## **Appendix D-14**

Invasive Plant and Noxious Weed Survey Report

## LUGO-VICTORVILLE 500 KV TRANSMISSION LINE REMEDIAL ACTION SCHEME PROJECT 2022 INVASIVE PLANT AND NOXIOUS WEED SURVEY REPORT

San Bernardino County, California and Clark County, Nevada

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#### 1 Introduction

Artemis Environmental Services, Inc. (Artemis Environmental) was retained by Rincon Consultants, Inc. (Rincon) to perform an invasive plant and noxious weed survey on behalf of Southern California Edison (SCE) for the Lugo-Victorville 500-kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line Remedial Action Scheme Project (Project). The Project, which is located in San Bernardino County, California and Clark County, Nevada, includes two projects/segments, Segment 1: Gale Substation to Pisgah Substation (Gale to Pisgah Project; Segment 1) and Segment 2: Pisgah Substation to tower M152-T2 just beyond Nipton Substation (LVRAS; Pisgah to Nipton; Segment 2). Segment 1 includes the installation of telecommunication all-dielectric self-supporting (ADSS) cable line from SCE's Gale Substation near Barstow, California to SCE's Pisgah Substation near Ludlow, California for approximately 29 miles within an existing SCE right-of-way (ROW) along U.S. Route 66 and Interstate Highway 40. Segment 2 includes the removal of the existing overhead ground wire and replacement with Optical Ground Wire along approximately 84 miles within the existing SCE ROW starting at SCE's Pisgah Substation and ending at transmission tower M152-T2 within Clark County, Nevada (near Nipton Road/Joshua Tree Highway).

The invasive plant and noxious weed survey area (Survey Area) totals 3,013.4 acres and encompasses all disturbance areas with a 50-foot buffer and the entire ROW with a 50-foot buffer (25-feet on each side of the ROW). Disturbance areas are defined as all potential areas where work will be performed based on the current design.

#### 1.1 PROJECT LOCATION

The Project consists of two projects/segments, Segment 1: Gale to Pisgah and Segment 2: Pisgah to Nipton (LVRAS). Segment 1 is located within an existing distribution line ROW adjacent to U.S. Route 66, traversing private land and open space public lands including those administered by the BLM, Department of Defense (DOD), and State Lands Commission (SLC) in San Bernardino County, California (Appendix A, Figures 1 and 2: Project Overview and Project Vicinity, respectively). Segment 2 is located within primarily undisturbed desert scrub spanning lands administered by the BLM, DOD, Mojave National Preserve (MNP), SLC, and private landowners in San Bernardino County, California and Clark County, Nevada (Appendix A, Figure 2: Project Vicinity). The western edge of Segment 1, at Gale Substation, is located at latitude N34.858043, and longitude W-116.866728. Structure 429142S, which represents the eastern edge of Segment 1, is located at latitude N34.780758 and longitude W-116.386662. The Pisgah Substation is located at latitude N34.782406, and longitude W-116.384607, and the eastern edge of Segment 2, at Nipton Substation, is located at latitude N35.484861 and longitude W-115.187637.

#### 1.2 Survey Area Site Description

The invasive plant and noxious weed survey area (Survey Area), which totals approximately 3,013.4 acres, encompasses all disturbance areas with a 50-foot buffer and the entire ROW with a 50-foot buffer (25-feet on each side of the ROW). Disturbance areas are defined as all potential areas where work will be performed based on the current design.

Elevations vary from approximately 1,800 feet above mean sea level (AMSL) to approximately 2,100 feet AMSL within the Segment 1 and from approximately 1,100 feet AMSL to approximately 4,600 feet AMSL within Segment 2. The Survey Area is located within the American Semidesert and Desert Province ecological region (322), which encompasses the Mojave, Colorado, and Sonoran Deserts (USFS 2018). Specifically, the Survey Area is within the Mojave Desert section and ecoregion subsections: Mojave Valley-



Granite Mountains, Bullion Mountains-Bristol Lake, Silurian Valley-Devil's Playground, Kingston Range-Valley Wells, Ivanpah Valley, Providence Mountains - Lanfair Valley (Walter-Feller 2020).

#### 2 Invasive Plant and Noxious Weed Inventory Methods

This section outlines the methods used to locate and identify invasive plants and noxious weeds within the Survey Area, including a pre-field literature review to develop a list of noxious weeds and invasive plants with the potential to occur in the Survey Area based on federal and state definitions in the regulations as defined in the IWMP (Rincon 2022). The objective of the surveys was to identify and map noxious and invasive weeds to inform management during the pre-construction, construction, and restoration phases of the Project.

#### 2.1 PRE-FIELD ANALYSIS

#### 2.1.1 Invasive Plant and Noxious Weed Definitions

The following are the types of weeds targeted for surveys:

- Noxious Weeds: Species identified by public law as exerting substantial negative environmental or economic impact. Noxious weeds are a subset of non-native (or exotic) plants. The term "noxious weeds" is a legal classification, not an ecological term.
- Invasive Plants: Species that are capable of spreading beyond their natural range or environmental setting, often in response to disturbance or changing conditions. Invasive plant species are generally but not always non-native. The BLM defines an invasive plant as "a plant that interferes with management objectives for a given area of land at a given point in time."
- Other weedy plants: Other organizations, such as the non-profit California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC) and county agriculture commissioners (California) and weed control districts (Nevada) maintain other lists of weeds. The vast majority of these species were not indigenous to a given area before European settlement.

The term "noxious weed" is defined legally, through federal and state laws, as follows:

**U.S. Federal Plant Protection Act (7 U.S.C. § 7702.10):** "any plant or plant product that can directly or indirectly injure or cause damage to crops (including nursery stock or plant products); livestock, poultry, or other interests of agriculture; irrigation; navigation; the natural resources of the U.S.; the public health; or the environment."

CDFA Noxious Weed Act of 1989 (CDFA 3 California Administrative Code § 4500): "any species of plant that is, or is liable to be, troublesome, aggressive, intrusive, detrimental, or destructive to agriculture, silviculture, or important native species, and difficult to control or eradicate, which the director, by regulation, designates to be a noxious weed. In determining whether or not a species shall be designated a noxious weed for the purposes of protecting silviculture or important native Integrated Weed Management Plan 2-2 plant species, the director shall not make that designation if the designation will be detrimental to agriculture."

Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA) Control of Insects, Pests, and Noxious Weeds Statutes (NRS Chapter 555): "any species of plant which is, or is likely to be, a public nuisance, detrimental or destructive and difficult to control."

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2.1.2 Invasive Plants and Noxious Weeds with Potential to Occur in the Survey Area

The Non-native Invasive Plants Identified or with Potential to Occur in the LVRAS Project Area list developed for the IWMP was also the list of noxious weeds with potential to occur in the Survey Area used for this survey effort. To reference this list of 40 species, please see Table 2-1 of the IWMP (Rincon 2022).

#### 2.2 FIELD SURVEYS

Artemis Environmental performed a focused field survey of the Survey Area for invasive plants and noxious weeds in April 2022. The survey dates and personnel are provided in Table 1. Due to the lack of winter precipitation over much of the Survey Area in 2021/2022, the majority of annual species failed to germinate and were present only as dry remains over large sections of the Project at the time of the surveys. Although dry, many of the annual invasive plants and weeds were standing and identifiable as remains.

Table 1 Survey Dates and Personnel

Survey Personnel <sup>1</sup>							
Date	EK	FC	JZ	MB	MCH	KG	VM
12- Apr	Χ	Χ	Χ			Χ	
13- Apr	Χ	Χ	Χ		Χ	Χ	
14- Apr	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	
15- Apr	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	
16- Apr	Χ	Χ		Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ
17- Apr	Χ	Χ		Χ	Χ		Χ
18- Apr	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ
19- Apr	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ
20- Apr	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ
21- Apr	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ	Χ
22- Apr		Х	Х			Х	

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> EK = Ed Kentner, FC = Frankie Coburn, JZ = Jordan Zylstra, MB = Marc Baker, MCH = Michelle Cloud Hughes, KG= Kyle Gunther, VM = Vir McCoy

Qualified botanists and technicians conducted pedestrian and vehicle surveys throughout the Survey Area documenting invasive plants and noxious weeds as defined per the IWMP (Rincon 2022). Pedestrian surveys focused on weed infestations and populations within the disturbance areas while more cursory vehicle surveys were conducted for the sections of the ROW between the disturbance areas.

During the surveys, the surveyors mapped all target species observed with the exception of several common ubiquitous weeds, such as Mediterranean grass (*Schismus barbatus*), red brome (*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*), and several others that were generally too abundant to map. The general range of these ubiquitous species was tracked and recorded but individual occurrences of these species were only mapped at locations apart from the areas where they were documented to be abundant. For all other target species, surveyors mapped points for individual plants and small groups of plants and used polygon features to record larger infestations. In some cases, groups of points in close proximity to each other were digitized into polygons following the surveys for clarity and consistency in the mapping.

The ESRI Collector application installed on tablets and smart phones was used to navigate the Survey Area and for the mapping. The species scientific name, estimated population size, and any observation notes were recorded directly into Collector during the surveys. Populations extending beyond the Survey Area and ubiquitous species were noted to further inform the IWMP. Representative photographs of weed

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species, infestations, and areas of note were recorded during the surveys and are provided in Appendix B: Representative Photographs.

#### 2.2.1 Survey Limitations

Dry conditions prevailed in much of the Mojave Desert during the 2021-2022 winter precipitation season. While portions of Segment 2 showed better germination of spring annuals than was observed in 2021, Segment 1 was extremely dry in 2022 and showed no germination of annuals with the exception of a few roadside weeds near Newberry Springs. The Barstow-Daggett Airport near Segment 1 was documented to have received 0.00 inches of precipitation within the weeks prior to the survey effort (NOAA 2022), with no precipitation in the general vicinity since December 2021. Similarly low precipitation occurred the previous year (2019-2020) along much of the alignment. Although many annual weed species were identifiable during the survey effort, the survey timing and lack of moisture may have limited the detection of some annual weed populations and may have reduced the estimates of weed population sizes recorded.

### 3 Invasive Plants and Noxious Weeds Occurring within the Project Area

Fourteen species of invasive plants and/or noxious weeds were documented in the Survey Area, with all 14 species occurring in California and four occurring in Nevada. Specific locations were mapped for 13 of these species, while for six species, at least some occurrences were too large and the number of individuals too numerous for mapping to be practical. A summary of the number of mapped specific locations and approximate number of individuals observed for each species is provided in Table 2. The mapping results are provided in Appendix A, Figures, Figure 3: Invasive Plant and Noxious Weed Inventory Results. Ubiquitous occurrences are not shown on Figure 3. For ubiquitous species, the geographic range of the infestations were recorded as spans between pole/structure numbers and/or Project components, and these results are provided in Table 3.

Table 2 Invasive and Noxious Non-native Plant Species Non-Ubiquitous Occurrences in the Survey Area

Scientific Name	Common Name	Cal-IPC Rating <sup>1</sup>	No. of Locations	Approximate Total No. <sup>2</sup>	
Avena fatua	wild oat	Moderate	1	100	
Brassica tournefortii	Sahara mustard	High	94	10,000+	
Bromus rubens	red brome	High	5	N/A	
Bromus tectorum	cheatgrass	High	7	N/A	
Cynodon dactylon	Bermuda grass	Moderate	5	N/A	
Erodium cicutarium	redstem filaree	Limited	8	3,300	
Hordeum murinum	hare barley	Moderate	16	N/A	
Lepidium latifolium	perennial peppergrass	High	2	16	
Portulaca oleracea	common purselane	Not rated	6	11,000	
Salsola sp.	Russian thistle	Limited	47	2,500+	
Sisymbrium irio	London rocket	Limited	35	N/A	
Tamarix aphylla	Athel tamarisk	Limited	14	400	
Tamarix ramosissima	branched saltcedar	High	16	110	

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Cal-IPC (2022) ratings:

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lune 2022

High – These species have severe ecological impacts on physical processes, plant and animal communities, and vegetation structure.

Moderate – These species have substantial and apparent—but generally not severe—ecological impacts on physical processes, plant and animal communities, and vegetation structure.

Limited – These species are invasive, but their ecological impacts are minor on a statewide level or there was not enough information to justify a higher score.

Table 3.Locations of Ubiquitous Species

Scientific Name	Common Name	Cal-IPC Rating <sup>1</sup>	Locations
Brassica tournefortii	Sahara mustard	High	2347276E to 4792803E, 2347453E to 4185421E, M97-T1 to M101-T2, Telecom Structure 9 to 2347490E
Bromus rubens	red brome	High	2347489E to 2347538E, 2347497E to 2347490E, M107-T2 to M135-T4, M147-T3 to M151-T3
Erodium cicutarium	redstem filaree	Limited	M103-T5 to M134-T2, M147-T3 to M151-T3, Telecom Structure 9 to 2347490E
<i>Salsola</i> sp.	Russian thistle	Limited	M102-T2 to M102-T6, M103-T3 to M103-T4, M97-T1 to M101-T2, 228307S to 228313S, 30608S to 30618S, 62308CTC to 1729962E
Schismus barbatus	Mediterranean grass	Limited	1700575E to M97-T1, 1729969E to 30682S, 2347276E to 2347490E, 2347489E to 4185421E, 4185402E to 1730292E, 52005CTC to 60139CIT, M135-T1 to M135-T4, M147-T3 to M151-T3, M97-T1 to M121-T4, Telecom Structure 9 to 2347490E
Sisymbrium irio	London rocket	Limited	2347276E to 2347490E, 2347489E to 4185421E, 4185402E to 1730292E, 52005CTC to 62338CTC, 62312CTC to 30652S, Telecom Structure 9 to 2347490E

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Cal-IPC (2022) ratings:

High — These species have severe ecological impacts on physical processes, plant and animal communities, and vegetation structure.

Moderate – These species have substantial and apparent—but generally not severe—ecological impacts on physical processes, plant and animal communities, and vegetation structure.

Limited – These species are invasive, but their ecological impacts are minor on a statewide level or there was not enough information to justify a higher score.

The following are brief descriptions of each invasive plant and noxious weed species observed within the Survey Area primarily adopted from Cal-IPC Inventory (Cal-IPC 2006). Appendix B provides representative photos of 11 of the 14 species observed during the survey. While some species were observed as live individuals, as previously mentioned in Section 2.2.1 Survey Limitations, the Project alignment has received very little to no precipitation and many of the species observed were senescent individuals; the photos included in Appendix B represent live plants and/or plants or thatch from plants that senesced up to two years ago and represent the overall condition of the majority of plants observed on the Project alignment.

- Wild oat (*Avena fatua*) is a winter annual grass (Poaceae) often growing in sandy/poor soils and often on road verges.
- Sahara mustard (*Brassica tournefortii*) is an erect annual herb that grows 4 to 28 inches (10-70 cm) high. It is a member of the Mustard family (Brassicaceae) and is especially prevalent on sandy soils. Plants reproduce only by seed.
- Red brome (*Bromus madritensis* subsp. *rubens*) is an erect annual grass that is reddish brown to purplish at maturity. It is a member of the Grass family (Poaceae) and is commonly found in disturbed



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Totals for mapped specific locations only, excluding areas where the species was ubiquitous.

- areas in a climate with hot, dry summers and mild, moist winters. Propagation is by seed (CAB International 2019).
- Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) is an annual grass that can grow up to 2.5 ft. (0.76 m) in height that has long-slender yellowish-green seedheads that turn reddish-purple at maturity. It blooms from May to June and reproduces by seed that is easily spread through construction equipment, roads, wind, livestock, and other mechanisms.
- Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*) is a prostrate, turf-forming perennial grass that grows 4 to 16 inches (10-40 cm) high. It is a member of the Grass family (Poaceae). The leaves are less than 2.4 inches (6 cm) long. It spreads by rhizomes and stolons, and sometimes by seed.
- Redstem filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*) is an aggressive annual/biannual in the Geraniaceae family. It is often found along roadsides, grasslands, fields, and semi-desert areas.
- Hare barley (Hordeum murinum) is a cool-season annual grass with long awns. Mature plants can reach up to 12 to 36 inches (30-90 cm) tall with flat and narrow leaves. It is common in disturbed areas, in both wetland and upland habitats. It is a member of the Grass family (Poaceae) and spreads by seed.
- Perennial peppergrass (*Lepidium latifolium*) is a perennial herb in the Brassicaceae family. It grows aggressively, forming dense colonies and outcompeting native species. It reproduces both by seed and vegetatively from its roots and small root fragments.
- Common purselane (*Portulaca oleracea*) is an annual herb that is characteristic of disturbed habitat communities. It blooms from May to September and is a member of the Portulacaceae family.
- Russian thistle ("Salsola sp." in this report, but likely includes both Salsola tragus and Salsola paulsenii) Salsola tragus is a rounded annual herb, less than 5 feet (1.5 m) high. It is a member of the Chenopod family (Chenopodiaceae). The leaves are 0.3 to 2 inches (0.8-5.2 cm) long. It spreads by seed. Salsola paulsenii is a bushy annual found throughout the Mojave Desert of California within desert scrub and disturbed areas. It is a member of the Chenopod family (Chenopodiaceae) and is often confused and hybridizes with Russian thistle. It spreads by seed.
- Common Mediterranean grass (*Schismus barbatus*) is a winter annual invasive grass found mostly in disturbed areas and deserts. It is a member of the Grass family (Poaceae) and spreads by seed.
- London rocket (Sisymbrium irio) is a winter annual forb/herb in the Brassicaceae family. It matures earlier in the year than native species, giving it an advantage to outcompete them. It is often found in abandoned fields, waste places, roadsides, and orchards.
- Athel tamarisk (*Tamarix aphylla*) is a large shrub or tree that grows up to 82 feet (25 m) high. It is a member of the Tamarisk family (Tamaricaceae). The leaves are united around the stem, giving it a jointed appearance. It spreads by planting and wind and flood-borne seed, and it hybridizes with saltcedar (*T. ramosissima*).
- Branched saltcedar (*Tamarix ramosissima*) is a multi-trunked tree or large shrub that grows up to 26 feet (8 m) high. It is a member of the Tamarisk family (Tamaricaceae). The leaves are scale-like, stems green and smooth. It spreads by seed and root sprouts.



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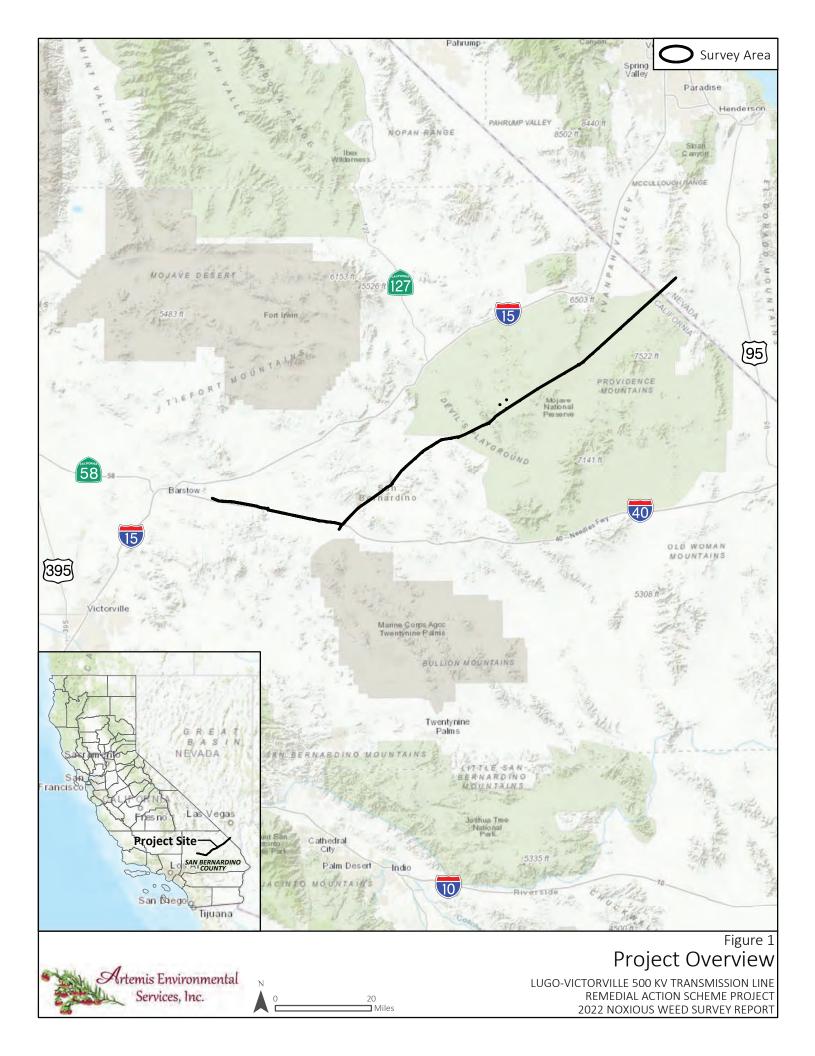
# Appendix A

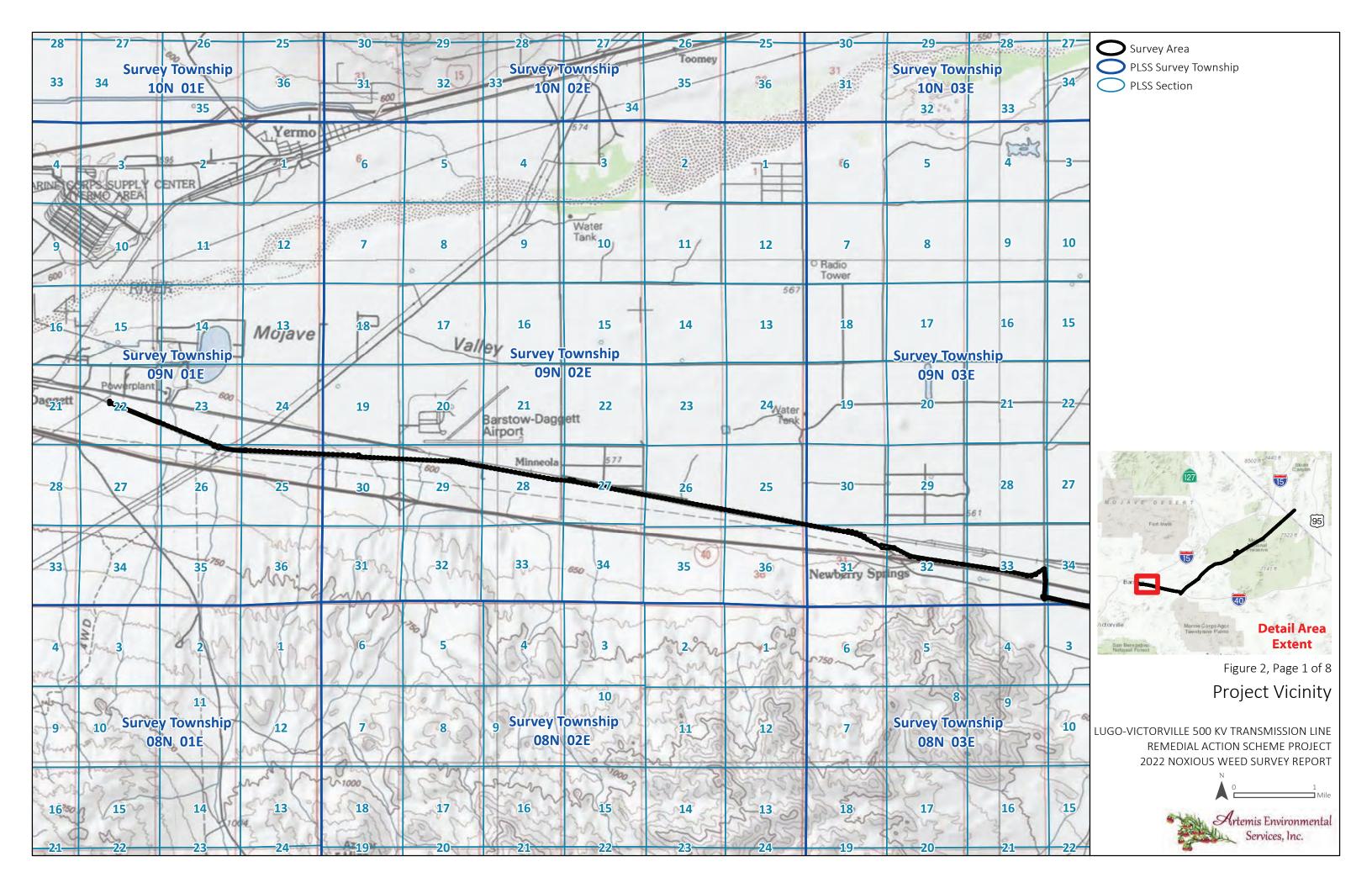
Figures

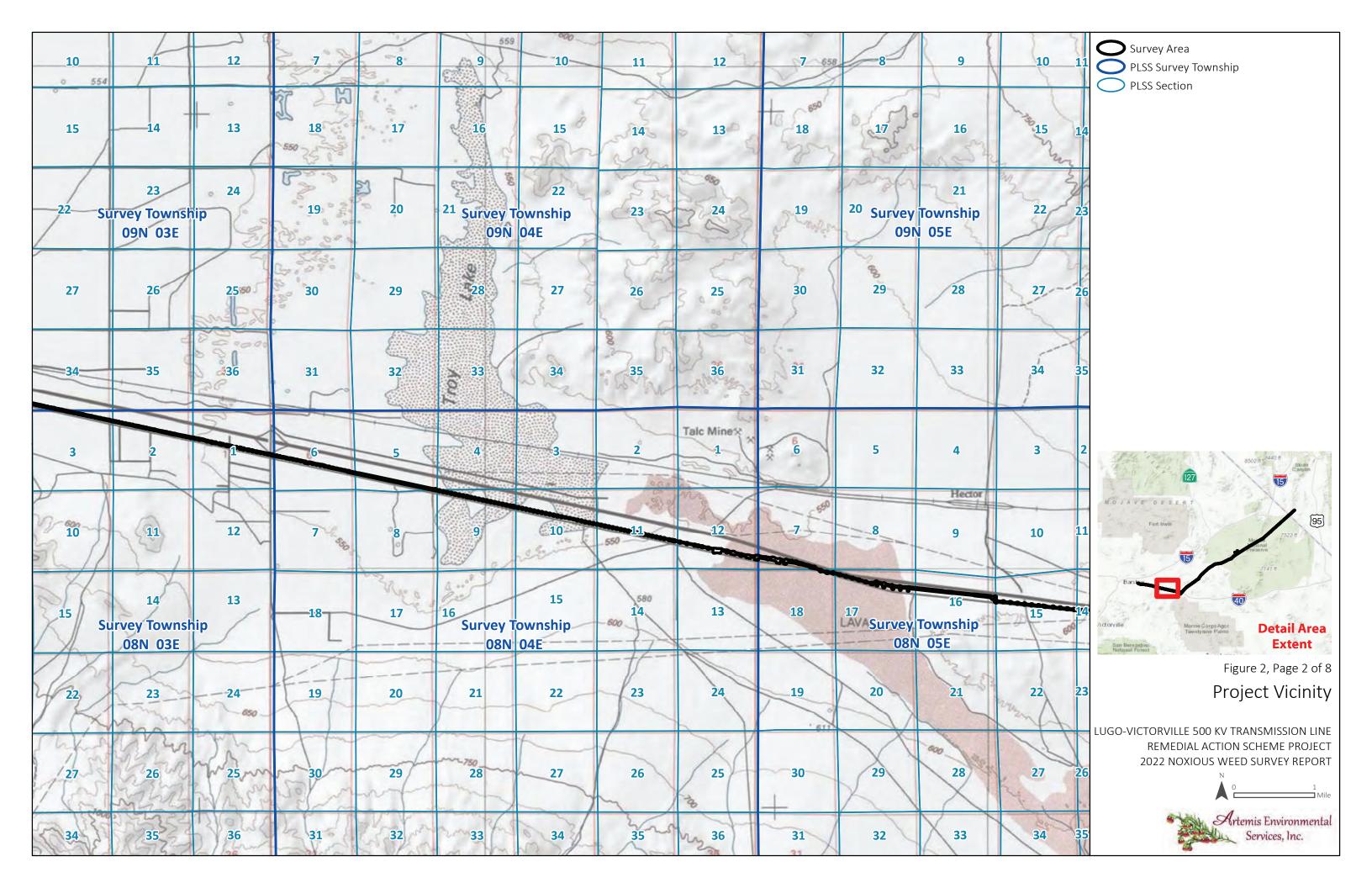
Figure 1 Project Overview

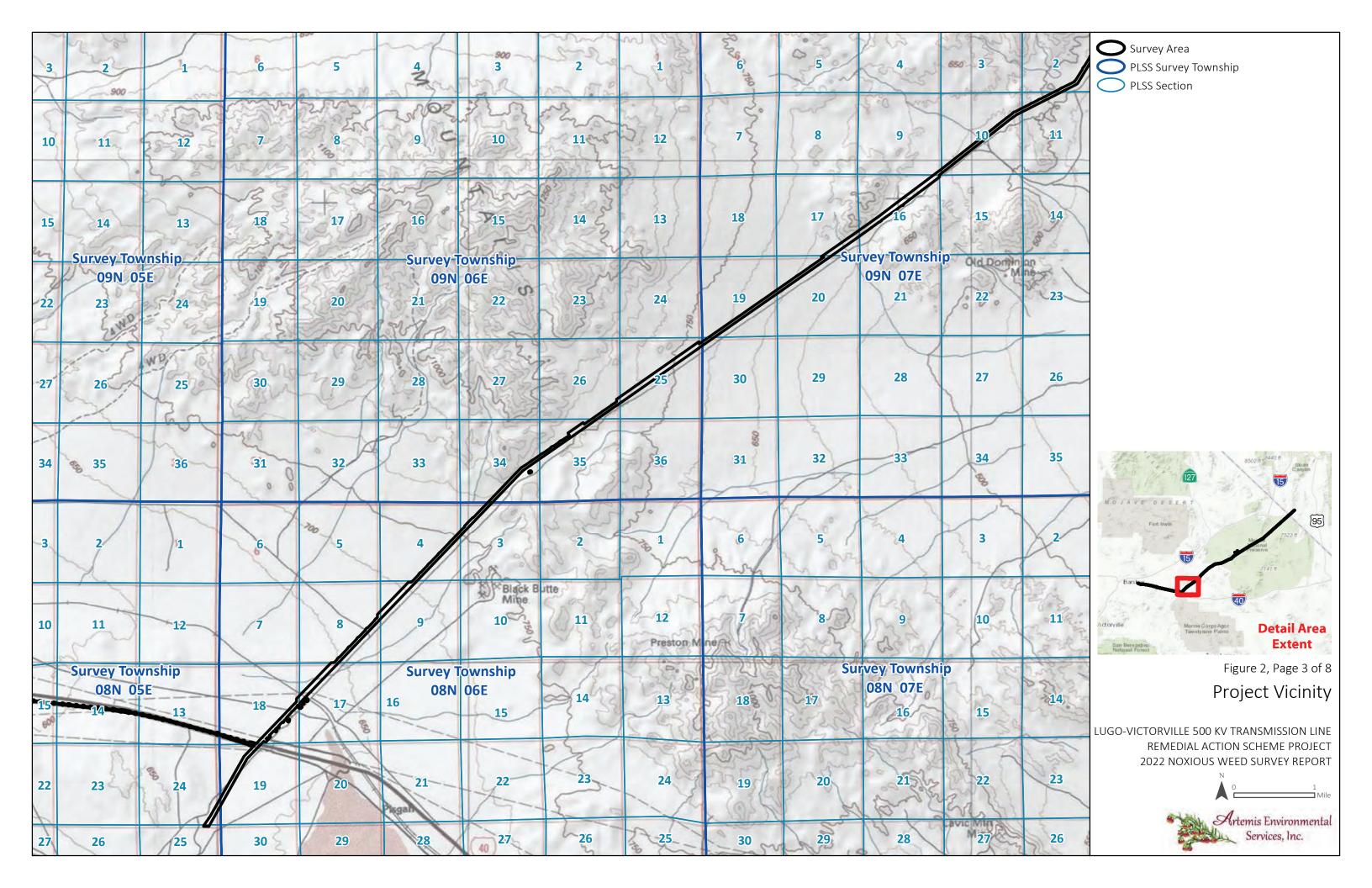
Figure 2 Project Vicinity

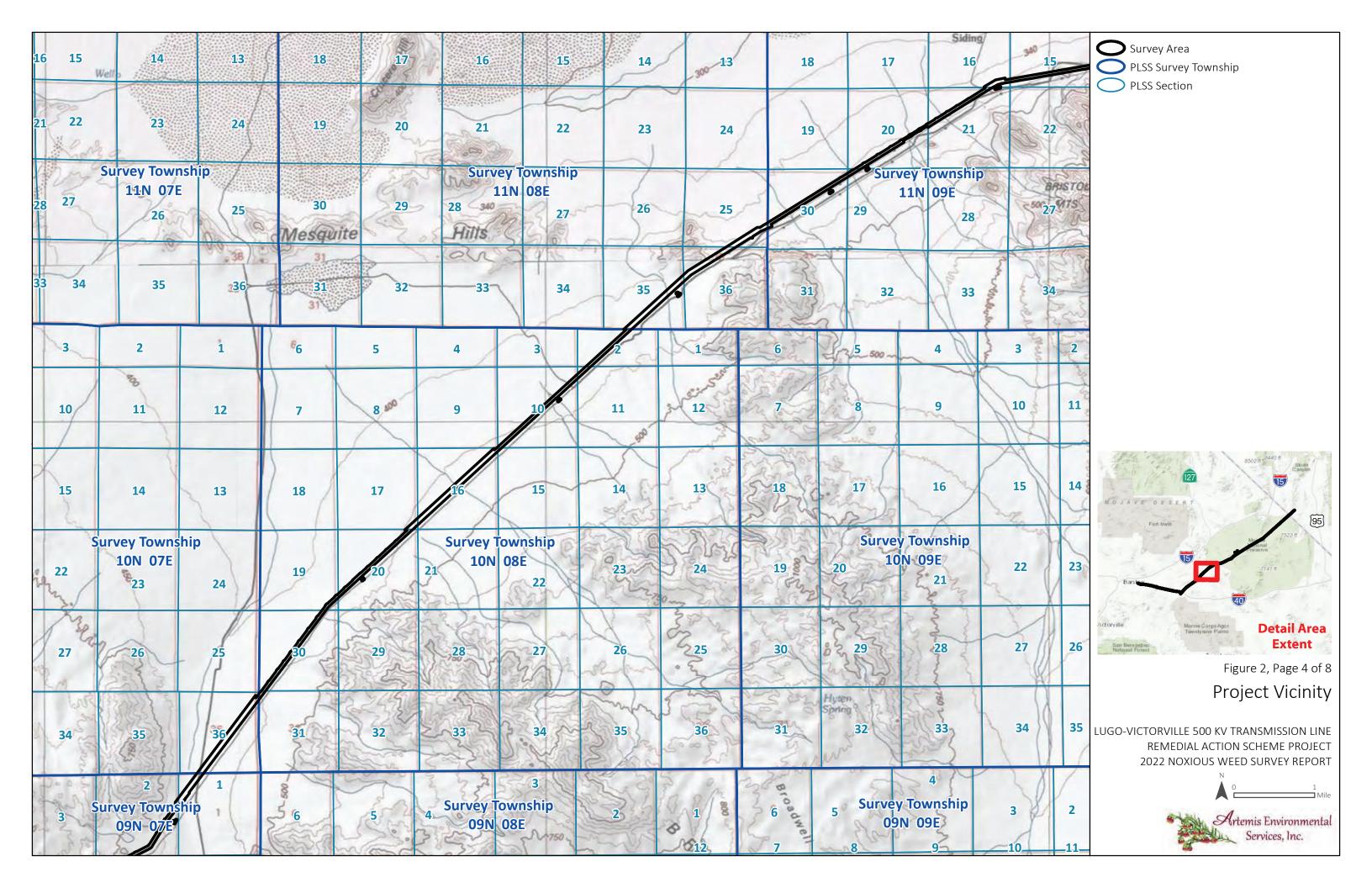
Figure 3 Invasive Plant and Noxious Weed Inventory Results

