

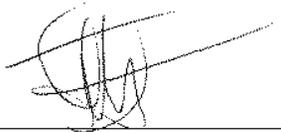
Visual Report
The Highlands at Warner Springs

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1 INTRODUCTION

The site is 149.7 acres in the unincorporated County of San Diego adjacent to the community of Warner Springs. The project site is located along Los Coyotes Road, south of Camino San Ignacio Road and east of State Highway 79 (SR 79). It is within the Warner Springs Specific Plan (WSSP) and within the boundary of the North Mountain Subregional Plan. The site is designated Rural Development Area (RDA) and Specific Area (21) in the County's General Plan Regional Land Use Element.

The Warner Springs Specific Plan zones the site RR.5, Rural Residential, with a density of 0.5 Dwelling Unit per acre (0.5 DU/1 AC) and a minimum lot size of two acres. The WSSP included 35 rural residential lots on the site. The project proposes 28 lots, seven less lots than allowed in the Specific Plan. Lots range in size from 5.00 to 8.50 acres. Average lot size is 5.3 acres.

The site is approximately one mile east of SR 79 at its southern boundary and approximately one-half mile from the highway at its northern boundary. The community of Warner Springs is to the northwest; a residential community, Los Tules, is to the north. The Los Coyotes Indian Reservation is to the east and undeveloped Vista Irrigation District Land is to the south. With the exception of Warner Springs area, the area surrounding the site is primarily public land that is undeveloped and unoccupied.

Figure 1, "Regional Vicinity Map," page 29, shows the general location of the site in northeast San Diego County. Figure 2, "USGS Quadrangle Map," page 31, show the location of the site in relation to Warner Springs, and surrounding topography.

The proposed project is shown on Figure 3, "Site Plan," page 33, which delineates the proposed design, location of building pads, fire safety vegetation management areas, and Limited Building Zone (LBZ).

2 METHODS AND ANALYSIS LIMITATIONS

In preparation of this report, TRC Consultants conducted field visits and took photos of the site from viewpoints along SR 79, S-2, and in the vicinity of Warner Springs. The study is based on a site plan and preliminary grading plan prepared by San Dieguito Engineering. Key project boundary points were surveyed and these reference points were used to create photosimulations of the most prominent views of the site.

3 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

3.1 General Plan

The County of San Diego General Plan (GP), including the North Mountain Subregional Plan (NMSP), were reviewed for provisions that relate to the proposed project. Relevant GP and NMSP provisions and related conformance discussions are provided in the following table. No inconsistencies with the GP and NMSP were found.

3.2 Other Regulatory Requirements

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, the Resources Protection Ordinance (RPO), and the Board of Supervisor's Hillside Development Policy (I-73) were reviewed for provisions that relate to the proposed project. CEQA Guidelines Checklist (Appendix G) has been used to formulate guidelines to aid in determining the significance of impacts to visual resources, and are presented in Section 5, Guidelines for the Determination of Significance. An analysis of project impacts using these guidelines is included in Section 6, Analysis of Effects. RPO and I-73 provisions are reviewed in the following table. No inconsistencies with the RPO and Policy I-73 were found.

Regulatory Framework: Project Conformance

San Diego County General Plan

Open Space Element

The following Goals of the Open Space Element apply to the proposed project:

General Open Space Goals

3. Conserve open spaces needed for recreation, education and scientific activities.

4. Encourage and preserve those open space uses that distinguish and separate communities.

Consistency with the Open Space Element:

3. The site is part of the approved Warner Springs Specific Plan (WSSP) that has earmarked this area for Estate Residential development. The Specific Plan set aside large areas of open space which have remained undisturbed. This open space has preserved the visual resources in the Warner Springs area, which includes the flat open plain and the hillsides surrounding the community. As such, the project has met the need to conserve open space that protects visual resources. The specific plan amendment proposes a project that has 28 lots, seven fewer than approved with the WSSP. Original density was approved at approximately one dwelling unit per four acres. Proposed density is one dwelling unit per 5.3 acres.

4. The visual landscape of Warner Springs is of a single community surrounded by a large area of undisturbed land. The dominant visual element of the area is Hot Spring Mountain and its associated foothills. Warner Springs is located at the base of these foothills. The proposed project is adjacent to Warner Springs, at a slightly higher elevation. At a distance, the project will blend in with the other communities and will not appear as a significant expansion of development in the area.

<p>Open Space Design of Private Lands</p> <p>Goal II. Conservation of Resources and Natural Processes</p> <p>8. Encourage the preservation of significant natural features of the County, including the beaches, lagoons, shoreline, canyons, bluffs, mountain peaks, and major rock outcroppings.</p> <p>Goal IV. Distinguish and Separate Communities</p> <p>16. Encourage an intermingling of open space as an integral part of all major residential development so as to preserve an atmosphere of openness at the neighborhood scale.</p>	<p>8. One bluff is associated with the site, Inspiration Point, which is a viewpoint looking west at the Warner Springs basin. It is at an elevation of 3,510 feet. Inspiration Point is offsite and will not be altered by the project. Residential development will take place on both sides of the viewpoint. The pad elevation of Lot 5 is 3,428 feet and of Lot 6 is 3,469 feet. Therefore adjacent pads will be located behind the viewing area and at a lower elevation. The fire management zone will require reduced vegetation around residences. A person standing at the end of the viewpoint would have an approximately 170-degree view that would be unaffected by the fire management zone.</p> <p>16. An extensive area of open space was created in conjunction with the Warner Springs Specific Plan, of which the project is a part. This open space is integrated with development, and surrounds the airport, golf course, and the resort. This open space has preserved the openness and viewshed of the plateau.</p>
<p><u>Conservation Element</u></p>	
<p><i>The following Policies of the Recreation Element apply to the proposed project:</i></p>	<p><i>Consistency with the Conservation Element:</i></p>

<p>General Conservation</p> <p>Policy 1</p> <p>The San Diego County General Plan will include provisions for the conservation of natural resources.</p>	<p>Policy 1</p> <p>The project conserves natural visual resources by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. developing the project in conformance with the WSSP, of which it is a part, with a reduced overall density that is lower than what is allowed. 2. using a lot-sales marketing approach, where sales and development will take place on a lot-by-lot basis, taking place over time. This is a preferred alternative to the merchant building approach, where the site is developed all at once. The chosen lot-sales marketing approach reduces the intensity of development effects. 3. creating large lots (average size: 5.3 acres) that will create a visual bulk and scale that are consistent with this rural area. 4. revegetating graded slopes in excess of three feet. 5. retaining a vegetative cover in fire management areas 6. using the existing Los Coyotes Road route to minimize grading, and 7. avoiding rideglines and locating pads on the flatter areas of the site.
<p>Policy 4</p> <p>The Resource Conservation Area (RCA) overlay designation, as defined in Policy 2.7 of the Land Use element, will be applied to appropriate areas throughout the County.</p>	<p>Policy 4</p> <p>There are no RCA overlays on the property.</p>
<p>Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat</p> <p>Policy 9</p> <p>When significant adverse habitat modification is unavoidable, San Diego County will</p>	<p>Policy 9</p> <p>The Warner Springs Specific Plan, including the project, set aside open space when it was</p>

<p>encourage project designers to provide mitigating measures in their design to protect existing habitat.</p> <p>Policy 16</p> <p>The County will regulate major land-clearing projects to minimize significant soil erosion, destruction of archaeological, historic, and scientific resources and endangered species of plants and animals.</p>	<p>created in 1983. The great majority of habitat modification proposed on the site is related to fire clearing. This reduction in vegetation can be selective and will minimize habitat impacts. The project will mitigate for impacts to native habitat, largely Chamise and red-shank chaparral, through a program of off-site purchase of similar habitat.</p> <p>Policy 16</p> <p>There are no significant archaeological or historical resources on the site. All graded slopes over three feet will be revegetated, in keeping with the County of San Diego Grading Ordinance. Fire management areas will also retain a ground cover that will prevent erosion while minimizing visual effects.</p>
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Recreation Element

