

## GLENN LUKOS ASSOCIATES

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May 8, 2017

Ms. Stacey Love  
Recovery Permit Coordinator  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
2177 Salk Avenue, Suite 250  
Carlsbad, California 92008

**SUBJECT:** Submittal Requirements for Coastal California Gnatcatcher Surveys for the Esperanza Hills Project, City of Yorba Linda, Orange County, California.

Dear Ms. Love:

This letter report summarizes the methodology and findings of surveys for the federally listed threatened coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) ("CAGN") conducted by Glenn Lukos Associates, Inc. (GLA) in Orange County, California. GLA was retained to determine the presence or absence of the coastal California gnatcatcher within the Survey Area; which includes approximately 38 acres of potentially suitable coastal sage scrub habitat that includes species such as California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) and coast brittlebush (*Encelia californica*). Other portions of the site support chaparral bush mallow which reaches heights of up to 10 feet and is not suitable; however, many areas of the bush mallow are shorter and exhibit at least modest potential for supporting the CAGN and were subject to surveys. The Survey Area was divided into two polygons to ensure full survey coverage of all suitable habitat and the survey polygons are designated Polygons A and B on Exhibit 3.

Focused surveys for the CAGN were conducted from March 20 through May 4, 2017 in areas of potentially suitable habitat in accordance with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) guidelines. No CAGN were detected within or adjacent to the Survey Area during the 2017 breeding season survey.

### **SURVEY LOCATION**

The Survey Area is located in an unsectioned portion of Township 3 South, Range 8 West, of the Prado Dam and Yorba Linda, California USGS 7.5 minute topographical maps [Exhibits 1 & 2 – Regional and Vicinity Maps]. The Survey Area is east of San Antonio Road and north of Green Crest Drive. To the north and east the area is bounded by open space. To the south and west the area is bounded by residential development. It is important to note that since the previous survey was conducted in 2013, the applicant has proposed a new alternative that does not require access

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from the west from San Antonio Drive, either directly or via Aspen Way. The changes to the project have resulted in a smaller survey area as all of the offsite areas to the west including areas of willow riparian habitat previously noted to be occupied by least Bell's vireo are now avoided by the project.

## **PLANT COMMUNITIES**

As noted in the 2013 45-day report for CAGN, as a result of a wildfire that swept through this area in November 2008, the vegetation is in a successional state, with large areas still dominated by fire followers and non-native grasses. Dominant species throughout much of the site include chaparral mallow (*Malacothamnus fasciculatus*), black mustard (*Brassica nigra*), ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*), annual yellow sweet clover (*Melilotus indicus*), and redstem filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*). Other common species occurring on site include lemonade berry (*Rhus integrifolia*), blue elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* ssp. *caerulea*), wishbone bush (*Mirabilis californica*), bush lupine (*Lupinus arboreus*), and milkvetch (*Astragalus* sp.).

Cover by coastal sage scrub (CSS) species such as California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) are limited to less than 40 acres of the entire site. The topography of the site is quite steep with many slopes of 70 degrees or more. Generally, the CSS on site occurs in isolated patches, with fewer contiguous CSS blocks occurring sporadically. Common CSS species include California sagebrush, black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*), and California brittlebush (*Encelia californica*).

## **METHODOLOGY**

Protocol surveys for the CAGN were performed across the Survey Area. Due to the steep terrain and difficulty of accessing all areas, the Survey Area was divided into two survey polygons (Polygon A and Polygon B).<sup>1</sup> Surveys were conducted in accordance with the 1997 USFWS guidelines, which stipulate that during the breeding season six surveys shall be conducted in all areas of suitable habitat with at least seven days between site visits. Jeff Ahrens (TE-052159-5) conducted the protocol surveys on March 20 through May 4, 2017. No surveys were conducted during extreme weather conditions (i.e., winds exceeding 15 miles per hour, rain, or temperatures in excess of 35°C/95°F). All areas of suitable habitat were surveyed on foot by walking slowly and methodically. Taped vocalizations and "pishing" sounds were utilized to elicit a response from gnatcatchers that might be present. Table 1 provides a summary of gnatcatcher survey dates and ambient conditions.

