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

SITE NAME: **SKINNER1**

EDA NAME: **LAKE SKINNER INVESTORS**

I. SITE PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

1.A. Site Physical Location & Access:

The SKINNER1 site is located on the western and northern slopes of Bachelor Mountain, immediately north of Lake Skinner. Access is from the west, via dirt roads off of Washington Street over private agricultural land, and from the northeast via Judith Street which itself is accessed from Fields Road.

1.B. APNs & Acreage:

APN	ACREAGE
467-270-005	160.00
467-270-004	27.84
467-280-004	27.72
467-280-005	80.00
TOTAL	295.56

1.C. Topography:

Most of the site is composed of the steep slopes of Bachelor Mountain. It also includes some portions of the alluvial apron to the west, toward Washington Street. This latter area is rolling terrain, with a small retention basin constructed roughly in the center of the area, and large areas of old cement foundations used for a former chicken ranch. Both the western and northern slopes of Bachelor Mountain support several well-formed drainages which form small canyons.

1.D. Surrounding Land Use:

Much of the area to the west continues to be used for agriculture, although this pattern is changing rapidly. Residential development is quickly making inroads into this area, with tracts currently under construction about 4 kilometers to the west-southwest. Adjacent to the southwestern boundary of the site is the MWD Inland Feeder aqueduct, along with its access road and fencing. The site is bordered on the south and southeast by the Lake Skinner Park and the Southwestern Riverside County Multi-Species Reserve (SRCMSR). To the north lie scattered ranchettes of about 5 acres (+) in size.

2. BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

2.A. Plant Communities:

Vegetation on the site is varied. The slopes of Bachelor Mountain support dense growths of chaparral and sage scrub in a complex mixture. Dominant species include California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), scattered chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*) and yerba santa (*Eriodictyon californicum*). The lower western portions of the site support non-native annual grasslands and ruderal communities. These areas are dominated by red brome (*Bromus madritensis rubens*) and mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*). Near an old residential foundation on the western side, a linear arrangement of eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus sp.*) has been planted along with several other ornamental species.

2.B. Likely Animal Species:

The expected animals of the site include those accustomed to human disturbance (in the western portions) and those associated with undisturbed chaparral (on Bachelor Mountain). In the west, typically encountered species could include the California ground squirrel (*Spermophilus beecheyi*), valley pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*), grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*), western meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*), horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris*), gopher snake (*Pituophus melanoleucus*), western fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*), and the side-blotched lizard (*Uta stansburiana*). It is highly likely the Stephens' kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys stephensi*) can be found in the western, flatter portions of the site.

2.C. Other Habitat or Wildlife Features:

The steep slopes, occasional rocky outcrops and canyons of Bachelor Mountain could provide important roosting habitat for raptors and various 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 has historically been used as a chicken ranch. As a result, many old foundations, and ornamental plants, are found within the western portion of the site. Currently, the site is used sporadically for OHV activity, shooting and hunting, and to a lesser degree, trash dumping.

3.B. Fencing & Access Controls:

The adjacent private property on Washington Street is not fenced, but supports a "natural fence" of shrubs. This "fence" has been breached in several places and vehicles are gaining access through these breaks. The northern boundary is fenced, and mostly abuts existing residences. The southern boundary is also fenced, as is the western boundary along the aqueduct. Fences are mostly older barbed wire, and present little if any barriers to wildlife movement.

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

OHV used on the site is currently sporadic, but based on our Ranger's reports, appears to be increasing in frequency. Virtually all this activity is centered in the western portions of the site, since topography limits the use of the rest of it. It is likely that much of this activity is associated with young "partiers" or shooters/hunters. As such, the OHV damage to the site is located in areas of previous disturbance and generally is of low current biological concern.

3.D. Illegal Dumping:

It was reported that trash dumping was very common on this site, and a major clean-up had been performed prior to this survey. Currently only minor trash dumping has returned, although this is expected to increase. There is a considerable amount of residual debris associated with the chicken ranch; primarily old wooden foundation boards, rusty nails, galvanized water and gas lines, etc., which should eventually be removed.