<p><i>The following Goals of the Recreation Element apply to the proposed project:</i></p> <p>Goals</p> <p>Provide a system of public parks, riding and hiking trails, and outdoor recreation facilities which not only preserve significant areas of natural beauty for citizen enjoyment, but which also serve the needs of the citizens in their immediate environments. This system is to be augmented by private outdoor recreation facilities that are compatible with the goals and objectives of the public system.</p>	<p><i>Consistency with the Recreation Element:</i></p> <p>The project will create a public road which will maintain access to Inspiration Point, a popular viewpoint in the area. Residents will have the opportunity to establish outdoor recreation facilities on their properties if desired.</p>
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North Mountain Subregional Plan

<p><i>The following Goals of the North Mountain Subregional Plan (NMSP) apply to the proposed project:</i></p>	<p><i>Consistency with the NMSP:</i></p>
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<p>The applicable goals, policies and recommendations of the North Mountain Subregional Plan are:</p> <p>1. <u>COMMUNITY CHARACTER GOAL</u></p> <p>PRESERVE THE RURAL CHARACTER OF THE COMMUNITIES AND THE NATURAL AMBIENCE OF MOUNTAINS, HILLS, VALLEYS IN THE SUBREGION.</p> <p><u>POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS</u></p> <p>2. Preserve the rural character by discouraging required urban-scale improvements such as sidewalks, curbs, gutters, and street lighting where the public health, safety and welfare is not endangered</p> <p>4. Require revegetation and landscaping of all manufactured slopes in graded areas subject to a Grading Permit, Major Use Permit or Site Plan which will be altered by development. Use native or naturalizing plants to blend with existing topography.</p> <p>and:</p> <p>2. <u>LAND USE</u></p> <p><u>GENERAL GOAL</u></p> <p>LAND USE WITHIN THE NORTH</p>	<p>1. The project proposes rural estate residential uses with an average lot size of 5.3 acres. The area was approved for 35 rural residential lots in the Warner Springs Specific Plan, which has established the character that is intended for the Warner Springs area. The Specific plan amendment proposes fewer residences on the site than allowed, thereby enhancing the large-lot concept that was approved in the WSSP. The overall character of Warner Springs as a rural community surrounded by large areas of natural open space is preserved by the project.</p> <p>2. The project does not propose streetlights, curbs, gutters, or sidewalks.</p> <p>4. Manufactured slopes will be revegetated in accordance with the Grading Ordinance. Native plants will be used where appropriate in revegetation of graded slopes.</p> <p>The overall rural character of Warner Springs</p>
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<p>MOUNTAIN SUBREGION SHALL RETAIN AND ENHANCE THE RURAL CHARACTER OF THE COMMUNITY.</p> <p><u>POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developments which require extensive, unsightly or severe grading, both private and public, shall be discouraged. 3. Large lot sizes shall be required outside of Country Towns to maintain the existing rural character, protect steep slopes, and preserve and protect open space and agriculture. 5. All development shall comply with the County Light Pollution Code (Ordinance 6900, 7041 et al. of the San Diego County Code). 8. Low density residential development on lot sizes of 4 and 8 acres or larger shall be the predominant land use pattern for the area. <p>and,</p>	<p>is not altered by the addition of the proposed rural estate residential lots because the viewshed is preserved. The project proposes fewer lots than were authorized under the WSSP, and as such preserves the rural character anticipated in that document.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grading has been minimized by siting most pads on the flatter areas of the site. Pads at or near the higher elevations on the site are adjacent to still higher elevations offsite that rise behind the pads, thus reducing the visual impact when seen straight on. All graded slopes over three feet will be revegetated. By using an existing roadway for access throughout the site, potential visual impacts from grading are reduced. 3. The project proposes seven fewer lots than were authorized under the WSSP. Lots have an average area of 5.3 acres. Rural character is maintained because the project is well within the scale of project anticipated in the WSSP as appropriate for this rural setting. The project avoids steep slopes. 5. The project will comply with the Light Pollution Code. In addition, urban type improvements such as streetlights are not proposed. 8. Lot sizes range in size from 5.00 to 8.50 acres Average lot sizes of 5.3 acres are proposed. The project thereby conforms to the policy.
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<p><u>RESIDENTIAL GOAL</u></p> <p>MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE THE EXISTING RURAL ATMOSPHERE OF THE NORTH MOUNTAIN SUBREGION.</p> <p><u>POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS</u></p> <p>2. Applications for discretionary permits for proposed residential development shall utilize a site design which preserves existing natural landscape features by locating home sites where adverse impacts to natural landscapes features are minimized or eliminated. Natural landscapes features include, but are not limited to: drainage courses, streams and other wetlands, ridgelines, rock outcroppings, native and old-growth vegetation and steep slopes greater than 25%.</p> <p>3. Extensive or severe grading shall be prevented by tailoring development to the character of the natural terrain.</p> <p>4. Preserve the rural atmosphere of the Subregion by blending roads into the natural terrain.</p>	<p>The rural atmosphere is maintained by large lot sizes, low density development, minimized grading, revegetation over manufactured slopes, and retention of an appropriate vegetative cover over fire cleared areas. Urban type improvements such as streetlights are not proposed.</p> <p>2. Pads are sited to avoid drainage areas and rock outcroppings, and steep slope encroachments are maintained below the limits established by the RPO. Nearby offsite rock outcroppings are not impacted by the project.</p> <p>Portions of some residences will be visible on a ridgeline. This effect is limited to the pad on Lot 16, at an elevation of 3,587. Elevations offsite northeast of this pad reach 3,620 feet, providing a topographic backdrop that will screen buildings. Pads 19, 21, 25, and 27 range in elevation from 3,564 to 3,657 feet. However, elevations offsite to the east or northeast are 3,720 feet and higher, providing screening and reducing the visibility of buildings near the skyline. Effects from farther away along SR 79 are diminished due to distance and future landscaping.</p> <p>3. See response #1 on the page 8.</p> <p>4. See response #1 on page 8.</p>
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<p>5. Grading of residential areas shall conform to the existing natural terrain by designing cut and fill areas which follow the natural slope contour lines, by eliminating hill topping and eliminating the filling of canyons.</p> <p>DARK SKY GOAL</p> <p>Ensure continued astronomical research and exploration by the Palomar Mountain Observatory.</p> <p><u>POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS</u></p> <p>3. All development proposals shall comply with the County Light Pollution Code.</p> <p>4. The design, type, usage and location of lighting sources shall minimize light-pollution impacts.</p>	<p>5. No hilltopping will be employed in the project. No canyons will be filled. For a discussion of grading, see #1 on page 8.</p> <p>3. and 4. The project does not propose street lighting and will conform with the County Light Pollution Code (Ordinances 6900 and 7041, et. al.). Large lots will disperse residential lighting, thereby reducing the intensity of the development’s combined lighting effect.</p>
<p>Resource Protection Ordinance</p>	
<p><i>The RPO provides for the protection of wetland, archaeological resources, and steep slopes. The provisions of the RPO that touch on visual issues relate to steep slopes. Article IV5b states in part:</i></p> <p>Project Design and Open Space to Protect Steep Slopes. In designing lot configuration [sic] on steep slope lands in all land use designations, parcels shall be created in a manner which minimizes encroachment onto steep slope lands.</p> <p>Article IV5b(ii) states:</p> <p>...[T]he following types of development shall</p>	<p><i>Consistency with RPO:</i></p> <p>No wetlands are impacted by the project.</p> <p>All steep slope encroachments are within the allowance established by the RPO.</p> <p>Fire management zones have been defined</p>

<p>be allowed in steep slope lands and shall not be subject to the encroachment limitations set forth above: (4) Areas with native vegetation, which are cleared or trimmed to protect existing or proposed structures in potential danger from fire, provided that the area of such clearance is the minimum necessary to comply with applicable fire codes or orders of fire safety officials and that such slopes retain their native root stock or are planted with native vegetation having a low fuel content, and provided further that the natural landform is not reconfigured.</p>	<p>through a fire study undertaken by a fire specialist as minimum areas that have been calculated to provide protection in the event of a fire. Reduced vegetation levels will nevertheless provide erosion control and reduce negative visual effects. Managed areas will not reconfigure the underlying land forms in fire management zones.</p>
<p>Board of Supervisors Policy I-73 (Hillside Development Policy)</p>	
<p>The purpose of the Hillside Development Policy is, in part, to minimize the effects of disturbing natural terrain and provide for creative design for Hillside Developments.</p> <p>Policy</p> <p>It is the policy of the County of San Diego that:</p> <p>Development of building sites in hillside areas be planned and constructed in such a manner as to preserve, enhance or improve the physical features of the area consistent with providing building sites while at the same time optimizing the aesthetic quality of the final product. The design process set forth below shall be used as a guide to achieve the best possible hillside development.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All hillside subdivisions should be designed to minimize the permanent impact upon site resources. The resources 	<p><i>Consistency with I-73:</i></p> <p>Site design has been integrated to the extent possible with existing topography. Large lots are proposed. The project design locates pads on the flattest portions of the site where ever possible, and slopes over 25 percent are avoided. Where pads are located near the top of a topographic feature, the backdrop of Hot Spring Mountain and related foothills diminished visual effects.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Natural terrain will be altered for building pads. Fire management zones will not be graded to bare earth. A public viewpoint

