

*Appendix B: Biological Resource Assessment for
Murrieta Canyon Academy*

Memorandum

Date: November 1, 2019

To: Lori Noorigian, Murrieta Valley Unified School District

From: Brianna Bernard, Carlson Strategic Land Solutions

Subject: Biological Resource Assessment for Murrieta Canyon Academy in the City of Murrieta

Murrieta Valley Unified School District (MVUSD) requested Carlson Strategic Land Solutions (CSLS) prepare a Technical Memo and graphics documenting the finding of a field review for potential sensitive plants and wildlife for the Murrieta Canyon Academy (Project) located in the City of Murrieta, California. In support of Project efforts, CSLS biologist, Brianna Bernard, conducted an analysis of the biological resources observed onsite and on October 2, 2019 and described in further detail below.

1.0 Project Location

The Project Site is located at 24150 Hayes Avenue, Murrieta, California (Figure 1). The Project site is located north of Hayes and west of Fullerton Road (Figure 2). The Project Site is located within the United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-Minute Topographic Map *Murrieta* Quadrangle.

Areas surrounding the Project Site include residential to the east and south; Thompson Middle School soccer field and Thompson Middle School to the west; and Murrieta Valley High School to the north (Figure 2). The Project site is a portion of the Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APN) 904-050-047.

2.0 Project Description

MVUSD proposes to expand the existing Murrieta Canyon Academy (Project). The Murrieta Canyon Academy is an alternative high school which provides independent study and alternative high school and adult education. The Project expansion will allow MCA to increase current capacity from 200 students to 500 students.

The existing Murrieta Canyon Academy buildings are to be demolished and new buildings, parking, and landscape is to be constructed. The Project proposes buildings that are generally

located within the existing softball fields located immediately north of the existing campus and south of the adjacent Thompson Middle School. Currently, the campus is a closed campus with a chain link fence surrounding the site. Access to all portions is via a locked gate along the south side of the campus.

The Project will generally include the design of a new campus with approximately 33,000 square-foot total footprint, associated parking lot, and other site improvements. More specifically, the new campus will include construction of a laboratory and classroom building, student pavilion, administration office, various academic and activity courts with additional parking and landscape at the existing campus. The proposed buildings will contain various classrooms, a library, restrooms, and storage rooms. The proposed buildings are expected to be single-story structures.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Biological Survey

Prior to the field survey, available literature, historical aeriels, and databases were reviewed regarding sensitive habitats, special status plants, and wildlife species within the vicinity. CSLS reviewed and consulted literature and databases focused on Riverside County, California, including the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB), California Native Plant Society (CNPS), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Critical Habitat database. The CNDDDB is a California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) species account database that inventories status and locations of rare plants and wildlife in California (Figure 3). The CNDDDB was used to identify any sensitive plant communities and special status plants and wildlife that have potential to occur within the Project site.

The CNPS inventory provides information and range for sensitive plant species within a specific or general area.

The USFWS's online service for information regarding Final Critical Habitat designation within California was reviewed to determine if the Study Area is within any species' designated Critical Habitat.

3.2 Jurisdictional Waters

The Project site was assessed for jurisdictional Waters of the United States (U.S.) and Waters of the State. To determine the presence of a wetland, three indicators are required: (1) hydrophytic vegetation, (2) hydric soils, and (3) wetland hydrology. The methodology published in the *U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 1987 Wetland Delineation Manual* and the *Arid West Supplement* sets the standards for meeting each of the three indicators, which normally require that 50 percent

or more dominant plant species typical of a wetland, soils exhibiting characteristics of saturation, and hydrological indicators be present.

Additionally, jurisdiction over non-wetland Waters of the U.S. is typically determined through the observation of an Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM), which is defined as the "line on the shore established by the fluctuation of water and indicated by physical characteristics such as a clear, natural line impressed on the bank, shelving, changes in the character of soil, destruction of terrestrial vegetation, the presence of litter and debris, or other appropriate means that consider the characteristics of the surrounding areas." Projects with impacts to Waters of the U.S. are regulated under Sections 401 and 404 of the Clean Water Act.

Waters of the State are regulated by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) through Section 1600 et seq. of the California Fish and Game Code. The limits of Waters of the State are defined as the "body of water that flows at least periodically or intermittently through a bed or channel having banks and supports fish or other aquatic life. This includes watercourses having surface or subsurface flow that supports or has supported riparian vegetation." Therefore, the limits extend from the channel bed to the top of the bank, with the addition of the canopy of any riparian habitat associated with the watercourse.