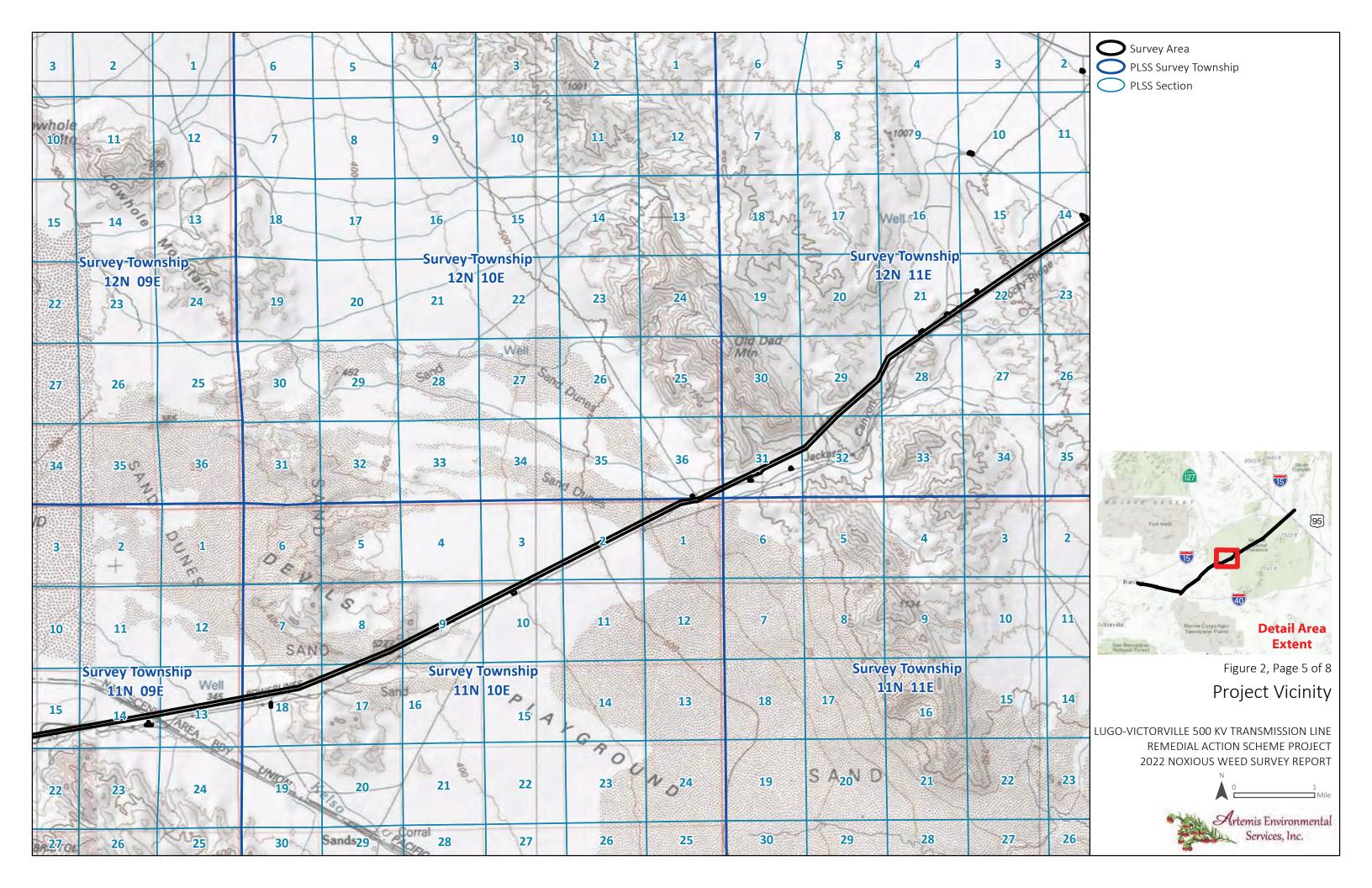


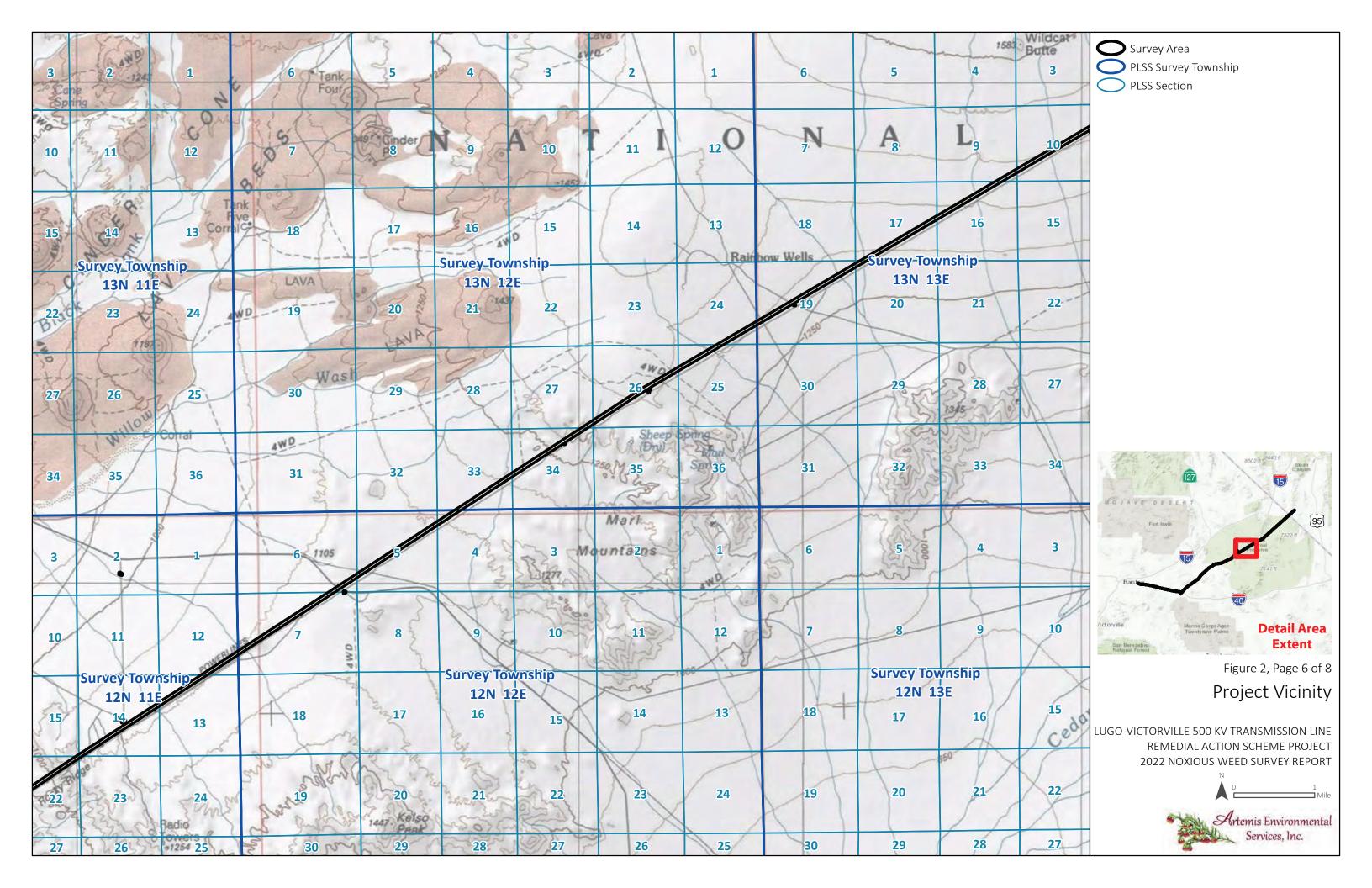


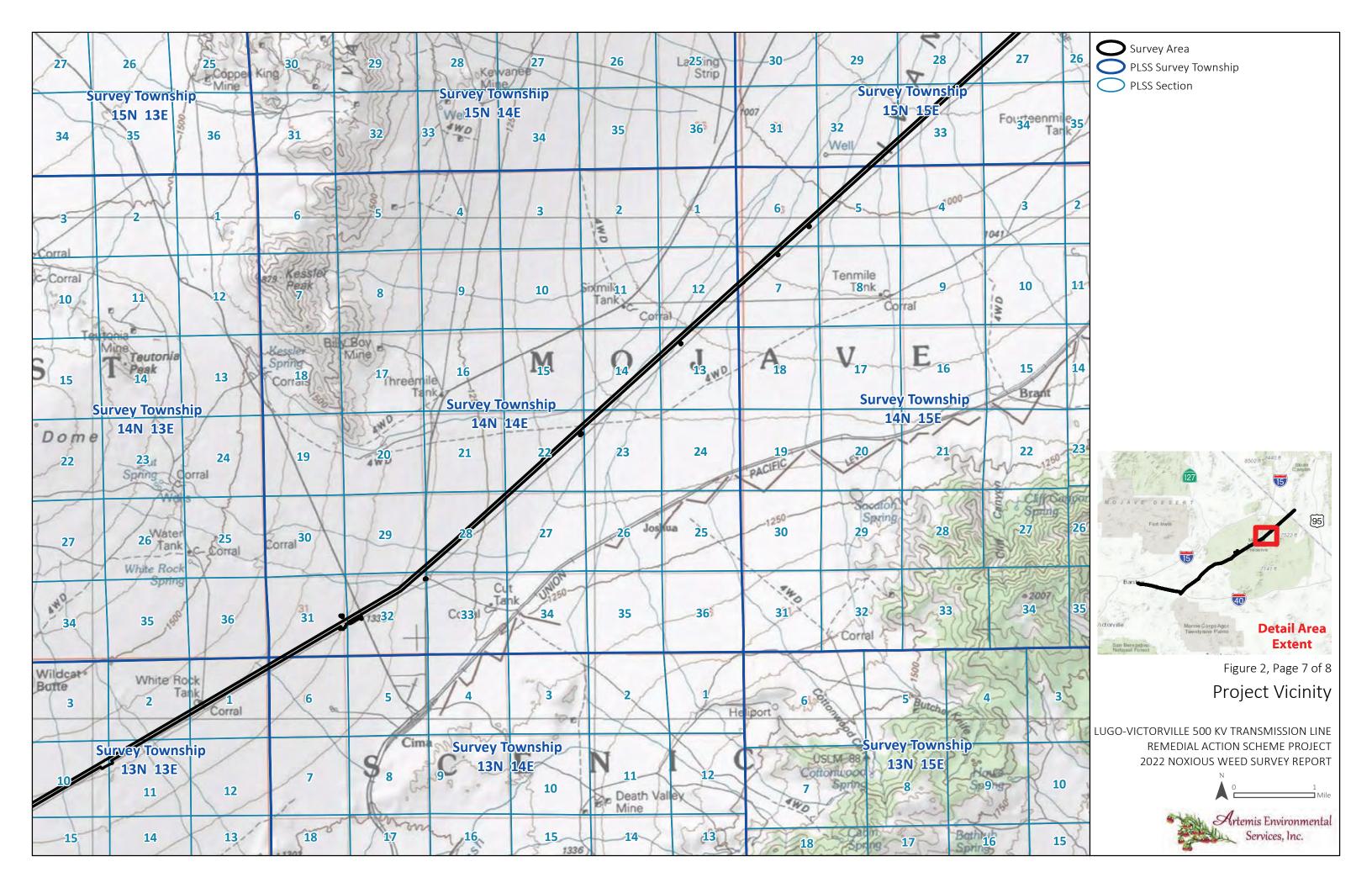


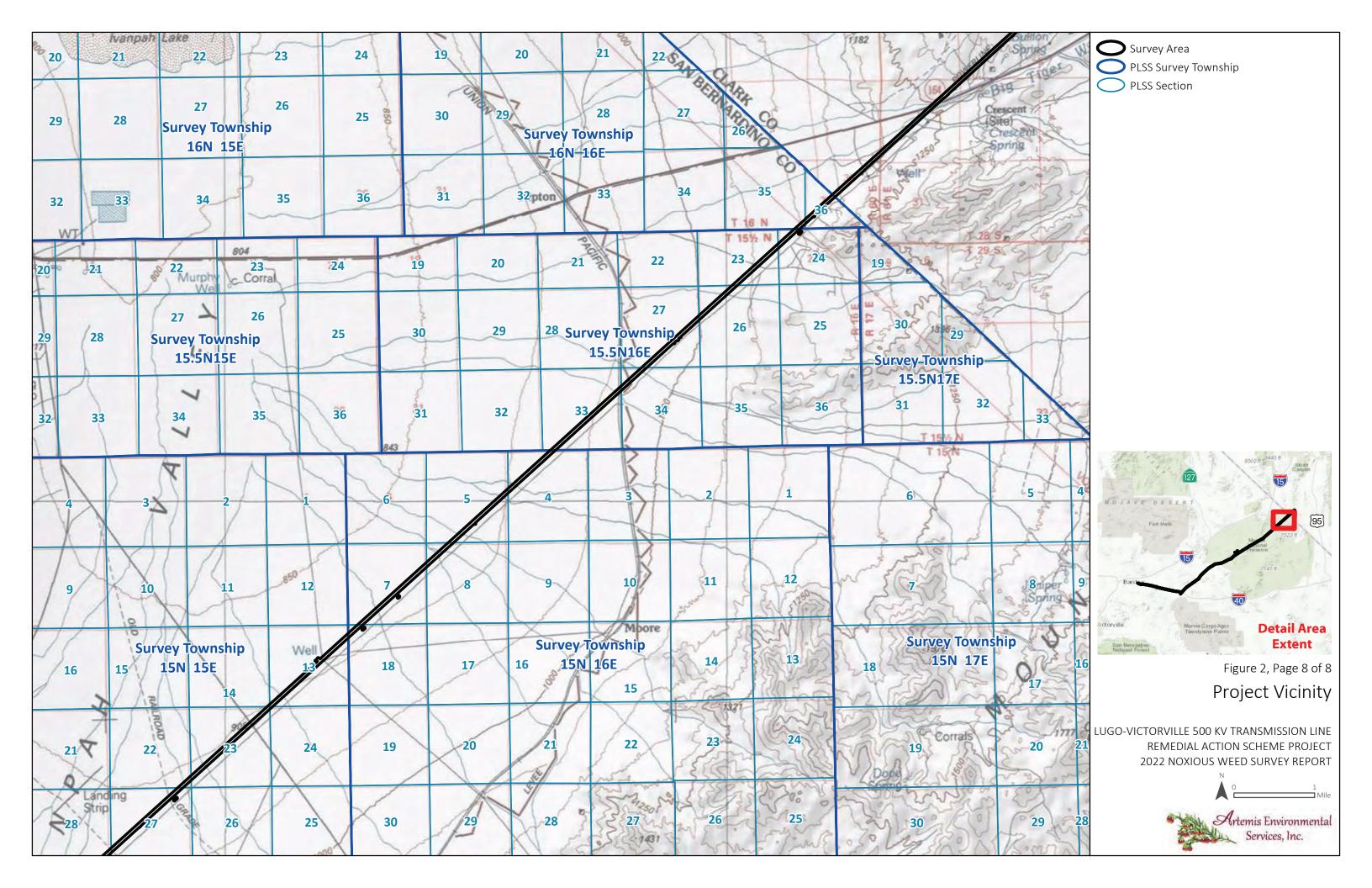


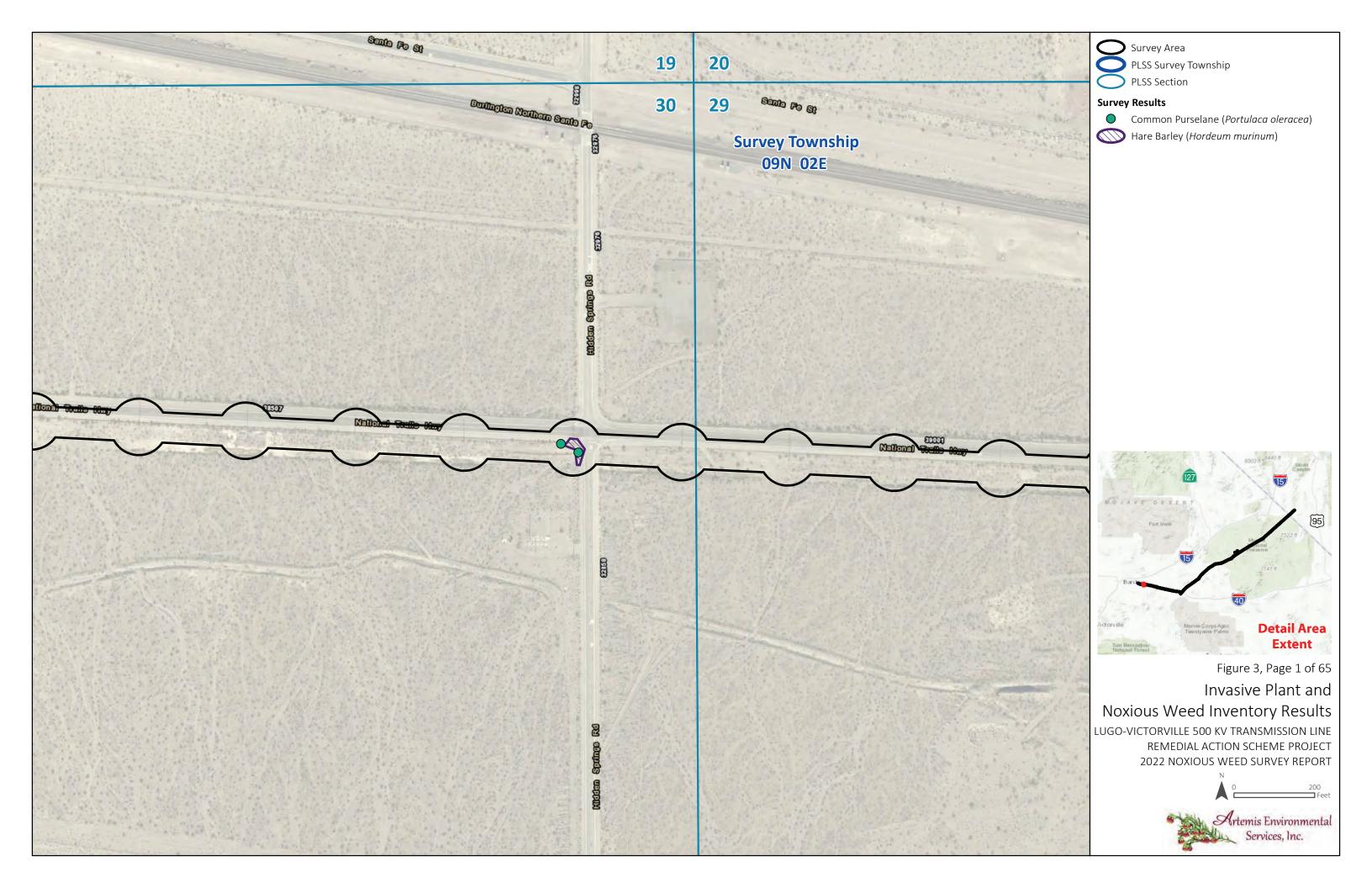


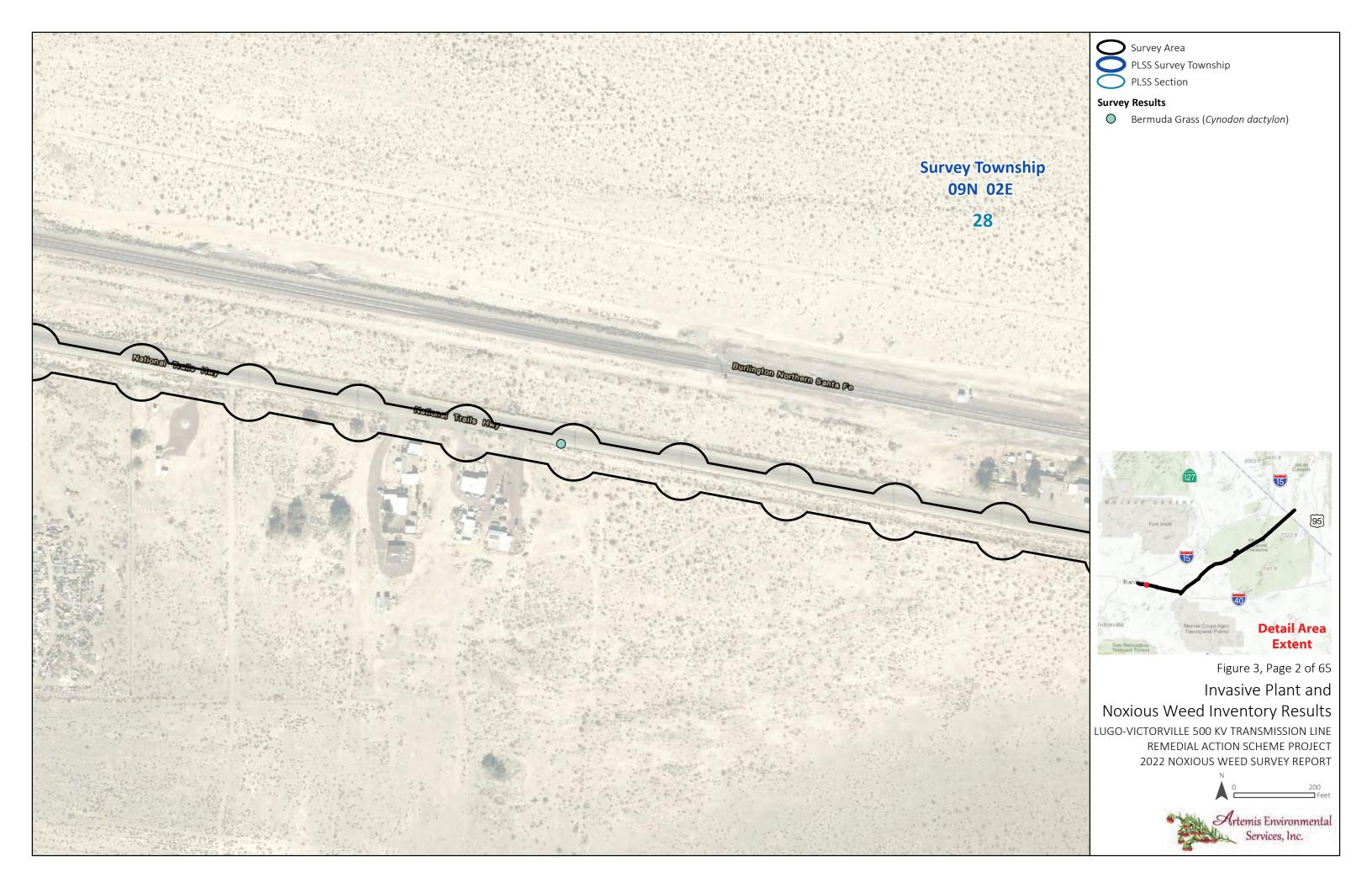


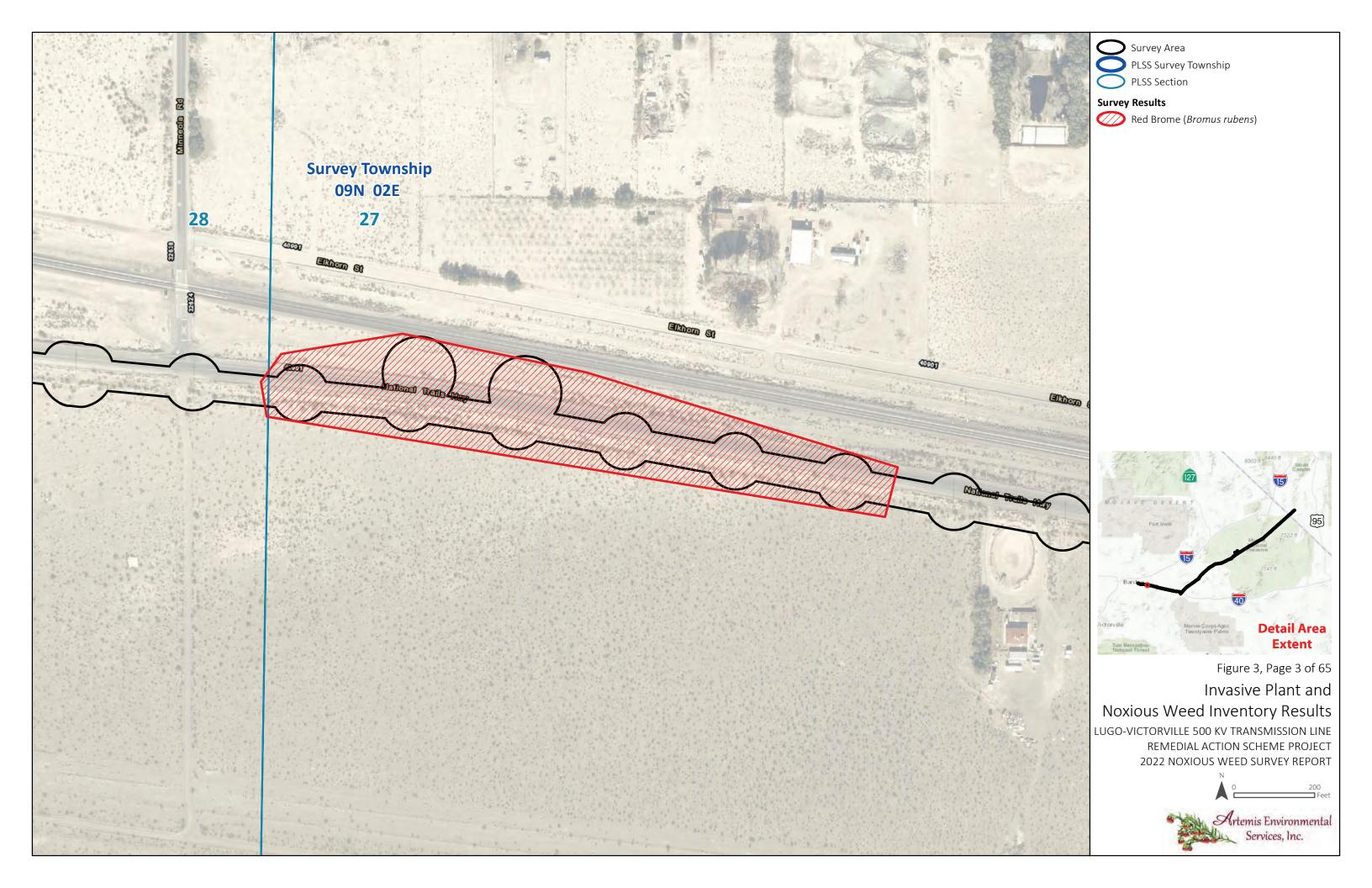


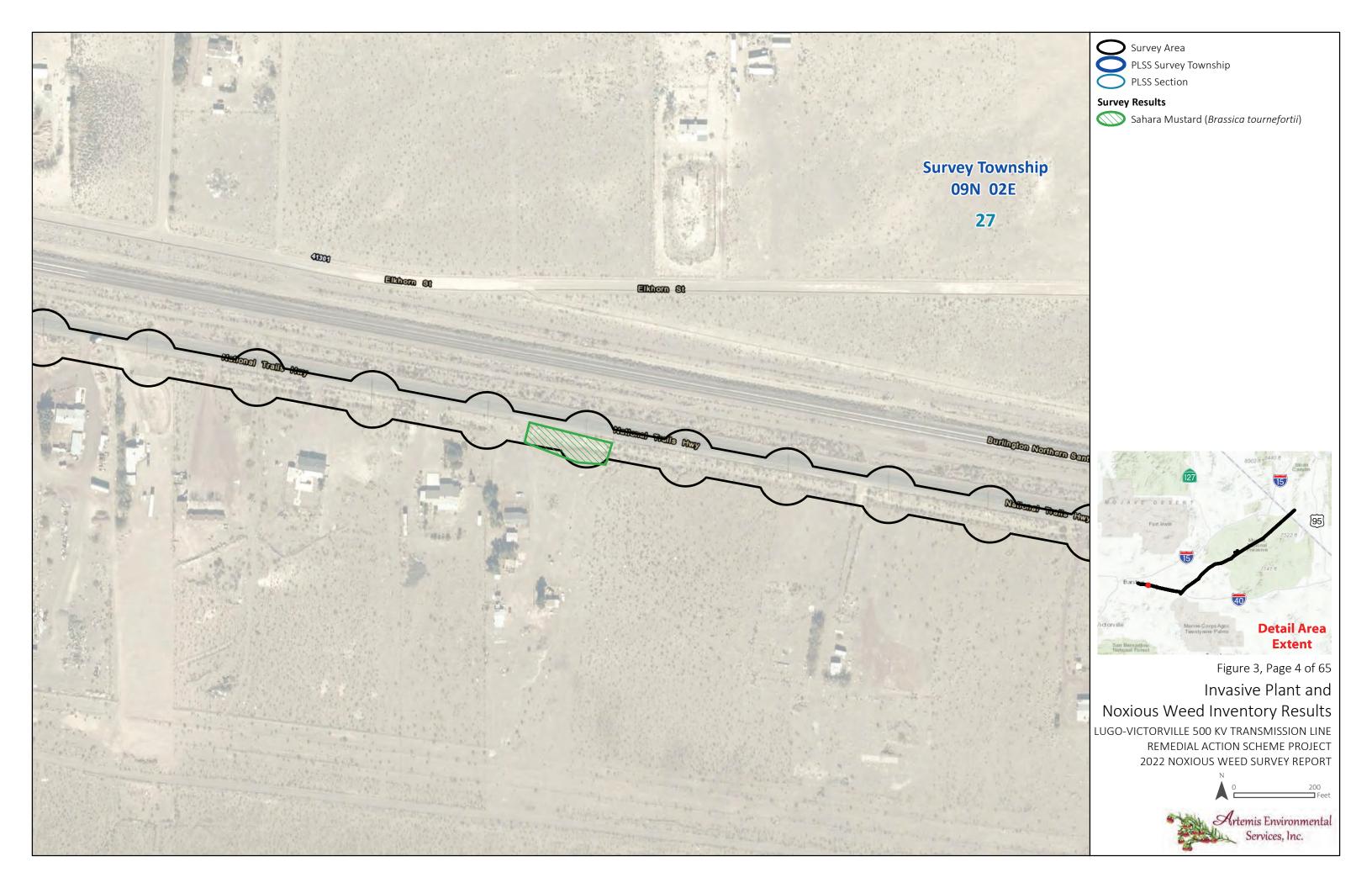




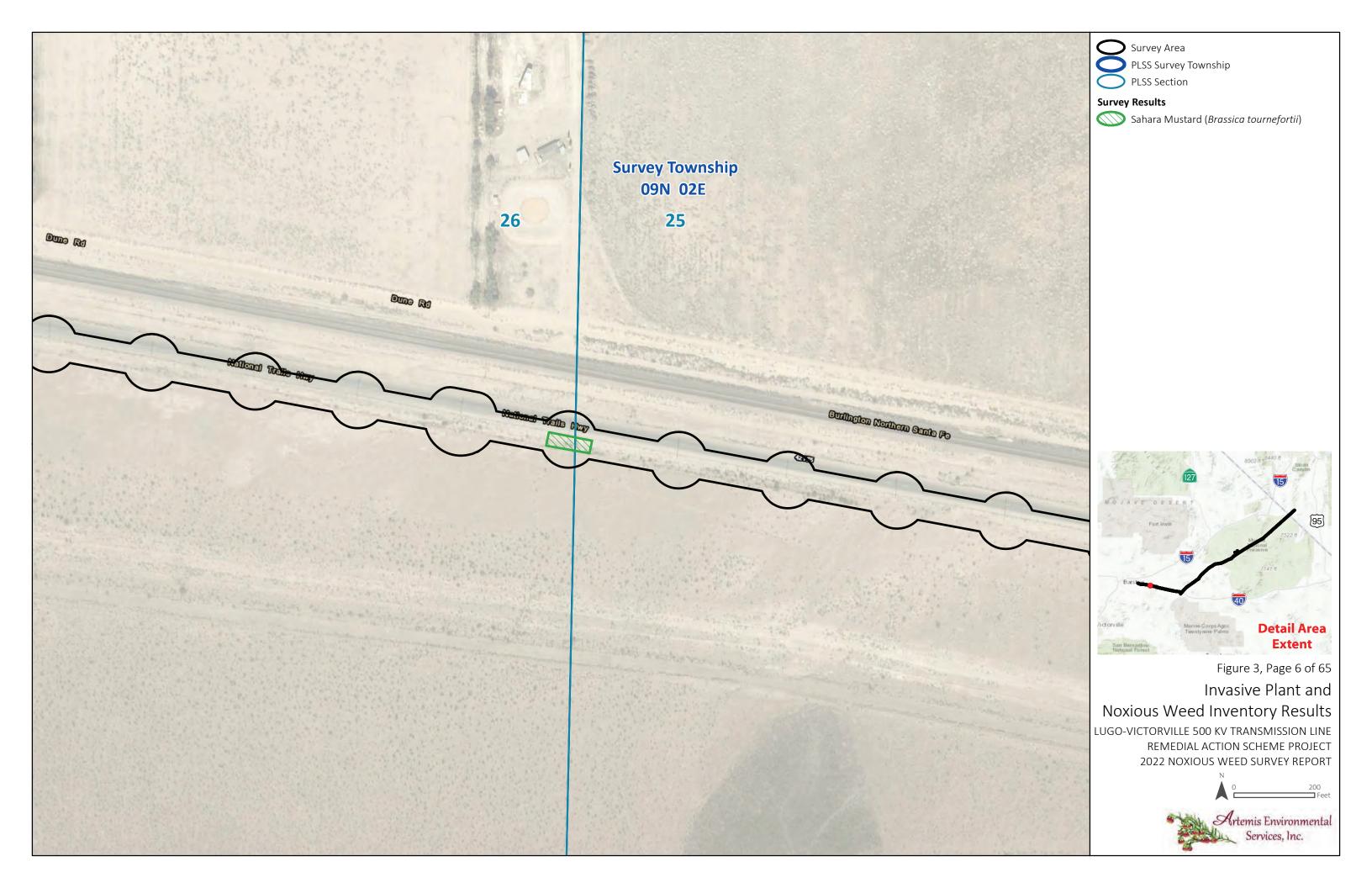


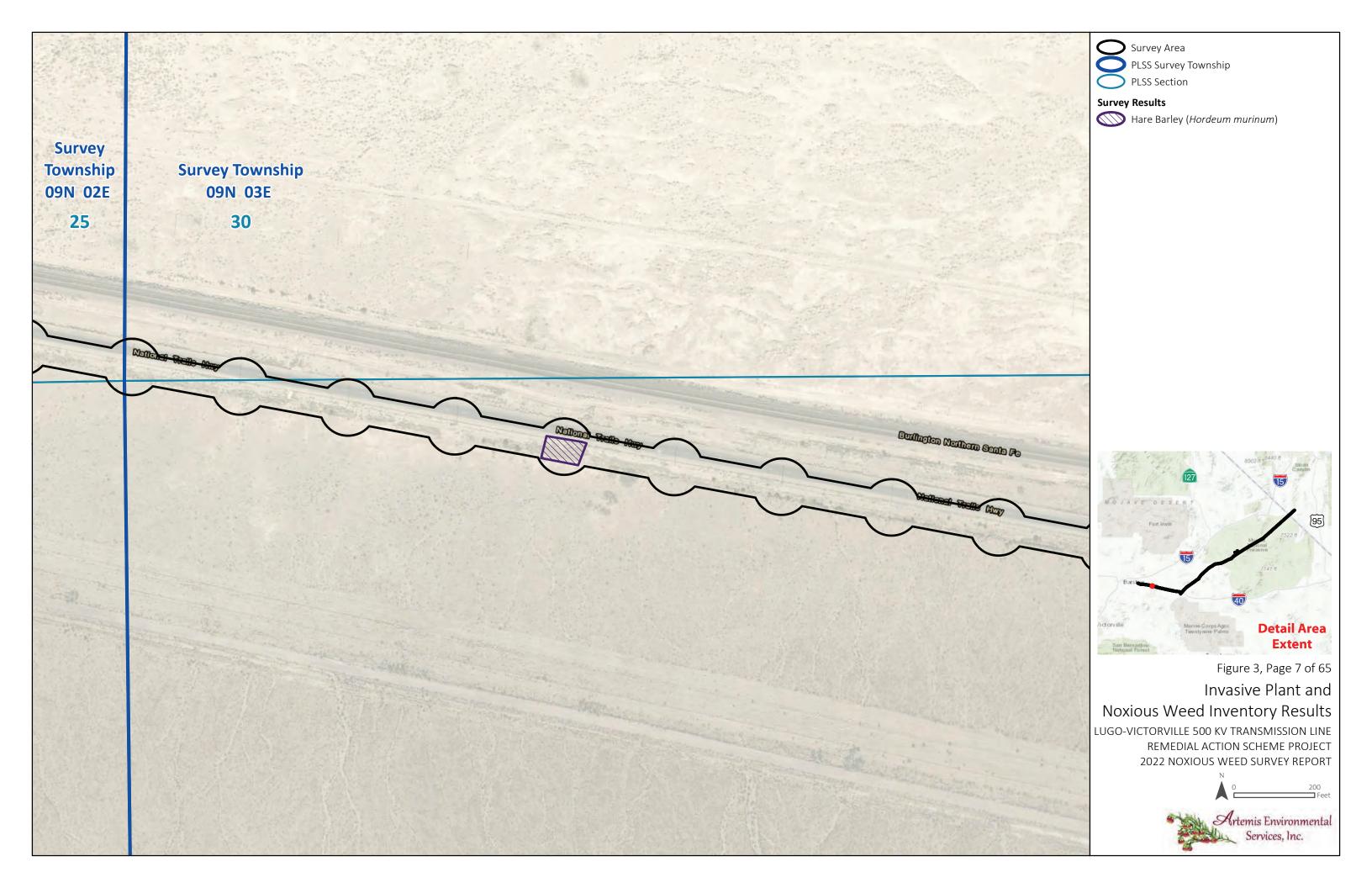


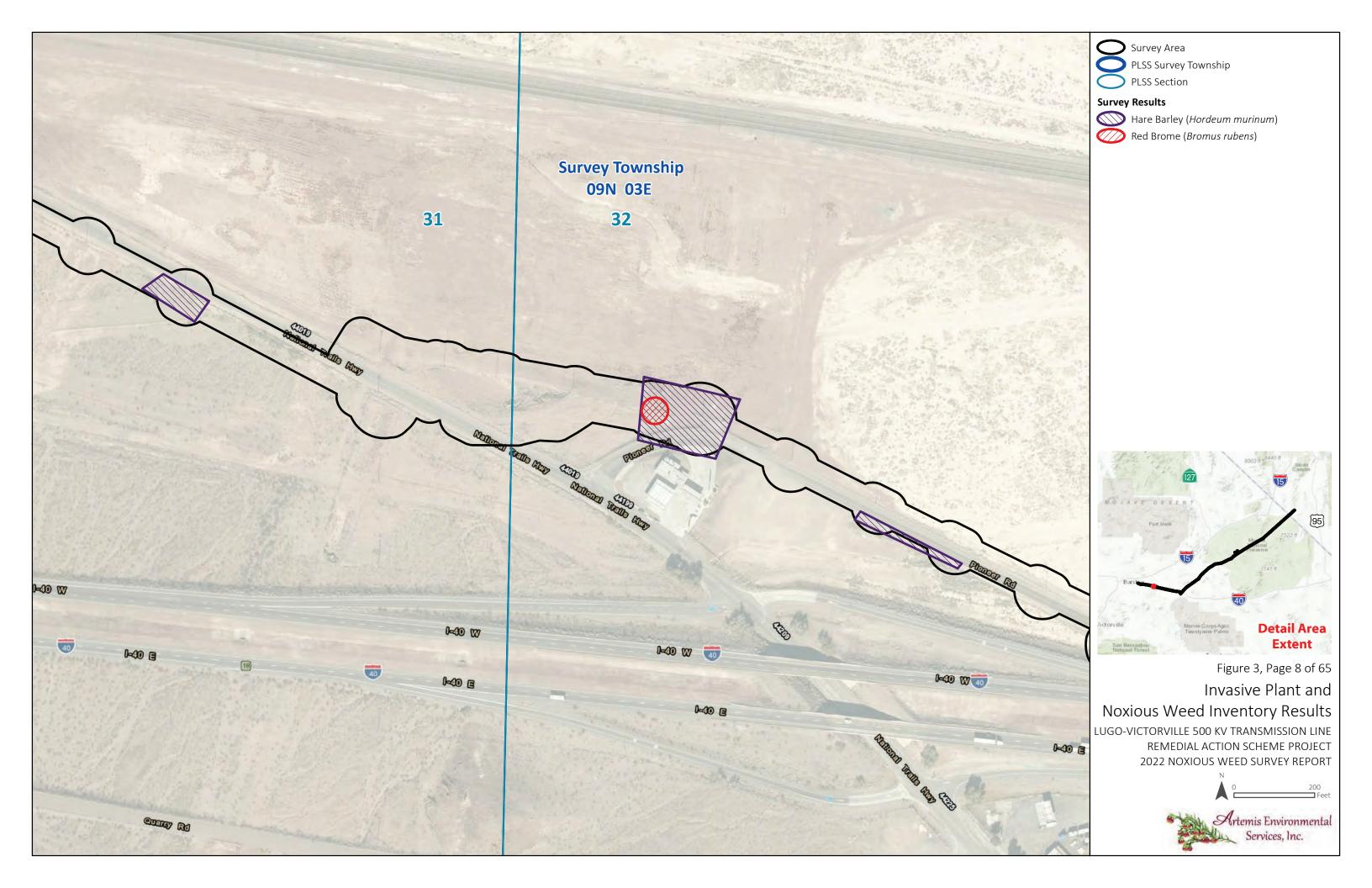


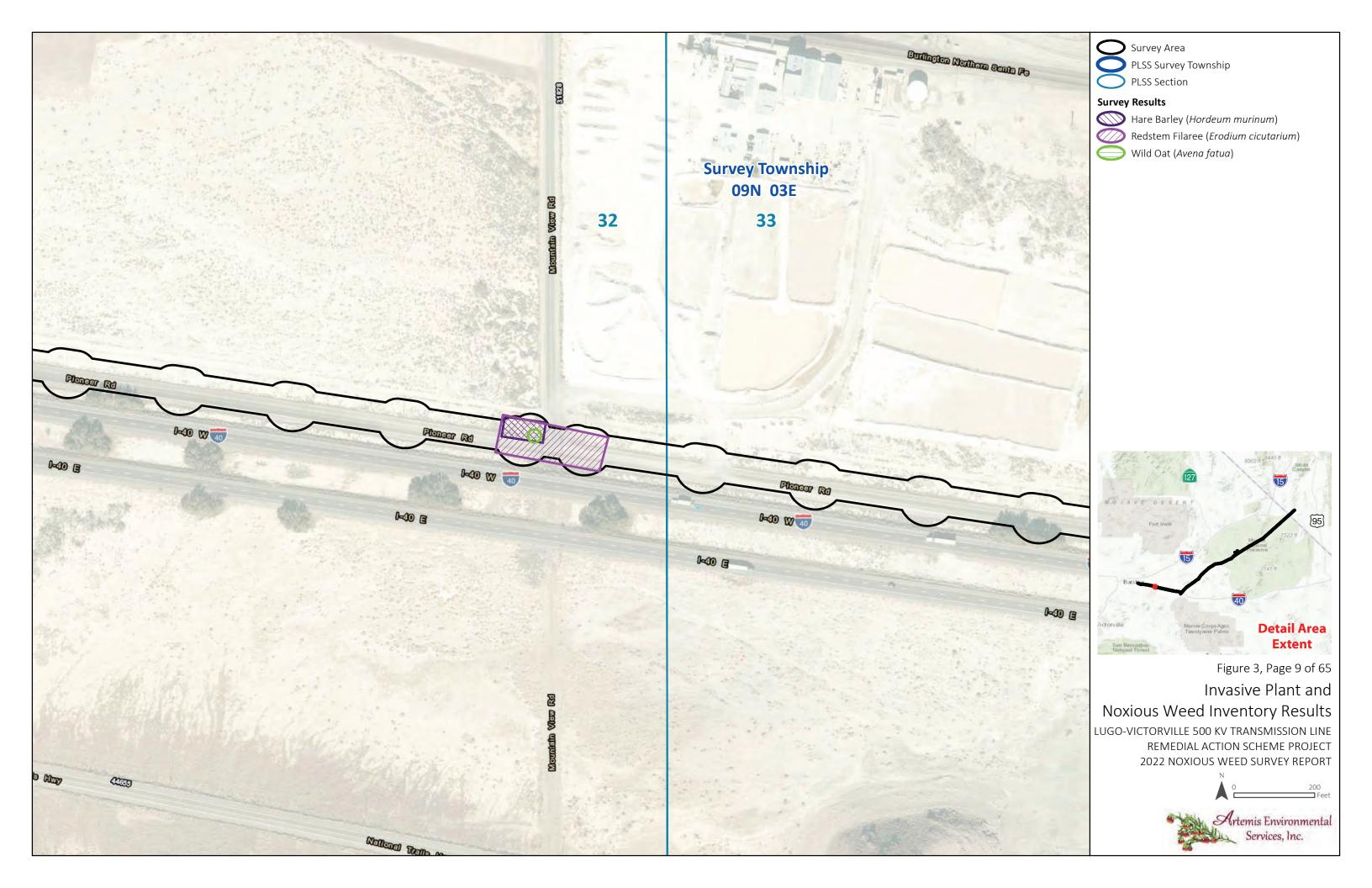


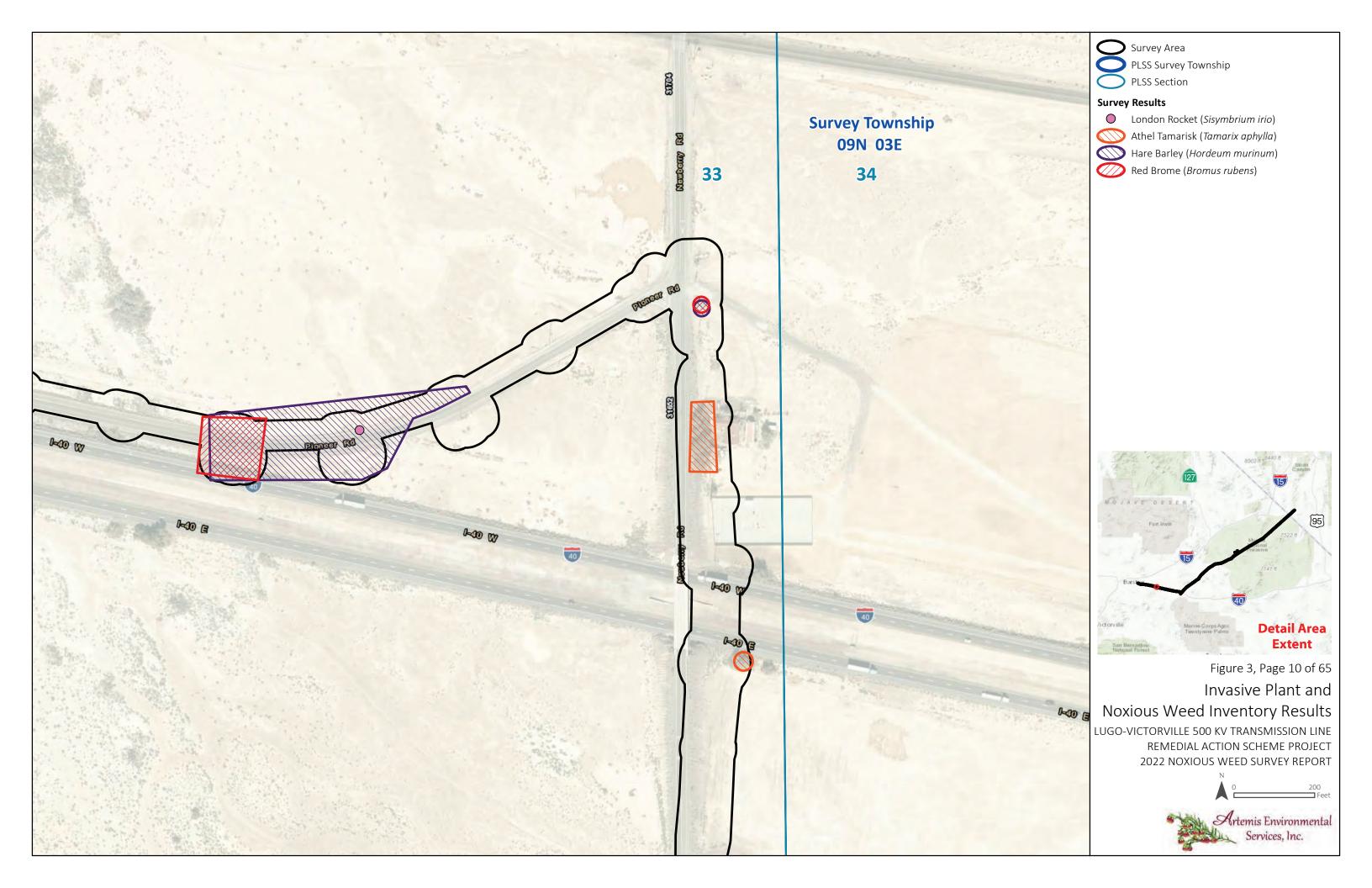


