

Appendix B:
Biological Resources

**GENERAL BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES ASSESSMENT
LOWER HESSE PARK
CITY OF RANCHO PALOS VERDES, CALIFORNIA**

**Assessor's Identification Numbers and Locations:
7583-022-908, 7583-022-909, 7583-022-910, 7583-022-911**

**United States Geological Survey 7.5' Redondo Beach Quadrangle
Los Angeles County, California
[Unsectioned land of the Los Palos Verdes Land Grant]**

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**April 2012
AMEC Project No. 1155400461**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AMEC Earth and Environmental, Inc. (AMEC) was contracted by Willdan to perform a biological resources assessment of the significant effects of the proposed Lower Hesse Park Project (Project) on special-status biological resources potentially occurring on the Project site and in the vicinity. Impacts were analyzed according to their direct, indirect, and cumulative effects.

The Rancho Palos Verdes City Council adopted the “2010 Tactical Plan” on February 16, 2010. One of the tactical goals is: *Improve the City’s recreational and educational facilities by expanding opportunities for active recreational uses and improving access to all parks.* A stated sub-goal is: *provide improvements to Lower Hesse Park and Grandview Park.*

The proposed Lower Hesse Park Project (Figure 1) is located in The City of Rancho Palos Verdes, Los Angeles County, California, on approximately 18 acres within the approximately 29 acres of Frank Hesse Memorial Park. Frank Hess Memorial Park, adjacent and east of the Project area, is improved with a community center, a parking lot, playground equipment, and a multi-use athletic field, and is extensively landscaped. The western part of the park was purchased from the Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District in 1977. The property is zoned “Open Space Recreation” with a General Plan land use designation of “Passive Recreational.”

The Project site is surrounded by residential development; the park itself is largely vegetated with nonnative invasive and/or introduced landscaped plantings. Very small (less than one acre total) patches of coastal sage scrub, a sensitive habitat, are on the southwest edge of the site, adjacent to Locklenna Lane. AMEC biologists with appropriate federal permits surveyed these areas for coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) a federally-listed “Threatened” species. None were found. It is the opinion of AMEC biologists that the coastal sage scrub habitat on the Project site is too small to support coastal California gnatcatchers.

A drainage, vegetated in portions with willow trees (*Salix spp.*) crosses the Project site, (presumably) flowing west toward the ocean, crossing into the residential area via a culvert under Locklenna Lane. A delineation may be required to determine the jurisdictional status of this drainage.

All special-status species identified by AMEC’s literature review as potentially occurring on the Project site are either absent or have a low probability of occurrence due to the highly developed nature of the Project vicinity and because very little native habitat remains within the Project site. Special-status species identified by the literature review as potentially occurring in the area include plant species such as South Coast saltscale, Davidson’s saltscale, Santa Catalina Island desert-thorn, and Brand’s phacelia and wildlife: the monarch butterfly; Palos Verdes blue butterfly, coast (San Diego) horned lizard; the coastal California gnatcatcher; and the San Diego desert woodrat (see Table 1).

The Project site is within designated critical habitat for the endangered Palos Verdes blue butterfly; No federal funding or permitting is anticipated for this project, so consultation with USFWS will not be required. Because the species was present at this location in the past,

however, a CEQA mitigation measure will be included requiring an informal consultation with the Service.

Focused surveys for California gnatcatcher were performed by permitted AMEC biologists John F. Green and Nathan Moorhatch on 21 May, and 1 June and 8 June 2011. These surveys were done in compliance with standard protocols established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for surveys in Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP) areas. None were found in the sparse coastal sage scrub habitat present on-site (AMEC 2011).

Preconstruction surveys for potentially-occurring special-status species shall be conducted by qualified biologists. Mitigation measures for special-status species occurring on the Project site shall be implemented in accordance with City Plans, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), and the California Native Plant Protection Act. No significant impacts to sensitive species or habitats are expected.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

AMEC Earth and Environmental, Inc. (AMEC) was contracted by Willdan to perform a biological resources assessment of the potentially significant effects of the proposed Lower Hesse Park Project (Project) on special-status biological resources potentially occurring on the Project site and in the vicinity. This report discusses the legal status of special-status species, suitable habitat for these species, and the potential for each to occur on or near the site. Potential impacts to special-status resources are discussed in the context of their "significance" under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and state and federal Endangered Species Acts (ESAs). Information provided in this assessment will assist the involved regulatory agencies with the review of the proposed Project.

This report includes the following sections and information:

- Section 1** Introduction. This section provides an overview of the contents of the General Biological Resources Assessment.
- Section 2** Project and Property Description. This section provides a brief description of the proposed Project.
- Section 3** Methodology. This section provides a description of the methods used for literature and data research and biological resources assessment.
- Section 4** Results. This section presents the results of the literature and data research and biological resources assessment.
- Section 5** Impacts and Recommendations. This section identifies potential impacts to biological resources and provides recommendations and mitigation measures.
- Section 6** References. This section provides a listing of all references cited in the report.

2.0 PROJECT AND PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The proposed Project, located in the City of Rancho Palos Verdes, Los Angeles County, California (Figure 1), will be situated on approximately 18 acres that were purchased from the Palos Verdes Unified School District in 1977. The Project crosses or is immediately adjacent to Assessor's Identification Numbers (AIN), which are listed on the cover page. The Project is located in the United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' *Redondo Beach* quadrangle, in unsectioned land of the Los Palos Verdes Land Grant.

Photographic Exhibits in Appendix B show current site conditions. The Lower Hesse Park Project site is downslope and west of the developed Frank Hesse Memorial Park. Both areas are surrounded by residential development. Lower Hesse, while not developed as yet to the extent of Frank Hesse Memorial Park, has trails and signs, tables and benches, a parking lot (included a handicapped space), a beach volleyball area, and drinking fountains. Landscape plantings and invasive nonnative plant species from surrounding areas dominate the flora. The property is zoned Open Space recreation – Active.

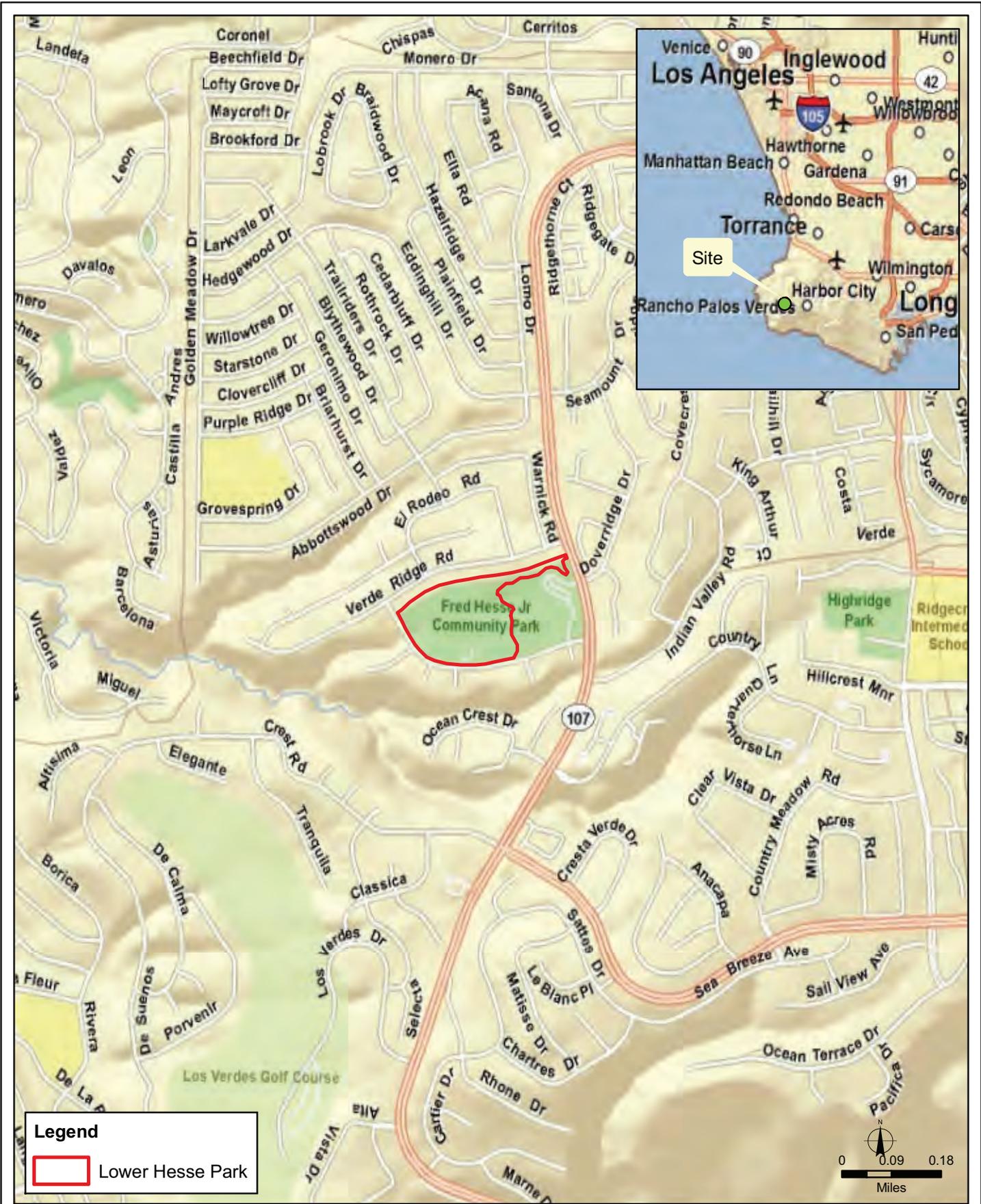
The Request for Proposals (RFP; City of Rancho Palos Verdes [February 21, 2011]) describes the *Pacific Plan* improvements proposed to enhance the accessibility, aesthetic condition, and recreational opportunities available at the park. The proposed *Pacific Plan* includes the following facility based programs, amenities, and features:

