
Rice

The Rice study area is located within Riverside County in the northern portion of Rice Valley, approximately 28 miles north of the City of Blythe.

Existing Conditions

General Site Conditions

The study area is located on a flat, undeveloped area south of State Route 62. The elevation of the study area is approximately 916 feet above sea level. Soils observed on the study area during the survey consist of pebbly, compressed sand; no USDA soil surveys have been completed for this area. Land use in the vicinity consists of an existing communications facility and associated aboveground utility lines to the west, State Route 62 to the north, and open space to the south and east. The study area is subject to disturbance associated with a dirt access road that runs along the northern boundary of the study area.

Vegetation

The vegetation in the study area consists of a creosote bush scrub plant community. The plant species observed include creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*), burro-weed (*Ambrosia dumosa*), and beavertail cactus (*Opuntia basilaris*).

Wildlife

Wildlife activity was low during the survey. Wildlife species observed include zebra-tailed lizard (*Callisaurus draconoides*). Species expected to occur are those common in desert scrub habitat, such as deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*) and greater roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*).

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive Species

Federally and State Listed Species

The study area has suitable habitat for desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) a State- and federally-listed threatened species focused surveys are recommended. The species was not observed within the study area. Focused surveys are necessary to determine the occupancy status of the species onsite.

CSC

The study area contains suitable habitat for burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) and Le Conte's thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*), both CSC species. Neither species were observed within the study area. Even though CSC are not protected by any State or federal laws or policies, both species are still protected under the MBTA and CDFG Code.

Other Sensitive Species

No suitable habitat for sensitive species not specifically protected under any other policy occurs on the study area.

Critical Habitat

The study area is not located within any USFWS-designated Critical Habitat.

Nesting Birds

No nests or nesting activities were observed during the survey; however, the vegetation in the study area contains suitable nesting habitat for shrub nesting avian species, such as greater roadrunner.

California Desert Native Plant Act

Beavertail cactus was observed in the study area and this species is protected under Section 80073 of the CDNPA. According to Section 80073 of the CDNPA, no desert ironwood (including both dead and live) may be harvested except under a permit issued by the County Agricultural Commissioner or the sheriff. The commissioner may establish limits on the quantity of beavertail cactus which may be taken under any permit and on the number of permits for the taking of beavertail cactus which may be issued.

Jurisdictional Waters

No drainage features, wetlands, vernal pools, or suitable habitat for sensitive fairy shrimp species occur on or in the vicinity of the study area. No waters or wetlands potentially under the jurisdiction of the State or the United States will be impacted by the development of the study area.

Wildlife Corridors and Movement

Given the limited size and minimal disturbance associated with the development of the study area, no impacts to any wildlife corridors or wildlife movement patterns are anticipated.

Applicable HCP or Land Use Management Plan

The study area is located on federal land managed by the BLM and is subject to the North and East Colorado Desert Amendment of the California Desert Conservation Area Plan. Approval by the BLM must be obtained prior to construction.



