



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

SITE NAME: **MENIFEE1**

EDA NAME: **McELHINNEY / STIMMEL**

I. SITE PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

1.A. Site Physical Location & Access:

The Meniffee1 site is located about three kilometers east of Interstate 15 and one kilometer south of Scott Road. It can be reached from Scott Road via Briggs Road, which bisects the reserve into eastern and western portions. Golden J Lane defines the line of the northern boundary. The southern boundary of the eastern portion is formed by Sunny Hills Drive, while that of the western portion is the right-of-way for Keller Road (non-existent to date). The property can be located at:

Township / Range / Section: S½, Section 20, T5S, R4W

UTM Coordinates: 470549E, 3736628N

State Plane Coordinates: 6236576E, 2206295N

1.B. Acreage: 337.76

1.C. Topography:

The oddly-shaped site consists primarily of rolling terrain of generally low relief. A few small rocky hills can be found on the eastern portion (east of Briggs Road). A rather large low-lying area, which represents a former creek or seep, can also be observed there. The western portion of the site (west of Briggs Road) slopes up to base of a pronounced hill which lies along the western boundary.

1.D. Surrounding Land Use:

The site is surrounded by low-density residences, primarily former ranches and ranchettes. However, new homes are currently under construction along Shady Hills Drive. A large section of private land can be found in the center of the parcel, adjacent to Briggs Road. This ranch is not a part of the reserve. Adjacent to the site on Briggs Road is the Budweiser Clydesdale horse ranch.

2. BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

2.A. Plant Communities:

The vast majority of the site supports ruderal non-native annual grasslands. Typical species encountered included red brome (*Bromus madritensis rubens*), rip-gut brome (*B. diandrus*), tarweed (*Hemizonia sp.*), mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*) and dove weed (*Eremocarpus setigerus*). The growth is extremely thick (see Restoration Opportunities below).

This community continues across Briggs Road into the western portion of the site, where it forms the apron of a large hill located along the western boundary. This hill supports dense mature Riversidian sage scrub, primarily dominated by California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*).

Two reasonably developed riparian strips are found on the site. One is located in the southeastern corner of the site, primarily running east and west. The other is within the western portion of the site, and runs primarily north and south. Both support large individuals of California pepper (*Shinus molle*), western sycamores (*Platanus racemosa*), Mexican elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*), willows (*Salix sp.*) and cottonwoods (*Populus fremontii*).

2.B. Likely Animal Species:

Animals likely to inhabit the site are those associated with disturbed and/or agricultural areas. Species associated primarily with sage scrub habitat will most likely be found only on the western hill. Overall common species could include the pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*), California ground squirrel (*Spermophilus beecheyi*), deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), California towhee (*Pipilo fuscus*), grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*), black phoebe (*Sayornis nigricans*), gopher snake (*Pituophis melanoleucus*), California whipsnake (*Masticophis lateralis*), southern Pacific rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis*), western fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*), and the side-blotched lizard (*Uta stansburiana*).

The riparian areas are likely to support a few individuals of species associated just such areas, such as the Nuttall's woodpecker (*Picoides nuttallii*), American and lesser goldfinch (*Carduelis tristis*, *C. pasaltria*), Copper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperi*), and possibly the horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*) and California treefrog (*Hyla regilla*). Treefrogs and other water-loving species may also center activities on the large seep of the eastern portion.

2.C. Other Habitat or Wildlife Features:

The riparian corridors could provide potential nesting sites for owls and other birds of prey (e.g., red-tailed hawk, Cooper's hawk).

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 currently not being used for any agriculture or other organized activities. Equestrian use is common on the site from the adjacent and nearby residents. Numerous "steep jumps" are found on the site, and should probably be removed unless these represent part of the agreement with the previous owners.

3.B. Fencing & Access Controls:

The entire site is fenced. The fences have been well-maintained by the previous owners, and still have their ranch signs on them. There is also internal cross-fencing on the eastern portion of the site which should eventually be removed.