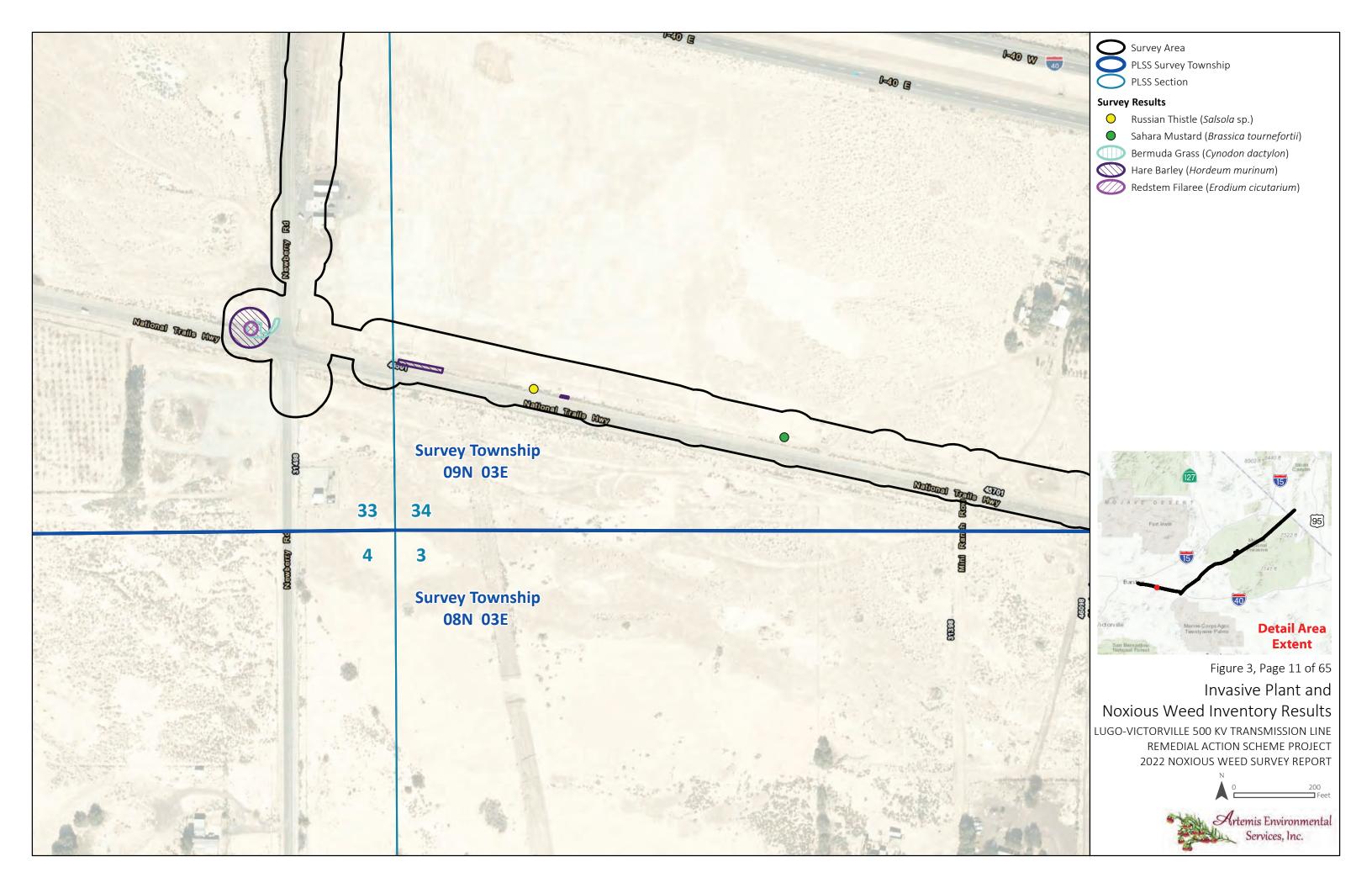


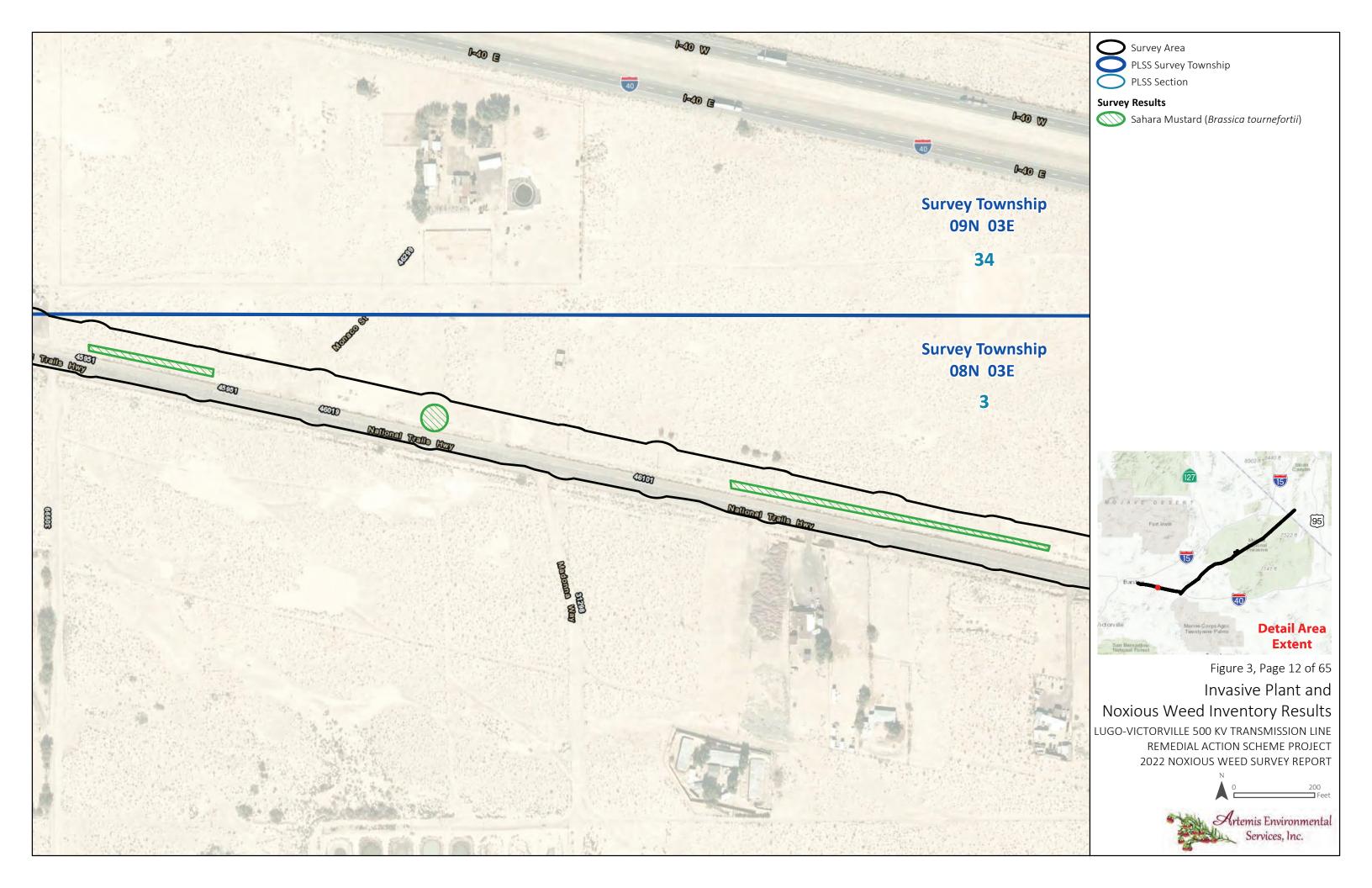


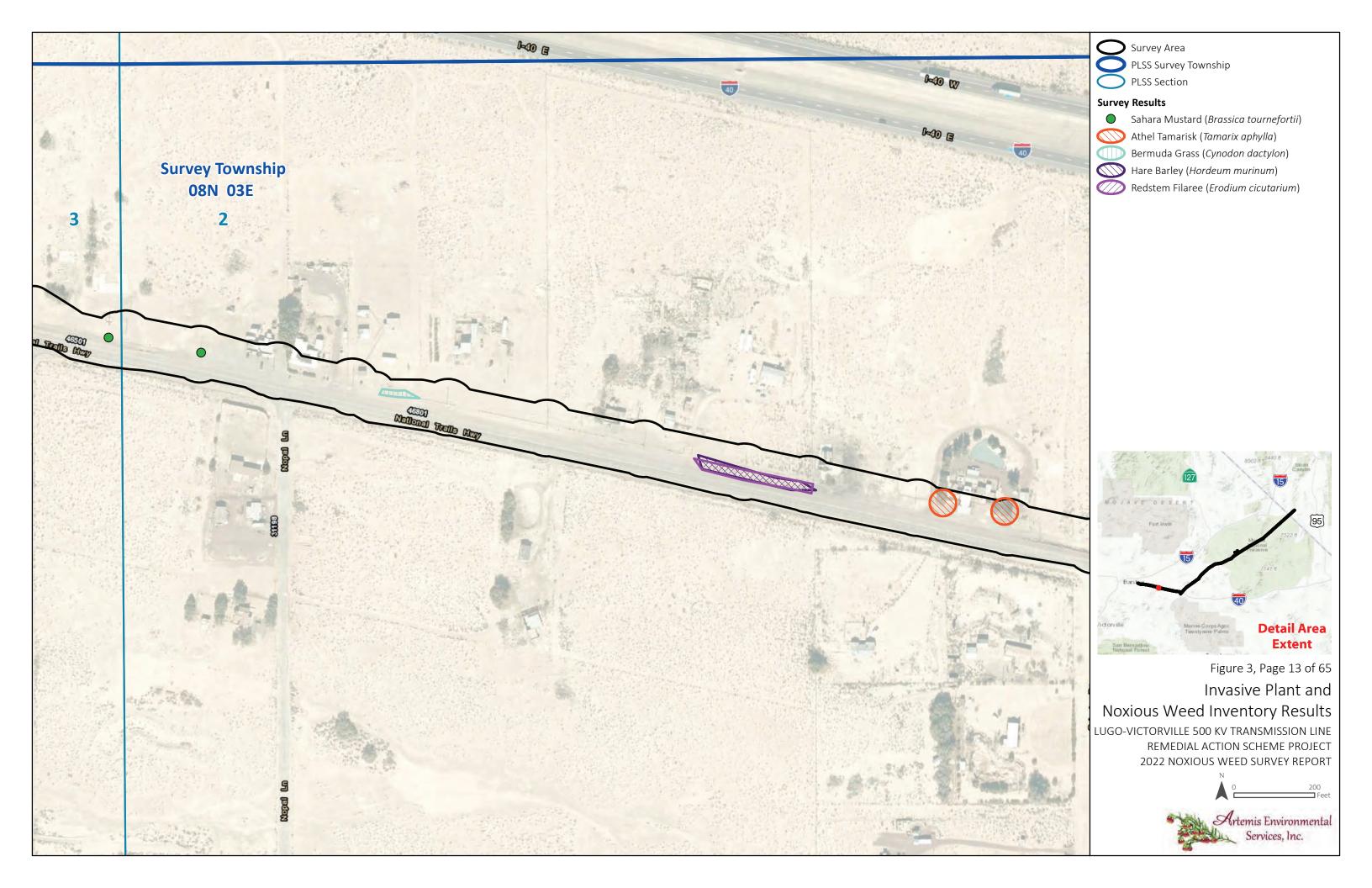


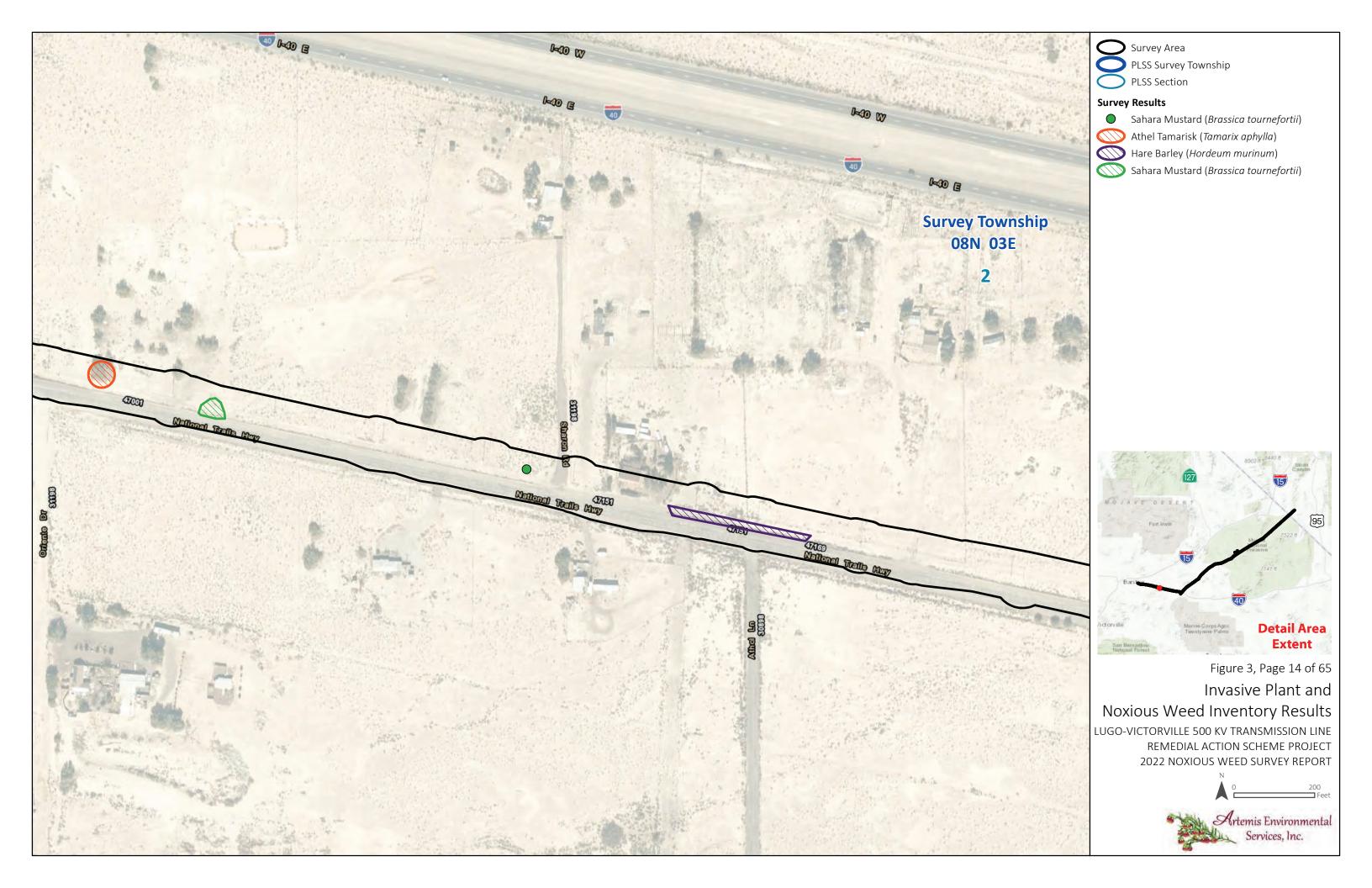


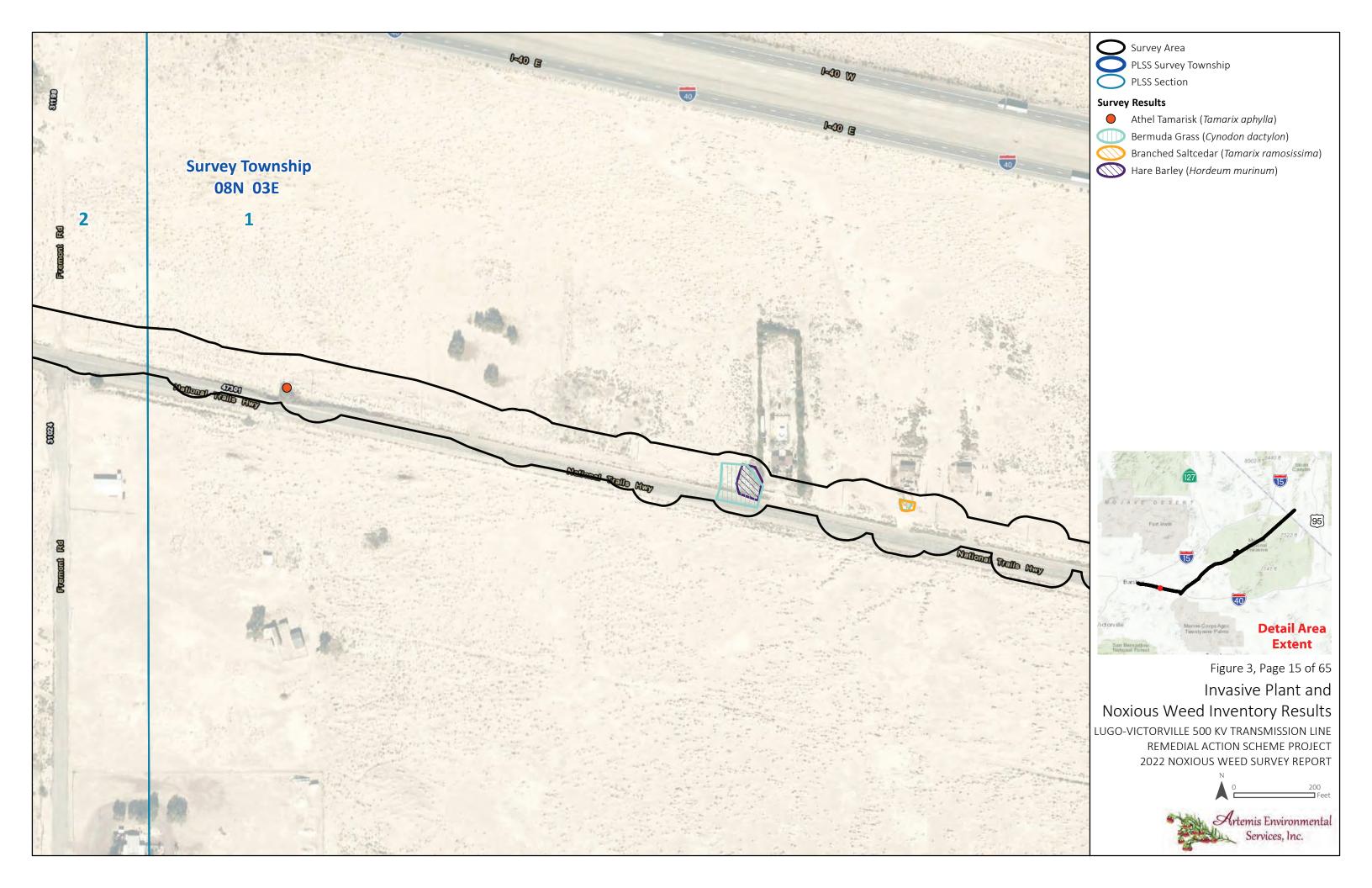


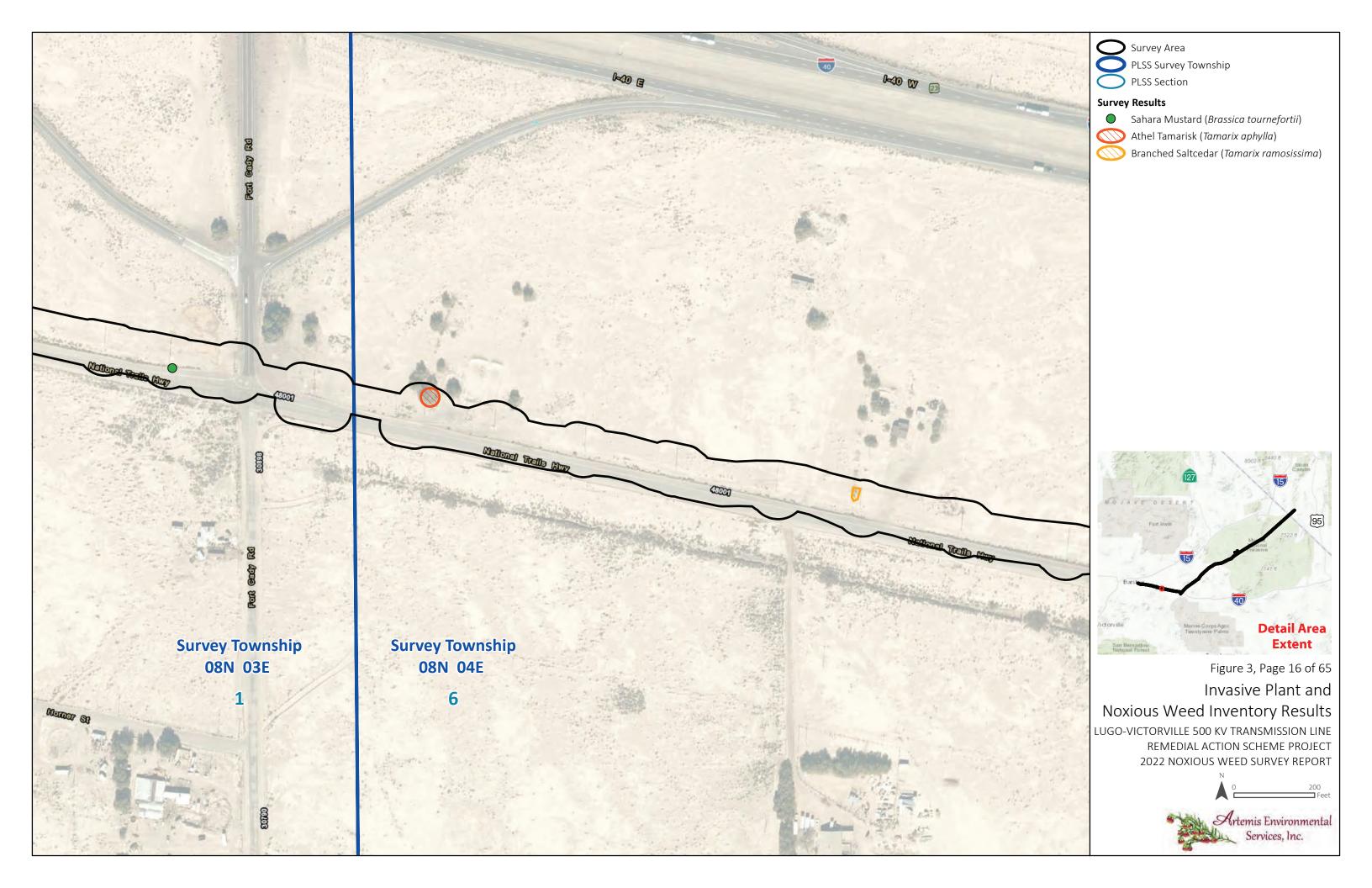


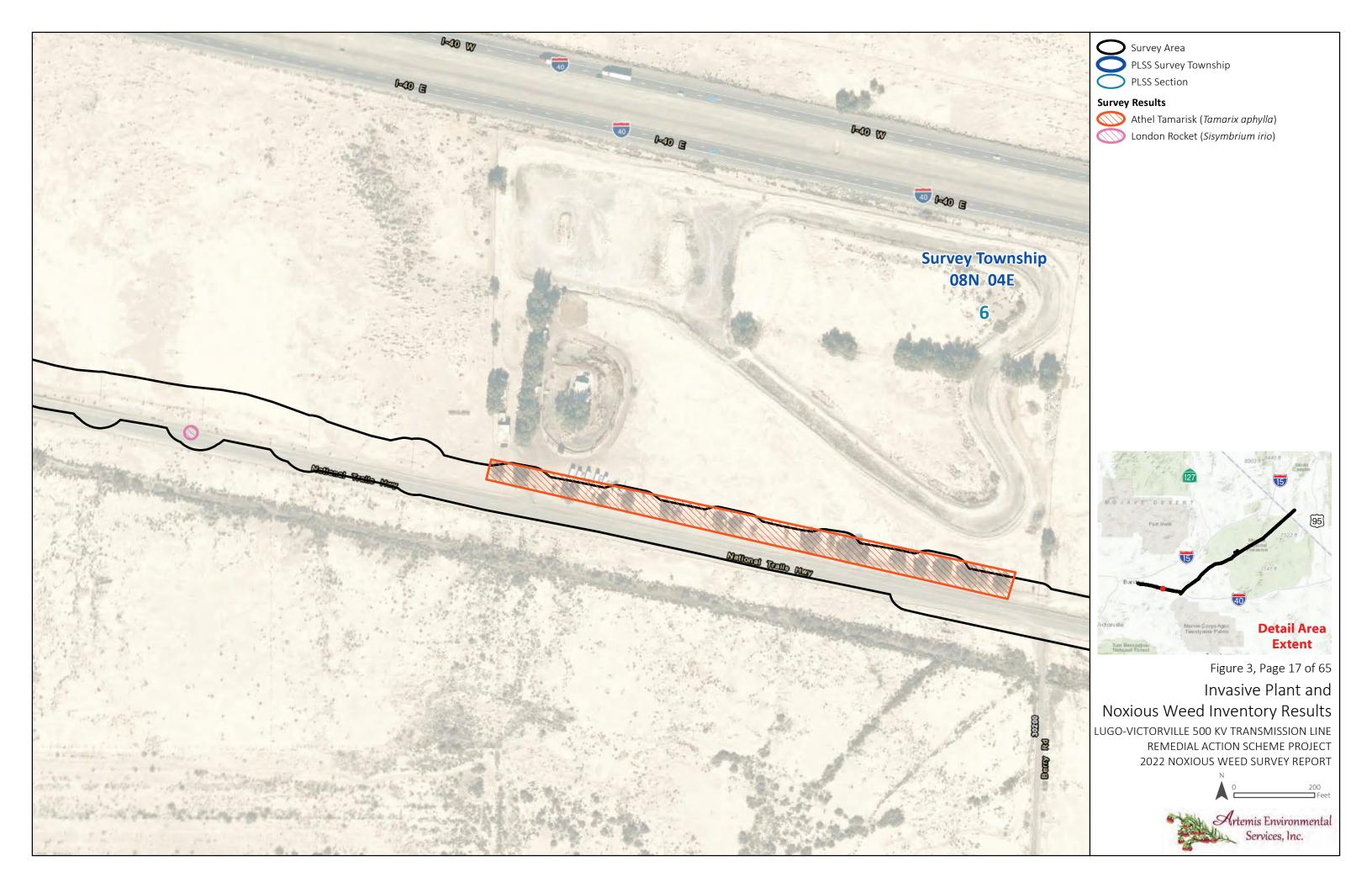


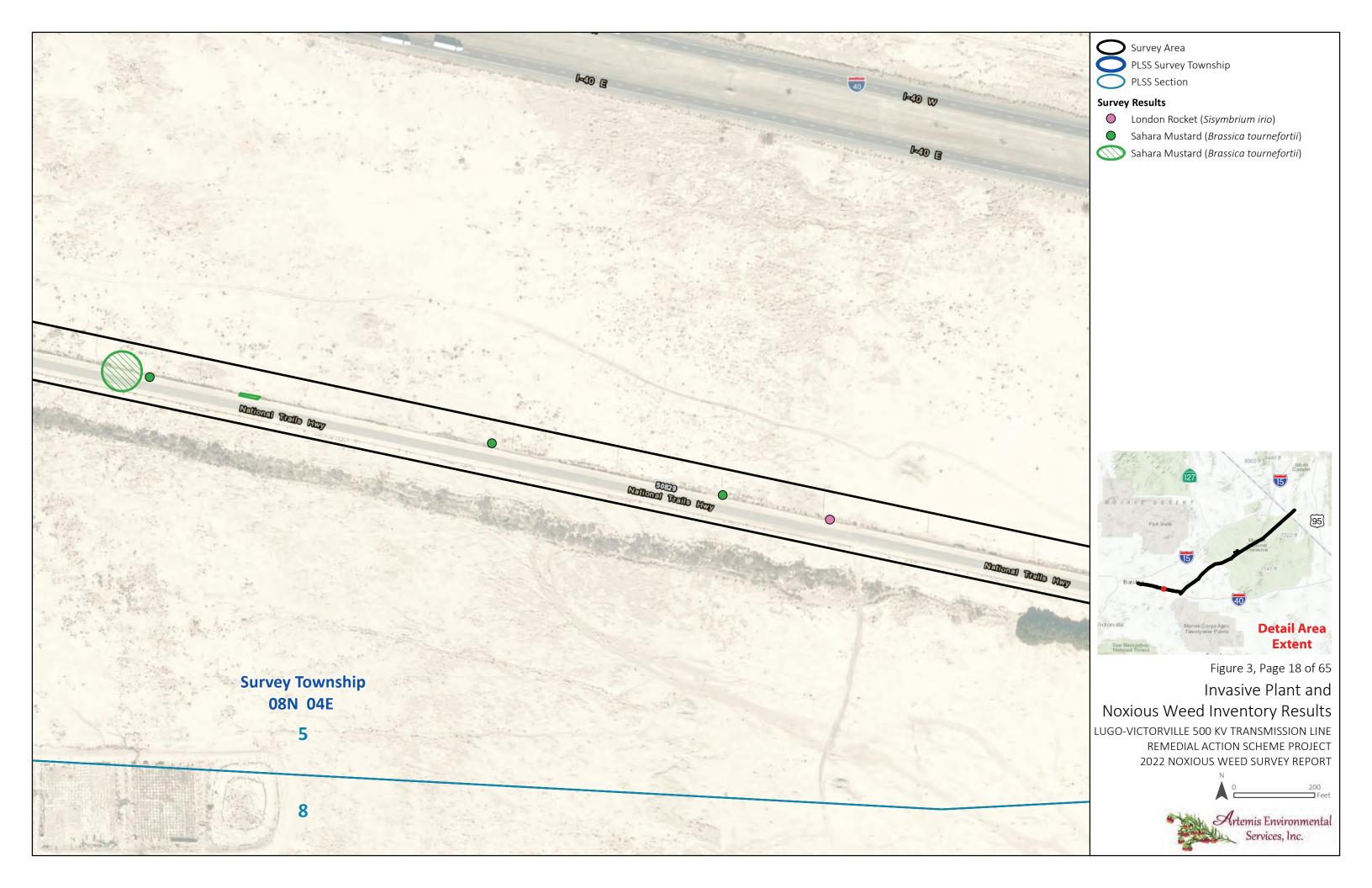


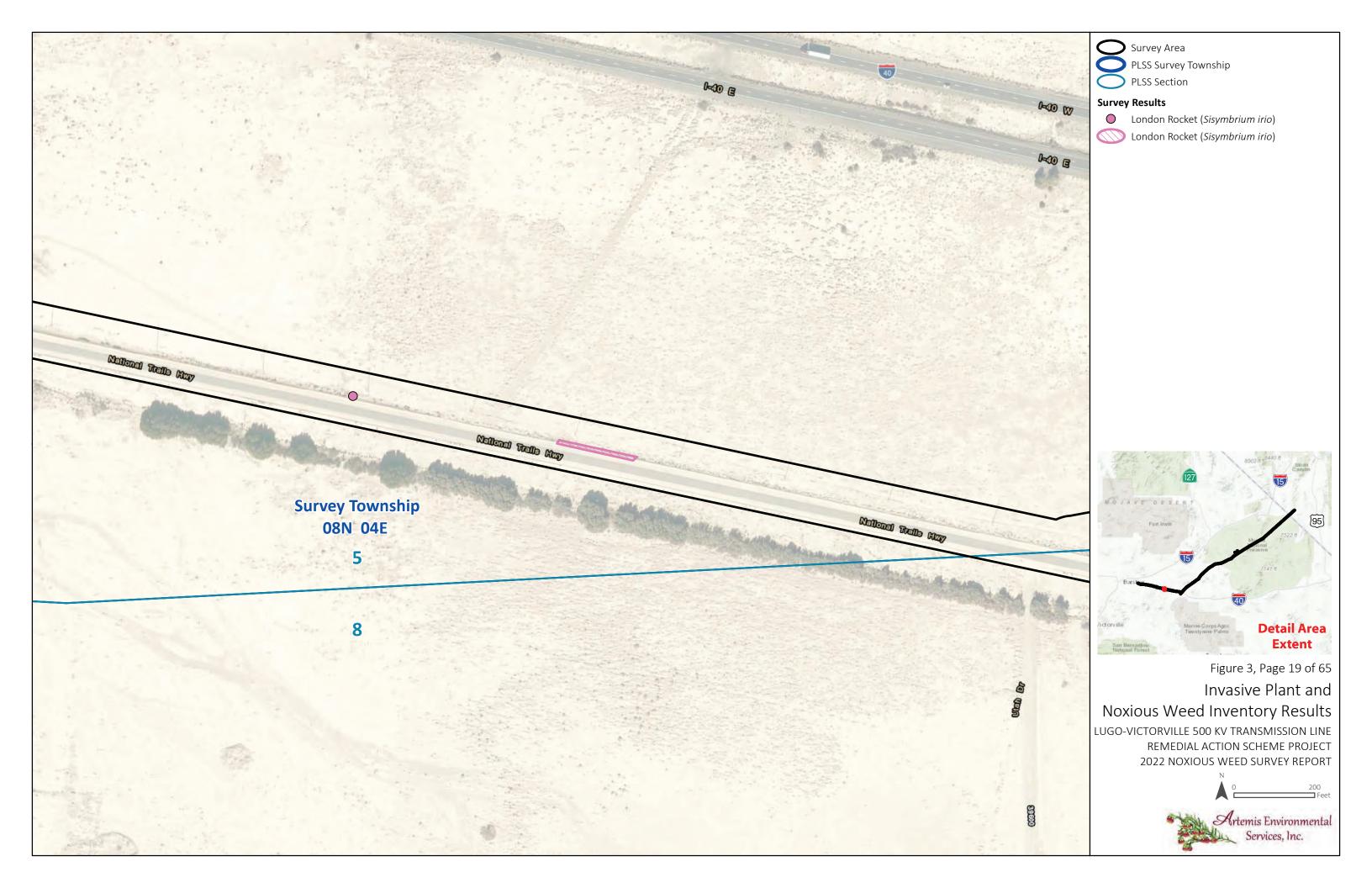


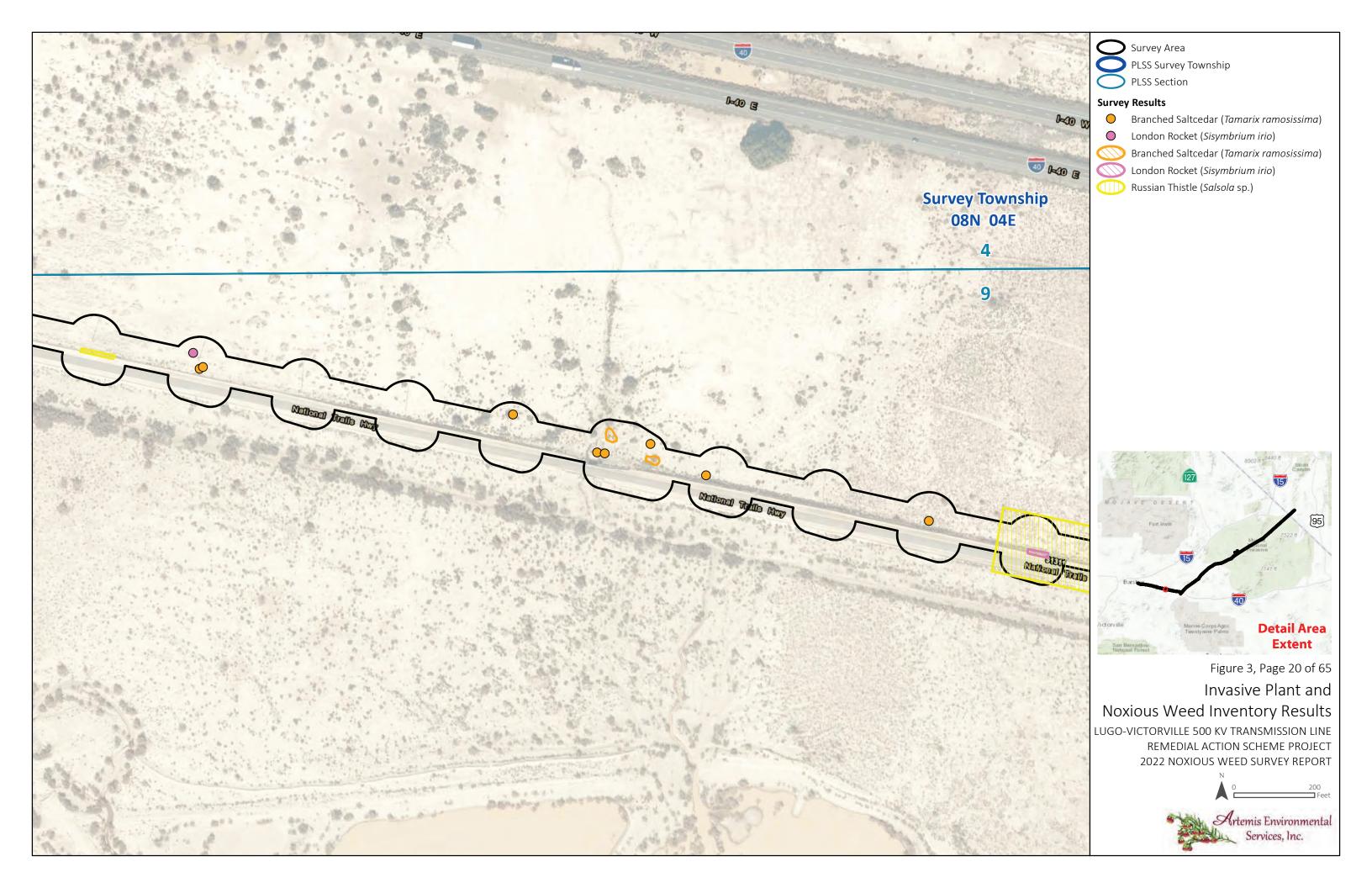


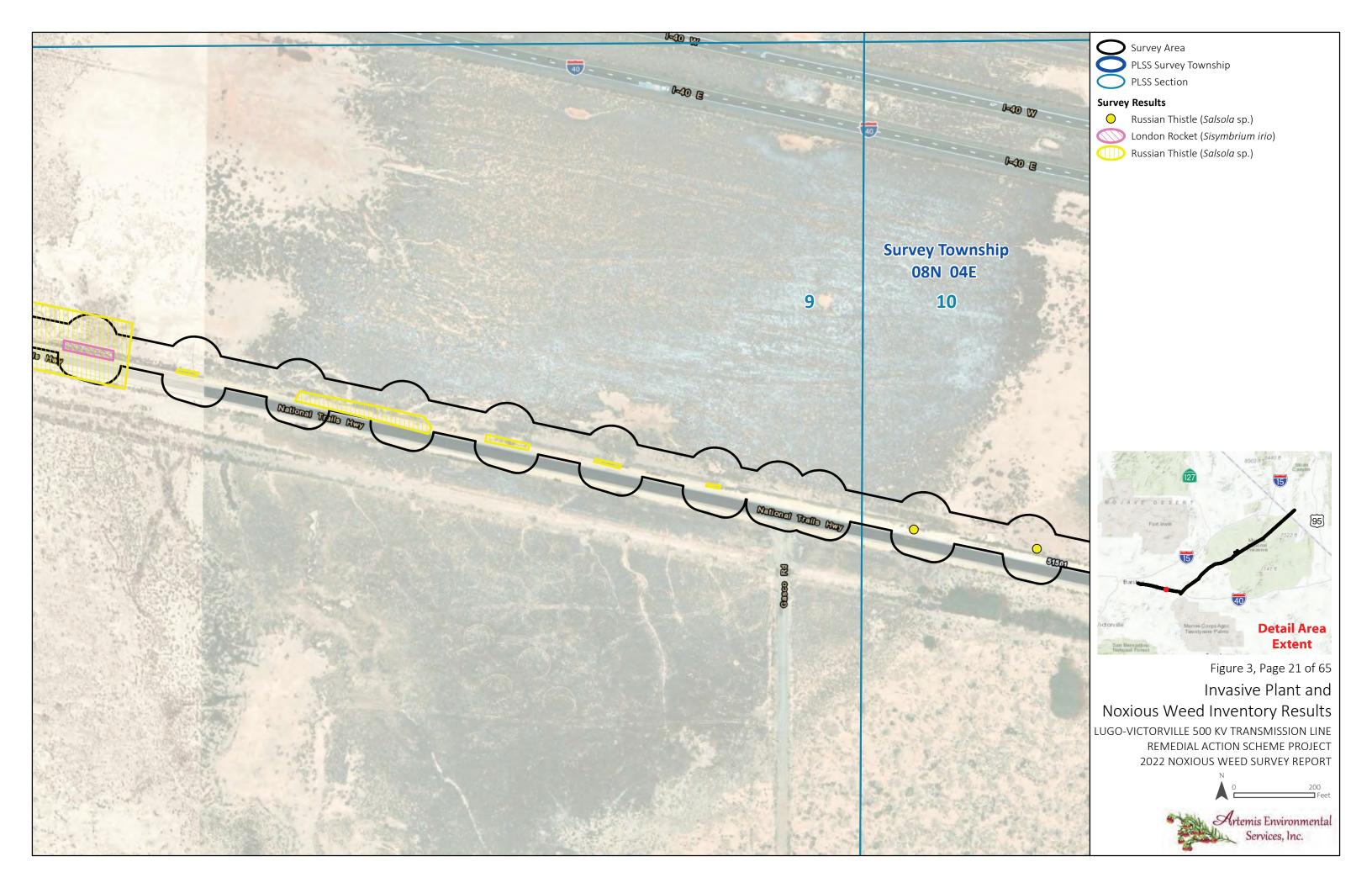


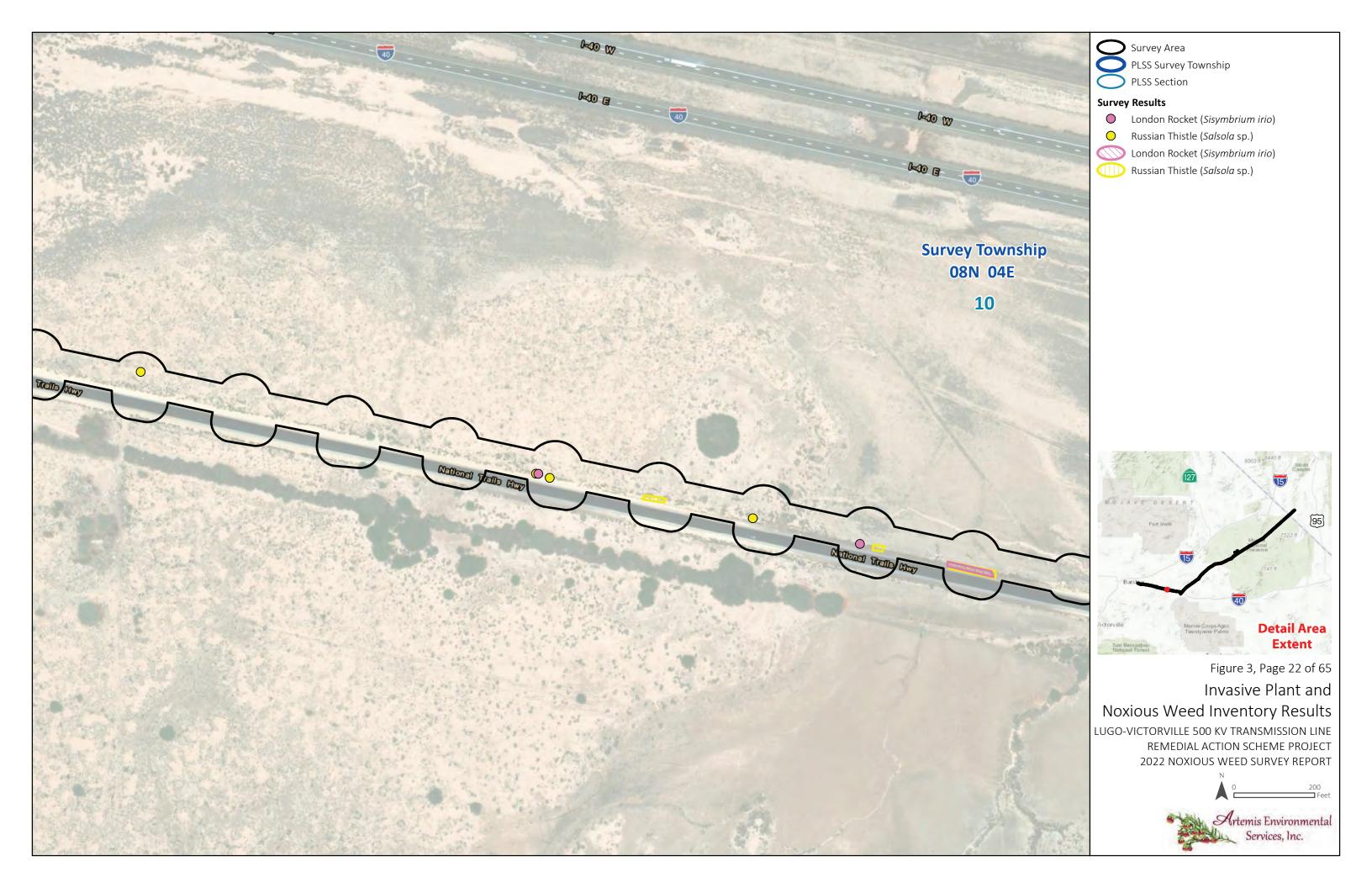


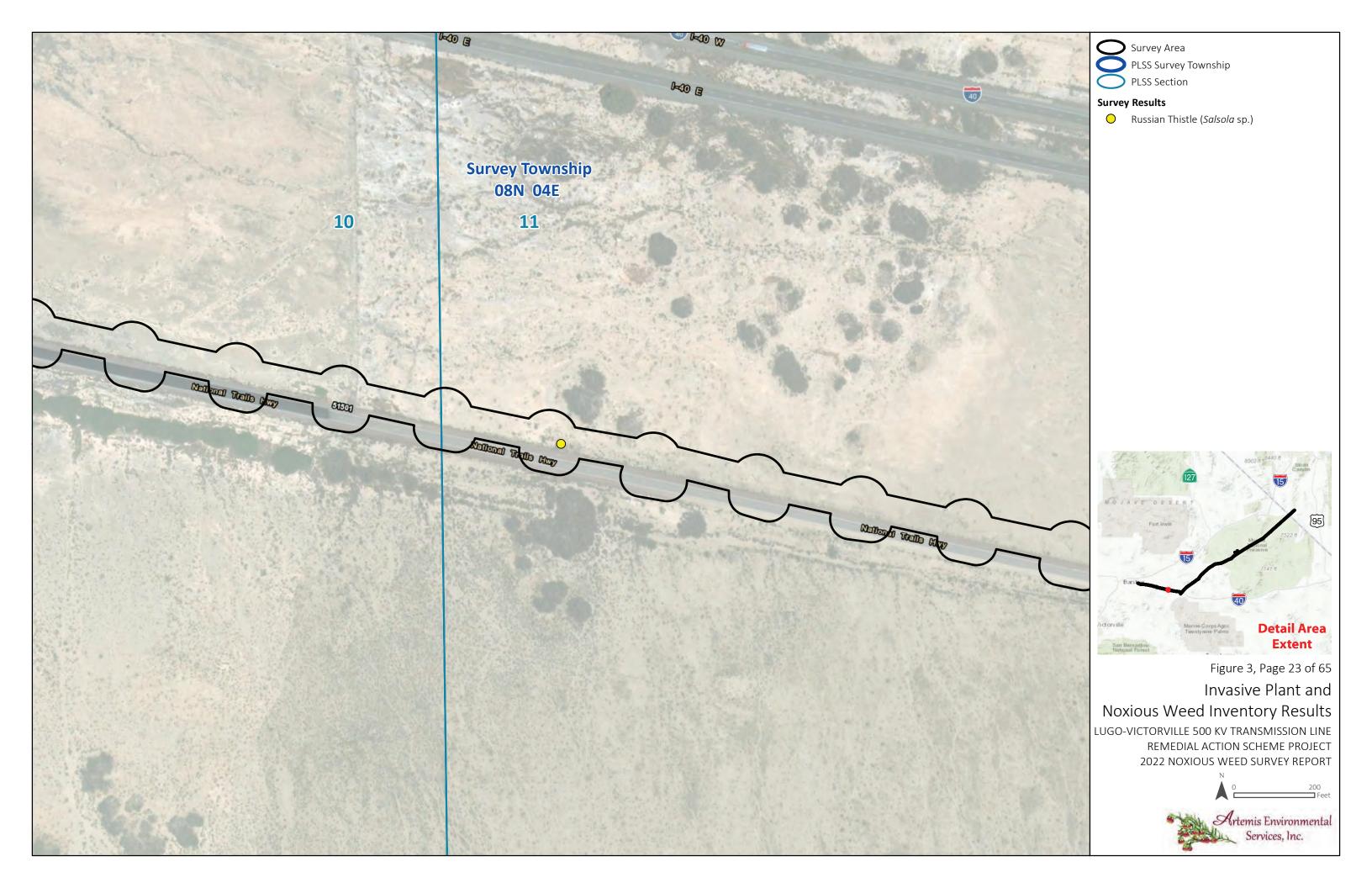


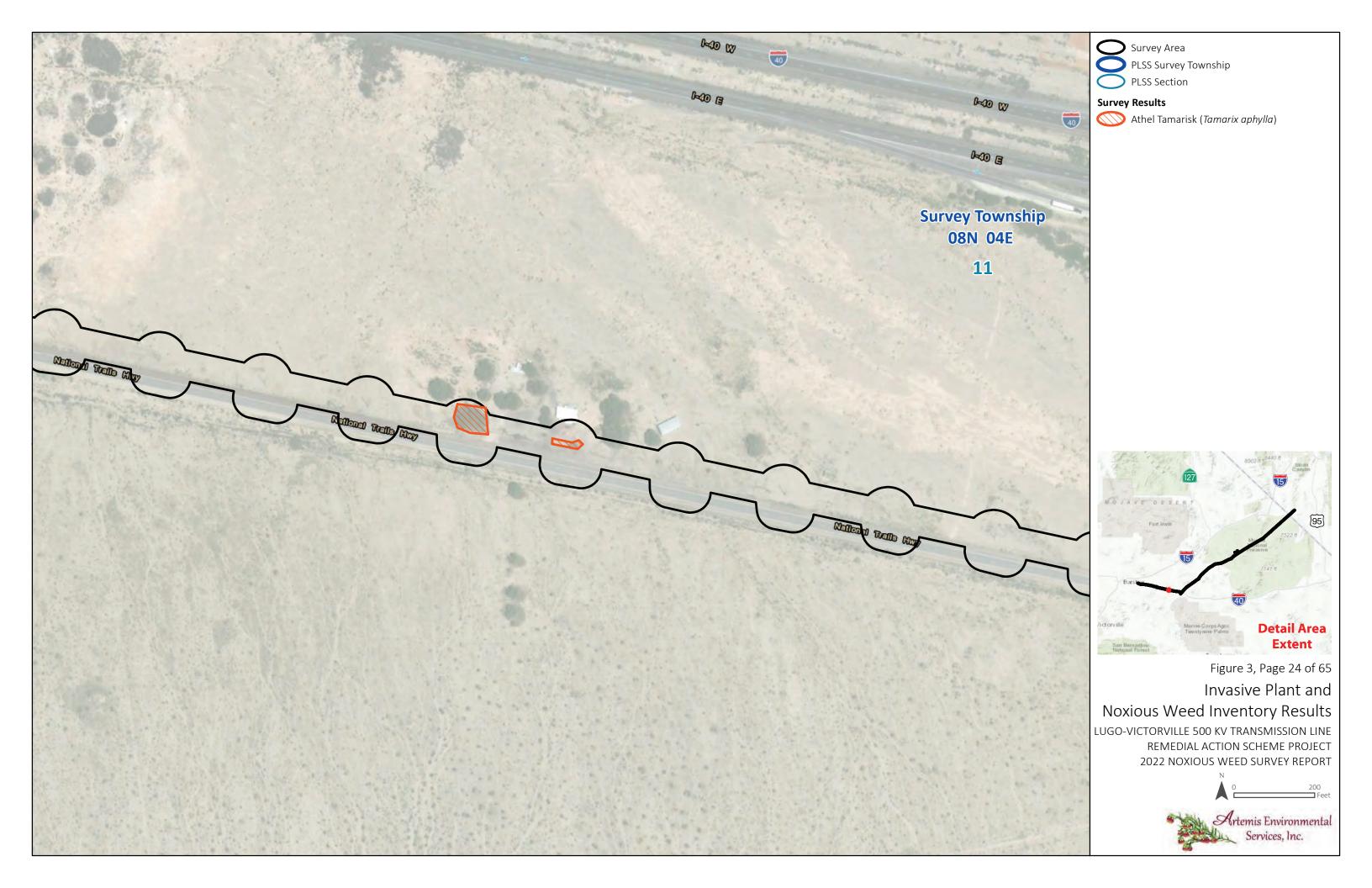


