

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT

**SUN MESA (BILLINGS) MINI STORAGE PROJECT
YUCCA VALLEY, SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
(APN 0597-111-67-0000)**

LSA

August 2024

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(APN 0597-111-67-0000)**

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The logo for LSA, consisting of the letters 'LSA' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

August 2024

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

amsl	above mean sea level
APN	Assessor's Parcel Number
BMPs	Best Management Practices
BRA	Biological Resources Assessment
BUOW	Burrowing owl (<i>Athene cunicularia</i>)
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CDNPA	California Desert Native Plant Act
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CESA	California Endangered Species Act
CNDDDB	CDFW's California Natural Diversity Database
CNPS	California Native Plant Society
County	San Bernardino County
CRPR	California Rare Plant Rank
CWA	Clean Water Act
DETO	Desert tortoise (<i>Gopherus agassizii</i>)
FESA	Federal Endangered Species Act
ft	foot/feet
IPaC	USFWS' Information for Planning and Consultation
ITP	Incidental Take Permit
LSA	LSA Associates, Inc.
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
MM	Mitigation Measure

NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
project	Sun Mesa (Billings) Mini Storage Project
RWQCB	Regional Water Quality Control Board
SR-247	State Route 247
SSC	Species of Special Concern
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	United States Geological Survey
WJTCA	Western Joshua Tree Conservation Act

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

LSA Associates, Inc. (LSA) was retained by DRP Enterprises, LLC to conduct a general biological study of the approximately 4.92-acre Sun Mesa (Billings) Mini Storage Project (project) site located within Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 0597-111-67-0000, located in the Town of Yucca Valley, San Bernardino County (County), California. The study was conducted to address compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the California Endangered Species Act (CESA), and the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA). Results of the general biological study are summarized below.

The project site contains suitable habitat for burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*) and desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*). A general pre-construction survey for both species will be required to ensure any direct impacts to these species will be avoided.

The project site does provide suitable habitat for nesting birds protected under the California Fish and Game Code and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA). It is recommended that vegetation removal be conducted between September 1 and January 15 (outside the general bird nesting season) to avoid impacts to nesting birds. If vegetation cannot be removed outside the bird nesting season, a pre-construction nesting bird survey by a qualified biologist is required 72 hours prior to vegetation removal.

There were no drainage features identified within the project site that are considered potential jurisdiction waters that may be subject to the regulatory authority of the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), or the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB).

The project will apply for an incidental take permit (ITP) for western Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*) under the Western Joshua Tree Conservation Act (WJTCA) and a tree removal permit for Mojave yucca (*Yucca schidigera*) and California juniper (*Juniperus californica*) under Development Code Section 9.10.040 for the Town of Yucca Valley. In seeking an ITP under the WJTCA and a tree removal permit under the Town of Yucca Valley Development Code Section 9.10.040, no additional permitting requirements for desert plant species present within the project site are expected to be required under San Bernardino County Development Code Section 88.01.060. The project will not conflict with any local policies or ordinances and is not within an adopted habitat conservation plan area. The project site does not contain wildlife corridors, nursery sites, or natural communities of concern. Additionally, standard Best Management Practices (BMPs) shall be implemented during construction activities to reduce impacts to wildlife resources in the project vicinity.

INTRODUCTION

DRP Enterprises, LLC, retained LSA to conduct a Biological Resources Assessment (BRA) for the Sun Mesa (Billings) Mini Storage Project (project) on Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APN) 0597-111-67-0000 in San Bernardino County, California (Figure 1; all figures are provided in Appendix A). The project proposes an approximately 94,500-square-foot (4.92-acre) mini storage facility and associated parking facilities.

The survey identified vegetation communities, the potential for the occurrence of special-status species, or habitats that could support special-status wildlife species, and recorded all plants and animals observed or detected within the project boundary. This BRA is designed to address the potential effects of the proposed project on designated critical habitats and/or any species currently listed or formally proposed for listing as endangered and/or threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) and the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) or species designated as sensitive by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) or the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). Information contained in this document is in accordance with accepted scientific and technical standards that are consistent with the requirements of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the CDFW. Additionally, the site was surveyed for any drainage features that would meet the definition of the waters of the United States, waters of the State, or CDFW jurisdiction.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The 4.92-acre project site is a currently undeveloped parcel within the Town of Yucca Valley, in San Bernardino County, California, as depicted on the United States Geological Survey (USGS) *Yucca Valley North, California* 7.5-minute series topographic quadrangle map in Section 13 of Township 1 North, Range 5 East, San Bernardino Baseline and Meridian (USGS 1989).

Specifically, the site is approximately 680 feet (ft) east of California State Route 247 (SR-247), located on the southeast corner of Newton Lane and Sun Mesa Drive; Figure 1 (all figures are provided in Appendix A) details the project location.

METHODS

LITERATURE REVIEW

Prior to performing the field survey, a literature review and record search were conducted to identify the existence and potential for occurrence of sensitive or special-status plant and animal species in the project vicinity. The most recent records were reviewed for the following quadrangles containing and surrounding the project site: *Yucca Valley North, Landers, Goat Mountain, Rimrock, Yucca Valley South, Joshua Tree North, and Joshua Tree South, California*, USGS 7.5-minute quadrangles for locations between 3,500 to 4,000 ft in elevation.

Federal and State lists of sensitive species were also examined. Current electronic database records reviewed include the following.

- **California Natural Diversity Database information (CNDDDB – RareFind 5)** (CDFW 2024a), which is administered by the CDFW, formerly known as the California Department of Fish and Game. This database covers sensitive plant and animal species, as well as sensitive natural communities that occur in California. Records from the *Yucca Valley North, Landers, Goat Mountain, Rimrock, Yucca Valley South, Joshua Tree North, and Joshua Tree South, California* USGS quadrangles between 3,500 to 4,000 ft in elevation were obtained from this database to inform the field survey.
- **California Native Plant Society’s (CNPS) Electronic Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants** (CNPS 2024), which uses four specific categories or “lists” of sensitive plant species to assist with the conservation of rare or endangered botanical resources. All of the plants constituting California Rare Plant Ranks 1A, 1B, 2A, and 2B are intended to meet the status definitions of “threatened” or “endangered” in CESA and the California Fish and Game Code and are considered by CNPS to be eligible for State listing. At the discretion of the CEQA Lead Agency, impacts to these species may be analyzed as such, pursuant to *State CEQA Guidelines* Sections 15125(c) and 15380. Plants in Rank 3 (limited information; review list), Rank 4 (limited distribution; watch list), or that are considered Locally Unusual and Significant may be analyzed under CEQA if there is sufficient information to assess potential significant impacts. Records from the *Yucca Valley North, Landers, Goat Mountain, Rimrock, Yucca Valley South, Joshua Tree North, and Joshua Tree South, California* USGS quadrangles between 3,500 to 4,000 ft in elevation were obtained from this database to inform the field survey.
- **United States Fish and Wildlife Service’s (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) Online System** (USFWS 2024a), which lists all proposed, candidate, threatened, and endangered species managed by the Endangered Species Program of the USFWS that have the potential to occur on or near a particular site. This database also lists all known critical habitats, national wildlife refuges, and migratory birds that could potentially be impacted by activities from a proposed project. An IPaC Resource Report was generated for the project area.

In addition to the databases listed above, historic and current aerial imagery, existing environmental reports for developments in the project vicinity, and regional habitat conservation plans and local

land use policies related to biological resources were reviewed. Wetland resources including riparian corridors were determined using the USFWS Wetlands Mapper online edition (USFWS 2024b).

SOILS

Before conducting the surveys, soil maps of the project vicinity were referenced online to determine the types of soil found within the project site. During review of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service WebSoil Survey (USDA 2024), it was determined that the soil at the project site and the surrounding areas have not been defined.

RECONNAISSANCE FIELD SURVEY

LSA Biologists Stanley Spencer, Christina Van Oosten, and Julia Lung conducted a general reconnaissance-level, pedestrian field survey and rare plant survey on May 7, 2024, between 0945 and 1150 hours. All areas within the 4.92-acre project site were surveyed on foot, and binoculars were used to aid in the identification of animal species. Notes were taken on general site conditions, vegetation, and suitability of habitat for various special-status elements. Weather conditions during the survey included temperatures ranging from 70 to 77 degrees Fahrenheit, with sunny skies, no precipitation, and 0 to 3 mile-per-hour winds.

JURISDICTIONAL FEATURES

The project site was assessed for areas that may potentially be considered jurisdictional wetlands, waters of the United States, or streambeds/habitats as defined by the USACE, RWQCB, and CDFW, respectively.

VEGETATION

All plant species observed within the project site were recorded. Vegetation communities within the project site were identified and qualitatively described. Plant communities were determined in accordance with *A Manual of California Vegetation*, Second Edition (Sawyer et al. 2009). Plant nomenclature follows that of *The Jepson Manual*, Second Edition (Baldwin et al. 2012). A comprehensive list of the plant species observed during the survey is provided in Appendix B.

The Joshua tree census survey was conducted to comply with the permitting requirements of the Western Joshua Tree Conservation Act (WJTCA) and CDFW guidelines.

WILDLIFE

All wildlife and wildlife signs observed and detected, including tracks, scat, carcasses, burrows, excavations, and vocalizations, were recorded. Additional survey time was spent in those habitats most likely to be utilized by wildlife (native vegetation, wildlife trails, etc.) or in habitats with the potential to support State- and/or federally listed or otherwise special-status species. Notes were made on the general habitat types, species observed, and the conditions of the project site. A comprehensive list of the wildlife species observed during the survey is provided in Appendix C. Representative photographs of the project site that document existing conditions are provided in Appendix D.

RESULTS

LITERATURE REVIEW RESULTS

According to the records collected from relevant literature and databases, 14 special-status species, 4 of which are federally or State listed as threatened, and/or endangered, and sensitive habitats have been documented in the *Yucca Valley North, California*, and the other 6 quadrangles between 3,500 to 4,000 ft in elevation. This list of special-status species and habitats includes CDFW-designated Species of Special Concern (SSC), and otherwise Special Animals. "Special Animals" is a general term that refers to all of the taxa the CNDDDB is interested in tracking, regardless of their legal or protection status. This list is also referred to as the list of "species at risk" or "special status species." The CDFW considers the taxa on this list to be those of greatest conservation need.

An analysis of the likelihood of the occurrence of all CNDDDB-sensitive species documented in the *Yucca Valley North, Yucca Valley South, Joshua Tree North, Joshua Tree South, Rimrock, Goat Mountain, and Landers, California*, quadrangles between 3,500 to 4,000 ft in elevation is provided in Table A. This analysis takes into account species range as well as documentation within the vicinity of the project site and includes the habitat requirements for each species and the potential for their occurrence on the site, based on required habitat elements and range relative to the current site conditions. According to the databases, no sensitive habitat, including USFWS-designated critical habitat, occurs within or adjacent to the project site. CDFW natural communities of concern are further discussed below.

EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

Topography and Soils

The topography of the project site is more or less with elevation ranges from approximately 3,710 to 3,726 ft above mean sea level (amsl). Review of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service WebSoil Survey resulted in soils within the project site and the surrounding areas as not being defined. Based on the May 7, 2024, field survey, soil types were identified as sandy loam and loamy sand.

Vegetation and Land Cover

Vegetation on the site consists of disturbed Joshua tree woodland (*Yucca brevifolia* Woodland Alliance) and was classified using *A Manual of California Vegetation, Second Edition* (Sawyer et al. 2009) (Appendix A, Figure 3). Dirt roads have been present with the current configurations since 2006 based on historic aerial imagery. Dominant vegetation within Joshua tree woodland includes western Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*), Mojave yucca (*Yucca schidigera*), creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), Mediterranean grass (*Schismus* sp.), red brome (*Bromus ruben*), Sahara mustard (*Brassica tournefortii*), shortpod mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*), and redstem stork's bill (*Erodium cicutarium*). No other plant communities are present on the site.