<p>include but are not limited to existing natural terrain, established vegetation, visually significant geologic displays and portions of a site which have significant public or multiple-use value. This may be achieved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Planning the grading and design of hillside developments to complement natural landforms. b. Encouraging variety in the development of hillsides through site preparation techniques; grading techniques; configuration, size and placement of lots; and protection of the public use of on-site vista points. c. Protecting and conserving physiographic features of public significance. d. Encouraging preservation of bluffs which by their location, relative scale and configuration would be significant features of the development. g. Maximizing visual quality and minimizing erosion potential through the use of existing native plant communities and by planting native and naturalized plants especially in disturbed areas adjacent to ungraded hillsides and water courses. (It is recognized that native or naturalized plants may not be appropriate on 	<p>located offsite will be preserved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The primary project road, Los Coyotes Road, follows existing landforms. The project will maintain this road configuration. b. Grading has been minimized by siting pads on the flatter areas of the site. A vista point adjacent to the site is accessed through the project. This access will be maintained. c. The most prominent feature associated with the site, Inspiration Point, is offsite but is accessed through the project. This access will be preserved. Grading and the fire management zones on adjacent lots have been designed so that a viewer would have a 170-degree view that is not disrupted by the project. d. Inspiration Point, associated with most prominent bluff on the site, will be preserved by the project. g. Manufactured slopes over three feet in height will be planted with erosion resistant plants. Fire management zones will reduce vegetation but retain basic ground cover so that visual effects are minimized. Native plants will be utilized wherever possible. It is recognized that some native plants do not belong in fire management zones.
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<p>graded slopes under 12 feet in vertical elevation which are generally adjacent to a building pad. Also, the bottom 12 feet of higher slopes visible from building pads or major through streets may not be appropriate for native or naturalized plants.)</p> <p>j. Encouraging the use of limited open-space easements on contiguous lots in undisturbed areas, excluding building areas, and active uses areas, when such areas are highly visible and significantly large.</p> <p>k. Waiving any requirement for irrigation systems in native and naturalized planting areas when it can be demonstrated that vegetative cover can be re-established without it, and that no significant surface erosion will result during the re-establishment period.</p> <p>l. Encouraging the use of mechanical erosion control methods such as slope serrations, punched straw and contour plowing which will allow revegetation of disturbed areas without irrigation systems.</p>	<p>j. The fire management zone, which encompasses the largest part of the site, will be a restricted use zone. No structures that require fire clearing will be located there. Because fire protection requires reducing vegetation fuel load, these areas are not appropriate for open space designation. However, retained vegetation will minimize the visual effects.</p> <p>k. The vegetation palette established in fire management zones will be designed to minimize water use.</p> <p>l. The techniques outlined can be utilized to re-establish vegetation after grading has taken place. It is the goal of the project to minimize water use in the establishment/preservation of revegetation on graded slopes.</p>
<p>CEQA</p>	
<p>The CEQA Guidelines Checklist, Appendix G, provide guidance on questions to pose when assessing land use/community character impacts.</p>	<p>The Checklist is being used to provide Guidelines of Significance for this study. These are detailed in Section 6 and impacts are discussed in Section 7.</p>

4 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project consists of 28 rural estate residential lots on 149.7 acres. Lot sizes range in size from 5.00 to 8.5 acres, and average lot size is 5.3 gross acres. The project site is part of the Warner Springs Specific Plan, and the specific plan amendment is proposed to allow a reduced number of lots and the use of groundwater for new residences.

The project is a lot-sales development, in which lots will be developed as they are sold, rather than a merchant builder approach, in which lots are developed all at one time. The owner expects that lots will be purchased and built out over an extended period of time. Individual pads will be graded as part of this process.

The existing Los Coyotes Road will be used for access. No improvements to Los Coyotes are proposed. The project includes the offsite purchase of native habitat to mitigate for biological impacts to the site. Most biological impacts are related to fire management zones, which are 200 feet from habitable structures. Figure 3, "Site Plan," page 33, depicts the site and its main access.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The site is located at the northeast edge of a broad high plain in the rural, largely undeveloped northeastern part of San Diego County. The site is part of a broad low hill system associated with Hot Springs Mountain to the northeast. The site is near the bottom of the foothills of the mountain, and has a high point of approximately 3,700 feet Above Mean Sea Level (AMSL) near the south central part of the site. The low point of 3,300 AMSL is at the northwest corner of the project as it abuts with Los Tules. The terrain slopes to the west toward SR 79. The site is covered by natural vegetation, primarily Chaparral. The site is bisected by Los Coyotes Road. Inspiration Point and associated rock outcroppings are located off-site to the west, accessible via Los Coyotes Road. The site is covered in native vegetation consisting of Chamise and Red Shank Chaparral. Approximately seven acres of oak woodland are also present on the site. An aerial photograph is provided in Figure 5, "Aerial Photograph and Index to Visual Exhibits," page 37. The vast majority of these lands are in public ownership, owned by the Vista Irrigation District.

The viewshed of the area is shown on Figure 4, "Generalized Viewshed Map," page 35. The viewshed is extensive, approximately 4.5 by 5 miles, due to the relatively flat topography to the west and south. Primary features within the viewshed are the community of Warner Springs, SR 79, and San Felipe Road (S 2). SR 79 approaches the site from the southwest, then turns west and north once it passes through the town of Warner Springs. SR 79 is not a priority scenic route in this area.

Figure 5, “Aerial Photograph and Index to Visual Exhibits,” page 37, provides an overview of the topography in the surrounding area. Warner Springs Resort, and the residential neighborhood of Los Tules lie immediately north and northeast of the site. A school and the California Department of Forestry (CFD) fire station are to the west along SR 79. Land to the southwest, south, and east is sparsely populated and remains primarily in natural habitat.

Warner Springs is a resort with a golf course, dining, recreational, and spa facilities. The resort has incorporated extensive landscaping amenities, including mature tree cover, lawns, and ornamental vegetation. The residential neighborhood consists of established home sites that are well landscaped.

6 GUIDELINES FOR THE DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

The CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G, provide guidance on questions to pose when assessing visual impacts. Three are posed. Will the project:

- (1) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?
- (2) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?
- (3) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect any day or nighttime views in the area?
- (4) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

State scenic highways refer to those highways that are officially designated. A scenic highway is officially designated as a State scenic highway when the local jurisdiction adopts a scenic corridor protection program, applies to the California Department of Transportation for scenic highway approval, and receives notification from Caltrans that the highway has been designated as an official Scenic Highway. The proposed project is not located near or visible within the same composite viewshed as a State scenic highway and will not change the visual composition of an existing scenic resource within a State scenic highway.

However, the proposed project is located near two Third Priority Scenic Routes that are identified in the County’s Scenic Highway Element. State Route 79 to the west of the site and San Felipe Road (S2) to the south of the project site are the two routes listed. Effects to the viewsheds of these roads are addressed under Section 7.2 of this report.

7 ANALYSIS OF EFFECTS

7.1 Physical Changes to the Project Site

The project proposes subdivision of the 149.7-acre site into 28 estate residential lots. Construction will include grading for building pads and driveways, as well as reductions in vegetation within fire management zones. Grading for building pads will involve 73,990 cubic yards (cy) of excavation, and 65,290 cy of fill. Approximately 8,700 cy will be exported under appropriate permits.