Facility-Based Programs

- Flex Lawn (2)
- One Basketball Court (full size)
- Three Tennis Courts
- Family Fun Zone, (including tricycle/bicycle loop)
- Fitness Station
- Two-three Picnic Areas
- Enhanced Trail System
- Discovery Trail

Amenities

- Staff Office/Restroom/Storage
- Shade Structures
- Park Furniture(drinking fountains, trash cans, Mutt Mitt stations)
- Parking Lot
- Driveway Gates
- Landscaping and Irrigation
- Greenbelt
- Park Signage
- Landscape Buffers



Legend
 Lower Hesse Park

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 Miles

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Regional Location
 Lower Hesse Park

FIGURE
1

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Literature Review

Prior to the reconnaissance survey, a literature review and records search were conducted to identify special-status biological resources known from the Project vicinity. AMEC accessed environmental, geographical, and planning data from the following sources:

- United States Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Wetlands Mapper.
- Web Soil Survey produced by the National Cooperative Soil Survey (NCSS) and operated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).
- California Department of Fish and Game's (CDFG) California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDB/Rarefind Version 3.1.1). The Torrance, Redondo Beach, and San Pedro USGS quadrangles were queried.
- California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Inventory of Rare Plants.
- Environmental Reports (e.g., Initial Studies, Environmental Impact Reports, Rolling Hills Estates General Plan) in the Project vicinity.

3.2 Reconnaissance Survey

AMEC biologist Chet McGaugh conducted a reconnaissance-level survey of the Project site on August 30, 2011. The purpose of this survey was to characterize the site and assess the presence or absence of special-status plants and animals or the likelihood of their occurrence on-site. Recorded information included overall character of the site, plant and animal species present, and potential jurisdictional areas. All flora and fauna observed or otherwise detected (e.g., vocalizations, presence of scat, tracks, and/or bones) on the Project site during the course of this survey. Three protocol level focused surveys for coastal California gnatcatcher (*Poliioptila californica californica*) were also conducted by AMEC (AMEC 2011).

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Topography and Hydrology

The elevation of the Project site ranges from approximately 740-920 feet above sea level, rising from west to east. An unnamed drainage “flows” east to west across the Project site before entering a culvert under Locklenna Lane, in the direction of the Pacific Ocean. A delineation may be necessary to determine the jurisdictional status of this drainage. It is likely the result of urban run-off.

4.2 Soils

The Web Soil Survey has no soil data for the Lower Hesse Park Project site. AMEC contacted the U.S. Department of Agriculture (Randy L. Riddle, pers.comm.) and was told that historic data “does not meet our current standard and the data it provides cannot be modeled with confidence.” Observations made during the reconnaissance survey indicate that the Project site lacks the sandy substrate associated with sensitive several plant species (see Table 1. below).

4.3 Vegetation

The Project site is surrounded by residential development (Figure 2). As such, nearly half of the plant species observed on the project site are nonnative, introduced/invasive/landscaped plantings. (see Appendix A and photographs in Appendix B.) Native trees and shrubs found sparsely on the site include California sycamore, white alder, willow (*Salix spp.*), lemonadeberry, and toyon (Scientific names are presented in Appendix A). The only native plant community on the site is coastal sage scrub; plants characteristic of this habitat on-site include black sage, California brittlebush, and California sagebrush. The site appears to be periodically and recently disced, with the remnants of nonnative grasses remaining, and landscaped plantings avoided. The most conspicuous shrub is fennel. (see Photographic Exhibits).

4.4 Wildlife

Vertebrate species detected on the Project site during the course of the reconnaissance survey and focused surveys for coastal California Gnatcatcher are listed in Appendix A. Additional species not observed, but expected to occur on the Project site, may have been undetectable because of the timing of the survey, species seasonality (migratory patterns of birds), species daily activity patterns (diurnal, crepuscular, or nocturnal wildlife), behavior (fossorial or burrowing species), and/or weather conditions (species that typically bask during sunny conditions or species associated with rainfall events [toads]). A complete biological inventory requires multiple visits in different seasons and at different times of day. The rattlesnake warning signs attest to this, and also implies a cryptic/nocturnal small mammal fauna.

4.4.1 Special-status Species and Habitats

The literature review identified 33 special-status plants, animals, and habitats known to occur in the vicinity (within an approximate 3-mile radius) of the Project site (Figure 3). These included 17 plants, one fish, six invertebrates, one reptile, three birds, three mammals, and one native plant community.

Table 1 summarizes information on the special-status biological resources identified in the literature review. However, because of a lack of suitable habitat, 23 of these species and habitats are absent from the Project site. The remaining 5 species potentially occurring on the Project site are discussed below.

Table 1.
Special-Status Biological Resources Occurring or Potentially Occurring in the Project Vicinity

Resource	Status ¹		Habitat and Distribution	Activity/ Bloom Period	Occurrence Probability
	Federal	State CNPS/BLM			
Plants					
<i>Aphanisma blifoides</i>	None	None	Coastal bluff scrub, coastal dunes, coastal scrub. On bluffs and slopes near the ocean in sandy or clay soils.	Mar-Jun	Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.
south coast saltscare <i>Atriplex pacifica</i>	None	None	Alkali soils within coastal scrub, coastal bluff scrub, playas, chenopod scrub.	Mar-Oct	Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.
Parish's brittleSCALE <i>Atriplex parishii</i>	None	None	Alkali meadows, vernal pools, chenopod scrub, playas. Usually on drying alkali flats with fine soils.	Jun-Oct	Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.
Davidson's saltscare <i>Atriplex serenana</i> var. <i>davidsonii</i>	None	None	Alkaline soils within coastal bluff scrub, coastal scrub.	Apr-Oct	Absent. Lack of suitable habitat..
southern tarplant <i>Centromadia parryi</i> ssp. <i>australis</i>	None	None	Margins of marshes and swamps, valley and foothill grassland. Often in disturbed sites near the coast at marsh edges; also in alkaline soils sometimes with saltgrass.	May-Nov	Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.
Orcutt's pincushion <i>Chaenactis glabruscula</i> var. <i>orcuttiana</i>	None	None	Sandy sites within coastal bluff scrub, coastal dunes.	Jan-Aug	Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.
salt marsh bird's-beak <i>Cordylanthus maritimus</i> ssp. <i>maritimus</i>	E	E	Coastal salt marsh, coastal dunes. Limited to the higher zones of the salt marsh habitat.	May-Oct	Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.
<i>Catalina crossoSoma</i> <i>CrossoSoma californicum</i>	None	None	Chaparral, coastal scrub. On rocky sea bluffs, wooded canyons, and dry, open sunny spots on rocky clay.	Feb-May	Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.