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<sup>1</sup> Polygon B also included a proposed offsite grading area (see Exhibit 3).

**Table 1: Dates and Weather Data Recorded for the Esperanza Hills Project Site**

Date	Biologist	Start/End Time	Temp °F (Start/End)	Cloud Cover (%) (Start/End)	Wind (Mph)
Polygon A					
3/20/17	JA	0600/1200	56/63	100/100	1-3/1-2
3/30/17	JA	0630/1035	56/69	20/0	1-2/3-5
4/10/17	JA	0555/1000	52/64	0/0	2-3/1-3
4/17/17	JA	0620/1015	51/66	50/50	2-4/1-4
4/24/17	JA	0625/1005	58/65	90/75	0-1/1-2
5/1/17	JA	0555/0930	54/71	0/0	1-2/1-2
Polygon B					
3/27/17	JA & TB	0630/1150	52/70	0/40	2-3/2-4
4/3/17	JA	0615/1100	100/100	48/60	1-2/1-2
4/13/17	JA	0605/1200	53/66	80/80	1-3/1-2
4/20/17	JA	0630/1145	57/71	0/0	2-3/3-4
4/27/17	JA	0610/0945	57/67	20/10	2-4/1-3
5/4/17	JA	0540/0900	60/73	100/0	1-2/2-4

JA = Jeff Ahrens (permitted), TB = Tony Bomkamp (permit retired)

## **RESULTS**

No CAGN were observed within or adjacent to the Survey Area during the 2017 breeding season protocol survey.

Other birds commonly observed during the focused survey included lesser goldfinch (*Carduelis psaltria*), northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), Anna's hummingbird (*Calypte anna*), mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), house finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*), spotted towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*), wrenit (*Chamaea fasciata*), California towhee (*Pipilo crissalis*), Allen's hummingbird (*Selasphorus sasin*), Bewick's wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*), California quail (*Callipepla californica*), Say's phoebe (*Sayornis saya*), rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps*), black-chinned sparrow (*Spizella atrogularis*), bushtit (*Psaltiriparus minimus*), song sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*), Lazuli bunting (*Passerina amoena*), and red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*).

See Appendix A for a complete list of birds observed on site. No brown-headed cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*) were identified during surveys.

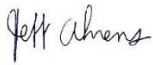
In addition, the golden eagle nest site observed off site north of the site prior to the 2008 Freeway Complex fire was occupied in 2017 by an active red-tail hawk nest and no observations of golden eagles, including foraging or "fly-overs" were made during the 2017 surveys.

Stacey Love  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
May 8, 2017  
Page 4

Should you have any questions regarding the methodology or findings of this report, please contact me at (949) 837-0404, extension 40.

I certify that the information in this survey report and attached exhibits fully and accurately represents my work.

GLENN LUKOS ASSOCIATES, INC.



TE-052159-5

May 8, 2017

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Jeff Ahrens  
Biologist

Permit #

Date

# AVIAN COMPENDIUM<sup>2</sup>

## AVES

### ACCIPITRIDAE

*Buteo jamaicensis*  
*Circus cyaneus*

### AEGITHALIDAE

*Psaltiriparus minimus*

### APODIDAE

*Aeronautes saxatilis*

### CAPRIMULGIDAE

*Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*

### CARDINALIDAE

*Passerina amoena*  
*Passerina caerulea*  
*Pheucticus melanocephalus*

### CATHARTIDAE

*Cathartes aura*

### COLUMBIDAE

*Columba livia*  
*Zenaida macroura*

### CORVIDAE

*Aphelocoma californica*  
*Corvus brachyrhynchos*  
*Corvus corax*

### CUCULIDAE

*Geococcyx californianus*

### EMBERIZIDAE

*Ammodramus savannarum*  
*Chondestes grammacus*  
*Melospiza melodia*  
*Melospiza crissalis*