Fire management zones for the project are 200 feet of clearing around each habitable structure. A fire management zone design has been provided, and is shown in Figure 3, "Site Plan," page 33.

7.2 Existing Visual Character of the Site and Its Surroundings

Although the viewshed is large, most of this area is unoccupied and the project is only visible from a few populated areas. Six vantage points were selected to investigate the predominant views of the site from these areas. These are presented in Figures 6 through 11. The project boundary is indicated on each photo in red. Inspiration Point is a readily identifiable feature on the ridge immediately west of the project boundary, and is called out on photos when it is visible. Each figure is discussed below.

View Photo 1

Figure 6, "View Photo 1: Looking Northeast into Site from SR 79 West of San Felipe Road," page 39, was taken from State Route (SR) 79 approximately 3.65 miles southwest of the site. The project boundary is indicated in red. The project presents a low vertical profile at this distance. The northern third of the site is out of view beyond Inspiration Point. The south-central portion of the site is visible from this vantage, while the southeastern part of the site appears as a sliver of land.

Los Coyotes Road, an existing road, will be retained. A segment of this road is visible to the right of Inspiration Point.

During the construction grading phase, individual pads will appear from this vantage as slivers. An example of this expected effect can be seen in Photo 1 offsite and slightly above the project boundary on the right. This effect will be reduced in the short term because all manufactured slopes over three feet will be revegetated in compliance with the County's Grading Ordinance. Areas where fire management will be undertaken will appear different in color. The road may become more visible in places due to reductions of vegetation in the fire management zone.

Over time, cover for manufactured slopes will mature and the visual effect of manufactured slopes will be eliminated. Landscaping will mature around residences, screening them from view. Views from this distance provide no site details. From a general perspective, the project is located at the base of the foothills of Hot Springs Mountain and therefore tends to blend with the existing community. The site will be indistinguishable from residential areas in other parts of Warner Springs.

View Photo 1 presents the view as one approaches Warner Springs from the southwest. This view persists for a northeast-bound driver going 55 MPH for approximately four minutes. The approach is characterized by several curves and topographic variations that shift, obscure, or remove the view intermittently. For example, a cut bank for the highway is visible in the middle ground of Photo 1. The site is no longer visible as the driver passes through this section of the road. Such variations in the route are seen in Figure 5, "Aerial Photograph and Index to Visual Exhibits," page 37, and include a long curve after the intersection with San Felipe Road, topographic variation along the straight stretch after this curve, and a second curve and topographic variation before reaching View Point 3. These variations diminish the visibility of the site.

Project design will allow the developed site to blend with its surroundings as revegetation areas and landscaping mature. The distance from the viewer, and the intermittent views diminish the presence of the site from this perspective. Impacts are not significant and no mitigation is required.

View Photo 2

Figure 7, "View Photo 2: Looking Northeast into Site from San Felipe Road," page 41, portrays the view of the site from San Felipe Road (also known as S-2) approximately 3.1 miles from the site. The driver is proceeding perpendicularly to the view and would be looking to her right to see the site. The southeastern part of the site is visible from this vantage. From this distance, the site presents a narrow vertical profile. Portions of the site north of Inspiration Point is not visible. The site is viewed against the backdrop of Hot Springs Mountain.

During construction, graded pads will appear as whitish cleared areas similar to but smaller than the offsite areas seen on the right in the photo. These are two very large cleared pads that have little or no vegetative cover. The fire management area will appear to be different in color. In the short term, vegetation on manufactured slopes will mature and these slopes would not be as visible. Over time, the homesites and manufactured slopes will be screened by vegetation and landscaping, while fire management areas will continue to show a lighter vegetative cover.

The drive along San Felipe Road during which the site is visible lasts approximately 2.1 minutes. The view is blocked by topographic variations, specifically erosional features and road cuts. These are visible in Figure 5, page 37, as shadows along the north side of the road.

The site presents a narrow vertical profile from this view, at a distance of 3.1 miles. The site is low on the hill and is seen against the panoramic backdrop of Hot Spring Mountain, which further reduces its prominence. The site is only visible in an oblique view. A traveler must turn away from her focus on the road to view the site. Additionally topographic variation blocks views from time to time. The result is fleeting views of the site for the viewer. Due to distance, context, and the very sporadic glimpses available from this perspective, impacts are not significant.

View Photo 3

Figure 8, “View Photo 3: Looking Northeast into Site from SR79 Approaching Warner Springs,” page 43, portrays the view of the site from the vantage of a driver on SR 79 approaching Warner Springs from the southwest, approximately 1.3 miles from the site. The site is seen against the backdrop of Hot Springs Mountain. The California Department of Forestry (CFG) station and school grounds can be seen in the middle of the photo, beyond the curve on the right. Both are screened by mature vegetation. Some of the residences on the outskirts of Warner Springs are visible above the trees on the far left. The northern third of the site is clearly visible on the left of Inspiration Point. The north-central part of the site and a portion of Los Coyotes Road are visible to the right of the Point, while the southern third of the site is out of view to the right.

Residences will be visible when first constructed because they will lack landscaping. For example, a structure on an unlandscaped pad is visible on the right hillside between the lower right project boundary and above the “t” of the word “Point.” Graded slopes on individual lots will also be visible during the construction phase. Because the project is a lot-sales development, lots will be developed over time by individual owners, and the sequencing and timing of construction are not known. Construction is expected to occur gradually. Fire-management areas will encompass most of the area outlined, and would appear lighter green in color. Some topographic features such as rock outcroppings will be visible. Fire management areas will be created in connection with individual lots over time. Los Coyotes Road will be more visible in segments due to the reduced vegetation in the fire management areas. Effects are somewhat diminished to the right of Inspiration Point because Los Coyotes Road curves away from the viewer and grading effects become foreshortened.

In the short term, grading impacts will be diminished due to revegetation required by the Grading Ordinance. Landscaping around residences will be evident. Fire management zones will continue to support vegetative cover.

In the long term, residences will be screened by landscaping. For comparison, the roof of one residence is visible between the lower left edge of the site outline and the tree line in the center of the photo. Several residences are indicated by rooflines on the far left of the photo. The overall effect is not obtrusive. In time the site will appear to be an extension of the developed neighborhoods to the northeast known as Los Tules. The Los Tules neighborhood has a higher density of residential development than is proposed here, but is also in a less visible location. However the large lots on the project, averaging over five acres, will disperse residences and allow for extensive vegetative cover between residences. The mountain backdrop also diminishes the overall visual effects because its large mass makes the site appear less prominent.

A driver moving at 55 mph has this unobstructed view of the site for approximately a minute before entering the curve. Near the CFD station and school, views are obscured by mature trees, and after the curve the primary view shifts to the approaching golf course and the town of Warner Springs.

The project's visual effects will be diminished because graded slopes will be revegetated. The project design calls for large average lot size, which disperses effects, and the mountain backdrop dilutes visual prominence of the site. Landscape screening typical of the area and retention of vegetative cover over most of the site will allow it to resemble existing residential areas. The site is visible from this vantage for a brief period of time. Therefore, impacts are not significant and no mitigation is required.

View Photo 4

Figure 9, "View Photo 4: Looking into Site from Golf Course," page 45, is taken from the edge of the golf course, looking east across a residential area into the site, which is approximately 0.7 miles away. Inspiration Point is out of view to the right of the project site. The northern half of the site is visible. From this point, the project presents a fragmented profile, with the most visible areas screened by trees while the southern half of the site is out of view over the horizon.

During construction, isolated home sites may be visible through the trees. Fire management zones will retain a low vegetative cover. In the short term, graded slopes will be revegetated. A good example of short term effects is seen on the left part of the image, in the center of the photo, below the short left arrow and between two of the fairway trees. This structure is a relatively large new residence with no landscaping. This large scale residence is not highly visible from this vantage due to distance. It is also closer to the viewer than the project's residences.

In the long term, landscaping around homes will mature. Residences with more mature landscaping are also evident in the image. On the right, above the red flag on the fairway, a

two-story residence is visible among trees. Landscaping breaks the roof line and wall mass. The dark earthtone color helps the structure blend into its surroundings. It fits well with its surroundings, and it is closer to the viewer than project residences will be. There are other residences in the vicinity, some of which are evident around the trees in the center of the photo. These are more closely spaced than project residences and considerably closer to the viewer, but they remain unobtrusive due to landscaping and topographic variation.

