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RESULTS OF SURVEY FOR FIRST-YEAR SPECIAL-STATUS PLANT SPECIES, ALTON NORTH CONSERVATION BANK, SONOMA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Submitted to:

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March 19, 2007

Jurisdictional Determinations Wetland Mitigation Planning Regulatory Analysis and Permitting Endangered Species Surveys

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

1.1. PROJECT SITE LOCATION

This report presents the results of a first-year survey (2007) for special-status plant species on the approximately 24.8-acre property on part of which the Alton North Conservation Bank (ANCB) is proposed. The proposed bank site is located northwest of the City of Santa Rosa (Figure 1), between Piner Road and Alton Lane (Figure 2). The north site boundary is at Alton Lane. The ANCB site is divided by an access road that connects Alton Lane and Piner Road and provides access to the existing residence on the 24.8-acre property and another residence 300 feet to the south.

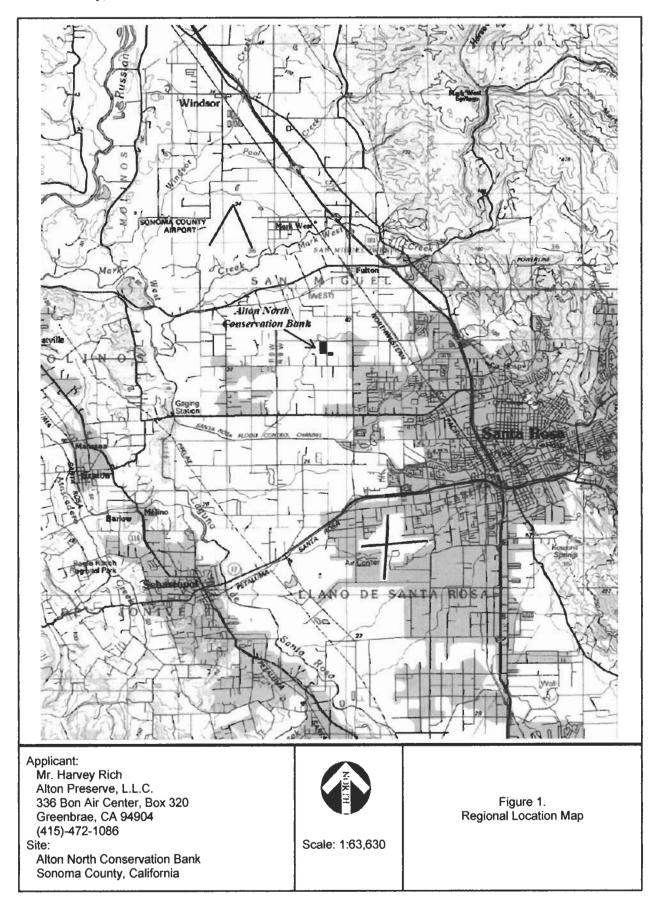
1.1.2. Current and Past Land Use

Approximately 20.9 acres of the property is part of the Vera Gold Vineyards and has been divided into several blocks managed for wine grape production for several decades. All but one of the vineyard blocks are west of the access road. Two residences, a driveway and parking area, large barn, storage sheds and several outbuildings used to store vineyard management equipment (grape boxes, tee posts, cable, spraying equipment, stakes) are clustered with an array of facilities used by the owners for their own recreational pleasure and for catered events such as weddings and parties on approximately 1.04 acres. These facilities included a gazebo, bocci ball courts, horseshoe pits, swings, barbeque grills, restrooms etc. The area around the residences and these facilities has been landscaped with lawns and ornamental vegetation. An additional 2.9 acres includes a leach field, access roads, older farm and vineyard management equipment stored outside the barn and sheds and ruderal annual grassland habitat. A handful of large valley oaks (*Quercus lobata*) are scattered throughout these areas.

