

Appendix E

- **California Red-legged Frog Habitat Assessment**

**Nipomo Regional Park
Nipomo, California**

**CALIFORNIA RED-LEGGED
FROG HABITAT ASSESSMENT**

Prepared for:

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June 4, 2004

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: California Red-legged Frog Survey Data Sheet

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I. INTRODUCTION

This California Red-Legged Frog Habitat Assessment has been prepared by Morro Group, Inc. at the request of the County of San Luis Obispo, General Services Department (County) and is intended for use by the County and regulatory agencies for permitting and planning purposes. The purpose of this survey was to investigate the potential for the presence of aquatic special-status species within the project site, specifically the California red-legged frog.

A. PROJECT LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

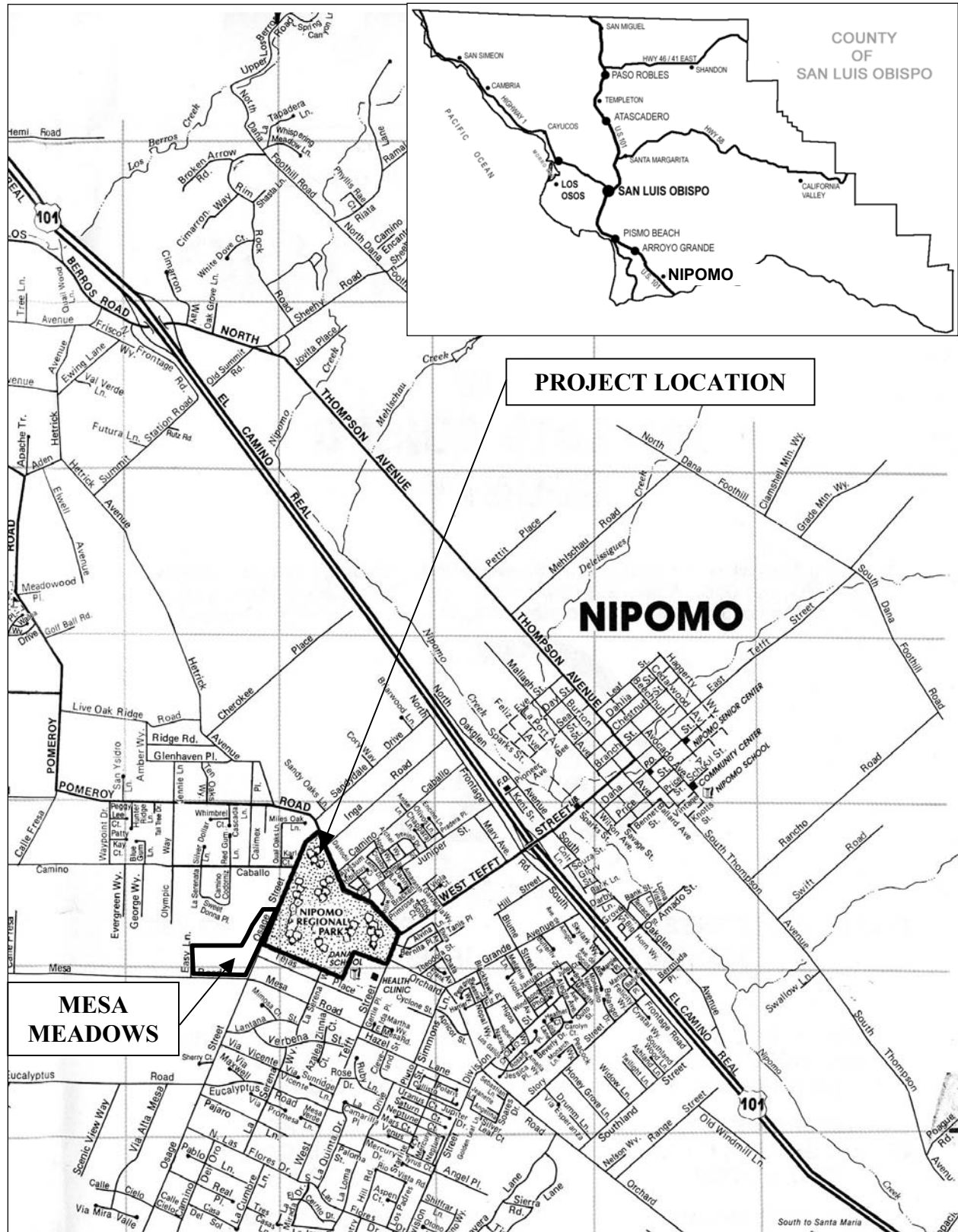
The approximately 140-acre Nipomo Regional Park (the Park) recreation area and Mesa Meadows are located roughly one mile west of the 101/Tefft Street intersection in the community of Nipomo, California (refer to Figures 1 and 2). The Park currently provides park services to the unincorporated communities Nipomo and Oceano as well as nearby cities (i.e., Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach, etc.). The Park is bounded by Pomeroy Road and the Nipomo Native Botanical Garden to the north, Tefft Street to the east, Osage Street and Mesa Meadows to the southwest, a residential development to the south, Dana Elementary School and the Nipomo Community Library to the southeast.