Table A: Special-Status Species Occurrence Probability

Species	Status	Habitat and Distribution	Activity Period	Occurrence Probability
Plants				
<i>Astragalus bernardinus</i> San Bernardino milk-vetch	US: – CA: 1B	Granitic or carbonate (limestone) substrates in Joshua tree woodland and pinyon and juniper woodland at 900 to 2,290 meters (2,950 to 7,500 feet) elevation. Occurs only in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, in the San Bernardino, New York, and Ivanpah Mountains.	Blooms April through June (perennial herb)	Absent: Not identified during May 2024 focused rare plant survey.
<i>Astragalus tricarinatus</i> Triple-ribbed milk-vetch	US: FE CA: 1B	Metamorphic rock outcrops weathering into gravelly soil in semi-desert chaparral, or (probably as waifs) at the edges of boulder-strewn desert washes and adjacent slopes in rocky incised canyons in Joshua tree woodland and Sonoran Desert scrub; known from west edge of desert at 450 to 1,200 meters (1,500 to 3,900 feet) elevation in Riverside and extreme southern San Bernardino Counties.	Blooms February through May (perennial herb)	Absent: Not identified during May 2024 focused rare plant survey.
<i>Boechea dispar</i> Pinyon rock cress	US: – CA: 2B	Granitic, gravelly slopes and mesas in Joshua tree woodland, pinyon-juniper woodland, and Mojave Desert scrub at 1,200 to 2,400 meters (4,000 to 7,900 feet) elevation. In California, known from Inyo, Mono, San Bernardino, and Tulare Counties.	Blooms March through June (perennial herb)	Absent: Not identified during May 2024 focused rare plant survey.
<i>Linanthus bernardinus</i> Pioneertown linanthus	US: – CA: 1B	Joshua tree woodland and pinyon and juniper woodland at 1,120 to 1,345 meters (3,670 –4,410 feet). Known only from the Sawtooth Range in San Bernardino County.	Blooms March through May (annual herb)	Absent: Not identified during May 2024 focused rare plant survey.
<i>Linanthus maculatus</i> ssp. <i>maculatus</i> (<i>Gilia maculata</i>) Little San Bernardino Mountains linanthus	US: – CA: 1B	Loose, well-aerated sand on wash-margin benches with few or no competing species and void of large shrubs or trees, in areas of desert dune, desert scrub, and Joshua tree woodland at 195 to 2,075 meters (600 to 6,800 feet) elevation. Loosely associated shrubs include creosote bush (<i>Larrea tridentata</i>), brittle bush (<i>Encelia farinosa</i>), burro bush (<i>Ambrosia dumosa</i>), cheesebush (<i>Hymenoclea salsola</i>) and desert catalpa (<i>Chilopsis linearis</i>). Not found in loose sands away from washes, nor in dense stands of weedy annuals. Known only from Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. Known only from edges of washes associated with the San Bernardino	Blooms March through May (annual herb)	Absent: Not identified during May 2024 focused rare plant survey.

Table A: Special-Status Species Occurrence Probability

Species	Status	Habitat and Distribution	Activity Period	Occurrence Probability
		Mountains (north and east sides), the Little San Bernardino Mountains, and the northern part of the Coachella Valley.		
<i>Monardella robisonii</i> Robinson’s monardella	US: – CA: 1B	Rocky, granitic slopes often among boulders in pinyon-juniper woodland and Joshua tree woodland at 610 to 1,525 meters (2,000 to 5,000 feet) elevation. In California, known only from the immediate vicinity of the Little San Bernardino Mountains in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties.	Blooms in April through October (perennial herb)	Absent: Not identified during May 2024 focused rare plant survey.
<i>Saltugilia latimeri</i> Latimer’s woodland gilia	US: – CA: 1B	Dry desert slopes of coarse sandy to rocky soils in chaparral and Mojavean desert scrub at 400 to 1,900 meters (1300 to 6200 feet) elevation.	Blooms March through June	Absent: Not identified during May 2024 focused rare plant survey.
<i>Yucca brevifolia</i> Western Joshua tree	US: – CA: SCT/SCE	Various plant communities from Sonoran Desert scrub to yellow pine forest in desert and desert edge areas (up to about 6,600 feet elevation in California). In California, known from Kern, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, Riverside, Inyo, and Mono Counties. Also occurs in Nevada, Utah, and Arizona.	Blooms March through June	Present: Project site contains 98 individual trees.
Reptiles				
<i>Gopherus agassizii</i> Desert tortoise	US: FT CA: ST	Historically found throughout most of the Mojave and Sonoran Deserts into Arizona, Nevada, and Utah. Believed to have been extirpated from the western and southern portions of the Antelope Valley. Found in creosote bush scrub, saltbush scrub, thornscrub (in Mexico), and Joshua tree woodland. Found in the open desert as well as in oases, riverbanks, washes, dunes, and occasionally rocky slopes.	Spring, and again in early fall in areas of summer rains, with brief periods of activity at other times	Low: Suitable habitat is present within the project site. However, no suitable burrows or sign of this species occurred on site during the May 2024 field survey. Two CNDDB records occur approximately 2 miles southwest of the project site, west of SR-247.
Birds				
<i>Athene cucularia</i> (burrow sites) Burrowing owl	US: – CA: SSC/SCT/SCE	Open country in much of North and South America. Usually occupies ground squirrel burrows in open, dry grasslands, agricultural and range lands, railroad rights-of-way, and margins of highways, golf courses, and airports. Often utilizes man-made structures, such as earthen berms, cement culverts, cement, asphalt, rock, or wood debris piles. They avoid thick, tall vegetation, brush, and trees, but may occur in	Year-round	Low: Suitable habitat is present within the project site. Species is common in the area. However, during the time of the May 2024 field survey the project site was highly vegetated with no suitable burrows or sign of this species. One CNDDB record occurs approximately 6.5 miles east of the project site.

Table A: Special-Status Species Occurrence Probability

Species	Status	Habitat and Distribution	Activity Period	Occurrence Probability
		areas where brush or tree cover is less than 30 percent.		
<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i> (nesting) Loggerhead shrike	US: – CA: SSC (breeding)	Prefers open habitats with scattered small trees and with fences, utility lines, or other perches. Inhabits open country with short vegetation, pastures, old orchards, cemeteries, golf courses, riparian areas, and open woodlands. Highest density occurs in open-canopied valley foothill hardwood, valley foothill hardwood-conifer, valley foothill riparian, pinyon-juniper, juniper, desert riparian, and Joshua tree habitats. Occurs only rarely in heavily urbanized areas, but often found in open cropland. Found in open country in much of North America.	Year-round	Present: Adults and fledglings were observed adjacent to the project site during the May 2024 field survey.
<i>Toxostoma lecontei</i> Le Conte’s thrasher (San Joaquin Valley population)	US: – CA: SSC	Inhabits sparsely vegetated desert flats, dunes, alluvial fans, or gently rolling hills having a high proportion of saltbush (<i>Atriplex</i> spp.) or cholla (<i>Cylindropuntia</i> spp.), often occurring along small washes or sand dunes. Prefers dense thorny shrubs (most often saltbush or cholla) for nesting. Uncommon and local resident in low desert scrub throughout most of the Mojave Desert, extending up into the southwestern corner of the San Joaquin Valley. Breeding range in California extends from these areas into eastern Mojave, north into the Owens Valley and south into the lower Colorado Desert and eastern Mojave. Only the San Joaquin Valley population of this species is considered a BLM Sensitive species or California Species of Concern.	Year-round	Low: Suitable habitat (desert scrub) present with the project site may be suitable. Species not detected during May 2024 field survey. Two CNDDB records occur approximately 2 miles west and north of the project site.

Table A: Special-Status Species Occurrence Probability

Species	Status	Habitat and Distribution	Activity Period	Occurrence Probability
Mammals				
<i>Taxidea taxus</i> American badger	US: – CA: SSC	Primary habitat requirements seem to be sufficient food and friable soils in relatively open uncultivated ground in grasslands, woodlands, and desert. Widely distributed in North America.	Year-round	Not expected: Marginally suitable (friable soils) habitat is present on site. However, no suitable burrows or sign for this species were detected during the May 2024 field survey. Site is small and not expected to provide enough food. One CNDDB record occurs approximately 7 miles west of the project site, west of SR-247.

Source: Compiled by LSA (2024).

US: Federal Classifications

- FE Listed as Endangered.
- FT Listed as Threatened.
- FPE Proposed for listing as Endangered.
- FPT Proposed for listing as Threatened.
- FPD Proposed for delisting.
- FC Candidate for listing as Threatened or Endangered.

CA: State Classifications

- SE State-listed as Endangered.
- ST State-listed as Threatened.
- SR State-listed as Rare.
- SCE Candidate for State-listing as Endangered.
- SCT Candidate for State-listing as Threatened.
- SC Candidate for State-listing as Threatened or Endangered.
- SSC Species of Special Concern. Refers to animals with vulnerable or seriously declining populations.
- CFP California Fully Protected. Refers to animals protected from take under Fish and Game Code sections 3511, 4700, 5050, and 5515.
- SA Special Animal. Refers to any other animal monitored by the Natural Diversity Data Base, regardless of its legal or rarity status.
- 1A California Rare Plant Rank 1A – presumed extinct in California.
- 1B California Rare Plant Rank 1B – rare, threatened or endangered in California and elsewhere.
- 2B California Rare Plant Rank 2B – rare, threatened or endangered in California, but more common elsewhere.
- 3 California Rare Plant Rank 3 – a review list of plants about which more information is needed.
- 4 California Rare Plant Rank 4 – a watch list of plants of limited distribution.

MSHCP: Western Riverside County MSHCP Status

- C Species is covered and adequately conserved under the MSHCP.
- S Species is covered and adequately conserved under the MSHCP, but surveys are required within indicated habitats and/or survey areas.
- P Species is covered and will be adequately conserved when MSHCP specified requirements are met.

CNDDB = California Natural Diversity Database

A census of Joshua trees was conducted on November 1, 2023, by LSA biologists Stan Spencer, Christina Van Oosten, and Eva Newby. The census survey resulted in a total of 98 Joshua trees present within the site and buffer area (Appendix E). A total of 35 vascular plant species were identified within the project site during the May 7, 2024, field survey. Appendix F can be referenced for the findings of the spring rare plant survey. See Appendix B for a complete list of plant species observed on site.

Wetlands and Other Jurisdictional Waters

The USACE, under Section 404 of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA), regulates discharges of dredged or fill material into “waters of the United States.” These waters include wetlands and non-wetland bodies of water that meet specific criteria, including a connection to interstate commerce. This connection may be direct (through a tributary system linking a stream channel with traditional navigable waters used in interstate or foreign commerce) or it may be indirect (through a connection identified in USACE regulations). The USACE typically regulates as non-wetland waters of the United States any body of water displaying an “ordinary high water mark.” To be considered a “jurisdictional wetland” under Section 404, an area must possess hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils, and wetland hydrology. The CDFW, under Sections 1600 et seq. of the California Fish and Game Code, regulates alterations to lakes, rivers, and streams. A stream is defined by the presence of a channel bed and banks and at least an occasional flow of water. The RWQCB is responsible for the administration of Section 401 of the CWA through water quality certification of any activity that may result in a discharge to jurisdictional waters of the United States. The RWQCB may also regulate discharges to “waters of the State,” including wetlands, under the California Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act.

