

County of San Diego RPO Wetlands/Impacts

VALIANO

Figure 14a

Table 7			
IMPACTS TO JURISDICTIONAL WETLANDS AND WATERWAYS (acre[s])*			
HABITAT	WATERS OF U.S.	CDFW	COUNTY RPO
WETLANDS/RIPARIAN			
Southern Riparian Forest	--	0.14	0.17
Southern Riparian Woodland	--	--	--
Coast Live Oak Woodland	--	0.39	--
Southern Willow Scrub	--	0.02	--
Mule Fat Scrub	--	0.01	0.01
Freshwater Marsh	--	--	--
Herbaceous Wetland	0.02	0.02	--
Disturbed Wetland	--	0.08	--
Subtotal	0.02	0.66	0.18
NON-WETLAND WATERS			
Non-wetland WUS/Streambed	0.19	0.26	--
Open Water/Pond	--	--	--
Subtotal	0.19	0.26	--
TOTAL	0.21	0.92	0.18

*Areas are presented in acre(s) rounded to the nearest 0.01.

2.5 WILDLIFE MOVEMENT AND NURSERY SITES

The site is not part of a regional corridor, but presently has characteristics of a local corridor. The site does not serve as a nursery site.

2.6 INDIRECT IMPACTS

Potential indirect impacts from construction noise, human access, domestic animals, exotic plant species, and lighting may occur as a result of project implementation; further discussed below and in Sections 3.1.H and 3.1.L.

2.6.1 Noise

Construction-related noise from such sources as clearing and grading would be a temporary impact to wildlife. Breeding birds and mammals may temporarily or permanently leave their territories to avoid disturbances from construction activities, which could lead to reduced reproductive success and increased mortality. Potential short-term noise impacts could result from construction for the proposed Project. Noise effects would be considered significant if construction noise levels exceed a level of 60 dB L_{eq} hourly average or ambient adjacent to ground- or tree-nesting raptor nests during the raptor breeding season (February 1 to July 15).

2.6.2 Human Access

Increases in human activity in the area could result in degradation of open space habitat and associated indirect impacts on sensitive species through the creation of unauthorized trails and removal of vegetation. In addition, illegal dumping of lawn and garden clippings, trash, and other refuse could occur. Resulting habitat degradation and effects on sensitive species in open space areas could result in a significant impact.

2.6.3 Domestic Predators

The project is residential in nature, so domestic predators (e.g. dogs and cats) may be introduced to the surrounding habitat. Although such introductions have potential to harm native wildlife species, the site is adjacent to existing rural residential development and is already subject to some level of disturbance and predation by domestic animals.

2.6.4 Exotic Plant Species

Non-native plants could colonize areas disturbed by construction and development and could potentially spread into adjacent native habitats. Many non-native plants are highly invasive and can displace native vegetation (reducing native species diversity), potentially increase flammability and fire frequency, change ground and surface water levels, and potentially adversely affect native wildlife dependent on native plant species.

2.6.5 Lighting

Night lighting that extends from a developed area onto adjacent wildlife habitat can discourage nocturnal wildlife in habitat and can provide nocturnal predators with an unnatural advantage over their prey, resulting in a potentially significant impact.

3.0 SPECIAL STATUS SPECIES

3.1 GUIDELINES FOR THE DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

Would the project have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the USFWS or CDFW (County 2010b)?

Any of the following conditions would be considered significant if:

- A. The Project would impact 1 or more individuals of a species listed as federally or state endangered or threatened.
- B. The Project would impact an on-site population of a County List A or B plant species, or a County Group 1 animal species, or a species listed as a state Species of Special Concern.

