

# Memorandum

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Date: April 28, 2015

To: Trammell Crow Southern California Development, Inc.

From: Juan J. Hernandez, Principal Biologist

Subject: Burrowing Owl Survey Report for Decker Parcels II

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This memorandum provides the methods and results of a Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) (BUOW) survey at the Decker Parcels II Project site. The Decker Parcels II Project is located immediately southwest of the intersection of Decker Road and Oleander Avenue within an unincorporated portion of Riverside County, California (Figures 1 and 2). Specifically, the site is located within Township 4 South, Range 4 West, in the northeastern portion of Section 2 of the *Steele Peak* United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' topographic quadrangle.

The Decker Parcels II Project consists of the construction of a 595,840-square-foot warehouse with associated offices and parking stalls, as shown on the Project Plans (Figure 3). The 35.47-acre project site consists of Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APNs) 314-020-010, 314-020-017, and 314-020-019-4. Approximately 28.6 acres of the site will be impacted by the proposed development. The BUOW survey was conducted by Hernandez Environmental Services (HES) Principal Biologist, Juan J. Hernandez.

## **Burrowing Owl Study Location**

The BUOW study area included the entire 35.47-acre Decker Parcels II Project site and a 150-meter (500-foot) buffer area around the site, as shown on the Survey Area Map (Figure 4).

## **Project Contact Information**

Owner/Applicant: Trammel Crow Southern California Developmental, Inc.  
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**Field Survey Methods**

HES implemented the three steps as described in the *Burrowing Owl Survey Instructions for the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Area* (Attachment A). The “General Western Riverside County MSHCP Habitat Assessment and Constraints Analysis” prepared for the Decker Parcels II Project, dated April 2015, determined that focused surveys for BUOWs would be required due to recorded historic observations on the site and the presence of suitable habitat documented during the December 19, 2014 habitat assessment. In accordance with the *Burrowing Owl Survey Instructions for the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Area*, focused burrow and focused BUOW surveys (Part A and Part B, respectively) were conducted on four separate days during the breeding season: March 29, April 9, April 19, and April 28, 2015. Survey times, weather, and sunrise/sunset information is described in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Survey Information**

Survey	Date	Survey Start Time	Sunrise/Sunset	Weather
1	March 29,2015	0643 hours	0645 hours	57 degrees Fahrenheit, partly cloudy, winds 0-3 mile per hour wind from the southwest
2	April 9, 2015	1700 hours	1915 hours	72 degrees Fahrenheit, partly cloudy, winds 8-10 miles per hour from the northwest
3	April 19, 2015	0600 hours	0612 hours	51 degrees Fahrenheit, clear, winds 0-3 miles per hour from the northwest
4	April 28, 2015	0550 hours	0604 hours	58 degrees Fahrenheit, clear, winds 0-3 miles per hour from the southwest

Surveys were conducted from one hour before sunrise to two hours after sunrise or two hours before sunset to one hour after sunset and during weather that was conducive to observing owls outside their burrows and detecting BUOW sign. The surveys were not conducted during rain, high winds (> 20 miles per hour), dense fog, or temperatures above 90 degrees Fahrenheit. Surveys involved walking through potentially suitable habitat within the survey area. The pedestrian survey transects were spaced approximately 30 to 50 feet apart to allow 100 percent visual coverage of the ground surface. Special attention was paid to those habitat areas that appeared to provide suitable habitat for BUOW. Where permission to access the buffer areas could not be obtained, the biologist visually inspect adjacent habitats with binoculars.

All encountered burrows or structure entrances were checked for the presence of BUOW, molted feathers, cast pellets, prey remains, eggshell fragments, tracks, or excrement. Natural or man-made structures and debris piles that could support BUOW were also surveyed. The locations of all suitable BUOW habitat, potential burrows, BUOW sign, and any BUOW observed was recorded and mapped with a handheld Global Positioning System (GPS) unit.

All wildlife species encountered visually or audibly during the field survey were identified and recorded in field notes. Binoculars were used to aid in the identification of observed wildlife. Photographs were taken to document existing conditions within the survey area, as shown in the attached photographs.

## **Results**

The Decker Parcels II Project site contains four habitat types: 31.39 acres of disturbed non-native vegetation, 1.90 acres of disturbed non-vegetated habitat, 0.26 acre of Peruvian peppertree dominant habitat, and 1.72 acres of granitic rocky outcrops. The site also contains a 0.20-acre swale dominated by upland species vegetation.

