl has a low potential to occur within the Project site.

#### United States Fish Wildlife Service Critical Habitat

Critical Habitat is defined as areas of land, water, and air space containing the physical and biological features essential for the survival and recovery of endangered and threatened species. Designated Critical Habitat includes sites for breeding and rearing, movement or migration, feeding, roosting, cover, and shelter. Designated Critical Habitats require special management and protection of existing resources, including water quality and quantity, host animals and plants, food availability, pollinators, sunlight, and specific soil types. Designated Critical Habitat delineates all suitable habitat, occupied or not, that is essential to the survival and recovery of the species. According to the USFWS Critical Habitat for the San Bernardino kangaroo rat is present within 2.5 miles of the Project site to the northeast, and Critical Habitat for spreading navarretia and thread-leaved brodiaea is present within 5 miles of the Project site to the southwest as depicted in (Attachment 1: Figure 4 – USFWS Occurrences and Critical Habitat Map).

# Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) Compliance

The Project site occurs within the MSHCP Planning Area. The survey requirements and conservations measures were found by conducting an online search in the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (RCA) MSHCP Information Map. In addition, Volume 1 of the MSHCP discussed general conservation requirements for MSCHP Compliance.





The MSHCP Project Review Checklist was used to determine surveys and conservation measures necessary for MSHCP Compliance.

The Project site is not:

- in an amphibian survey area
- in a mammal survey area
- in a criteria area species survey area
- in a Delhi Sands Flower-loving fly survey area

The Project site does fall under a:

- burrowing owl survey area
- narrow endemic species survey area

#### Criteria Cell Requirements

The Project site resides outside of the MSHCP Criteria Cell. The Project site is found within the following Assessor Parcel Numbers: 432130001, 432130002, 432130008, and 432130009.

#### Burrowing Owl Survey Area

The Project site falls within the mapped survey area for burrowing owl.

#### Narrow Endemic Plant Species Survey Area

The Project site is located within a Narrow Endemic Plant Species Survey Area (NEPSSA). Database search (RCA MSHCP Information Map 2021) resulted in a list of five federally and/or state-listed threatened, endangered, or otherwise special status plant species that are MSCHP Covered Species. Of the five plant species that resulted from the database search, it was determined that all five are considered absent from the Survey Area and one species is considered to have a low potential to occur within the Survey Area. No MSCHP Covered Species were found during the biological reconnaissance survey.

The following five plant species are considered **Absent** from the Survey Area due to lack of suitable habitat or because they grow outside the elevation range of the Survey Area:

- California Orcutt grass (Orcuttia californica) FE, CE, CRPR 1B.1
- Munz's onion (Allium munzii) FE, CE, CRPR 1B.1
- many-stemmed dudleya (Dudleya multicaulis) CRPR 1B.2
- San Diego ambrosia (Ambrosia pumila) FE, CRPR 1B.1
- Wrights's trichocoronis (Trichocoronis wrightii var. wrightii) CRPR 2B.1

# **Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### Hydrology

No jurisdictional features were observed within the Project site. A canal runs parallel to the northern boundary outside of the Project site, just south of the San Jacinto Valley Regional Water Plant, and a non-jurisdictional roadside ditch occurs between Sanderson Avenue and the Project site. No work is anticipated to occur to the canal or the roadside ditch during the construction activities and both features can be avoided. If any offsite required improvements





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associated with the development of this Project could potentially impact the canal, a Jurisdictional Delineation must be conducted to determine agency jurisdiction, and applications for a USACE 404 permit, State 401 certification, or CDFW State Streambed Alteration Agreement may be required for Project authorization.

#### Special Status Plant Species

Following the literature review and after the assessment of the various habitat types in the Survey Area, it was determined that of the 18 special status plant species known to historically occur within the Survey Area, all 18 species were considered absent within the Survey Area. No special status species were found during the biological reconnaissance survey.

#### Special Status Wildlife Species

Following the literature review and the assessment of the various habitat types in the Survey Area, it was determined that of the 31 special status wildlife species known to occur within the Project site, 30 species are considered absent. The burrowing owl has a low potential to occur within the Project site.

