

April 11, 2016

Mr. Rod Jones
Excel Engineering
440 State Place
Escondido, California 92029

Subject: Results of Burrowing Owl Survey for the Rockport Ranch Project Site, City of Menifee
(LSA Project No. EXC1601)

Dear Mr. Jones:

This report documents the results of LSA's focused survey for burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) of the Rockport Ranch Project site (Assessor's Parcel Numbers 364-190-004 and -005) located at 29875 Newport Road and 30455 Briggs Road, in the City of Menifee, Riverside County, California. Specifically, the site is located at the southwest corner of Old Newport Road and Briggs Road, as depicted on the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute *Romoland, California* quadrangle in projected Section 1, Township 6 South, Range 3 West (attached Figure 1).

The survey was conducted between January 26 and April 3, 2016. A single burrowing owl and active burrow were found during the January 26 burrow survey. Neither this owl nor any other burrowing owls or their sign were found during the burrowing owl survey conducted in March and April 2016.

BACKGROUND

Burrowing owls are found in open, dry grasslands; agricultural and range lands; desert habitats; and grass, forb, and shrub stages of pinyon and ponderosa pine habitats. They nest in abandoned burrows of ground squirrels or other animals, in pipes, rock and debris piles, and in other similar features.

Burrowing owls and their nests and eggs are protected from "take" (meaning destruction, pursuit, possession, etc.) under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918 and under Sections 3503, 3503.5, and 3800 of the California Fish and Game Code. Activities that cause destruction of active nests, or that cause nest abandonment and subsequent death of eggs or young, may constitute violations of one or both of these laws.

METHODS

The focused survey for burrows and owls was conducted in accordance with accepted protocol ("Burrowing Owl Survey Protocol and Mitigation Guidelines," The California Burrowing Owl Consortium, April 1993). The survey was conducted by LSA Senior Biologists Claudia Bauer and Denise Woodard. The burrow survey was conducted on January 26, 2016. Burrowing owl surveys were conducted on March 17, 20, 22 and April 3, 2016. Attached Table A provides dates, times, and weather conditions of site visits.

The survey was conducted by walking throughout the project site. Transect spacing averaged 100 feet, which allowed for 100 percent visual coverage of the ground surface. Potential habitat was examined for burrowing owl and owl sign (e.g., feathers, pellets, whitewash, and prey remnants). Potential habitat within 500 feet of the site was surveyed using binoculars.

RESULTS

The site is a recently abandoned dairy farm and, as a result, vegetation present was ruderal and sparse. Dominant plant species identified on the site include cheeseweed (*Malva parviflora*) and Malabar sprangletop (*Leptochloa fusca*). Ornamental trees and landscaping associated with existing residences were noted at the northern portion of the site.

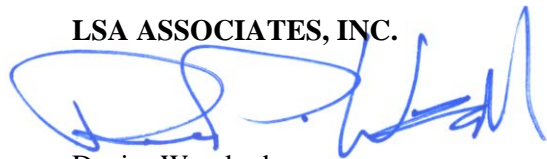
Common wildlife species observed during the survey were primarily bird species and include ring-billed gull (*Larus delawarensis*), common raven (*Corvus corax*), horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris*), mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), and Say's phoebe (*Sayornis saya*). A complete list of bird species observed is attached as Table B.

During the January 2016 burrow survey, a single burrowing owl and burrow with sign (in the form of whitewash and pellets) was observed along the northwest edge of the site, on the bank of a detention basin (Figures 2 and 3). However, during the March and April 2016 burrow owl surveys, no burrowing owls, active burrows, or new sign were observed. Some whitewash remained on the previously active burrow location, but by the final survey, the burrow was being utilized by a California ground squirrel and the whitewash was no longer visible. No other burrowing owls or features potentially occupied by burrowing owls were detected during the survey.

Although the burrowing owl was not now present on site during the burrowing owl portion of the survey, suitable habitat is present and could eventually be reoccupied. Accordingly, a pre-construction survey within 30 days prior to disturbance will be required so take of owls or active owl nests can be avoided.