## BIRDS

### Hawks and Old World Vultures

red-tailed hawk  
northern harrier

### Long-Tailed Tits and Bushtits

bushtit

### Swifts

white-throated swift

### Nightjars

common poorwill

### Cardinals, Grosbeaks and Allies

Lazuli bunting  
blue grosbeak  
black-headed grosbeak

### New World Vultures

turkey vulture

### Pigeons and doves

rock pigeon  
mourning dove

### Crows and Jays

California scrub-jay  
American crow  
common raven

### Cuckoos

greater roadrunner

### Emberizids

grasshopper sparrow  
lark sparrow  
song sparrow  
California towhee

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<sup>2</sup> Birds: American Ornithologists' Union (2017. Online 7<sup>th</sup> Edition Checklist).

*Pipilo maculatus*  
*Spizella atrogularis*  
*Zonotrichia leucophrys*

## **FALCONIDAE**

*Falco sparverius*

## **FRINGILLIDAE**

*Haemorhous mexicanus*  
*Spinus psaltria*  
*Spinus tristis*

## **HIRUNDINIDAE**

*Hirundo rustica*  
*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*  
*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*

## **ICTERIDAE**

*Icterus cucullatus*

## **MIMIDAE**

*Mimus polyglottos*  
*Toxostoma redivivum*

## **ODONTOPHORIDAE**

*Callipepla californica*