A total of 65 burrows were checked and recorded. Most of the identified burrows were made by small mammals and appeared to be active. One BUOW was observed outside of its burrow in the north central portion of the site, as shown on the Results Map (Figure 5). In addition to the observed BUOW, an owl pellet was found on a rock used for perching which was located in the northeastern portion of the site. The location of the BUOW and occupied burrow had UTM coordinates of 474708.33 and 3746481.58. The owl pellet was located at UTM coordinates 474832.33 and 3746466.49. The BUOW appeared to be nesting in the burrow, but the mate was not seen.

No other BUOW or BUOW sign was found on the remainder of the Decker Parcels II Project site; however, it was determined that the site is also used by BUOW to forage.

## **Recommendations**

HES has prepared the following recommendations to mitigate potential impacts to BUOW. These measures would include the following as well as any others developed in coordination with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and/or the Riverside Conservation Authority (RCA):

### **Avoidance**

1. Avoid disturbing occupied burrows during the BUOW nesting period, from March 1 through August 31.
2. Avoid direct destruction of burrows by chaining (dragging a heavy chain over an area to remove shrubs), dinking, and development related grading/construction activities.
3. An MSHCP pre-construction survey will be conducted within 30 days prior to the start of grading/construction activities to reevaluate the locations of active BUOW burrows located adjacent to or within the Decker Parcels II Project limits.

### **If Avoidance is Not Possible**

If avoidance of BUOW is not possible, the following mitigation measures are recommended:

1. A biologist with knowledge of BUOW and its habitat will be retained to function as a biological monitor.
2. The biological monitor will develop and implement a contractor education program with regard to the BUOW to be provided to all personnel (including temporary contractors and subcontractors) before beginning work on the Decker Parcels II Project site.
3. The biological monitor will be present during vegetation clearing, grading, and construction activities to monitor occupied BUOW burrows and any construction-related impacts.
4. Prior to any ground disturbance, all limits of Decker Parcels II Project construction will be delineated and marked so as to be clearly visible to personnel on foot and in heavy equipment. All construction-related activities (e.g., vegetation removal, grading, equipment lay-down and storage, and contractor parking) will occur inside the limits of construction and designated staging areas. Construction staging and equipment storage will be located outside of any occupied BUOW burrow locations. All movement of contractors, subcontractors, or their agents and equipment will be restricted to the limits of construction and staging areas.
5. A qualified biologist will conduct any necessary BUOW passive relocation that may be required to avoid Decker Parcels II Project effects to BUOW.

**Certification**

I hereby certify that the statements furnished above and in the attached exhibits present data and information required for this biological evaluation, and that the facts, statements, and information presented are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Date: April 28, 2015

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Juan J. Hernandez".