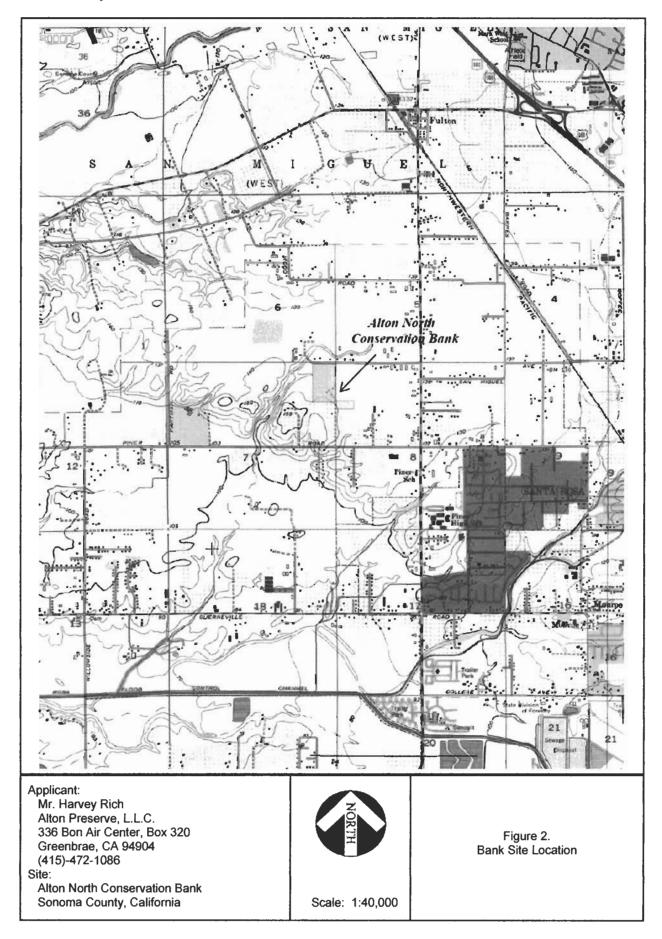
1.2. PHYSICAL AND HYDROLOGIC CONDITIONS

1.2.1. Topography and Drainage

The ground surface on the property slopes in all directions, in all cases toward a network of swales, the slopes ranging from virtually zero (in small areas) to just over 10 percent. Parts of the property must have at one time been characterized by mound-and-depression microtopography but decades of vineyard management have eliminated or muted much of it. West of the access road, the topography is dominated by high ground in the southwest corner and moderate slopes toward relatively gently sloping topography to the northeast and southeast. All of the ground west of the access road slopes toward a network of swales that converge and form a single major swale in the north half of the site. Almost all of the area west of the access road eventually drains to the west toward Abramson Creek via the major swale, which exits the west boundary of the property and proposed ANCB site approximately 200 feet south of Alton Lane.



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The ground in the vineyard block east of the access road flows in three directions. The northwest corner of the block slopes to the north and the northeastern corner slopes to the northeast but most of the block slopes to the south toward the proposed Alton South Conservation Bank.

A network of swales drains the property, carrying water from the east and south, through the property, toward Abramson Creek. Runoff from the northwest corner of the vineyard block east of the access road drains to the north into the Porter Mitigation Site but eventually finds its way, through a network of constructed vernal pools, into the swale network that crosses the major bank site area west of the access road. Runoff from the northeast corner of the vineyard block east of the access road also flows through a network of natural swales and constructed vernal pools and non-wetland depressions toward the rural residential area to the east of the existing Alton Preserve. A swale through the center of the east vineyard block carries water through the Alton South Conservation Bank site to a small tributary drainage to Santa Rosa Creek.

1.2.2. Soils

The soils on the property are mapped by the Soil Conservation Service (U. S. Soil Conservation Service 1992) as belonging to three phases of the Huichica loam series [HtA (0 - 2 percent slopes; HvC, (shallow 0 - 9 percent slopes); and HwB (shallow, ponded, 0 - 5 percent slopes)]. The terrain on the property may once have been hummocky, characterized by low "mima" mounds and intervening swales and depressional ground, but the relief has been modified over the years of vineyard management. The Huichica loam soils possess a clay horizon and hardpan below the clay. The clay ranges in thickness from two to 14 inches, and is thickest (and deepest) on the high ground west of the residences. The hardpan is present in the northern part of the area west of the access road and through most of the area east of the access road but is conspicuously absent from the high ground west of the existing residences. Physical site investigations reveal that hardpan cementation varies from weak to strong but where the cementation is strong, the hardpan takes the form a thin veneer (1 - 2 mm thick) of manganese- and iron-cemented loam. Below the thin but well-cemented and lack the capacity to perch water.

