

STEPHENS' KANGAROO RAT HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN

ANNUAL REPORT



JULY 2006 THROUGH JUNE 2007

**SUBMITTED TO:
U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**

**PREPARED BY:
RIVERSIDE COUNTY HABITAT CONSERVATION AGENCY**

STEPHENS' KANGAROO RAT HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN ANNUAL REPORT

Pursuant to Section III.A.1.e(2) of the Implementation Agreement for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Habitat Conservation Plan (SKR HCP), reporting information for the period of July 2006 through June 2007 is provided and set forth in the following attachments:

Attachment A

Indicates the amount of contributions from the Parties toward the total funding requirement, which have been received by the Agency during the previous year and cumulatively since commencement of this Agreement.

Attachment B

Identifies the amount of occupied Stephens' Kangaroo Rat (SKR) habitat, which has been disturbed within the Core Reserves during the previous year and the amount and location of mitigation, which has been provided by the Reserve Managers.

Attachment C

Sets forth the amount and location of suitable habitat and SKR occupied habitat, which has been acquired during the previous year.

Attachment D

Summarizes the activities of the Reserve Managers Coordinating Committee (RMCC) during the previous year, including management activities within each core reserve.

Attachment E

Presents financial information concerning the status of the endowments for Core Reserves that receive financial assistance from the Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency (RCHCA). The information includes revenue, expenses, fund balances, management plans, and budgets.

Attachment F

Estimates the current number of acres of SKR occupied habitat contained within the Core Reserves.

Attachment G

Evaluates problems encountered in the implementation of the HCP and corrective measures undertaken or planned to address those problems.

ATTACHMENT A

RIVERSIDE COUNTY HABITAT CONSERVATION AGENCY
SKR MITIGATION FEE COLLECTIONS

MEMBER AGENCY	A	B*
Corona	\$0.00	\$60,215.00
Hemet	\$458,780.00	\$2,849,025.40
Lake Elsinore	\$33,215.50	\$2,678,067.17
Moreno Valley	\$551,840.00	\$2,693,331.15
Murrieta	\$21,783.40	\$2,097,299.95
Perris	\$143,644.10	\$1,883,193.28
Riverside	\$160,292.00	\$6,882,386.39
Temecula	\$60,455.00	\$2,775,232.02
County of Riverside	\$1,437,460.00	\$28,697,565.26
Total	\$2,867,470.00	\$50,616,315.62

Notes:

Column A = SKR Mitigation Fees collected during FY06/07

* Column B = SKR Mitigation Fees collected since inception of the SKR program (11/89) through June 2007

No contributions of funds have been received by the RCHCA from other parties including the U.S. Department of the Interior, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the California Resources Agency or the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG).

ATTACHMENT B

AMOUNT OF SKR OCCUPIED HABITAT DISTURBED WITHIN THE CORE RESERVES

The RCHCA distributed surveys to all parties responsible for managing lands within the SKR reserves in order to assist the RCHCA in providing the most accurate information in the Annual Report. In addition to the RCHCA input, the following were asked to complete surveys: Metropolitan Water District (MWD), CDFG, BLM, University of California at Riverside, State of California Department of Parks and Recreation, City of Riverside Park and Recreation Department, and the Reserve Manager at Southwestern Riverside County Multi-Species Reserve (SWRCMSR).

In an effort to determine habitat disturbed other than by wildfire, the survey asked for the amount of habitat disturbed, the circumstances surrounding the disturbance, the method of notification and parties notified, and an accounting of any remedial actions that were taken.

Survey responses were received from the following:

- MWD for their reserve lands at Lake Mathews
- Reserve Manager at SWRCMSR
- BLM for their lands at Steele Peak and Potrero ACEC
- California Department of Parks and Recreation for their lands at Lake Perris State Recreation Area

The information that follows reflects the information provided in the survey responses received by the RCHCA.

Lake Mathews Reserve

On October 21, 2006, MWD was informed of unauthorized grading on Reserve land by residents along the Reserve boundary at Onaknoll Drive. The grading had been occurring for about two weeks and was reportedly for a go-cart track. Vegetation was removed from the surface and to a depth of several inches using heavy equipment. The site was mapped during previous surveys for the Lake Mathews MSHCP/NCCP as occupied by SKR. Further, the area is within the RCHCA held conservation easement on MWD land. The area of disturbance was calculated to be 6.42 acres.