3.3 MSHCP Assessment

The Property Boundary is located within the MSHCP, specifically within the Lake Elsinore Area Plan. The MSHCP is a comprehensive plan that includes portions of the County of Riverside and numerous cities. The MSHCP plans for conservation of 146 species and proposes a reserve system of approximately 500,000 acres. The MSHCP is intended to contribute to the economic viability of the County of Riverside by providing landowners, developers, and public infrastructure projects a streamlined regulatory process. While Murrieta Valley Unified School District is not a signatory to the MSHCP Agreement, the Project was analyzed to confirm no MSHCP features or overlays occurred on the Project.

4.0 Results

4.1 Biological Results

CSLS Biologist conducted a general biological survey within the Project site and surrounding 300-foot buffer on October 2, 2019. The survey was performed between 4:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. The temperature was 83° F during the field survey, with clear skies.

The Project site contains a manicured baseball field, buildings, hardscape, parking lot, and associated infrastructure.

Wildlife species observed onsite during the survey include: turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*), American crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), black phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*), mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), and song sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*).

Representative photographs of the Project site were taken and included within Attachment A.

4.1.1 Vegetation Communities

Based on the field survey, the Project site is minimally vegetated, with ornamental species adjacent to the parking lot and turf within the baseball field. The Project site contains developed areas in the form of buildings, parking lot, and hardscape courtyard (Figure 4).

Table 1. Vegetation within the Project Site

Vegetation Community	Acreage
Ornamental	2.82
Developed	2.89
Total	5.71

Ornamental

This community includes maintained landscaped areas. The ornamental vegetation is non-native, and some of it is considered invasive. The ornamental habitat type includes shade trees, such as Peruvian pepper tree (*Schinus molle*), Brazilian pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*), and turf associated with the ball field, primarily Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*).

Developed

This community consists of area developed with structures, asphalt, and concrete. These areas consist of built materials and are frequently maintained.

4.1.2 Special Status Plant and Wildlife Species

The Project does not contain any suitable habitat for special status plants or wildlife. Furthermore, no CNDDDB occurrences fall within the Project Boundary (Figure 3). The vegetation communities observed onsite are not identified as special status habitats by CDFW or CNDDDB; further, the communities observed onsite do not constitute as habitats for special status plants as identified in CNPS.

4.1.3 Critical Habitat

No critical habitat was mapped onsite (Figure 3).

4.1.4 Nesting Bird Species

Since the Project site contains suitable habitat for nesting and foraging bird species in the form of ornamental trees, if work is to be done during the typical avian breeding season (Feb. 15 - Aug. 15), a qualified biologist shall conduct a nesting bird survey to identify any potential nesting activity within 5 days before start of construction.

If active nests are observed, the location shall be clearly marked (with flagging) a distance of 100-feet surrounding the nest and designated as a “no-work buffer”. No work shall occur within the buffer until the nest becomes inactive and the nestlings fledged (as confirmed by a qualified biologist). Encroachment of construction may be permitted at the discretion of a biological monitor.

4.2 Jurisdictional Waters

The Project site does not contain any waters that meet the definition of Waters of the United States or Waters of the State as stated above.

4.3 MSHCP Assessment

The Project site is not located within any MSHCP Criteria Areas, Cell Groups, or Subunits. The Project site is not located in special status survey areas for Amphibians, Mammals, Special Linkage, or special status overlay areas. Furthermore, the Project site is developed with buildings, hardscape, a parking lot, and a turf field. The MVUSD is not a permittee or a signatory participant of the MSHCP.

5.0 Summary

The Project site does not contain sensitive habitat or suitable habitat for sensitive species. No jurisdictional features are present onsite. Pursuant to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, should vegetation be removed during active nesting season (February 15 to August 15) a qualified biologist should conduct a pre-construction nesting bird survey due to the ornamental tree species onsite.

Please contact me at bbernard@carlsonsls.com or 949.542.7042, should you have any questions or comments.