No drainage features, ponded areas, wetlands, or riparian habitat subject to jurisdiction by the CDFW, USACE, and/or RWQCB were found within the project site. Neither CWA Section 404 and 401 permits nor a CDFW streambed alteration agreement is necessary. The findings represent the professional opinion of LSA and are subject to verification by the regulatory agencies.

Wildlife

The abundant Joshua trees and yucca within the project site are considered potential habitat for some native wildlife species, especially birds. There are many trees on the project site that could significantly contribute to nesting, and could be directly impacted by the proposed development. A total of 9 wildlife species were observed in (or foraging over) the project parcel during the May 2024 field survey: California quail (*Callipepla californica*), mourning dove (*zenaida macroura*), turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*), loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), common raven (*Corvus corax*), house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), house finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*), San Diegan tiger whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*), desert cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*). One special-status species, loggerhead shrike, was observed during the field survey.

Special-Status Species

This section discusses special-status species potentially occurring within the limits of the project site. Legal protection for special-status species varies widely, from the comprehensive protection

extended to listed threatened/endangered species to no legal status at present. The CDFW, USFWS, local agencies, and special-status groups such as CNPS publish watch lists of declining species.

Species on watch lists can be included as part of the special-status species assessment. The special-status species list includes species that are candidates for State and/or federal listing. Species that are candidates for State and/or federal listing, which are considered locally sensitive by the Town of Yucca Valley and the County, and the species on watch lists are also included in the special-status species analysis (Table A). Inclusion of species described in the special-status species analysis is based on the following criteria:

- Direct observation of the species or its sign on the project site or immediate vicinity during previous biological studies;
- Sighting by other qualified observers;
- Records reported by the CNDDDB and published by the CDFW;
- Presence or location information for specific species provided by private groups (e.g., CNPS); and
- Project site lies within known distribution of a given species and contains appropriate habitat.

Table A summarizes special-status species known to occur in the region.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Under provisions of Section 7(a)(2) of the FESA, a federal agency that permits, licenses, funds, or otherwise authorizes a project activity must consult with the USFWS to ensure that its actions would not jeopardize the continued existence of any listed threatened or endangered species or destroy or adversely modify critical habitat. The USFWS designates as threatened or endangered species that are at risk of extinction and may also adopt recovery plans that identify specific areas that are essential to the conservation of a listed species. Critical habitat areas that may require special management considerations or protections can also be designated.

The CESA is administered by the CDFW and prohibits the “take” of plant and animal species identified as either threatened or endangered in the State of California by the Fish and Game Commission (Fish and Game Code Sections 2050 to 2097). “Take” is defined as to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill. Sections 2091 and 2081 of CESA allow the CDFW to authorize exceptions to the prohibition of “take” of State-listed threatened or endangered plant and animal species for purposes such as public and private development. The CDFW requires formal consultation to ensure that a proposed project’s actions would not jeopardize the continued existence of any listed species or destroy or adversely affect listed species’ habitats.

As identified in Table A, the following federally/State-listed species have the potential to occur on the project site based on the literature review:

- Triple-ribbed milk-vetch (*Astragalus tricarinatus*): Federally listed as endangered and California Rare Plant Rank (CRPR) 1B;
- Western Joshua tree: State Candidate for listing as threatened or endangered;
- Desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*, [DETO]): Federally and State-listed as threatened; and
- Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*, [BUOW]): State Candidate for listing as threatened or endangered and California Species of Special Concern (SSC).

Habitat within the project site is considered unsuitable for one of the four species identified above. The project site provides low quality habitat for desert tortoise and burrowing owl. Triple-ribbed milk-vetch is considered absent while western Joshua tree is known to be present.

Non-Listed Special-Status Species

The nine other non-listed special-status species identified and discussed in Table A, San Bernardino milk-vetch (*Astragalus bernardinus*), Pinyon rock cress (*Boechea dispar*), Pioneertown linanthus (*Linanthus bernardinus*), little San Bernardino Mountains linanthus (*Linanthus maculatus* ssp. *maculatus* [*Gilia maculata*]), Robinson's monardella (*Monardella robisonii*), and Latimer's woodland gilia (*Saltugilia latimeri*), are considered absent from the project site based on not being present during the focused rare plant surveys on May 7, 2024. One wildlife species, American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), is not expected to occur based on lack of suitable habitat. One wildlife species, Le Conte's thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*), has a low potential of occurring on site. While the SSC status refers to the San Joaquin Valley population, this species is regionally declining. While the site contains some fourwing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*), it is not expected to be enough to support nesting for this species. One special-status bird species, loggerhead shrike, was observed during the field survey. The project site has suitable vegetation present that could support nesting birds.

Natural Communities of Concern

Riparian habitats, oak woodlands, and vernal pools are among some of the natural communities of interest to the CDFW. In addition, CDFW maintains a list of natural communities occurring in the State and identifies those that are sensitive as having ranks of S1–S3.

The CDFW CNDDDB database search did not list any communities of concern occurring within the project site or its immediate surroundings. The field visit conducted on November 1, 2023, noted the occurrence of disturbed Joshua tree woodland within the entirety of the project site. Joshua tree woodland has a rank of S3, Vulnerable. The habitat within the project site contains a mostly non-native understory and is dominated by western Joshua tree. This habitat will be directly impacted by project activities taking place within the site. No other natural communities of concern, including those that have a State rank of S1-S3, are present within the site.

IMPACT FINDINGS

VEGETATION AND HABITAT IMPACTS

The project would result in direct impacts to native habitats and/or sensitive natural communities in the form of Joshua tree woodland. This species is discussed below.

THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

One state-listed species, western Joshua tree, was observed during the November 1, 2023, field survey. Two federal and/or State-listed animal species have a low potential of occurrence on the project site. No other listed plant or animal species were observed during the site surveys.

Western Joshua Tree

Direct impacts to western Joshua tree are expected with project implementation. Western Joshua tree is known to commonly occur within the general project vicinity. The Joshua tree census conducted on November 1, 2023, resulted in 98 individual trees within the project site and the buffer area. LSA recommends the following impact avoidance measure:

- **Joshua Tree Incidental Take Permit.** An incidental take permit (ITP) application under the Western Joshua Tree Conservation Act (WJTCA) shall be submitted to and approved by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) for any unavoidable impacts to western Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*), prior to its removal.

Desert Tortoise

The project site is within the range of DETO. Direct impacts to desert tortoise may occur with project implementation. No DETO, their sign, or suitable burrows were observed during the November 1, 2023, and May 7, 2024, surveys. LSA recommends the following impact avoidance measure:

- **Pre-Construction Desert Tortoise Survey.** Prior to any vegetation or ground disturbance activities, pre-construction surveys shall be conducted for the species according to the United States Fish and Wildlife's (USFWS) 2019 *Preparing for Any Action That May Occur Within the Range of the Mojave Desert Tortoise (Gopherus agassizii)* (USFWS 2019b). Should there be positive survey results, a federal incidental take permit under Section 10 of FESA and State incidental take permit under Section 2081 of the Fish and Game Code would be required.

Burrowing Owl

Direct impacts to BUOW may occur with project implementation. BUOW is known to commonly occur within the general project vicinity. No BUOW, their sign, or suitable burrows were observed during the November 1, 2023, and May 7, 2024, surveys. At the time of the May 2024 survey, the Joshua tree woodland had a highly vegetated understory that may deter BUOW. LSA recommends the following impact avoidance measure:

- **Pre-Construction Presence/Absence Survey:** A burrowing owl take avoidance survey shall be performed by a qualified biologist not more than 14 days prior to any site disturbance (grubbing, grading, and construction) in accordance with California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) guidelines (*Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation*, March 7, 2012). If an occupied burrow is found (as indicated by the observation of a burrowing owl or the presence of burrowing owl sign), a 250-foot buffer around the burrow will be staked and flagged and no construction activities will be allowed within the buffer area during the breeding season (February 1 through August 31). If the burrow is within the project disturbance area, CDFW will be consulted to coordinate relocation of the owl in accordance with accepted protocols. Determination of the appropriate method of relocation, such as eviction/passive relocation or active relocation, shall be based on the specific site conditions (e.g., distance to nearest suitable habitat and presence of burrows within that habitat) in coordination with the CDFW. Active relocation and eviction/passive relocation require the preservation and maintenance of suitable burrowing owl habitat determined through coordination with the CDFW.

NON-LISTED SPECIAL-STATUS SPECIES

One non-listed animal species, loggerhead shrike, was observed during the May 7, 2024, field survey and is considered present. One non-listed animal species, Le Conte's thrasher, has a low potential of occurring within the project site. No other non-listed plant or animal species were observed during the site surveys nor are they anticipated to be adversely affected by the project.

Nesting Birds

Nesting birds protected by the MBTA and California Fish and Game Code may occur on site (i.e., Le Conte's thrasher and loggerhead shrike) and may be directly affected without avoidance and minimization measures. With successful implementation of the measures described below, impacts to nesting birds would be avoided, and no additional avoidance or minimization measures are warranted. LSA recommends the following impact avoidance measure:

- **Pre-Construction Nesting Bird Survey.** To ensure compliance with California Fish and Game Code and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and to avoid potential impacts to nesting birds, vegetation removal activities shall be conducted outside the general bird nesting season (January 15 through August 31). Any vegetation removal and/or construction activities that occur during the nesting season will require that all suitable habitats be thoroughly surveyed for the presence of nesting birds by a qualified biologist. Prior to commencement of clearing, a qualified biologist shall conduct a pre-construction survey within 3 days prior to ground-disturbing activities. Should nesting birds be found, an exclusionary buffer will be established by the qualified biologist. The buffer may be up to 500 feet in diameter, depending on the species of nesting bird found. This buffer will be clearly marked in the field by construction personnel under guidance of the qualified biologist, and construction or clearing will not be conducted within this zone until the qualified biologist determines that the young have fledged or the nest is no longer active. The buffer may be modified and/or other recommendations proposed as determined appropriate by the biologist to minimize impacts. Nesting bird habitat within the project site will be resurveyed during bird breeding season if there is a lapse in construction activities longer than 7 days.

WILDLIFE MOVEMENT

Wildlife movement includes seasonal migration along corridors and daily movements for foraging. Migration corridors may include areas of unobstructed movement of deer, riparian corridors providing cover for migrating birds, routes between breeding waters and upland habitat for amphibians, and areas between roosting and feeding areas for birds.

The project site does not contain any essential connectivity areas, natural landscape blocks, natural areas small, or potential riparian connections, as documented in the California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project report (Spencer et al. 2010).

The project site is adjacent to existing commercial development and SR-247 that already restricts wildlife movement to the west and south in the project vicinity. The majority of wildlife movement within the project site is anticipated to be limited to wildlife present on site or within an adjacent vacant lot to the east and north. The noise, vibration, light, dust, or human disturbance within construction areas would only temporarily deter wildlife from using areas in the immediate vicinity of construction activities. These indirect effects could temporarily alter migration behaviors, territories, or foraging habitats in select areas. However, because these are temporary effects, it is likely that wildlife already living and moving close to urban development would alter their normal functions for the duration of the project construction and then re-establish these functions once all temporary construction effects have been removed. Additionally, the proposed project's activities would not place any permanent barriers within any known wildlife movement corridors or interfere with habitat connectivity. Therefore, the proposed project would not substantially limit wildlife movement, and no mitigation is warranted.