- C. The Project would impact the local long-term survival of a County List C or D plant species or a County Group 2 animal species.
- D. The Project may impact arroyo toad aestivation, foraging, or breeding habitat.
- E. The Project would impact golden eagle habitat.
- F. The Project would result in a loss of functional foraging habitat for raptors.
- G. The Project would impact the viability of a core wildlife area, defined as a large block of habitat (typically 500 acres or more not limited to project boundaries, though smaller areas with particularly valuable resources may also be considered a core wildlife area) that supports a viable population of a sensitive wildlife species or supports multiple wildlife species.
- H. The Project would cause indirect impacts, particularly at the edge of proposed development adjacent to proposed or existing open space or other natural habitat areas, to levels that would likely harm sensitive species over the long term.
- I. The Project would impact occupied burrowing owl habitat.
- J. The Project would impact occupied cactus wren habitat, or formerly occupied coastal cactus wren habitat that has been burned by wildfire.
- K. The Project would impact occupied Hermes copper butterfly habitat.
- L. The Project would impact nesting success of the following sensitive bird species through grading, clearing, fire fuel modification, and/or other noise generating activities such as construction:
 - Coastal cactus wren
 - Coastal California gnatcatcher
 - Least Bell's vireo
 - Southwestern willow flycatcher
 - Tree-nesting raptors
 - Ground-nesting raptors
 - Golden eagle
 - Light-footed clapper rail

3.2 ANALYSIS OF PROJECT EFFECTS

The proposed Project would result in significant impacts under the above guidelines for the following reasons:

- 3.1.B The Project would impact habitat for seven County Group 1 animal species observed on site: Cooper's hawk, red-shouldered hawk, northern harrier, white-tailed kite, turkey vulture, prairie falcon, and grasshopper sparrow. These impacts would be significant under County Guideline 3.1.B.
- 3.1.F The Project site supports raptor foraging habitat. Impacts to 53.8 acres of non-native grassland and 20.5 acres of extensive agriculture (pasture/field) would occur and would be significant under County Guideline 3.1.F.
- 3.1.L Potential short-term noise impacts could result from construction of the proposed Project. Noise effects would be considered significant if construction noise levels exceed a level of 60 dB L_{eq} hourly average or ambient adjacent to ground- or tree-nesting raptor nests during the raptor breeding season (February 1 to July 15).

The proposed Project would not result in significant impacts under the above guidelines for the following reasons:

- 3.1.A The Project would not impact any species listed as federally or state endangered or threatened.
- 3.1.C The Project would impact habitat of three County Group 2 animal species (southern mule deer, yellow warbler, and western bluebird). These impacts would not affect the local long-term survival of these species. While mule deer can occur throughout the property, there is no regional or significant movement corridor through the Project site, which is bordered to the north, south, and east by a combination of residential development and orchards. A road crossing would affect a small amount of yellow warbler habitat (southern riparian forest), while the remaining habitat for this species would be unaffected. Yellow warbler is a fairly common breeding summer resident in the county, as well as a common migrant. Western bluebird is a common resident of foothills and mountains in the county. Habitat for western bluebird occurs scattered throughout the site, some of which would be preserved in open space. As such, Project implementation would not affect the local long-term survival of these species.
- 3.1.D The site contains no habitat suitable for the arroyo toad.
- 3.1.E The nearest golden eagle nest is approximately 3 miles to the south of the Project site. However, there have been no recent sightings of territorial eagles at this nest location. The Project site does not contain nesting habitat and it is not within any known golden eagle territory. While there is adequate eagle foraging habitat (open non-native grassland) on site, the surrounding habitat fragmentation and the distance from known eagle territories would indicate that the site has low value for golden eagle. The surrounding area is primarily urbanized so new nesting in the vicinity is unlikely. The USFWS also was contacted and confirmed that they had no information of additional eagle activity near the site. Therefore, impacts to golden eagle habitat would be less than significant.

