

**Riverside County
Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan
Interim Management Evaluation and Recommendations**

SITE NAME: MENIFEE2

EDA NAME: Beeler / Leland

I. SITE PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

1.A. Site Physical Location & Access:

The MENIFEE2 site is located between Interstate 15 and Interstate 215 immediately north of Clinton Keith Road. It occupies the north-facing slope of a small range of hills separating the Menifee area from the Wildomar area. Its general location can be found at:

State Plane Coordinates:	6272566E, 2168247N (NAD-83, feet)
UTM:	481651E, 3719154N (NAD-27, meters)
Township / Range / Section:	W1/2, SW1/4 SE1/4, SW1/4 Section 28, T6S, R3W (SBBM)

The entire southern boundary of the site is now being developed into residential communities. Several roads lead up to near the site, but few if any accesses to the site will be available from the south due to residences and "common" areas' landscaped fences. However, it may eventually be able to access the southern area of the site if the water district (East Valley Municipal?) would allow access through their water tanks sites there.

Otherwise, the site can be access from the north from off of Keller Road. From the western end of Keller, at Gloria Road, near a large water tank, a dirt road proceeds southwest. Following this road, one passes a number of small mobile homes and arrives at a nursery. The site can then be accessed on several dirt trails proceeding south from this nursery. These roads are rough, in places overgrown, and very rocky. Four-wheel drive is required to reach the majority of the site.

1.B. APNs & Acreage:

359-190-008	80.00 acres
359-200-005	42.20 acres
359-200-007	<u>65.66 acres</u>
TOTAL	187.86 acres

1.C. Topography:

Basically the site represents the north-facing slope of a ridge of moderate-sized hills. This slope is cut by several small but steeply-walled canyons which drain to the northwest and west to meet up with a well-defined watercourse. This watercourse cuts-off the northwestern corner of the site, and drains to the southwest. Rocky outcrops are common, but generally small in stature.

1.D. Surrounding Land Use:

To the south the site is currently being developed into residential communities. North of the site is primarily native open space, with the exception of the nursery. Natural open space is also found to the west, however, approximate 1 kilometer to the west of the site, the land has been cleared and graded in anticipation of another housing development. To the east lies open space and the northeastern fringes of the new development and eventually Interstate 215. Areas further to the north, near Keller Road, supports larger parcels (apx. 5 acres or so) and low density housing.

2. BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

2.A. Plant Communities:

The site is dominated by mature, dense chamise chaparral (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), with occasional individuals of sugar bush (*Rhus ovata*), scrub oak (*Quercus berberidifolia*), and black sage (*Salvia mellifera*). Much of the understory and openings between shrubs contains California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*).

There are a few open areas in the north-central area of the site, and along most of the trails, which have been invaded by non-native grass, primarily red brome (*Bromus madritensis rubens*) and mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*).

The large riparian strip of the northwestern corner supports mule fat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and scattered western sycamores (*Platanus racemosa*). Due to the high density and mature nature of the chaparral, any wildfires that enter the site will most likely be catastrophic.

2.B. Likely Animal Species:

Animals likely to be encountered include those associated with chaparral communities. These are likely to include the California whiptail (*Cnemidophorus tigris*), western fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*), the side-blotched lizard (*Uta stansburiana*), southern pacific rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis*), wrentit (*Chamaea fasciata*), speckled towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*), California towhee (*Pipilo fuscus*), Bewick's wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*), scrub jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*), California thrasher (*Toxostoma redivivum*), rufous-

crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*), brush mouse (*P. boylei*), California mouse (*P. californicus*), both the dusky-footed and desert woodrats (*Neotoma fuscipes* and *N. lepida*, respectively), and brush rabbit (*Sylvilagus bachmani*).

2.C. Other Habitat or Wildlife Features:

The occasional rock outcrops and oak riparian areas could be important roosting spots for several bat species and potentially birds of prey.

2.D. Target Species:

Please see Appendix A for a qualitative checklist of MSHCP target animal species, and Appendix B. for plant species.

3. IMPACTS AND CURRENT CONDITIONS

3.A. Current Uses:

The site is not currently used for any organized activities. An active nursery is located approximately 250 meters north of the site.