B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The County of San Luis Obispo is proposing to improve the existing facilities at the Park. The incorporation of lighting around proposed soccer/play fields will allow extended playing hours and greater use of the facilities. Various additional improvements are also proposed to provide safe, attractive and functional recreational facilities to park visitors. Work will mainly occur in the undeveloped area south and west of the existing softball fields and nearby parking and picnic area. All improvements are anticipated to occur within previously un-developed areas.

Proposed improvements include but are not limited to the following:

- New ball fields;
- Irrigation system improvements;
- New parking facilities
- Skate Park
- Community Center
- Basketball/Tennis Courts
- Various Components (e.g. swimming pool, horse shoe pits, equestrian area, bmx trails, etc.).

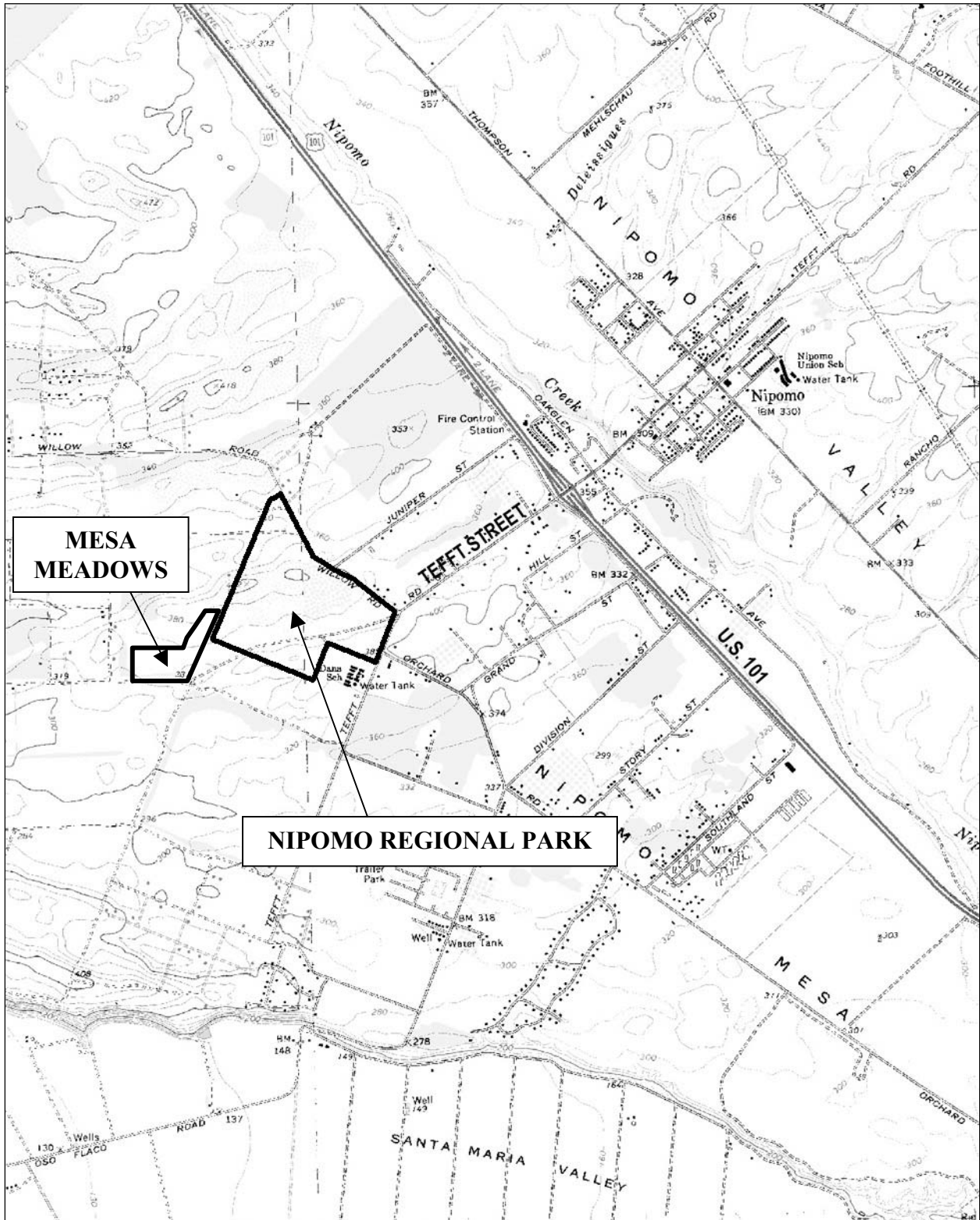


Source: Compass Maps



NORTH
Not to Scale

VICINITY MAP
FIGURE 1



Source: USGS quadrangle – Nipomo, Oceano



NORTH
Not to Scale

PROJECT LOCATION MAP
FIGURE 2

C. CALIFORNIA RED-LEGGED FROG

California red-legged frogs historically ranged from Marin County southward to northern Baja California. Presently, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara counties support the largest remaining California red-legged frog populations within the state. The California red-legged frog is a large (85-138 millimeters) reddish-brown frog with variable red pigment on the ventral surfaces. California red-legged frogs were listed as federally threatened by the USFWS in 1996 (USFWS, 1996), and are considered a California Special Concern species by the CDFG (CDFG, 2002). Riparian habitat degradation, urbanization, predation by bullfrogs, and historic market harvesting have all reportedly contributed to population declines in this species.

The species occurs in varied habitats during its life cycle. Breeding areas include lagoons, streams and ponds, including siltation and irrigation ponds. California red-legged frogs typically breed from January to July, with peak breeding occurring in February. California red-legged frog eggs are usually laid on emergent vegetation, and hatched tadpoles require 11 to 20 weeks to metamorphose. It is estimated that only 1% of eggs actually reach adulthood. Tadpoles usually stay in these breeding areas until metamorphosis. Juvenile frogs are found in open, shallow aquatic habitats containing dense emergent vegetation.