- 3.1.G The Project site is not part of a core wildlife area of 500 acres of wildlife habitat or more.
- 3.1.H. Potentially significant indirect impacts to sensitive species resulting from human access, domestic animals, exotic plant species, and lighting would be avoided through the following design measures: (1) permanent fencing shall be installed around biological open space, and signs precluding access shall be posted (Figures 16a-16b); (2) only non-invasive plant species would be included in the landscape plan for the site (species not listed on the California Invasive Plant Inventory prepared by the California Invasive Plant Council [Cal-IPC; 2006]); and (3) all Project-related lighting would be required to adhere to Division 9 of the San Diego County Light Pollution Code. Lighting within the proposed Project footprint adjacent to undeveloped habitat would be of the lowest illumination allowed for human safety, selectively placed, shielded, and directed away from these areas. Under County Guideline 3.1.H, impacts to sensitive species resulting from indirect impacts from human access, domestic animals, exotic plant species, or lighting would be less than significant over the long term. Potential indirect impacts from construction noise are discussed under Guideline 3.1.L and in Section 3.4.
- 3.1.I The Project site does not support occupied burrowing owl habitat.
- 3.1.J The Project site does not contain suitable habitat for the coastal cactus wren.
- 3.1.K The Project site does not contain Hermes copper butterfly habitat.

3.3 CUMULATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS

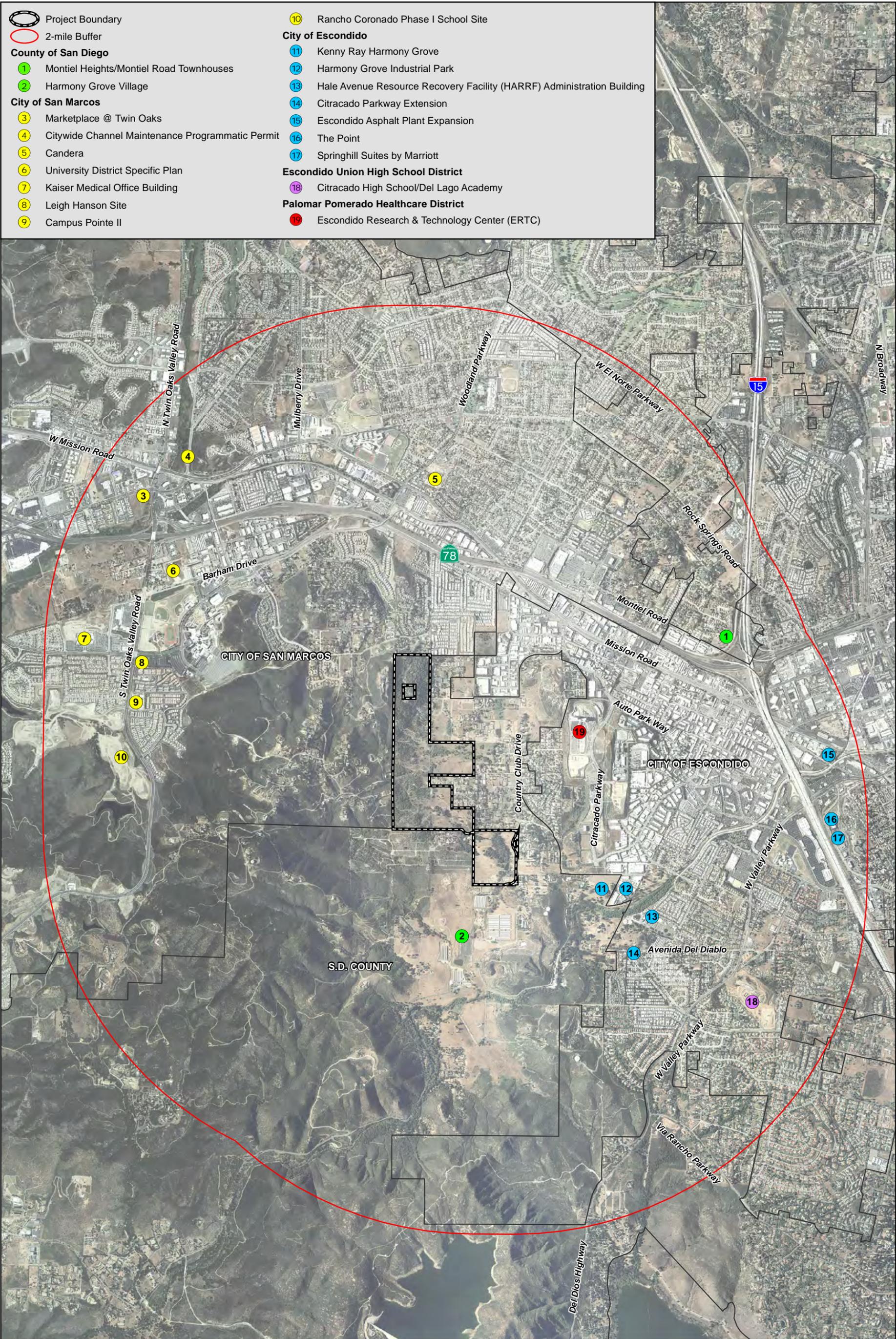
The area of consideration for cumulative biological projects impacts was based on an approximate two-mile radius of the Project site (Figure 15), including the foothills west and southwest of the Project site and extending south to the northern edge of Olivenhain Reservoir. The cumulative study area also extends slightly beyond Interstate 15 to the east and north of SR 78. The cumulative study area was chosen because it includes areas with similar biological resources as the Project site, as well as capturing the watershed for the Project site, including urbanized areas draining to Escondido Creek upstream and downstream of the site. It also includes the nearest draft NCMSCP PAMA areas and wildlife corridor in the Mt. Whitney/Double Peak area connecting south to Escondido Creek. The area of consideration includes areas within a reasonable distance from the Project site that may have a biologically based connection to the Project site in terms of habitat, connectivity, and development in the watershed.