Some residences may be visible near the ridgeline indicated by the long arrow on the right. There are no residences proposed on the ridgeline in this part of the site. Rooflines may break the ridgeline, as will landscape features once they mature. Several homes that are similarly situated near a ridgeline are located in the background on the left, below the words “Project Site.” These are farther from the viewer than the project. The view demonstrates the screening effects of revegetation, landscaping, and distance.

Due to the screening effect of revegetated slopes, landscaping, and distance, the visual effects from this vantage are not significant. No mitigation is required.

View Photo 5

Figure 10, “View Photo 5: Looking Southeast Into Site from SR 79,” page 47, was taken approximately 1.0 miles from the site from a vantage point northwest of the site. The town of Warner Springs is in the left center, but is obscured by a ridge and vegetation. The northern edge of the golf course is seen on the right. The northern third of the site is visible in the left center of the image and is fragmented by trees in the foreground. Inspiration Point is at the horizon.

Effects during construction will include grading for pads and creation of the fire management area with its reduced vegetation levels. Several residences will be visible on the hillside. In the short term, graded slopes will be revegetated but plants will not be mature. Some development may be visible near the ridgeline. In the long term, residences will be screened by landscaping and mature revegetation on manufactured slopes. Ridgelines may include some structural elements such as rooflines, but these will be broken by landscaping.

A traveler moving past this point at 55 mph would have a view of the site for approximately 45 seconds before the road curves south. At that point the view shifts away from the site and is focused on the commercial area along SR 79 and the Warner Springs Resort entrance.

Due to distance, landscaping, and revegetation of manufactured slopes, impacts will be diminished. The view will be brief, and is broken by existing trees and intervening topography. Impacts are not significant and no mitigation is required.

View Photo 6

Figure 11, “View Photo 6: Looking Southeast into Site from SR 79 at Warner Springs Airport,” page 49, was taken from SR 79 at the west end of the airport, approximately 2.8 miles northwest of the site. To accommodate the airport, tree cover has been pushed back and most of the northern part of the site is visible. The site presents a narrow vertical profile from this distance. The residential areas of Los Tules are visible to the left of the site and parts of the town can be seen as light colorations below the site. Uses associated with the airport are visible in the foreground of the photograph. These include hangars and airplanes, as well as the airport itself.

When first developed, the graded pads will appear as slivers of lighter color. Fire clearing areas will support reduced vegetation that may have a different color and texture than existing vegetation. When landscaping matures, the neighborhood will resemble the existing neighborhood, as seen below the words “Project Site.” There will be a variation in density, with Los Tules representing a higher density neighborhood and the Highlands representing a low density neighborhood. Residences will be screened by vegetation and will be interspersed among large areas of vegetation.

For a traveler moving along SR 79 at 55 mph, this view persists for approximately 2.75 miles. In approximately three minutes the traveler reaches the view depicted in View Photo 5. After traveling parallel with the airport, the road veers northeast and the view shifts to the mountains to the north. At this point, hills block views to the east. When the road resumes its southeast trajectory, tree cover close to the road begins to obscure views of the site. Figure 5, “Aerial Photograph and Index to Visual Exhibits,” page 37, shows the path of the road and intervening features.

Due to distance, and the brief nature of the view from this vantage, impacts are not significant and no mitigation is required.

7.3 Scenic Vista

One scenic vista is associated with the site, Inspiration Point, which is a viewpoint looking west at the Warner Springs basin. It is at an elevation of 3,510 feet. This point is offsite to the west of the site but sole access to it is provided by Los Coyotes Road. The viewpoint will not be physically altered by the project. Grading and fire management will be carried out on two lots adjacent to the viewpoint on the north and south. Lot 5, which is north of the viewpoint, is planned to have a pad elevation of 3428 feet, which is 82 feet below the viewpoint. A person looking at the view to the west at the west end of the viewpoint will not see the grading. Fire management will extend 200 feet from structures, and could be visible from the west end of the viewpoint if the viewer turns north. These areas will retain vegetation, although it will be thinned. Some rock outcroppings may become more visible.

Lot 6 is south of the viewpoint, and its graded pad is at an elevation of 3,489 feet, or 21 feet below the viewpoint. As with Lot 5, the pad will be behind a viewer looking west. The fire management zones will require reduced vegetation 200 feet from the structures, and could be visible from the west end of the viewpoint if the viewer turns south. These areas will retain vegetation, although it will be thinned. Some rock outcroppings may become more visible.

A person standing at the end of the viewpoint would have an unobstructed view of the basin below. The views to the right and left would remain unaltered through a 170-degree arc centered on the viewer. Points on the hillside north and south of this arc would show evidence of vegetation thinning for fire control purposes. However, vegetative cover will be retained, reducing the visual impact.

Views of the Warner Springs basin from Inspiration Point will be unaltered by the project. Access to the viewpoint will be maintained. Views of the hillsides north and south of the viewpoint will remain undisturbed through a 170-degree arc. Graded areas will remain well behind and below the viewpoint. Fire management areas will retain vegetation that will reduce visual effects. Because the main view is unobstructed, and developed areas are not readily in view, impacts are not significant and no mitigation is required.

7.4 Light or Glare

The proposed project is located partially within Zone A as identified by the San Diego County Light Pollution Code, approximately 15 miles from the Palomar Observatory. However, it will not adversely affect nighttime views or astronomical observations, because any future outdoor lighting pursuant to this project shall be required to meet the requirements of the County of San Diego Zoning Ordinance (Section 6322-6326) and the Light Pollution Code (Section 59.101-59.115), including the Zone A lamp type and shielding requirements per fixture and hours of operation limitations for outdoor lighting and searchlights. The project proposes a large lot subdivision averaging 5.3 acres that will widely separate residences, preventing massing of light sources that could affect night sky resources. No streetlights are proposed. The approved Warner Springs Specific Plan (WSSP), of which the project is a part, was reviewed by representatives of California Institute of Technology, managing Palomar Observatory, and the WSSP design was approved. The project will conform to design requirements of the WSSP, including adherence to the Light Pollution Code. As a result of project design review under the Warner Springs Specific Plan, and compliance with current regulations of outdoor lighting, there will be no impacts to the dark sky resource and no mitigation is required.

8 CONCLUSIONS

The visual effects of The Highlands at Warner Springs on the surrounding area, an existing vista point, and on night sky resources were evaluated in a report prepared by TRC Consultants, which is on the County of San Diego's Qualified Consultant's List for Visual Reports. The analysis involved site visits, surveying of key project boundary points, photographic documentation, and photo-simulations. The most prominent view of the site from the surrounding area were considered and analyzed. Relevant guidelines from the CEQA Guidelines Appendix G were used to judge the extent of significance of visual effects. The project's consistency with existing plans was also examined. These were the County of San Diego General Plan and the North Mountain Subregional Plan, the Resources Protection Ordinance, and Board of Supervisor's Policy I-73. The project was found to be consistent with these regulations due to the large lot design, revegetation of graded slopes over three feet, retention of vegetative cover in the fire management area, and consistency of the project with the existing visual scale and density of the community.

The analysis of the viewshed concluded that most of the region is undeveloped and unoccupied. Large areas are in public ownership. The general location of the site low on the foothills of Hot Spring Mountain and adjacent to already developed areas was determine to be consistent with the preservation of the viewshed in the region because the site will appear to be a part of the existing community.

The project's effects on surrounding views were examined for the most prominent vantage points. These are approaches to the site along SR 79 from the south and north, the approach from S-2, and views from the existing golf course, which is part of the WSSP. The analysis found that project effects on vantages from S-2, and SR 79 both north and south were not significant due to distance, intervening features, and project design features such as large lots, revegetation of graded slopes, and retention of vegetative cover in the fire management area. The analysis found that the project effects on vantages from the golf course were not significant due to intervening features, particularly existing trees and topography, and project design features, particularly the dispersed nature of lots, revegetation of graded slopes, and retention of vegetative cover in the fire management area.

