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SUMMARY BIOLOGY REPORT

Biological Resources, Project Impacts, and Mitigation
The Valley Center ARCO Project
APN 188-260-31, Valley Center
PDS2015-STP-15-012 / BCE #17067

Final September 2020
Revised August 2015

Summary

The Valley Center ARCO Project (PDS2015-STP-15-012 / BCE #17067) consists of an application to construct a 3,953 square foot convenience market and gas station on an approximately 0.9-acre property (APN 188-260-31) in Valley Center. Approval and construction of the Valley Center ARCO Project could result in the entirety of the property being impacted by development. Habitats presently found in association with the project site include Non-native Grassland, Disturbed Habitat, Urban/Developed Habitat, and Eucalyptus Woodland. No biological mitigation for impacts to Disturbed Habitat, Eucalyptus Woodland, or Urban/Developed Habitat will be necessary. Impacts to Non-native Grassland are avoided by design. A drainage course is located to the west of the property with a small portion being onsite at its northwest corner. This drainage splits the west property line for approximately 55 feet before curving further offsite to the west. Impacts to the drainage are also avoided by design. The only recommended mitigation measure consists of an avian nesting survey and/or seasonal restrictions on tree felling, brush removal, and noise-generating activities to provide project compliance with the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the California Fish and Game Code.

Introduction, Project Description, Location, and Setting

The Valley Center ARCO Project proposes to improve a mostly-vacant, 0.9-acre parcel for the purpose of constructing an Arco gasoline station and related convenience market selling alcohol and operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The station will have a fueling facility with a 42' X 88' canopy and 6 multiple fuel dispensers. Primary access to the property would be provided off Valley Center Road to the north and Cole Grade Road to the east. The Valley Center ARCO Project site (APN 188-260-31) is located in the Valley Center area of unincorporated San Diego County, California, immediately southwest of the intersection of Valley Center Road and Cole Grade Road (see Figures 1 and 2). Disturbed Habitat, Eucalyptus Woodland, Urban/Developed Habitat, and Non-native Grassland habitats are all found onsite. Offsite habitats which adjoin the project site include similar habitat-types. A seasonal drainage enters the property from a box culvert beneath Valley Center Road and cuts through the extreme northwestern corner of the property before continuing offsite to the southwest.

Vince Scheidt, Certified Biological Consultant, completed a biological field study of the 0.9-acre Valley Center ARCO Project site on June 19, 2015 between the hours of approximately 12:00pm and 1:30pm. Weather conditions during the field survey were characterized by clear skies, temperatures in the low 90°s, and a light southwesterly wind. The purpose of this survey was to identify the site's flora and fauna (Table 1), the onsite habitat-types (Figures 3 and 4), and potential project-impacts and mitigation as necessary (Table 2). The 0.9-acre Valley Center ARCO Project site, plus a 100-foot zone surrounding the project site constitute the "study area" as defined in this report.

This report was updated in September 2019 with a slightly modified project design and the understanding that the project site has been historically used as a parking lot and laydown yard consistently for at least the last five years. For this reason, site conditions as they relate to biological resource have not fundamentally changed, and the description of indicator species, etc,. have not been modified either.

Habitats/Vegetation Communities

The Valley Center ARCO Project site has been used in the past for various purposes, including light agriculture, up until as recently as 2015, when it supported an organic produce stand, small nursery, and parking area. It is currently (2019) vacant other than a few parked vehicles. The onsite and adjoining offsite habitats (Figure 3 and 4) include the following:

Non-native Grassland (Holland Code 42200) – < 0.1 acre onsite (trace)
A tiny area on the northwest corner of the project site as well as adjoining offsite areas to the west support Non-native Grassland (NNG) vegetation. Much of this habitat-type is dominated by Ripgut Brome (*Bromus diandrus*), Slender Wild Oat *(Avena barbata)*, and other Eurasian weeds and grasses. However, the onsite portion is found within and on the slopes of a low-lying drainage that supports an isolated Red Willow (*Salix laevigata*), Sedge *(Cyperus)*, Western Ragweed (*Ambrosia psilostachya)* and other wetland species in low numbers. These species are supported by runoff that enters the northwest property corner from a box culvert beneath Valley Center Road. From the corner of the site, this flow is directed offsite to the southwest. NNG is a regulated habitat-type in San Diego County as defined by the County's Biology Guidelines. The biological resource value of this habitat-type is low.