A total of 20 projects (including the proposed Project) were reviewed for this cumulative analysis (Figure 15; Table 8). Of these 20 cumulative projects, 7 would result in significant or potentially significant cumulative impacts to sensitive biological resources. The remaining 13 projects either would not result in impacts to sensitive biological resources or information on impacts is not available.

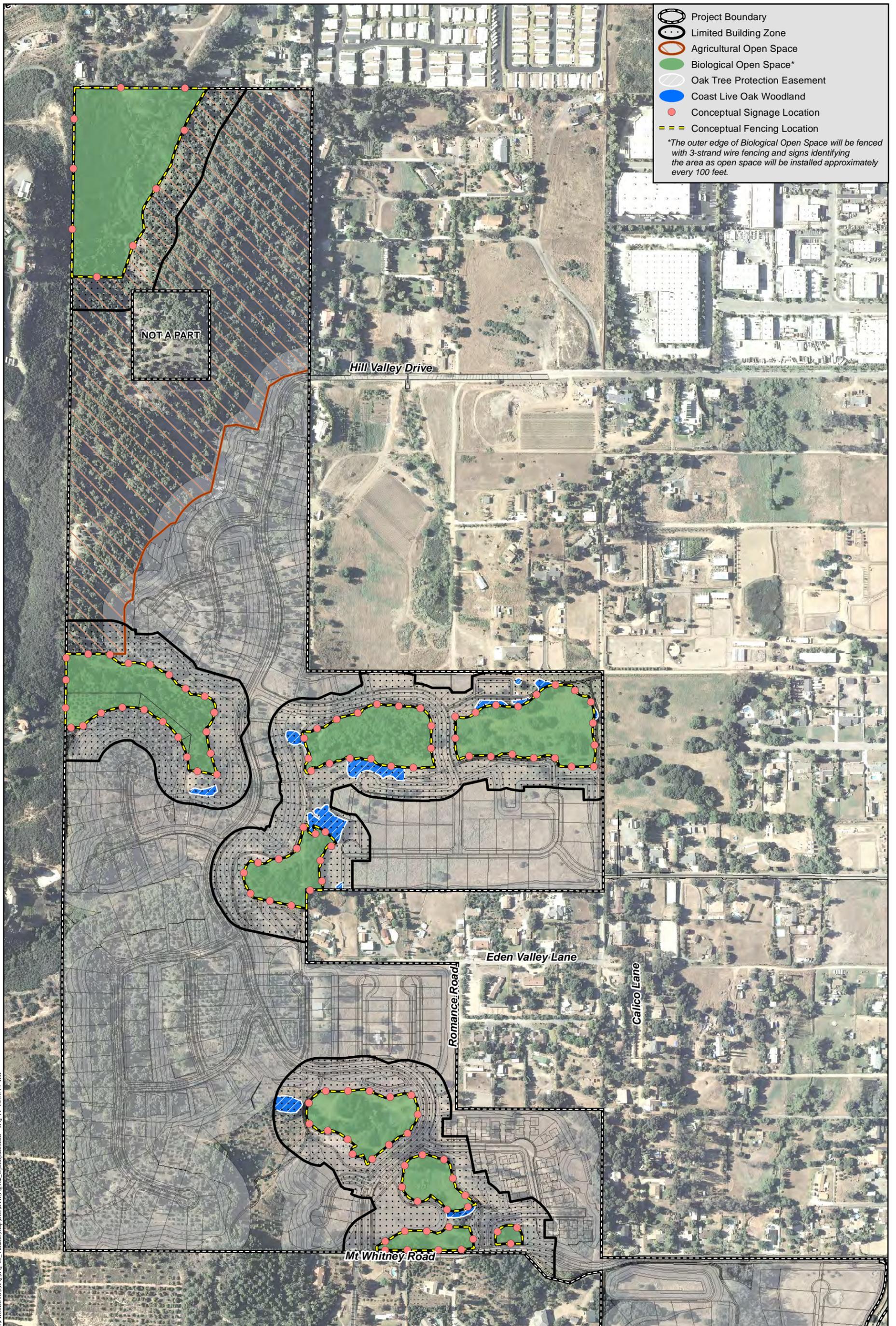
The cumulative projects (including the proposed Project) with available data would impact 218.8 acres of raptor foraging habitat, as well as potential habitat for grasshopper sparrow. Cumulative impacts to raptors and grasshopper sparrow would be significant since the cumulative projects would further reduce the amount of foraging habitat available for these species. The proposed Project would result in impacts to raptor foraging habitat and grasshopper sparrow habitat comprised of 53.8 acres of non-native grassland and 20.5 acres of extensive agriculture (pasture/field). Therefore, the proposed Project would contribute to significant cumulative impacts to raptors and grasshopper sparrow.

The proposed Project would mitigate for these impacts through the purchase of credits and/or off-site preservation of 53.1 acres of non-native grassland/raptor foraging habitat for impacts to non-native grassland, and an additional 10.3 acres of off-site preservation and/or purchase of credits for impacts to extensive agriculture considered raptor foraging habitat. Thus the proposed Project's impacts to raptor foraging habitat and habitat for grasshopper sparrow would be mitigated through preservation/acquisition of appropriate habitat off site. Although a significant impact to sensitive wildlife habitat would occur and the proposed Project would contribute to these significant impacts, such impacts would be mitigated and the proposed Project's contribution to cumulative impacts to sensitive wildlife would be less than significant.

No cumulative impacts to listed plant or animal species would occur as no listed species are present on site.