Table 1.
Special-Status Biological Resources Occurring or Potentially Occurring in the Project Vicinity

Resource	Status ¹		Habitat and Distribution	Activity/ Bloom Period	Occurrence Probability
	Federal	State			
beach spectaclepod <i>Dithyrea maritima</i>	None	T	1B.1	Coastal dunes, coastal scrub. Sea shores, on sand dunes, and sandy places near the shore.	Mar-May Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.
island green dudleya <i>Dudleya virens</i> ssp. <i>insularis</i>	None	None	1B.2	Rocky soils within coastal bluff scrub, coastal scrub.	Apr-Jun Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.
Mexican flannelbush <i>Fremontodendron mexicanum</i>	E	R	1B.1	Occurs in closed-cone coniferous forests dominated by Tecate cypress (<i>Cupressus forbesii</i>) and with mixed chaparral in southern California. Reports of individuals growing in Los Angeles County are believed to be garden escapees.	Mar-Jun Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.
Santa Catalina Island desert-thorn <i>Lycium brevipes</i> var. <i>hassei</i>	None	None	1B.1	Coastal bluffs and slopes within coastal bluff scrub, coastal scrub.	Jun Absent. Not seen during survey (a perennial shrub)
prostrate navarretia <i>Navarretia prostrata</i>	None	None	1B.1	Coastal scrub, valley and foothill grassland, vernal pools. Alkaline soils in grassland, or in vernal pools.	Apr-Jul Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.
coast woolly-heads <i>Nemacaulis denudata</i> var. <i>denudata</i>	None	None	1B.2	Coastal dunes.	Apr-Sep Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.
Lyon's pentachaeta <i>Pentachaeta lyonii</i>	E	E	1B.1	Chaparral, valley and foothill grassland. Edges of clearings in chaparral, usually at the ecotone between grassland and chaparral or edges of firebreaks.	Mar-Aug Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.
Brand's phacelia <i>Phacelia stellaris</i>	C	None	1B.1	Open sandy areas within coastal scrub, coastal dunes.	Mar-Jun Absent. Lack of Suitable habitat..
estuary seablite <i>Suaeda estroea</i>	None	None	1B.2	Marshes and swamps. Coastal salt marshes in clay, silt, and sand substrates.	May-Oct Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.

Table 1.
Special-Status Biological Resources Occurring or Potentially Occurring in the Project Vicinity

Resource	Status ¹		Habitat and Distribution	Activity/ Bloom Period	Occurrence Probability
	Federal	State			
Fish					
Mohave tui chub <i>Gila bicolor mohavensis</i>	E	E	None	Year-round	Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.
Invertebrates					
sandy beach tiger beetle <i>Cicindela hirticollis gravida</i>	None	None	None	Year-round	Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.
tiger beetle <i>Cicindela latesignata latesignata</i>	None	None	None	Year-round	Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.
monarch butterfly <i>Danaus plexippus</i>	None	None	None	Oct-Mar	Low. Possible overwintering or roosting.
El Segundo blue butterfly <i>Euphilotes battoides allyni</i>	E	None	None	July-Sept.	Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.
Palos Verdes blue butterfly <i>Glaucopsyche lygdamus palosverdesensis</i>	E	None	None	Year-round	Project site is included in "critical - habitat" for the species, host plants were not found during AMEC assessment.

Table 1.
Special-Status Biological Resources Occurring or Potentially Occurring in the Project Vicinity

Resource	Status ¹		Habitat and Distribution	Activity/ Bloom Period	Occurrence Probability
	Federal	State			
El Segundo flower-loving fly <i>Rhaphiomidas terminatus terminatus</i>	None	None	None	Year-round?	Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.
mimic tryonia (California brackishwater snail) <i>Tryonia imitator</i>	None	None	None	Year-round	Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.
Amphibians and Reptiles					
coast (San Diego) horned lizard <i>Phrynosoma coronatum (blainvillii population)</i>	None	SC	None	Apr-Jul	Low. Potentially in small patches of coastal sage scrub.
Birds					
tricolored blackbird Agelaius tricolor	None	SC	S	Year-round	Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.
coastal California gnatcatcher <i>Polyptila californica californica</i>	T	SC	None	Year-round	Absent. Protocol-level focused surveys conducted in 2011, with negative results.
California least tern <i>Sterna antillarum browni</i>	E	E	None	Apr-Oct	Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.

Table 1.
Special-Status Biological Resources Occurring or Potentially Occurring in the Project Vicinity

Resource	Status ¹		Habitat and Distribution		Activity/ Bloom Period	Occurrence Probability
	Federal	State	CNPS/BLM			
Mammals						
San Diego desert woodrat <i>Neotoma lepida intermedia</i>	None	SC	None	Coastal sage scrub of southern California from San Diego County to San Luis Obispo County. Moderate to dense canopies preferred. They are particularly abundant in rock outcrops and rocky cliffs and slopes.	Year-round	Low. Potentially occurs in small patches of coastal sage scrub.
pocketed free-tailed bat <i>Nyctinomops femorosaccus</i>	None	SC	None	Variety of arid areas in southern California; pine-juniper woodlands, desert scrub, palm oasis, desert wash, desert riparian. Rocky areas with high cliffs.	Year-round	Absent. Lack of suitable roosting habitat.
Pacific pocket mouse <i>Perognathus longimembris pacificus</i>	E	SC	None	Inhabits the narrow coastal plains from the Mexican border north to El Segundo, Los Angeles County. Seems to prefer soils of fine alluvial sands near the ocean.	Year-round	Absent. Lack of suitable habitat.
Natural Communities						
southern coastal bluff scrub	None	INV	None	Bluffs of Palos Verdes Peninsula from Malaga Cove to Cabrillo Beach. Along bluffs and steep slopes of immediate coast. Native species include lemonadeberry (<i>Rhus integrifolia</i>), California sunflower (<i>Encelia californica</i>), coast goldenbush, (<i>Isocoma menziesii</i>), California boxthorn (<i>Lycium californica</i>), big saltbush (<i>Atriplex lentiformis</i>), Bladderpod (<i>Isomeris arborea</i>), prickly pear cactus (<i>Opuntia</i> spp.), ashyleaf buckwheat (<i>Eriogonum cinereum</i>), green dudleya (<i>Dudleya virens</i>).	---	Absent, site is not on immediate coast. A few shrubs (possibly planted) characteristic of this community are present

1/ Status:

FEDERAL (United States Fish and Wildlife Service)

- E = Federally listed as endangered
- T = Federally listed as threatened
- C = Federal candidate for listing as threatened or endangered
- SC = Federally listed as species of concern

STATE (California Department of Fish and Game)

- E = California state-listed as endangered
- T = California state-listed as threatened
- R = California state-listed as rare
- SC = California state-listed as species of special concern
- INV = Communities that are either known or believed to be of high priority for inventory in CNDDDB

CNPS (California Native Plant Society)

- 1B = CNPS list of plants that are rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere
- 2 = CNPS list of plants that are rare, threatened, or endangered in California, but more common elsewhere
- 3 = CNPS list of plants that require more information
- .1 = Seriously endangered in California
- .2 = Fairly endangered in California
- .3 = Not very endangered in California

BLM (Bureau of Land Management)

- S = BLM sensitive species

OCCURRENCE PROBABILITY

- Occurs = Observed on the site by AMEC biologists, or recorded on-site by other qualified biologists.
- High = Observed in similar habitat in region by qualified biologists, or habitat on the site is a type often utilized by the species and the site is within the known range of the species.
- Moderate = Reported sightings in surrounding region, or site is within the known range of the species and habitat on the site is a type occasionally used by the species.
- Low = Site is within the known range of the species but habitat on the site is rarely occupied by the species.
- Absent = A focused study failed to detect the species, or no suitable habitat is present.
- Unknown = Distribution and habitat use has not been clearly determined.