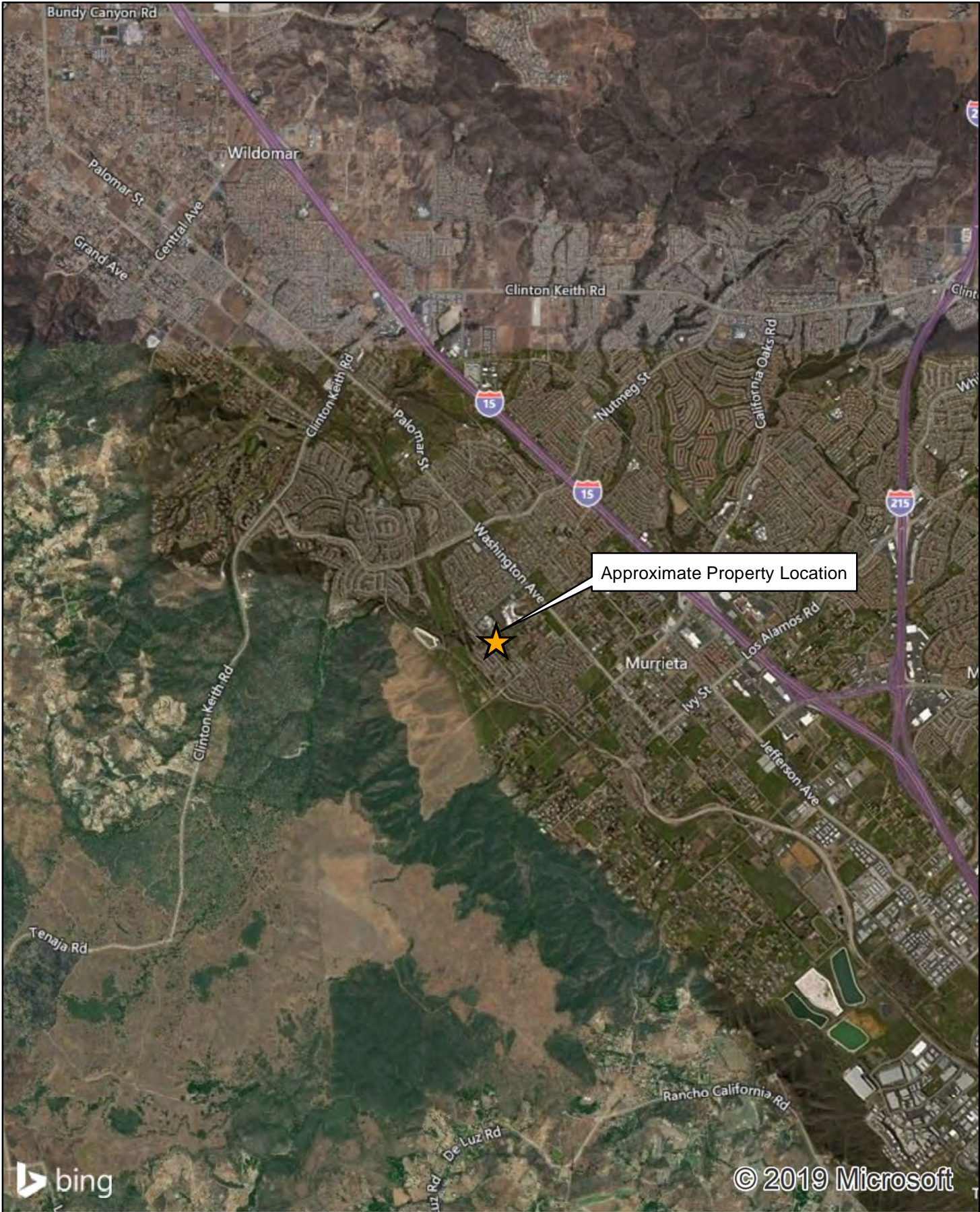
Brianna Bernard
Project Manager

Enclosures:

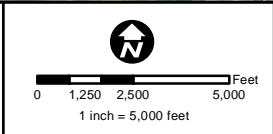
- Figures:
 - Figure 1: Regional Location
 - Figure 2: Project Site Location Map
 - Figure 3: CNDDB Occurrences and Critical Habitat Results
 - Figure 4: Vegetation Mapping
- Attachment A: Representative Photographs