Disturbed Habitat (Holland Code 11300) – 0.7 acre onsite
Most of the project site supports bare dirt that clearly qualifies as Disturbed Habitat (DH). In places, the DH supports a sparse cover (<10%) of weedy species such as Long-beaked Stork's-bill (*Erodium botrys*), Common Goosefoot *(Chenopodium murale)*, Perennial Mustard *(Brassica geniculata)*, and other non-native forbs. These species are indicators of surface disturbance and soil compaction. DH is not considered a sensitive habitat-type in San Diego County as defined by the County's Biology Guidelines. The DH onsite has no biological resource value.

Urban/Developed (Holland Code 12000) – < 0.1 acre onsite
Urban/Developed (UD) habitat abuts the project site to the north (Valley Center Road), south (commercial building and lot) and east (Cole Grade Road). This habitat-type is primarily found offsite, however. This habitat-type consists of paved areas and structures, etc. UD is not considered a sensitive habitat-type in San Diego County as defined by the County's Biology Guidelines. The UD habitat onsite has no biological resource value.

Eucalyptus Woodland (Holland Code 11100) – < 0.1 acre onsite
A small patch of Eucalyptus Woodland (EW) is present offsite to the west and along the southern edge of the project site. This habitat-type is dominated by mature Murray Red Gum trees (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) over an understory of leaf litter, downfall, and various weedy non-native species. Two small Coast Live Oak trees (*Quercus agrifolia*), which may have been planted as a component of past site landscaping, are present within the EW along the southern property edge. These are isolated and do not constitute a separate habitat-type. EW is not considered a sensitive habitat-type in San Diego County as defined by the County's Biology Guidelines. The EW habitat onsite has little to no biological resource value.

Flora and Fauna

Thirty-six species of vascular plants and four species of animals were detected during the field survey of the property. These are listed in Table 1. This list represents a characteristic flora and fauna associated with this part of San Diego County in disturbed, grassland, and eucalyptus-dominated habitats.

Special Status Species

No sensitive species were detected onsite during the field survey. Various wide-ranging or cryptic sensitive animal species could occur on the property, at least on an occasional basis. However, no critical populations or highly sensitive species would be anticipated given the nature and configuration of the onsite habitats. Sensitive species known from the vicinity, along with an assessment of the probability of occurrence onsite, are presented in Table 3.

Jurisdictional Wetlands and Waterways

A seasonal drainage crosses the northwest corner of the project site, entering the property from a box culvert beneath Valley Center Road. Currently, this drainage does not show any signs of a "bed or bank", although it does show clear signs of seasonal surface flow. It also contains sparse numbers of hydrophytes, including a single scrubby willow, but most of the drainage is vegetated with upland species. The drainage does not qualify as Waters of the United States, but it may qualify as Waters of the State. Nothing about the drainage suggests that it would qualify as a Resource Protection Ordinance (RPO) "wetland" as defined by the County due to a lack of characteristic indicators. Based on its location, size, and configuration, this is clearly a man-made drainage ditch that was constructed to abate flooding many decades ago.

Other Unique Features/Resources

The Valley Center ARCO Project site does not support any unique land features or other uniquely significant biological resource. The overall disturbed and generally non-native nature of this small site would preclude unique features or resources that would enhance its regional biological significance.

Significance of Project Impacts and Proposed Mitigation

The Valley Center ARCO Project is subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This means that the County requires that project-related impacts to native habitat and species be "less than significant", as defined by CEQA. This usually requires the adoption of mitigation measures intended to reduce "significant" impacts to a level that is "less than significant". Project-related impacts, as we have identified them, are presented in Table 2.

Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Impacts

Direct Impacts

Development of the Valley Center ARCO Project site, as currently proposed, could result in the following direct impacts:

- Loss of up to 0.7 acre of Disturbed Habitat
- Loss of less than 0.1 acre of Eucalyptus Woodland
- Loss of less than 0.1 acre of Urban Developed land

This analysis assumes impacts to all areas of the project site within the development/construction area (Figure 4). Impacts to Non-native Grassland will be avoided by design in conjunction with avoidance of the onsite drainage. Offsite fire clearing is not included in these calculations because none is anticipated.

Indirect Impacts

Indirect impacts associated with development on Valley Center ARCO Project site, as currently proposed, are expected to be minimal. This is because the proposed development will not introduce any new "edge effects" to the vicinity, as the site is already heavily disturbed, and the development of larger structures and related infrastructure, etc. is consistent with adjoining, similarly developed areas.

Cumulative Impacts

The Valley Center ARCO Project should qualify for a "partial exemption" pursuant to CEQA Section 15183. CEQA Section 15183 allows qualifying projects to rely on the cumulative analysis contained within a certified Environmental Impact Report prepared for a General Plan. The County of San Diego Board of Supervisors certified the General Plan Update EIR on August 3, 2011, which comprehensively evaluated environmental impacts that would result from plan implementation, including information related to existing site conditions, analyses of the types and magnitude of individual and cumulative environmental impacts, and feasible mitigation measures that could reduce or avoid environmental impacts. Consequently, no additional review of cumulative impacts is required under CEQA.

Proposed Mitigation

In order to reduce all project impacts (see Table 2) to "less than significant", the following mitigation measures (design features) are recommended:

1. The seasonal drainage that crosses the northwestern corner of the site should be entirely avoided. No improvements of any kind, including slope grading, the construction of retaining walls, the placement of energy dissipaters, BMPs, etc should be permitted to avoid the need for regulatory agency consultation and/or permitting. By avoiding this drainage entirely, impacts to the trace amount of NNG associated with it will also be avoided.

2. No specific mitigation for impacts to DH, UD, or EW is required. Impacts to these habitat-types are considered "less than significant" as defined by CEQA and the County's biology guidelines.

3. Site brushing, grading, and/or the removal of any vegetation within 300 feet of any potential migratory songbird nesting location should not take place during the songbird and raptor breeding season, defined as from 1 January to 31 August of each year. This is required in order to ensure compliance with the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Sections 3503, 3503.5 and 3513 of the California Fish and Game Code, which prevent the "take" of eggs, nests, feathers, or other parts of most native bird species. Limiting activities to the non-breeding season will minimize chances for the incidental take of migratory songbirds or raptors. Should the applicant propose to conduct brushing, tree felling, grading, or other construction activities during the bird breeding season, a preconstruction nesting survey of all areas within 300 feet of the proposed activity will be required. The results of the survey will be provided in a report to the Director, Department of Planning &

Development Services for concurrence with the conclusions and recommendations. It is also recommended that the survey report be provided to the Wildlife Agencies to ensure compliance with the above state and federal statutes.

No other biological mitigation associated with the Valley Center ARCO Project is recommended at this time.

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Preparer and Persons/Organizations Contacted

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Attachments

Figure 1. Regional Location - U.S.G.S. 7.5" Topo
Figure 2. Recent (2019) Aerial Photo
Figure 3. Biological Resources on Recent Aerial Photo
Figure 4. Biological Resources on Project Site Plan
Table 1. Flora and Fauna Detected
Table 2. Habitat Impact/Mitigation Analysis
Table 3. Sensitive Species Known from the Vicinity

Figure 1. Regional Location – The Valley Center ARCO Project, Valley Center
Portion of U.S.G.S "Valley Center, California" 7.5′ Quadrangle

Figure 2. Recent (2018) Aerial Photo – The Valley Center ARCO Project, Valley Center

Figure 3. Biological Resources on Recent Aerial Photo – The Valley Center ARCO Project, Valley Center

