



An Employee-Owned Company

October 13, 2021

Mr. Troy Friedeck
Meridian Development
9988 Hibert Street, Suite 210
San Diego, CA 92131

Reference: Northeast Gateway Project – Biology Constraints Analysis (RECON Number 9998)

Dear Mr. Friedeck:

A site visit was conducted on September 22, 2021, on six parcels (survey area) located in the northeastern portion of the city of Escondido, California (Figure 1). The survey area is located to the east of East Valley Parkway and north of Beven Drive and includes Assessor Parcel Numbers 240-011-01, 240-011-12, 240-011-13, 240-020-23, 240-002-031, and 240-002-032 (Figure 2). The purpose of the site visit was to document the existing vegetation communities and assess the study area for the potential to support any sensitive biological resources based on the habitats present. This information would then be used to identify any constraints sensitive biological resources identified on the site could have on the future development of these parcels. This constraints analysis did not evaluate any proposed project or impacts associated with any proposed project.

1.0 Methods

A search of the California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDDB) was conducted prior to visiting the site to identify any sensitive species occurrences documented in the vicinity of the study area. Once on-site, the study area was walked on foot to document the existing vegetation communities, map the locations of any sensitive biological resources observed at the time of the site visit, and assess the habitats present for the potential to support sensitive species. Vegetation communities were mapped in the field using a recent aerial photograph.

Information collected in the field was used to produce a preliminary biological resource map of the property. The data layers for the map were created using ArcMap, a Geographic Information System (GIS) type software program.

2.0 Survey Results

CNDDDB Search

The CNDDDB search revealed that no sensitive species occurrences have been recorded in the survey area. The data base had occurrences of sensitive species in the vicinity of the survey area and these species are listed in Table 1.

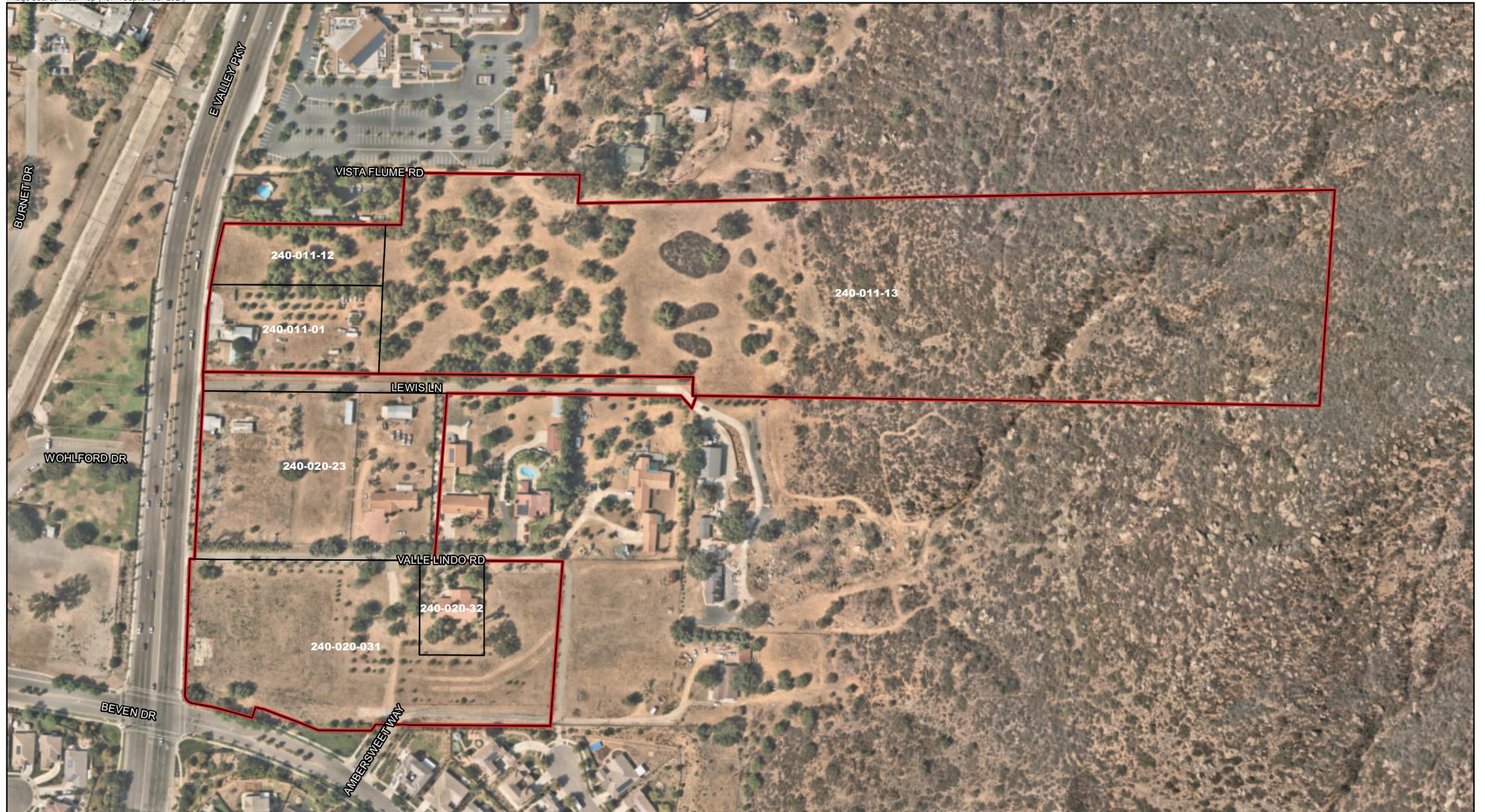
One sensitive plant species has the potential to occur in the study area, Engelmann oak. This oak tree has a moderate potential to occur in low numbers within the northern portion of the study area as individual trees in the grove of mostly non-native trees and in the oak woodland habitat on the hillside in the northeast part of the survey area.

