



**DESERT TORTOISE HABITAT ASSESSMENT
FOR
ASSESSOR'S PARCEL NUMBER
059-708-121**

**TOWN OF YUCCA VALLEY
SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY
CALIFORNIA**

Prepared for:

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Yucca Valley, CA, 92284**

Prepared by:

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Executive Summary

Hernandez Environmental Services (HES) was contracted to conduct desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) habitat assessment surveys for an approximately 2.53-acre property consisting of Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APN) 059-708-121.

HES followed the presence/absence survey guidelines in the October 26, 2018, *Preparing For Any Action That May Occur Within The Range Of The Mojave Desert Tortoise* guidelines. The entire 2.53-acre property was surveyed.

On July 18, 2024, HES biologists surveyed all 2.53 acres of on site. No live tortoise, scat, carcass, or tortoise burrows were found during the survey. No habitat suitable for supporting desert tortoise was found on site.

1.0 Introduction

Hernandez Environmental Services (HES) was contracted to conduct a desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) habitat assessment for the 2.53-acre property. HES determined that potential desert tortoise habitat does not occur within the property.

HES conducted a habitat assessment following the guidelines in the October 26, 2018, *Preparing For Any Action That May Occur Within The Range Of The Mojave Desert Tortoise*. The size of the property would be considered a small project under the 2018 guidelines; therefore, a *Small Project Survey* was conducted.

1.1 Project Site Location

The approximate 2.53-acre property is located at the address 56885 Sunflower Drive Yucca Valley, CA 92284. The project site is located northeast of the intersection of Old Woman Springs Road and Sun Mesa Drive. Specifically, the project site is located within section 14, township 1 north, range 5 east in the *Yucca Valley North* United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' topographic quadrangle. The center point latitude and longitude for the project site are 34° 10' 09.3872" North, 116° 25' 22.8727" West (Figures 1 and 2).

1.2 Proposed Project

The proposed project includes the development of a 1,200 square foot single story artist studio addition to an existing residential and storage building. Other improvements include a new 600 SF attached shade cover, accessible path of travel improvements, a paved parking area, and compacted native surfacing parking area. The proposed project includes will result in approximately 0.16 acre of impacts on the property. All project activities will occur within the northwest corner of the property, within the existing driveway and around the existing structures.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Literature Review

HES conducted a literature search and reviewed aerial photographs and topographic maps of the property and surrounding areas. HES biologist referred to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) California Native Diversity Database (CNDDDB) and Biogeographic Information and Observation System (BIOS) for desert tortoise occurrence information. The California Wildlife Habitat Relationships Desert Tortoise Predicted Habitat layer on BIOS does not predict habitat for desert tortoise on the property. The three recorded occurrences of desert tortoise on CNDDDB within five miles of the site are all in natural areas not bordered by urban development. HES followed the protocol for site assessment and presence/absence surveys described in the USFWS October 26, 2018, *Preparing For Any Action That May Occur Within The Range Of The Mojave Desert Tortoise (Gopherus agassizii)*.

2.2 Field Survey

On July 18, 2024, HES biologists surveyed the entire 2.53-acre property. Survey conditions were as follows:

Date	Time	Temperature (Fahrenheit)	Weather Conditions
July 18, 2024	0820 hours to 0900 hours	86-87 degrees	sunny

HES biologists conducted linear transects spaced approximately ten meters apart were walked using UTM as guidelines for 100 percent coverage. The survey focused on identifying any tortoise, tortoise sign, or tortoise burrows within the property. Location data would be recorded using a handheld Global Positioning System (GPS) system.

3.0 Existing Conditions and Results

The 2.53-acre property consists of a maintained and fenced residential property. There are two existing structures, located near the center of the western portion of the site. The vegetation on the property is sparse and scattered mostly along the borders of the site. Plant species observed on site include Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*), pine tree (*Pinus* sp.), saltbush (*Atriplex* sp.), and shortpod mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*). The herbaceous layer on the property is sparse and appears to be regularly maintained. The site is flat with elevations ranging from 3,738 feet above mean sea level (AMSL) and 3,745 feet AMSL. The soil on the property appeared to be compact with a thin layer of loose sandy soil on top. The property is bordered by a rural residential development to the north, vacant land to the east, a commercial development to the south, and Old Woman Springs Rd to the west.

The entire property was surveyed for the presence/absence of desert tortoise. No live tortoise, scat, carcass, or tortoise burrows were found during the survey (Figure 4).

4.0 Discussion

Based on the October 26, 2018 *Preparing For Any Action That May Occur Within The Range Of The Mojave Desert Tortoise* guidelines, the property and the Action Area is considered a “smaller project.” A smaller project is one that is smaller than 500 acres. For smaller projects, the number of tortoises affected is likely to be too small for statistical treatment; the goal with surveying these areas is to determine whether desert tortoise is likely to be present and to determine any areas of concentrated use (October 26, 2018 Guidelines).