Where present, the clay and/or the hardpan form an effective barrier to deep percolation and perch water near the surface. Although the surface relief appears to have been modified, deep ripping does not appear to have preceded vine planting and the soil properties that affect ponding at the surface appear to remain intact on most of the bank site. The Huichica loam series is considered a vernal pool soil by the Vernal Pool Task Force (CH2M Hill 1996).

Applying the criteria developed by the National Technical Committee for Hydric Soils to the soils in Sonoma County, the NRCS field office in Santa Rosa (Soil Conservation Service 1992) developed a draft list of hydric soils that occur in Sonoma County. The gentle and ponded phases of the Huichica loam series that occur on the bank site are designated or classified as hydric soils. Evidence collected during the physical site investigation indicates through redoximorphic features that the designations are correct.

2.0. METHODS

Target special-status species were those listed in the draft Santa Rosa Plain Vernal Pool Ecosystem Preservation Plan in preparation for the Santa Rosa Plain Vernal Pool Task Force (CH2M Hill 1996) and identified in California Natural Diversity Data Base records. Target species include those species whose range includes the region and which, by virtue of their known occurrence in the vicinity, were considered to have the potential to occur on the site given their habitat requirements and the types of habitat present. These species are listed in the table in Appendix A.

The field survey was conducted by thoroughly searching each wetland and conducting a transect survey of the annual grassland habitats on March 2, March 18, and April 11. The survey visits were made within the desired survey window.

The survey methods used were consistent with the guidelines established by the California Department of Fish and Game and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service for assessing the effects of proposed developments on rare and endangered plants and plant communities. Distributional information for the three species listed as endangered by the federal government -- Sonoma sunshine (*Blennosperma bakeri*), Sebastopol meadowfoam (*Limnanthes vinculans*), and Burke's goldfields (*Lasthenia burkei*) -- was obtained from Appendix B to the Vernal Pool Ecosystem Preservation Plan (CH2M Hill 1996). Information on distributional and habitat requirements of the upland species was obtained from flora (Mason 1975, Munz and Keck 1968), other reports (Waaland, Vilms, and Thompson 1990; Patterson, Guggolz, and Waaland 1994) and surveys conducted for special-status species on the Santa Rosa Plain and properties in the vicinity, and the California Native Plant Society's list of rare and endangered plant species in the state (Skinner and Pavlik 1994).

Reference sites were checked prior to and during the completion of the survey. The sites included:

- 1. For Sebastopol meadowfoam Gobbi Mitigation Site, Gobbi Preserve No 2., and the Hazel Mitigation Bank;
- 2. For Sonoma sunshine the existing Alton Lane Preserve and the Porter Mitigation Site;
- 3. For Burke's goldfields the Alton Lane Preserve and the proposed Albertson site west of the Piner Road-Marlow Avenue intersection.

The number of plants were counted using full-census methods. Sampling methods may be included in the new protocol to be developed by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service but, in the interim, a full census was made at this site because the number of plants was just below the limit at which sampling would become necessary.

3.0. SURVEY RESULTS

3.1. VEGETATION TYPE DESCRIPTIONS

The objective of this report is to present the results of a special-status plant species survey. Full habitat descriptions and assessments are, therefore, not presented. The habitats include ornamental vegetation and planted vines, which are not described, seasonal wetland and ruderal annual grassland, which are described. Brief descriptions of the seasonal wetland and annual grassland habitats follow.

3.1.1. Seasonal Wetlands

Approximately 2.03 acres of seasonal wetland habitat occur on the property (Figure 3). With a few exceptions, these seasonal wetlands occupy swales. They are also depauperate, the reduced number of species directly related to the annual disturbance associated with vineyard management. The habitat is generally stripped like a barber's pole, broken at regular intervals by the rows of slightly elevated planted vines and is best expressed in the linear areas between the vines.