Juan J. Hernandez  
Principal Biologist

**Enclosures:**

Figure 1: Project Location Map

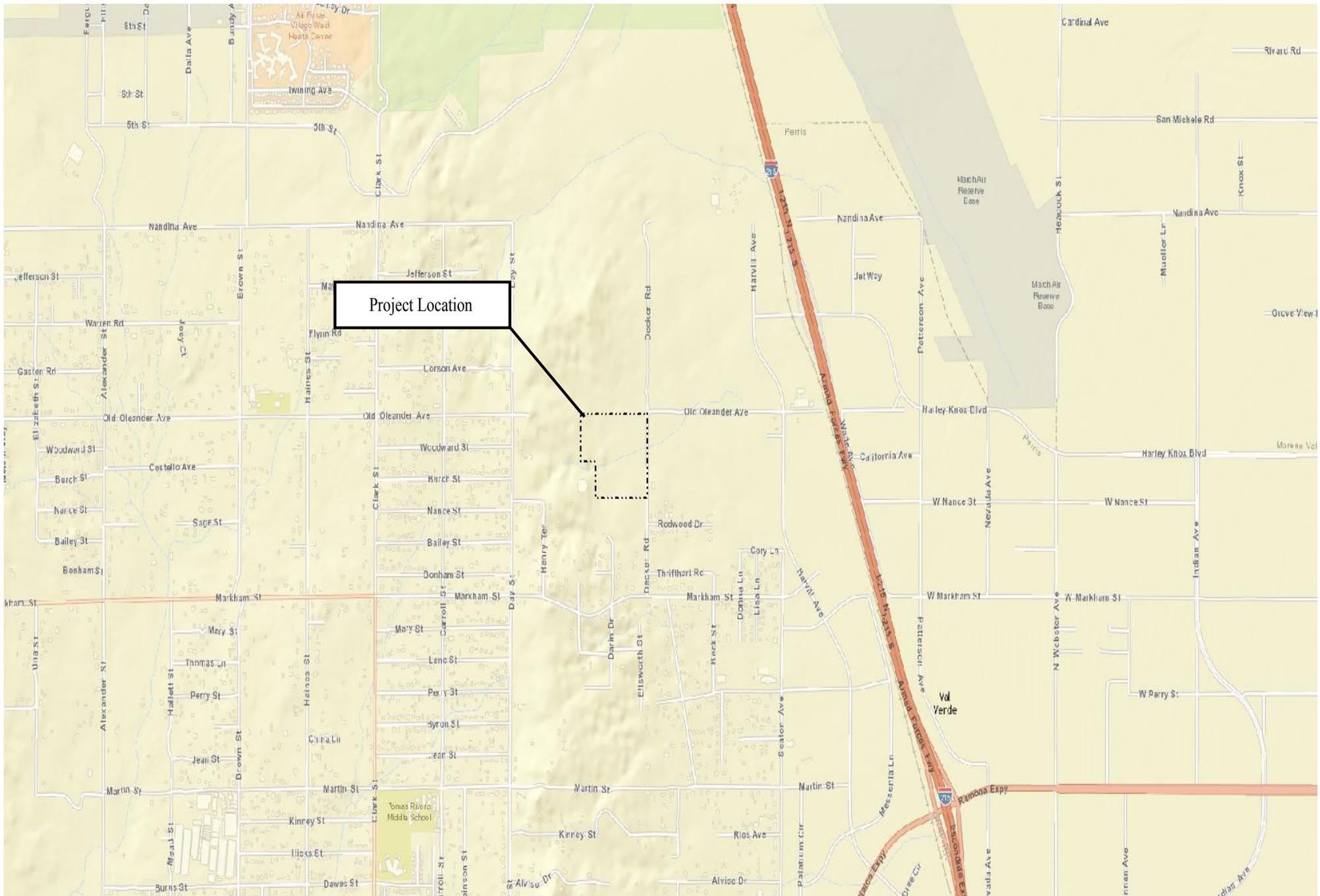
Figure 2: Project Vicinity Map