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Figures



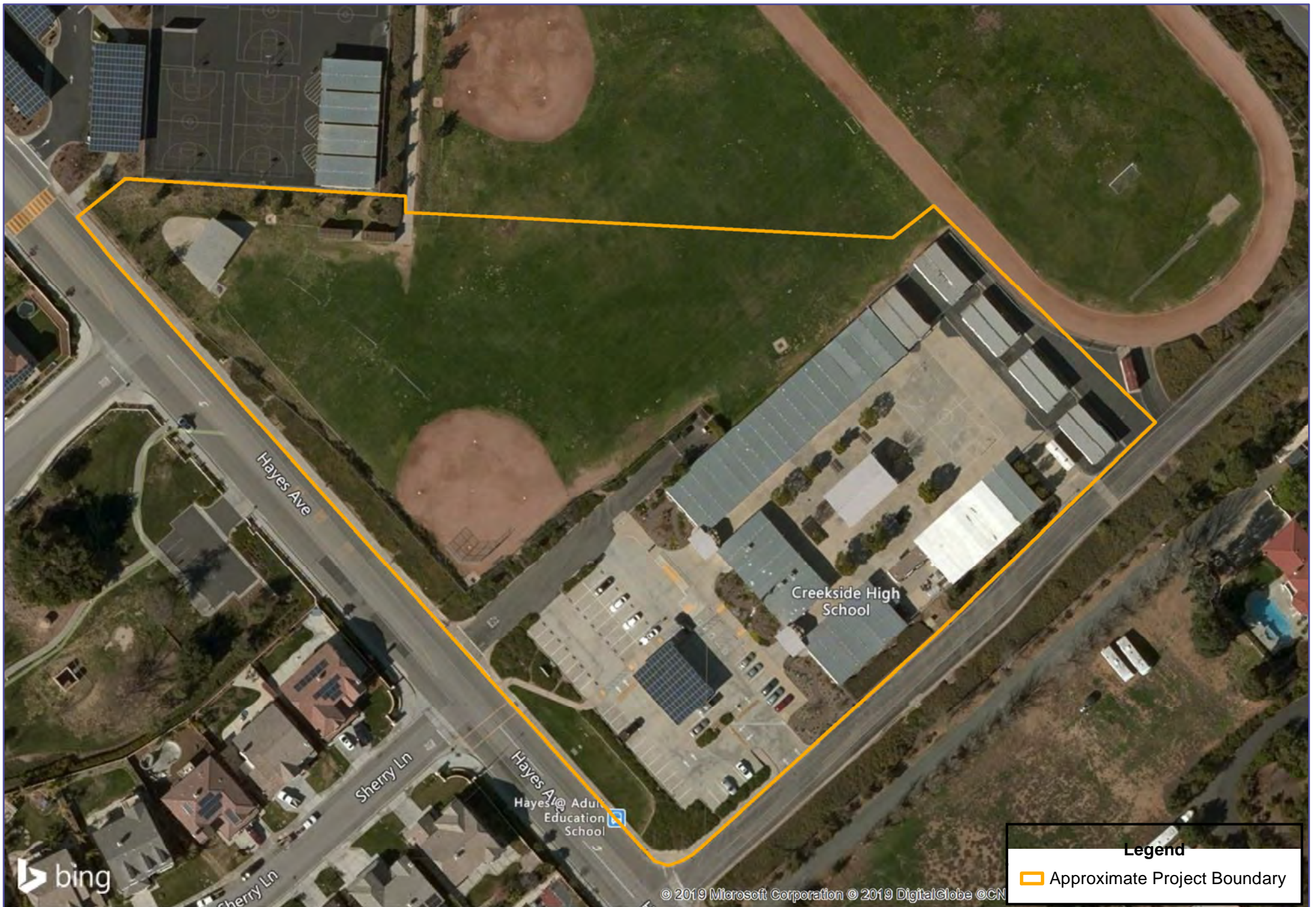
GIS Prepared By:
Carlson SLS
Created: October 2, 2019



Data Sources: Bing Maps

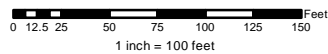
Murrieta Unified School District:
Murrieta Canyon Academy
Regional Map