MWD notified the offenders that the trespassing and disturbance in the Reserve was to cease. MWD notified the Reserve Management Committee (RMC) of the trespass and filed a report with the Sheriff's

Department. The area of disturbance was mapped and assessed for biological impacts.

MWD repaired and replaced the fencing along the Onaknoll properties to secure the Reserve and prevent future trespass. MWD legal staff continues to pursue legal remedies against the offending property owners.

Survey responses identified no other reports of disturbance.

ATTACHMENT C

**AMOUNT AND LOCATION OF SUITABLE
SKR OCCUPIED HABITAT ACQUIRED**

No land acquisitions were made by the RCHCA during this reporting period.

ATTACHMENT D

ACTIVITIES OF THE RESERVE MANAGERS COORDINATING COMMITTEE

The RMCC met three times during this reporting period. The meeting scheduled for October 26, 2006, was canceled due to scheduling conflicts and lack of attendance. Attendees at the meetings generally included RCHCA staff and representatives from CDFG, USFWS, BLM, Riverside County Regional Park and Open Space District (RCRPOSD), Riverside City Parks, SWRCMSR, Motte Rimrock, San Jacinto, Lake Perris, Steele Peak, Potrero, Sycamore Canyon and Lake Mathews reserves. The meeting minutes detail those present at each meeting.

The focus of the RMCC continues to be the implementation component of the SKR HCP as it pertains to data collection, associated mapping, development of reserve management and monitoring plans, and available management tools to assist the reserve managers in efficiently and effectively managing for SKR. The RMCC continues to discuss issues including budgets/funding, current research, monitoring, labor resources available for reserve management, reserve security, illegal dumping, trespass/OHV use and coordinated response by law enforcement, wild fire, and weed abatement. It is anticipated that these items will continue to be agendized for discussion. The RMCC meetings are the appropriate venue to facilitate discussion among the USFWS, CDFG, RCHCA, and the Reserve Managers.

During the FY 02/03 reporting period, the RMCC membership agreed to participate in a SKR monitoring program developed upon recommendations from San Diego State University. The matter was presented to the RCHCA Board for their consideration and was unanimously supported with the caveat that the USFWS and CDFG would endorse the methodology in writing. The endorsement was received from USFWS and CDFG. Plans progressed toward a monitoring program for SKR that strove for consistency and conformity among monitoring entities. The RCHCA contracted with Dudek and Associates, Inc., to develop a protocol and to initiate monitoring on RCHCA owned lands at Lake Mathews and Steele Peak. Following discussion with the RCA, in order to achieve consistency and conformity, the RCHCA adjusted the protocol. The protocol anticipated trapping for three nights on each grid, four times per year. The third trapping session conducted by Dudek for the RCHCA was delayed because the permission to allow the permitted consultant to PIT tag was withheld by the USFWS. As a result, the protocol was again adjusted to extend the three nights for each session to five nights. Four sessions of trapping were completed on most of the grids.

At its June 21, 2007 meeting, the RCHCA Board of Directors adopted the Management Plan for the RCHCA owned lands at the Lake Mathews and Steele Peak reserves. In conjunction with the adoption of the Management Plan, the Board directed RCHCA staff to hire a Natural Resources Manager to implement the Plan. At the close of this

reporting period, only two other reserves have management plans—Sycamore Canyon and Motte Rimrock. The management plan for SWRCMSR is still in draft form. With its completion, the RCHCA's lands in the SWRCMSR will be managed pursuant to that plan. At present, there is no management entity at the Lake Mathews Reserve for those lands not owned by the RCHCA.

The minutes that follow reflect an accounting as it pertains to SKR reserve management and related issues. The meetings have been structured so that the minutes report the status of SKR management and reflect the information provided regarding each individual reserve.