3.E. Target Shooting & Hunting:

These activities appear to be fairly common on this site. Numerous spent rounds are observed throughout the site. Although it is expected that dove and rabbit hunting is common, most activity seems to be target shooting.

3.F. Weed Abatement:

Because of the need to protect the sensitive sage scrub and chaparral communities from wildfire, weed abatement activities should be performed along the western and northwestern boundaries. Additionally, should liability issues be important, it may be advisable to create a firebreak along the entire northern boundary to prevent spread to or from the adjacent residences. No such firebreaks are necessary on the eastern or southern boundaries.

3.G. Other Recreational Opportunities and Constraints:

None.

3.H. Special Conditions of Purchase:

None.

4. RESTORATION OPPORTUNITIES

4.A. Target Species:

The western portions of the site can lend themselves to restoration of native grasslands/forblands important for grassland species such as the SKR and grasshopper sparrow. This is best accomplished by first eradicating or controlling the non-native grasses by prescribed fire or possibly the use of fusillade. Likewise the lower portions of the slopes, especially around the former chicken ranch, could be enhanced to re-establish sage scrub/chaparral there. The presence of a retention basin could be important for existing populations, or future introductions of, the western spadefoot toad (*Scaphiopus hammondi*). As such, this catchment basin should be maintained and potentially periodically cleaned out.

4.B. Multi-Species Aspects:

By maintaining the two general biotic types on the site (i.e., scrublands and grasslands), species diversity should be maximized. Further expansion to the west could enhance the stability of the existing biotic edge of these two communities by lessening human edge effects.

5. RERSERVE DESIGN AND CONNECTIVITY

5.A. Boundary, Edge and Community Location:

The site basically represents an extension of the existing SRCMSR. By extending the western edge of this reserve, the SRCMSR not only becomes more robust, but is further protected by human activities occurring to the west.

5.B. Connectivity:

This site is currently adjacent to the SRCMSR to the south and east. Based on a quick review of the MSHCP, it appears to not be considered as part of a movement corridor, but rather an expansion and buffer for the existing reserve core.

5.C. Nearby Existing Reserves:

The SRCMSR is adjacent to the site.

5.D. Priority for Future Purchases:

Priority should be given to acquiring the parcel or parcels immediately northwest of the site, east of the aqueduct, to prevent development on the east side of the aqueduct and homologize the northern boundary along the section line with the existing residences. Additionally, the parcel or parcels adjacent to this site to the west of the aqueduct should receive priority, thus forming a manageable boundary for the overall reserve at Washington Street.

6. INTERIM MANAGEMENT

6.A. Public Issues:

It appears as though human intrusion into the site is increasing. Reports from the Open Space staff indicate shooting and/or hunting is increasing, along with the frequent vandalism of signs, especially since the opening of dove season. It appears as though a good deal of the OHV activity is associated with this shooting. Steps should be taken along the western boundary to prevent such trespass. The most effective way would be for MWD to construct a gate at the aqueduct, and it is recommended that MWD be contacted to solicit their cooperation in this endeavor. Along with this, it is felt the most cost-efficient way to increase patrols of the site is to allow the SRCMSR Ranger to include this site in his general patrol efforts.

6.B. Biological Issues:

It is recommended that a walkover survey be performed to determine if the SKR inhabits the western portions of the site. If so, future management will need to consider this listed species when performing any kind of restoration work.

6.C. Recommended Interim Management Scenario:

- 1) Patrol the site at least once per weekend to discourage OHV and shooting. Maintenance of signs and fences, and removal of trash, should be performed every two weeks. With approval of the SRCMSR Reserve Management Committee, patrols should be carried out by the SRCMSR Ranger.
- 2) A gate should be installed at the aqueduct. MWD should be solicited to assist in this endeavor since the property at this location is theirs. In the event they will not, a gate is included in the suggested budget.
- 3) Perform yearly weed abatement along the western edge and northwestern edge of the site. This should involve the mowing of the grassland habitat a distance of 15 to 20 meters from the boundary. Optionally, a firebreak, about 10 meters wide, should be constructed along the northern boundary fenceline.