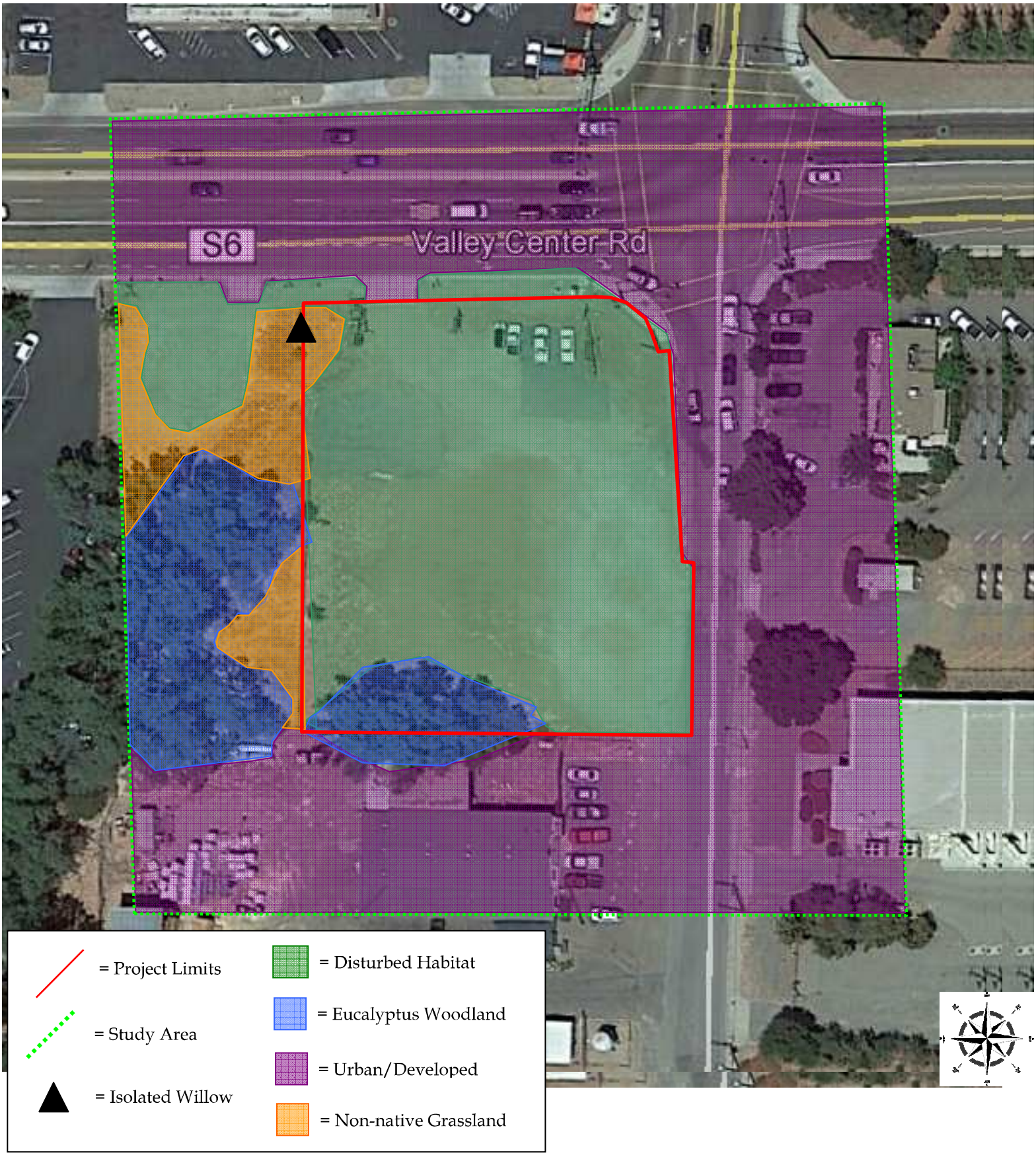