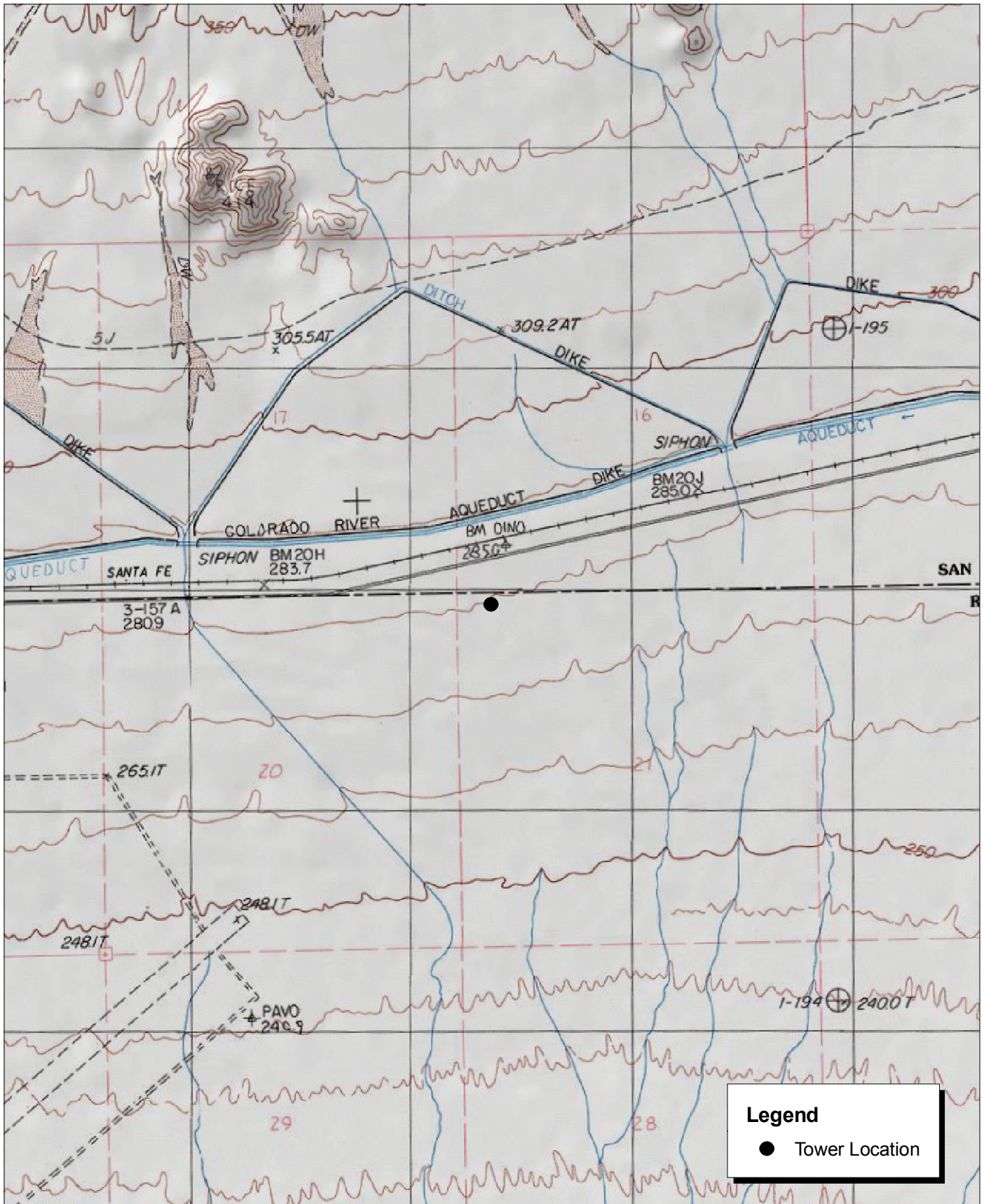
Legend

- Tower Locations
- ⊠ 50' Study Area



Source: Riverside County NAIP, 2005.



Rice Communication Site Local Vicinity Aerial Map



Source: USGS Rice 7.5' Topographic Map.



 2,000 1,000 0 2,000 Feet

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Rice Communication Site Local Vicinity Topographic Map



Legend

- Tower Location
- 50' Study Area
- NOTCOM - USDA Soils Not Complete

Source: USDA Soils Data (NRCS).



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Rice Communication Site
 USDA Soils Map



Photograph 1: View toward Rice candidate location, facing northwest.



Photograph 2: View toward Rice candidate location, facing north.



Photograph 3: View toward Rice candidate location, facing east.



Photograph 4: View toward Rice candidate location, facing south.

Source: Michael Brandman Associates, 2008.



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Rice Candidate Photographs 1 to 4
PSEC Project



Photograph 5: View from Rice candidate location, facing north.



Photograph 6: View from Rice candidate location, facing east.



Photograph 7: View from Rice candidate location, facing south.



Photograph 8: View from Rice candidate location, facing west.

Source: Michael Brandman Associates, 2008.



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Rice Candidate Photographs 5 to 8
PSEC Project