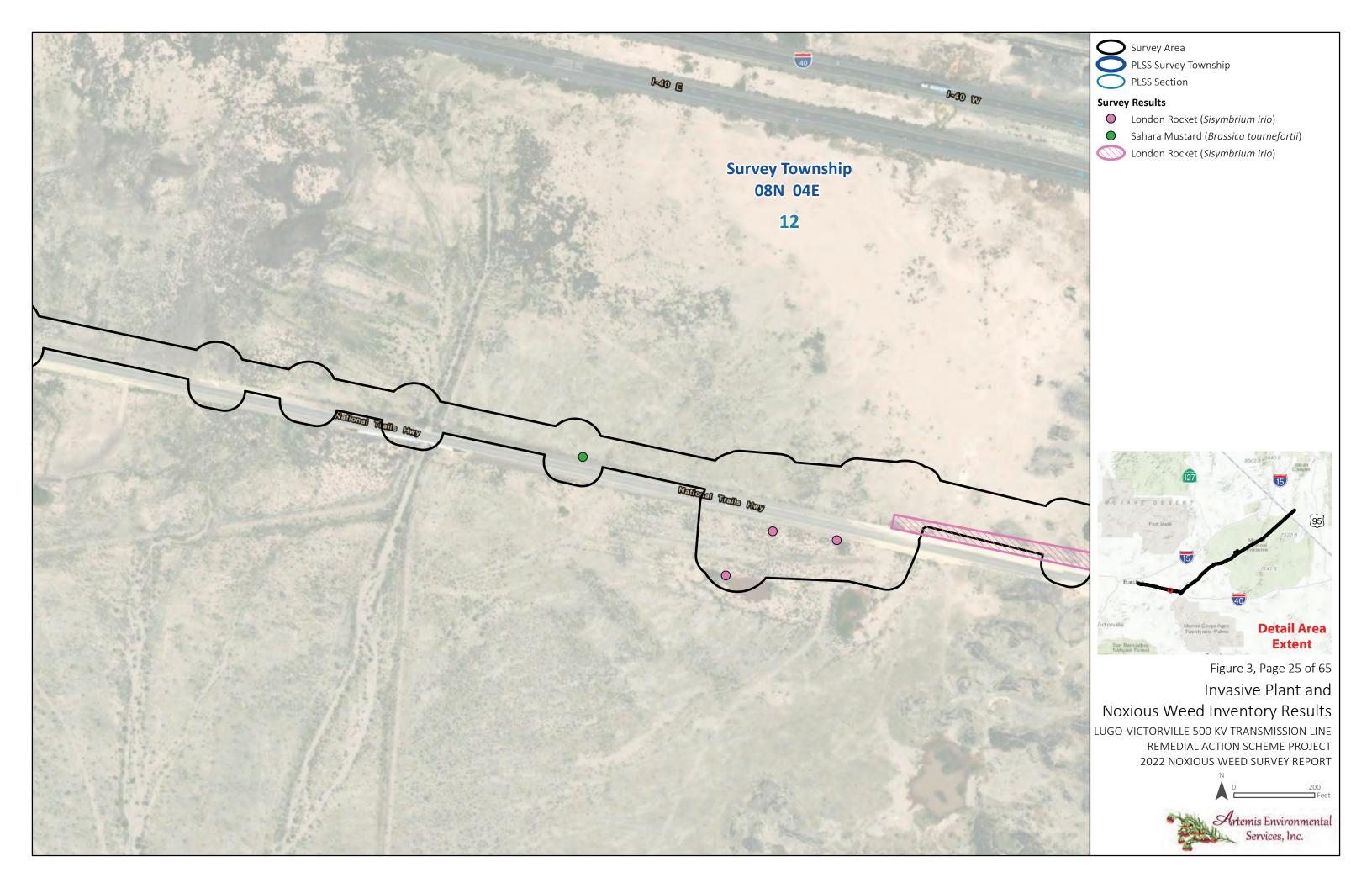


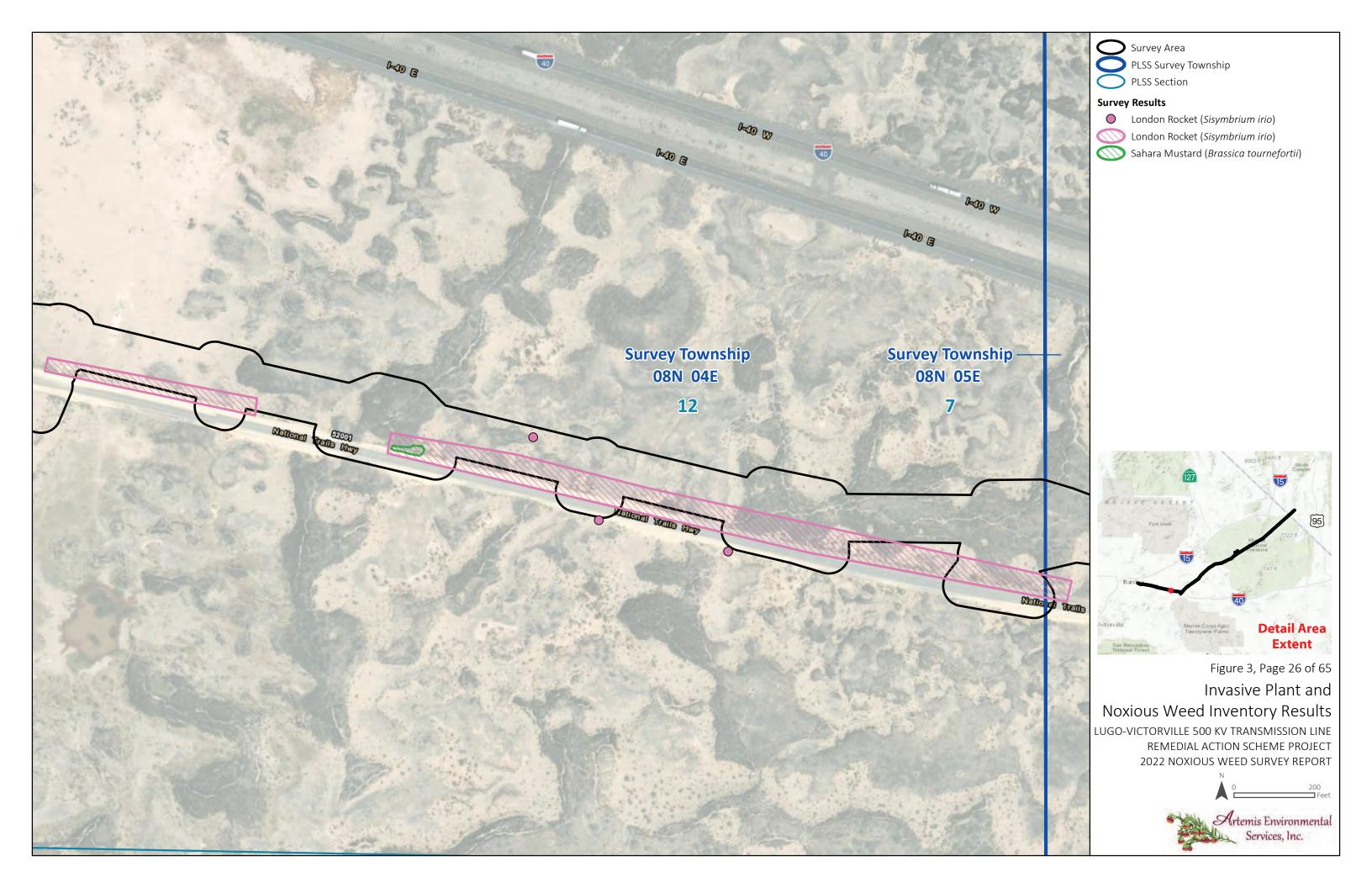


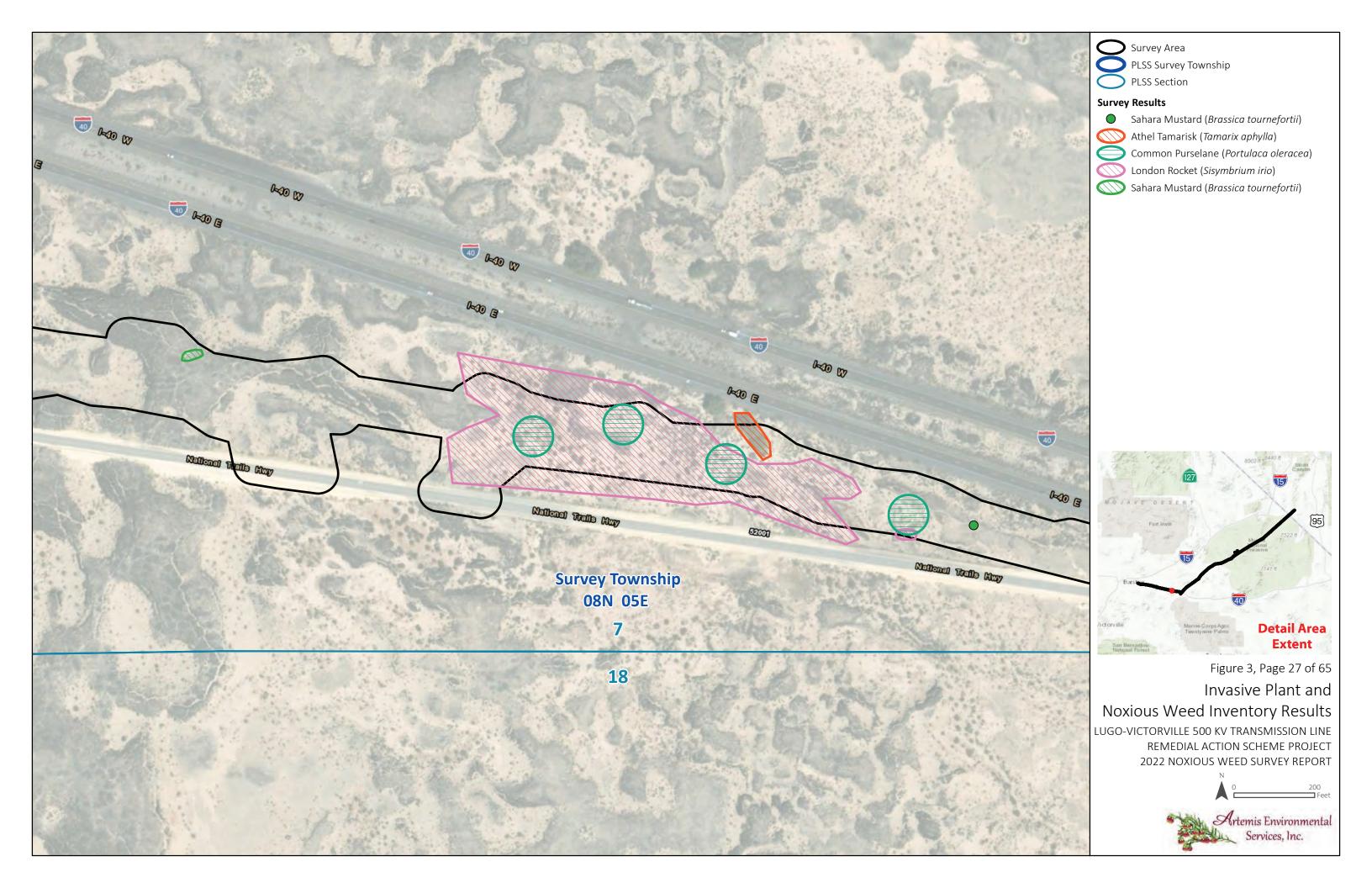


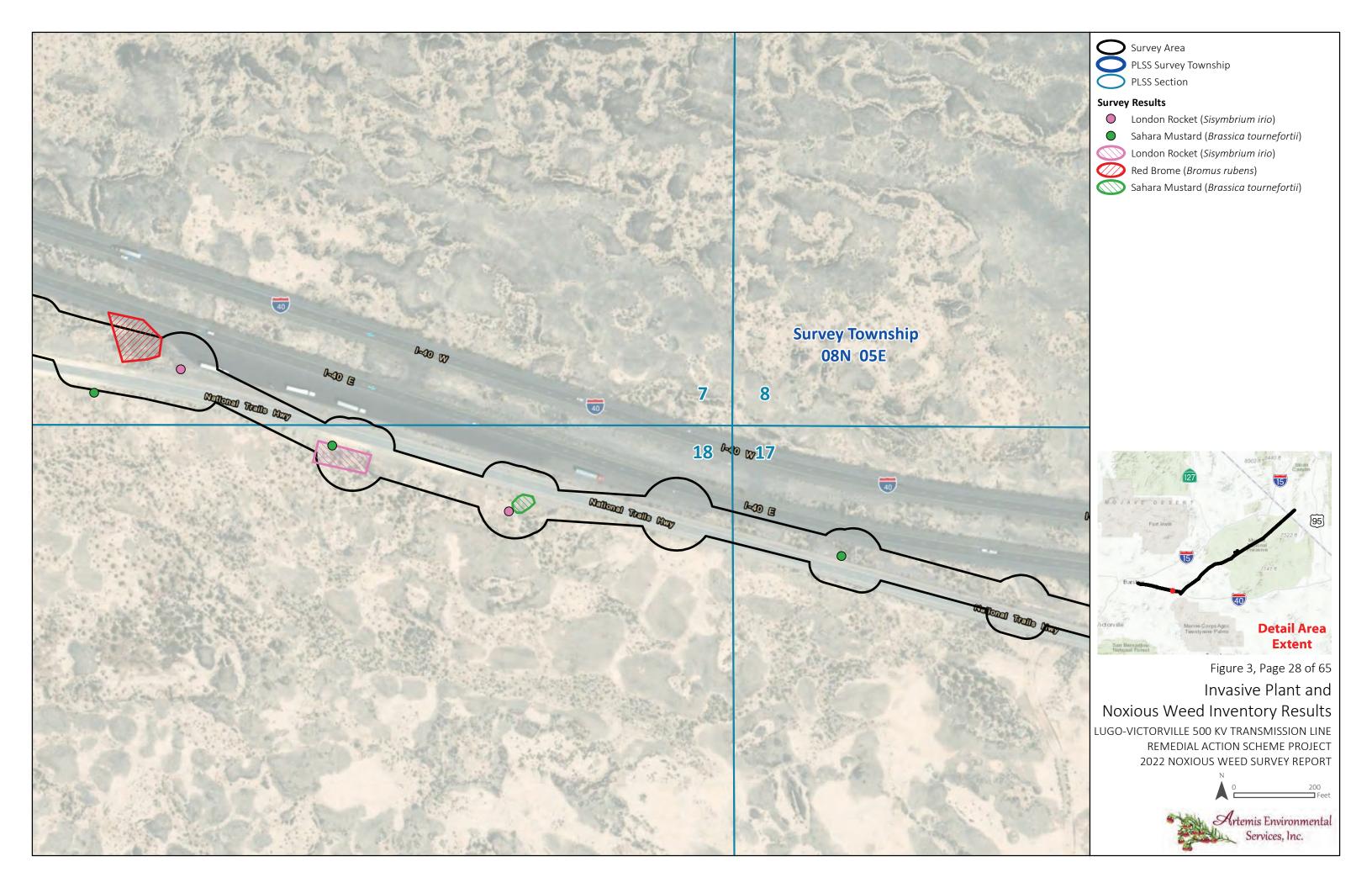


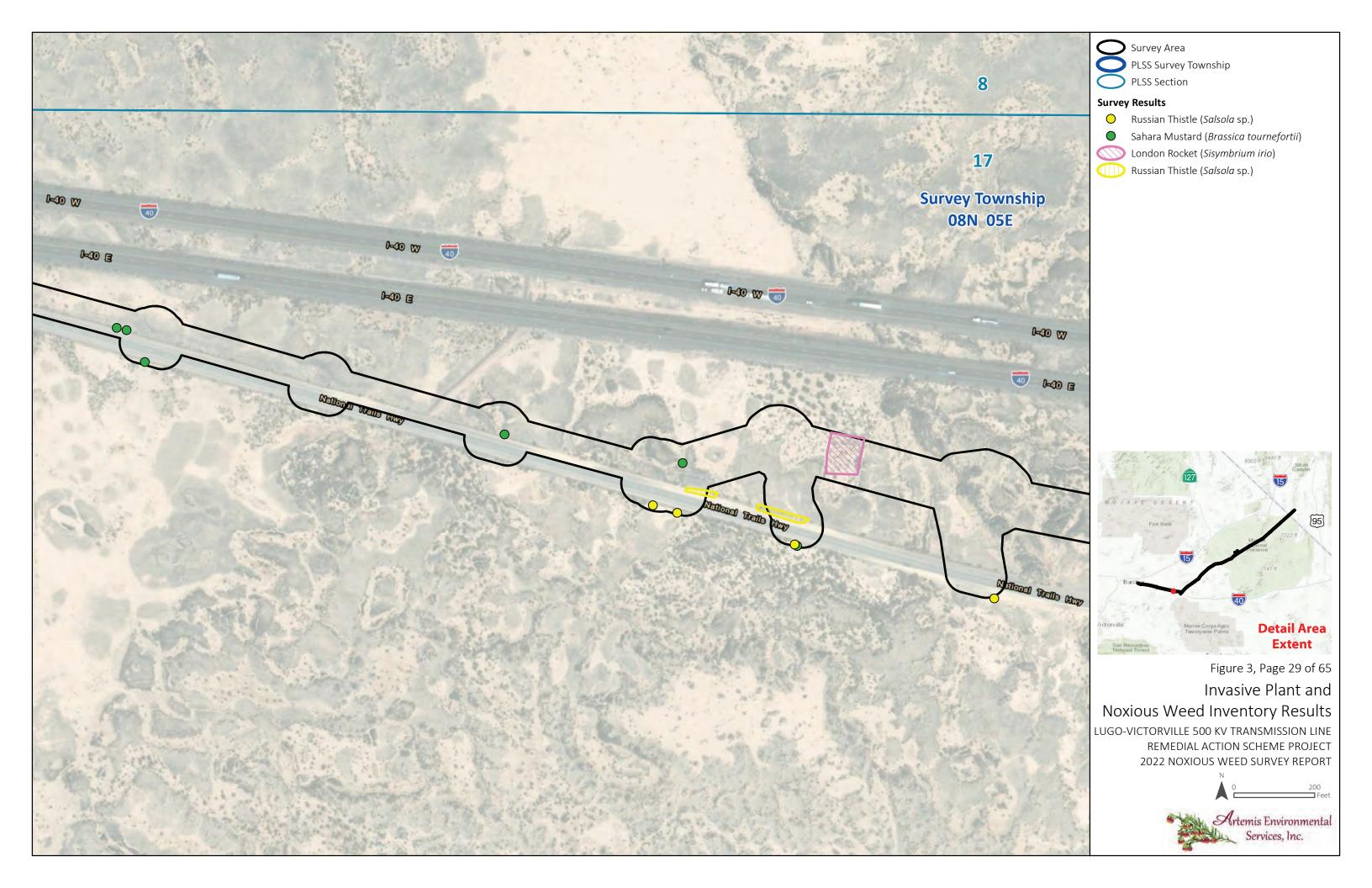


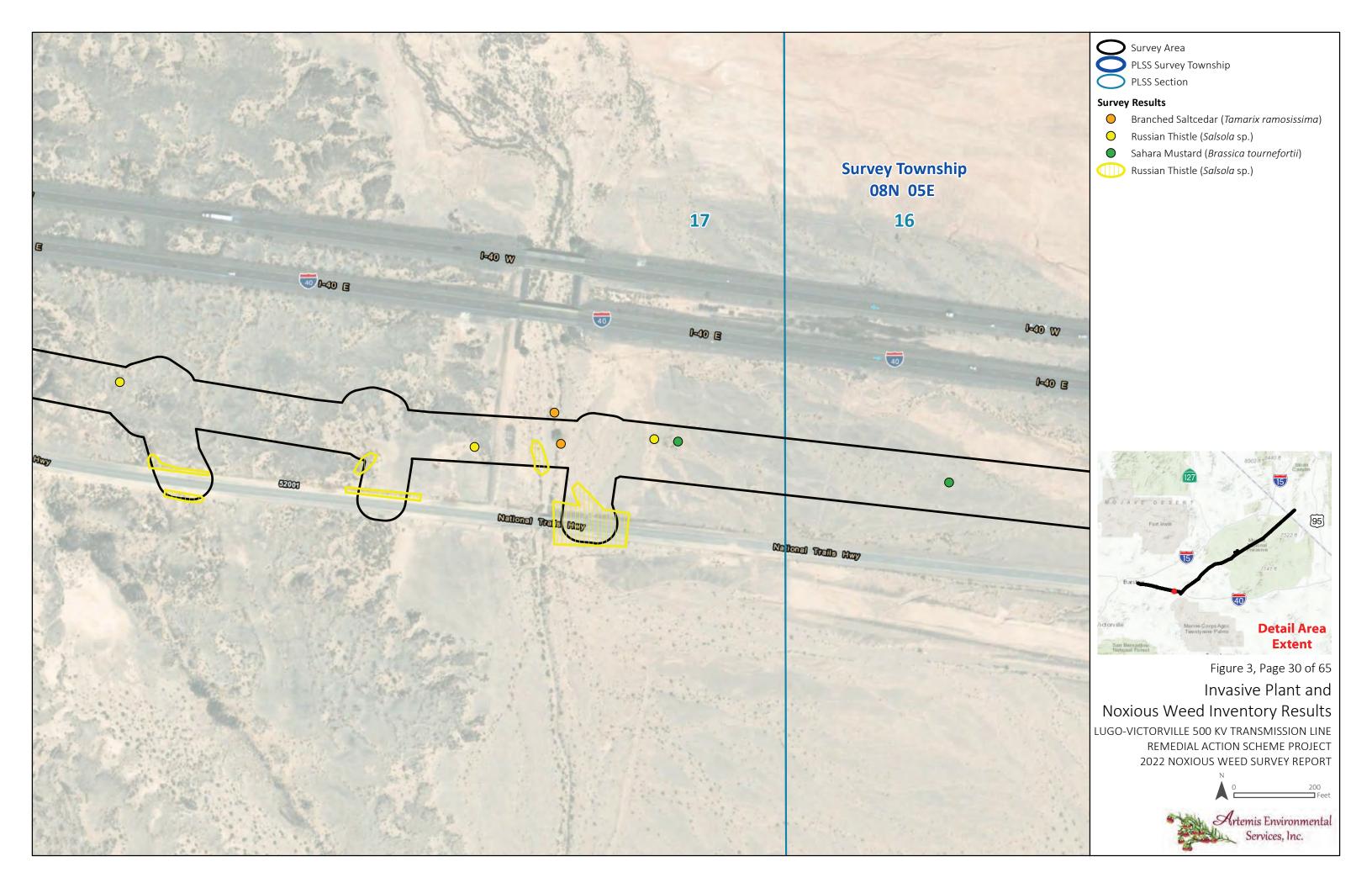


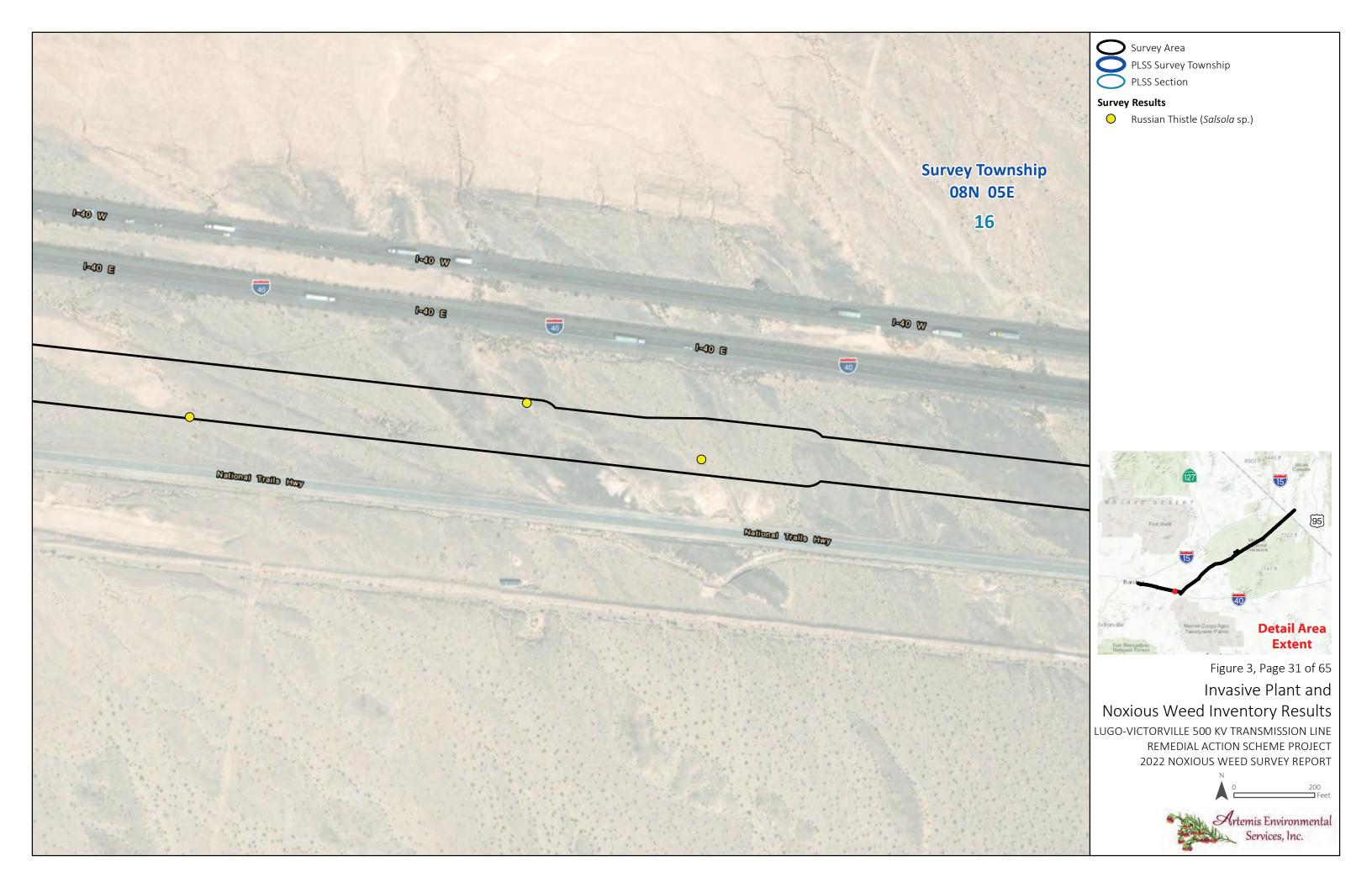


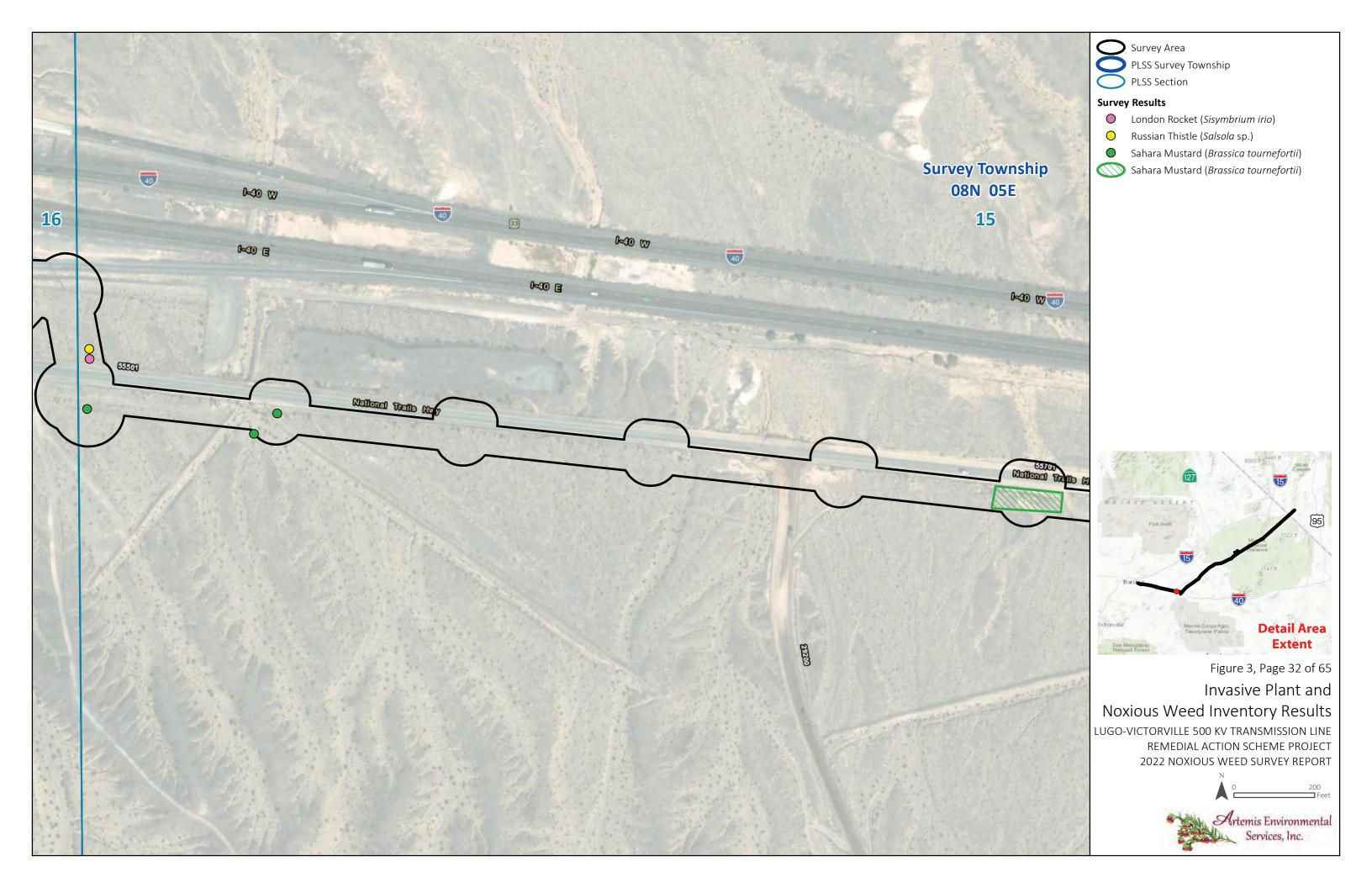


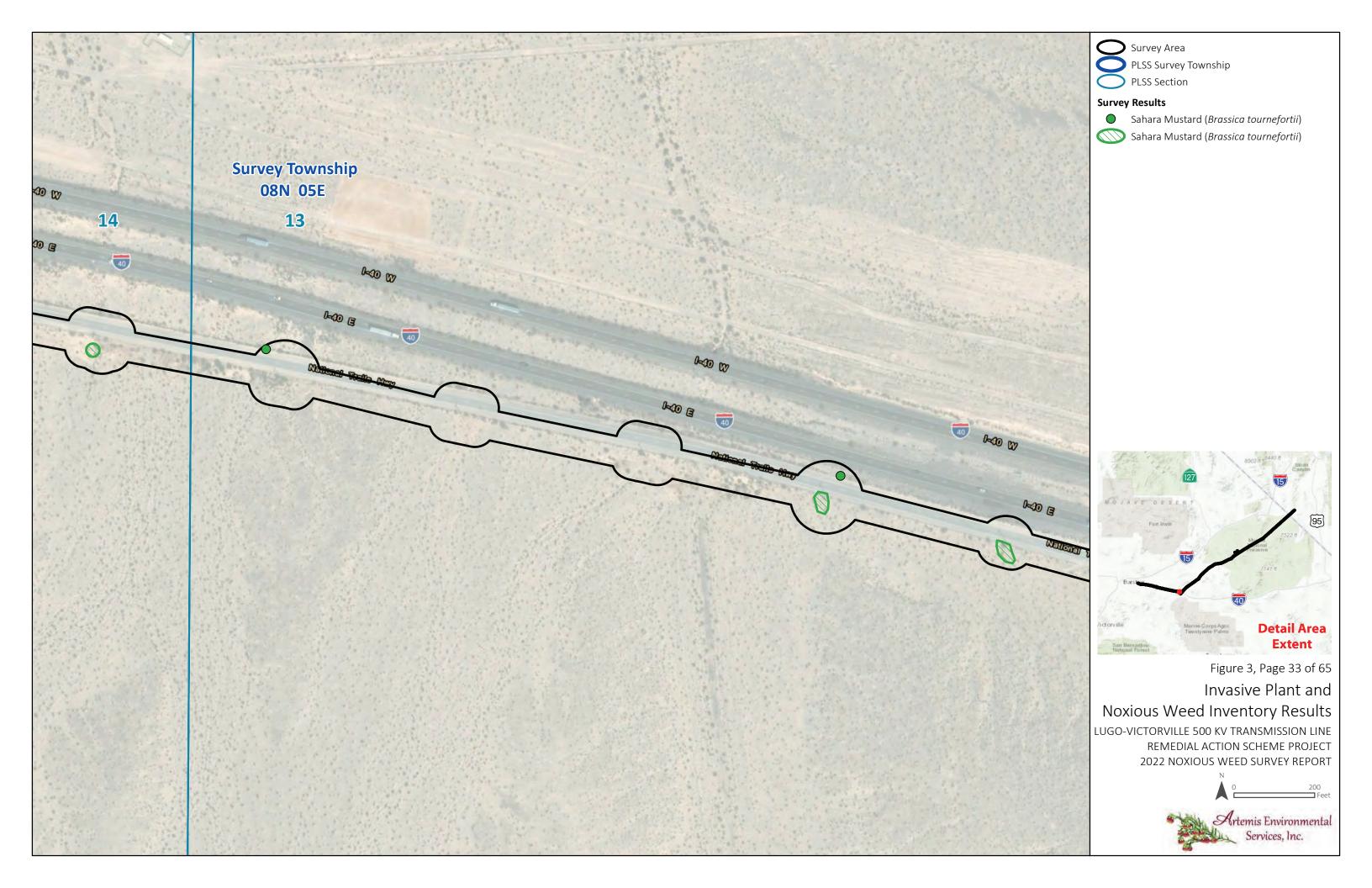


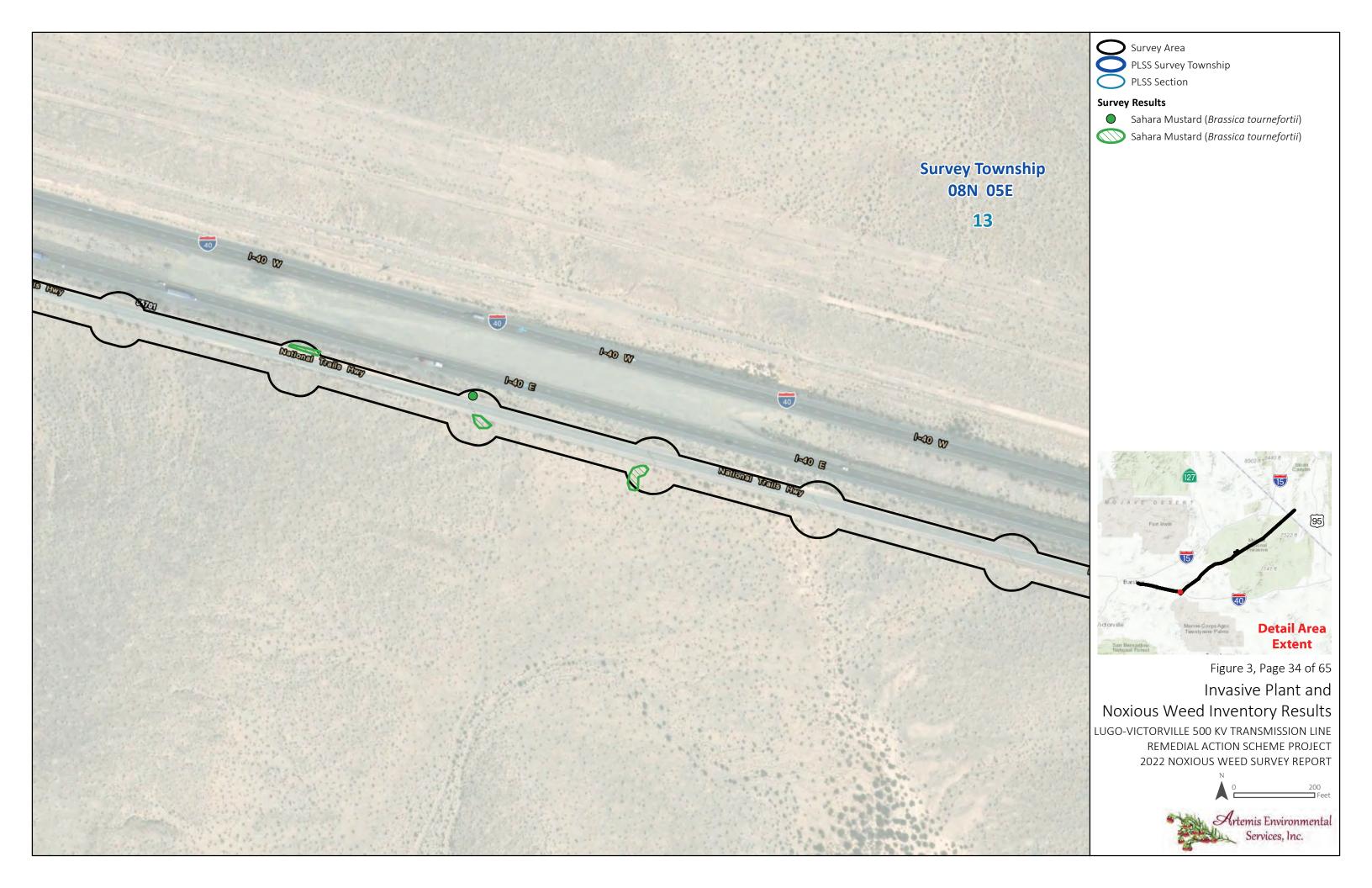




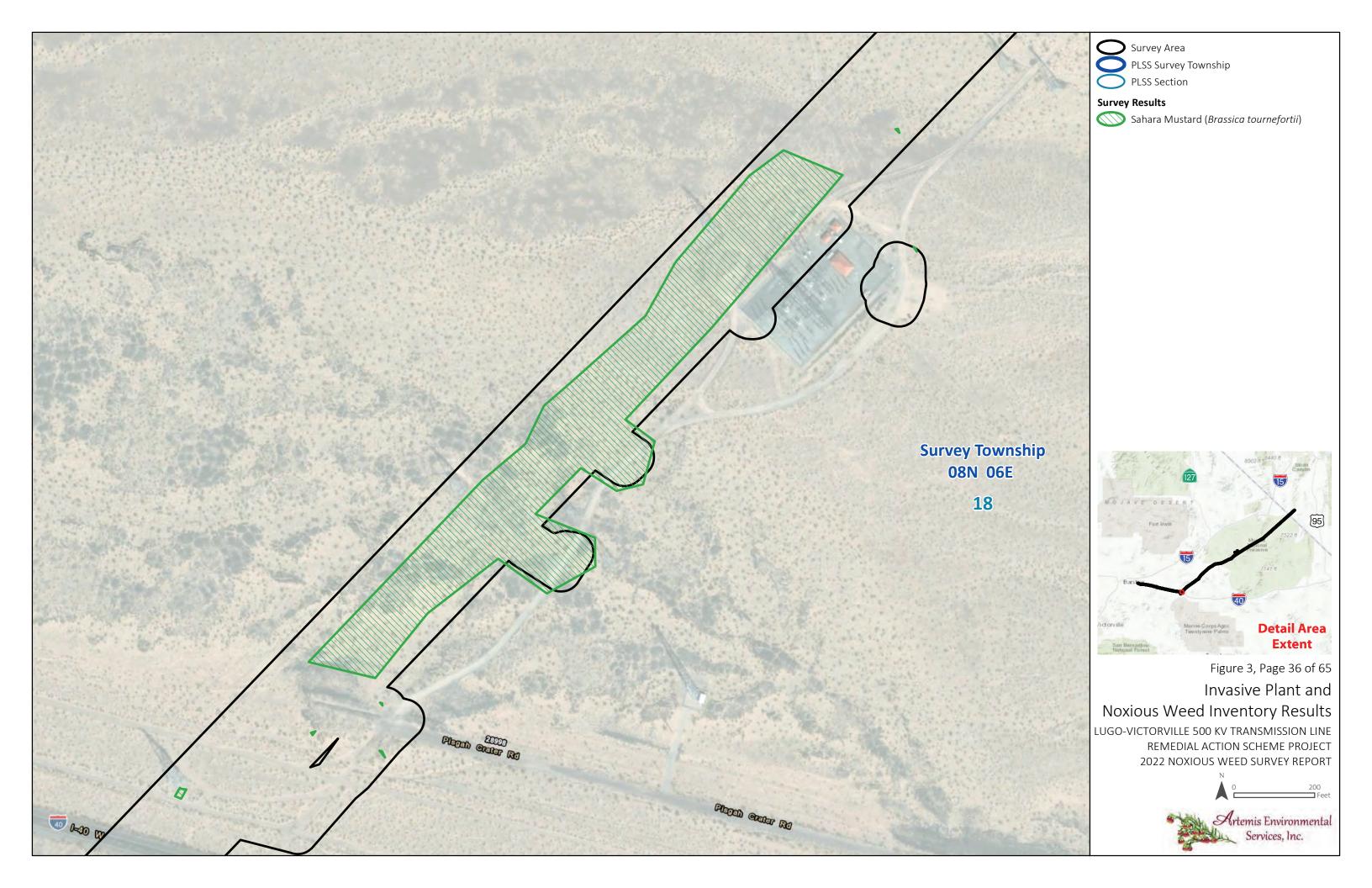


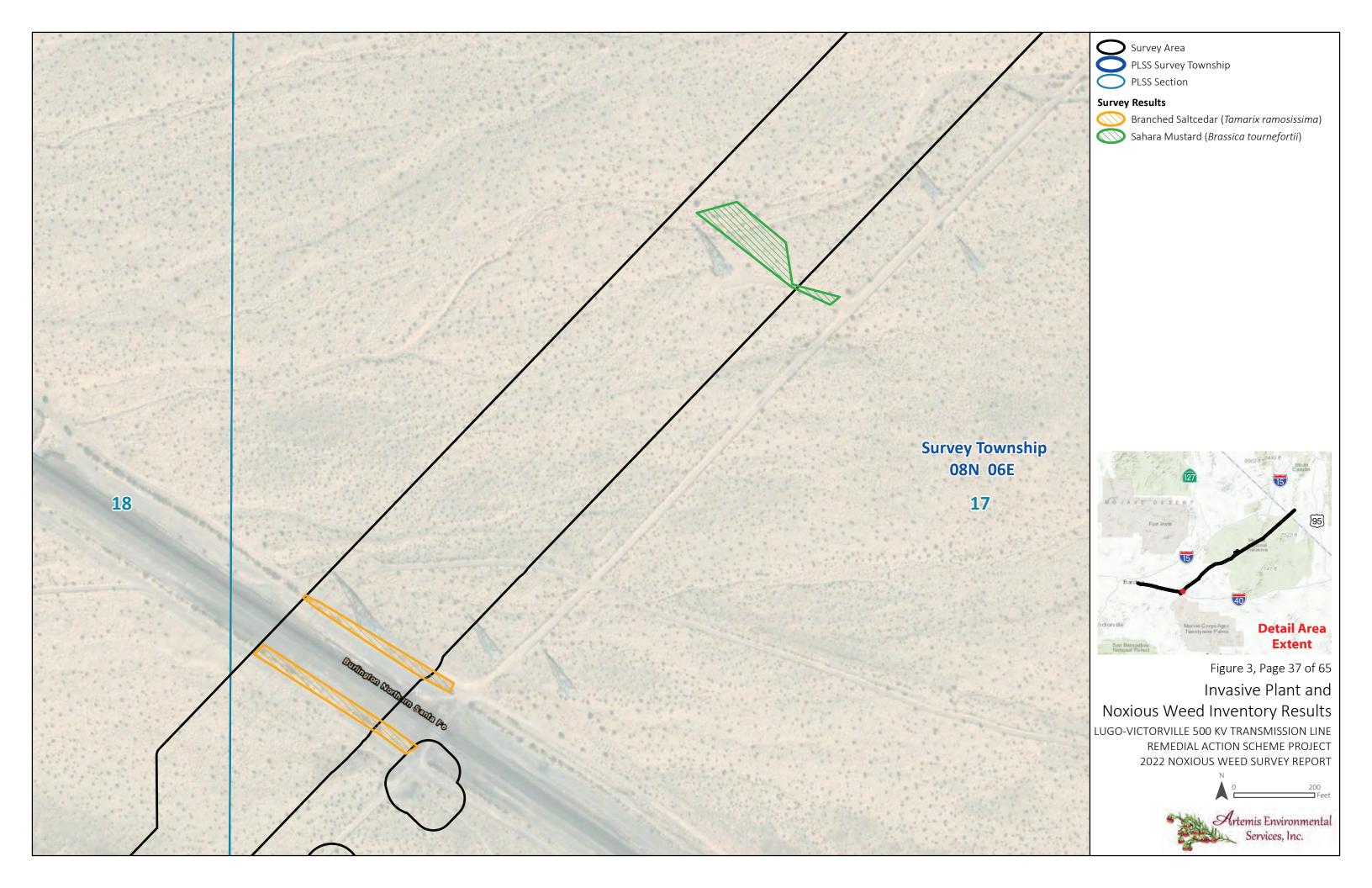


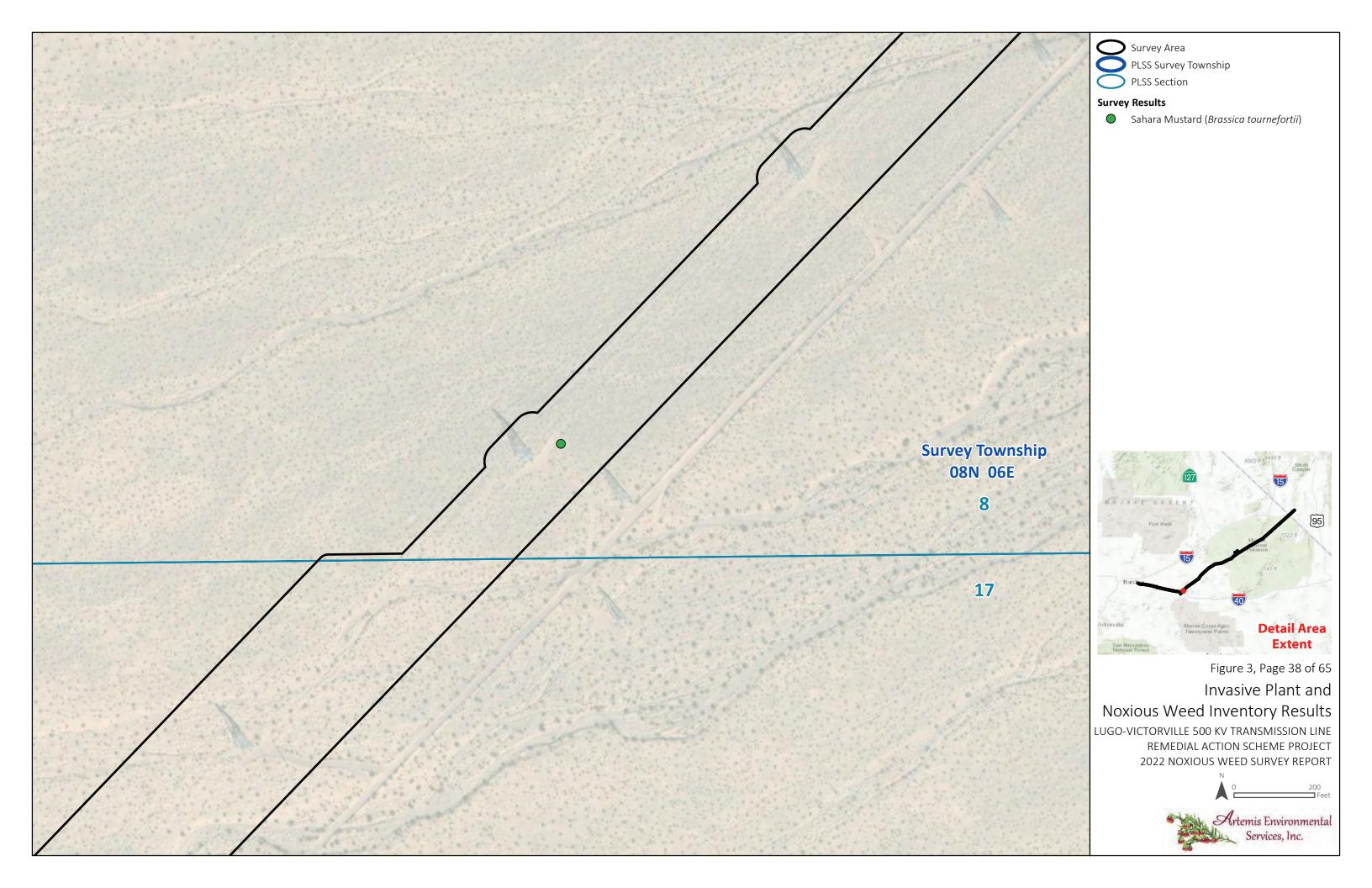