## **PARULIDAE**

*Cardellina pusilla*  
*Geothlypis trichas*  
*Leiothlypis ruficapilla*

## **PHASIANIDAE**

*Phasianus colchicus*

## **PICIDAE**

*Picoides nuttallii*

## **POLIOPTILIDAE**

*Polioptila caerulea*

## **PTILOGONATIDAE**

*Phainopepla nitens*

## **STURNIDAE**

*Sturnus vulgaris*

spotted towhee  
black-chinned sparrow  
white-crowned sparrow

## **Falcons**

American kestrel

## **Fringilline Finches and Allies**

house finch  
lesser goldfinch  
American goldfinch

## **Swallows**

barn swallow  
cliff swallow  
northern rough-winged swallow

## **Blackbirds**

hooded oriole

## **Mockingbirds and Thrashers**

northern mockingbird  
California thrasher

## **New World Quails**

California quail

## **Wood Warblers and Relatives**

Wilson's warbler  
common yellowthroat  
Nashville warbler

## **Pheasant Family**

ring-necked family

## **Woodpeckers and Allies**

Nuttall's woodpecker

## **Gnatcatchers**

blue-gray gnatcatcher

## **Silky-flycatchers**

phainopepla

## **Starlings**

European starling

**TIMALIIDAE**

*Chamaea fasciata*

**TROCHILIDAE**

*Calypte anna*

*Calypte costae*

*Selasphorus sasin*

**TROGLODYTIDAE**

*Catherpes mexicanus*