Adult California red-legged frogs prefer aquatic habitats with little or no flow, the presence of surface water to at least early June, surface water depths to at least 0.7 meter (2.3 feet), and the presence of fairly sturdy underwater supports such as cattails. The largest densities of California red-legged frogs are typically associated with dense stands of overhanging willows and an intermixed fringe of sturdy emergent vegetation. Although the species can inhabit ephemeral streams or ponds, populations probably cannot be maintained in ephemeral streams in which all surface water disappears. Adult California red-legged frogs are primarily nocturnal, although metamorphs and juveniles are known to be active during the day and night. Suitable habitat for the species was not identified within the project site during the October 14, 2003 survey. California red-legged frogs were not observed during surveys of the project site.

II. STUDY METHODOLOGY

The CNDDDB (2003) was reviewed for the occurrences of California red-legged frogs near the project site prior to conducting the surveys. To determine the potential for occurrence of the California red-legged frog within the project site, an assessment of the habitat was conducted in conjunction with the first daytime survey for the species. This survey followed the USFWS protocol, as contained in the Guidance on Site Assessment and Field Surveys for California Red-legged Frogs, February 18, 1997.

Morro Group Biologists, Jeremy Wiggins and Crystahl Handel, conducted the habitat assessment for the California red-legged frog. A habitat assessment of the entire project site and the first daytime survey was conducted on October 14, 2003. Surveys were focused within the stormwater detention basin within Nipomo Regional Park and Mesa Meadows, as this was the only location in the vicinity of the project site containing reasonably suitable California red-legged frog habitat.