LOCAL POLICIES AND ORDINANCES PROTECTING BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Western Joshua Tree Conservation Act

The WJTCA is a law passed in California in July 2023 to set forth protections and guidelines for the western Joshua tree. The law prohibits the importation, export, take, possession, purchase, or sale of any western Joshua tree in California unless authorized by CDFW. The proposed project is in the reduced fee area, as described in Fish and Game Code Section 1927.3. The project must comply with the permitting requirements of the Western Joshua Tree Conservation Act and California Department of Fish and Wildlife guidelines. As noted above, an ITP application under the WJTCA is required prior to project implementation (see Mitigation Measure [MM] BIO-1). It should be noted that the CDFW has not entered into an agreement with any county or city to delegate limited authority to permit the taking of western Joshua tree. While the western Joshua tree is regulated under the Town of Yucca Valley Development Code Section 9.10.040 and the San Bernardino County Development Code Section 88.01.060, the WJTCA supersedes previous ordinances or policies put in place prior to its implementation.

San Bernardino County Development Code Section 88.01.060

The Desert Native Plant Protection code applies to the removal or harvesting of certain desert native plants. This county code coordinates with the California Desert Native Plant Act (CDNPA), which protects California desert native plants from unlawful harvesting on both public and privately owned

lands. It should be noted that many of the species protected by CDNPA are not considered rare or special-status species. Yucca Valley is an incorporated town within San Bernardino County's Desert Planning Region, and the County Development Code is applicable to the project site. The County Development Code regulates all species of the family Agavaceae. Western Joshua tree and Mojave yucca (*Yucca schidigera*) were the only plant species regulated by the code and observed within the project site. Given that the project is expected to acquire a tree removal permit from the Town of Yucca Valley for the Mojave yucca and an ITP from the CDFW for the western Joshua trees, no additional permitting requirements for these species are expected to be necessary under San Bernardino County Development Code Section 88.01.060.

Town of Yucca Valley Development Code Section 9.10.040

Under the Town of Yucca Valley Ordinance, western Joshua tree, Mojave yucca, Parry's nolina (*Nolina parryi*), California juniper (*Juniperus californica*), Our Lord's candle (*Yucca whipplei*), and Pinon pine (*Pinus monophylla*) require a tree removal permit. Yucca Valley Development Code Section 9.10.040 requires mapping for any regulated native plant within 40 feet of ground disturbance within the project site. A photograph must be provided for each plant or plant cluster. The diameter of each plant or plant cluster and the approximate height of each plant or cluster should be included in the photo caption or in a separate table. A determination of general plant condition and whether the plant or cluster is likely to survive transplanting must also be provided.

Through project implementation, the project may conflict with local policies or policies related to biological resources for Mojave yucca and California juniper. With implementation of MM BIO-5 the project would not conflict with local policies or policies related to biological resources. The project is not subject to any other local policies or ordinances.

MITIGATION MEASURE SUMMARY

- MM BIO-1 Joshua Tree Incidental Take Permit.** An incidental take permit (ITP) application under the Western Joshua Tree Conservation Act (WJTCA) shall be submitted to and approved by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) for any unavoidable impacts to western Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*), prior to its removal.
- MM BIO-2 Pre-Construction Desert Tortoise Survey.** Prior to any vegetation or ground disturbance activities, pre-construction surveys shall be conducted for the species according to the United States Fish and Wildlife's (USFWS) 2019 *Preparing for Any Action That May Occur Within the Range of the Mojave Desert Tortoise (Gopherus agassizii)* (USFWS 2019b). Should there be positive survey results, a federal incidental take permit under Section 10 of the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) and State incidental take permit under Section 2081 of the Fish and Game Code would be required.
- MM BIO-3 Pre-Construction Burrowing Owl Survey.** A burrowing owl take avoidance survey shall be performed by a qualified biologist not more than 14 days prior to any site disturbance (grubbing, grading, and construction) in accordance with CDFW guidelines (*Staff Report on Burrowing Owl Mitigation*, March 7, 2012). If an occupied burrow is found (as indicated by the observation of a burrowing owl or the presence

of burrowing owl sign), a 250-foot buffer around the burrow will be staked and flagged and no construction activities will be allowed within the buffer area during the breeding season (February 1 through August 31). If the burrow is within the project disturbance area, CDFW will be consulted to coordinate relocation of the owl in accordance with accepted protocols. Determination of the appropriate method of relocation, such as eviction/ passive relocation or active relocation, shall be based on the specific site conditions (e.g., distance to nearest suitable habitat and presence of burrows within that habitat) in coordination with the CDFW. Active relocation and eviction/passive relocation require the preservation and maintenance of suitable burrowing owl habitat determined through coordination with the CDFW.

MM BIO-4 Pre-Construction Nesting Bird Survey. To ensure compliance with the California Fish and Game Code and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and to avoid potential impacts to nesting birds, vegetation removal activities shall be conducted outside the general bird nesting season (January 15 through August 31). Any vegetation removal and/or construction activities that occur during the nesting season will require that all suitable habitats be thoroughly surveyed for the presence of nesting birds by a qualified biologist. Prior to commencement of clearing, a qualified biologist shall conduct a pre-construction survey within 3 days prior to ground-disturbing activities. Should nesting birds be found, an exclusionary buffer will be established by the qualified biologist. The buffer may be up to 500 feet in diameter, depending on the species of nesting bird found. This buffer will be clearly marked in the field by construction personnel under guidance of the qualified biologist, and construction or clearing will not be conducted within this zone until the qualified biologist determines that the young have fledged or the nest is no longer active. The buffer may be modified and/or other recommendations proposed as determined appropriate by the biologist to minimize impacts. Nesting bird habitat within the project site will be resurveyed during the bird breeding season if there is a lapse in construction activities longer than 7 days.

MM BIO-5 Town of Yucca Valley Development Code Section 9.10.040. A tree removal permit application under Development Code Section 9.10.040 shall be submitted to and approved by the Town of Yucca Valley for any unavoidable impacts to Mojave yucca and California juniper.

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APPENDIX A

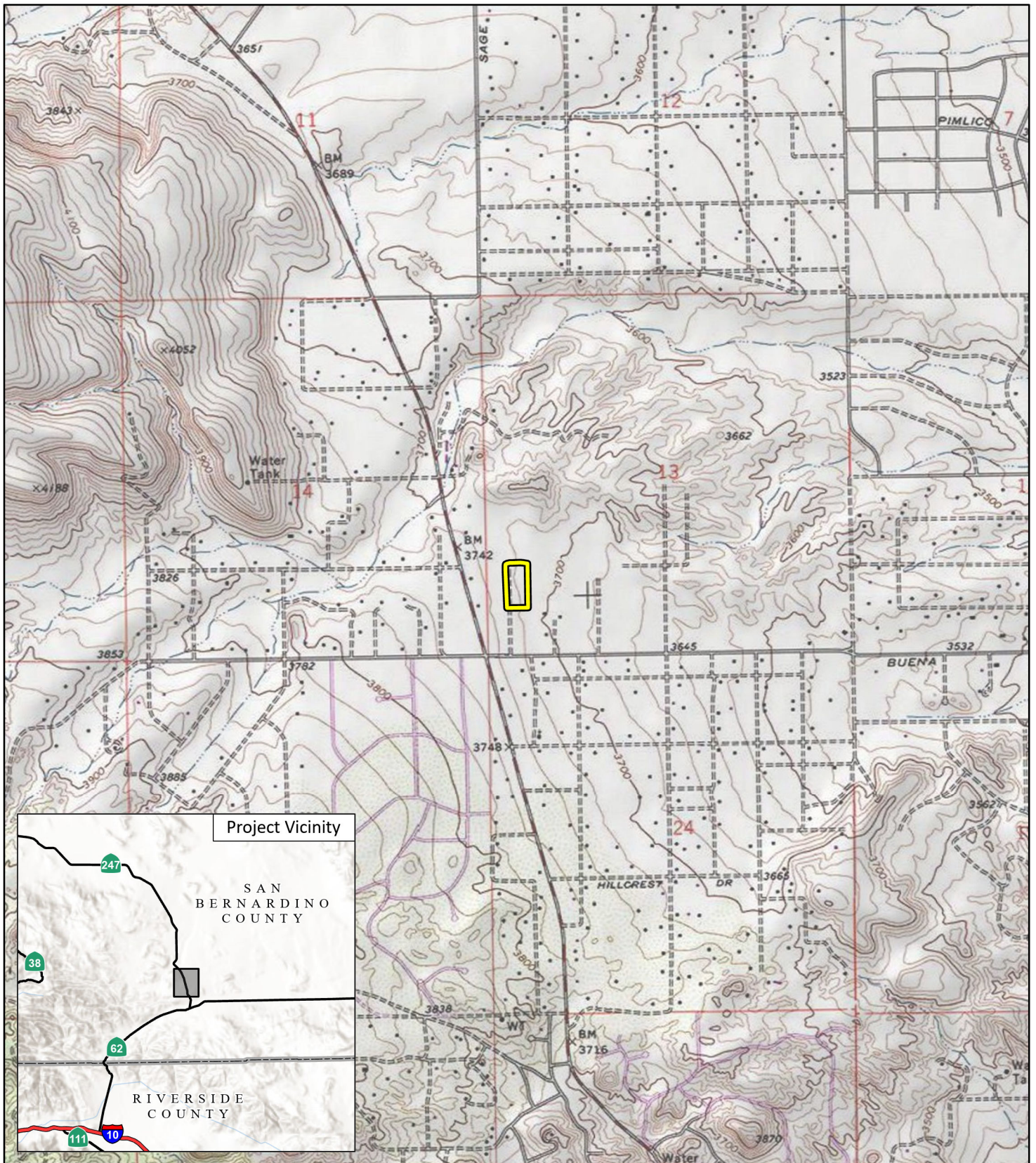
FIGURES 1–4

Figure 1: Regional and Project Location

Figure 2: Project Site Plan

Figure 3: Vegetation, Land Use, and Photo Locations

Figure 4: Joshua Tree Census



 Project Location

FIGURE 1

LSA



0 1000 2000
FEET

SOURCE: USGS 7.5' Quad - Yucca Valley North (1989), CA

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Sun Mesa (Billings) Mini Storage Project
Regional and Project Location