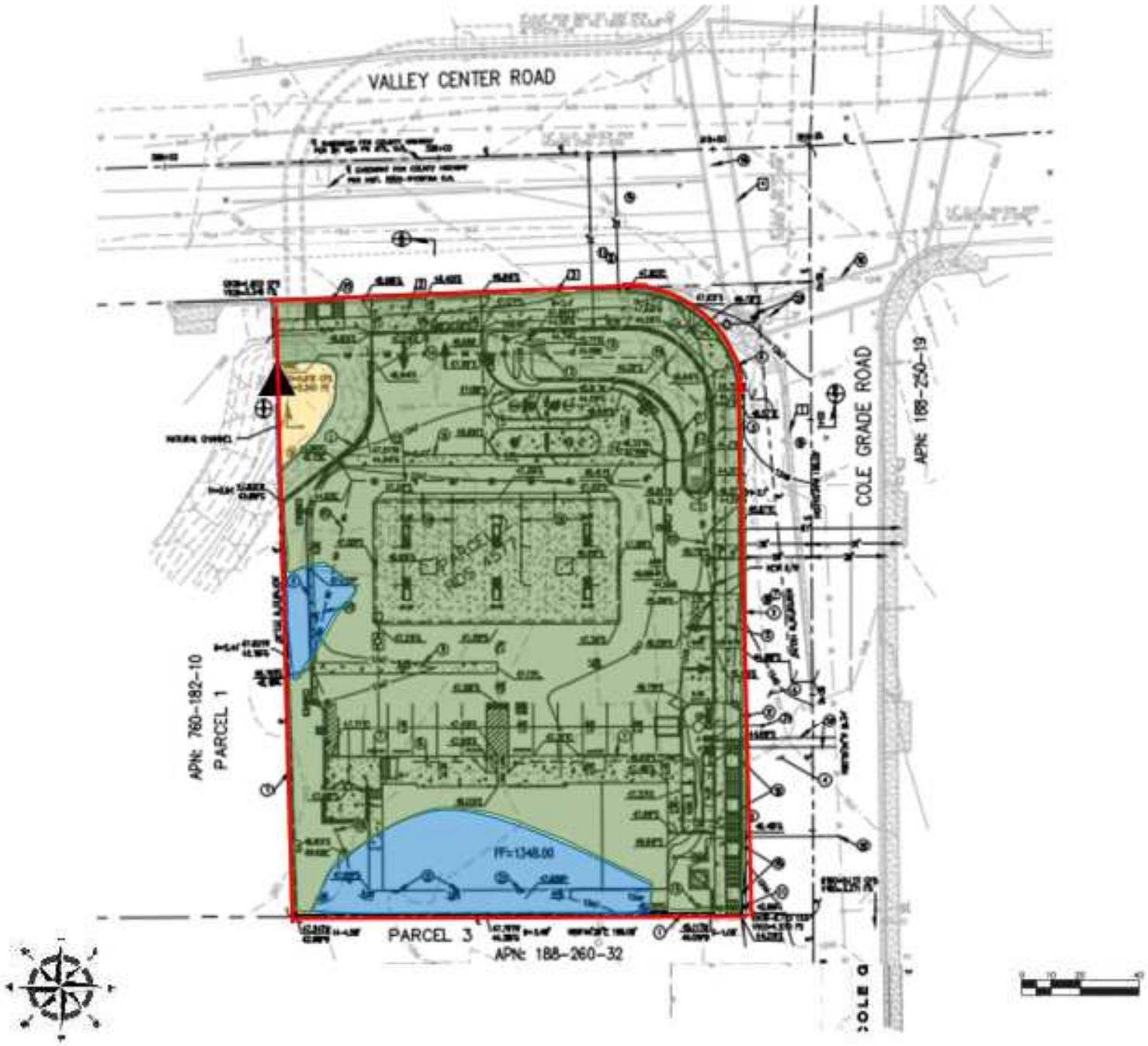