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

OHV use is virtually non-existent on the site because of its long protection by the previous owners. It is expected that once the "word gets out" that the site is now public, sporadic OHV use will increase some.

3.D. Illegal Dumping:

There is currently no major dumping on the site.

3.E. Target Shooting & Hunting:

There is currently no serious target shooting or hunting on the site

3.F. Weed Abatement:

The site currently supports thick non-native grassland habitat. Such areas are prone to wildfires; quick to catch and extremely rapid in their spread. Because of the close proximity of residences, weed abatement is a necessary and immediate management action. In the interim management, this should include the mowing (not disking) of the entire perimeter of the eastern portion, and the perimeter of

the western portion adjacent to Briggs Road and any residences. In the long run, this activity could become part of the restoration of the site to native grasses

3.G. Other Recreational Opportunities and Constraints:

Potential exists to use the site within the County's regional and community trails plan. The previous owners have mowed large strips of the grassland to serve as trails and runs for their horses.

3.H. Special Conditions of Purchase:

Terms of acquisition included allowing continued access of the site to the previous owners for equestrian use. It is unclear if this agreement allows the previous owners to maintain the steeple jumps found across the site. If it does not, they should eventually be removed.

4. RESTORATION OPPORTUNITIES

4.A. Target Species:

The growth of extremely thick non-native grasses should, in the long run, be eliminated in order to allow natives to re-colonize the site, and/or prevent further spread to non-natives to adjacent sites. This could enhance the vast majority of the site for grassland target species (e.g., SKR, grasshopper sparrow)

Care should be taken to insure the continued existence of the well-developed sage scrub on the western hill. This could include the creating of fire breaks, and the spot removal of non-native grasses as they encroach into the sage scrub areas.

4.B. Multi-Species Aspects:

Several small, rocky hills are found scattered across the eastern portion of the site. These small areas historically supported sage scrub habitat. To facilitate the movement of sage scrub species across the site in general, these small hills should be restored to sage scrub habitat, thus forming a series of small "stepping stones" across the site. In conjunction with this, the riparian area of the eastern portion could be enhanced with additional plantings to facilitate wildlife movement and promote riparian species use.

5. RERSERVE DESIGN AND CONNECTIVITY

5.A. Boundary, Edge and Community Location:

The site has a very long boundary and edge. This is primarily a result of the remaining ranch in the center of the site, and Briggs Road bisecting the site. No opportunities exist to change this boundary without buying-out existing homes.

5.B. Connectivity:

The site lies within or adjacent to Proposed Core 2 with Constrained Linkages 16 to the west and 17 to the east. In addition to serving as a component of a future core area, the value of this site lies in providing access from the Lake Skinner / DVA area west to the Sedco Hills lies with establishing the immediate connection to the southeast, since most of the eastern boundary and southern boundary are already supporting residences.

5.C. Nearby Existing Reserves:

The site is located about 900 meters east of the existing Warmington Mitigation parcel, currently managed by Riverside County Park District (see map).

5.D. Priority for Future Purchases:

Top priority should be given to acquire the lands lying between the project site and the Warmington Mitigation parcel, and lands to the immediate southeast of the site to insure the site does not become isolated and loose its proposed function as a movement corridor.

6. INTERIM MANAGEMENT

6.A. Public Issues:

Few public issues exist for the site. It can be expected that, as Menifee grows, increased pressure will be exerted on the site for various recreations. Currently however, the only potential issue is the continued use of the site by the previous owners for grazing of horses and goats.

Because the general community has clearly exhibited a lack of interest in trespass, it is recommended that only "low key" signs be placed around the existing fences. It may also be advisable to lock the existing gates, providing a key or combination number to the previous owners for their continued equestrian access. It would also be advisable to remove the steeple jumps found across the eastern portion of the site, and the internal cross-fencing found there.