III. SURVEY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

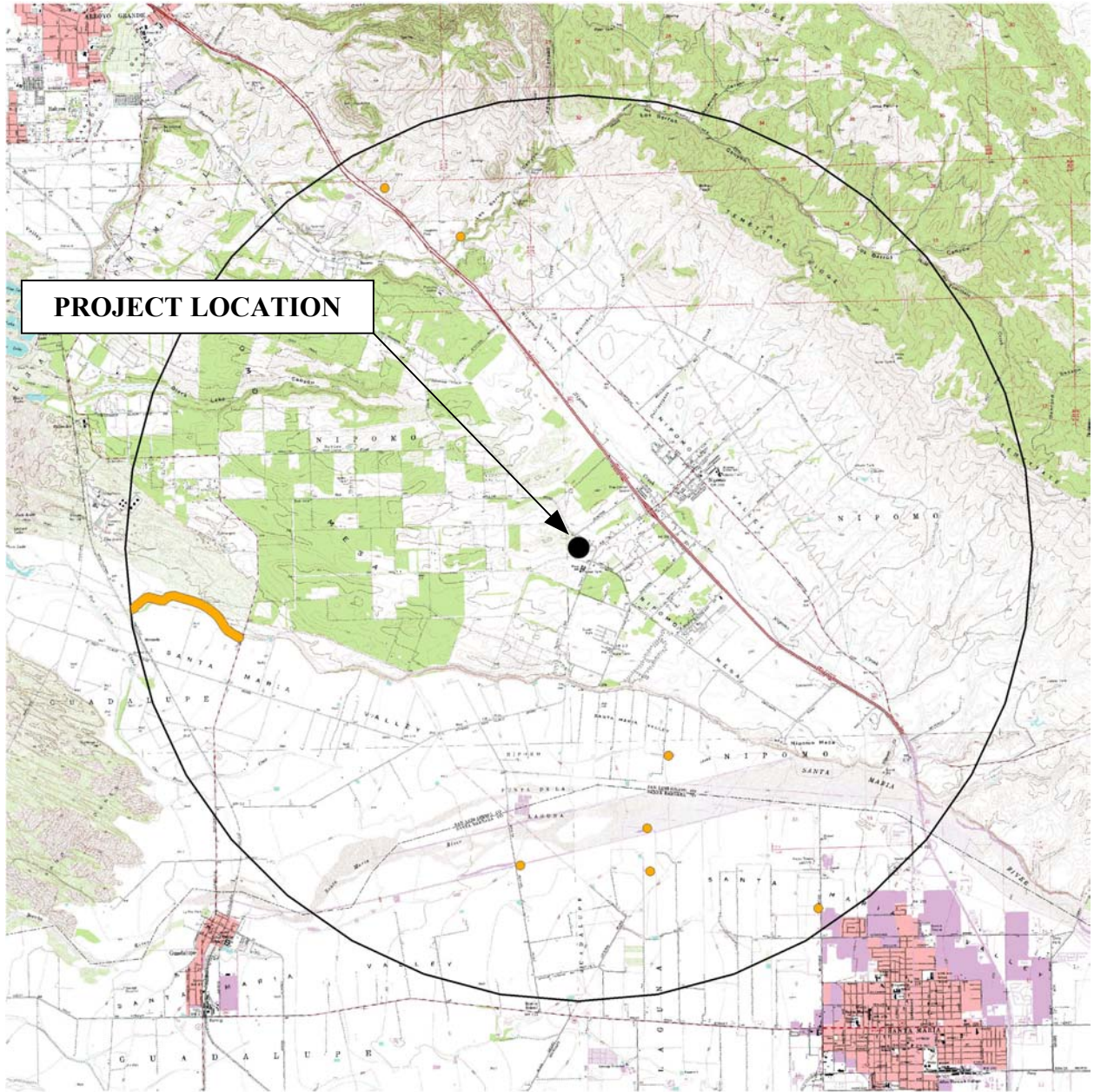
Search of the CNDDDB (2003) yielded eight known occurrences of California red-legged frogs within a five-mile radius of the project site. The closest documented California red-legged frog occurrence is adjacent to the Santa Maria River south of the project site. There is no direct connection between any of the known occurrences with the Nipomo Regional Park and Mesa Meadows.