The seasonal wetlands are dominated by annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*), California semaphore grass (*Pleuropogon californicus*), ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), curly dock (*Rumex crispus*), Mediterranean barley (*Hordeum marinum* ssp. gussoneanum), six-weeks fescue (*Vulpia bromoides*), spiny-fruited buttercup (*Ranunculus californicus*), purple loosestrife (*Lythrum hyssopifolium*), red maids (*Calandrinia ciliata*), water blinks (*Montia fontana*), and willow herb (*Epilobium densiflorum*).

3.1.2. Annual Grassland

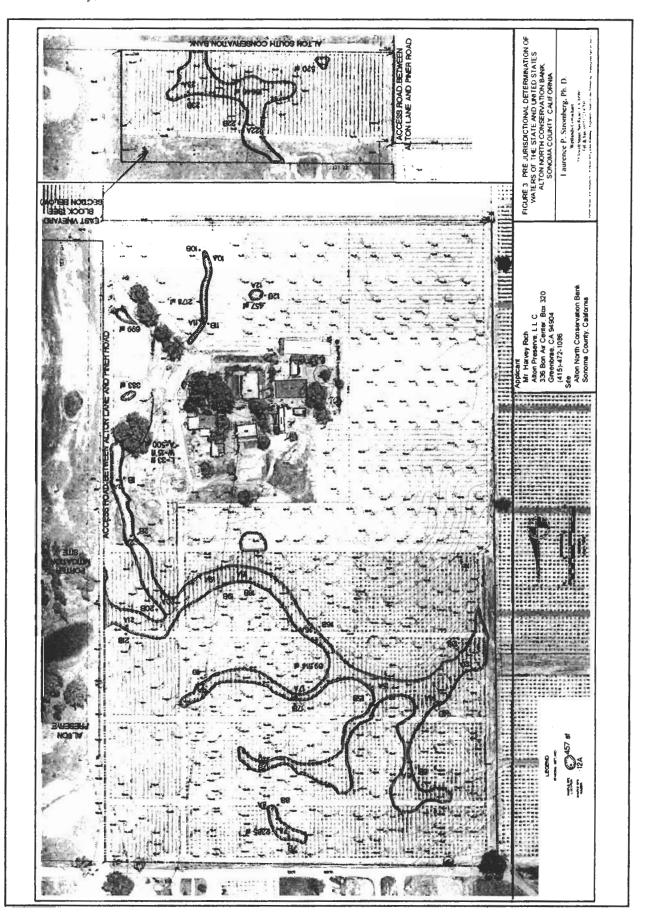
The annual grassland on the site is representative of the type in the region and supports the typical array of annual introduced grasses and forbs. The dominant species are ryegrass, soft chess (*Bromus hordeaceus*), filaree (*Erodium cicutarium*), and vetch (*Vicia sativa*), oats (*Avena fatua* and *A. barbata*), ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), little rattlesnake grass, hairgrass (*Aira caryophyllea*) sixweeks fescue (*Vulpia bromoides*), and cat's ear (*Hypocheris radicans*). In the vineyard, the vegetation on the slightly raised ground beneath the vines and in other non-wetland areas can be considered a ruderal annual grassland. The dominant species include bur clover (*Medicago polymorpha*), stickwort (*Spergula arvensis*), subterranean clover (*Trifolium subterraneum*), common groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*), and field mustard (*Brassica rapa*). Subdominant species include bittercress (*Cardamine oligosperma*), speedwell (Veronica persica), tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*), miner's lettuce (*Montia perfoliata*), filarees (*Erodium botrys, E. cicutarium, E. moschatum*), and wild radish (*Raphanus sativus*).

Appendix B lists the species observed in the above habitats during the field survey.

3.2. SPECIAL-STATUS PLANT SPECIES

3.2.1. Potential Habitat

The presence of "potential habitat" for the federally listed plant species on the Santa Rosa Plain is one of the elements in the habitat evaluation process. Potential habitat is defined by the combination



of vegetation, topographic, and hydrologic conditions.

