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

SITE NAME: **GAVILAN2**
EDA NAME: North Peak #2

I. SITE PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

1.A. Site Physical Location & Access:

The GAVILAN2 site is located immediately northwest of State Highway 74, about six kilometers north of Interstate 15. It comprises a portion of the southeastern edges of the Gavilan Plateau. Access can be gained from the old El Toro Cutoff road, which has fallen into disuse except for local traffic. Access can also be gained from El Toro Road to the northwest, and from several small dirt residential streets to the northeast. The general location of the site is:

State Plane Coordinates: 6236682E, 2206066N (NAD-83, feet)

UTM: 470584E, 3730592N (NAD-27, meters)

Township / Range / Section: S1/2, Section 20
Portions of the N1/2, NE1/4, Section 29
T5S, R4W (SBBM)

1.B. APNs & Acreage:

The site is composed of nine parcels:

APN	ACRES
347-020-008	140.00
347-020-004	138.63
347-020-010	20.00
347-020-011	20.60
347-110-003	8.08
347-110-004	3.00
347-110-066	2.48
347-110-067	2.14
347-110-068	2.83
TOTAL:	337.76

1.C. Topography:

The topography of the site consists of steep-walled canyons and ridges, with a few flatter upland valleys. Three significant drainages are found on the site. The first parallels the western boundary, along the El Toro Cut-Off. The second, which connects to this first drainage, cross the site from northeast to southwest. The final drainage proceeds northeast from the southern boundary.

1.D. Surrounding Land Use:

To the north of the site lies disturbed natural open space which is continuous with the areas around Steele Peak and the eastern edges of the Gavilan Plateau. South and east of the site are low density residences which are adjacent to Highway 74. Usually these areas have a buffer of disturbed open spaces parcel between them and the site proper. To the west lies El Toro Canyon, with scattered residences within it.

2. BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

2.A. Plant Communities:

Overall the site supports Riversidian sage scrub, but a significant portion in the northwest was subject to wildfire approximately 5 years ago. This has resulted in the establishment of non-native annual grasses (e.g., *Bromus madritensis rubens*, *B. diandrus*, *Avena sp.*), mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*), and dove weed (*Eremocarpus setigerus*). Remaining sage scrub areas are dominated by California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*) and California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) which occasional individuals of black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), white sage (*S. apiana*) and brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*).

The canyons support riparian vegetation composed primarily of willows (*Salix sp.*), California sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), and introduced peppers (*Schinus molle*) and eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus sp.*).

The extremely invasive giant reed (*Arundo donax*) has become established in the northern drainage, most like as a result of the illegal dumping there.

2.B. Likely Animal Species:

Animals found on the site would include a subset of native sage scrub animals. This subset is likely to be dominated by species with high adaptability in terms of human presence. Such species include the California ground squirrel (*Spermophilus beecheyi*), valley pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*), deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*), western harvest mouse (*Reithrodontomys megalotis*), the San Diego pocket mouse (*Chaetodipus fallax*), desert cottontail (*Sylvilagus auduboni*), spotted skunk (*Spilogale putorius*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), California towhee (*Pipilo fuscus*), black phoebe (*Sayornis*

nigricans), red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps*), southern Pacific rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis*), red diamond rattlesnake (*C. rubens*), California kingsnake (*Lampropeltis getulus*), California whipsnake (*Masticophis lateralis*), and possibly the western toad (*Bufo boreas*).

2.C. Other Habitat or Wildlife Features:

The larger trees found in the riparian areas may be important roosting places for both local and migrating birds, or possibly for a number of bat species.

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 commonly used for paintball games, target shooting, OHV recreation, trash dumping, and to a small degree by homeless individuals. The site apparently once supported a residence; several foundations and an old swimming pool can be found near the entrance to the northern drainage.