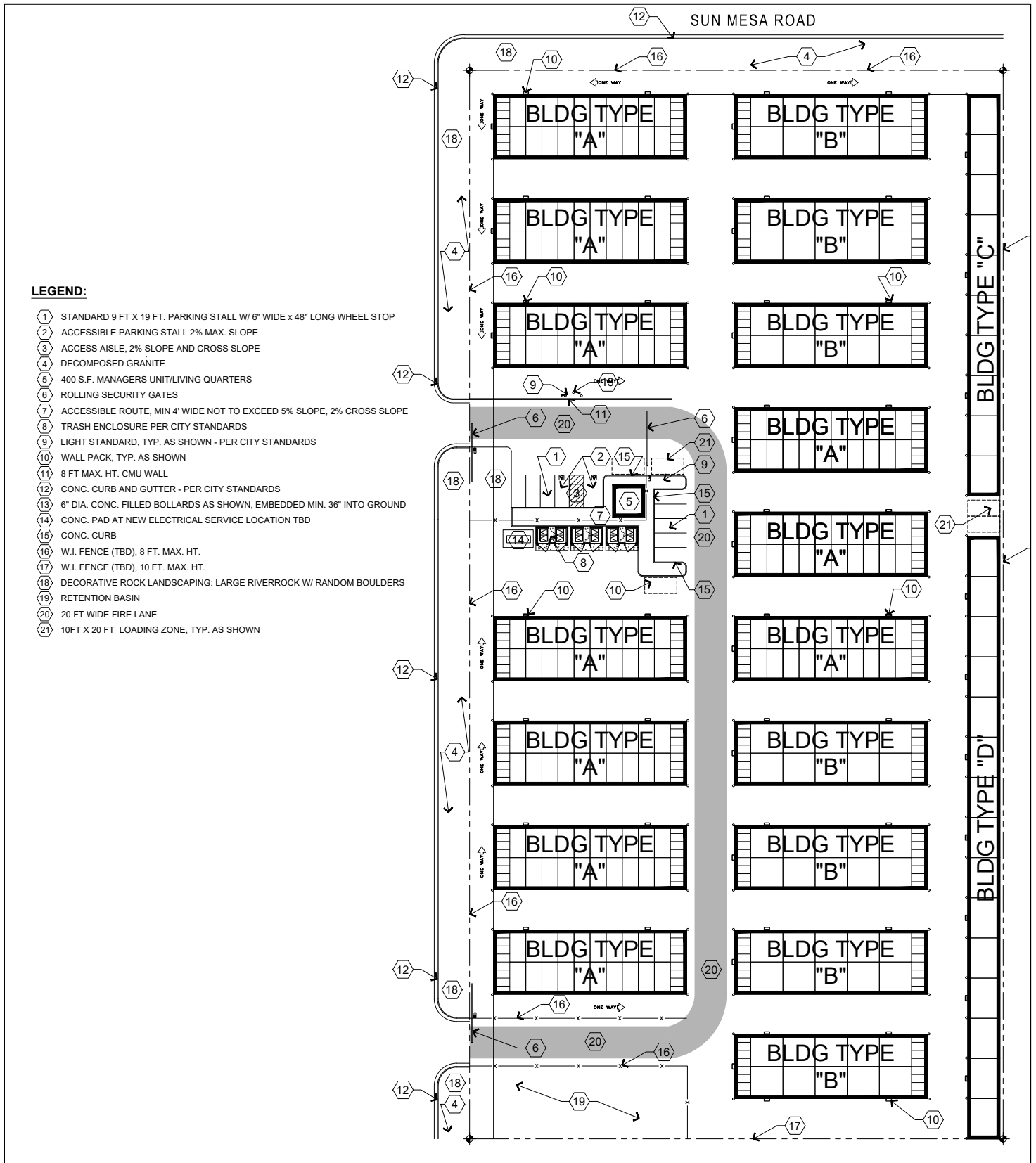


FIGURE 2

LSA



NOT TO SCALE

Sun Mesa (Billings) Mini Storage Project
Project Site Plan

SOURCE: DRP Enterprises

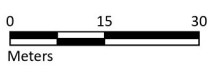
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FIGURE 3

LSA

- Project Area
- Photo Points
- Land Cover
- Joshua Tree Woodland - 4.92 acres



SOURCE: Nearmap Aerial Imagery (June 12, 2023)

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Sun Mesa (Billings) Mini Storage Project
Vegetation, Land Use, and Photo Locations

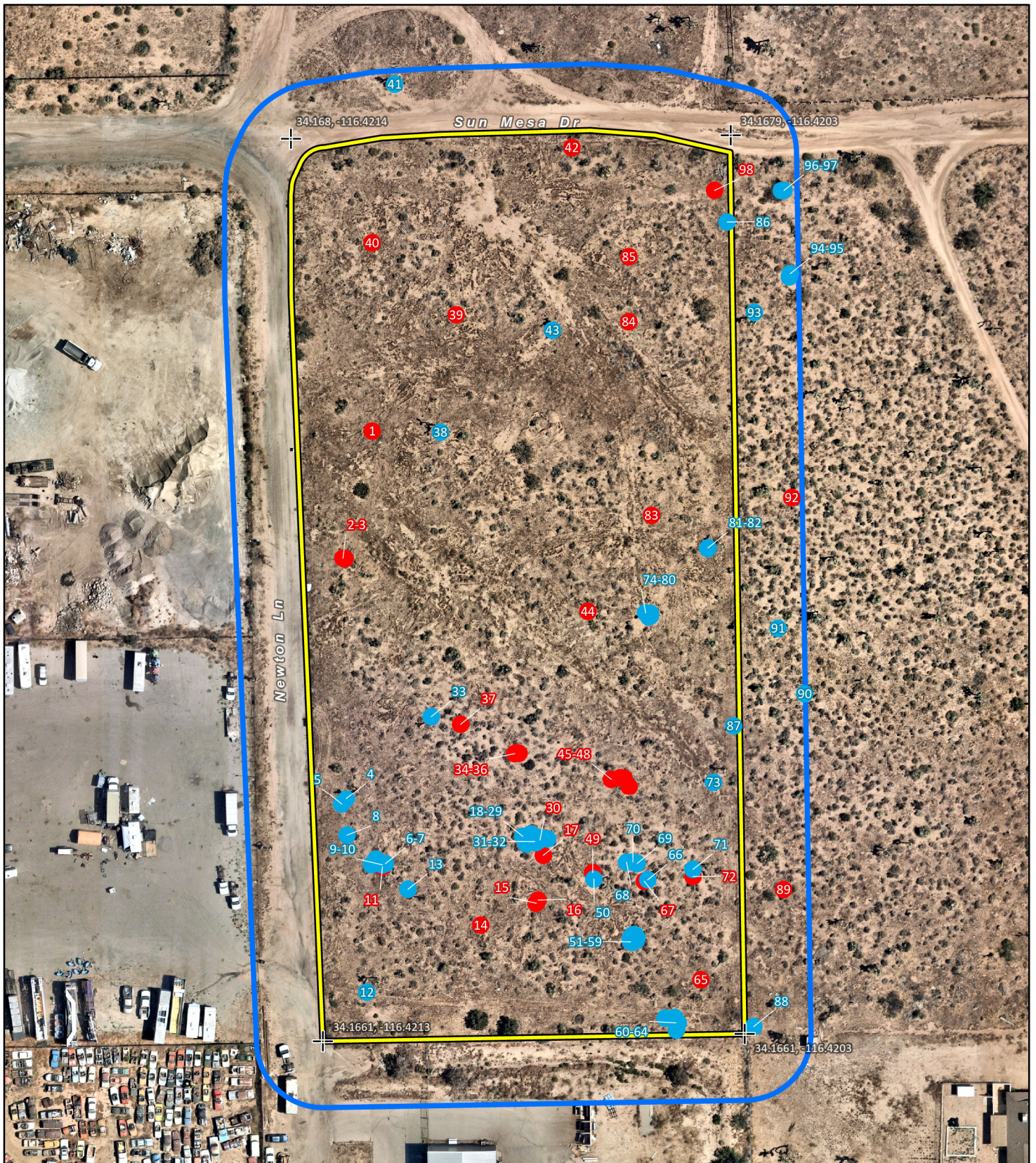


FIGURE 4

LSA

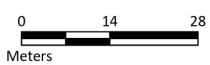
Project Area

Study Area

Joshua Trees

Alive

Dead



SOURCE: Nearmap Aerial Imagery (June 12, 2023)

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Sun Mesa (Billings) Mini Storage Project
Joshua Tree Census

APPENDIX B

VASCULAR PLANT SPECIES OBSERVED

The following vascular plant species were observed within the project site by LSA biologists on May 7, 2024.

* Introduced species not native to California

CONIFERS	
Cupressaceae	Cypress family
<i>Juniperus californica</i>	California juniper
GNETOPHYTES	
Ephedraceae	Ephedra family
<i>Ephedra nevadensis</i>	Nevada jointfir
EUDICOT FLOWERING PLANTS	
Asteraceae	Sunflower family
<i>Acamptopappus sphaerocephalus</i>	Rayless goldenhead
<i>Adenophyllum cooperi</i>	Adenophyllum
<i>Ambrosia dumosa</i>	White bur-sage
<i>Ambrosia salsola</i>	Burrobrush
<i>Baileya multiradiata</i>	Desert marigold
<i>Ericameria cooperi</i>	Cooper's goldenbush
<i>Stephanomeria exigua</i>	Small wreath-plant
Boraginaceae	Borage family
<i>Amsinckia tessellata</i>	Bristly fiddleneck
Brassicaceae	Mustard family
<i>Brassica tournefortii</i> *	Sahara mustard
<i>Hirschfeldia incana</i> *	Shortpod mustard
<i>Sisymbrium altissimum</i> *	Tall tumbledustard
<i>Sisymbrium irio</i> *	London rocket
Cactaceae	Cactus family
<i>Cylindropuntia echinocarpa</i>	Silver cholla
<i>Cylindropuntia ramosissima</i>	Diamond cholla
<i>Echinocereus engelmannii</i>	Hedgehog cactus
Chenopodiaceae	Saltbush family
<i>Atriplex canescens</i>	Fourwing saltbush
Euphorbiaceae	Spurge family
<i>Euphorbia albomarginata</i>	Rattlesnake weed

Fabaceae	Pea family
<i>Senegalia greggii</i>	Catclaw
<i>Senna armata</i>	Spiny senna
Geraniaceae	Geranium family
<i>Erodium cicutarium</i> *	Redstem stork's bill
Lamiaceae	Mint family
<i>Salvia columbariae</i>	Chia
<i>Scutellaria mexicana</i>	Bladder sage
Malvaceae	Mallow family
<i>Sphaeralcea ambigua</i>	Desert mallow
Nyctaginaceae	Four-o'clock family
<i>Mirabilis laevis</i>	Wishbone bush
Polygonaceae	Buckwheat family
<i>Eriogonum fasciculatum</i>	California buckwheat
<i>Eriogonum maculatum</i>	Buckwheat
Solanaceae	Nightshade family
<i>Lycium andersonii</i>	Water jacket
<i>Lycium cooperi</i>	Peach thorn
Zygophyllaceae	Caltrop family
<i>Larrea tridentata</i>	Creosote bush
MONOCOTS FLOWERING PLANTS	
Agavaceae	Agave family
<i>Yucca brevifolia</i>	Western Joshua tree
<i>Yucca schidigera</i>	Mojave yucca
Poaceae	Grass family
<i>Bromus rubens</i> *	Red brome
<i>Schismus sp.</i> *	Mediterranean grass

Taxonomy and scientific nomenclature generally conform to Baldwin, B.G., D.H. Goldman et al., eds. (2012; *The Jepson Manual: Vascular Plants of California*, 2nd edition; University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California).

Common names for each taxa generally conform to Roberts, F.M., Jr. (2008; *The Vascular Plants of Orange County, California: An Annotated Checklist*; F.M. Roberts Publications, San Luis Rey, California) except where Abrams, L. (1923, 1944, and 1951; *Illustrated Flora of the Pacific States: Washington, Oregon, and California*, vols. I–III; Stanford University Press, Stanford, California) and Abrams, L. and Ferris, R.S. (1960; *Illustrated Flora of the Pacific States: Washington, Oregon, and California*, vol. IV; Stanford University Press, Stanford, California) were used, particularly when species-specific common names were not identified in Roberts, F.M., Jr. (2008).

APPENDIX C

ANIMAL SPECIES DETECTED

This is a list of the conspicuous aerial insects (i.e., damselflies, dragonflies, and butterflies), bony fishes, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals noted in the study area by LSA biologists. Presence may be noted if a species is seen or heard, or identified by the presence of tracks, scat, or other signs. Please note that most species are listed in phylogenetic order of relation.