3.2.1.1. Vegetation conditions. Potential habitat for the plant species listed as federally endangered is characterized as:

- 1. areas supporting vernal pool indicator species, i.e., those plant species listed in Table 3-1 of the Vernal Pool Ecosystem Preservation Plan (CH2M Hill 1996), with a 10 percent relative cover, or
- 2. areas not dominated by weedy grasses, i.e., areas in which perennial plant species not listed in Table 3-1 and/or exotic grasses such as *Hordeum marinum* ssp. gussoneanum, Lolium perenne, Bromus hordeaceus, etc. contribute less than 90 percent of the relative cover.

These criteria are not to be applied to the entire wetland area, since only a small portion may be suitable habitat. If any square meter area meets the above criteria (such as in the deepest portion of shallow ponds or on the sides of deep swales), this area would be considered suitable habitat.

3.2.1.2. Topographic and hydrologic conditions. One or more of the following topographic or hydrologic conditions must exist in conjunction with the vegetation criteria for a wetland to be considered potential habitat:

- 1. the wetland area has not been entirely filled such that the wetland no longer floods or ponds (i.e., as a result of leveling) and the original topography no longer exists;
- 2. the wetland has an outlet barrier (is a pool) or occurs in depressional terrain (i.e., is a swale or drainage feature);
- 3. the wetland contains surface (standing or flowing) water during the rainy season in a normal rainfall year for seven days or more;

The following conditions indicate that a particular wetland is not potential habitat. The site does not meet the vegetation criteria *and*:

- 4. the wetland occurs on sloping ground (not the slopes of a swale or pond) and is not a swale or swale-related drainage feature, such that no ponding or flooding occurs;
- 5. the wetland is irrigated, and contains standing water of natural or artificial origin, and the soils are saturated for more than 60 days between June 1 and October 1.

Even though the seasonal wetlands on the site have been disturbed annually, potential habitat for the listed plant species occurs on the site. Plant species listed in Table 3-1 of the Vernal Pool Ecosystem Preservation Plan contribute more than 10 percent relative cover in relatively large areas of each of the wetlands. Species such as ryegrass and Mediterranean barley contribute less than 90 percent relative cover where the native species cover exceeds 10 percent. None of the wetlands remain physically intact and their hydrologic function has been modified) but many of the seasonal wetlands are slightly depressional, characterized by a minimal outlet barrier, and they have been observed to contain standing surface water for seven days or more during the rainy season in a

normal rainfall year.

3.2.2. Survey Results

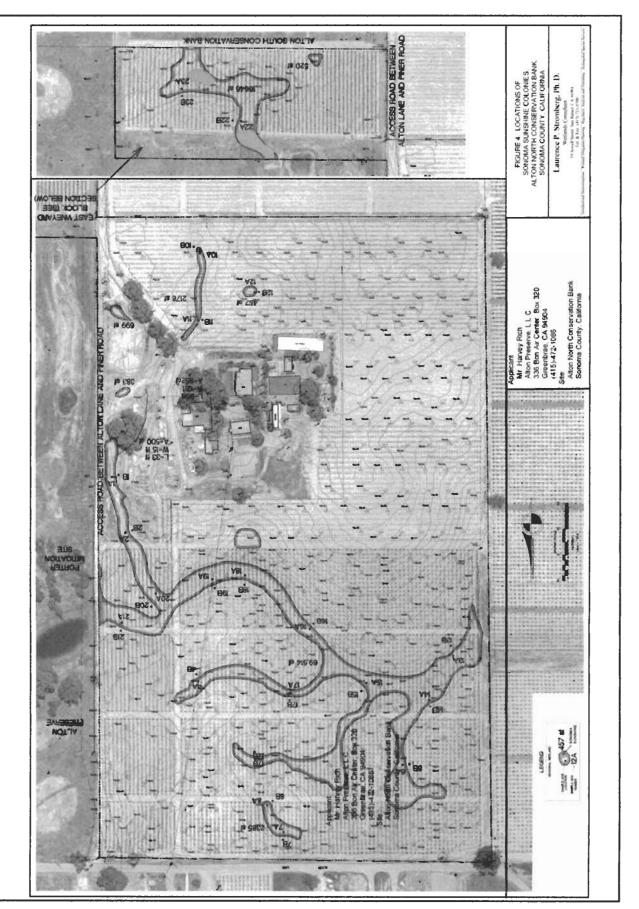
Sonoma sunshine has been observed previously in two locations east of the access road that divides the site. One location is in the access road on the north side of the vineyard block, essentially a depressional extension of a native vernal pool to the north, and the other is in the deeper portion of a swale in the center of the block. These locations are shown in Figure 4. In the spring of 2007 Sonoma sunshine was observed an another slightly different location, just south of and outside the vineyard block. The total number of Sonoma sunshine is estimated to be 3,919 plants. Of this total, 3,869 plants occur in the slightly depressional area north of the vineyard block, 48 plants occur in the seasonal wetland in the vineyard block, and two plants occur south of the vineyard.