ATTACHMENT E
STATUS OF RESERVE ENDOWMENTS

SKR Reserve Endowments

The interest earnings referenced in the fourth column below are now available to finance SKR management activities in the Motte Rimrock and Sycamore Canyon reserves contingent upon the RCHCA Board of Directors authorizing the funds for expenditure by the reserve managers through the approval of a work program and budget that conforms to an approved management plan. The Executive Director is empowered to authorize expenditures not exceeding \$25,000 as they relate to matters such as needed fencing and requisite repairs.

Core Reserve	Endowment	Fund Balance As Of June 30, 2007	Management Funds Now Available	Dollars Expended FY 06/07	Management Plan
Motte Rimrock	\$300,600.00 *	\$353,166.27	\$52,566.27	\$7,814.00	Yes
Lake Skinner	\$500,000.00 *	\$689,177.89	\$189,177.89	\$0	No
Sycamore Canyon	\$500,000.00 *	\$549,223.96	\$49,223.96	\$0	Yes
Lake Mathews	\$2,500,000.00*	\$3,480,110.00	\$980,110.00	\$95,990.00	No
RCHCA lands at Lake Mathews	N/A				Yes

* Denotes non-wasting endowment

As indicated in column six above, management plans have been prepared for two of the four reserves that receive funding from the RCHCA. A management plan has been completed and adopted for the RCHCA owned lands at Lake Mathews and Steele Peak reserves. A draft management plan is being prepared by the Reserve Manager for the SWRCMSR. It is anticipated that this management plan, if adopted, will sufficiently address SKR management issues at the Lake Skinner Reserve. Similarly, a draft management plan is being contemplated for the MWD owned portion of the Lake Mathews Reserve which is still without a Reserve Manager.

Pursuant to the SKR HCP, the Implementing Agreement for the HCP, and the BLM/RCHCA Assembled Land Exchange Agreement, RCHCA lands in the Lake Mathews Reserve were to be traded to the BLM. Pursuant to the trade, BLM was to assume the management and monitoring obligations for the RCHCA's property at Lake Mathews. Subsequently, the BLM lands were incorporated into the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan as public/quasi public lands for conservation, making the majority of the RCHCA/BLM land exchange significantly encumbered and the sale of BLM surplus lands ultimately unattainable. Because most of the RCHCA lands at Lake Mathews were not exchanged and BLM did not assume management, the RCHCA is burdened with the unanticipated cost of management in order to maintain the state and federal SKR take permits.

The RCHCA has remained committed to securing the participation of BLM in meeting their obligations under the SKR HCP. In January 2007, RCHCA staff attended a BLM sponsored workshop to learn more about the collaborative process that will be utilized by BLM as they undertake the South Coast Resource Management Plan Revision. It is the goal of the RCHCA to insure that the Revision allows for the ability of BLM to fulfill their obligations through the transfer of appropriate parcels and consolidation of management efforts. The RCHCA maintains an amicable relationship with the BLM and discussion is ongoing.

On June 21, 2007, along with the RCHCA Board's adoption of the Management Plan for RCHCA owned lands at the Lake Mathews and Steele Peak reserves, the Board directed staff to hire a Natural Resources Manager. This was the final step in assuming active management of the RCHCA owned lands at the Lake Mathews and Steele Peak reserves.

Pursuant to the requirements of the SKR HCP, the RCHCA paid \$2.5 million to MWD. That sum was placed in a non-wasting endowment for the management of habitat in the Lake Mathews MSHCP portion of the Lake Mathews/Estelle Mountain Core Reserve. The funds are managed and invested by MWD which maintains responsibility for financial reporting on the SKR endowment. The RCHCA received a summary from MWD through June 30, 2007. The information is reflected above and provided at the end of this report.

ATTACHMENT F

NUMBER OF ACRES OF SKR OCCUPIED HABITAT WITHIN THE CORE RESERVES

Data resulting from SKR monitoring on the SKR reserves in Riverside County dates back to the 1980's. In the report by James Diffendorfer and Douglas Deutschman, Department of Biology at San Diego State University, which was presented to the RCHCA Board on February 20, 2003, the authors drew the following conclusions:

- Despite nearly 12 years of monitoring, there are still large gaps in our knowledge of the population dynamics of SKR.
- Given the lack of information, it is impossible to develop a cost effective monitoring program that will produce defensible estimates of population sizes across all reserves or even within most individual reserves.
- A monitoring program should be instituted that utilizes uniform standards for data collection, analysis, and reporting across the reserve network.
- Data should be collected synchronously for 3-5 years to describe the pattern of population change across space and through time, both within and across reserves.
- The resulting data will drive the preparation of a longer-term reserve-wide monitoring program that will produce cost effective high quality data.