3.B. Fencing & Access Controls:

Except for the area adjacent to Highway 74 where residences screen access, the site is open on all sides. Access appears to be primarily from the west (El Toro Cut-off) and to a lesser degree from parts unknown to the north and northeast. Old fences can be found here and there, but most are dilapidated, and serve no useful purpose. A myriad of dirt roads and trails are found on the site, most running along ridgelines or canyon bottoms.

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

Although apparently staying mostly on existing roads and trails (which are extensive), OHV use is common on the site. Neighbors routinely ride their motorcycles, ATVs and 4x4s on this site. Because of the steepness of the terrain, much of this activity appears to be motorcycle and ATV, although the more defined roads receive a lot of 4x4 use.

3.D. Illegal Dumping:

Trash dumping is a major problem at this site, especially along the western boundary at El Toro Cut-off. Here, mounds of household garbage have been dumped for years. New trash appears weekly, including in one case, a travel

trailer which was dumped in the middle of the road. A major clean-up was completed by parties unknown in September of this year, but there still remains a great deal of material to be removed, including old car bodies.

3.E. Target Shooting & Hunting

Target shooting, and to a lesser degree, hunting, are common practices on the site. The hillsides and narrow canyons are littered with old targets, mounds of broken glass, and other materials used for targets. Thousands of spent shells can be found scattered across the site, but are most commonly observed along the dirt roads.

Paintball games appear to be a common activity, particularly in the northern drainage in the vicinity of the old residence. The vegetation of this area provides cover for their games. In fact, someone spray painted "PAINTBALL VALLEY" on the old foundation there. Our "No Paintballs" signs are usually destroyed within a week of placement.

3.F. Weed Abatement::

Weed abatement may be necessary along the southern boundary where the site lies adjacent to residences. Here the habitat is primarily non-native grassland, and mowing could be used to protect the site [and the homes] from the spread of wildfire. The remainder of the site is adjacent to disturbed open space.

3.G. Other Recreational Opportunities and Constraints:

A few old mine tunnels are located on the property which could be the source of potential liability actions should anyone become injured or killed when entering them.

3.H. Special Conditions of Purchase:

None reported by EDA.

4. RESTORATION OPPORTUNITIES

4.A. Target Species:

Much of the burned area currently supports habitat that could be utilized by the SKR. However, these areas historically support sage scrub. In the long run, a decision will need to be made as to the eventual fate of these areas, which in turn would dictate the mode of management actions.

4.B. Multi-Species Aspects:

The *Arundo donax* found in the northern drainage should be removed as soon as possible. This invasive exotic spreads rapidly by underground stems, and can quickly choke a water way, usurping valuable wildlife habitat, and wasting significant amount of ground water.

5. RERSERVE DESIGN AND CONNECTIVITY

5.A. Boundary, Edge and Community Location:

With the exception of the small southern extension which is adjacent to Highway 74, the site is rectangular in shape. Overall this shape has a tendency to minimize edges (as opposed to irregularly shaped parcels). The site represents the edge of a relatively unbroken area of open space stretching from the Steele Peak area, south along the southern boundary of the Gavilan Plateau, eventually connecting with the existing Lake Mathews-Estelle Mtn. Reserve.

5.B. Connectivity:

The site forms the southern edge of the eastern extension of MSHCP Proposed Core Area No. 1.

5.C. Nearby Existing Reserves:

The MSHCP Gavilan4 site is adjacent to this site to the northeast. Additional lands are currently under negotiation with will eventually connect these areas with Gavilan3, located in Steele Valley about 2.5 kilometers to the north. The site is approximately 5.1 kilometers north-northwest of the CNLM Granite Homes Mitigation Site and about 5.3 kilometers west-southwest of the CNLM Four Seasons preserve. The Park District's Kabian Park open space area is located about 3.5 kilometers east of this site.

5.D. Priority for Future Purchases:

In the immediate area, priority should be given to acquiring the parcels to the west and northwest to allow the connection of the Steele Peak area with the existing Lake Mathews-Estelle Mtn. Reserve.