No sign of desert tortoise was found on site. The site appears to be regularly maintained and the vegetation on site does not provide suitable food resources for desert tortoise. Based on the survey

results, it has been determined that the property has no desert tortoise present and does not contain suitable desert tortoise habitat.

5.0 Certification

CERTIFICATION: I hereby certify that the statements furnished above and in the attached exhibits present the 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 08/12/24 SIGNED _____
PROJECT MANAGER

Fieldwork Performed By:
Elizabeth Gonzalez
SENIOR BIOLOGIST

6.0 References

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB). Accessed August 2024. CDFW, Sacramento, California

Hickman, J. C., ed. 1993. *The Jepson Manual: Higher Plants of California*. University of California Press.

Munz, P.A., 1974. *A Flora of Southern California*. University of California Press, Berkeley, California.

Sawyer, J.O., T. Keeler-Wolf, and J.M. Evens 2009 *A Manual of California Vegetation, 2nd edition*. California Native Plant Society Press, Sacramento, CA.

U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, 2019. Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants. <https://www.fws.gov/endangered/species/us-species.html>.

U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, October 26, 2018 *Preparing For Any Action That May Occur Within The Range Of The Mojave Desert Tortoise* guidelines.

FIGURES

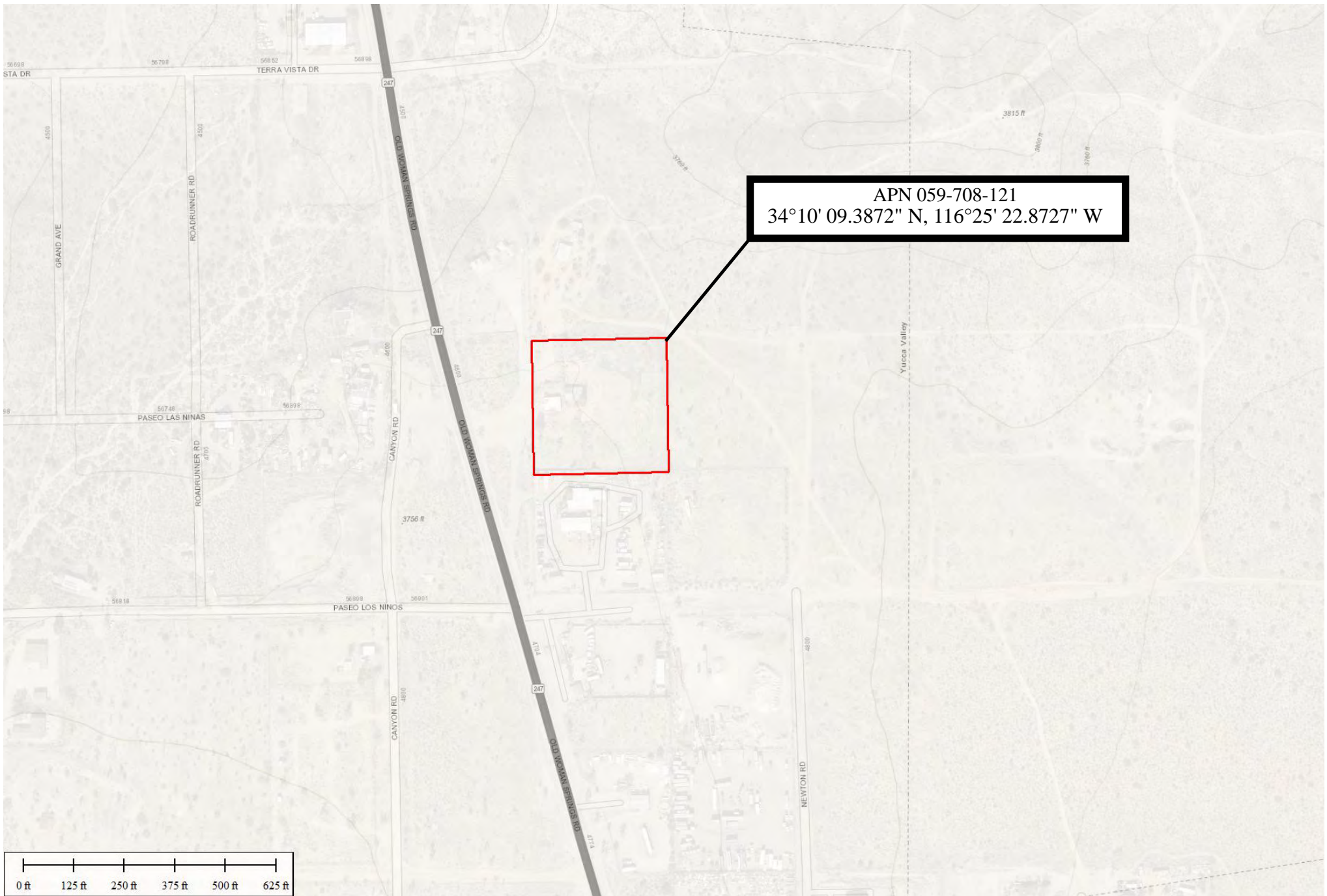


Figure 1
 Location Map
 APN 059-708-121
 Town of Yucca Valley
 San Bernardino County, California