Four wildlife species have the potential to occur in the study area: orange-throated whiptail, San Diegan tiger whiptail, southern rufous-crowned sparrow, and coastal California gnatcatcher. These species have a moderate potential to occur on the hillside in the northeastern portion of the survey area within the native shrubland habitats.



 Project Location

FIGURE 1
Regional Location



-  Survey Area
-  Parcels

FIGURE 2
Study Area

Table 1 List of Sensitive Plant and Wildlife Species Occurrences in the Vicinity of the Study Area			
Species	Federal/State Status*	CNPS Rank**	Potential for Occurrence
Plants			
Ramona horkelia <i>Horkelia truncata</i>	--/--	1B.3	Low
Summer holly <i>Comarostaphylis diversifolia</i> ssp. <i>diversifolia</i>	--/--	1B.2	Low
Engelmann oak <i>Quercus engelmannii</i>	--/--	4.2	Moderate
Wildlife			
Blainville's [=Coast] horned lizard <i>Phrynosoma blainvillii</i>	--/CSC	--	Low
Belding's orange-throated whiptail <i>Aspidoscelis hyperythra beldingi</i>	--/CSC	--	Moderate
San Diegan tiger whiptail <i>Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri</i>	--/CSC	--	Moderate
Least Bell's vireo (nesting) <i>Vireo bellii pusillus</i>	FE/CE	--	Low
Coastal California gnatcatcher <i>Polioptila californica californica</i>	FT/CSC	--	Moderate
Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow <i>Aimophila ruficeps canescens</i>	--/WL	--	Moderate
Tricolored blackbird <i>Agelaius tricolor</i>	--/CSC	--	Low
Dulzura pocket mouse <i>Chaetodipus californicus femoralis</i>	--/CSC	--	Low
Source: California Natural Diversity Data Base – Rare Find 2021 *Federal and State Status Codes: FE = Listed as endangered by the federal government. FT = Listed as threatened by the federal government. CE = Listed as endangered by the state of California. CSC = California Department of Fish and Wildlife species of special concern. WL = California Department of Fish and Wildlife watch list species. **California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Ranks: 1B = Species rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere. .2 = (20-80% occurrences threatened; moderate degree and immediacy of threat). .3 = Species not very threatened in California (<20% of occurrences threatened; low degree and immediacy of threat or no current threats known). 4 = A watch list of species of limited distribution. These species need to be monitored for changes in the status of their populations.			

In general, the western portion of the study area is comprised of disturbed land that lacks native habitat that could support sensitive species. The native habitats observed on the hillside in the northeastern portion of the study area are more suitable to support sensitive species as noted above.

Vegetation Communities

Four vegetation communities and two land cover types occur in the study area (Figure 3). The vegetation communities are coastal sage scrub, southern mixed chaparral, coast live oak woodland, and disturbed land. The two land cover types are ornamental plantings and developed land.