Figure 3: Project Plans

Figure 4: Survey Area Map

Figure 5: Results Map

Project Photographs



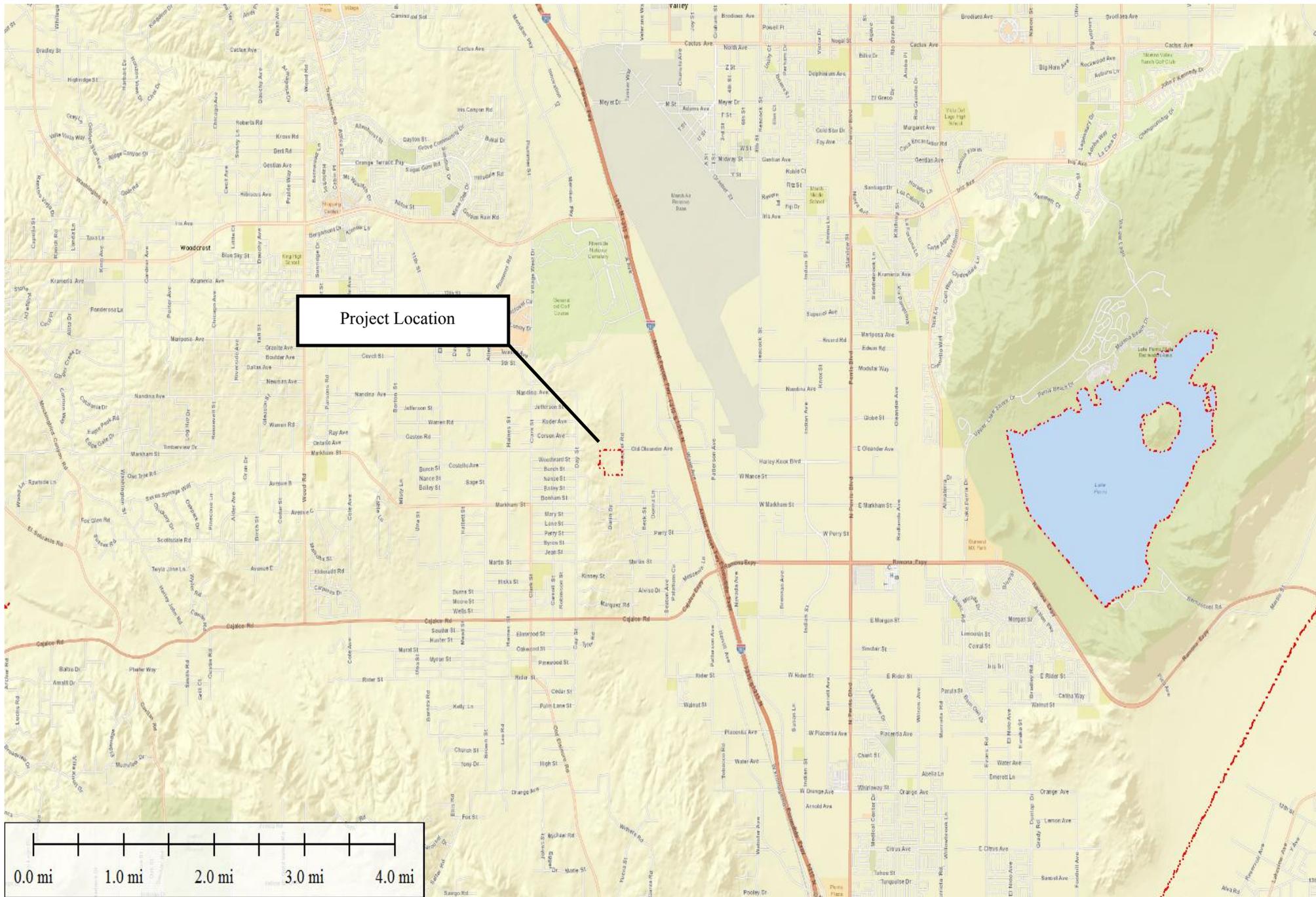
