1602 Spring Street, Paso Robles, CA 93446 (805) 237-9626 • Fax (805) 237-9181 • www.althouseandmeade.com

December 20, 2019 1183.01

Mr. Emilio Cortez Evergreen Standard P.O. Box 1524 Nipomo, CA 93444 DRC2019-00058

Conditional Use Permit
090-051-058 / 375 MEHLSCHAU RD
CORTEZ EMILIO
CANNABIS INDOOR CULTIVATION, ANCILLARY NURSERY
AND MANUFACTURING

Re: Revised Biological Resource Assessment for 375 Mehlschau Road, Nipomo, San Luis Obispo County

### Dear Mr. Cortez:

This report provides the results of a reconnaissance level biological survey conducted on a 22.3-acre property (Property) located at 375 Mehlschau Road in Nipomo, San Luis Obispo County, California (Figures 1 and 2). The project description has been updated to reflect revised site plans provided in Attachment C. Approximate coordinates for center of the Property are 35.05833° N, -120.48315° W (WGS 84) in the Nipomo United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle. The Property is assessor parcel number (APN) 090-051-058. This survey was conducted to provide baseline biological information and an assessment of potential special status plant and animal species that could occur on the Property or be affected by the proposed project (Project), a Cannabis Cultivation Minor Use Permit on approximately 1.3 acres of the Property.

The proposed Project would consist of a 1.3-acre indoor grow area with access road and ancillary components. The indoor grow area would include installation of eight greenhouses dedicated to indoor cultivation (totaling 27,216 square feet), and two greenhouses dedicated to nursery cultivation (totaling 6,552 square feet). A working clearance of 150 feet with base will be added around the proposed greenhouses for CalFire access. Approximately 10,320 square feet of new proposed access road would run parallel to greenhouse structures on the south side, extending west from the existing road which accesses the site from Mehlschau Road. New 6-foot chain link fencing with black polyethylene screen cloth will be installed around the grow area as a security measure, and an electric gate will be installed at the east end of the fire access road entrance. Two 5,000-gallon water tanks are proposed to serve the indoor cultivation and will be located in the southeast corner of fenced grow area. Twelve spaces of designated parking (approximately 1,536 square feet) are proposed east of the greenhouses and existing access road. The 2,683-square foot existing building would be brought up to code and used for drying, manufacturing, and exporting the cannabis product. A paved ADA ramp is proposed to connect the parking lot on the south side to the manufacturing building. A temporary 3-foot wide by 2-foot deep trench (approximately 2,520 square feet) will be excavated along the southwest portion of the Property to provide electrical power to the grow area from the existing PG&E connection. Three existing structures, including two residences and agricultural (AG) storage shed, will remain on site but will not be used as part of the Project; whereas the existing historical building is slated for removal. A Site Plan is provided which shows areas of proposed development for the intended Project (refer to Attachment C).

### **Methods**

The Property was surveyed for biological resources on February 27, 2018 by Althouse and Meade, Inc. Senior Biologist Lisa Gadsby. Biological surveys were conducted on foot in order to compile species lists, to search for special status plants and animals, to map habitats, and to photograph the Study Area. The general vegetation survey method included meandering transects with an emphasis on identifying each plant species observed. Transects were also utilized to describe general conditions and dominant species, compile species lists, and evaluate potential habitat for special status species. The entire 22.2-acre Property was surveyed. Identification of botanical resources included field observations and laboratory analysis of collected material. Botanical nomenclature used in this document follows the Jepson Manual, Second Edition (Baldwin et al. 2012).

Wildlife documentation included observations of animal presence and wildlife sign. Observations of wildlife were recorded during the field survey in all areas of the Property (Table 2; Attachment F). Birds were identified by sight or by vocalizations. Results of the botanical and wildlife surveys are summarized below.

The California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB; February 2019 data) and the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) On-line Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California were reviewed for the nine USGS 7.5-minute quadrangles surrounding the site, including: Arroyo Grande NE, Tar Spring Ridge, Caldwell Mesa, Oceano, Nipomo, Huasna Peak, Guadalupe, Santa Maria, and Twitchell Dam.