Other species that occur in association with Sonoma sunshine are water blinks, annual bluegrass California semaphore grass, ryegrass, curly dock, meadow barley (Hordeum brachyantherum), spiny-fruited buttercup, purple loosestrife, red maids, water blinks, willow herb, water starwort (Callitriche heterophylla), whitetip clover (Trifolium variegatum), and Howell's quillwort (Isoetes howellii).

3.2.3. Previous Surveys and Records of Occurrence

The CNDDB contains no records of previous observations. The Sonoma sunshine observed in 2007 has been observed north of and in the middle of the east vineyard block had been observed by Stromberg in prior casual surveys conducted in conjunction with monitoring of the vernal pools constructed on the Porter Mitigation Site to the north.

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4.0. REFERENCES CITED

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APPENDIX A. Special-status Plant Species with the Potential to Occur on the Alton North Conservation Bank Site, Santa Rosa, California

<i>Scientific Name</i> Common Name	Status	Habitat Affinities	Blooming Period	Notes
Alopecurus aequalis var. sonomensis Sonoma alopecurus	USFWS: C2 CDFG: - CNPS: 1A	Marshes, swamps, and scrub.	Feb-Apr	No suitable habitat occurs on the site. The species was not found.
Amsinkia lunaris Bent-flowered fiddleneck	USFWS: - CDFG: - CNPS: 4	Annual grassland.	Mar-Jun	A limited area of marginally suitable annual grassland habitat is present. The spe- cies was not found.
Blennosperma bakeri Sonoma sunshine	USFWS: E CDFG: E CNPS: 1b	Vernal pools and vernal swales.	Mar-Apr	Marginally suitable habitat is present in the swales. Spe- cies has been observed in two locations on the site.
<i>Cuscuta howelliana</i> Bogg's Lake dodder	USFWS: - CDFG: - CNPS: 4	Vernal pools.	Mar-Apr	Parasitic species on many vernal pool species, particu- larly <i>Eryngium</i> . <i>Eryngium</i> is not present and the species was not found.
Downingia humilis Dwarf downingia	USFWS: - CDFG: - CNPS: 1B	Vernal pools.	Mar-Apr	Marginally suitable habitat is present in depressions in the swales but the species was not found.
<i>Lasthenia burkei</i> Burke's goldfields	USFWS: E CDFG: E CNPS: 1B	Vernal pools and vernal swales.	Mar-Apr	Marginally suitable habitat is present in the depressions in the swales but the species was not found.
<i>Limnanthes vinculans</i> Sebastopol meadowfoam	USFWS: E CDFG: E CNPS: 1B	Vernal pools and vernal swales.	Mar-Apr	Marginally suitable habitat is present in the depressions in the swales but the species was not found.
<i>Navarretia pleiantha</i> Many-flowered navarretia	USFWS: C1 CDFG: E CNPS: 1B	Vernal pools and vernal swales.	Mar-Apr	Suitable habitat is not pres- ent. The species was not found.
<i>Perideridia gairdneri</i> ssp. <i>gairdneri</i> Gairdner's yampah	USFWS: C2 CDFG: - CNPS: IB	Vernal pools and saturated seasonal wetland habitat.	Jun-Jul	Suitable soils are not present and because the soils are not clay soils. The species was not observed.
Pogogyne douglasii ssp. parviflora Small-flowered mesamint	USFWS: C3c CDFG: - CNPS: 1B	Vernal pools and inundated seasonal wetland habitat in- cluding swales.	May-Jul	Marginally suitable habitat is present in the depressions in the swales but the species was not found.