* Species not native to the project site

BIRDS	
Odontophoridae	New World Quail
<i>Callipepla californica</i>	California quail
Columbidae	Pigeons and Doves
<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	mourning dove
Cathartidae	American Vultures
<i>Cathartes aura</i>	turkey vulture
Laniidae	Shrikes
<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	loggerhead shrike
Corvidae	Crows and Ravens
<i>Corvus corax</i>	common raven
Passeridae	Old World Sparrows
<i>Passer domesticus</i> *	house sparrow
Fringillidae	Finches
<i>Haemorhous mexicanus</i>	house finch
REPTILES	
Teiidae	Whiptails
<i>Aspidoscelis</i>	San Diego tiger whiptail
MAMMALS	
Leporidae	Rabbits and Hares
<i>Sylvilagus audubonii</i>	desert cottontail

APPENDIX D

REPRESENTATIVE SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1: View looking south at Joshua tree woodland from the northwest corner of the project site.



Photo 2: View looking south at Joshua tree woodland from the northeast corner of the project site.



Photo 3: View looking west at Joshua tree woodland from the southeast corner of the project site.



Photo 4: View looking north at Joshua tree woodland from the southwest corner of the project site.



Photo 1: View looking south at Joshua tree woodland from the northwest corner of the project site.

APPENDIX E

JOSHUA TREE REPORT



November 20, 2023

Daniel R. Patneau
DRP Enterprises, LLC
P.O. Box 4428
Palm Springs, CA 92263

Subject: Western Joshua Tree Census for the Sun Mesa (Billings) Mini Storage Project in Yucca Valley, San Bernardino County, California (LSA Project No. 20231230)

Dear Mr. Patneau:

This letter report documents the results of a census of western Joshua trees (*Yucca brevifolia*) conducted at the request of DRP Enterprises, LLC, for the Sun Mesa (Billings) Mini Storage project (project) on Assessor's Parcel Numbers 0597-111-67-0000. The 4.92-acre site is on the southwest corner of Newton Lane and Sun Mesa Road, north of Buena Vista Drive in Yucca Valley, San Bernardino County, California. Figure 1 (all figures provided in Attachment A) provides project location.

The Joshua tree census survey was conducted to comply with the permitting requirements of the Western Joshua Tree Conservation Act and California Department of Fish and Wildlife guidelines. This project is in the reduced fee area, as described in Fish and Game Code section 1927.3.

METHODS

The census was conducted on November 1, 2023, by LSA arborist Stan Spencer, senior biologist Christina Van Oosten and assistant biologist Eva Newby. Dr. Spencer has a Ph.D. in botany from Claremont Graduate University (1997) and is an International Society of Arboriculture Certified Arborist (WE-9358A). He has conducted arborist studies throughout Southern California since 2003, including Joshua tree inventories in Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties as well as Joshua tree relocation monitoring. Dr. Spencer is knowledgeable of Joshua tree ecology and identification and experienced in inventorying and assessing Joshua trees for general health and suitability for transplanting. Dr. Spencer can be contacted at 951-232-4124 or stan.spencer@lsa.net. Ms. Van Oosten has a B.S. in Zoology from California State Polytechnic University, Pomona (2008) and is a desert ecologist with more than 10 years' experience in the Southwest. She is knowledgeable of Joshua tree ecology and identification and experienced in inventorying and assessing Joshua trees for general health. Ms. Van Oosten is under the tutelage of Dr. Spencer to become an arborist herself and has conducted Joshua tree inventories in Kern and San Bernardino counties.

The study area for the census includes the 4.92-acre project site plus a 15-meter (49-foot) buffer area around the site (Figure 2). They surveyed the study area on foot by walking 30-foot transects. The transect spacing provided for complete visual coverage of Joshua trees of all size classes on the site. As access was not provided to the buffer area, Joshua trees were surveyed from the edge of the project site (Assessor's Parcel Numbers 0597-111-67-0000). Each living or dead Joshua tree in the study area was assigned a unique identification number, tagged, photographed, and mapped using Global Positioning System (GPS) technology (datum WGS 84). Each Joshua tree stem or trunk arising

from the ground was considered an individual tree. For each Joshua tree, the arborist recorded size class, maturity, and flowering/fruited status. The collected information for each Joshua tree is provided in Table A (Attachment B). Figure 2 shows Joshua tree locations. Photographs of the Joshua trees are provided in Figure 3.

RESULTS

As shown in Table A, Joshua Tree Census Data, 98 Joshua trees were found in the study area: 87 on the project site and 11 in the buffer area. Fifty-eight of the 87 within the project site are alive, with 4 greater than 5 meters (16.4 feet), 27 are between 1 meter (3.8 feet) to less than 5 meters (16.4 feet), and the remaining 27 are less than 1 meter (3.8 feet) in height.

The 11 Joshua trees in the buffer area are spread through the eastern side of the project. Eight of the 11 are alive, with 1 greater than 5 meters (16.4 feet), 5 are between 1 meter (3.8 feet) to less than 5 meters (16.4 feet), and 2 are less than 1 meter (3.8 feet) in height. No Joshua tree seedlings were found in the study area or the buffer. No flowering or fruiting was observed for the current year.

If you have any questions about this Joshua tree census, please contact me at (626) 215-0329 or christina.vanoosten@lsa.net.

Sincerely,

LSA Associates, Inc.



Christina Van Oosten
Senior Biologist

Attachments: A: Figure 1—Project Location
Figure 2—Joshua Tree Census
Figure 3—Representative Tree Photographs
B: Table A

ATTACHMENT A

FIGURES

- Figure 1: Project Location
- Figure 2: Joshua Tree Census
- Figure 3: Joshua Tree Photographs

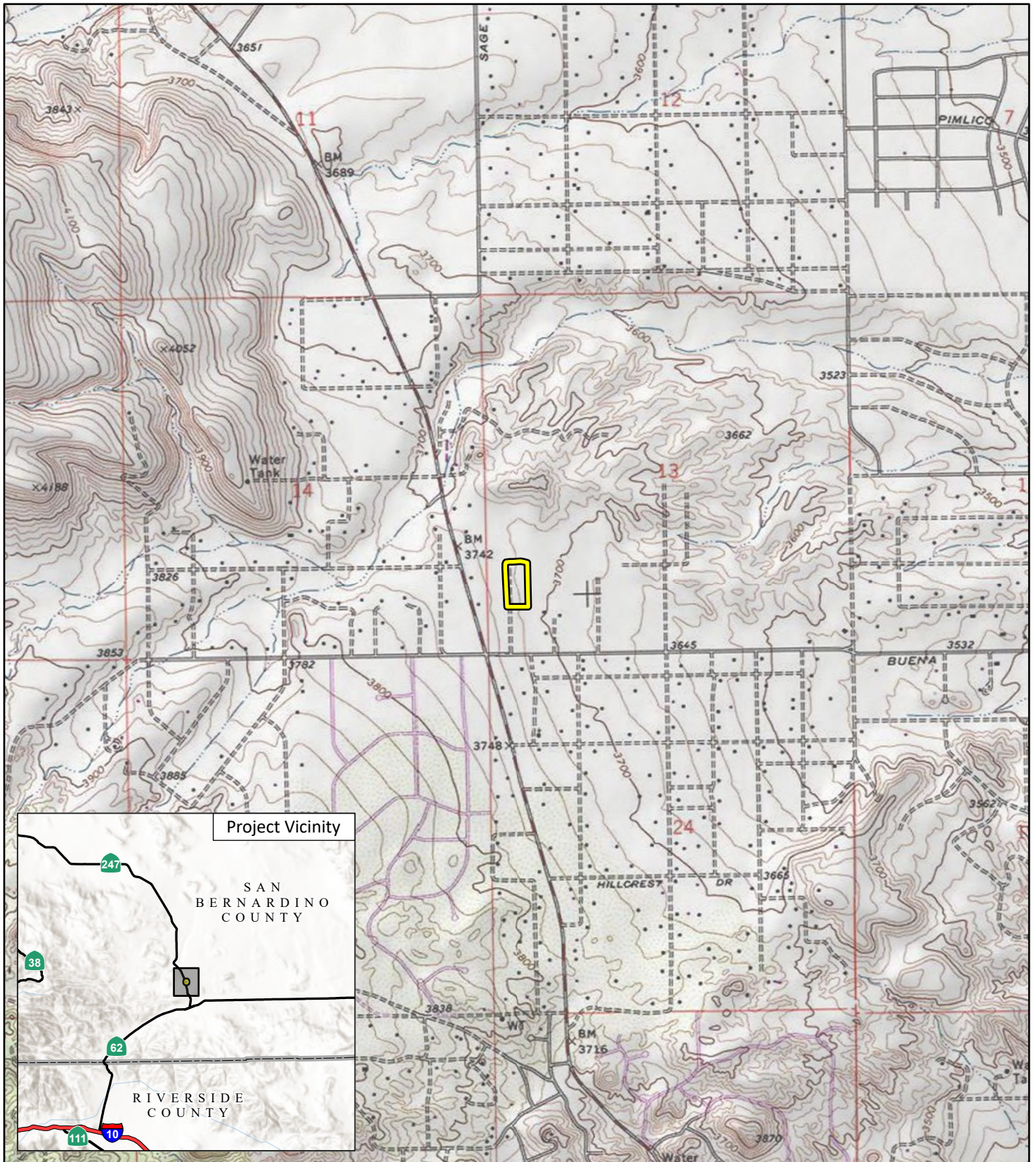



FIGURE 1

LSA

 Project Area



0 1000 2000
FEET

SOURCE: USGS 7.5' Quad - Yucca Valley North (1989), CA

J:\20231230\GIS\Pro\Sun Mesa Mini Storage Project\Sun Mesa Mini Storage Project.aprx (11/16/2023)