### **Existing Conditions**

The Property is an agriculturally zoned parcel located in the unincorporated community of Nipomo, approximately 7.5 miles north of the City of Santa Maria and 7.2 miles southeast of the City of Arroyo Grande, in southern San Luis Obispo County. The Property is 22.2 acres in size, approximately half of which is comprised of fallow cropland dominated by wild mustard (Sinapis arvensis). Structures on the Property include two single-family residences, two temporary office trailers, a barn, a small storage shed, and other ancillary facilities related to previous farming activities. An ephemeral drainage with associated willow riparian habitat is located at the western corner of the Property. The drainage was dry with no evidence of ponding or pooling at the time of the survey. Scattered trash and debris were observed in the drainage. A windrow of eucalyptus trees borders the Property to the northeast. Ornamental trees such as olive and cypress border the southeast end and the driveway.

### Results

Special Status Species

The CNDDB and CNPS On-line Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California list 63 special status plant species, subspecies, and varieties and 35 special status animal species known to occur in the vicinity (9-quad search area) of the Property. Based on the results of the site survey, the Property does not have potential to support special status plant species and none were observed during the survey. The Property has potential to support one special status animal (Table 1, Attachment D). There are no sensitive natural communities present on the Property. Below we discuss the potential special status animal species and describe habitat, range restrictions, known occurrences, and survey results for the Property.

A. Special Status Birds. One special status bird, Cooper's hawk (Accipiter cooperii), was observed on the Property during the February 2019 survey. Cooper's hawk is listed by California Department of Fish and wildlife (CDFW) as a Watch List species (for nesting occurrences only). Cooper's hawks occur regularly in California during the winter months and during spring and fall migration (CNDDB 2019). Cooper's hawks frequent oak and riparian woodland habitats, and increasingly urban areas, where they prey primarily upon small birds (Curtis et al. 2006). One Cooper's hawk was observed within the willow riparian habitat at the northwest end of the Property. No nests or nesting behaviors were observed, however there is potential for Cooper's hawk to nest in the riparian habitat and the large eucalyptus trees on the northeast border of the Property. The CNDDB does not list any records of Cooper's hawk nesting within the vicinity of the Property.

California red-legged frog (CRLF) was determined to have no potential to occur on the Property due to the lack of suitable aquatic habitat on site. The Property is not within known CRLF critical habitat and although California red-legged frog is not expected to occur on site, this species warrants further discussion.

B. California red-legged frog (Rana draytonii) is a federally listed threatened species and a California Species of Special Concern. It occurs in California in the Coast Range, Sierras, the Transverse Range and south below 1,200 meters elevation (CDFW 2014, Sousa 2008). The main habitat types for the CRLF are deep, still or slow-moving sources of water in lowlands and foothills with shrubby, riparian, or vegetative shorelines for cover (CDFW 2014, CNDDB 2017, Jennings and Hayes 1994). The most suitable vegetation types for cover are cattails (Typha sp.), arroyo willow (Salix lasiolepis) and bulrushes (Scirpus sp.) (Jennings and Hayes 1994). Along with its aquatic habitat, the CRLF also utilizes upland habitat for seeking food, shelter and as migration corridors between breeding and nonbreeding sites. Bulger et al. (2003) found that during dry summer months, CRLF were nearly always within 5 meters of a pond; however, during summer rain events and early winter rains, frogs moved up to 130 meters from their ponds, and some frogs even traveled up to 2800 meters to migrate to a different pond. When out of the water the CRLF will shelter under natural or manmade debris and burrow into moist leaf litter or small animal burrows (USFWS 2010). The breeding season for the CRLF is from January to July with a peak in February (CDFW 2014). The closest reported occurrence of CRLF to the Study Area is approximately 2.3 miles northwest (CNDDB #1356), with several occurrences reported in the vicinity. Reported occurrences denote CRLF observed in either riparian

habitat with dense riparian/wetland vegetation or within drainages or ponds with pooled water. The willow riparian habitat along the northwestern boundary of the property was dry at the time of the survey, which occurred during the wet season, and lacked evidence of any deep pools or ponds that would provide suitable aquatic habitat for CRLF. Additionally, the property is not within a potential migration path to/from known breeding locations, therefore CRLF are not expected to traverse the site during breeding migrations. CRLF are not expected to occur within the Study Area.

### **Botanical Survey Results**

An early season botanical survey conducted in February 2019 identified 17 species and subspecies of vascular plants on the Property (

Table 2; Attachment E). The botanical survey effort did not include late or mid-season coverage and therefore is not considered a protocol-level survey. The list includes 3 species native to California, and 14 introduced (naturalized or planted) species. Special status species were not detected.