<i>Scientific Name</i> Common Name	Status	Habitat Affinities	Blooming Period	Notes
<i>Ranunculus lobbii</i> Lobb's aquatic buttercup	USFWS: - CDFG: - CNPS: 4	Vernal pools and ponded reaches of swales.	Feb-Apr	Marginally suitable habitat is present in the depressions in the swales but the species was not found.
Trifolium amoenum Showy indian clover	USFWS: C2* CDFG: - CNPS: 1A	Annual grassland.	Apr-Jun	The annual grassland on the site provides marginally suitable habitat but the spe- cies was not observed.

Notes:

Agencies - USFWS = U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, CDFG = California Department of Fish and Game, CNPS = California Native Plant Society. Federal Designations: E = Listed as Endangered by the Federal Government. T = Listed as Threatened by the Federal Government. C1 = Category 1 Candidate. $C1^* = Sufficient data$ are on file to support listing but taxon presumed extinct. C2 = Category 2 Candidate. $C2^* = Sufficient data$ to support federal listing lacking, taxon presumed extinct. State Designations: E = Listed as Endangered. R = Listed as Rare. CNPS Designations: List 1A = Species presumed extinct in California. List 1B = Species rare and endangered in California and elsewhere. List 2 = Species rare and endangered in California but more common elsewhere. List 3 = Species for which additional data are needed. List 4 = Species of limited distribution.

APPENDIX B.

CLASS Family	
Scientific name	Common name
FERNS AND ALLIES	
Isoetaceae – Quillwort Family	
Isoetes howellii	Howell's quillwort
GYMNOSPERMS	
Pinaceae – Pine Family	
Pinus radiata	Monterey pine
Cupressaceae – Cypress Family	
Juniperus sp.	Ornamental juniper (hedge)
Sequoia sempervirens	Coast redwood
ANGIOSPERMS DICOTYLEDONAE	
Apiaceae Carrot Family	
Daucus pusillus	American wild carrot
Scandix pectin-veneris	Shepherd's needles
Apocynaceae – Dogbane Family	
Vinca major	Big-leaved periwinkle
Nerium oleander	Oleander
Asteraceae - Sunflower Family	
Achyrachaena mollis	Blow-wives
Anthemis cotula	Stinking chamomile
Blennosperma bakeri	Sonoma sunshine
Carduus pycnocephalus	Italian thistle
Chamomilla suaveolens	Pineapple weed
Cichorium intybus	Cichory
Dimorphotheca aurantiaca	African daisy
Gnaphalium luteo-album	Cudweed
Hypocheris radicata	Rough cat's ear

APPENDIX B.

CLASS	
Family Scientific name	Common name
Lactuca serriola	Prickly lettuce
Leontodon taraxacoides	Lesser hawkbit
Microseris laciniata	Microseris
Picris echioides	Bristly oxtongue
Taraxacum officinale	Dandelion
Tragopogon porrifolius	Goat's beard
Boraginaceae - Borage Family	
Plagiobothrys stipitatus var. micranthus	Popcorn flower
Brassicaceae - Mustard Family	
Brassica rapa	Field mustard
Cardamine oligosperma	Little western bittercress
Lepidium nitidum nitidum	Peppergrass
Raphanus sativus	Wild radish
Cactaceae – Cactus family	
Opuntia basilaris	Beavertail
Callitricaceae - Water starwort Family	
Callitriche heterophylla	Water starwort
Caryophyllaceae - Pink Family	
Cerastium viscosum	Mouse-ear chickweed
Cerastium glomeratum	Sticky chickweed
Stellaria media	Common chickweed
Convolvulaceae - Morning-glory Family	
Convolvulus arvensis	Field bindweed
Crassulaceae – Stonecrop Family	
Sedum sp.	Stonecrop cultivar
Euphorbiaceae – Spurge Family	
Eremocarpus setigerus	Turkey mullein

APPENDIX B.