**Figure 1 Location Map**

BUOW Survey  
 Decker Parcels II Project  
 County of Riverside, California



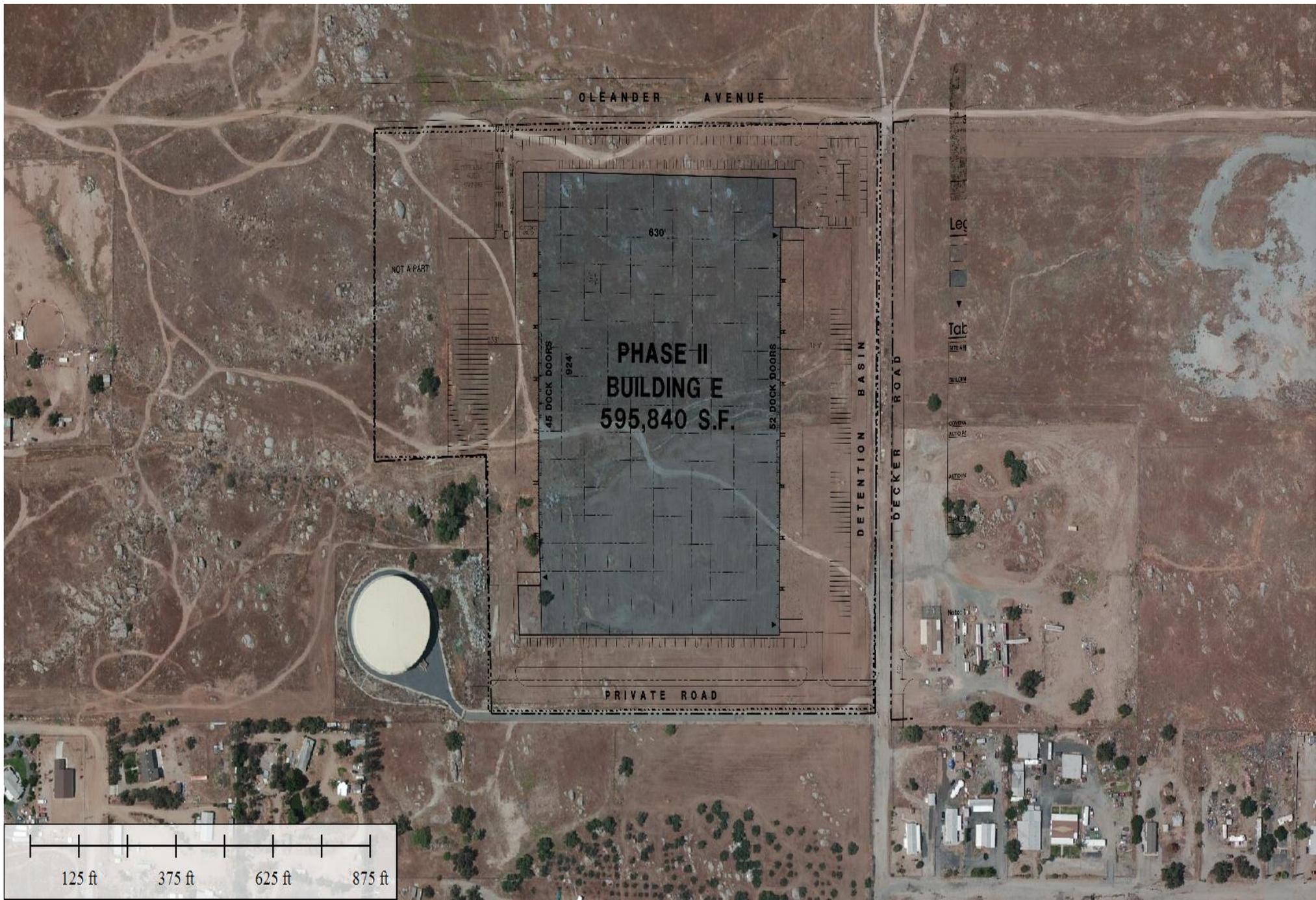
0 2000 Feet