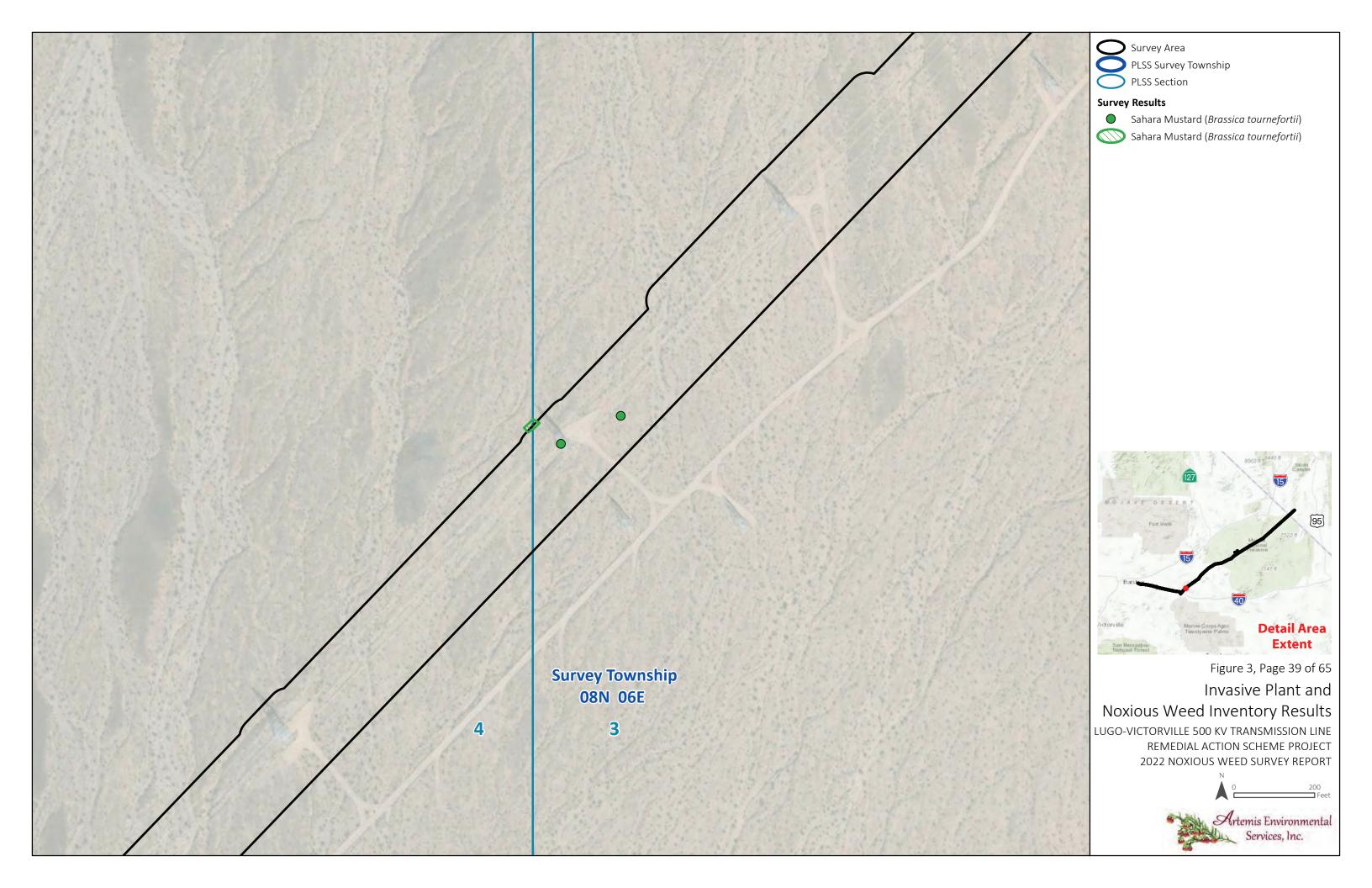


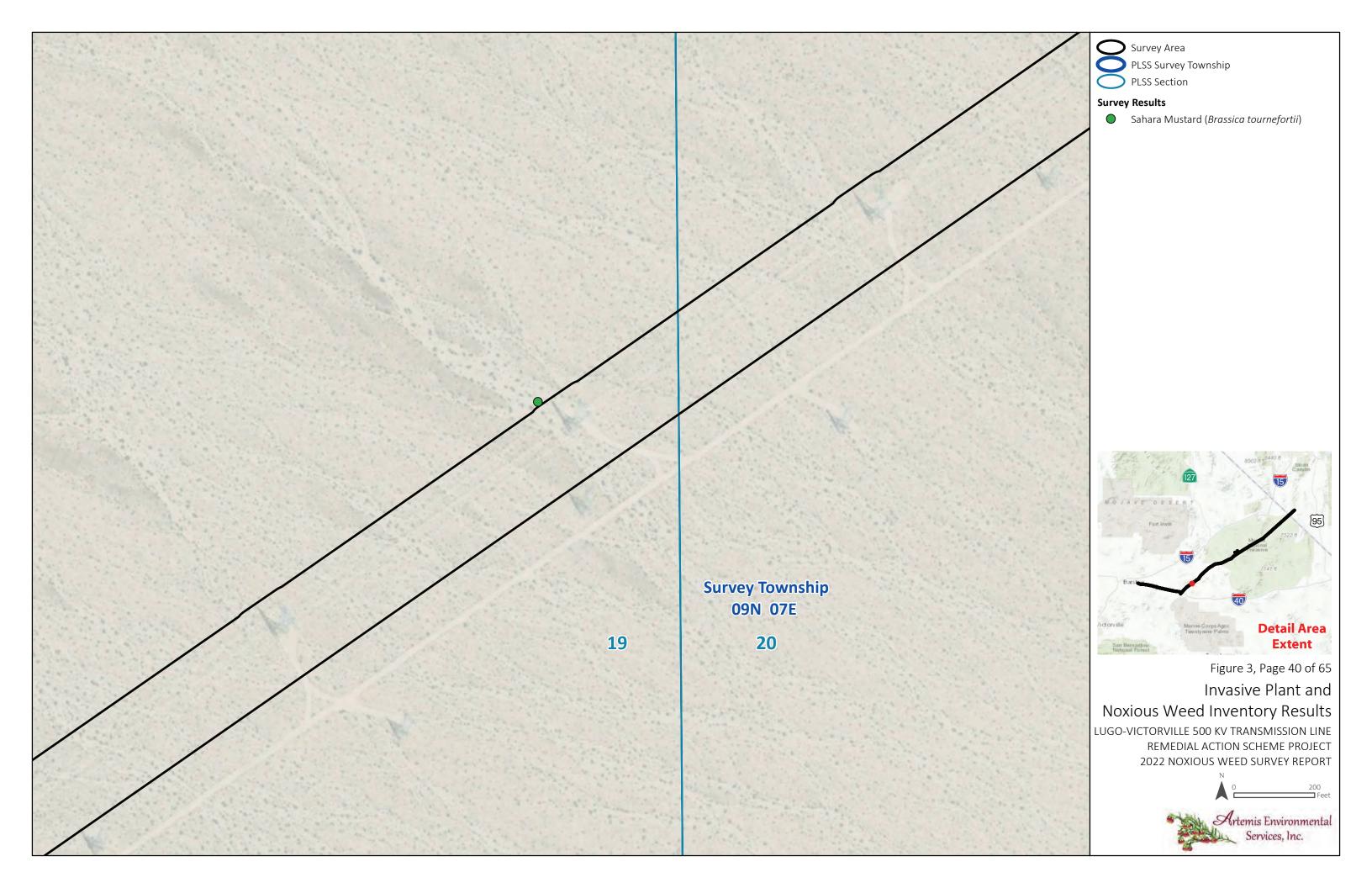


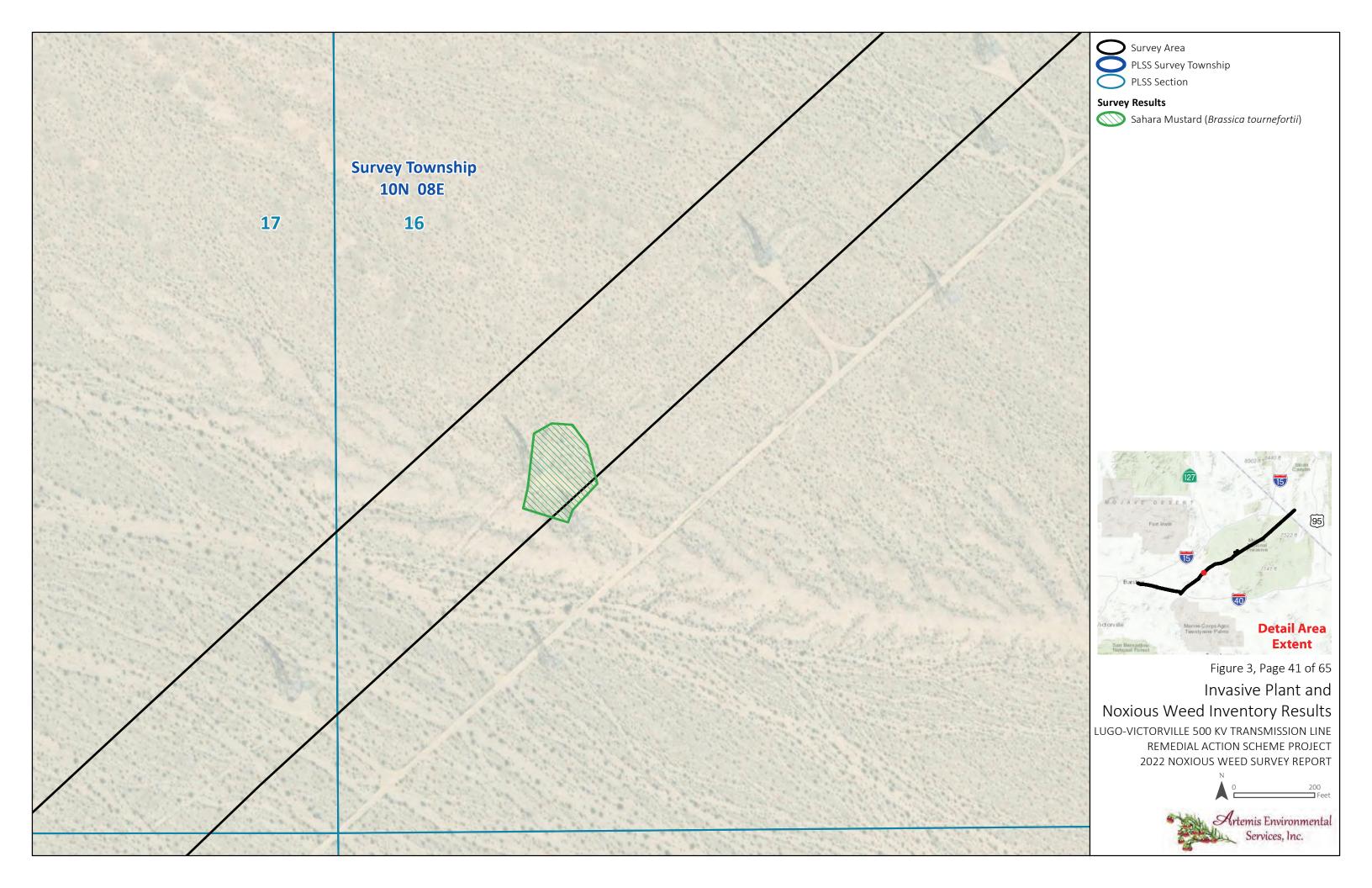


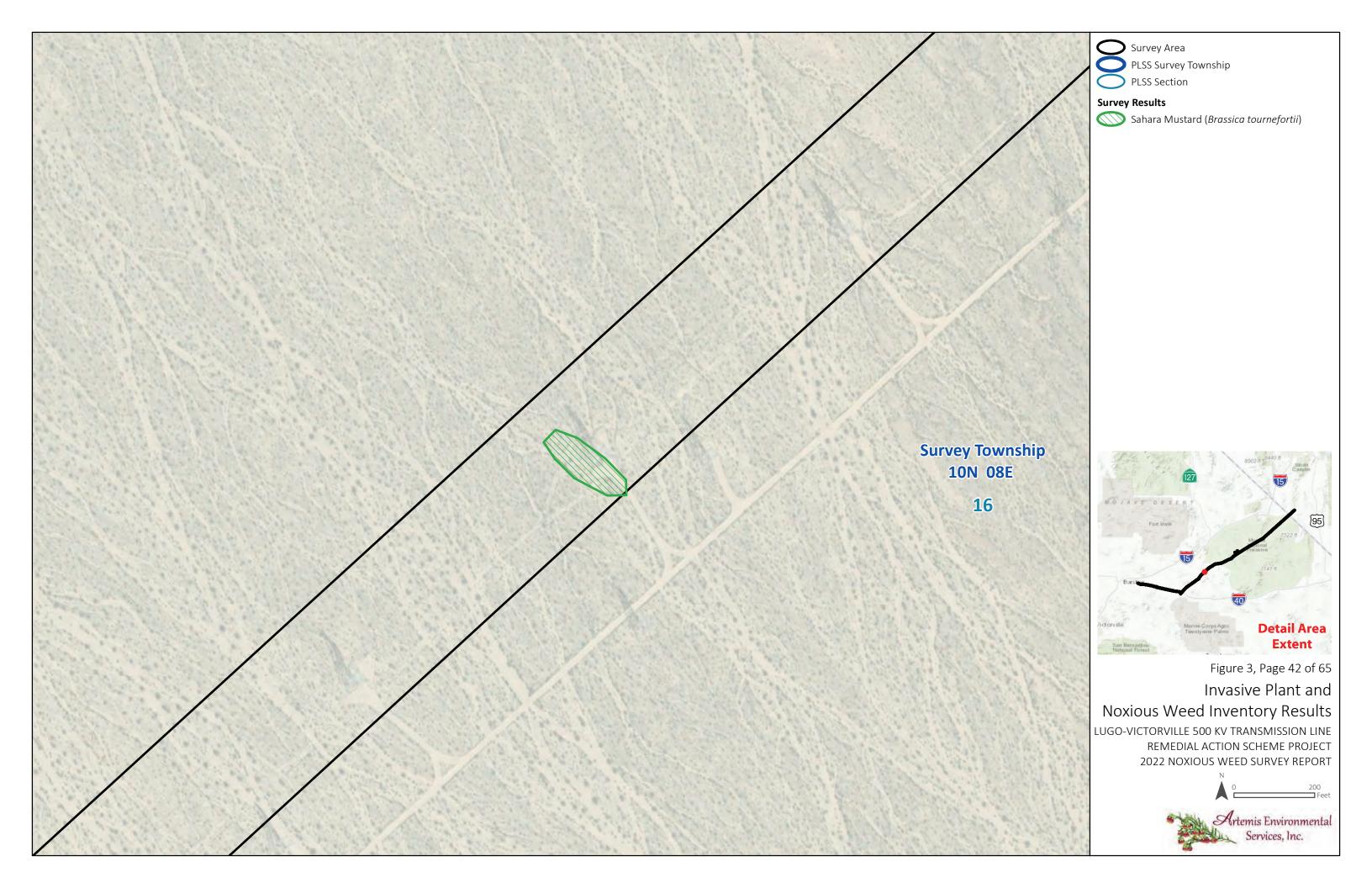


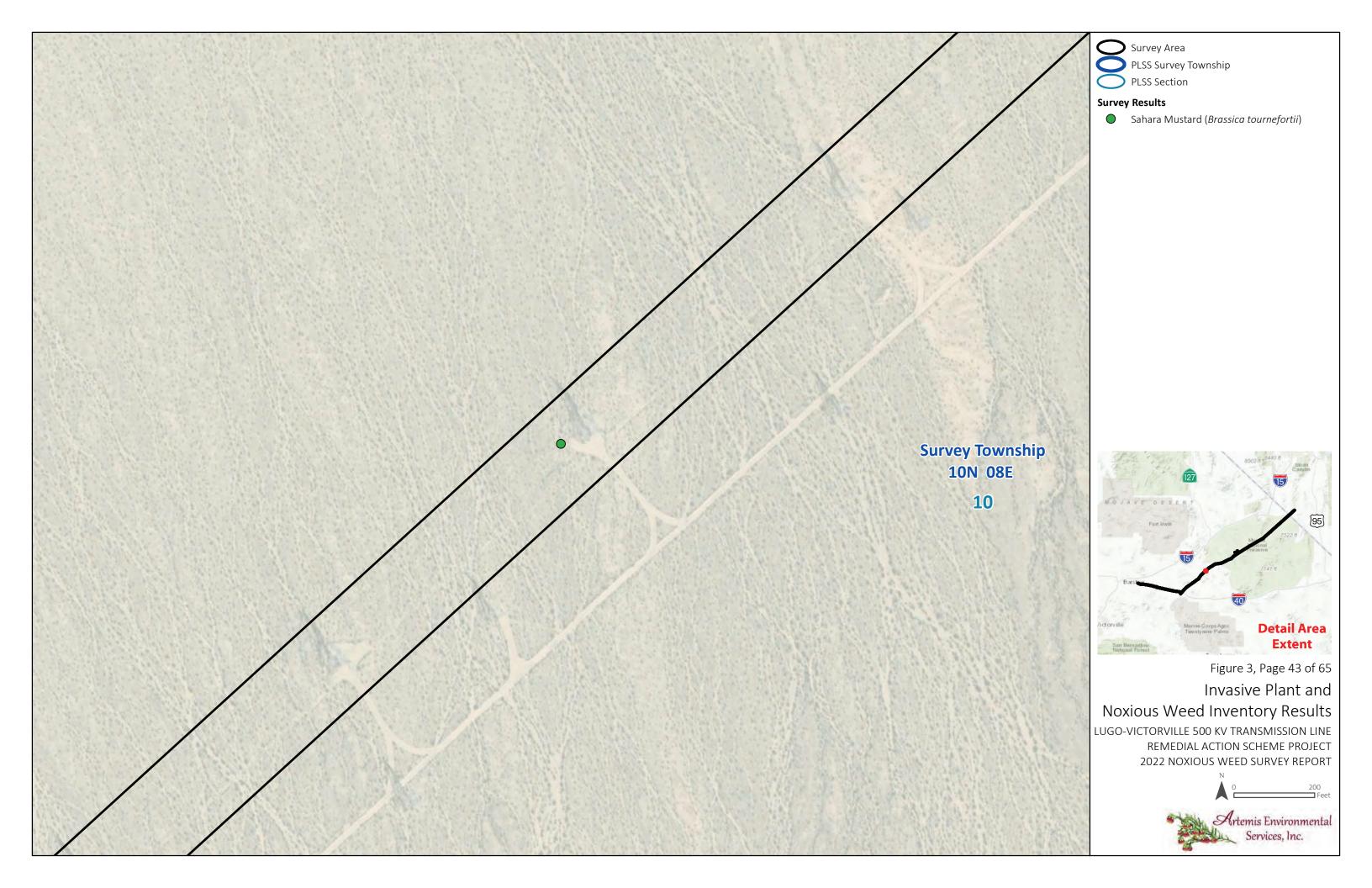


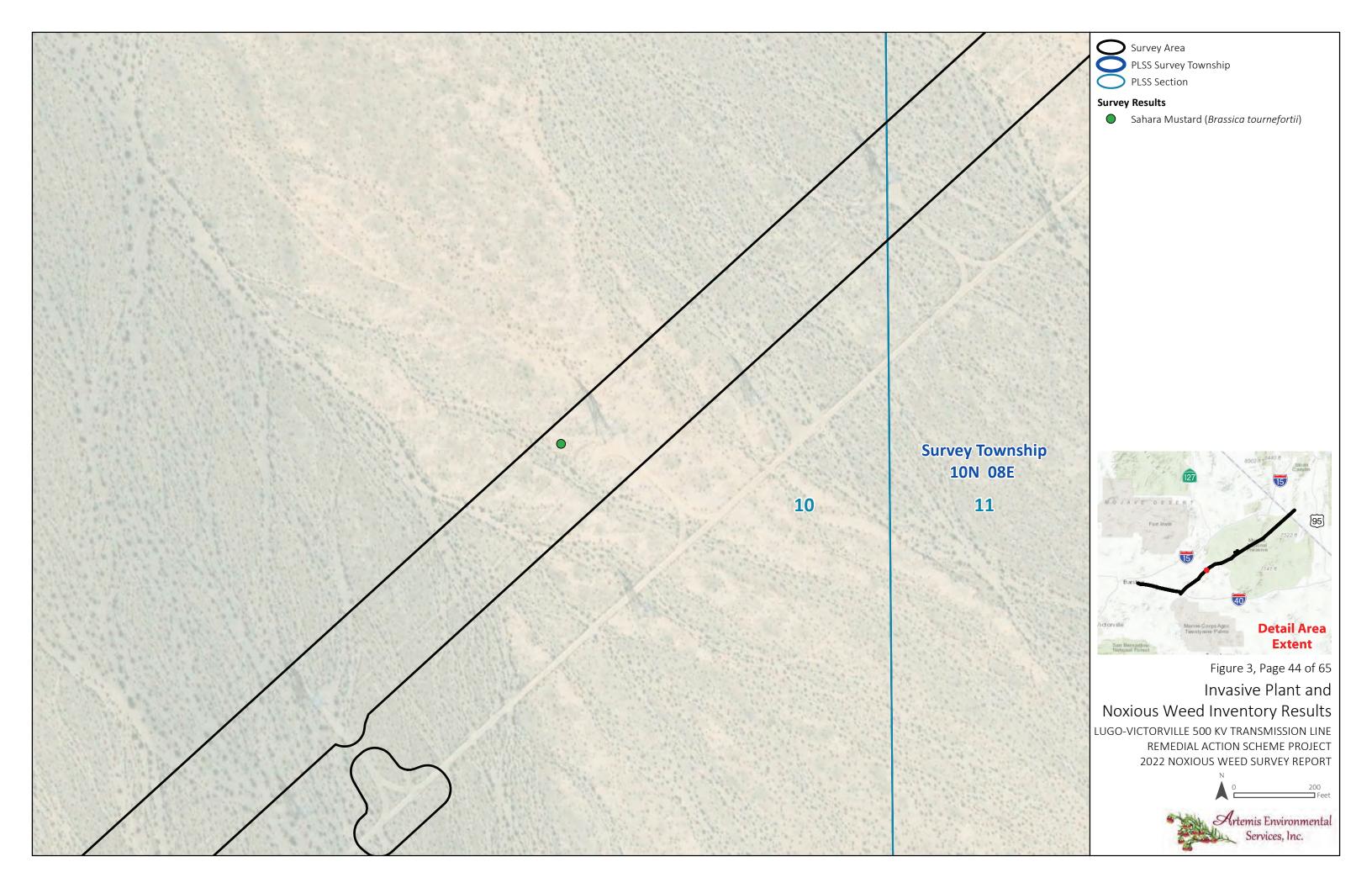


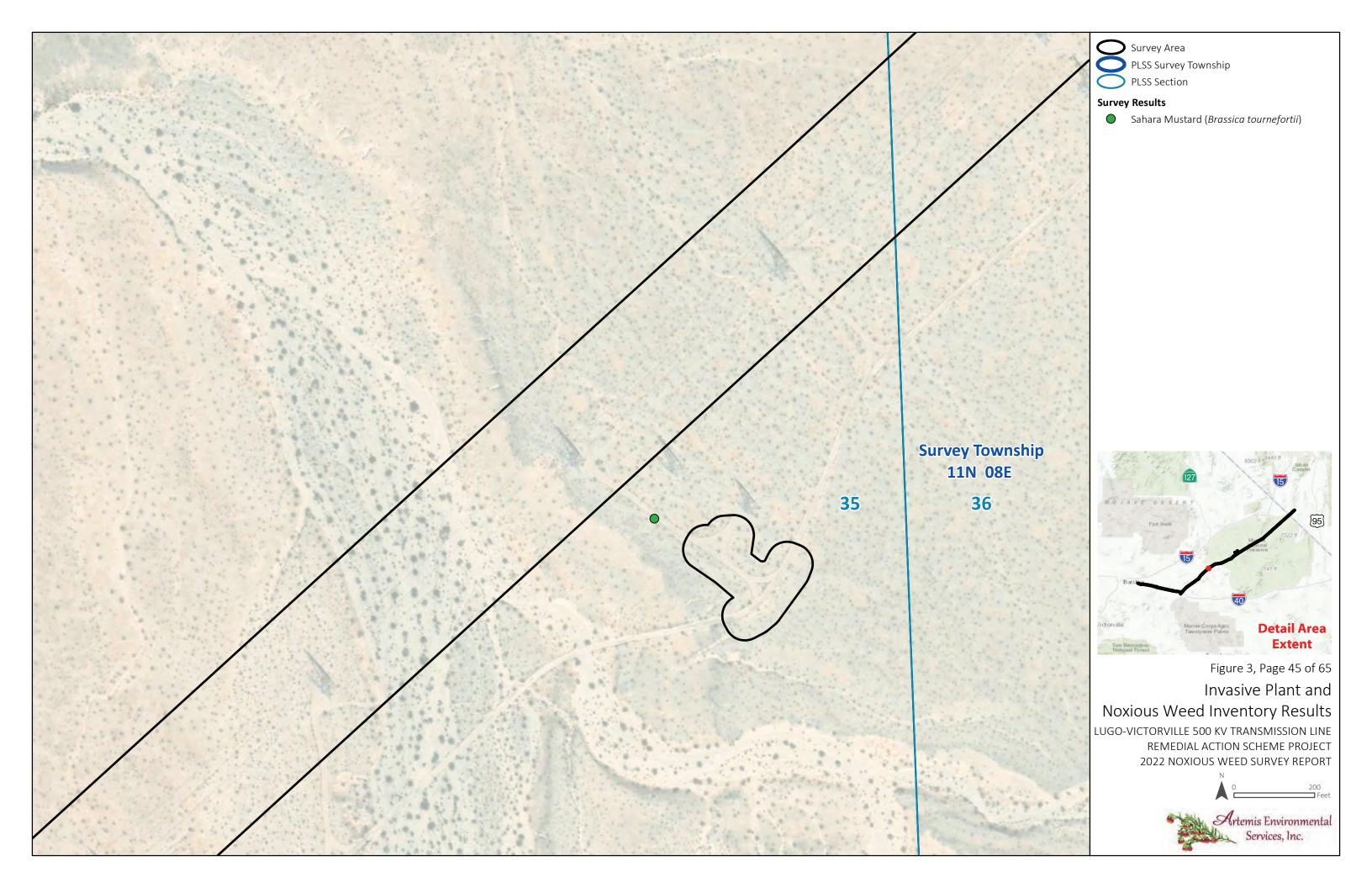


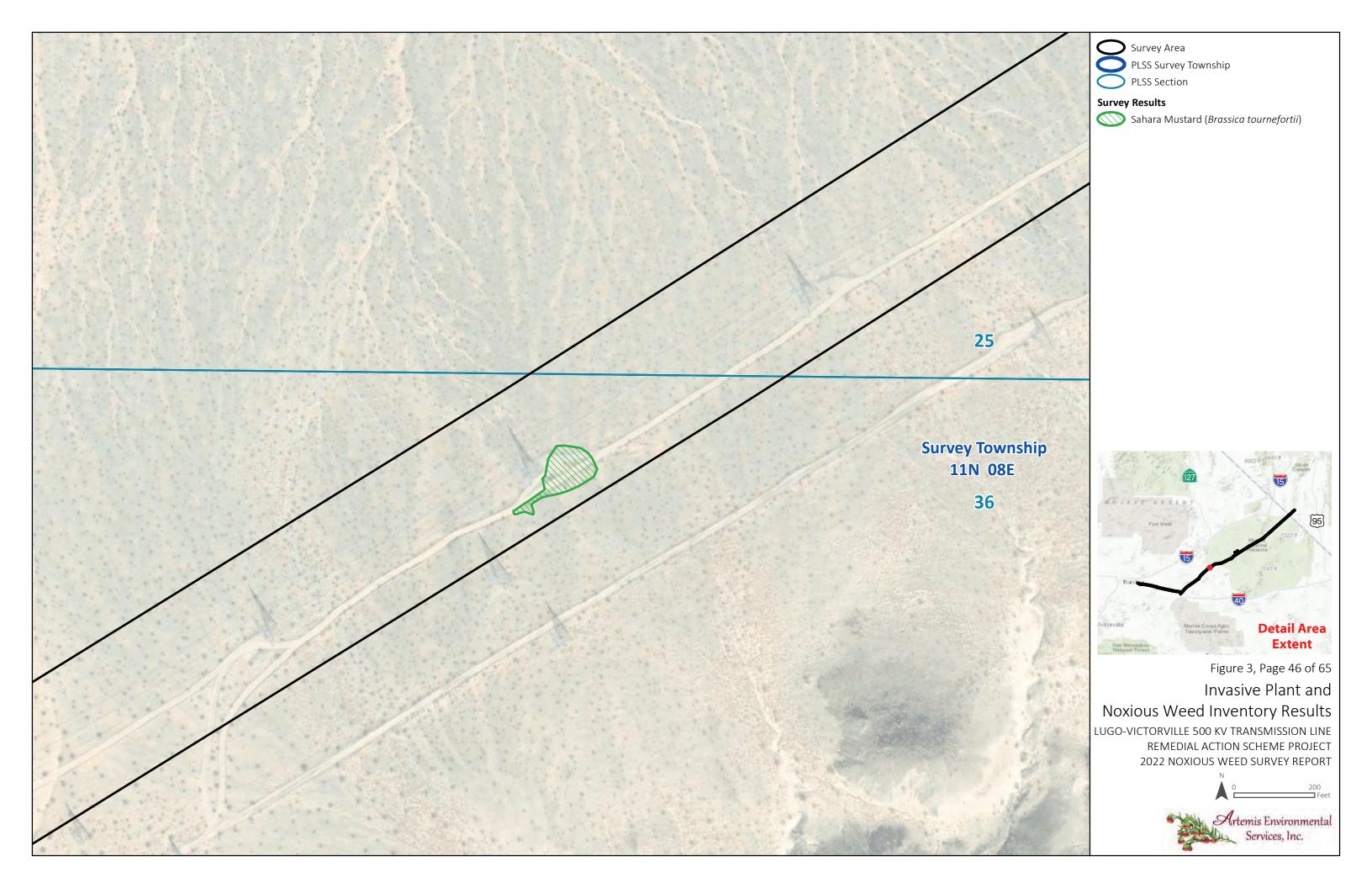


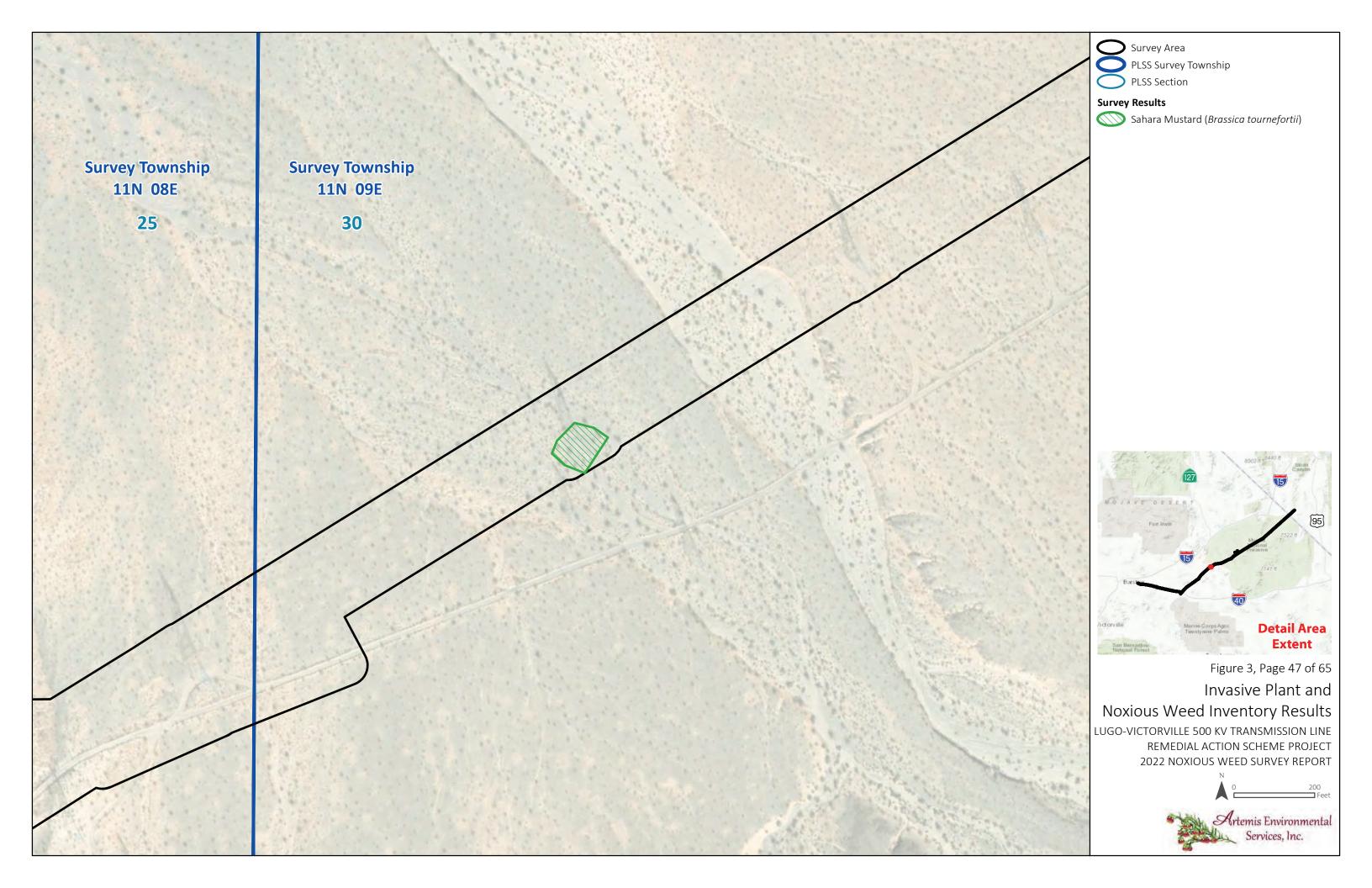


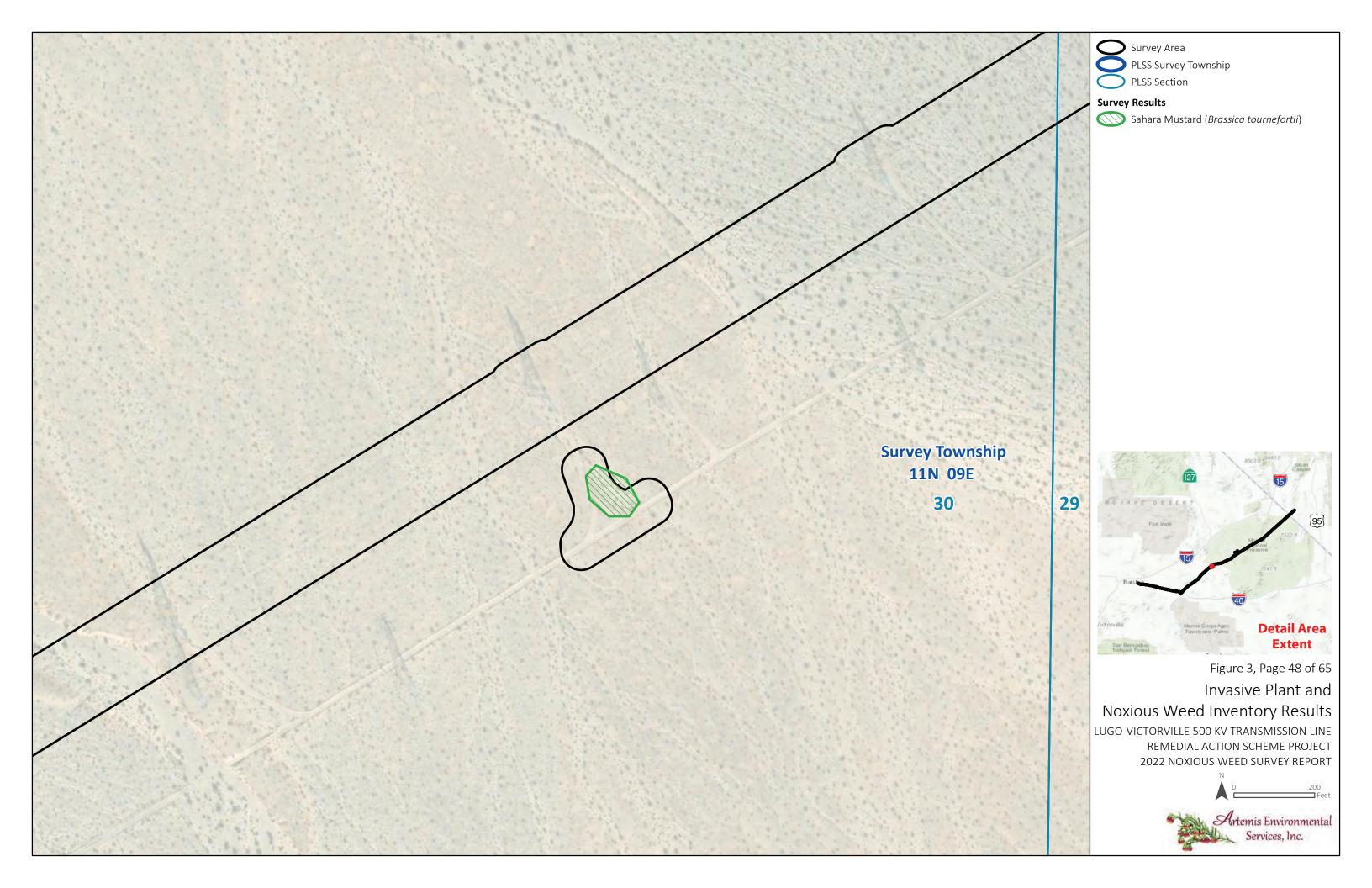


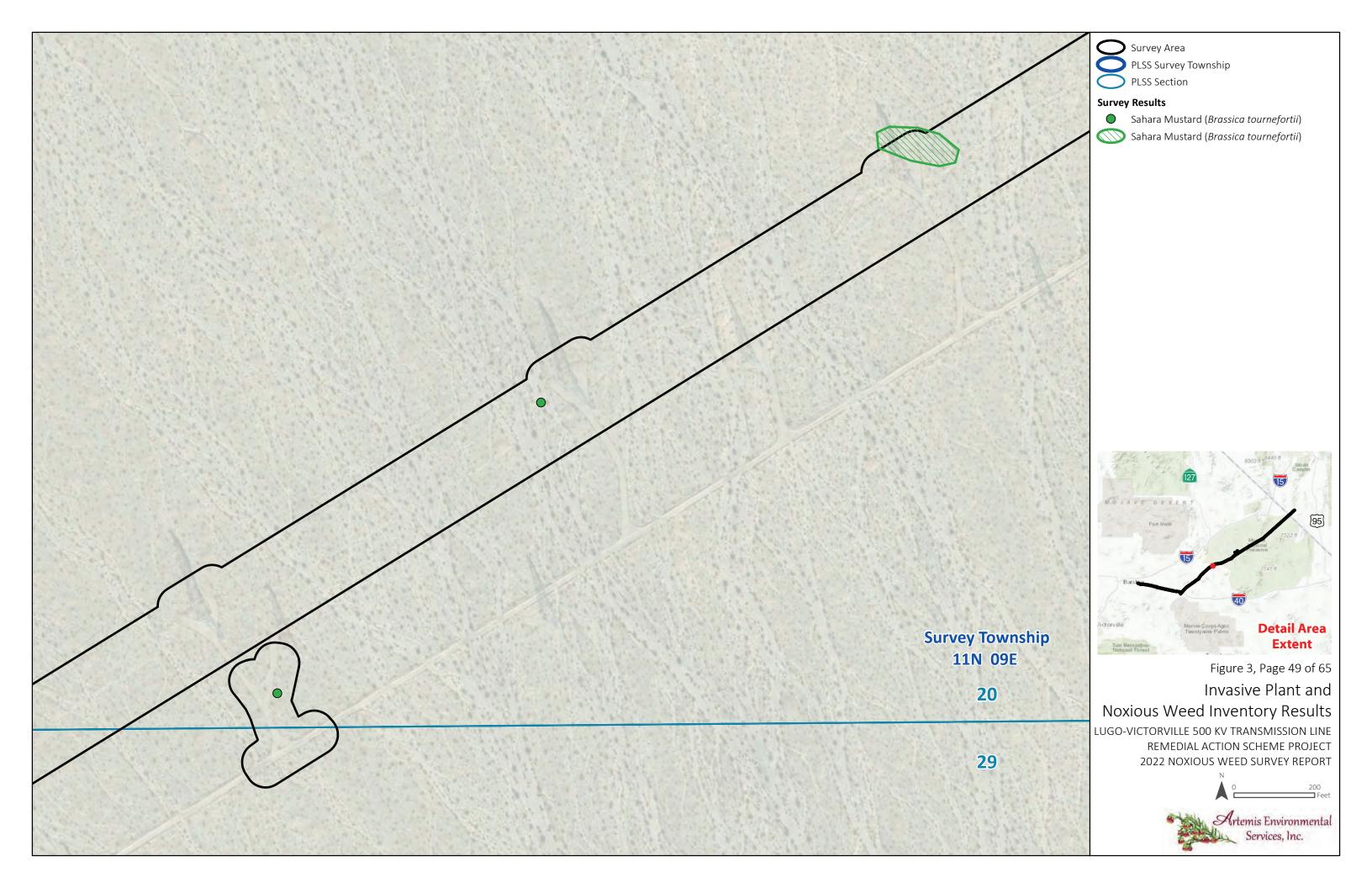


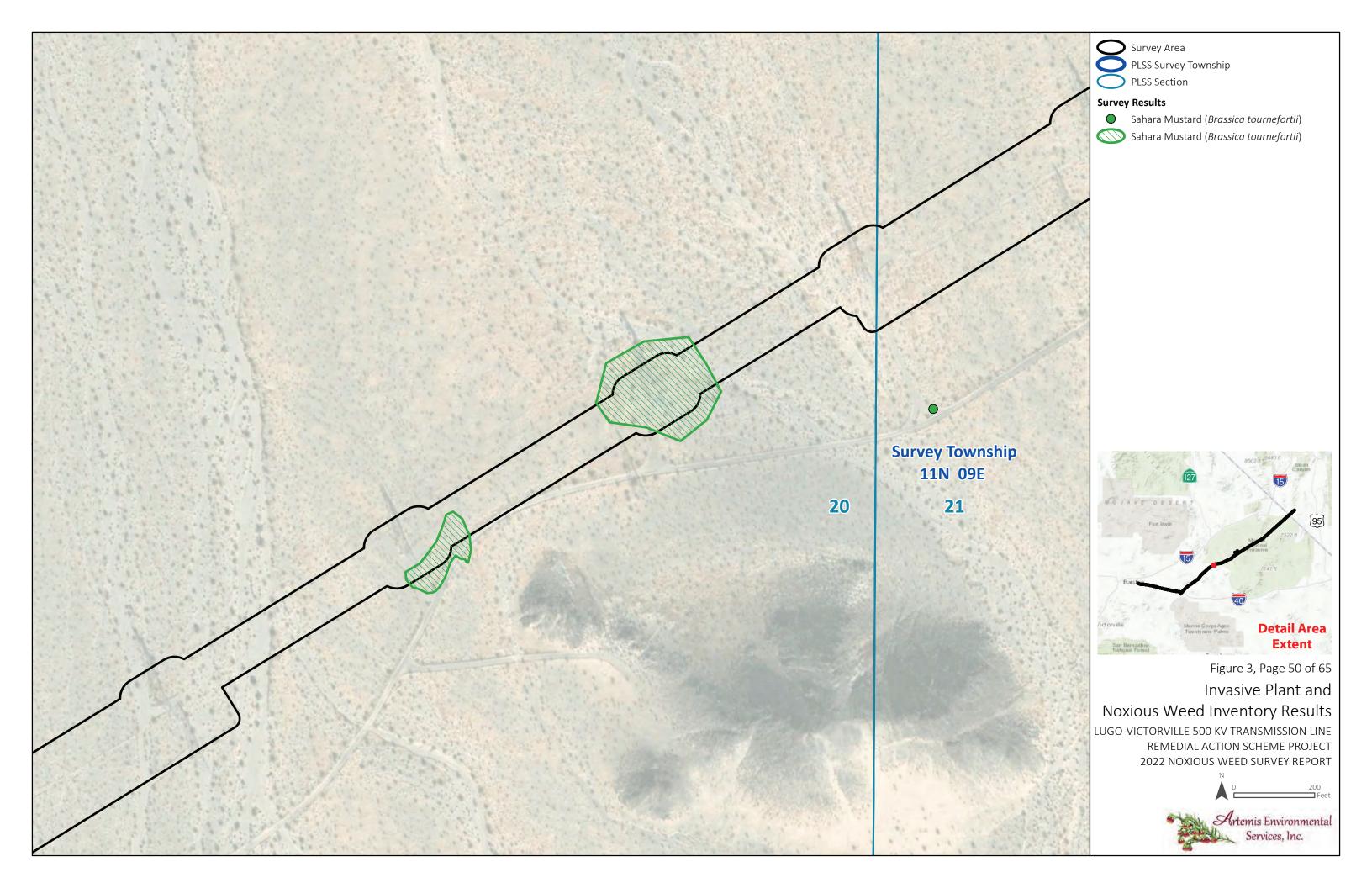


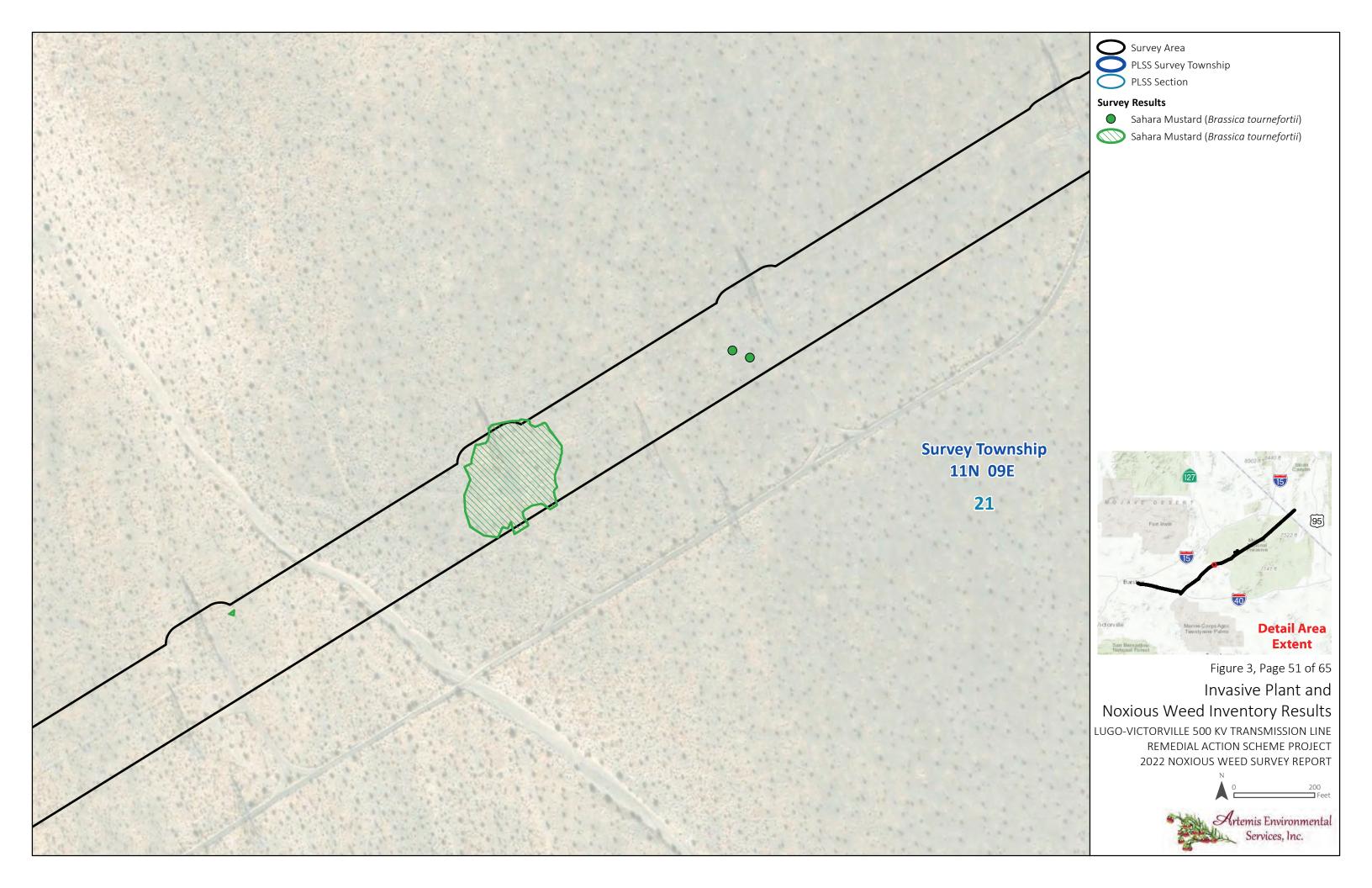