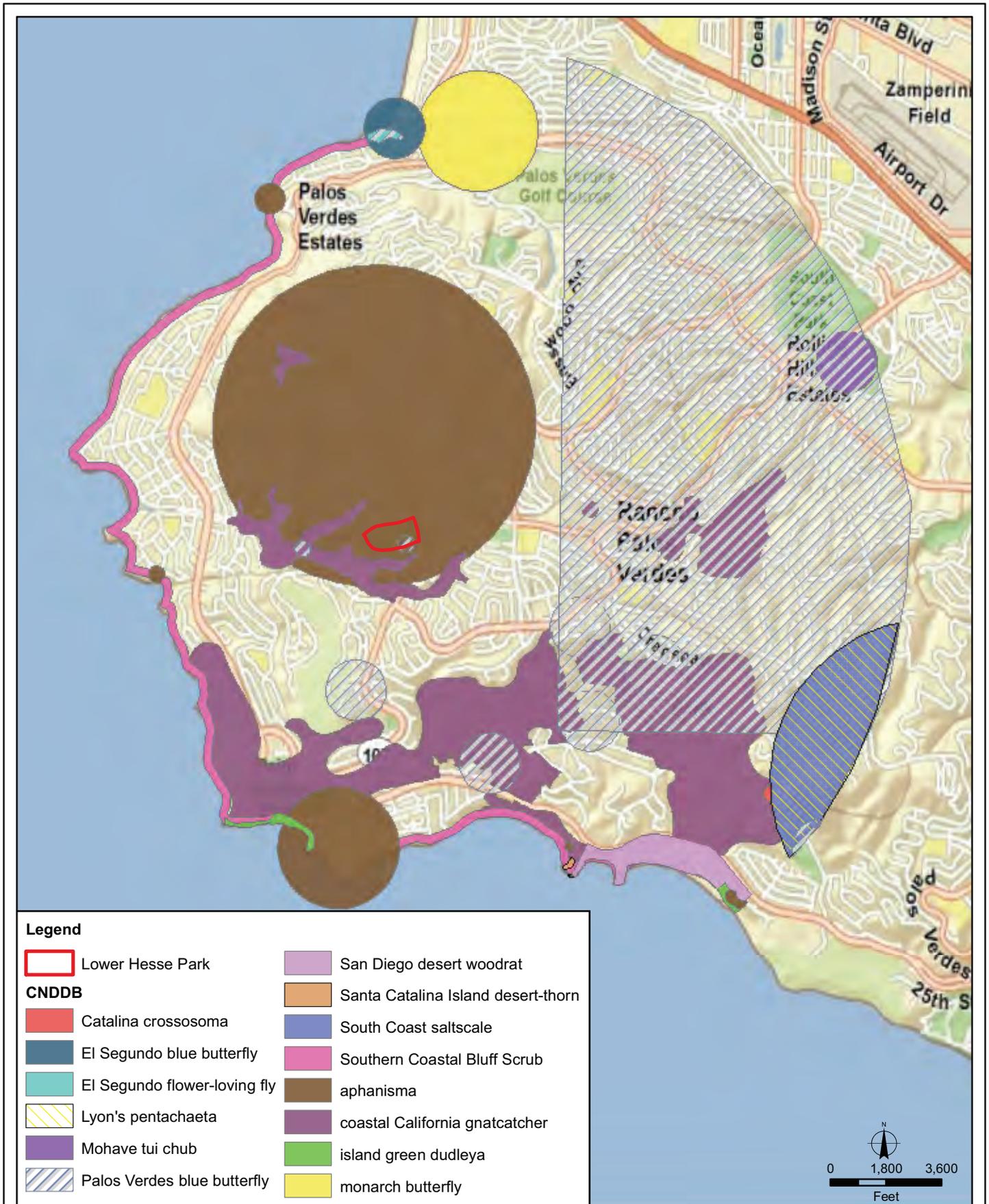
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Survey Area/Vegetation Communities
Lower Hesse Park Gnatcatcher Survey

FIGURE

2





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FIGURE

3



CNDDB Sensitive Species Within a Three Mile radius
Lower Hesse Park Bio

4.4.2 Plants

Santa Catalina Island desert-thorn (*Lycium brevipes* var. *hassei*)

Santa Catalina Island desert-thorn is a deciduous shrub that is native to California. It is included by the CNPS on list 1B.1 (rare, threatened, or endangered in CA and elsewhere; seriously endangered in CA). This species occurs on coastal bluffs and slopes within coastal bluff scrub and coastal sage scrub habitats at 10-300 meters (33-984 feet) elevation, and it blooms in June. This perennial herb was not found on the project site during the reconnaissance survey, and is considered absent.

4.4.3 Invertebrates

Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*)

Monarch butterflies that spend the summer breeding season in western North America (Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, and Montana) migrate to the southern coast of California, where they roost in eucalyptus trees, Monterey pines, and Monterey cypresses that are located in bays sheltered from wind or farther inland where they are protected from storms. In California, migrating monarchs begin appearing along the coast in October. By early March, overwintering sites are abandoned. Migrating monarch butterflies certainly pass across the site and may roost occasionally on trees (possibly eucalyptus at Upper Hesse) and shrubs on-site, but the Project site (Lower Hesse) lacks the tree species typically used as winter roosts.

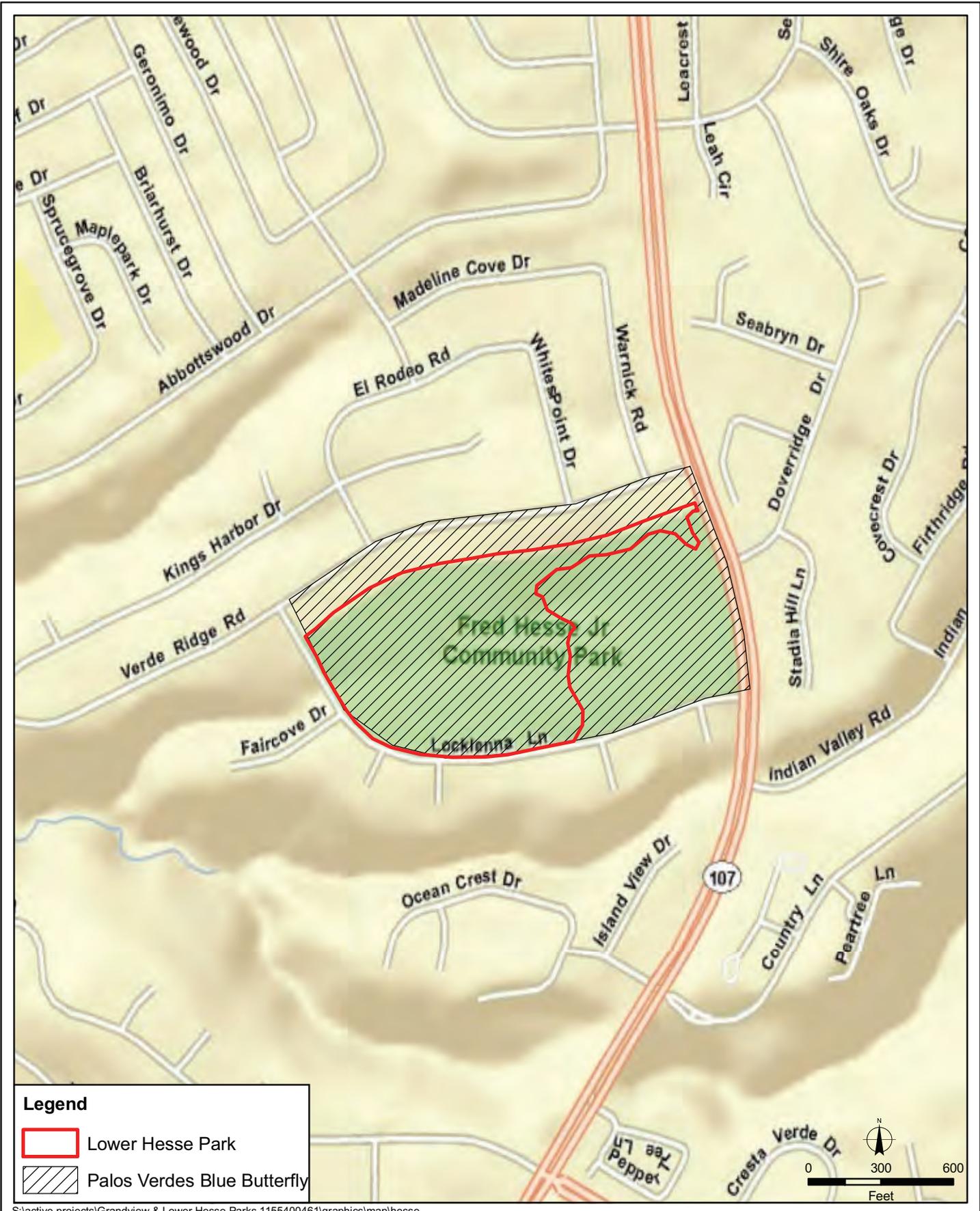
Palos Verdes Blue butterfly (*Glaucopsyche lygdamus palosverdesensis*)