Sincerely,

LSA ASSOCIATES, INC.



Denise Woodard
Associate/Senior Biologist

Attachments: Tables A and B
Figures 1 through 3

Table A: Focused Survey Dates, Times, and Weather Conditions

Survey	Date (2016)	Time (24-Hour) (start/finish)	Temp. (°F) (start/finish)	Wind (mph)	Cloud Cover
Burrow Survey	January 26	0745/1010	49/64	0	0%
Burrowing Owl Survey 1	March 17	0700/0800	50/50	1–3	0%
Burrowing Owl Survey 2	March 20	0745/0900	50/55	1–3	0%
Burrowing Owl Survey 3	March 22	0740/0850	54/57	0	10%
Burrowing Owl Survey 4	April 3	0715/0820	55/59	0	0%

Table B: Bird Species Observed

Scientific Name	Common Name
Anatidae	Swans, Geese, and Ducks
<i>Branta canadensis</i>	Canada goose
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Mallard
Phalacrocoracidae	Cormorant
<i>Phalacrocorax auritus</i>	Double-crested cormorant
Ardeidae	Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns
<i>Ardea alba</i>	Great egret
Accipitridae	Kites, Hawks, and Eagles
<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	Red-tailed hawk
Falconidae	Falcons
<i>Falco sparverius</i>	American kestrel
Charadriidae	Plovers and Lapwings
<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	Killdeer
Recurvirostridae	Stilts and Avocets
<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>	Black-necked stilt
<i>Recurvirostra americana</i>	American avocet
Laridae	Skuas, Gulls, Terns, Skimmers
<i>Larus delawarensis</i>	Ring-billed gull
<i>Larusflaucescens</i>	Glaucous-winged gull
Columbidae	Pigeons and Doves
<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	Mourning dove
<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> (nonnative species)	Eurasian collared dove
Tyrannidae	Tyrant Flycatchers
<i>Sayornis nigricans</i>	Black phoebe
<i>Sayornis saya</i>	Say's phoebe
<i>Tyrannus verticalis</i>	Western kingbird
Corvidae	Crows and Ravens
<i>Corvus corax</i>	Common raven

Table B: Bird Species Observed

Scientific Name	Common Name
Alaudidae	Larks
<i>Eremophila alpestris actia</i>	California horned lark
Hirundinidae	Swallows
<i>Stelgidopteryx serripennis</i>	Northern rough-winged swallow
<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Barn swallow
Troglodytidae	Wrens
<i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>	Bewick's wren
Sturnidae	Starlings
<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> (nonnative species)	European starling
Motacillidae	Wagtails and Pipits
<i>Anthus rubescens</i>	American pipit
Parulidae	Wood Warblers
<i>Dendroica coronata</i>	Yellow-rumped warbler
Emberizidae	Emberizines
<i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i>	Savannah sparrow
<i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i>	White-crowned sparrow
Icteridae	Blackbirds, Orioles and Allies
<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	Red-winged blackbird
<i>Euphagus cyanocephalus</i>	Brewer's blackbird
Fringillidae	Finches
<i>Carpodacus mexicanus</i>	House finch
<i>Carduelis tristis</i>	American goldfinch
Passeridae	Old World Sparrows
<i>Passer domesticus</i> (nonnative species)	House sparrow