Legend

 Property Boundary



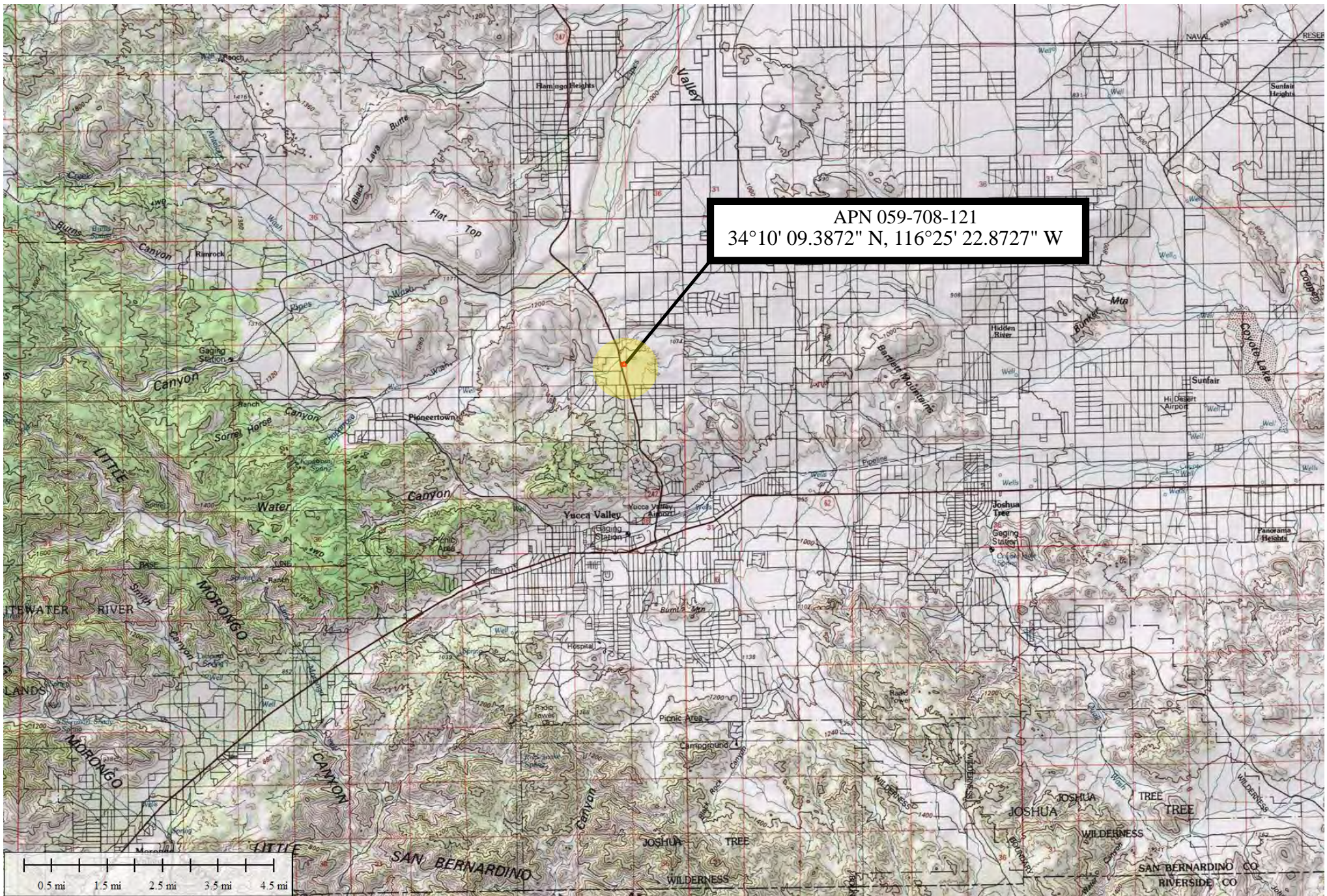


Figure 2
Vicinity Map
APN 059-708-121
Town of Yucca Valley
San Bernardino County, California

Legend



 Property Boundary





Figure 3
Survey Area Map
APN 059-708-121
Town of Yucca Valley
San Bernardino County, California

Legend

-  Property Boundary
-  Transect



APPENDIX A



View of existing structure on the northwest portion of the site.



View of existing structure and ornamental trees on western portion of site.



View facing east of existing structures on site and the maintained areas on the property.



View of the disturbed habitat on the northern portion of the site.



View of tarps on the disturbed habitat on the southern portion of the site. The tarps are placed to solarize invasive seeds.



View of southern portion of the site from the east facing west.