The Palos Verdes Blue butterfly is known from Frank Hesse Memorial Park. The species was presumed extirpated following the development of the upper (eastern) portion of the park (Figure 4). The last of the hostplants for the butterfly, locoweed (*Atraglaus trichopodus* var. *lonchus*), were rototilled in 1982. Frank Hesse Memorial Park, including the Project site on the western portion of the site, is included in the USFWS "critical habitat" for the species (USFWS 1984).

4.4.4 Amphibians and Reptiles

Coast (San Diego) horned lizard (*Phrynosoma coronatum* [*blainvillii* population])

The coast (San Diego) horned lizard is a California species of special concern (CSC). Its range extends from northern California to the tip of Baja California. The subspecies found in southern California, (*P.c. blainvillii*), is distributed throughout the foothills and coastal plains from the Los Angeles area to northern Baja California. It frequents areas with abundant, open vegetation such as chaparral or coastal sage scrub. It is most often found on sandy or friable soils with open scrub. Habitat requirements include open areas for sunning, bushes for cover, and fine loose soil for rapid burial. Harvester ants are the primary food item of the horned lizard and indicate potential for occurrence of the lizard in an area. This species is primarily active in late spring and early summer (April through July), after which individuals typically aestivate. Because of the small amount of coastal sage scrub present on the Project site, there is a low potential that this species occurs.



Legend

- Lower Hesse Park
- Palos Verdes Blue Butterfly

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Critical Habitat
Lower Hesse Park Bio

FIGURE

4

4.4.5 Birds

Coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*)

The coastal California gnatcatcher is federally listed as threatened and a CSC. It is restricted to the coastal slopes of southern California, from Los Angeles County south to Baja California. It is closely associated with coastal sage scrub vegetation, particularly Diegan coastal sage scrub occurring on gentle slopes within the maritime and coastal climate zones. California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) and flat-topped buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*) are the primary plants used by gnatcatchers when foraging for insects. Because of the small amount of fragmented coastal sage scrub present on the Project site, there is a low potential that this species occurs, but recent surveys performed by AMEC determined that the species is absent from the Project site (AMEC 2011).

4.4.6 Mammals

San Diego Desert Woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*)

The San Diego desert woodrat is a CSC. It occurs in coastal California from San Luis Obispo south through the Transverse and Peninsular Ranges into Baja California. Desert woodrats commonly inhabit Joshua tree woodlands, pinyon-juniper woodlands, mixed chaparral, sagebrush, and desert habitats. Because of the small amount of coastal sage scrub present on the Project site, there is a very low potential that this species occurs. Middens built by this species are typically obvious; none were seen during AMEC's surveys.

5.0 IMPACTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section describes the impacts to biological resources that are expected to occur as a result of Project implementation. Impacts were analyzed according to their direct, indirect, and cumulative effects. Direct biological impacts are defined as the removal and permanent loss of native plant communities functioning as wildlife habitat as well as losses of individual wildlife resulting from Project implementation. Indirect impacts are those impacts resulting in decreased use of areas and/or adjacent habitats by wildlife due to increases in human related activities. Cumulative impacts are the incremental effects of an individual project when viewed in connection with the effects of past, current, and probable future projects within the cumulative impact area for biological resources.

5.1 Thresholds of Significance

The following impact criteria are based on the effects normally considered significant as identified in Appendix G of the CEQA guidelines. An impact would be considered significant if it would:

- Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the CDFG and/or the USFWS.
- Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other special-status natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the CDFG and/or the USFWS.
- Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means.
- Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery areas.
- Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance.
- Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan.

5.2 Vegetation

5.2.1 Direct Impacts

The primary impact of the Project on vegetation is the cutting, clearing, and/or removal of existing vegetation within the construction work area. The area where direct impacts would be encountered would be the small, remnant patches of coastal sage scrub habitat. Efforts should be made to preserve these habitat patches if feasible. If preservation of the coastal sage scrub habitat patches is not feasible, the impacts could likely be mitigated to below a level of

significance through revegetation and/or other mitigation measures. The Pacific Plan may provide areas where coastal sage scrub species could be planted.

5.2.2 Indirect Impacts

Indirect effects associated with Project disturbances include increased soil erosion by wind and water, increased potential for the introduction and establishment of invasive weedy species, and a local reduction in available wildlife habitat.

Construction activity has the potential to increase dust generation and erosion on-site, which may create short term impacts on surrounding habitats. However, these effects are minimized and controlled by the preparation and implementation of dust and erosion control plans as part of grading permit conditions. Therefore, required permit conditions will mitigate these potential impacts to below a level of significance.

5.2.3 Cumulative Impacts

Upon compliance with existing City General Plan guidelines and implementation of mitigation measures, the proposed Project would not result in a net loss of special-status natural community, would not impact any special-status plant species, and would not directly or indirectly impact any jurisdictional areas. Therefore, the proposed project would not contribute to cumulative losses of special-status plant species or natural communities, and no significant cumulative biological impacts would occur as a result of implementation of the proposed Project.

5.2.4 Special-status Plant Species

The Santa Catalina Island desert-thorn (*Lycium brevipes* var. *hassei*), was determined to be absent through direct search.

5.3 Wildlife

5.3.1 Direct Impacts

Project development will result in minor permanent impacts to wildlife habitat and may temporarily displace species during construction. Depending on the season, construction could disrupt the courting or nesting of birds and breeding of other wildlife on or adjacent to the Project site. Smaller, less mobile wildlife, such as small mammals and reptiles, could be crushed by construction equipment or entrapped in trenches. Other wildlife, such as birds and larger mammals, will leave the Project area as construction activities approach. These animals may relocate into similar habitats nearby; however, the lack of adequate territorial space could force these animals into suboptimal habitat and could lower reproductive success and survival. Increased densities of animals in these habitats due to relocation of displaced individuals could also reduce reproductive success of animals not displaced by construction. Some wildlife will return to the newly disturbed areas and adjacent, undisturbed habitats soon after completion of construction.

Preconstruction activities occurring prior to vegetation clearing may deter some individuals from selecting nesting sites within the proposed Project area. Although the Project activities could

cause some migratory birds to avoid the area, this impact will be limited to the period of active construction and is not expected to result in a substantial or long-term change in migration patterns through the area.

The Lower Hesse Park Project site is surrounded by residential development; the direct impact to wildlife resources is considered less than significant.

5.3.2 Indirect Impacts

A possible indirect impact of the Project is ongoing operation and maintenance of the proposed park facilities. This has the potential to cause indirect impacts on surrounding habitats since most wildlife are sensitive to the presence of humans (e.g. noise, activity, lighting) and commonly move away from areas occupied by humans. However, the surrounding area is already largely developed and urbanized. Therefore, indirect impacts would have a less than significant impact on wildlife within or adjacent to the Project site.

5.3.3 Cumulative Impacts

Upon compliance with existing City General Plan guidelines and implementation of mitigation measures, the proposed Project would not result in a loss of a special-status natural community, would not impact any special-status species, and would not directly or indirectly impact any jurisdictional areas. Therefore, the proposed project would not contribute to cumulative losses of special-status species or habitat, and no significant cumulative biological impacts would occur as a result of implementation.