### Wildlife Survey Results

Wildlife species detected on the Property include nine birds and one mammal (

Table 3; Attachment F). As previously described, one special status bird species, Cooper's hawk, was observed. All habitats on the Property are disturbed and provide low quality conditions for most wildlife. A variety of birds are likely to pass through the Property seasonally, and several species are likely to nest in the riparian habitat, eucalyptus trees, and other areas of the Property. Common reptiles and amphibians such as western fence lizard, gopher snake, and Sierra treefrog are expected.

## Impacts and Mitigations

The proposed Project would occupy approximately 1.3 acres of the Property, including the above-ground greenhouse structures for cultivation, perimeter fencing, and parking spaces (refer to Site Plan in Attachment C). The Project would be situated in an area that is presently fallow farm fields dominated by wild mustard. One special status animal species, Cooper's hawk, was observed on the Property and has potential to nest in the willow riparian habitat or eucalyptus trees on site. The Project would not likely affect any nesting Cooper's hawk, if present, because work would be limited to the fallow cropland habitat at a distance of at least 400 feet from riparian habitat and 200 feet from eucalyptus trees. Therefore, there are no mitigation measures recommended for Cooper's hawk.

Other bird species may potentially nest within the fallow fields in the Study Area. There is one potentially jurisdictional drainage feature along the northwest end of the Study Area. The following sections provide mitigation information and recommendations designed to reduce potential effects of the Project to biological resources to a less than significant level.

### Nesting Birds

Migratory non-game native bird species are protected by international treaty under the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918 (50 C.F.R. Section 10.13). Sections 3503, 3503.5 and 3513 of the California Fish and Game Code prohibit take (as defined therein) of all native birds and their active nests, including raptors and other migratory non-game birds (as listed under the Federal MBTA).

BR-1. Within one week of vegetation clearing or ground disturbance, if work occurs between March 15 and August 15, nesting bird surveys shall be conducted. If surveys do not locate nesting birds, construction activities may commence. If nesting birds are located, no construction activities shall occur within a distance specified by a qualified biologist, until chicks are fledged, or the nest fails. Buffer radius shall be specified according to special status rank of the nesting bird, intensity of construction activity or impact (i.e. high decibel levels or heavy ground disturbance) and where local, state, and federal regulations apply. A preconstruction survey report shall be submitted to the lead agency immediately upon completion of the survey. The report shall detail appropriate fencing or flagging of the buffer zone and make recommendations on additional monitoring requirements. A map of the Project site and nest locations shall be included with the report. The qualified biologist conducting the nesting survey shall have the authority to reduce or increase the recommended buffer depending upon site conditions.

### Jurisdictional Drainages

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife regulates activities that divert or obstruct the natural flow of, or substantially change or use any material from the bed, channel, or ban of any river, stream, or lake. CDFW has initiated a Cannabis cultivation permitting program that requires all applicants obtaining an Annual License from the California Department of Food and Agriculture to have a Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement or written verification that one is not needed. If all Project components are set outside the 1600 jurisdiction a Self-Certification can be submitted online. More information about the CDFW Cannabis Program and permitting can be found at <a href="https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Cannabis/Permitting">https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Cannabis/Permitting</a>.

The State Water Board has also initiated a Cannabis Cultivation Program to establish principles and guidelines (requirements) for cannabis cultivation activities to protect water quality and instream flows. To implement the program, the Cannabis Cultivation General Order was adopted and provides for a permitting pathway for cultivators. The General Order provides criteria to evaluate the threat to water quality based on site conditions and waterway classification. More information about the State Water Board Cannabis Cultivation can be found at <a href="http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water-issues/programs/cannabis">http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water-issues/programs/cannabis</a>.

The drainage that passes through the is defined as Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland, classified as PSSA (Palustrine (P), Scrub-Shrub (SS), Temporary Flooded (A) according to the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI 2005). As an ephemeral waterway, all project components should observe a minimum 50-foot buffer from the top of bank or bank-full location. Figure 6 provides a Project footprint overlay on biological resources and indicates a minimum 50-foot setback from the waterway.

Thank you for allowing us to be of assistance. If you have any questions or concerns, please call our office at (805) 237-9626.