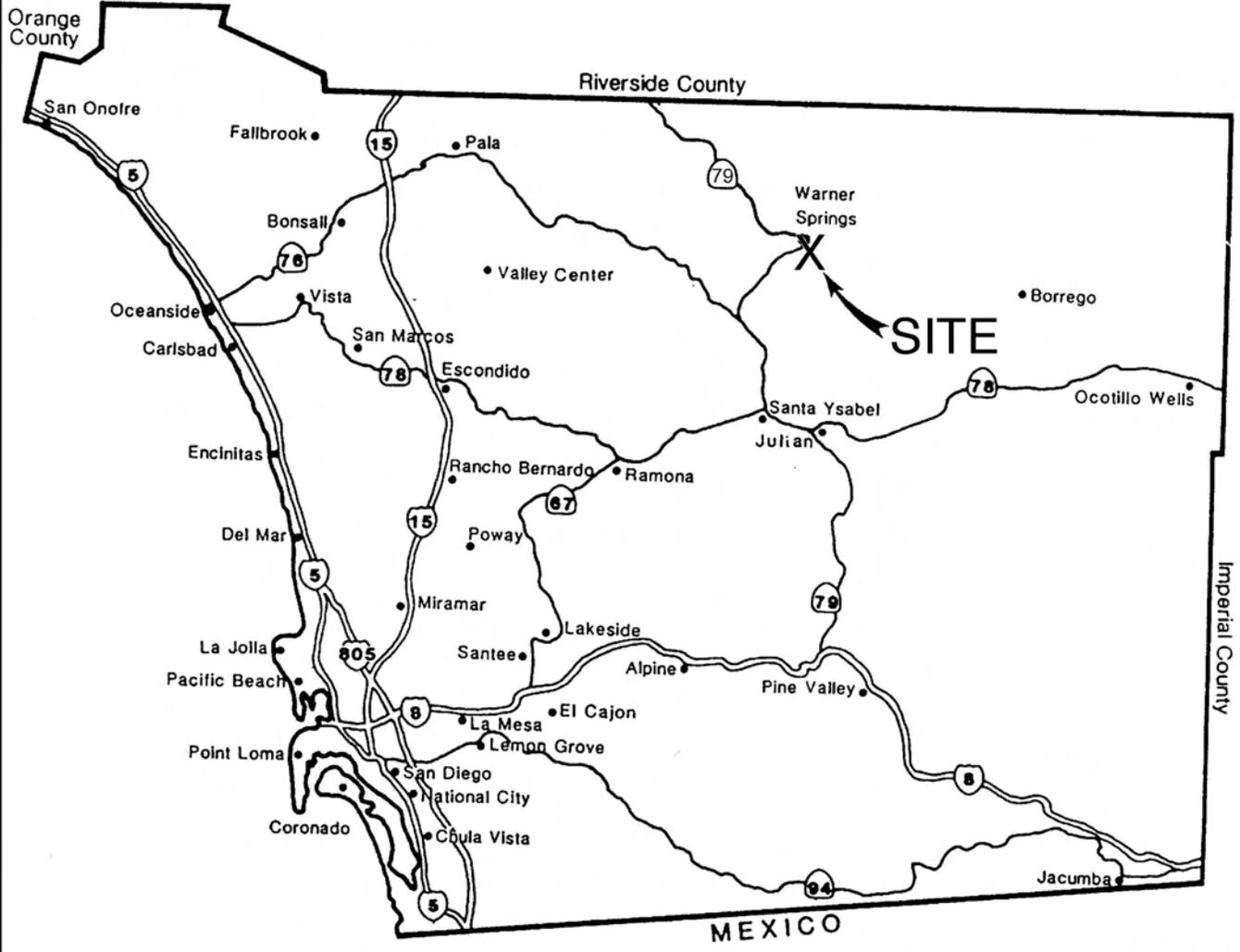
Project effects on a scenic vista, Inspiration Point, were analyzed. Effects were found to be not significant because the view from the vista to the Warner Springs basin below is not obstructed by the project. Visual effects from adjacent lots are minimal because the development areas are below and behind the viewing area of Inspiration Point. Fire management areas are in the periphery of the viewer's vision.

The project's effect on dark sky resources was analyzed. The effect was found to be not significant due to the lack of streetlights, the large lot design that disperses light sources, and the project's adherence to Specific Plan Requirements and the Light Pollution Code.

The Highlands at Warner Springs will not have a significant effect on visual resources in the area because it conforms to Warner Springs Specific Plan design parameters that pertain to visual resources, it is not a prominent site when seen from afar against the backdrop of Hot Spring Mountain, and it is designed to disperse or minimize visual effects. No mitigation is required.

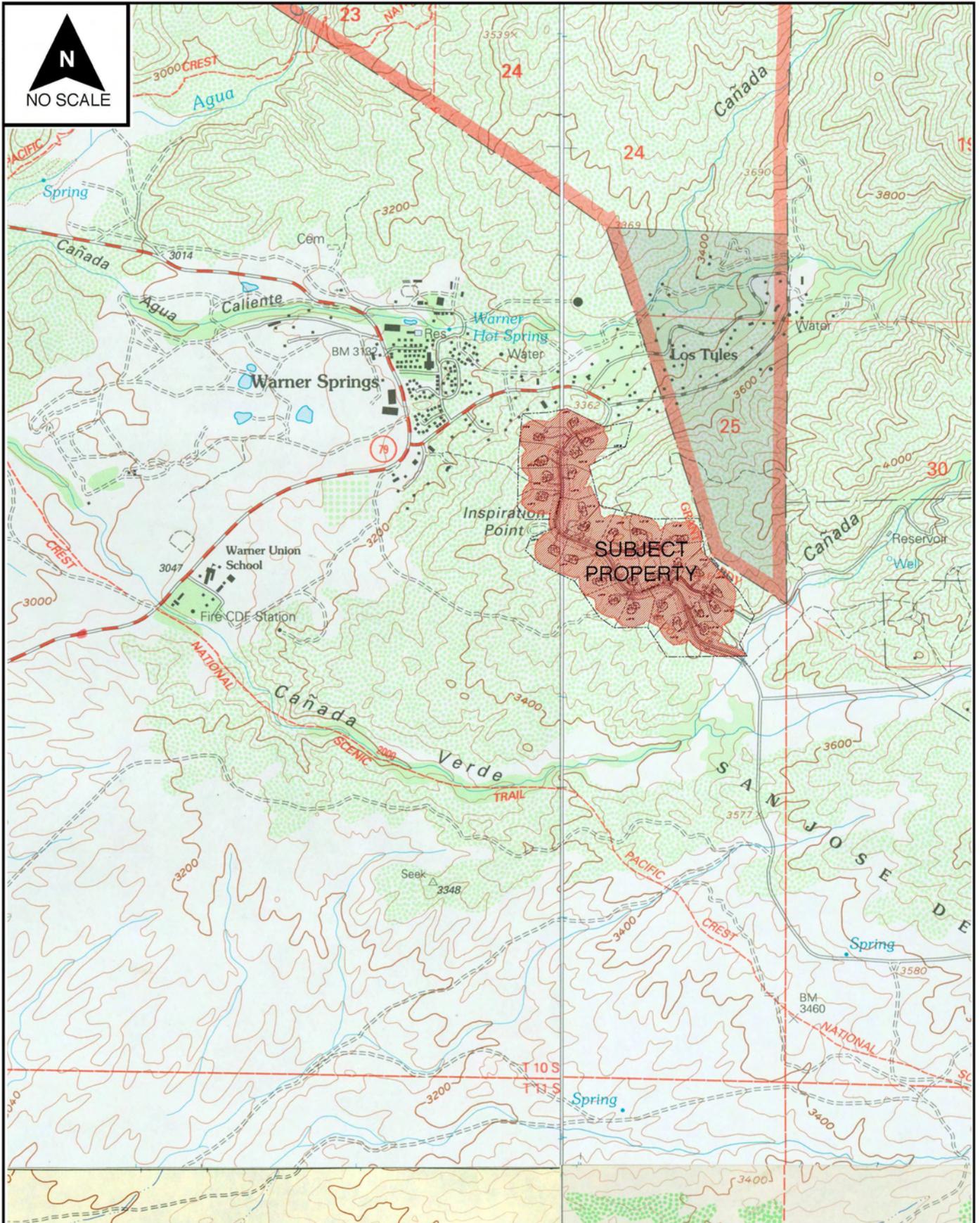
FIGURES

(Pages 25-45)