Biological Cumulative Study Area



-  Project Boundary
-  Limited Building Zone
-  Agricultural Open Space
-  Biological Open Space*
-  Oak Tree Protection Easement
-  Coast Live Oak Woodland
-  Conceptual Signage Location
-  Conceptual Fencing Location

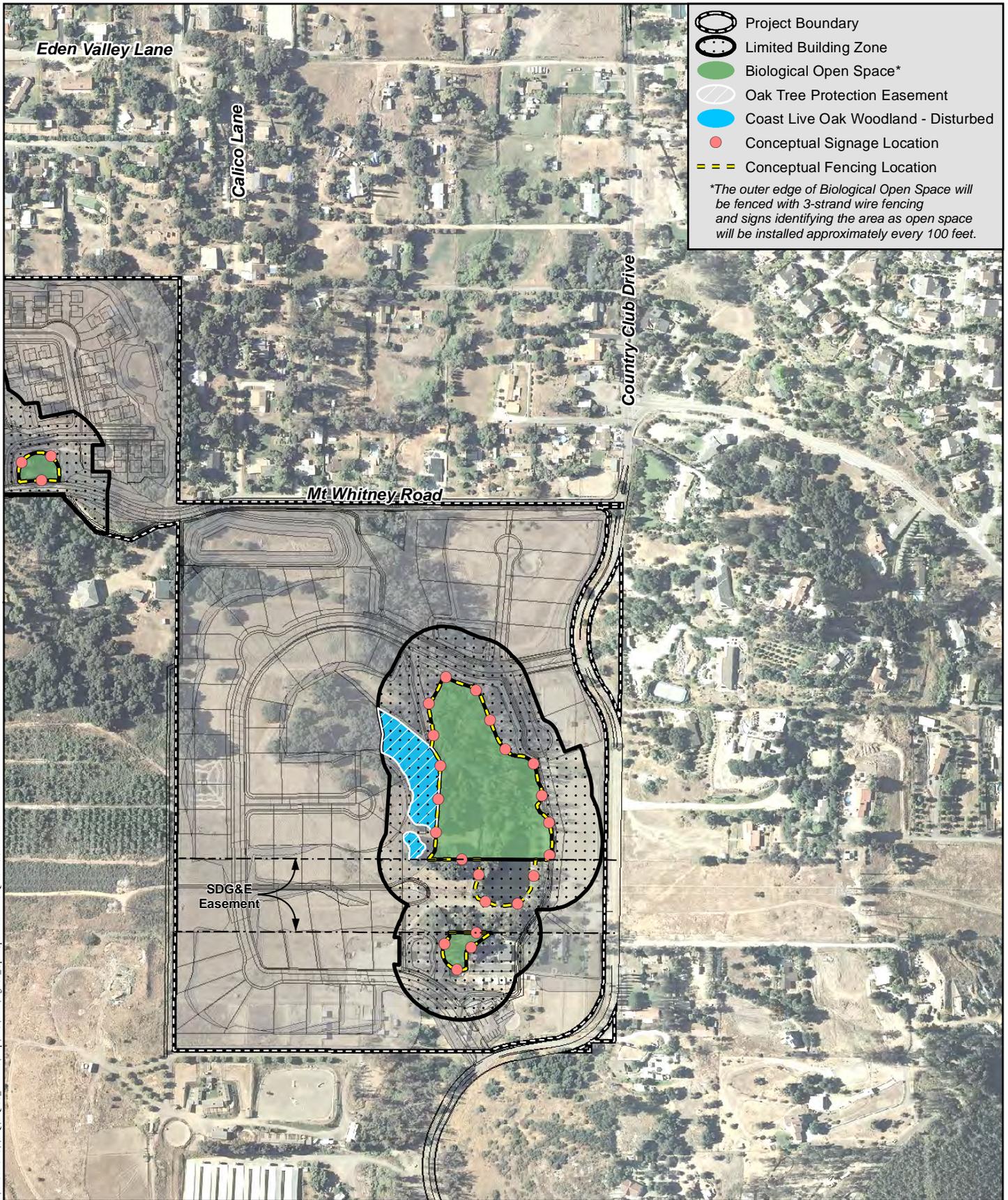
**The outer edge of Biological Open Space will be fenced with 3-strand wire fencing and signs identifying the area as open space will be installed approximately every 100 feet.*

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Biological Open Space

VALIANO

Figure 16a



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Biological Open Space

VALIANO

Figure 16b