Sincerely,

Jason Dart

Principal Biologist

Copy:

Jessica Miller, Kirk Consulting

### **Attachments**

- Attachment A. References
- Attachment B. Photographs
- Attachment C. Figures
- Attachment D. CNDDB/CNPS Special Status Species Lists
- Attachment E. Plant List
- Attachment F. Wildlife List

### Attachment A. References

- Baldwin BG, Goldman DH, Keil DJ, Patterson R, Rosatti TJ, Dieter H. Wilken DH, editors. 2012. The Jepson manual: vascular plants of California. 2nd ed. Berkeley (CA): UC Press.
- Bulger JB, Scott Jr NJ, Seymour RB. 2003. Terrestrial activity and conservation of adult California red-legged frogs Rana aurora draytonii in coastal forests and grasslands. Biological conservation. 110(1):85–95.
- [CDFW] California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Interagency Wildlife Task Group. 2014. CWHR version 9.0 personal computer program. Sacramento, CA.
- [CDFW] California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2018. Guidelines for assessing the effects of proposed projects on rare, threatened, and endangered plants and natural communities. [cited 2019 March 6]. 2nd ed.
- [CNDDB] California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Natural Diversity Database. November 2018 Special animals list [Internet]. Sacramento (CA): California Department of Fish and Wildlife; [cited 2019 February 26]. Available from http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/nongame/list.html.
- [CNDDB] California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Natural Diversity Database. 2018. Special vascular plants, bryophytes, and lichens list [Internet]. Sacramento (CA): California Department of Fish and Wildlife; [cited 2019 February 26]. Available from <a href="http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/nongame/list.html">http://www.dfg.ca.gov/wildlife/nongame/list.html</a>.
- [CNPS] California Native Plant Society, Rare Plant Program. 2019. Inventory of rare and endangered plants of California. Sacramento (CA): California Native Plant Society; [cited 2019 February 26]. Available from <a href="http://rareplants.cnps.org">http://rareplants.cnps.org</a>.
- Curtis OE, Rosenfield RN, Bielefeldt J. 2006. Cooper's hawk (Accipiter cooperii). In: Birds of North America. (Poole A, editor).
- Jennings MR, Hayes MP. 1994. Amphibian and reptile species of special concern in California. California Department of Fish and Game, Inland Fisheries Division Rancho Cordova.
- [NAIP] National Agriculture Imagery Program. 2018. Aerial photomosaic of San Luis Obispo County [Internet]. Washington (DC): United States Department of Agriculture (USDA); Available from <a href="https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/aerial-photography/index">https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/aerial-photography/index</a>
- [NWI] National Wetlands Inventory. 2005. Wetland mapper. NWI, translator. [USFWS] US Fish and Wildlife Service. [accessed 2019 March 7]. https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/data/Mapper.html.
- Sousa CL. 2008. Monitoring of the California red-legged frog, Rana aurora draytonii, within properties of the Los Baños Wildlife Area Complex. California Department of Fish and Game.
- [USFWS] US Fish and Wildlife Service. 2010. Endangered and threatened wildlife and plants; revised designation of critical habitat for the California red-legged frog. Sacramento, CA: Federal Register 50 CFR Part 17. [accessed 2019 Dec 19]. <a href="https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2010/03/17/2010-4656/endangered-and-threatened-wildlife-and-plants-revised-designation-of-critical-habitat-for-the">https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2010/03/17/2010-4656/endangered-and-threatened-wildlife-and-plants-revised-designation-of-critical-habitat-for-the</a>.

# Attachment B. Photographs



Photo 1. View from southeast end of property showing driveway, with residences and barn in background. View northwest. February 26, 2019.



Photo 2. Overview of proposed outdoor grow location. Fallow fields dominated by wild mustard. View northwest. February 26, 2019.

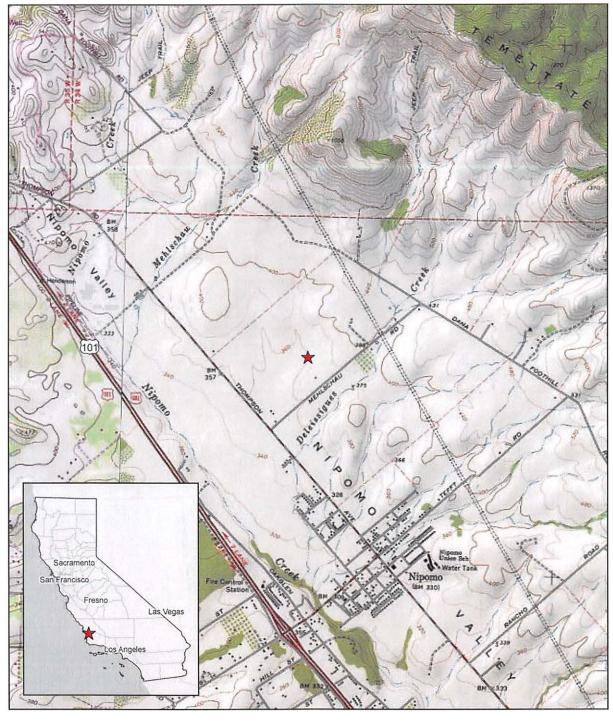


Photo 3. View of willow riparian habitat and ephemeral drainage along northwest end of property. View northeast. February 26, 2019.