5.3.4 Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)

Compliance with this legislation is maintained with several treaties signed by the United States, Great Britain, Mexico, Japan, and countries of the former Soviet Union to prohibit the pursuit, capture, killing, and/or possession of any migratory bird, nest, egg, or parts thereof, except as provided by statute. The USFWS maintains a list of designated migratory birds occurring in the United States. As precautionary mitigation, preconstruction nesting bird surveys would be conducted by a qualified biologist immediately prior to any earth-moving or vegetation disturbing activities during the nesting season (generally 1 February through 31 August) to ensure that nesting bird species protected by the MBTA are not actively nesting at the time. If active bird nests are found, the area immediately supporting these nests would be avoided until seasonal nesting is complete.

5.3.5 Special-status Wildlife Species

Coastal California gnatcatcher

Qualified AMEC biologists conducted presence/absence surveys for the coastal California gnatcatcher in spring 2011 in accordance with USFWS protocol (AMEC 2011). None were found. These survey results are typically valid for one year, and updated surveys are required, but it is the opinion of AMEC that the very small (less than 0.5 acre) and degraded coastal sage scrub patch on the Project site does need to be considered habitat for coastal California gnatcatchers, and further surveys are not necessary. If project implementation includes coastal

sage scrub restoration to an extent where there is potential for gnatcatcher habitation, surveys may be appropriate.

Palos Verdes blue butterfly

The endangered Palos Verdes blue butterfly formerly occurred at Hesse Park, and the entire park is within designated critical habitat for the species. No federal funding or permitting is anticipated for this project, so consultation with USFWS will not be required. Because the species was present in the past, a CEQA mitigation measure will be included requiring an informal consultation with the Service.

Biological monitoring

A qualified biologist shall conduct general wildlife surveys prior to any earth-moving or vegetation disturbing activities to determine the presence/absence of other special-status wildlife species, such as the monarch butterfly, coast horned lizard, and San Diego desert woodrat. A qualified biologist will monitor any construction activities that are a potential threat to nesting birds or special status wildlife. If special-status animal species are found on the Project site, construction activities shall be halted and buffers installed until the species is out of harm's way. General construction activities would be conducted in a manner that minimizes mortality of the species and degradation of habitat. If special-status species are found, consultation with USFWS and CDFG shall be initiated by the Project Applicant.

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April 2012

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AMEC Project No. 1155400461
April 2012

APPENDIX A

LOWER HESSE PARK PROJECT OBSERVED SPECIES LIST

Appendix A
Lower Hesse Park Project
Observed Species List

This list reports only plants and animals observed on the site by this study. Other species may have been overlooked or undetectable because of their growing/activity season. Plants were identified from keys, descriptions and drawings in Hickman (ed.) 1993, and Munz 1974. Unless noted otherwise, nomenclature and systematics follow Hickman (ed.) 1993.

SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS:

- * Non-native (introduced) species.
 - sp. Identified only to genus; species unknown.
-

I. VASCULAR PLANTS

DICOT ANGIOSPERMS

Anacardiaceae

Rhus integrifolia

Apiaceae

**Foeniculum vulgare*

Asteraceae

Artemisia californica

Baccharis pilularis

Encelia californica

**Lactuca serriola*

Malacothrix saxatilis

**Picris echioides*

**Sonchus oleraceus*

Betulaceae

Alnus rhombifolia

Brassicaceae

**Brassica nigra*

**Hirschfeldia incana*

**Rapistrum rugosum*

DICOT FLOWERING PLANTS

Sumac Family

lemonadeberry

Carrot Family

fennel

Sunflower Family

California sagebrush

coyote bush

brittlebush

prickly lettuce

cliff malacothrix

bristly ox-tongue

common sow thistle

Birch Family

white alder

Mustard Family

black mustard

shortpod mustard

Chenopodiaceae

Atriplex lentiformis

**Salsola tragus*

Convolvulaceae

**Convolvulus arvensis*

Cucurbitaceae

Cucurbita palmata

Euphorbiaceae

Chamaesyce albomarginata

Fabaceae

**Vicia sativa*

Juglandaciae

**Juglans* sp.

Lamiaceae

Salvia leucophylla

Salvia mellifera

Malvaceae

**Lavatera critica*

**Malva parviflora*

Myrtaceae

**Eucalyptus* sp.

Onograceae

**Oenothera speciosa*

Platanaceae

Plantanos racemosa

Polygonaceae

**Eriogonum giganteum*

Rhamnaceae

**Ceanothus c.f. verrucosus*

Rosaceae

Heteromeles arbutifolia

Salicacea

Goosefoot Family

big saltbush

Russian thistle

Morning-glory Family

common bindweed

Gourd Family

coyote melon

Spurge Family

rattlesnake weed

Legume Family

spring vetch

Walnut Family

walnut

Mint Family

purple sage

black sage

Mallow Family

tree-mallow

little mallow

Myrtle Family

eucalyptus

Evening Primrose Family

evening primrose

Sycamore Family

California sycamore

Buckwheat Family

Santa Catalina Island buckwheat

Buckthorn Family

wart-stemmed ceanothus

Rose Family

toyon

Willow Family

Salix laviegata
Salix lasiolepis

red willow
arroyo willow

MONOCOTYLEDONEAE

Poaceae

**Avena barbata*
Leymus condensatus
**Piptatherum miliaceum*

Grass Family

slender wild oat
giant rye
Smilo grass

II. WILDLIFE

REPTILES

Iguanidae

Uta stansburiana
Sceloporus occidentalis

Iguanids

Side-blotched Lizard
Western Fence Lizard

BIRDS

Acciptridae

Buteo jamaicensis

Hawks, Kites, Eagles, Allies

Red-tailed Hawk

Falconidae

Falco sparverius

Caracaras, Falcons

American Kestrel

Columbidae

**Columbia livia*
Zenaida macroura

Pigeons, Doves

Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove

Trochilidae

Calypte anna

Hummingbirds

Anna's Hummingbird

Picidae

Picoides pubescens

Woodpeckers

Downy Woodpecker

Tyrannidae

Contopus sordidulus
Tyrannus vociferans
Tyrannus verticalis
Empidonax sp.
Sayornis nigricans
Sayornis saya

Tyrant Flycatchers

Western Wood-Pewee
Cassin's Kingbird
Western Kingbird
"Western" Flycatcher
Black Phoebe
Say's Phoebe

Corvidae

Aphelocoma californica

Crows, Jays

Western Scrub-Jay

Corvus brachyrhynchos
Corvus corax

Aegithalidae

Psaltriparus minimus

Troglodytidae

Thryomanes bewickii
Troglodytes aedon

Mimidae

Mimus polyglottos

Sturnidae

**Sturnus vulgaris*

Parulidae

Oreothlypis celata
Wilsonia pusilla

Emberizidae

Melospiza crissalis
Pipilo maculatus
Melospiza melodia

Fringillidae

Carpodacus mexicanus
Spinus psaltria

Passeridae

**Passer domesticus*

MAMMALS

Geomyidae

Thomomys bottae

American Crow
Common Raven

Long-tailed Tits and Bushtits

Bushtit

Wrens

Bewick's Wren
House Wren

Mockingbirds and Thrashers

Northern Mockingbird

Starlings

European Starling

Wood-Warblers

Orange-crowned Warbler
Wilson's Warbler

Emberizids

California Towhee
Spotted Towhee
Song Sparrow

Finches, Allies

House Finch
Lesser Goldfinch

Old World Sparrows

House Sparrow

Pocket Gophers

Botta Pocket Gopher

Willdan
Biological Resources Assessment
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April 2012

APPENDIX B

PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITS

Photographic Exhibits



Photo 1. View east, upslope to Upper Hesse, pines and eucalyptus in back, fennel in foreground.



Photo 2. Lower Hesse, behind sign. Pacific Ocean in distance.

Photographic Exhibits



Photo 3. Drainage downslope from Upper Hesse; riparian habitat on right.



Photo 4. Bridge across drainage.

Photographic Exhibits



Photo 5. Culvert under Locklenna Lane.



Photo 6. View upslope to Upper Hesse; recent discing, scattered shrubs.