California red-legged frogs were not observed during any of the surveys of the project site (refer to Attachment 1 for the California Red-legged Frog Survey Data Sheet). The stormwater detention basins within Nipomo Regional Park and Mesa Meadows do not contain breeding or foraging habitat for the species. In addition, the detention basins did not contain water or vegetative cover during the habitat assessment.

Surrounding vegetation consists of wild oats (*Avena fatua*), yellow star thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*), horseweed (*Conyza canadensis*), California croton (*Croton californicus*), Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*), doveweed (*Eremocarpus setigerus*), California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), *Eucalyptus* sp, telegraph weed (*Heterotheca grandiflora*), perennial mustard (*Hirshfeldia incana*), Monterey pine (*Pinus radiata*), and Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus*).

IV. CONCLUSION

Upon completion of the initial habitat assessment, it was determined that the Nipomo Regional Park and Mesa Meadows do not contain California red-legged frog habitat. No impacts to the California red-legged frog or its habitat are expected to occur throughout implementation of the project.



Source: CNDDDB, Commercial Version: FEB-03-2004

- California Red-legged Frog
- Five Mile Radius
- Project location



NORTH
Not to Scale

KNOWN OCCURRENCES OF CALIFORNIA RED-LEGGED FROG
FIGURE 3

V. REFERENCES

- California Department of Fish and Game. 1997. State and Federal Endangered and Threatened Animals of California and listing dates. Sacramento, California.
- California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDDB). 2004. Rarefind data output for the Cambria USGS 7.5-minute quadrangle, February 3, 2004. California Department of Fish and Game. Sacramento, California.
- Jennings, M. R. & M. P. Hayes. 1994. Amphibian and Reptile Species of Special Concern in California. California Department of Fish and Game Inland Fisheries Division, Rancho Cordova, California.
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- Stebbins, Robert C. 1972. California Amphibians and Reptiles. University of California Press, Berkeley, California.
- Stebbins, R.C. 1985. A field guide to western reptiles and amphibians. 2nd ed., revised. Houghton Mifflin, Boston. 336 pp.
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service. 1997. Guidance on Site Assessment and Field Surveys for California Red-legged Frogs (*Rana aurora draytonii*).
- Zweifel, R.G. 1955. Ecology, distribution, and systematics of frogs of the *Rana boylei* group. Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool. 54:207-292.

ATTACHMENT A

- **California Red-legged Frog Survey Data Sheet**

**CALIFORNIA RED-LEGGED FROG
SURVEY DATA SHEET**

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project: Nipomo Park Constraints Analysis **Date:** October 14, 2003
Surveyor(s): Crystahl Handel and Jeremy Wiggins
Begin time: 10:00 a.m. **End time:** 11:30 a.m.

WEATHER CONDITIONS

% Moon: n/a **% Cloud Cover:** clear **Wind Speed:** <5mph
Air Temperature: 72° **Water Temperature:** n/a

VEGETATION

Emergent: no emergent vegetation present
Overhanging: no overhanging vegetation present
Bank-side:

HABITAT

Breeding Habitat? Yes No **Foraging Habitat?** Yes No
Pool Information: < 1 foot deep 1-2 feet deep 2-3 feet deep > 3 feet deep none
Substrate: sand/gravel silt/mud bedrock

SENSITIVE SPECIES OBSERVED

<i>Species Observed</i>	<i>Number Observed</i>	<i>Age Class</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> California Red-legged Frog		
<input type="checkbox"/> Southwestern Pond Turtle		
<input type="checkbox"/> Two-Striped Garter Snake		
<input type="checkbox"/> Western Spadefoot Toad		
<input type="checkbox"/> Arroyo Toad		
<input type="checkbox"/> Steelhead Trout		
<input type="checkbox"/> Tidewater Goby		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None		

PREDATORY SPECIES OBSERVED

Bullfrog Sunfish Raccoon Feral/Domestic Cat
 Human Disturbance Other:

Notes: There was no water and no emergent or overhanging vegetation present within the project site; therefore, it was determined that the project site is not suitable California red-legged frog habitat.