Photo 4. Site overview from west end of property, facing east. Eucalyptus in background. February 26, 2019.

Figure 1. United States Geological Survey Topographic Map



Legend

★ Project Location

N 0 1,000 2,000 4,000 Feet 375 Mehlschau Road Map Center: 120.48315°W 35.05832°N Nipomo, San Luis Obispo County

USGS Quadrangle: Nipomo



# Attachment C. Figures

- Figure 1. USGS Topographic Map
- Figure 2. Aerial Photograph
- Figure 3. California Natural Diversity Database Plant Records
- Figure 4. California Natural Diversity Database Animal Records
- Figure 5. USFWS Critical Habitat
- Figure 6. Biological Resources
- Updated Site Plan for 375 Mehlschau Road

Figure 2. Aerial Photograph



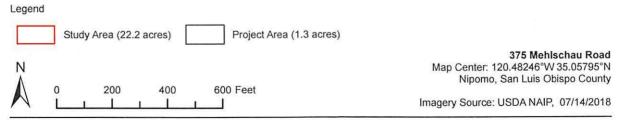
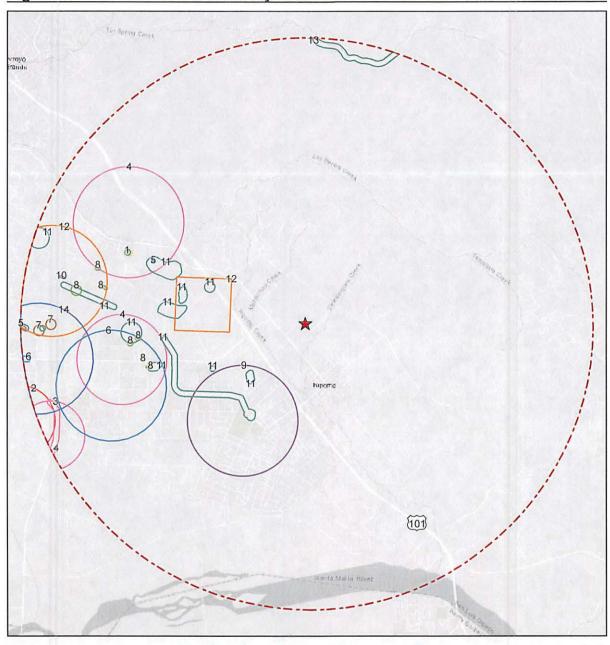




Figure 3. California Natural Diversity Database Plant Records



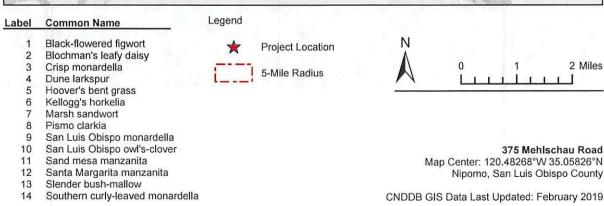
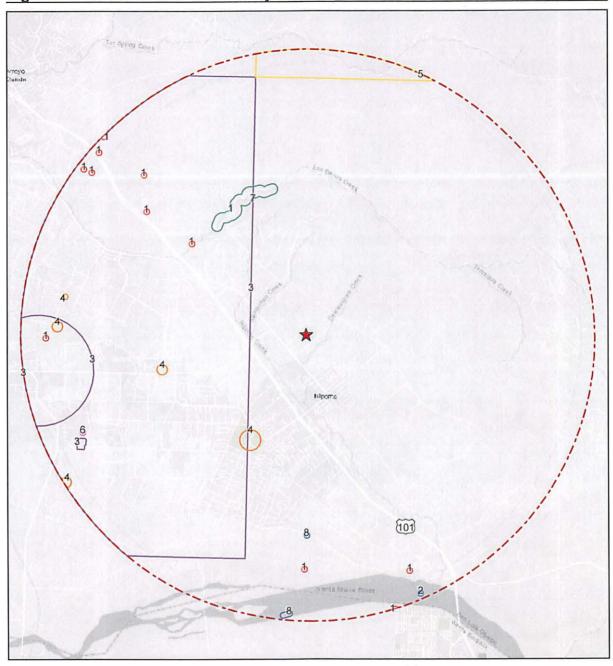