FIGURE 1




GIS Prepared By:
Carlson SLS

Created: October 1, 2019



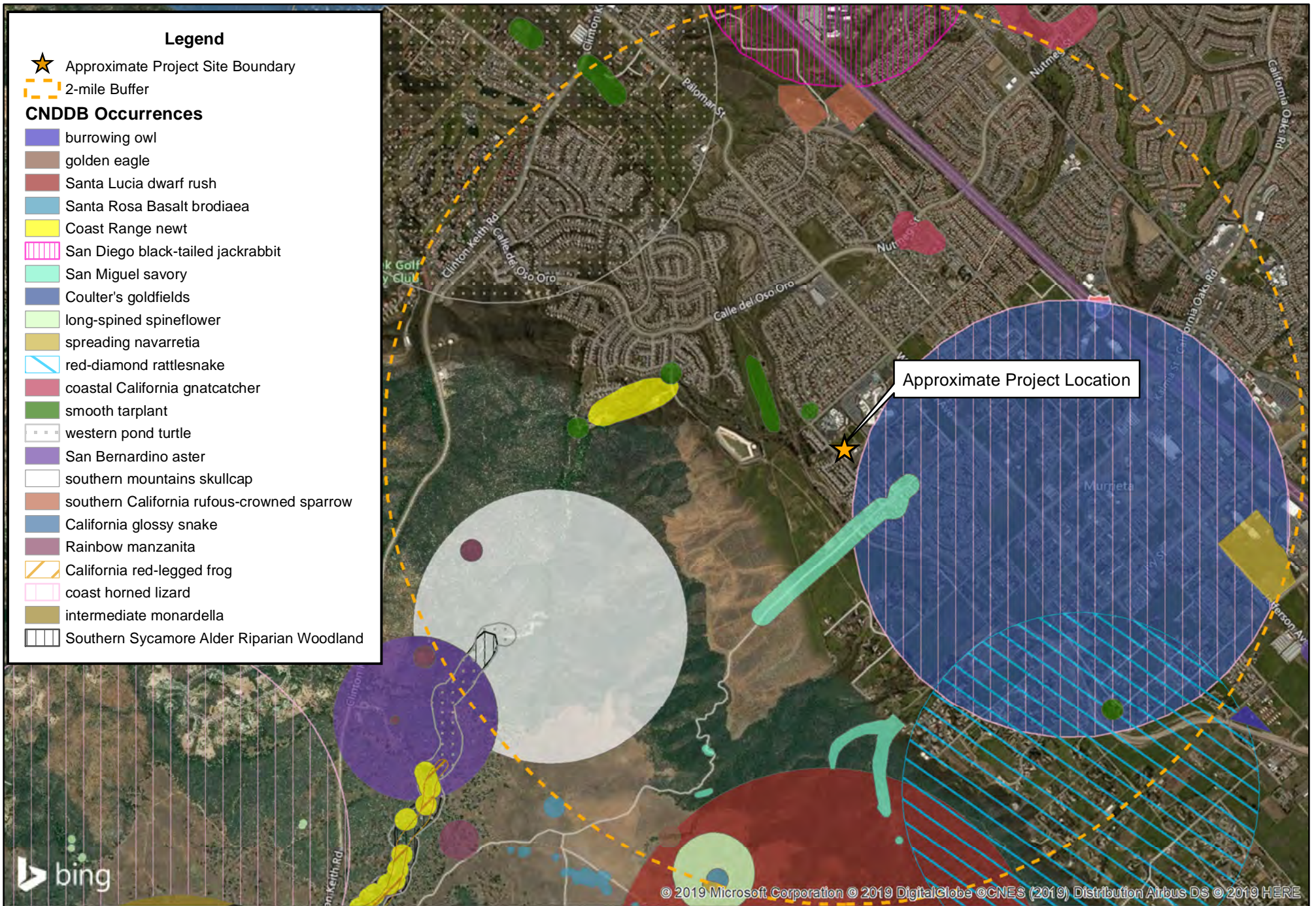
Data Source: Bing Maps

Legend

 Approximate Project Boundary

**Murrieta Unified School District: Murrieta Canyon Academy
Project Site Location**

FIGURE 2



Legend

- ★ Approximate Project Site Boundary
- 2-mile Buffer

CNDDB Occurrences

- burrowing owl
- golden eagle
- Santa Lucia dwarf rush
- Santa Rosa Basalt brodiaea
- Coast Range newt
- San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit
- San Miguel savory
- Coulter's goldfields
- long-spined spineflower
- spreading navarretia
- red-diamond rattlesnake
- coastal California gnatcatcher
- smooth tarplant
- western pond turtle
- San Bernardino aster
- southern mountains skullcap
- southern California rufous-crowned sparrow
- California glossy snake
- Rainbow manzanita
- California red-legged frog
- coast horned lizard
- intermediate monardella
- Southern Sycamore Alder Riparian Woodland

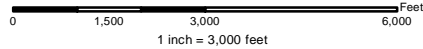
Approximate Project Location



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Data Source: Bing Maps
CNDDB (09/2019)

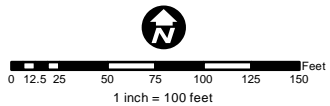
Murrieta Unified School District: Murrieta Canyon Academy
CNDDB Occurrences and Critical Habitat Results

FIGURE 3



GIS Prepared By:
Carlson SLS

Created: October 1, 2019



Data Source: Bing Maps
Field Visit 10/02/19

Murrieta Unified School District: Murrieta Canyon Academy
Vegetation Mapping

FIGURE 4

APPENDIX A

Representative Photographs



The Project site is currently developed as Murrieta Canyon Academy (MCA).



Adjacent to the classroom buildings is a large maintained baseball field.



Large baseball field adjacent to MCA.



MCA is a closed campus with fencing along the perimeter.



A shade structure and large roll-off bins are found on the north east side of the Project site.



Ornamental landscape areas adjacent to parking.



Ornamental landscaped areas adjacent to the sidewalk.



Hardscaped inner courtyard with ornamental trees.