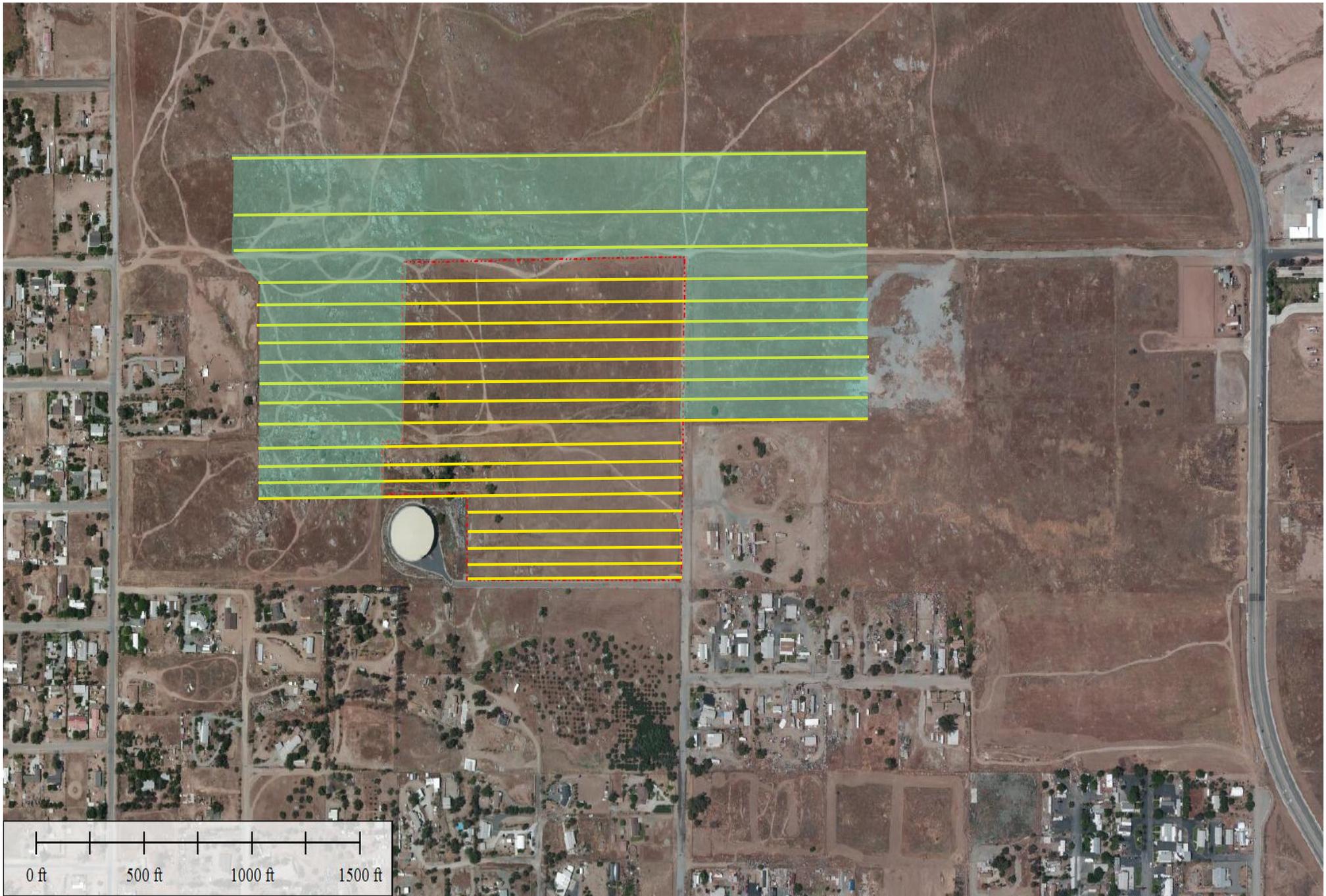
**Figure 2 Vicinity Map**  
 BUOW Survey  
 Decker Parcels II Project  
 County of Riverside, California