Regional Vicinity Map

Figure 1



USGS Quadrangle Map

Figure 2



LEGEND

LOS COYOTES ROAD ACCESS EASEMENT
PER DOC. # 74-268615

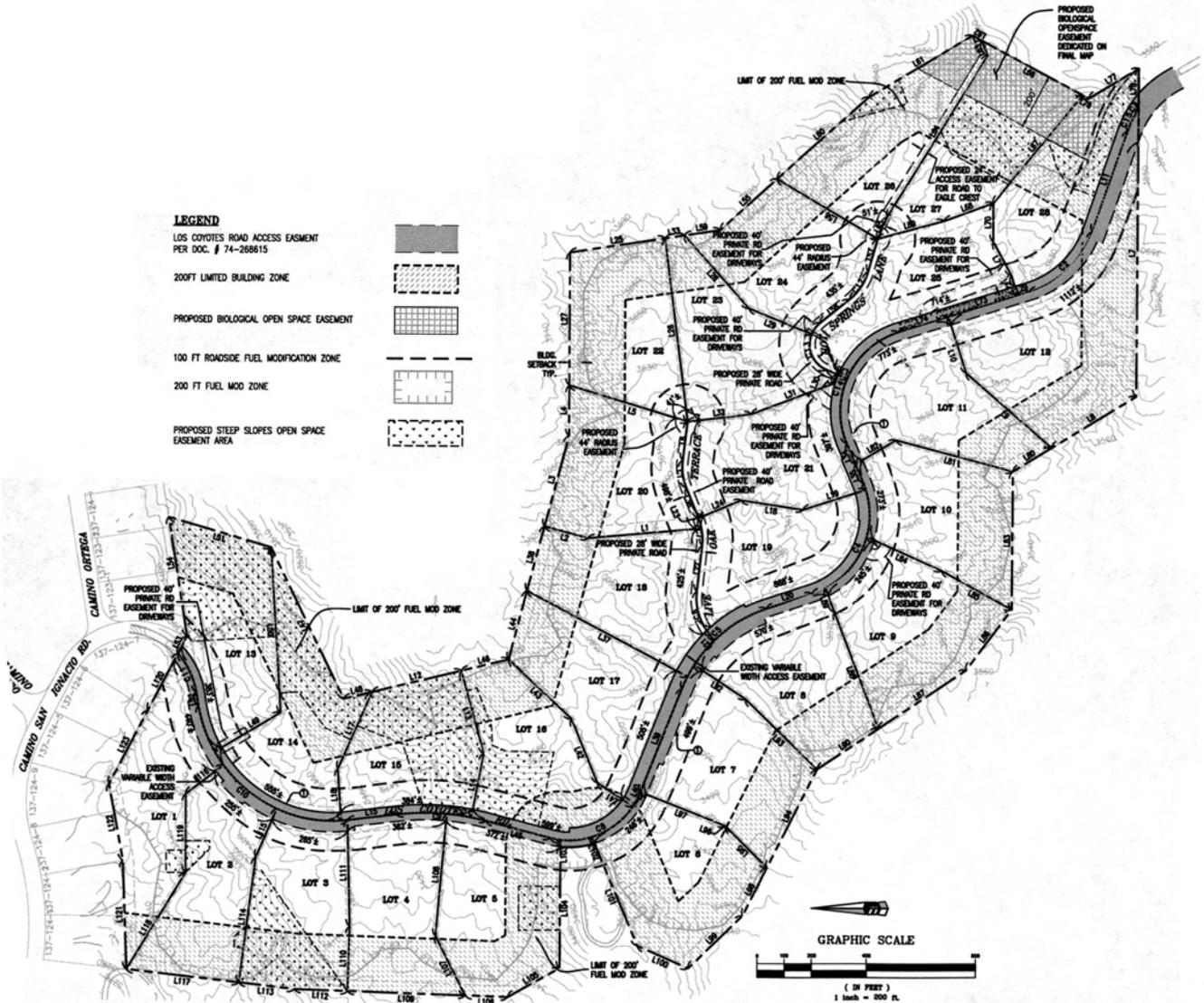
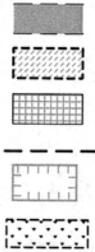
200FT LIMITED BUILDING ZONE