Coastal sage scrub occurs on a portion of the hillside in the northeastern portion of the study area and as two isolated patches in the flat area to just west. Dominant shrubs include California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) and California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*). Southern mixed chaparral also occurs on the hillside and dominant shrub species include chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*), and toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*). A small patch of coast live oak woodland occurs on the north portion of the hillside area that supports a small stand of coast live oak trees (*Quercus agrifolia*).

Most of the study area is comprised of disturbed land that lacks native habitat. Non-native species that are common in the disturbed areas include ripgut grass (*Bromus diandrus*), black mustard (*Brassica nigra*), and Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus*). Non-native trees, especially in the northwestern portion of the study area, are common and include California pepper (*Schinus mole*), Eucalyptus trees (*Eucalyptus* spp.), date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*), Mexican fan palm (*Washingtonia robusta*), olive (*Olea Europa*), and various citrus trees (e.g., orange, lemon). Individuals of native coast live oak trees occur scattered in the northwestern portion of the study area within the grove on non-native trees.

Developed land in the study area includes those portions that are paved or contain structures such as homes, sheds, or other out-buildings. Ornamental plantings include an area that was landscaped with non-native plants as part of the adjacent streetscape along Beven Drive.

Sensitive Biological Resources

The City of Escondido is a participant in the Multiple Habitat Conservation Program (MHCP; San Diego Association of Governments 2003) and has a draft MHCP Subarea Plan (City of Escondido 2001) that it uses as a guide for implementing the MHCP conservation goals. Vegetation communities considered environmentally sensitive lands under the MHCP and draft Subarea Plan that occur in the study area include coastal sage scrub, southern mixed chaparral, and coast live oak woodland.

No sensitive plants or wildlife were observed in the study area during the site visit. As described above, there is a moderate potential for sensitive plant species (Engelmann oak) and sensitive wildlife species (San Diegan tiger whiptail, orange-throated whiptail, southern rufous-crowned sparrow, and coastal California gnatcatcher) to occur in the study area in the northeastern portion of the site where native habitat is present.

No potential jurisdictional waters, wetland or non-wetland, were observed in the low-lying western portion of the study area. There is the potential for non-wetland water drainages to occur on the hillside on the northeastern portion of the study area. These drainages appear to drain to the southwest and not into the study area. A focused delineation would be required if future development were to encroach into the hillside on the northeast portion of the study area.

3.0 Biological Resource Constraints

Multiple Habitat Conservation Program

A portion of the northeastern study area is within a softline Focused Planning Area (FPA) as designated under the MHCP (see Figure 3). Softline FPA's are areas identified for up to eighty percent conservation. Impacts within an FPA would be limited to the designated percentage determined by the City of Escondido and require mitigation for vegetation and sensitive species impacts in an FPA area. Mitigation costs can represent a moderate to significant economic constraint to development, depending on the amount and type of mitigation required and cost to achieve it.