**Figure 3 Project Plans**

BUOW Survey  
Decker Parcels II Project  
County of Riverside, California



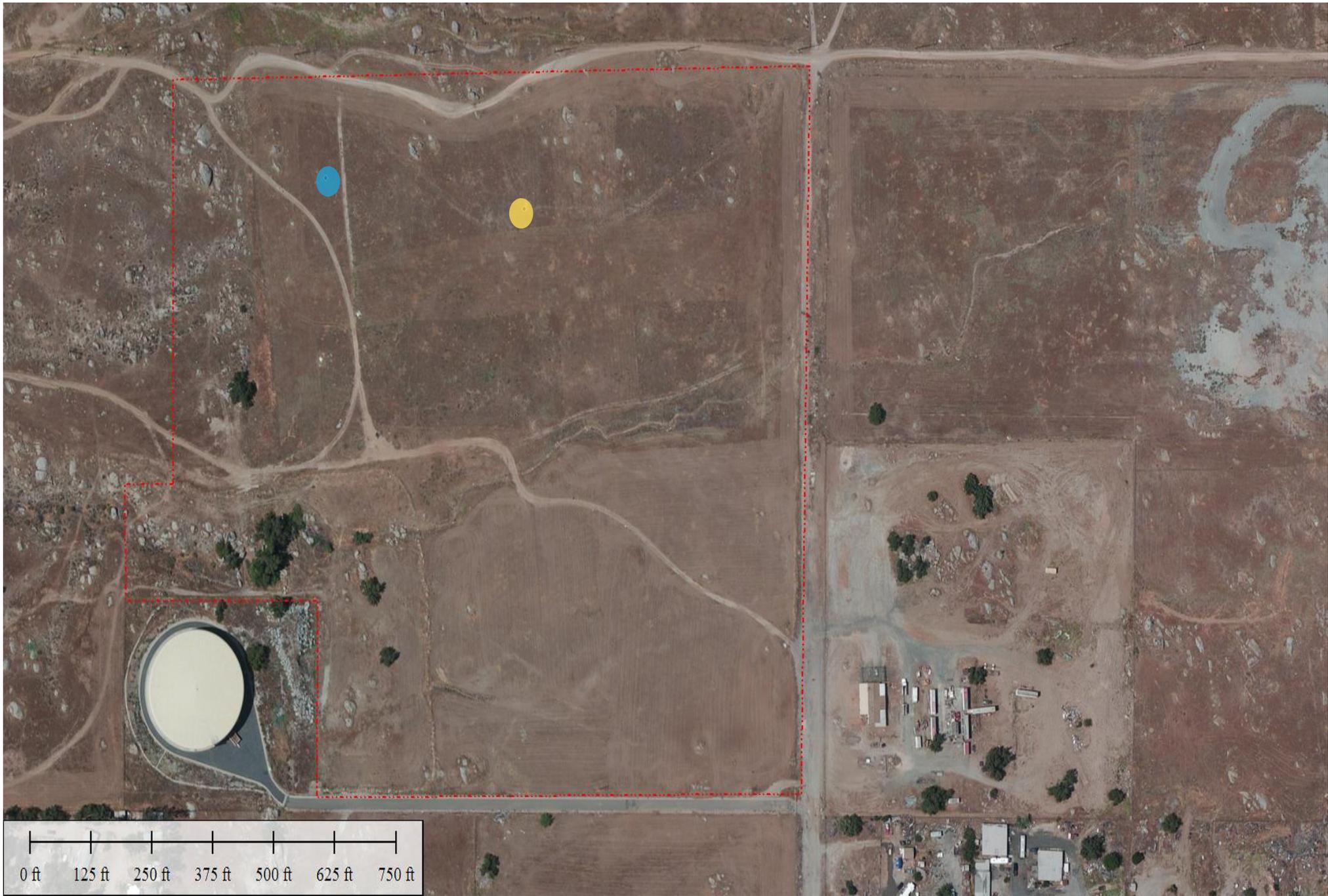
**Figure 4 Survey Area Map**

BUOW Survey  
 Decker II Parcels Project  
 County of Riverside, California

**Legend**

-  Transects
-  Buffer Area Transects
-  Project Area





**Figure 5 Results Map**  
BUOW Survey  
Decker Parcels II Project  
County of Riverside, California

**Legend**

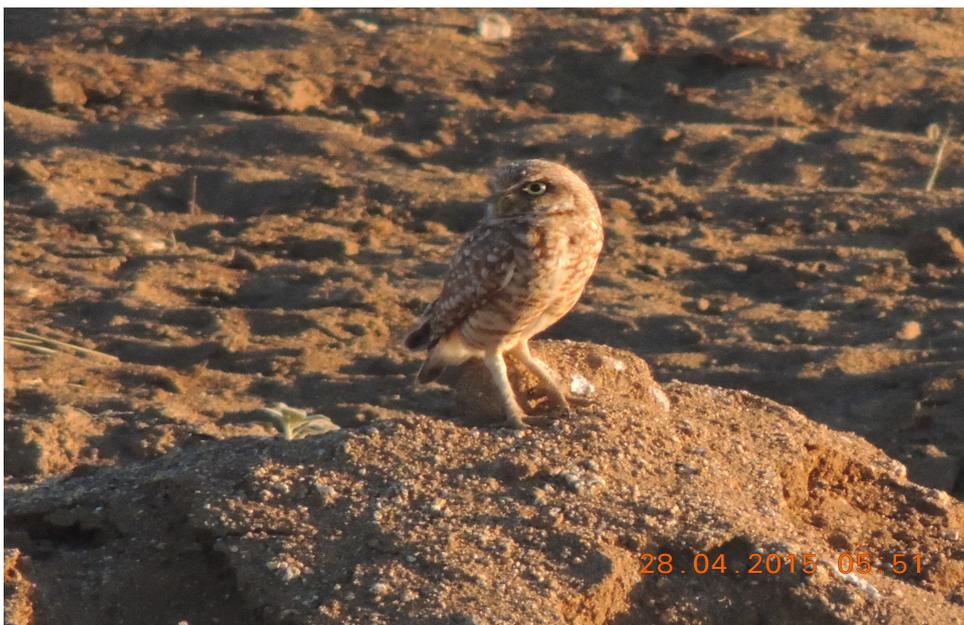
-  Burrowing Owl and Burrow
-  Burrowing Owl Pellet



**Decker Parcels II Project**  
**BUOW Survey**  
County of Riverside, California



Burrowing owl perched a few yards away from nest.



Only one burrowing owl seen.

**Decker Parcels II Project**  
**BUOW Survey**  
County of Riverside, California



The burrow where nest is located. Grass bedding was seen inside.



Insects outside the burrow entrance show what the burrowing owl has been feeding on.