PROPOSED BIOLOGICAL OPEN SPACE EASEMENT

100 FT ROADSIDE FUEL MODIFICATION ZONE

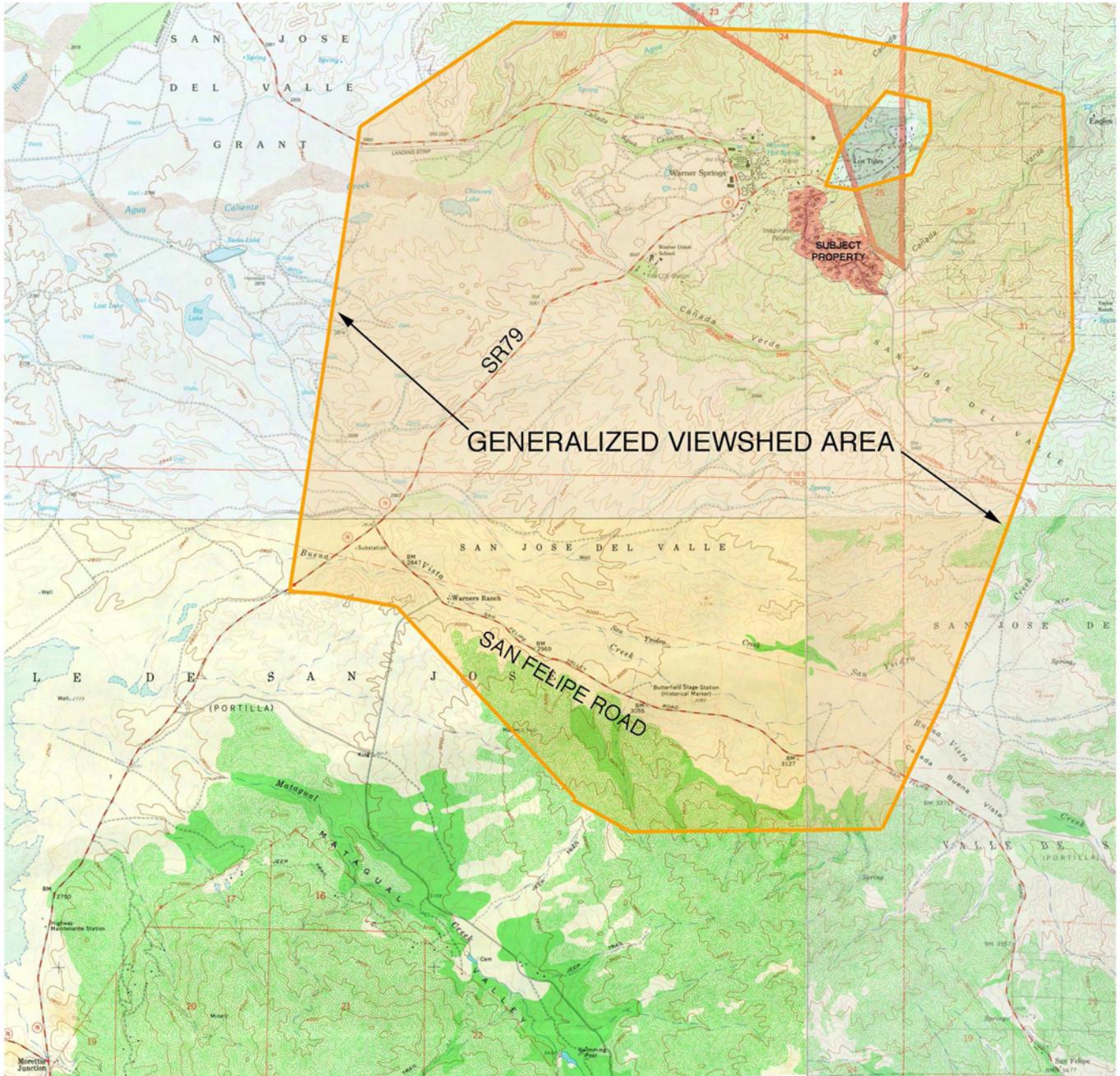
200 FT FUEL MOD ZONE

PROPOSED STEEP SLOPES OPEN SPACE
EASEMENT AREA



Site Plan ~ TM 5450

Figure
3



Generalized Viewshed Map

Figure
4



Aerial Photograph and Index
to Visual Exhibits

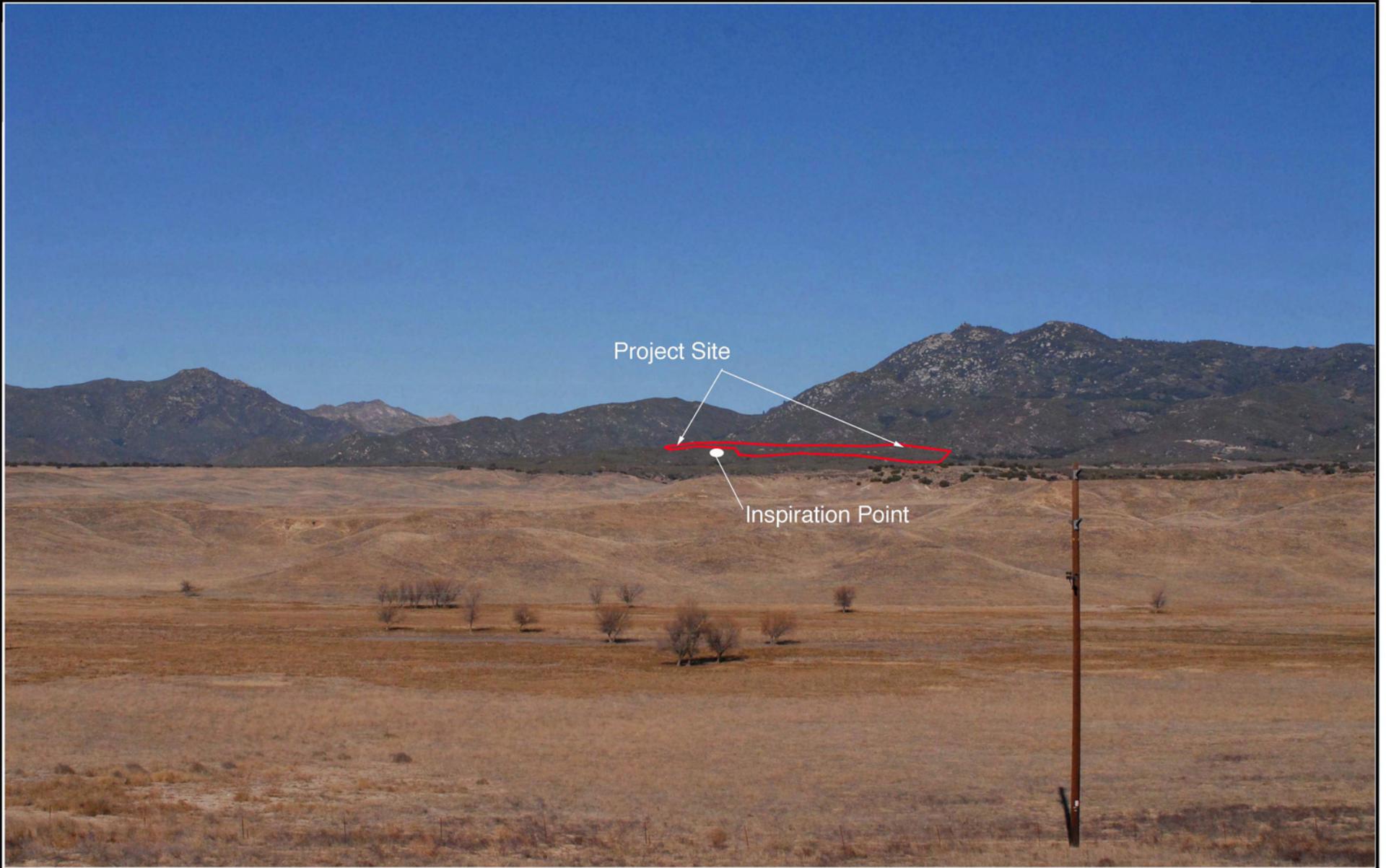
Figure
5



Figure
6

View Photo 1: Looking Northeast into Site from SR79
West of San Felipe Road





Project Site

Inspiration Point

Figure
7

View Photo 2: Looking Northeast into Site from San Felipe Road





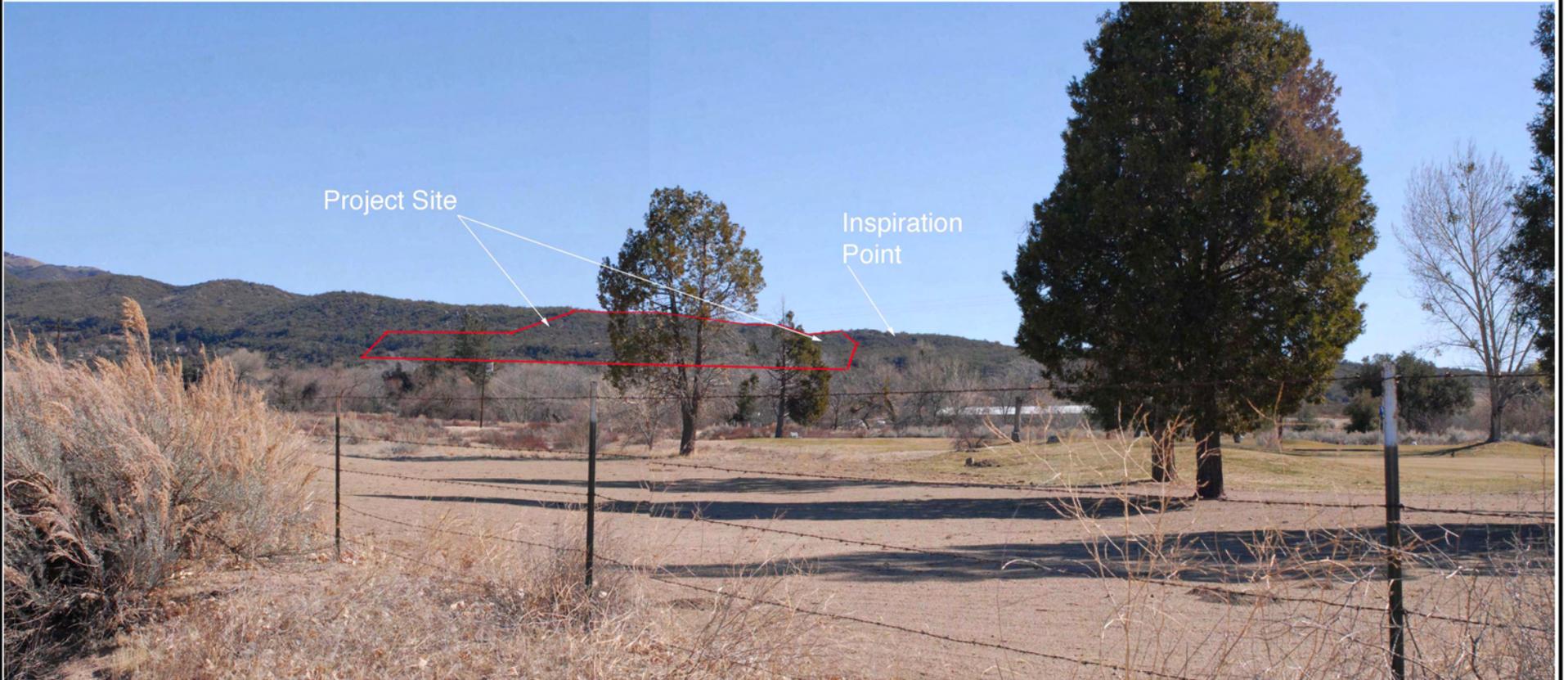
Figure
8

View Photograph 3: Looking Northeast into Site from SR79
Approaching Warner Springs



View Photo 4:
Looking into Site from Golf Course

Figure
9



Project Site

Inspiration Point

Figure
10

View Photo 5: Looking Southeast into Site from SR79





Subject Property

Inspiration Point

Figure
11

View Photo 6: Looking Southeast into Site from SR79
at Warner Springs Airport