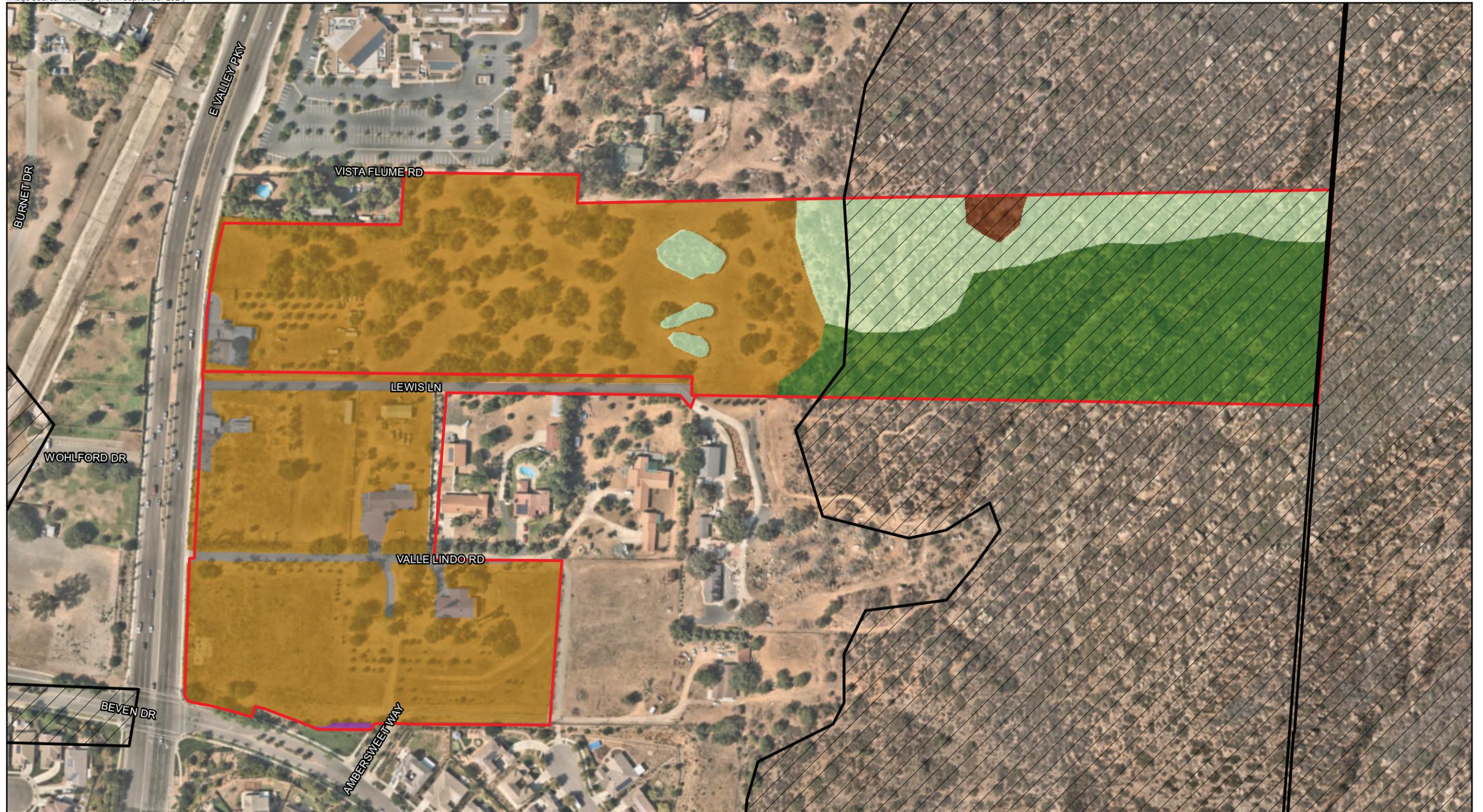


FIGURE 3
Biological Resources

City of Escondido

Under the MHCP, the City of Escondido requires mitigation for impacts to sensitive biological resources. Impacts to coastal sage scrub, southern mixed chaparral, or coast live oak woodland vegetation communities would be considered significant and require mitigation at ratios specified under the MHCP. Impacts to disturbed land, developed land, and ornamental plantings would not be considered significant or require mitigation. Mitigation for impacts to sensitive vegetation communities can be achieved either through preservation of similar habitat within an FPA either on-site or off-site in the city of Escondido, through the purchase of mitigation bank credits for similar habitat in an approved mitigation bank, or through the establishment of similar habitat in an appropriate area on-site or off-site. Mitigation for impacts to sensitive vegetation communities can represent a moderate to significant economic constraint of development, depending on the amount of mitigation required and cost to achieve that mitigation.

Impacts to sensitive plant and wildlife species if present would be considered significant and require mitigation. Often the mitigation for a sensitive wildlife species is achieved through the preservation of habitat (vegetation) as described above for sensitive vegetation communities. For sensitive plant species, translocation or planting may be required in addition to habitat preservation. Mitigation for sensitive species may represent a moderate economic constraint of development, depending on the amount and type of mitigation required and cost to achieve that mitigation.

The City of Escondido Municipal Code under Section 33-1068.C regulates impacts to mature and protected trees as defined by the code. Oak trees, including coast live oak and Engelmann oaks, are considered protected trees and their preservation is recommended where possible. Unavoidable loss of mature trees and protected trees often require replacement with a tree of equal size and caliper. Replacement ratios are generally 1:1 for mature trees and 2:1 for protected trees. The ordinance requires that a tree survey be conducted to document the mature and protected trees that occur on a site. Mitigation for mature and/or protected trees can represent a moderate economic constraint to development, depending on the number of trees required to be replaced and method of replacement (i.e., planting or translocation).

If you have any question regarding this biology constraints analysis, please contact me at 619-308-9333 ext. 171 or at gscheid@reconenvironmental.com.

Sincerely,



Gerry Scheid
Senior Biologist

GAS:jg

References Cited

City of Escondido

2001 Escondido Subarea Plan – Public Review Draft.

San Diego Association of Governments

2003 Final MHCP Plan. Prepared for Multiple Habitat Conservation Program for the Cities of Carlsbad, Encinitas, Escondido, Oceanside, San Marcos, Solana Beach, and Vista. March.