EASEMENT MONITORING REPORT

Mohamed Property

Sacramento County, California

June 2012

Prepared by:
Summer Pardo
City of Elk Grove
8401 Laguna Palms
Elk Grove, CA 95758

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide an accurate representation of the present condition of the Mohamed Property (property). The property is named for Joseph Mohamed Sr., trustee of the Joseph Mohamed Sr. and Shirley M. Mohamed Charitable Remainder Unitrust II, who is listed as "grantor" on the conservation easement (CE). The property is currently managed in accordance with the CE language and restrictions as recorded on April 28, 2008 (**Appendix A**). The information and photographs provided herein represent the condition of the property as of May 24, 2012.

1.2. LOCATION

The property is located in south central Sacramento County, to the southeast of the Elk Grove city limit, southeast of the intersection at Grant Line Road and Wilton Road (**Figure 1**). The property is bordered by Deer Creek to the northwest, and the Cosumnes River to the southeast. The area covered under the CE is approximately 80 acres, and is contained within a single legal parcel, assessor parcel number (APN) 126-0510-001-0000.

2. METHODS

A review of the property was conducted on May 24, 2012 by City of Elk Grove biologist Summer Pardo to note features relevant to the CE, and to take reference photographs at pre-designated locations. On the day of the site review, the sky was clear, with a WNW wind averaging 10.4 mph, and ambient temperature of approximately 66.2°F.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) National Agricultural Imagery Program (NAIP) 2010 imagery files and Sacramento County 2012 parcel data were utilized as base layers for field maps and the enclosed figures. Maps were created using ArcView software.

Photographs of the property were taken with a 10 megapixal Nikon Coolpix S550 digital camera, five feet above the ground, at predesignated locations (**Figure 2**). Representative site photos from each photopoint can be found in **Appendix B**. Photos are referenced by photopoint number and directionality. For example, photo 1-N would be taken at photopoint P1 facing north. The latitude and longitude for each photostation and a brief description of their locality can be found in **Appendix C**.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY AND EASEMENT

The property's legal description is contained in Exhibit A of the CE, which is provided in **Appendix A** of this report. The property is approximately 80 acres, situated in a northwest-southeast direction between the Cosumnes River and Deer Creek. Additional details regarding site characteristics can be found in sections 3.6 Infrastructure and Buildings and 3.7 Conservation Features, below.

3.1. PURPOSE OF THE CONSERVATION EASEMENT

The multiple natural resource conservation purposes of the CE are to preserve and protect in perpetuity (a) the availability of the property for agricultural use by protecting the property from development pressure; (b) the conservation and habitat values of the property as foraging and/or nesting habitat for Swainson's hawks (*Buteo swainsoni*) and for other wildlife essential for maintaining Swainson's hawk habitat including the processes which sustain that habitat; and (c) the open space character of the property, which is an important public benefit and is consistent with the availability of the property for wildlife habitat and agricultural uses.

3.2. SURROUNDING PROPERTIES

Vineyards comprise the lands to the northeast of the property. Properties to the south and west consist of undeveloped lands. The remainder of the surrounding land uses comprises agricultural estates, a form of rural residential land use with parcels that are typically five to 20 acres in size.

3.3. HISTORIC AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

According to the 2005 *Easement Documentation Report*, the property was operated as a dairy up until the mid-1980s (Williams Wildland Consulting 2005). Since this time, the lands covered on the current CE were traditionally planted in alfalfa and grain for use as feed for the dairy cows. The dairy barn and main operations buildings were located north of Deer Creek and outside the current property boundary. Additional crops historically grown onsite include tomatoes, sugar, beets, corn, and beans (Williams Wildland Consulting 2005).

3.4. CURRENT AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

At the time of the May 24, 2012, site visit, the entire CE area was planted in hay, and harvesting had been initiated as a portion of the area had recently been mowed; however, bailing activities had not begun. Improvements to the onsite irrigation system were conducted in 2010, and noted in the *Easement Documentation Report* (City of Elk Grove). The improvements included installation of a 40 horsepower (hp) electric well pump, located in the northern portion of the property; underground concrete pipes; and aboveground power lines that connect the electric well pump to two (2) other electric well pumps located on an adjacent parcel under the same ownership, but not covered under the CE.

3.5. CURRENT WATER USES

Irrigation water is pumped from the well located in the northern portion of the property, and delivered to the fields via underground concrete piping. Crops are irrigated aboveground by means of flood, ditch, or sprinkler irrigation. Irrigation water is also occasionally pumped out of the Cosumnes River via a removable tractor power take-off pump. The current water uses are similar to what has been reported previously (Williams Wildland Consulting 2005; City of Elk Grove 2011).