Figure 4. Biological Resources on Project Site Plan – The Valley Center ARCO Project, Valley Center



= Project Limits

= Disturbed Habitat

= Isolated Willow

= Eucalyptus Woodland

= Non-native Grassland

Table 1. Flora and Fauna Detected – The Valley Center ARCO Project Study Area, Valley Center

Scientific Name	Common Name
Plants	
Amaranthus albus *	White Tumbleweed
Ambrosia psilostachya	Western Ragweed
Avena barbata *	Slender Wild Oat
Bromus diandrus *	Ripgut Brome
Bromus rubens *	Foxtail Brome
Carduus pycnocephalus *	Italian Thistle
Chenopodium murale *	Goosefoot
Cyperus sp.	Sedge
Ehrharta erecta *	Panic Veldt Grass
Erigeron canadensis *	Common Horseweed
Eriogonum fasciculatum	Flat-top Buckwheat
Erodium botrys *	Long-beaked Stork's-bill
Eucalyptus camaldulensis *	Murray Red Gum
Euphorbia maculata *	Spotted Spurge
Galium aparine *	Common Bedstraw
Gazenia sp. *	Gazenia
Heliotropium curvassavicum	Wild Heliotrope
Heterotheca grandiflora	Telegraph Weed
Hirschfeldia incana *	Perennial Mustard
Hordeum murinum *	Wild Barley
Lactuca serriola *	Wild Lettuce
Lysimachia arvensis *	Scarlet Pimpernel
Malva parviflora *	Cheeseweed
Panicum capillare	Western Witch Grass
Polycarpon tetraphyllum *	Four-leaf Allseed
Polygonum arenastrum *	Yard Knotweed
Polypogon monspeliensis *	Rabbitfoot Grass
Pseudognaphalium luteoalbum *	Everlasting Cudweed
Quercus agrifolia	Coast Live Oak
Salix laevigata	Red Willow
Salsola pestifer *	Russian Thistle
Schismus barbatus *	Schismus
Sisymbrium irio *	London Rocket
Sonchus oleraceus *	Sow Thistle
Tribulus terrestris *	Puncture Vine
Urtica urens *	Dwarf Nettle
Birds	
Corvus brachyrhynchos	Common Crow
Carpodacus mexicanus	Housefinch
Mammals	
Sylvilagus audubonii	Desert Cottontail Rabbit
Thomomys bottae	Valley Pocket Gopher

* - non-native taxon

Table 2. Habitat Impact/Mitigation Analysis – The Valley Center ARCO Project, Valley Center

Biological Resource	Total Onsite Acres (Pre-development)	Acres Impacted (Post-development)	Mitigation Ratio (applied to impacts)	Mitigation Required
Disturbed Habitat	0.7 acre	0.7 acre	0:1	none
Non-native Grassland	<0.1 acre (trace)	none	0.5:1	avoidance
Eucalyptus Woodland	0.1 acre	0.1 acre	0:1	none
Urban/Developed Habitat	0.1 acre	0.1 acre	0:1	none
Totals	**0.9 acre**	**0.9 acre**	**--**	**avoidance**

Table 3. Sensitive Species Known from the Vicinity – The Valley Center ARCO Project, Valley Center