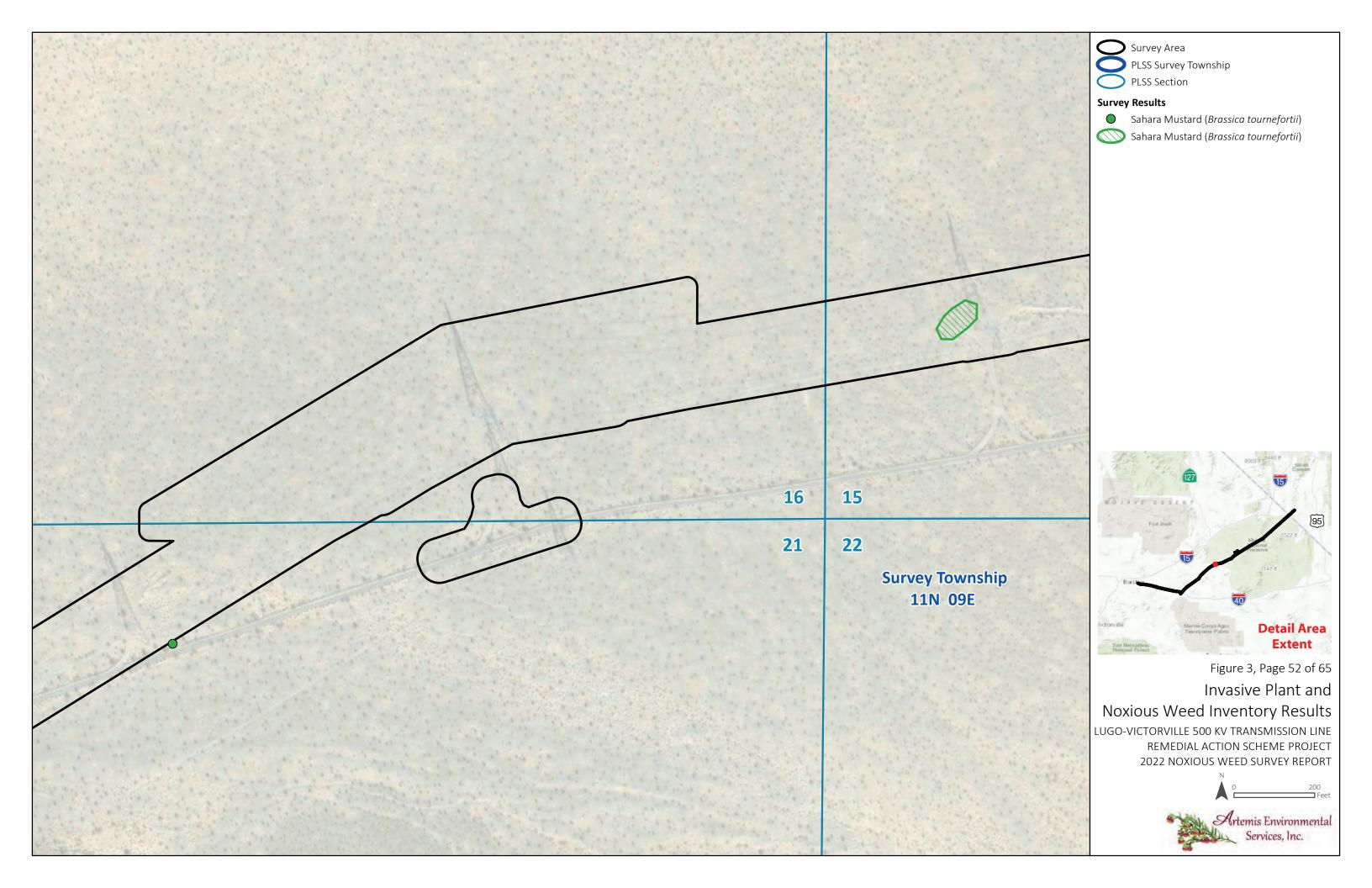




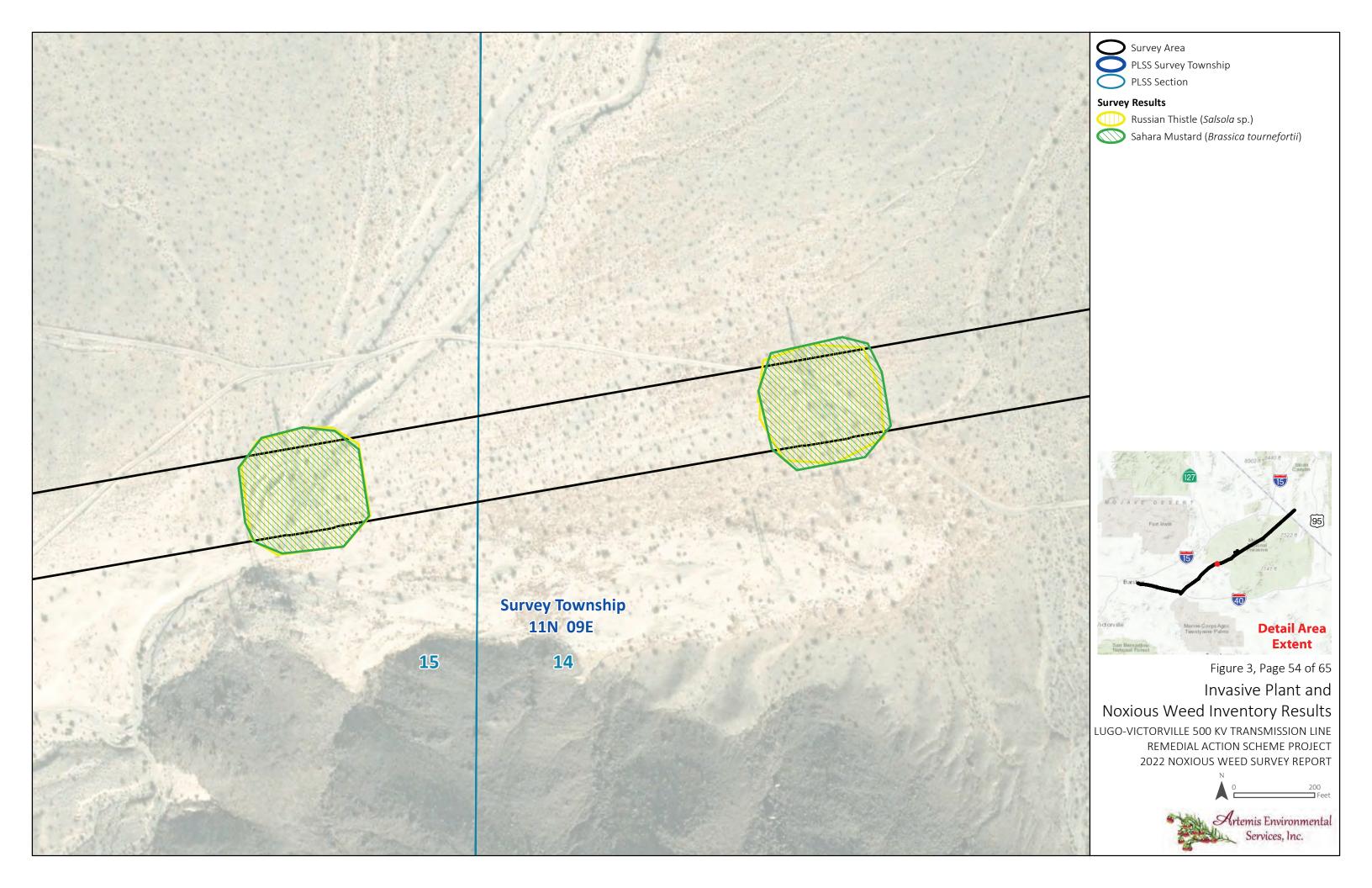


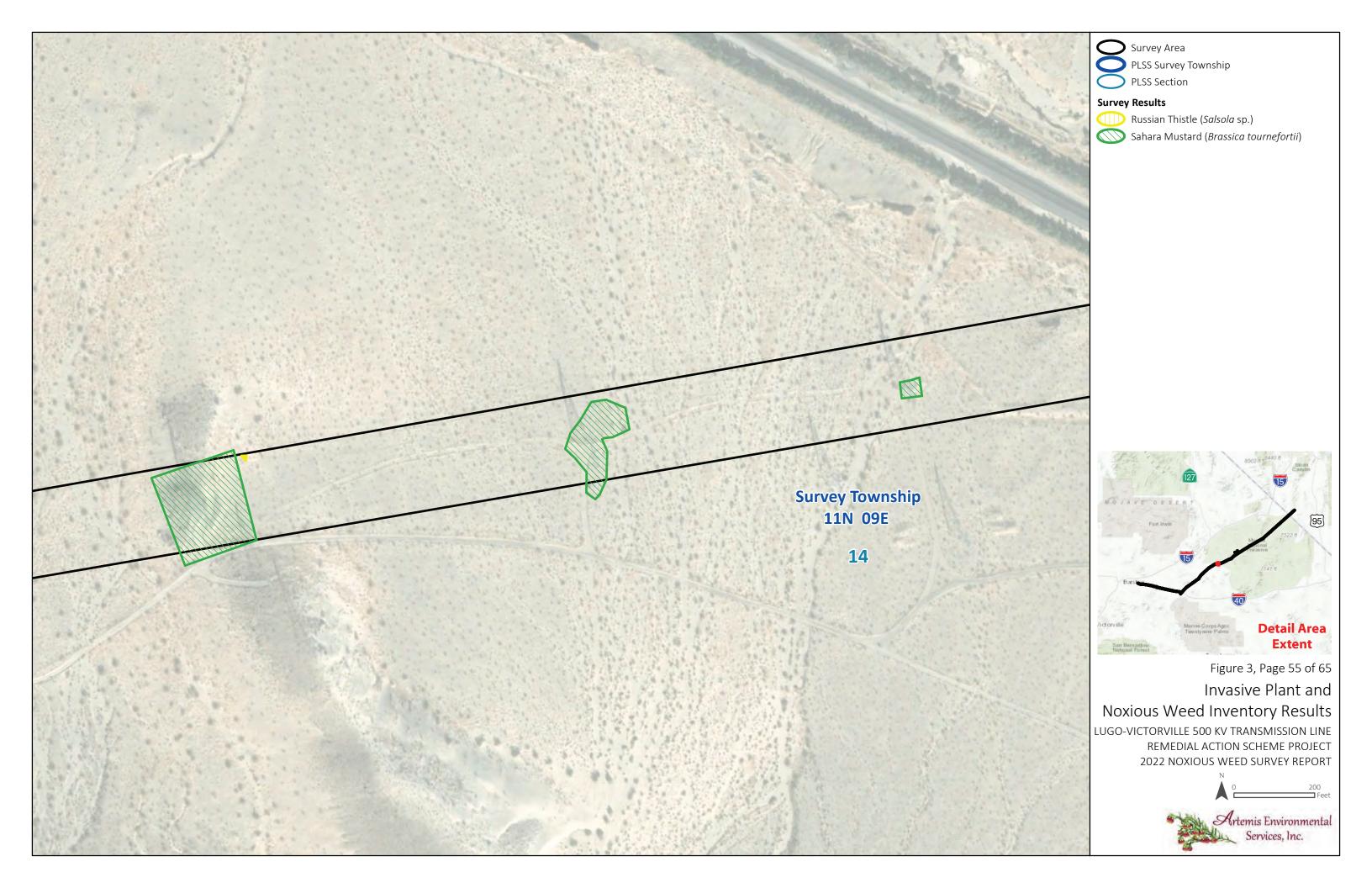


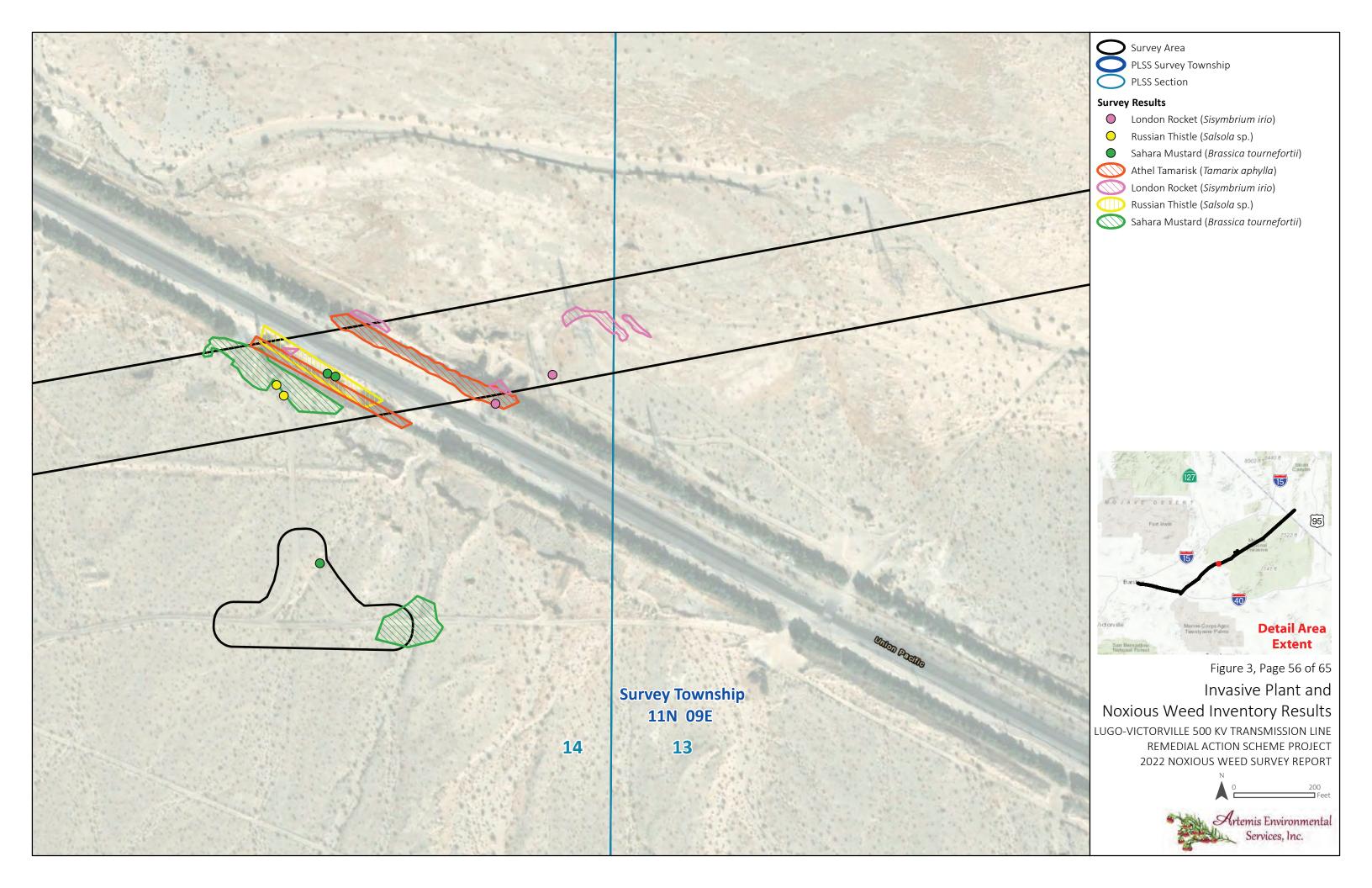


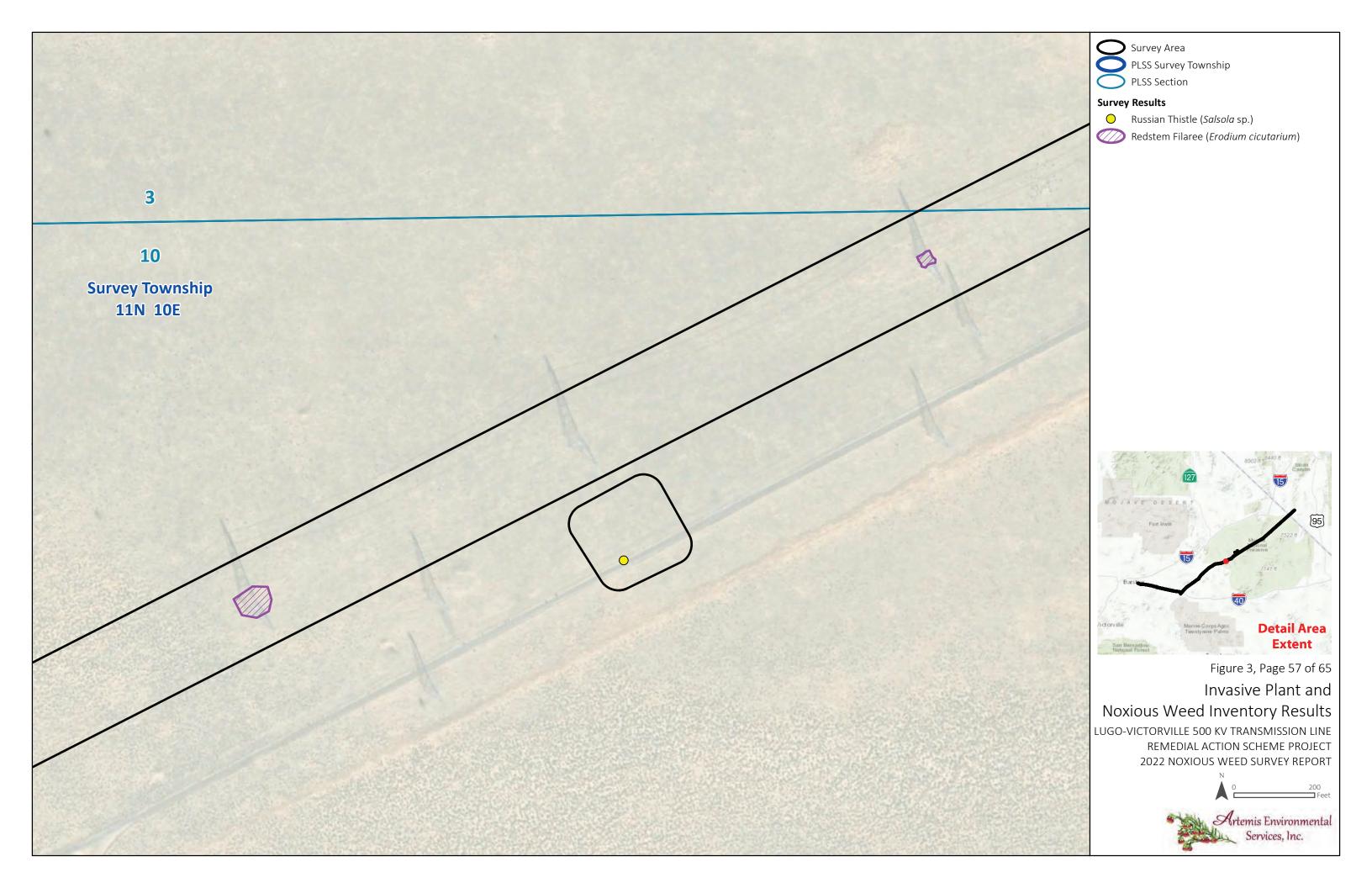


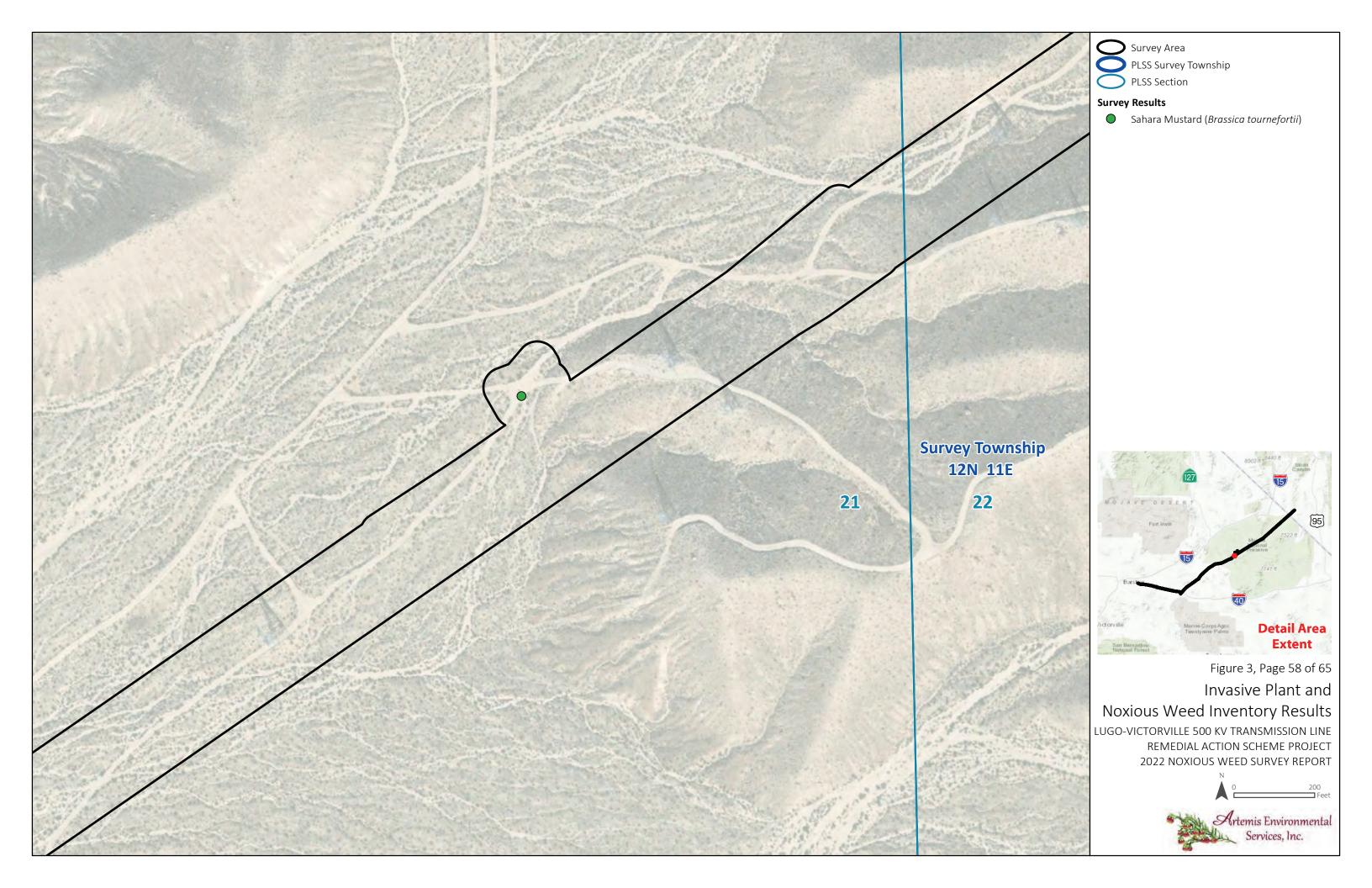


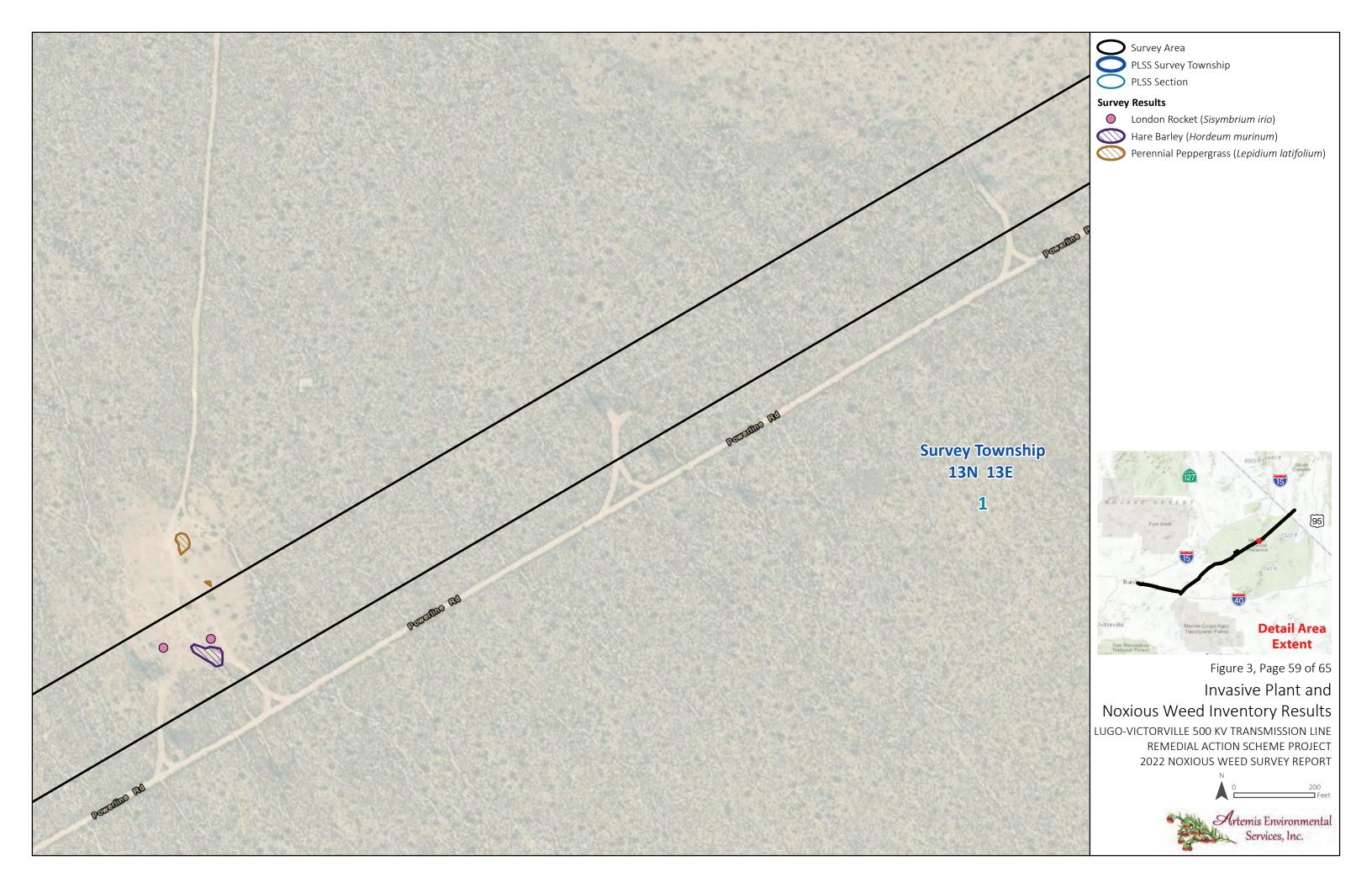


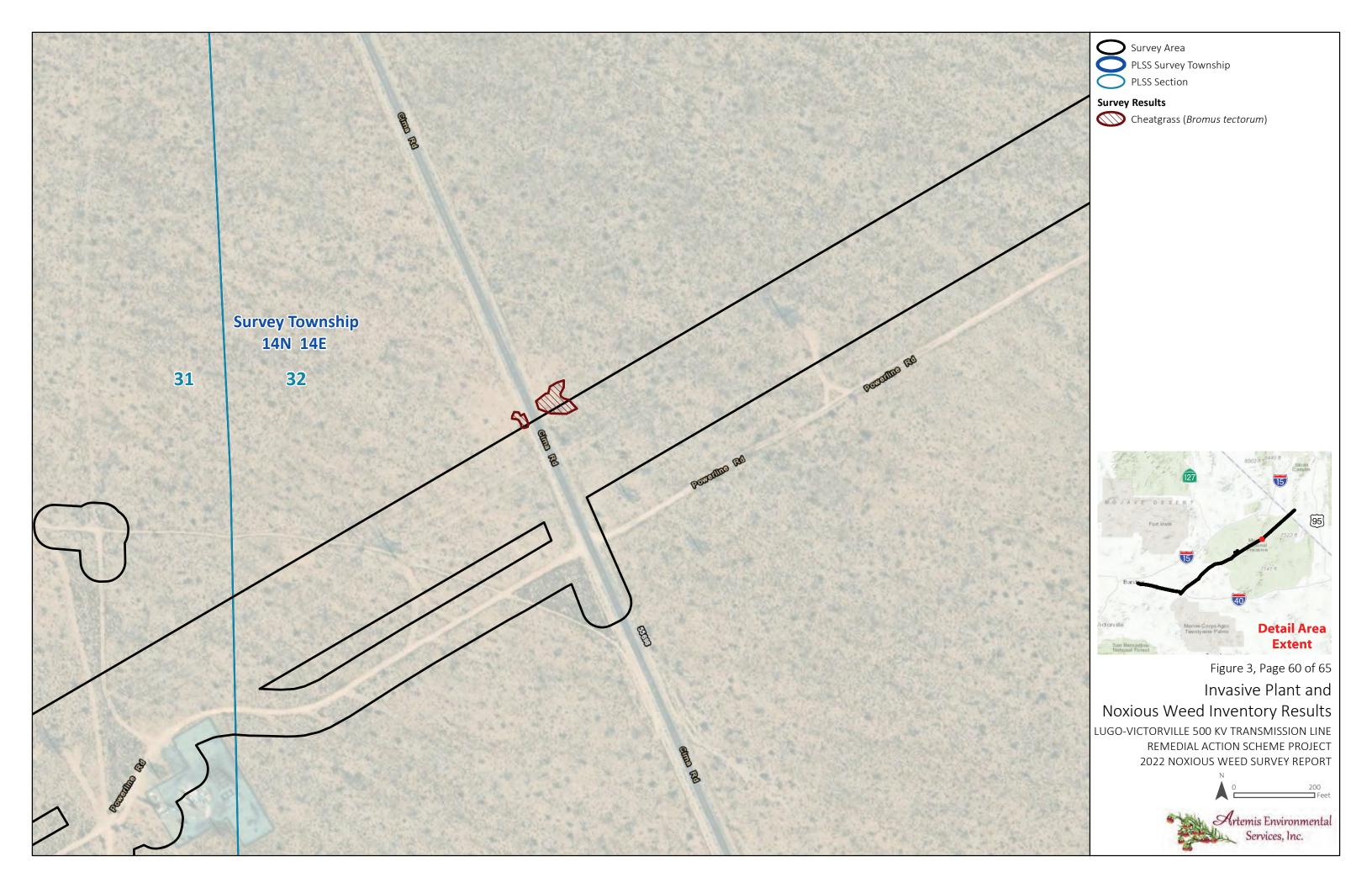


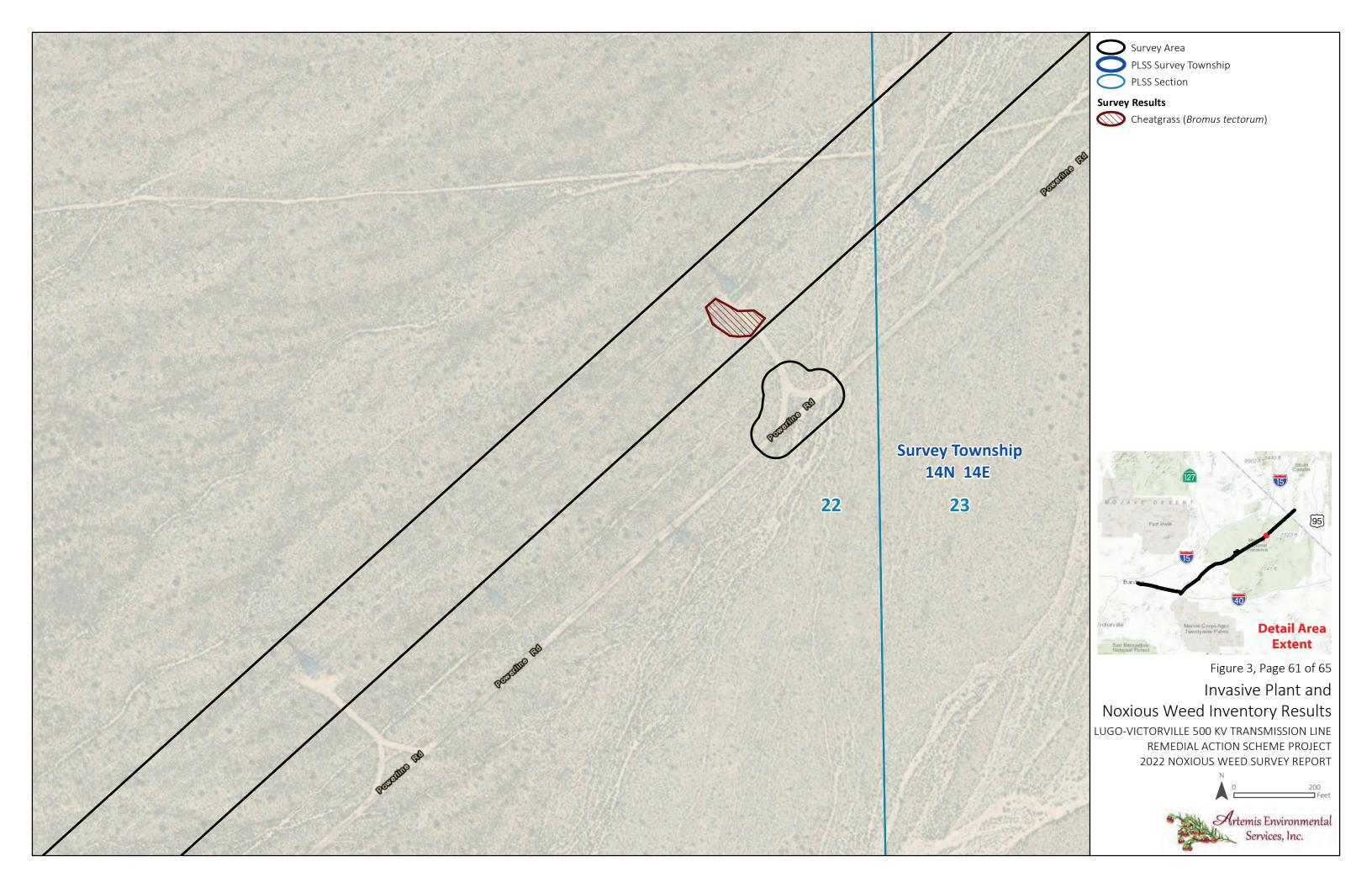


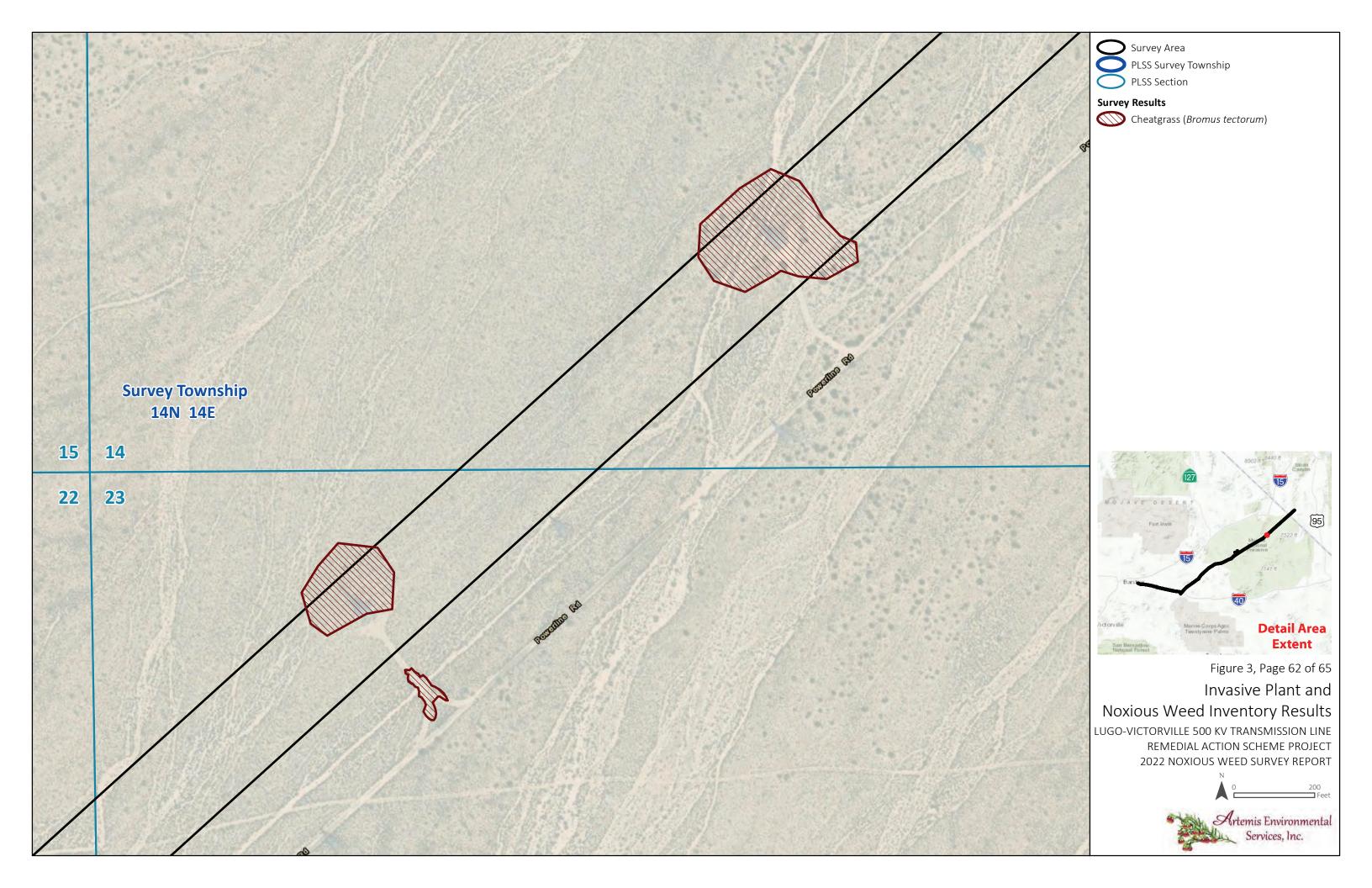


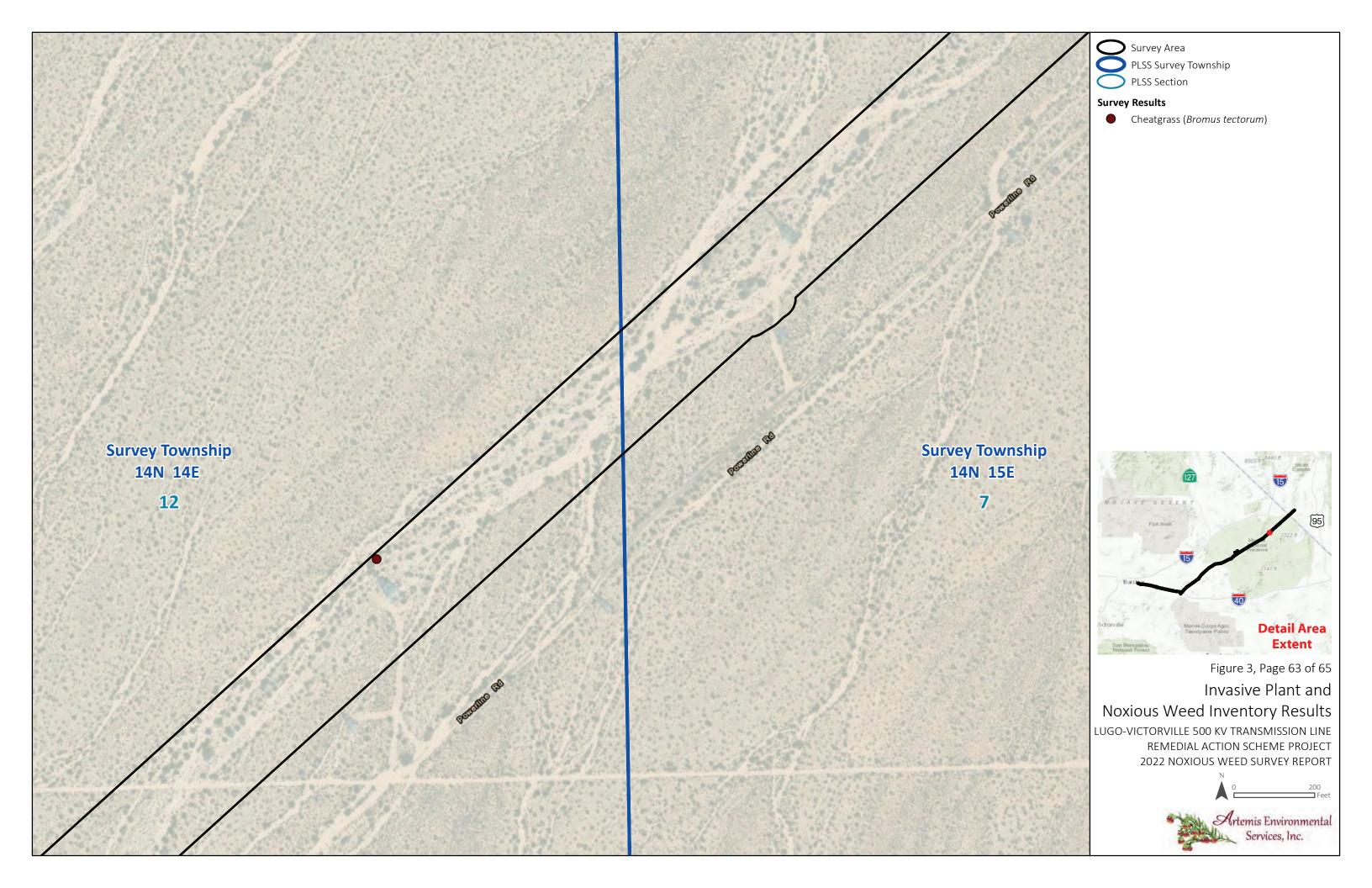


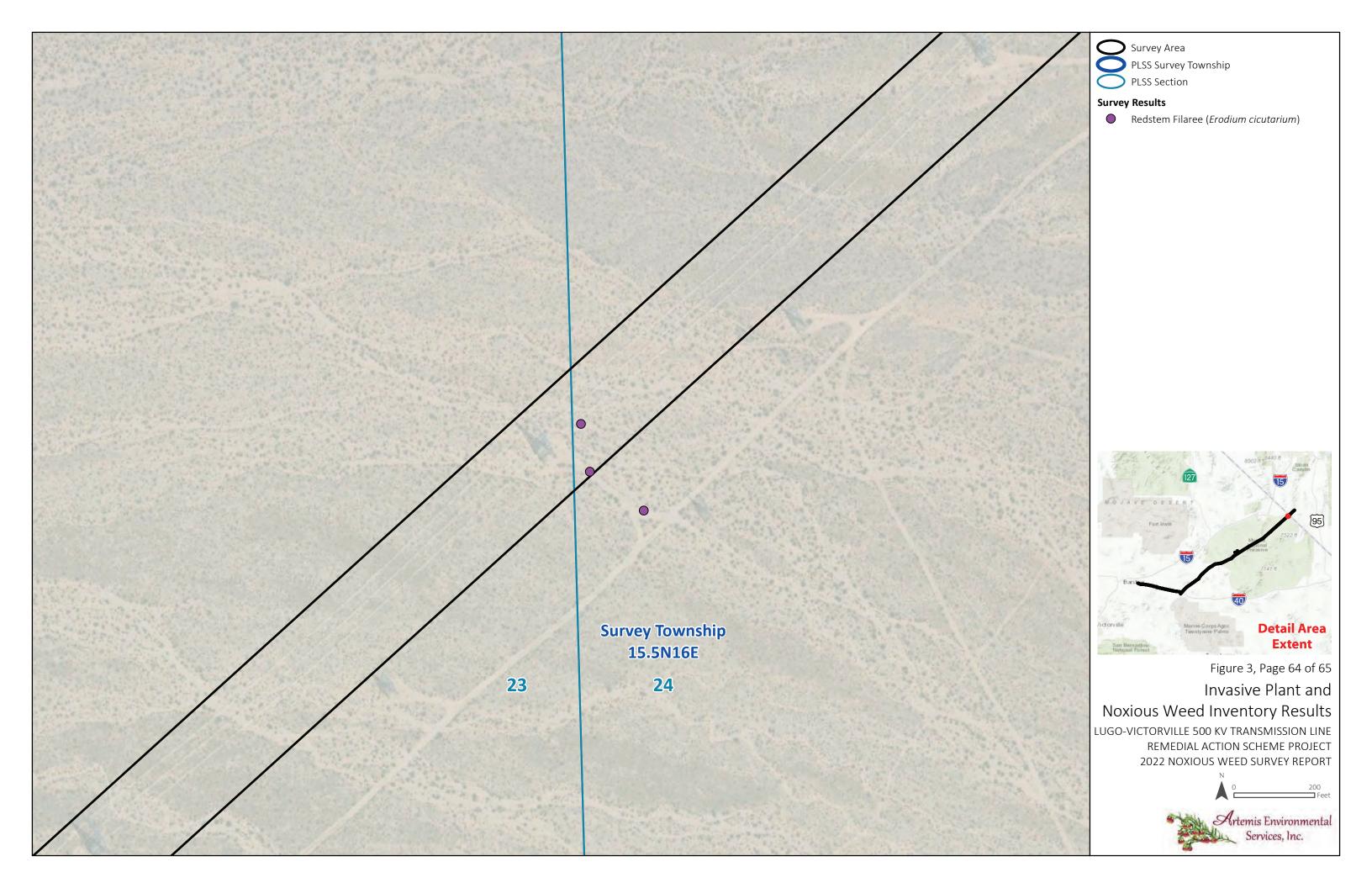


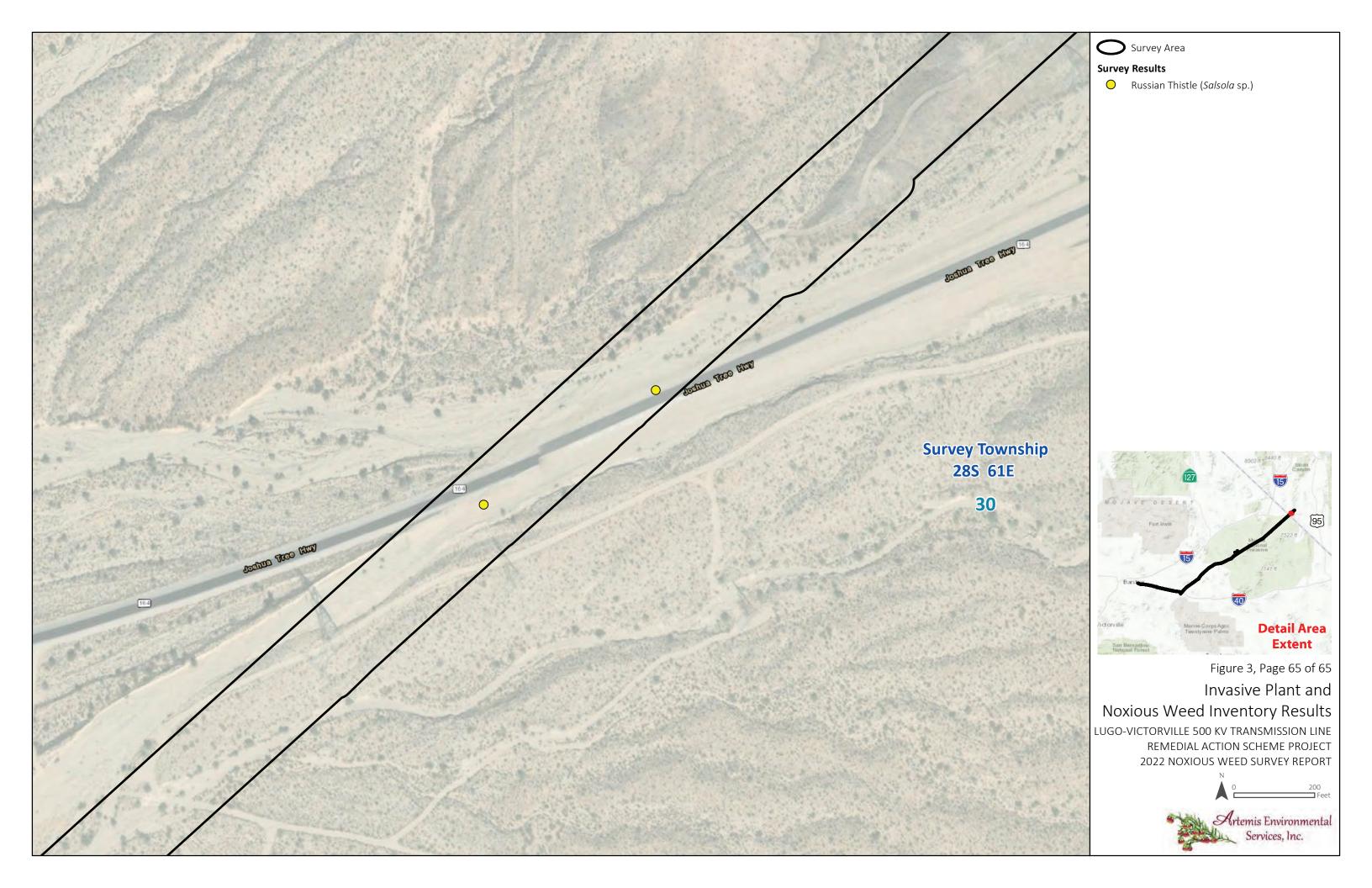