Figure 4. California Natural Diversity Database Animal Records

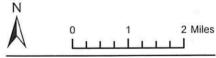


#### Label Common Name

- California red-legged frog Coast horned lizard
- Monarch California overwintering population Northern California legless lizard Prairie falcon

- Sharp-shinned hawk
- Steelhead south-central California coast DPS
- Western spadefoot

# Legend Project Location 5-Mile Radius



375 Mehlschau Road Map Center: 120.48268°W 35.05826°N Nipomo, San Luis Obispo County

CNDDB GIS Data Last Updated: February 2019



Figure 5. United States Fish and Wildlife Service Critical Habitat

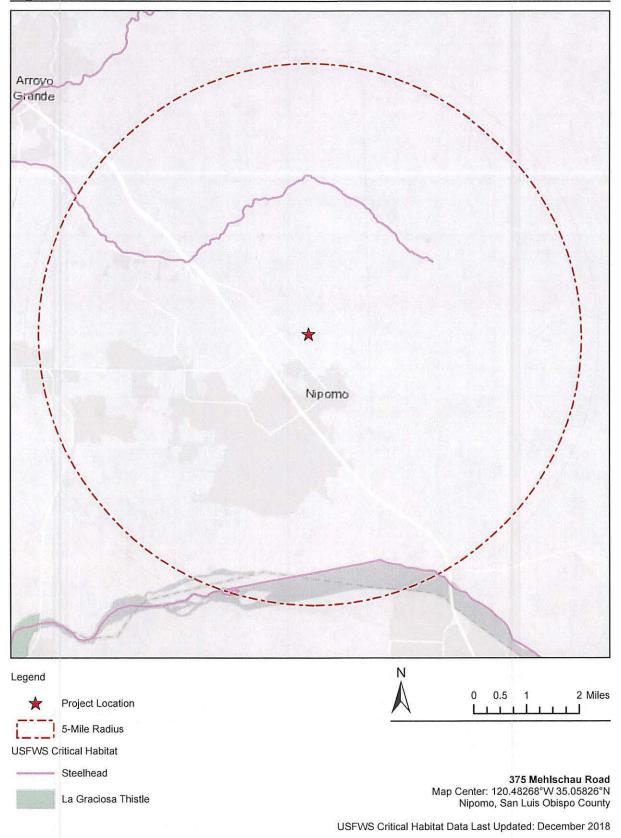
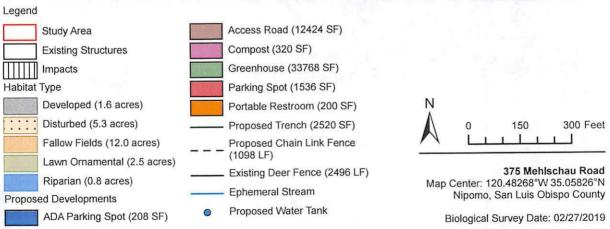




Figure 6. Biological Resources



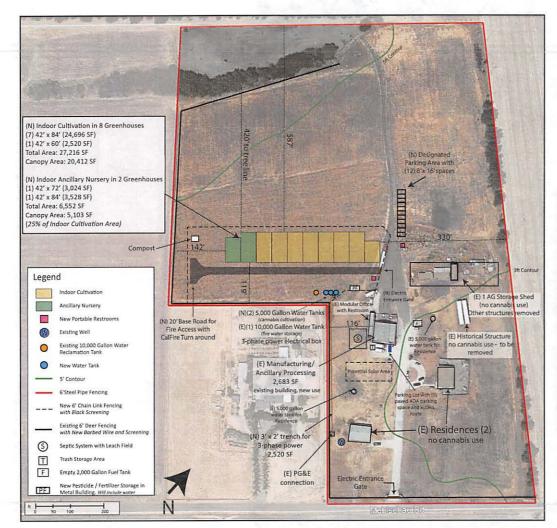




ortez heet

of 10

### **OVERALL SITE PLAN**



Site: 22.32 Acres



\* Site is located over 1000 feet from any sensitive use, as defined by 22.40.050D.1, and 22.40.060D.1, Location