3.6. INFRASTRUCTURE AND BUILDINGS

Residences and Other Buildings

There are no existing buildings within the CE. Since the property is prone to seasonal flooding due to its location within the Deer Creek and Cosumnes River floodplains, the CE does not allow for any residences or human-occupied buildings. The CE does allow for the maintenance, repair, replacement, or rebuilding of existing structures and improvements provided that such replacement structures and improvements shall be of the same square footage as the original, are rebuilt in the same general location, and in a manner consistent with the purposes of the CE. Currently, there are no plans to construct any new buildings on the property; therefore, the property is consistent with the requirements of the CE.

Fences and Roads

As of the May 24, 2012, site visit, there were no fences on the property. There are two (2) dirt roads, hereafter referred to as the "upper" and "lower" access roads, which provide outside vehicle access to the property (**Figure 2**). The lower access road is accessed from 9141 Mooney Road and the upper access road is accessed from 8705 Grant Line Road; both roads provide access to the northwestern end of the property, and have low-water crossings at Deer Creek. The low-water creek crossings consist of concrete slabs overlying steel pipes. Several other agricultural roads are located on and adjacent to the property. The sole purpose of these roads is to facilitate agricultural practices onsite. The type, location, and size of the roads observed onsite are similar to what has previously been reported (City of Elk Grove 2011; Williams Wildland Consulting 2005). The property is consistent with the requirements of the CE for fences and roads.

Ditches and Canals

The southeastern portion of the property is the highest topographically and, therefore, surface water generally flows to the north and west. Irrigation return water flows into Deer Creek via small irrigation swales located in the northwestern portion of the property. In 2011, the property owner stated that a small detention pond, with an electric pump, would be constructed in the northwestern portion of the parcel (outside of the CE) to recapture and reuse the irrigation water that is currently discharged into Deer Creek (Mohamed pers. comm). No pond was observed during the current monitoring period.

The location and size of the onsite drainage ditches are similar to what has previously been reported (City of Elk Grove 2011; Williams Wildland Consulting 2005). The property usage is consistent with the requirements of the CE for ditches and canals.

3.7. CONSERVATION FEATURES

Riparian Habitats

The northwestern and southeastern ends of the property are bordered by riparian corridors that are adjacent to Deer Creek and the Cosumnes River, respectively (**Figure 2**). The overstory of the Cosumnes River riparian corridor consists of valley oaks and several species of willow (*Salix* spp.), which are broadly spaced, giving the riparian area a more scrub-like appearance. The overstory of the Deer Creek riparian corridor is dominated by mature valley oak (*Quercus lobata*), Oregon ash (*Fraxinus latifolia*), Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), boxelder (*Acer negundo*), and California black walnut (*Juglans californica* var. *hindsii*). The dominant understory species consist of poison-oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*), wild grape (*Vitis californica*), Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus discolor*), California rose (*Rosa californica*) and poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*).

Both riparian corridors provide suitable nesting habitat for Swainson's hawks due to the size and proximity of the large trees to the onsite agricultural fields. Swainson's hawks typically utilize nesting sites in large trees bordering open fields due to the availability of foraging opportunities and prey items in proximity to their nest site. These riparian habitats also provide suitable foraging and cover habitat for a variety of wildlife species including prey items for Swainson's hawks. According to the 2005 *Easement Documentation Report*, Swainson's hawks were suspected of nesting in the large valley oaks along Deer Creek near the northwestern end of the property (Williams Wildland Consulting 2005). No potential nest sites were observed adjacent to Deer Creek during the recent monitoring period; however, two (2) potential nest sites were documented along the Cosumnes River (**Figure 2, Appendix B**). No activity was observed at either nest site during the May 24, 2012, site review. In addition, one (1) adult and one (1) subadult Swainson's hawks were observed perched in a snag northwest of photopoint P3 (**Figure 2, Appendix B**).

Uplands

Nearly all of the farmed land on the property has been converted to agricultural uses. As of the May 24, 2012, site visit, the fields were planted in hay and in the process of being harvested. These farm practices provide suitable foraging habitat for Swainson's hawks due to the high visibility and accessibility of prey items.