*Thryomanes bewickii*

*Troglodytes aedon*

**TYRANNIDAE**

*Myiarchus cinerascens*

*Sayornis nigricans*

*Sayornis saya*

*Tyrannus vociferans*

**Babblers**

wrentit

**Hummingbirds**

Anna's hummingbird

Costa's hummingbird

Allen's hummingbird

**Wrens**

canyon wren

Bewick's wren

house wren

**Tyrant Flycatchers**

ash-throated flycatcher

black phoebe

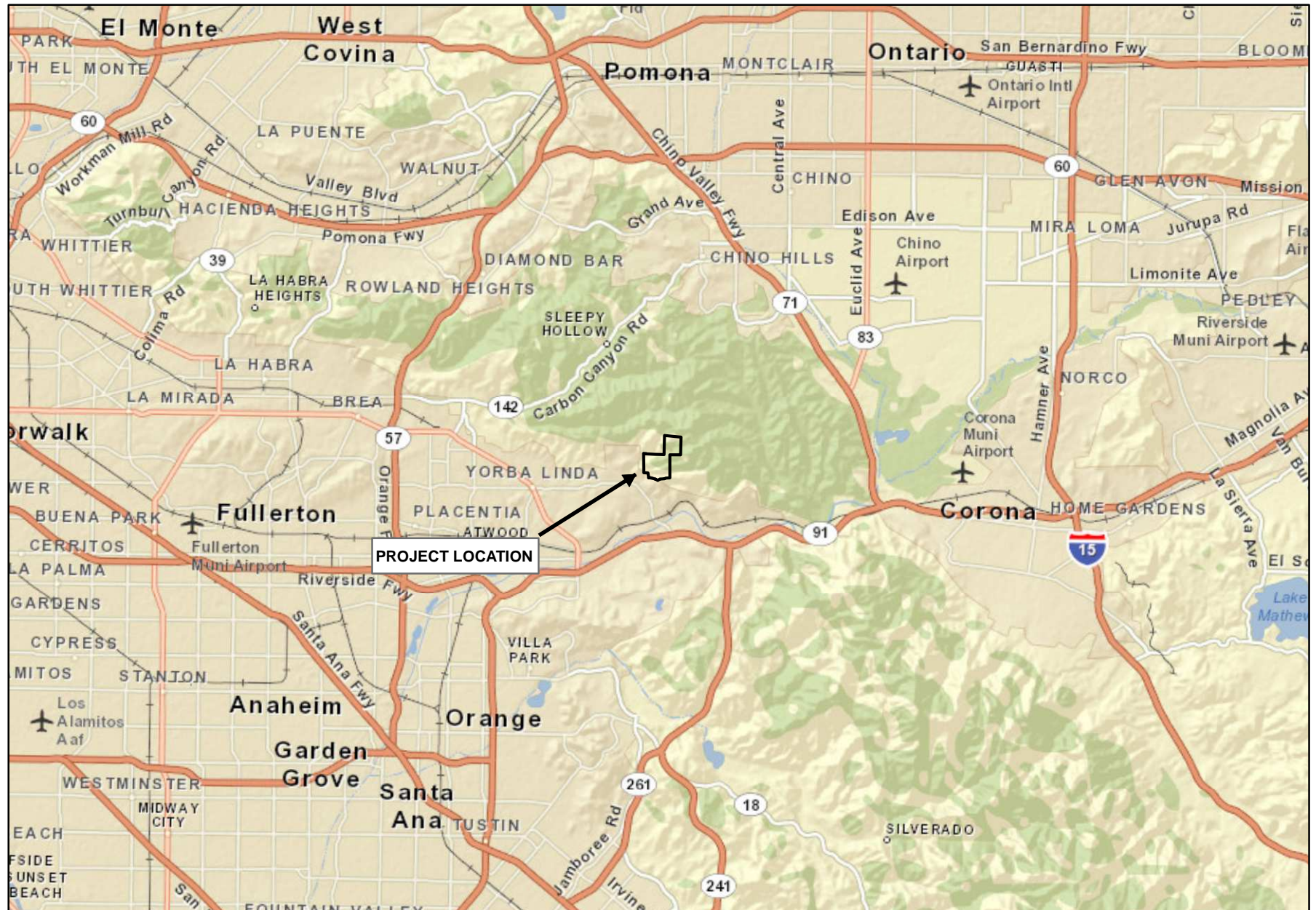
Say's phoebe

Cassin's kingbird

Source: ESRI World Street Map



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2  
4  
8  
Miles



## ESPERANZA HILLS SPECIFIC PLAN AREA

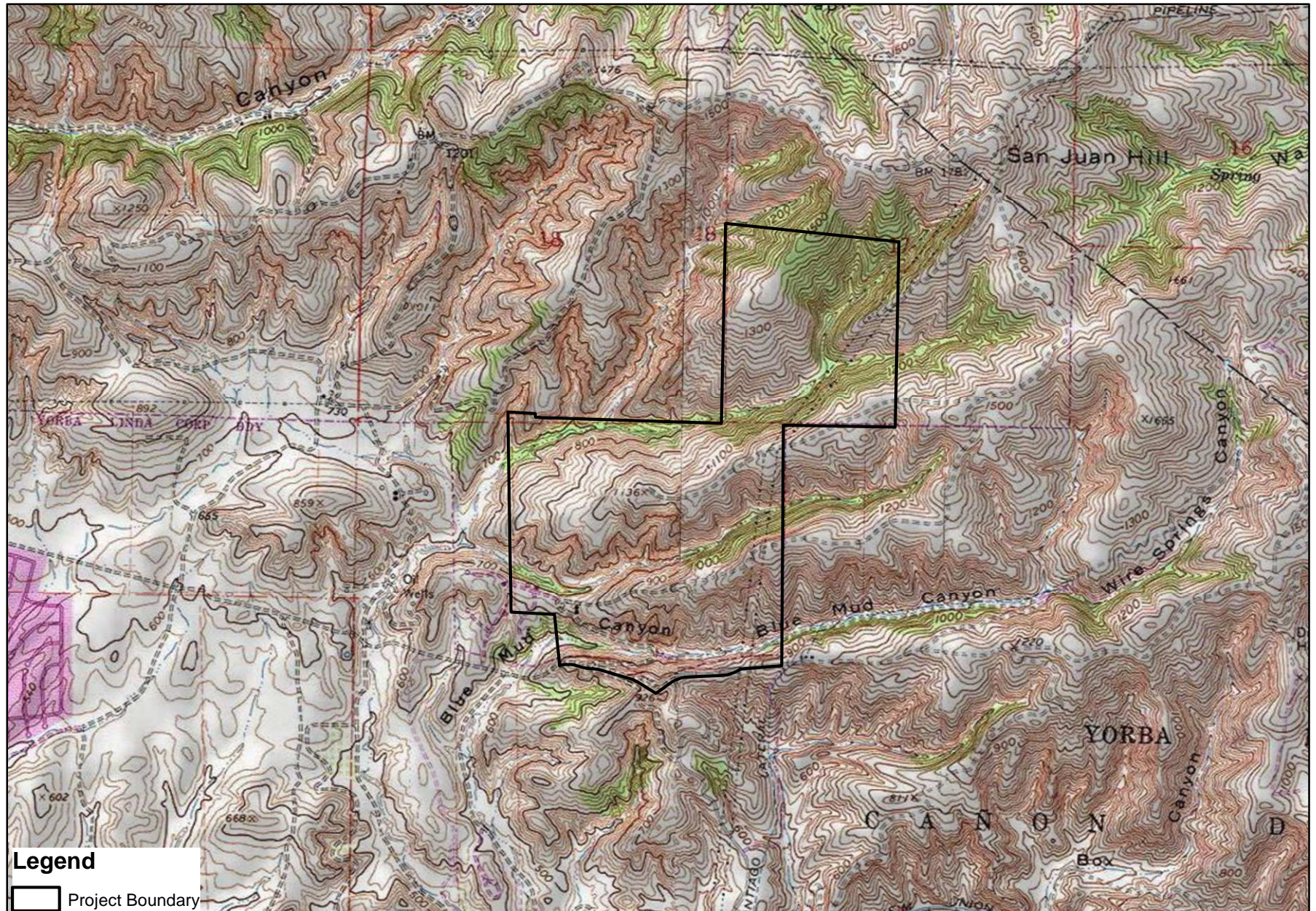
Regional Map

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Exhibit 1



Adapted from USGS Prado Dam & Yorba Linda, CA quadrangles



## ESPERANZA HILLS SPECIFIC PLAN AREA

Vicinity Map

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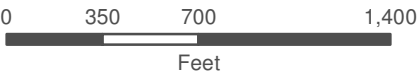
Exhibit 2





**Legend**

-  Offsite Grading
-  Polygon A
-  Polygon B



1 inch = 700 feet

**ESPERANZA HILLS  
SPECIFIC PLAN AREA**

CAGN Survey Areas

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Exhibit 3

Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community