### Scope of Work

- 1) 27,216 SF Indoor Cultivation
  - 20,412 SF Canopy
- 2) 7,560 SF Ancillary Nursery
  - 5,103 SF Canopy
- 3) 2,976 SF Building
  - 1,128 SF Manufacturing
  - 1,638 SF Ancillary Processing
  - 210 SF Cannabis Storage

# Vicinity Map



### Sheet Index

- 1) Overall Site Plan
- 2) Buffer Map
- 3) Security Plan
- 4-6) Greenhouse Plans
- 7) Greenhouse Floor Plans
- 8) Office Modulare, Manufacturing &
- Ancillary Processsing Floorplan
- 9) Office Modulare Elevations
- 10) Manufacturing & Ancillary Processing Elevations

# Attachment D. CNDDB/CNPS Special Status Species Lists

Attachment D includes Table 1, which lists the potential special status animal species in the region with potential to occur.

# Potential Special Status Animals List

Table 1 lists one special status animal species reported from the region with potential to occur in the Study Area. Federal status, California State status, and CDFW listing status for each species are given. Typical nesting or breeding period, habitat preference, to occur, and whether or not the species was observed in the Study Area are also provided.

TABLE 1. SPECIAL STATUS ANIMAL LIST

	Common Name Scientific Name	Fed/State Status Global/State Rank CDFW Rank	Nesting-Breeding Period	Habitat Preference	Potential to Occur	Detected Within Property?	Effect of Proposed Activity
1.	Cooper's Hawk*	None/None	March 15 through	Oak woodland,	High (foraging) to low	Yes	None
	Accipiter cooperii	G5/S4 WL	August 15	riparian, open fields. Nests in dense trees, esp. coast live oak.	(nesting). Species observed on Property. No nests observed, however suitable nesting habitat is present.in riparian habitat and eucalyptus windrow.		

<sup>\*</sup>not listed in the CNDDB for the search area, but possibly for the location.

### Abbreviations:

WL: CDFW Watch List

### Attachment E. Plant List

TABLE 2. PLANT LIST

Scientific Name	Special Status	Origin	Common Name
Trees - 4 Species			
Cupressus sp.	None	Ornamental	Cypress
Eucalyptus globulus	None	Introduced	Blue-gum
Olea europaea	None	Ornamental	Olive
Salix lasiolepis	None	Native	Arroyo willow
Forbs - 11 Species			
Asclepias sp.	None	Native	Milkweed
Brassica sp.	None	Introduced	Mustard
Foeniculum vulgare	None	Introduced	Fennel
Helminthotheca echioides	None	Introduced	Bristly ox-tongue
Juncus sp.	None	Native	Rush
Lamium amplexicaule	None	Introduced	Henbit
Malva sp.	None	Introduced	None
Rumex crispus	None	Introduced	Curly dock
Sinapis arvensis	None	Introduced	Wild mustard
Sonchus sp.	None	Introduced	Sow thistle
Vicia villosa	None	Introduced	Winter vetch
Grasses - 2 Species			
Bromus diandrus	None	Introduced	Ripgut brome
Hordeum murinum	None	Introduced	Foxtail barley

### Attachment F. Wildlife List

TABLE 3. WILDLIFE LIST

Common Name	Scientific Name	Special Status	Habitat Type				
Birds – 9 Species							
Cooper's Hawk	Accipiter cooperii	WL (nesting)	Oak, riparian woodland				
Red-winged Blackbird	Agelaius phoeniceus	None	Marshes, fields				
House Finch	Haemorhous mexicanus	None	Urban, grassland, chaparral, oak savannah				
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Regulus calendula	None	Oak, riparian woodlands				
Black Phoebe	Sayornis nigricans	None	Near water in natural and urban settings				
Say's Phoebe	Sayornis saya	None	Open country, grassland				
Eurasian Collared Dove	Streptopelia decaocto	None	Urban				
European Starling	Sturnus vulgaris	None	Agricultural, livestock areas urban				
White-crowned Sparrow	Zonotrichia leucophrys	None	Oak, riparian woodlands				
Mammals – 1 Species							
Pocket Gopher	Thomomys sp.	None	Variety of habitats				

Abbreviations:

WL: CDFW Watch List