The 2010 *Easement Documentation Report* noted the presence of regularly topped trees adjacent to the central interior dirt road (City of Elk Grove 2010). In 2011, these trees had been completely removed. The property owner had stated that replacement seedlings were purchased, and would be replanted after the road was realigned and regraded in the summer of 2011 (City of Elk Grove 2011). Unlike the trees that were removed, these replacement trees will not require frequent topping and will be allowed to fully mature. The replacement trees had been installed by the time of the May 24, 2012, site visit. It is reasonably presumed that these trees will eventually provide suitable nesting habitat for raptors, including Swainson's hawks.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1. ADHERENCE TO EASEMENT REQUIREMENTS

Review of the CE for the property revealed that the activities and practices observed during the site visit were permitted uses. The requirements set forth in the CE state that no residences or human-occupied buildings are permitted within the property because the property is prone to seasonal flooding due to its location within the floodplains of Deer Creek and the Cosumnes River. Currently, there are no plans to construct any buildings on the property, and the current farming practices are allowed under the requirements of the CE; therefore, the property is in compliance with the requirements of the CE.

4.2. QUALITY OF SWAINSON'S HAWK FORAGING HABITAT WITHIN THE EASEMENT PROPERTY

The farming practices observed provide excellent foraging habitat for Swainson's hawks, because it allows for clear visibility and accessibility of prey items within the fields. In addition, according to the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) CNDDB records, there are 55 previously recorded occurrences of Swainson's hawks within a 10-mile radius of the property (DFG 2012). Since numerous Swainson's hawk nests have been recorded in the surrounding area, it is reasonable to presume that Swainson's hawks nest in the vicinity of the property and could use the property as foraging habitat. In addition, the large trees around the perimeter of the property represent suitable nesting habitat for Swainson's hawk.

REFERENCES

CDFG (California Department of Fish and Game). 2012. RareFind 4. Sacramento, California: California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB). Accessed June 2012. http://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/cnddb/mapsanddata.asp

City of Elk Grove. 2010. *Easement Documentation Report for the Mohamed Property, Sacramento County, California.* Elk Grove, CA: City of Elk Grove.

City of Elk Grove. 2011. *Easement Documentation Report for the Mohamed Property, Sacramento County, California.* City of Elk Grove, Elk Grove, CA.

Williams, Brian, and A. Chatfield. 2005. *Easement Documentation Report: Alhambra Farms, Sacramento County, California*. Williams Wildland Consulting, Inc., Marysville, CA.

FIGURES

Page left blank intentionally

FIGURE 1 – LOCATION MAP

Page left blank intentionally

FIGURE 2 – PHOTOPOINT LOCATIONS

Page left blank intentionally

APPENDICES

Page left blank intentionally

APPENDIX A – CONSERVATION EASEMENT

This page left blank intentionally

APPENDIX B – PHOTO DOCUMENTATION

This page left blank intentionally

Appendix B – Photo Documentation

1-NE

1-E

1-SE

1-S

1-SW

1-SW

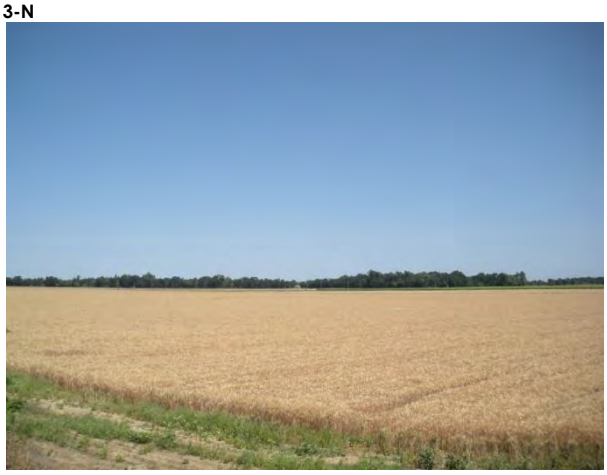
2-NW

2-W

2-SW

3-NE

3-N



3-NW

4-W

4-SW

5-NE

5-E

Potential Nest Site

Swainson's Hawk

APPENDIX C – PHOTOPOINT COORDINATES AND LOCALITY NOTES

This page left blank intentionally

Appendix C - Photopoint Coordinates and Locality Notes

Photopoint	Longitude	Latitude	Description
P1	121° 16' 33.597" W	38° 25' 37.233" N	At the upper access road to the property that crosses Deer Creek.
P2	121° 15' 55.048" W	38° 25' 11.857" N	At the northwestern end of the property, near the start of the interior dirt road (with the adjacent power line) that runs the length of the edge between the 30-acre and 50-acre portions of the property.
P3	121° 16' 15.632" W	38° 25' 4.708" N	At the northwestern corner of the property, taken from the dirt road adjacent to Deer Creek.
P4	121° 16' 12.907" W	38° 25' 34.623" N	At the northwestern end of the property, taken from the dirt road adjacent to Deer Creek.
P5	121° 16' 43.939" W	38° 25' 34.087" N	At the northwestern end of the property, taken at the terminus of the dirt road that runs along the majority of the property's northwestern end.