Sun Mesa (Billings) Mini Storage Project
Project Location

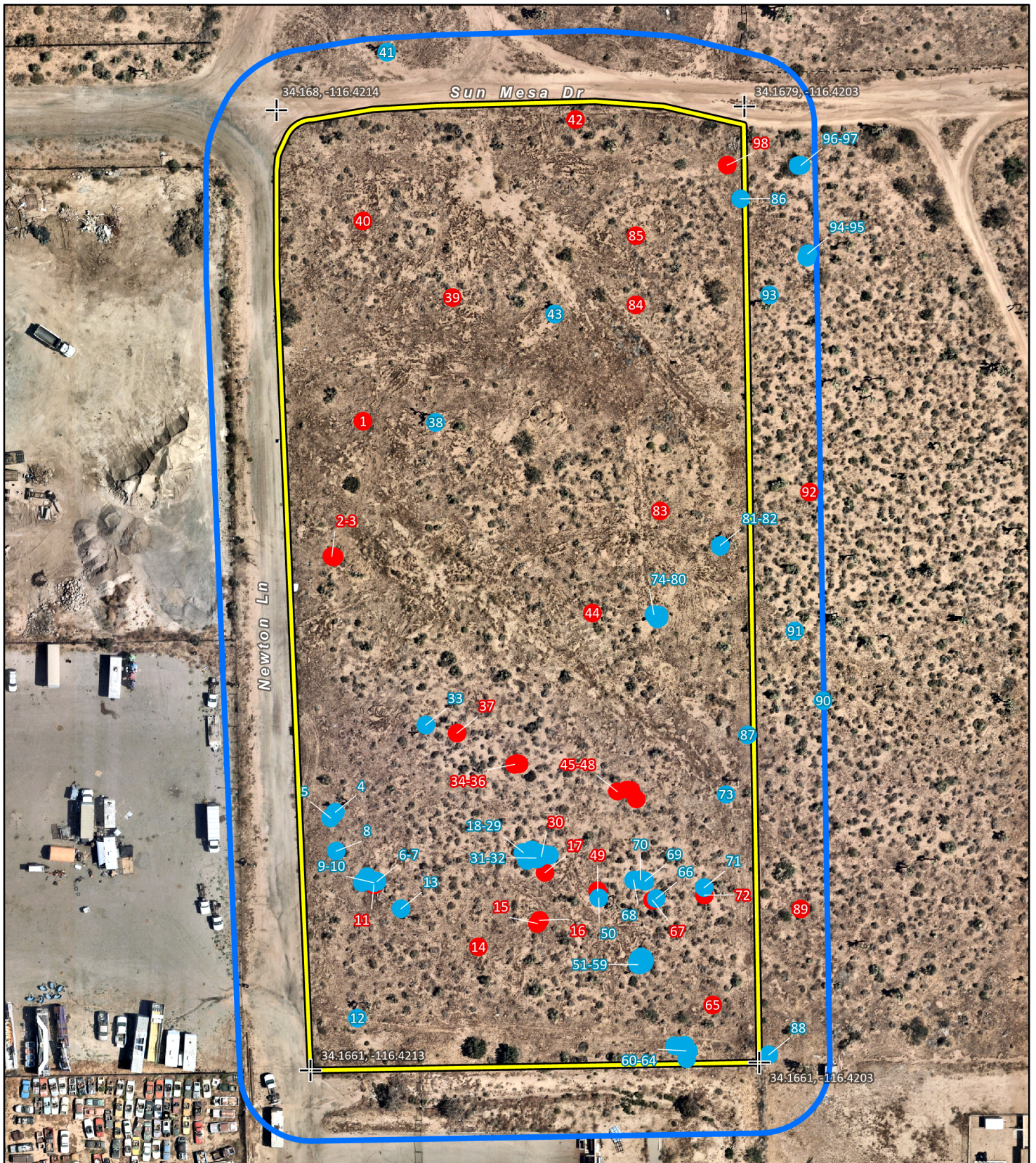


FIGURE 2

LSA

Project Area

Study Area

Joshua Trees

Alive

Dead



SOURCE: Nearmap Aerial Imagery (June 12, 2023)

J:\20231230\GIS\Pro\Sun Mesa Mini Storage Project\Sun Mesa Mini Storage Project.aprx (11/14/2023)

Sun Mesa (Billings) Mini Storage Project
Joshua Tree Census



Photo 1: Tree 1



Photo 2: Tree 2



Photo 3: Tree 3



Photo 4: Tree 4



Photo 5: Tree 5



Photo 6: Tree 6



Photo 7: Tree 7



Photo 8: Tree 8



Photo 9: Tree 9



Photo 10: Tree 10



Photo 11: Tree 11



Photo 12: Tree 12



Photo 13: Tree 13



Photo 14: Tree 14



Photo 15: Tree 15



Photo 16: Tree 16



Photo 17: Tree 17



Photo 18: Tree 18



Photo 19: Tree 19



Photo 20: Tree 20



Photo 21: Tree 21



Photo 22: Tree 22



Photo 23: Tree 23



Photo 24: Tree 24



Photo 25: Tree 25



Photo 26: Tree 26



Photo 27: Tree 27



Photo 28: Tree 28



Photo 29: Tree 29



Photo 30: Tree 30



Photo 31: Tree 31



Photo 32: Tree 32



Photo 33: Tree 33



Photo 34: Tree 34



Photo 35: Tree 35



Photo 36: Tree 36



Photo 37: Tree 37



Photo 38: Tree 38



Photo 39: Tree 29



Photo 40: Tree 40



Photo 41: Tree 41



Photo 42: Tree 42



Photo 43: Tree 43



Photo 44: Tree 44



Photo 45: Tree 45



Photo 46: Tree 46



Photo 47: Tree 47



Photo 48: Tree 48



Photo 49: Tree 49



Photo 50: Tree 50



Photo 51: Tree 51



Photo 52: Tree 52



Photo 53: Tree 53



Photo 54: Tree 54



Photo 55: Tree 55



Photo 56: Tree 56



Photo 57: Tree 57



Photo 58: Tree 58



Photo 59: Tree 59



Photo 60: Tree 60



Photo 61: Tree 61



Photo 62: Tree 62



Photo 63: Tree 63



Photo 64: Tree 64



Photo 65: Tree 65



Photo 66: Tree 66



Photo 67: Tree 67



Photo 68: Tree 68



Photo 69: Tree 69



Photo 70: Tree 70



Photo 71: Tree 71



Photo 72: Tree 72



Photo 73: Tree 73



Photo 74: Tree 74



Photo 75: Tree 75



Photo 76: Tree 76



Photo 77: Tree 77



Photo 78: Tree 78

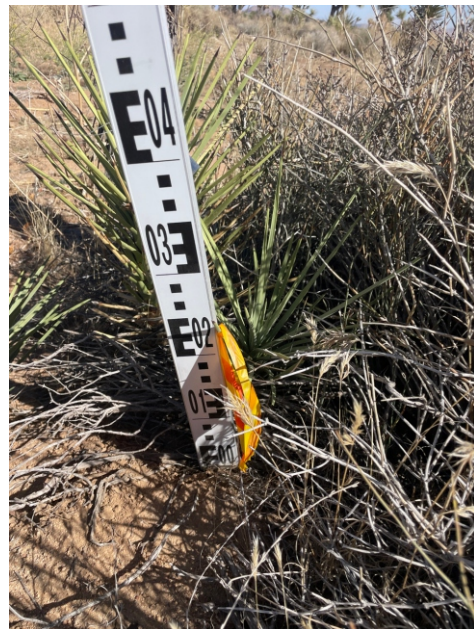


Photo 79: Tree 79



Photo 80: Tree 80



Photo 81: Tree 81



Photo 82: Tree 82



Photo 83: Tree 83



Photo 84: Tree 84



Photo 85: Tree 85



Photo 86: Tree 86



Photo 87: Tree 87



Photo 88: Tree 88 in buffer. No property access.



Photo 89: Tree 89 in buffer. No property access.



Photo 90: Tree 90 in buffer. No property access.



Photo 91: Tree 91 in buffer. No property access.



Photo 92: Tree 92 in buffer. No property access.



Photo 69: Tree 69 in buffer. No property access.



Photo 70: Tree 70 in buffer. No property access.



Photo 71: Tree 71 in buffer. No property access.



Photo 96: Tree 96 in buffer. No property access.



Photo 97: Tree 97 in buffer. No property access.



Photo 98: Tree 98 in buffer. No property access.

ATTACHMENT B

TABLE A

Table A: Joshua Tree Census Data

Tree Number	Latitude (WGS 84)	Longitude (WGS 84)	Size Class ¹	Live or Dead?	Mature (Branched)?	Flowering or Fruiting Stage?	Project Impact to Tree (Removal, Trim, Relocation, Other, or None)	Project Activity Within 15 Meters?
1	34.167359	-116.421207	B	Dead	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
2	34.167102	-116.421284	B	Dead	Unknown	None	Removal	Yes
3	34.167101	-116.421278	B	Dead	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
4	34.166611	-116.421285	C	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
5	34.1666	-116.421296	B	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
6	34.166477	-116.421191	B	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
7	34.166487	-116.421214	B	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
8	34.166536	-116.421284	A	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
9	34.166475	-116.421199	A	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
10	34.166476	-116.421226	A	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
11	34.16647	-116.421199	B	Dead	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
12	34.166216	-116.421242	C	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
13	34.166424	-116.421137	B	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
14	34.166349	-116.42096	B	Dead	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
15	34.166392	-116.420823	B	Dead	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
16	34.166398	-116.420819	B	Dead	Unknown	None	Removal	Yes
17	34.166489	-116.420804	B	Dead	No	None	Removal	Yes
18	34.166528	-116.420854	B	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
19	34.166525	-116.420811	B	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
20	34.166529	-116.420833	B	Live	Unknown	None	Removal	Yes
21	34.166514	-116.420846	B	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
22	34.166523	-116.42084	B	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
23	34.166526	-116.420819	B	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
24	34.166522	-116.420793	A	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
25	34.166523	-116.420825	A	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
26	34.166513	-116.420845	A	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
27	34.166517	-116.420837	A	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
28	34.166533	-116.420834	A	Live	Unknown	None	Removal	Yes
29	34.166518	-116.420816	A	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
30	34.16652	-116.420812	A	Dead	No	None	Removal	Yes

Table A: Joshua Tree Census Data

Tree Number	Latitude (WGS 84)	Longitude (WGS 84)	Size Class ¹	Live or Dead?	Mature (Branched)?	Flowering or Fruiting Stage?	Project Impact to Tree (Removal, Trim, Relocation, Other, or None)	Project Activity Within 15 Meters?
31	34.166517	-116.420825	A	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
32	34.166515	-116.420821	A	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
33	34.166776	-116.421073	B	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
34	34.166698	-116.42087	B	Dead	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
35	34.166699	-116.42086	B	Dead	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
36	34.1667	-116.420864	B	Dead	No	None	Removal	Yes
37	Yes	-116.421002	B	Dead	Unknown	None	Removal	Yes
38	Yes	-116.42104	C	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
39	Yes	-116.420997	B	Dead	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
40	Yes	-116.42120	B	Dead	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
41	Yes	-116.421139	C	Live	Yes	None	Other (in buffer)	Yes
42	Yes	-116.420707	B	Dead	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
43	Yes	-116.420761	B	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
44	Yes	-116.420685	B	Dead	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
45	Yes	-116.420634	B	Dead	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
46	Yes	-116.420603	B	Dead	Unknown	None	Removal	Yes
47	Yes	-116.420612	B	Dead	No	None	Removal	Yes
48	Yes	-116.420591	B	Dead	Unknown	None	Removal	Yes
49	Yes	-116.420684	B	Dead	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
50	Yes	-116.420681	C	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
51	Yes	-116.420594	B	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
52	Yes	-116.420586	B	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
53	Yes	-116.420578	A	Live	Unknown	None	Removal	Yes
54	Yes	-116.420588	A	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
55	Yes	-116.42058	A	Live	Unknown	None	Removal	Yes
56	Yes	-116.420594	A	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
57	Yes	-116.420591	A	Live	Unknown	None	Removal	Yes
58	Yes	-116.42058	A	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
59	Yes	-116.420587	A	Live	Unknown	None	Removal	Yes
60	Yes	-116.420486	B	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes

Table A: Joshua Tree Census Data

Tree Number	Latitude (WGS 84)	Longitude (WGS 84)	Size Class ¹	Live or Dead?	Mature (Branched)?	Flowering or Fruiting Stage?	Project Impact to Tree (Removal, Trim, Relocation, Other, or None)	Project Activity Within 15 Meters?
61	Yes	-116.420512	A	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
62	Yes	-116.420485	A	Live	Unknown	None	Removal	Yes
63	Yes	-116.42048	B	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
64	Yes	-116.420488	A	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
65	Yes	-116.420423	B	Dead	Unknown	None	Removal	Yes
66	Yes	-116.420549	B	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
67	Yes	-116.420558	B	Dead	Unknown	None	Removal	Yes
68	Yes	-116.42060	B	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
69	Yes	-116.420574	B	Live	Unknown	None	Removal	Yes
70	Yes	-116.420585	A	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
71	Yes	-116.420438	B	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
72	Yes	-116.420438	B	Dead	No	None	Removal	Yes
73	Yes	-116.420384	B	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
74	Yes	-116.420544	B	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
75	Yes	-116.420537	B	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
76	Yes	-116.420532	A	Live	Unknown	None	Removal	Yes
77	Yes	-116.420532	A	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
78	Yes	-116.420536	A	Live	No	None	Removal	Yes
79	Yes	-116.420538	A	Live	Unknown	None	Removal	Yes
80	Yes	-116.420535	A	Live	Unknown	None	Removal	Yes
81	Yes	-116.420388	B	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
82	Yes	-116.420389	B	Live	Unknown	None	Removal	Yes
83	Yes	-116.420526	B	Dead	Unknown	None	Removal	Yes
84	Yes	-116.420574	B	Dead	Unknown	None	Removal	Yes
85	Yes	-116.420571	B	Dead	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
86	Yes	-116.420329	B	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
87	Yes	-116.420332	B	Live	Yes	None	Removal	Yes
88	Yes	-116.420295	B	Live	Unknown	None	Other (in buffer)	Yes
89	Yes	-116.420216	B	Dead	Unknown	None	Other (in buffer)	Yes
90	Yes	-116.420157	B	Live	Yes	None	Other (in buffer)	Yes