CLASS Family		
Scientific name	Common name	
Fabaceae - Pea Family	and a second	
Lotus purshianus	Trefoil	
Lupinus nanus	Miniature lupine	
Medicago polymorpha	Bur-clover	
Trifolium pratense	Red clover	
Trifolium repens	Clover	
Trifolium subterranean	Subterranean clover	
Vicia cracca	Vetch	
Vicia sativa	Vetch	
Fagaceae – Oak Family		
Quercus lobata	Valley oak	
Geraniaceae - Geranium Family		
Erodium botrys	Filaree	
Erodium cicutarium	Red-stemmed Filaree	
Erodium moschatum	Filaree	
Geranium dissectum	Cutleaf geranium	
Hamamelidaceae – Witch Hazel Family		
Liquidambar styraciflua	Sweetgum	
Juncaginaceae - Arrow-grass Family		
Lilaea scilloides	Flowering quillwort	
Labiatae – Mint Family		
Mentha pulegium	Pennyroyal	
Lythraceae - Loosestrife Family		
Lythrum hyssopifolium	Purple loosestrife	
Malvaceae – Mallow Family		
Malva nicaeensis	Bull mallow	
Trichostemma lanceolatum	Vinegar weed	
Myrtaceae – Myrtle Family		
Eucalyptus globulus	Blue gum	

APPENDIX B.

CLASS	
Family Scientific name	Common name
Oleaceae – Olive Family	
Ligustrum japonica	Privet
Onagraceae – Evening Primrose Family	
Camissonia ovata	Evening primrose
Epilobium angustifolium	Fireweed
Épilobium ciliatum spp. ciliatum	Northern willow herb
Épilobium densiflorum	Willow herb
Papaveraceae - Poppy Family	
Eschscholzia californica	California poppy
Plantaginaceae - Plantain Family	
Plantago lanceolatum	English plantain
Polygonaceae - Buckwheat Family	
Polygonum aviculare	Knotweed
Rumex acetosella	Sheep sorrel
Rumex crispus	Curly dock
Rumex pulcher	Dock
Portulaceae - Purslane Family	
Anagallis arvensis	Scarlet pimpernel
Calandrinia ciliata	Red maids
Montia fontana	Water blinks
Montia perfoliata	Miner's lettuce
Ranunculaceae - Buttercup Family	
Ranunculus muricatus	Spiny buttercup
Ranunculus californicus	California buttercup
Rhamnaceae – Buckthorn Family	
Ceanothus sp.	Ceanothus cultivar
Rosaceae – Rose Family	
Fragaria sp.	Strawberry cultivar

APPENDIX B.

CLASS	
Family Scientific name	Common name
Prunus domestica	Plum
Rosa sp.	Rose cultivar
Schrophulariaceae - Figwort Family	
Castilleja exserta	Purple owl's clover
Castilleja attenuata	Valley tassels
Gratiola ebracteata	Bractless hedge-hyssop
Parentucellia viscosa	Parentucellia
Veronica peregrina var. xalapensis	Speedwell
Veronica persica	Speedwell
Theaceae – Camellia Family	
Camellia sp.	Ornamental camellia
Vitaceae – Grape Family	
Vitus californicus var. vinifera	Cultivated (wine) grape
ANGIOSPERMS	
MONOCOTYLEDONAE	
Juncaceae - Rush Family	
Juncus bufonius	Toad rush
Iridaceae - Iris Family	
Sisyrinchium bellum	Blue-eyed grass
Poaceae - Grass Family	
Aira caryophyllea	Silver (annual) hairgrass
Avena barbata	Slender wild oat
Avena fatua	Wild oat
Briza minor	Little rattlesnake grass
Bromus diandrus	Ripgut brome
Bromus hordeaceus	Soft chess
Danthonia californica	California oat grass
Festuca arundinacea	Tall fescue
Hordeum marinum ssp. gussoneanum	Mediterranean barley

Scientific name	Common name
Hordeum murinum ssp. leporinum	Hare barley
Lolium perenne	Perennial ryegrass
Pleuropogon californicus	California semaphore grass
Poa annua	Annual bluegrass
Taeniatherum caput-medusae	Medusahead
Vulpia bromoides	Six-weeks fescue
Vulpia myuros	Rat-tail fescue