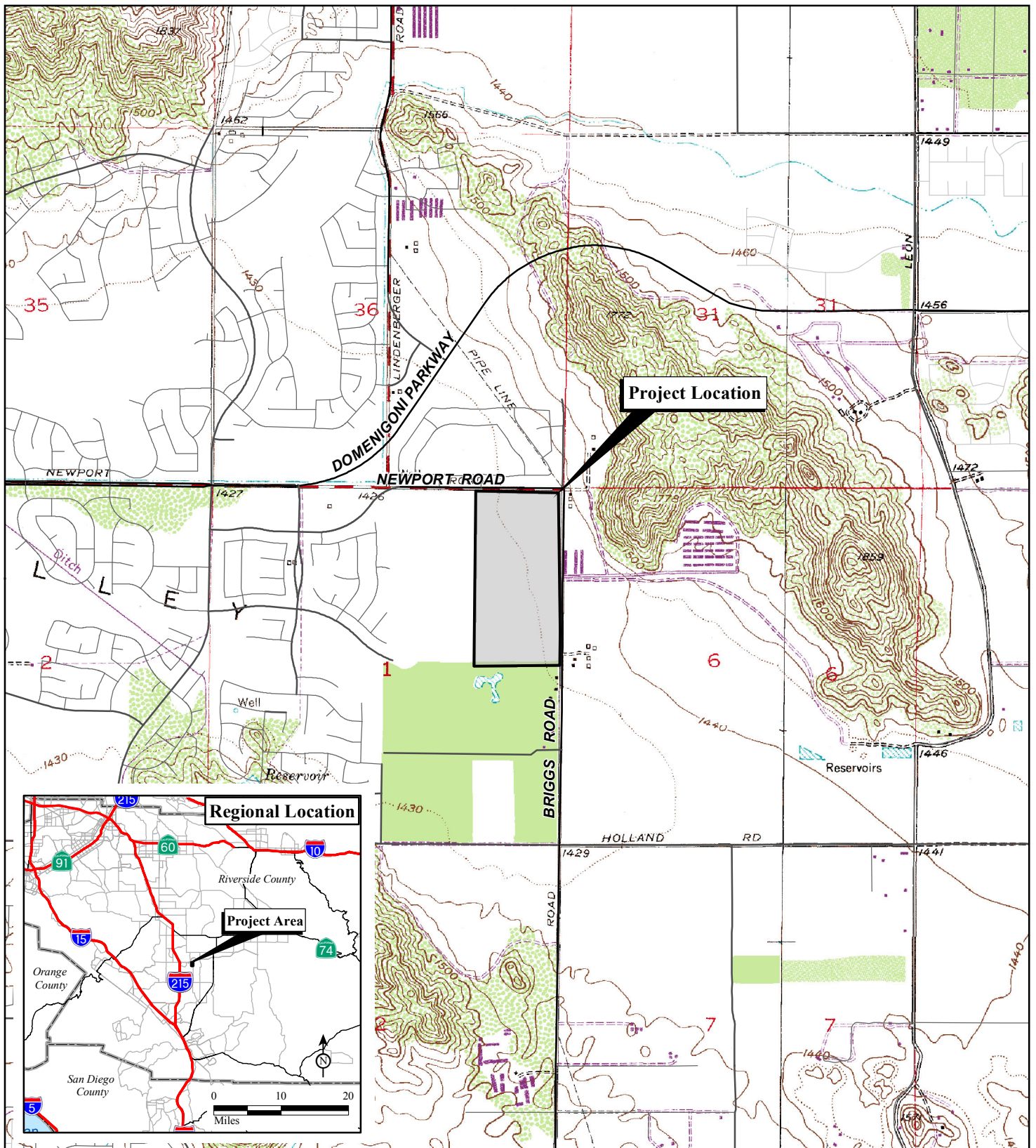


FIGURE 1

LSA



0 1000 2000
FEET

SOURCE: USGS 7.5' Quads: Romoland (79), CA; Winchester(79), CA; ESRI Streetmap, 2013/Riverside County, 2015.

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Rockport Ranch
Burrowing Owl Survey
Regional and Project Location



LSA



0 200 400
FEET

SOURCE: Google Earth, 2016

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LEGEND




-  Survey Area
-  Burrowing Owl / Burrowing Owl Sign
-  Photograph Location

FIGURE 2

Rockport Ranch
Burrowing Owl Survey
Survey Results and Photograph Locations

Photograph 1:
View of westerly bank of detention basin where burrowing owl sign was observed.



Photograph 2:
View of burrowing owl burrow that was occupied during the January 26, 2016 burrow survey, and shows evidence of white wash at the entrance during the owl survey (March 17, 2016).



Photograph 3:
View of burrowing owl burrow, that previously had white wash, showing use by California ground squirrel (April 3, 2016).



LSA

FIGURE 3

*Rockport Ranch
Burrowing Owl Survey*

Site Photographs