3.B. Fencing & Access Controls:

The site is currently open to the north from both the northeast and northwest. The areas to the south and east are currently being developed into residential communities, with HOA fences in place over much of the length of these developments. As such, access from the south will soon be very restricted.

3.C. Off-Road Vehicle (OHV) Use / Damage:

OHVs appear to be rather common on the site. The trails and dirt roads show repeated and recent use. Several trails cross the site, which are only accessible to horse or OHV access, yet appear well-used. Based upon chance encounters by our Ranger, it appears that most of the OHV use is from nearby communities, and the site does not appear to be a "draw" for off-road enthusiasts from distant communities. For the most part, because of the dense nature of the vegetation and steep-sided hills, OHVs stay on existing trails. The exception to this is on the western end of the site, near the riparian strip, where OHV use had created many trails and "turn arounds" (see aerial photograph map). Several places were observed where erosion from OHV use has started and where more recent use has widened the older track by driving around the erosion channels.

3.D. Illegal Dumping:

Dumping is relatively common on the western side of the site, particularly in the northwestern areas. Sporadic dumping has occurred south of the site, along the main dirt road which [more or less] parallels the southern boundary. Here, 'party goers' appear to frequent the area, leaving behind numerous bottles, cups and beer cans.

3.E. Target Shooting & Hunting

There is some evidence of hunting on the site, but this is confined to the flatter areas along the north-central boundary and along the riparian area of the west. Piles of spent shotgun shells are found, presumably used for hunting quail and dove. Most of the remainder of the site supports vegetation too thick to be penetrated by hunters.

3.F. Weed Abatement::

Currently, no weed abatement is required on the site. However, because of the dense chaparral, should wildfire reach the site, it could be expected that the entire site will be burned off, reducing the site's value for wildlife for many years, and potentially increasing the abundance of non-native grasses.

With the completion and occupancy of the new homes along the southern edge, the potential for fire will increase. It would be strongly advisable to contact the owner of the intervening properties (those between the houses and site proper), and request permission to maintain the main dirt road which parallels the southern boundary as a substantial firebreak.

Firebreaks could also be established along the northern and western boundaries. Even if adjacent parcels were acquired for the MSHCP, these internal firebreaks could greatly aid in the control of the spread of wildfires should one enter the area.

3.G. Other Recreational Opportunities and Constraints:

None.

3.H. Special Conditions of Purchase:

None.

4. RESTORATION OPPORTUNITIES

4.A. Target Species:

Since the site is in mostly pristine condition, supporting mature chaparral, little in the way of restoration is currently required. It would be advisable to begin to control the non-native grasses and mustard through the use of hand labor, followed by spray with an approved herbicide. This should be done as soon as is practical to prevent the continued spread of these invasive exotics into other areas of the site.

4.B. Multi-Species Aspects:

Trash should be removed from the riparian areas and the areas of the northwestern portion of the site. This would best be accomplished with the rental of a skiploader and dumpster.

5. RERSERVE DESIGN AND CONNECTIVITY

5.A. Boundary, Edge and Community Location:

Development is rapidly sealing off the southern and eastern edges of the site. Additionally, large areas to the west have already been cleared and graded for development.

5.B. Connectivity:

The site generally forms a portion of the MSHCP-identified Linkage No. 8, which is designed to provide animal and plant movement between MSHCP Proposed Core Areas 1 (Alberhill / Gavilan Plateau) and 2 (Antelope Valley). Additional acquisitions will be needed, expanding both the length and width of this proposed linkage, for it to function as a linkage.

5.C. Nearby Existing Reserves:

The Riverside County Regional Park and Open Space District maintains the Iodine Springs mitigation parcels which are located approximately 3 kilometers west of the site. The Center for Natural Land Management's Lincoln Mitigation Bank is located about 2 kilometers east-southeast of the site.

5.D. Priority for Future Purchases:

Since the areas to the south have already been (or are currently being) developed, the only possible expansion of this nexus of Linkage 8 is to the east, north and west. As mentioned, a large area to the west has already been cleared, presumably for residential development. Additional acquisitions in the area should attempt to solidify the linkage around this cleared area to prevent the