## Appendix B

Representative Photos



<u>Photo 1</u>: Sahara mustard (*Brassica tournefortii*). April 2022. Segment 1.



<u>Photo 2</u>: Red brome (*Bromus madritensis* subsp. *rubens*). April 2022. Segment 1.



B-1 June 2022



<u>Photo 3</u>: Cheatgrass (Bromus tectorum). April 2022. Segment 1.



<u>Photo 4</u>: Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*). April 2022. Segment 1.



B-2 June 2022



<u>Photo 5</u>: Redstem filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*). April 2022. Segment 1.



<u>Photo 6</u>: Hare barley (*Hordeum murinum*). April 2022. Segment 1.



B-3 June 2022



<u>Photo 7</u>: Salsola species (likely *Salsola paulsenii*). April 2022. Segment 2.



Photo 8: Salsola species (likely Salsola tragus). April 2022. Segment 1.



B-4 June 2022



<u>Photo 9</u>: Common mediterranean grass (*Schismus barbatus*). April 2022. Segment 2.



<u>Photo 10</u>: London rocket (Sisymbrium irio). April 2022. Segment 1.



B-5 June 2022



<u>Photo 11</u>: Athel tamarisk (*Tamarix aphylla*). April 2022. Segment 1.



<u>Photo 12</u>: Branched saltcedar (*Tamarix ramosissima*). April 2022. Segment 1.



B-6 June 2022