**FOCUSED SURVEYS FOR THE COASTAL CALIFORNIA GNATCATCHER
LOWER HESSE PARK
CITY OF RANCHO PALOS VERDES, CALIFORNIA**

**Assessor's Identification Numbers:
7583-022-908, 7583-022-909, 7583-022-910, and 7583-022-911**

**United States Geological Survey 7.5' Redondo Beach Quadrangle
Los Angeles County, California**

**Owner/Applicant:
City of Rancho Palos Verdes
Community Development Department
30940 Hawthorne Blvd.
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275-5391**

**Client:
Willdan
Contact: John Bellas
13191 Crossroads Parkway North, Suite 405
Industry, CA 91746
(562) 908-6298**

**Principal Investigator:
AMEC Earth & Environmental, Inc.
Contact: John F. Green
3120 Chicago Avenue, Suite 110
Riverside, CA 92507
(951) 369-8060**

**31 August 2011
AMEC Project No. 1155400461**



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

AMEC Earth and Environmental, Inc. (AMEC) was contracted by Wildan to conduct a focused survey for the coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*), at the minimally developed portion of Hesse Park. This proposed project (Project) would develop additional public recreational amenities. This report presents the findings of the focused survey.

2.0 PROJECT/SITE DESCRIPTION

The approximately 29 acre Hesse Park is owned by and located in the City of Rancho Palos Verdes, Los Angeles County, California (see Figure 1, Appendix 1). The Lower Hesse Park Project will occur on approximately 18 of the 28 acres, primarily in the west. The park is on or immediately adjacent to parcels identified as Assessor's Identification Numbers (AIN) 7583-022-908, 7583-022-909, 7583-022-910, and 7583-022-911. The Project is located on the United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5 minute *Redondo Beach* quadrangle, in unsectioned land of the Los Palos Verdes land grant. The elevation ranges from approximately 740 to 920 feet above sea level, with the lowest elevations in a drainage on the west side of the Project site and the highest point on the northeastern portion of the park.

2.1 Habitat Description

The Project site is significantly disturbed and entirely surrounded by residential development. Little or no original/native vegetative cover remains (see Photos 1-3 below). As such, more than half of the plant species observed on the Project site are nonnative ruderal species and/or landscaped plantings, which include slender wild oat (*Avena barbata*), eucalyptus trees (*Eucalyptus* sp.), tree-mallow (*Lavatera critica*), spring vetch (*Vicia sativa*), black mustard (*Brassica nigra*), fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*), and prickly lettuce (*Lactuca serriola*). Native trees and shrubs found sparsely on the site include lemonadeberry (*Rhus integrifolia*), toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), and ceanothus (*Ceanothus* sp.), some of which were clearly planted for landscaping. The only native plant community on-site is coastal sage scrub, which we have mapped as including planted California natives. Of that sage scrub, the patches most likely to be remnants of the original vegetation cover are those along the perimeter of the park on Locklenna Lane (see Photo 3). Plants characteristic of sage scrub which are present on-site include California brittlebush (*Encelia californica*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), and California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*). Most undeveloped portions of the site have been periodically and recently disced with remnants of nonnative grasses and ruderal vegetation remaining. Vegetation is mapped on Figure 2 in Appendix 1.

3.0 BACKGROUND ON THE COASTAL CALIFORNIA GNATCATCHER

The coastal California gnatcatcher (CCG) is a small, mostly gray, non-migratory songbird found in southern California primarily in areas with sage scrub vegetation communities. Several studies have revealed severely reduced population levels of CCGs and major habitat loss. Various experts have calculated that 85-90% of California's original sage scrub cover has been removed (Westman 1981, O'Leary and Westman 1988). The CCG was listed as a Federally Threatened species by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on 25 March 1993 (USFWS 1993). The Project site is within Palos Verdes Peninsula Subregion 8 revised Critical Habitat (see Figure 3, Appendix 1) for the CCG (USFWS 2007).



Photo 1. General site conditions looking west from general vicinity of southwest corner of baseball field. Patch of landscape planting of California natives center, patches of possible extant native vegetation at upper right & left. Nonnative, ruderal, disced throughout.



Photo 2. Looking north at coastal sage scrub components in this area (same area seen in upper right of previous photo) which may be extant remnants, but were more likely planted as landscaping.



Photo 3. Looking east at coastal sage scrub on right foreground (same area seen in upper left of previous photo). Vegetation at left is landscaped plantings of California natives, but strips of vegetation along the edge of the park along Locklenna Lane appear to be extant remnants of the original native vegetation cover in this area.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

CCG surveys were conducted in appropriate habitat (see Figure 3, Appendix 1) in accordance with the protocol for this species (USFWS 1997b). At the request of the City, these were done following the Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) protocol, which requires three survey visits from 15 February through 30 August with each performed a minimum of one week apart. Surveys were conducted by AMEC biologists John F. Green, and Nathan Moorhatch under the authority of recovery permits TE054011 (Green) and TE785148 (Moorhatch). During each survey the biologists walked slowly through or adjacent to any potential habitat, stopping to play recorded vocalizations and listen for responses.

All bird species detected during AMEC surveys were recorded in field notes and are listed in Appendix II below. Weather during all surveys was favorable. Table 1 contains information on the CCG surveys.

Table 1. Survey Information

Date	Biologist	Time (standard)	Temperature (° F)	Wind Speed (mph)	% Cloud Cover
21 May 2011	Green	0755-0855	56-62	0-2	100
1 June 2011	Moorhatch	0805-0856	59-59	0-7	5-60
8 June 2011	Green	0530-0610	58-62	1-4	100

5.0 RESULTS

No coastal California gnatcatchers were detected during the surveys. Suitable habitat on-site is very limited, degraded, and fragmented. The site is also completely isolated from any contiguous habitat.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

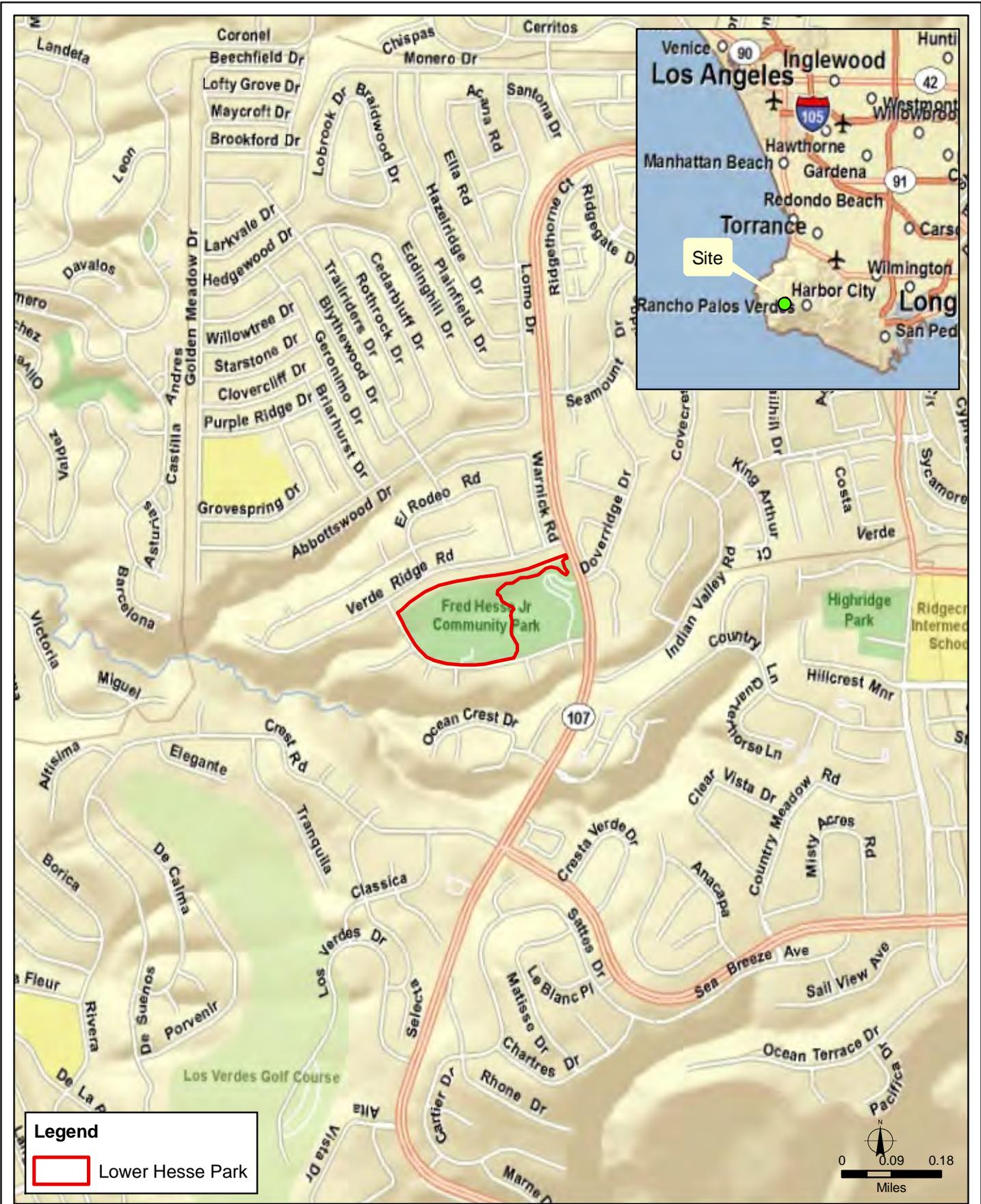
Focused presence-absence surveys did not detect the federally listed as Threatened coastal California gnatcatcher on the Project site. Because the site is in designated critical habitat, we recommend that native sage scrub cover be left in place where possible, but it is AMEC's opinion that the Project can proceed without further biological considerations regarding this species. The results of focused surveys are generally considered valid for one year, so should construction not commence prior to 8 June 2012, the focused survey may need to be repeated.