To minimize potential impacts to nesting birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), construction activities should take place outside nesting season (February 1 to August 31), to the greatest extent practicable.

If construction activities occur during nesting season, preconstruction nesting bird surveys should be conducted. The survey should occur no more than three days prior to initiation of ground disturbing activities, and any occupied passerine and/or raptor nests occurring within or adjacent to the impact area should be delineated. Additional follow-up surveys may be required by the resource agencies. To the maximum extent practicable, a minimum buffer zone around occupied nests should be determined by the qualified biologist to avoid impacts to the active nest. The buffer should be maintained during physical ground-disturbing activities. Once nesting has ceased, the buffer may be removed.

#### MSHCP Compliance

#### Burrowing Owl Survey Area

The Project site is within the designated survey area for burrowing owl. Therefore, a pre-construction survey for burrowing owl (BUOW) shall be conducted within 30 days prior to ground disturbance to reevaluate the locations of active burrowing owl burrows located adjacent to or within the Project limits and to avoid direct take of BUOW (MSHCP Species Specific Objective 6). If BUOWs are identified on site, avoidance measures will be developed in compliance with the MSHCP and in coordination with the CDFW and/or Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (RCA). These measures would include the following as well as any others developed in coordination with CDFW and/or RCA:

- A biologist with knowledge of BUOW and its habitat will be retained to function as a biological monitor.
- The biological monitor will develop and implement a contractor education program with regard to the BUOW to be provided to all personnel (including temporary contractors and subcontractors) before beginning work on the Project.
- The biological monitor will be present during vegetation clearing, grading, and construction, to monitor occupied BUOW burrows and any construction-related impacts.
- Prior to any ground disturbance, all limits of Project construction will be delineated and marked to be clearly visible to personnel on foot and in heavy equipment. All construction-related activities (e.g., vegetation removal, grading, equipment lay-down and storage, and contractor parking) will occur inside the limits of construction and designated staging areas. Construction staging and equipment storage will





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be located outside any occupied BUOW burrow locations.

- All movement of contractors, subcontractors, or their agents and equipment will be restricted to the limits
  of construction and staging areas.
- A qualified biologist will conduct any necessary BUOW passive relocation that may be required to avoid Project effects to BUOW.
- If BUOW must be moved away from the proposed work area, passive relocation techniques would be used rather than actual avian trapping. At least one or more weeks would be necessary to accomplish this to allow the birds to acclimate to alternate burrows.
- The Project would provide funding for long-term management and monitoring of the protected lands acquired for BUOW impacts. This monitoring would include an annual report submittal to the CDFW.

#### Narrow Endemic Plant Species Survey Area (NEPSSA)

The Project site is located within a NEPSSA for the following five plant species that are also MSCHP Covered Species: California Orcutt grass, Munz's onion, many-stemmed, Wrights's trichocoronis, and the San Diego ambrosia. However, it was determined that the Project site lacks suitable habitat for all five species; therefore, no focused surveys are required.

Please contact me at (949) 261-5414 ext. 7232 if you have any questions or concerns regarding this memo report.

Sincerely,

#### CHAMBERS GROUP, INC.

Harton Ro-

Heather Franklin Project Biologist hfranklin@chambersgroupinc.com (949) 261-5414 ext. 7232

#### Attachments

- Attachment 1: Figure 1 Project Location and Vicinity Map Figure 2 – Vegetation Communities Map Figure 3 – CNDDB Occurrences Map Figure 4 - USFWS Occurrences and Critical Habitat Map
  - Figure 5 USDA Soils Map
  - Figure 6 Jurisdictional Waters Map
- Attachment 2: Plant Species Observed
- Attachment 3: Wildlife Species Observed/Detected
- Attachment 4: Site Photographs





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**ATTACHMENT 1 – FIGURES** 

**ATTACHMENT 2 – PLANT SPECIES OBSERVED** 

ATTACHMENT 3 – WILDLIFE SPECIES OBSERVED/DETECTED

# **ATTACHMENT 4 – SITE PHOTOGRAPHS**