Scientific Name	Common Name	Federally Endangered	Federally Threatened	State Endangered	State Threatened	State Rare	Coastal Sage Scrub	Mixed Chaparral	Grassland	Riparian	Oak Woodland	Chamise Chaparral	Mixed Conifer	Closed Cone Forest	Piñon-Juniper	Freshwater Marsh	Desert Scrub	Desert Wash	Salt or Alkali Marsh	Vernal Pools	Montane Meadow	Coastal or Desert Dune	Lakes and Bays	Probability of Occurrence	Factual Basis for Determination
Amphispiza belli belli	Bell's Sage Sparrow						X	X				X												L	1a
Antrozous pallidus	Pallid Bat						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X			X			M	2a
Baccharis vanessae	Encinitas Baccharis		X	X				X				X												L	1a
Bassariscus astutus	Ringtail							X				X												L	1a
Bufo microscaphus californicus	Arroyo Toad	X					X	X	X	X	X	X									X			L	1a
Chaetodipus californicus femoralis	Dulzura California Pocket Mouse						X	X	X		X	X	X											L	1a
Charina trivirgata roseofusca	Coastal Rosy Boa						X	X			X	X												L	1a
Chorizanthe leptotheca	Peninsular Spine Flower							X				X												L	1a
Cnemidophorus hyperythrus	Orange-Throated Whiptail						X	X	X	X		X												M	2a
Cnemidophorus tigris multiscutatus	Coastal Western Whiptail							X		X	X	X												M	2a
Corynorhinus townsendii	Townsend's Big-Eared Bat							X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X			X			M	2a
Crotalus ruber ruber	N. Red Diamond Rattlesnake						X	X				X			X		X							L	1a
Diadophis punctatus similis	San Diego Ringneck Snake						X	X		X	X	X	X	X										M	2a
Eumeces skiltonianus interparietalis	Coronado Skink						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	X			M	2a
Eumops perotis californicus	Greater Western Mastiff Bat						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	M	2a
Felis concolor	Mountain Lion						X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X			X			L	1c
Horkelia truncata	Ramona Horkelia							X																L	1a
Lepus californicus bennettii	San Diego Black-Tailed Jackrabbit						X	X	X		X	X	X	X										M	2a
Lycaena hermes	Hermes Copper						X	X				X												L	1a
Lynx rufus	Bobcat						X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X			X			L	1a
Monardella hypoleuca lanata	Felt Leaved Rock Mint							X				X												L	1a
Myotis ciliolabrum	Small-Footed Myotis							X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X			X			M	2a
Myotis evotis	Long Eared Myotis							X		X	X	X	X	X	X						X			M	2a
Myotis thysanodes	Fringed Myotis							X		X	X	X	X	X	X						X			M	2a
Myotis volans	Long Legged Myotis							X		X	X	X	X	X	X						X			M	2a
Myotis yumanensis	Yuma Myotis						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X		X	M	2a
Nolina cismontana	Chaparral Beargrass							X				X												L	1b
Nyctinomops macrotis	Big Free-Tailed Bat						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	M	2a
Nyctinomops femorosaccus	Pocketed Free-Tailed Bat						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	M	2a
Odocoileus hemionus	Southern Mule Deer						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X			X			L	1a
Onychomys torridus ramona	Southern Grasshopper Mouse						X	X	X			X												L	1a
Quercus engelmannii	Engelmann Oak						X	X	X		X	X	X											L	1b
Perognathus longimembris brevinasus	Los Angeles Little Pocket Mouse						X	X	X		X	X										X		L	1a
Phrynosoma coronatum blainvillei	San Diego Horned Lizard						X	X	X	X		X	X											M	2a
Piperia cooperi	Cooper's Rein Orchid						X		X															L	1a
Piperia leptopetala	Narrow-Petaled Rein Orchid						X		X															L	1a
Polygala cornuta fishiae	Fish's Milkwort							X				X												L	1b
Salvadora hexalepis virgultea	Coast Patch-Nosed Snake						X	X				X			X									L	1a
Scaphiopus hammondii	Western Spadefoot Toad						X	X	X	X	X	X				X				X				M	2a
Senecio ganderi	Gander's Butterweed					X		X				X												L	1a
Taxidea taxus	American Badger						X	X	X		X	X	X		X		X	X			X			L	1a
Tetracoccus dioicus	Parry's Tetracoccus							X				X												L	1b

Probability of Occurrence Codes:
L – Low Probability; rare species in area; **M** – Moderate Probability; **H** – High Probability; **O** – Observed; see text for discussion.

Factual Basis for Determination:
1a - no significant habitat (animal or plant)
1b - distinctive perennial that would not have been missed if present onsite (plant)
1c – obvious species that would have been seen or otherwise detected if present (animal)
2a - can be expected to occur onsite on at least an occasional basis, based on habitat quality (animal)
2b - could occur onsite, but very rare, and/or poorly known (plant)
3a - nearly certain to occur onsite on a regular basis, but cryptic, seasonal, or otherwise difficult to detect (animal)
3b - ephemeral species known from the immediate vicinity, but seasonal in occurrence (plant)