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APPENDIX I

MAPS



Legend
 Lower Hesse Park

0 0.09 0.18
 Miles

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Regional Location
 Lower Hesse Park

FIGURE
1



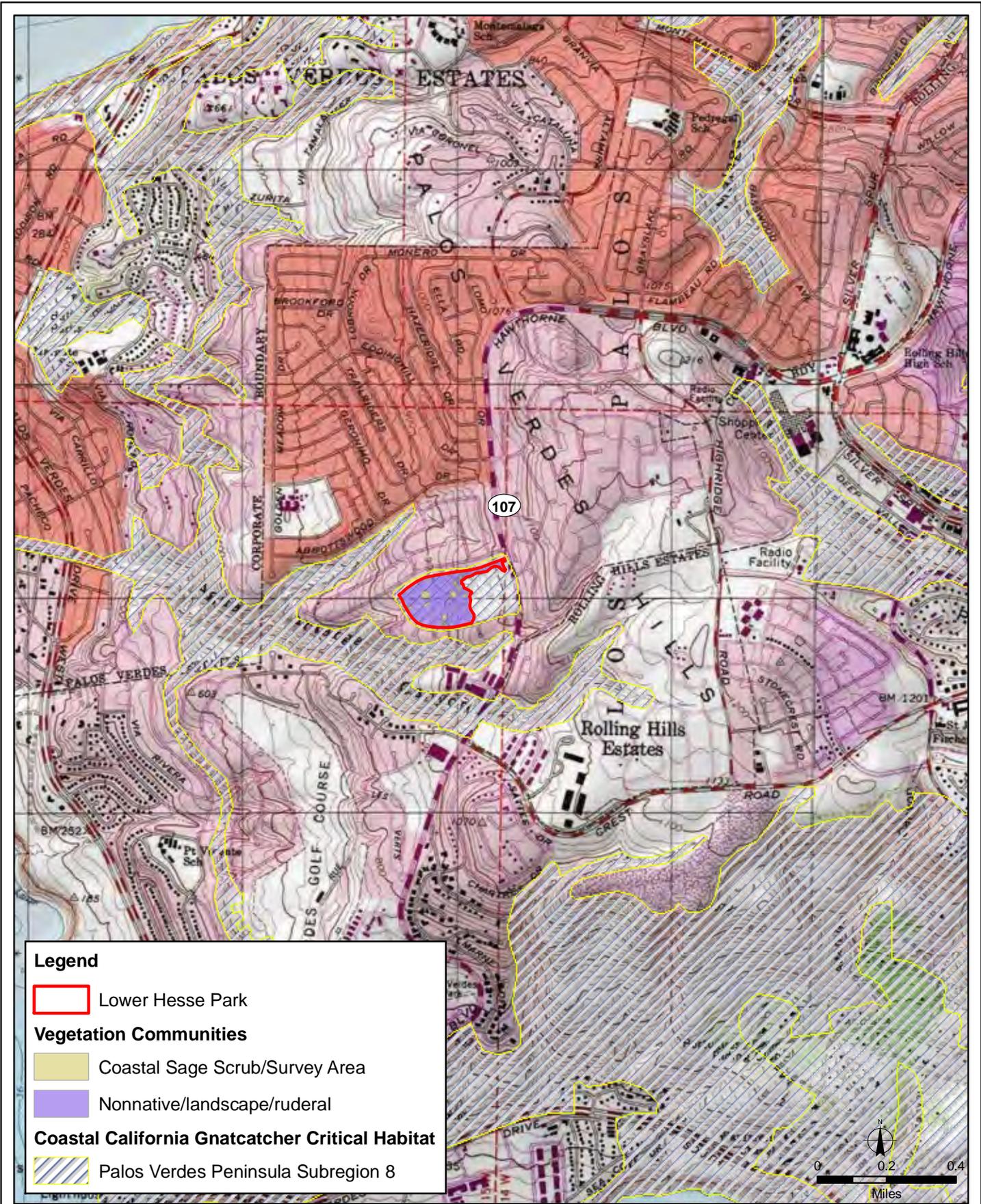
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Survey Area/Vegetation Communities
Lower Hesse Park Gnatcatcher Survey

FIGURE

2



S:\active projects\Grandview & Lower Hesse Parks 1155400461\graphics\map_USGS 7.5' topo redondo Beach quad

Survey Area/Vegetation Communities
Lower Hesse Park Gnatcatcher Survey

FIGURE

3

APPENDIX II
BIRD SPECIES LIST

BIRD SPECIES LIST

This list reports only birds observed during AMEC's site visits. Nomenclature and taxonomy generally follows the American Ornithologists' Union Checklist and its supplements (1998).

SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS:

sp.-Identified only to genus; species unknown plural = spp.
* Nonnative species

BIRDS

Accipitridae

Buteo jamaicensis

Columbidae

**Columbia livia*

Zenaida macroura

Trochilidae

Calypte anna

Selasphorus sasin

Tyrannidae

Contopus sordidulus

Empidonax difficilis

Sayornis nigricans

Sayornis saya

Tyrannus vociferans

Corvidae

Aphelocoma californica

Corvus brachyrhynchos

Corvus corax

Aegithalidae

Psaltriparus minimus

Troglodytidae

Troglodytes aedon

Mimidae

Mimus polyglottos

Sturnidae

**Sturnus vulgaris*

Parulidae

Cardellina pusilla

Emberizidae

Melospiza crissalis

Spizella passerine

Hawks, Kites, Eagles, Allies

Red-tailed Hawk

Pigeons, Doves

Rock Pigeon

Mourning Dove

Hummingbirds

Anna's Hummingbird

Allen's Hummingbird

Tyrant Flycatchers

Western Wood-Pewee

Pacific-slope Flycatcher

Black Phoebe

Say's Phoebe

Cassin's Kingbird

Crows, Jays

Western Scrub-Jay

American Crow

Common Raven

Long-tailed Tits and Bushtits

Bushtit

Wrens

House Wren

Mockingbirds and Thrashers

Northern Mockingbird

Starlings

European Starling

Wood-Warblers

Wilson's Warbler

Emberizids

California Towhee

Chipping Sparrow

Lower Hesse Park
Focused Surveys for the Coastal California Gnatcatcher
August 2011



Icteridae

Molothrus ater

Icterus sp.

Fringillidae

Carpodacus mexicanus

Spinus psaltria

Passeridae

**Passer domesticus*

Blackbirds

Brown-headed Cowbird

Oriole

Finches, Allies

House Finch

Lesser Goldfinch

Old World Sparrows

House Sparrow