Table A: Joshua Tree Census Data

Tree Number	Latitude (WGS 84)	Longitude (WGS 84)	Size Class ¹	Live or Dead?	Mature (Branched)?	Flowering or Fruiting Stage?	Project Impact to Tree (Removal, Trim, Relocation, Other, or None)	Project Activity Within 15 Meters?
91	Yes	-116.42022	B	Live	Yes	None	Other (in buffer)	Yes
92	Yes	-116.420181	B	Dead	Yes	None	Other (in buffer)	Yes
93	Yes	-116.420266	B	Live	Yes	None	Other (in buffer)	Yes
94	Yes	-116.420176	B	Live	Yes	None	Other (in buffer)	Yes
95	Yes	-116.420179	A	Live	No	None	Other (in buffer)	Yes
96	Yes	-116.420189	A	Live	No	None	Other (in buffer)	Yes
97	Yes	-116.420195	B	Live	Yes	None	Other (in buffer)	Yes
98	Yes	-116.420359	B	Dead	Yes	None	Removal	Yes

Source: Compiled by LSA (2023)

¹ A = Height less than 1 meter (3.8 feet) ; B = Height 1 m (3.8 feet) to less than 5 m (16.4 feet); C = Height 5 m (16.4 feet) or more.

APPENDIX F

RARE PLANT REPORT

June 18, 2024

Daniel R. Patneaude
DRP Enterprises, LLC
P.O. Box 4428
Palm Springs, CA 92263

Subject: Rare Plant Survey for the Sun Mesa (Billings) Mini Storage Project in Yucca Valley, San Bernardino County, California (LSA Project No. 20231230)

Dear Mr. Patneaude:

This letter report documents the findings of a spring plant survey conducted at the request of DRP Enterprises, LLC, for the Sun Mesa (Billings) Mini Storage Project (project) on Assessor's Parcel Number 0597-111-67-0000. The 4.92-acre site is on the southwest corner of Newton Lane and Sun Mesa Road, north of Buena Vista Drive in Yucca Valley, San Bernardino County, California. Figure 1 (provided in Attachment B) shows the project location.

The survey was conducted to determine the presence/absence of San Bernardino milk-vetch (*Astragalus bernardinus*), triple-ribbed milk-vetch (*Astragalus tricarinatus*), Pinyon rock cress (*Boechera dispar*), Pioneertown linanthus (*Linanthus bernardinus*), Little San Bernardino Mountains linanthus (*Linanthus maculatus* ssp. *maculatus*), Robinson's monardella (*Monardella robisonii*), Latimer's woodland gilia (*Saltugilia latimeri*), and any other special-status species detectable during the time of the survey. A survey had previously been conducted for Western Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*), a state candidate species.

METHODS

The plant survey was conducted by LSA botanist Stan Spencer, PhD, and LSA biologists Christina Van Oosten and Julia Lung on May 7, 2024, from 9:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. The survey was conducted to coincide with the expected flowering times of the target species. The entire project site was surveyed by systematically walking along 15-meter (50-foot) wide, parallel line transects. The survey was floristic in nature, and all species observed on the site were identified to the degree required to determine rarity status.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

None of the target species were observed during the survey. No other special-status plant species were observed except Western Joshua tree. A list of plant species observed in the study area is provided in Table A (Attachment A).

Please contact me at (951) 690-6309 or Christina Van Oosten at (626) 215-0329 if you have any questions regarding the results of this study.

Sincerely,

LSA Associates, Inc.



Stan Spencer
Associate/Botanist

Attachments: A: Table A – Vascular Plant Species Observed
B: Figure 1

ATTACHMENT A

TABLE A: VASCULAR PLANT SPECIES OBSERVED

Table A: Vascular Plant Species Observed

Scientific Name	Common Name
CONIFERS	
Cupressaceae	Cypress family
<i>Juniperus californica</i>	California juniper
GNETOPHYTES	
Ephedraceae	Ephedra family
<i>Ephedra nevadensis</i>	Nevada jointfir
EUDICOT FLOWERING PLANTS	
Asteraceae	Sunflower family
<i>Acamptopappus sphaerocephalus</i>	Rayless goldenhead
<i>Adenophyllum cooperi</i>	Adenophyllum
<i>Ambrosia dumosa</i>	White bur-sage
<i>Ambrosia salsola</i>	Burrobrush
<i>Baileya multiradiata</i>	Desert marigold
<i>Ericameria cooperi</i>	Cooper's goldenbush
<i>Stephanomeria exigua</i>	Small wreath-plant
Boraginaceae	Borage family
<i>Amsinckia tessellata</i>	Bristly fiddleneck
Brassicaceae	Mustard family
<i>Brassica tournefortii</i> *	Sahara mustard
<i>Hirschfeldia incana</i> *	Shortpod mustard
<i>Sisymbrium altissimum</i> *	Tall tumbledustard
<i>Sisymbrium irio</i> *	London rocket
Cactaceae	Cactus family
<i>Cylindropuntia echinocarpa</i>	Silver cholla
<i>Cylindropuntia ramosissima</i>	Diamond cholla
<i>Echinocereus engelmannii</i>	Hedgehog cactus
Chenopodiaceae	Saltbush family
<i>Atriplex canescens</i>	Fourwing saltbush
Euphorbiaceae	Spurge family
<i>Euphorbia albomarginata</i>	Rattlesnake weed
Fabaceae	Pea family
<i>Senegalia greggii</i>	Catclaw
<i>Senna armata</i>	Spiny senna
Geraniaceae	Geranium family
<i>Erodium cicutarium</i> *	Redstem stork's bill
Lamiaceae	Mint family
<i>Salvia columbariae</i>	Chia
<i>Scutellaria mexicana</i>	Bladder sage
Malvaceae	Mallow family
<i>Sphaeralcea ambigua</i>	Desert mallow
Nyctaginaceae	Four-o'clock family
<i>Mirabilis laevis</i>	Wishbone bush
Polygonaceae	Buckwheat family
<i>Eriogonum fasciculatum</i>	California buckwheat
<i>Eriogonum maculatum</i>	Buckwheat
Solanaceae	Nightshade family
<i>Lycium andersonii</i>	Water jacket

Table A: Vascular Plant Species Observed

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Lycium cooperi</i>	Peach thorn
Zygophyllaceae	Caltrop family
<i>Larrea tridentata</i>	Creosote bush
MONOCOTS FLOWERING PLANTS	
Agavaceae	Agave family
<i>Yucca brevifolia</i>	Joshua tree
<i>Yucca schidigera</i>	Mojave yucca

* non-native species

ATTACHMENT B

FIGURE 1

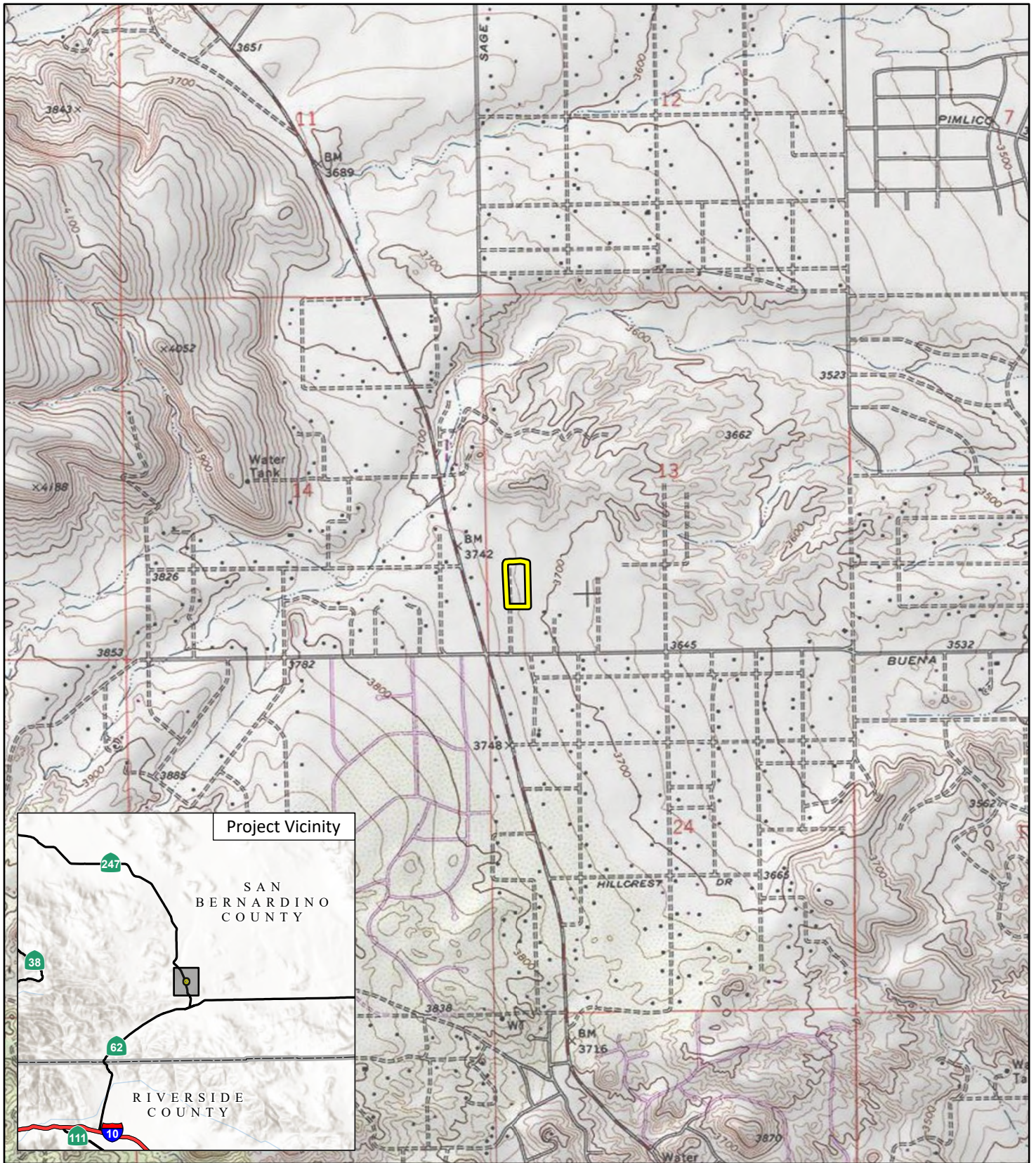

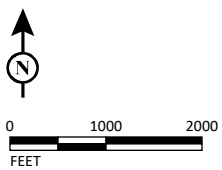


FIGURE 1

LSA

 Project Area



Sun Mesa (Billings) Mini Storage Project
Project Location

SOURCE: USGS 7.5' Quad - Yucca Valley North (1989), CA

J:\20231230\GIS\Pro\Sun Mesa Mini Storage Project\Sun Mesa Mini Storage Project.aprx (11/16/2023)