Following the presentation, the RCHCA Board approved the program with the condition that the RCHCA must receive written approval from both the USFWS and CDFG before the monitoring could commence. The approvals were received and on May 19, 2005, the RCHCA Board approved a proposal to broadcast a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the SKR Reserve Management and Monitoring Plan for RCHCA lands in the Lake Mathews and Steele Peak reserves. The scope of work in the RFP included the creation of a SKR Management Plan to establish policies and procedures to guide management activities, the creation of a Fire Management Plan, and the establishment of baseline data with the assurance that all information created is compatible with the County of Riverside's Geographic Information System (GIS). The RFP called for the formalization of a monitoring protocol based on the report prepared by San Diego State University in 2003 and endorsed by the RCHCA Board and the wildlife agencies. In October 2005, the RCHCA entered into a contract with DUDEK and Associates, Inc. to provide services consistent with the RFP. During the previous reporting period, DUDEK and Associates, Inc., worked with RCHCA staff and developed a protocol consistent with the Diffendorfer and Deutschman recommendations.

Following discussions with the Regional Conservation Authority (RCA) Monitoring Program, the protocol proposed by DUDEK and Associates, Inc., was modified in order to assure that the monitoring that the RCA was intending to do at SWRCMSR and other sites would be consistent with that being done by the RCHCA. With this modification

and a commitment to the study for three years, monitoring began in July 2006. The third session of trapping was delayed because the permission to allow the permitted consultant to PIT tag was withheld by the USFWS. The result was that the protocol was again modified. The delay resulted in the fact that several grids were not trapped during the third session because to do so would compromise the fourth session. By the end of June the trapping for the first year was completed and most grids were trapped for the full four sessions. Because of the controversy surrounding the protocol and the resulting data, the monitoring has been suspended and it is not anticipated that this monitoring protocol will be implemented in the next reporting period.

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ATTACHMENT G

EVALUATION OF PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SKR HCP

Problems encountered in the implementation of the SKR HCP remain consistent with previous years. They are as follows:

1. Adverse impacts resulting from infrequent patrolling

Several of the reserves still have neither a regular patrol operation nor fencing plan. Specifically, an inadequate level of boundary protection poses problems for the reserves at Lake Mathews/Estelle Mountain, Steele Peak, Potrero, and the Potrero ACEC. For the Lake Mathews/Estelle Mountain Reserve, the patrol issue is compounded by increased residential development in the immediate area and the inability of the RCHCA to dispose of RCHCA lands in the Estelle Mountain portion of the Reserve to BLM. If transfer had occurred as contemplated, the RCHCA would have been relieved of the management obligations in this reserve. Since this is not the case, the RCHCA continues to bear an unanticipated management liability at the Lake Mathews/Estelle Mountain Reserve.

Patrol at the Steele Peak Reserve, Potrero Reserve, and Potrero ACEC is provided by BLM rangers. The terms of the HCP and Implementation Agreement do not require BLM to maintain any specific level of service. It is assumed that the patrol operations currently provided at these sites reflect the amount of financial resources available to BLM for this activity.

2. Illegal Trespass, Vandalism, and Dumping

Illegal access continues to be a concern of the reserve managers as evidenced in the attached RMCC minutes. Solutions include additional patrol, a sting operation to catch illegal trespassers, enhanced coordination with the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, and fencing and signage strategies.

The RCHCA is working on a comprehensive fencing plan for RCHCA owned lands at Lake Mathews/Estelle Mountain Reserve. Access points for illegal trespass are being identified with the goal of crafting a plan for enhancing existing fencing and establishing new fencing to minimize the problem. The plan also takes into account access gates to meet the requirements of Cal Fire in the event they need to access the Reserve in order to address wildfire issues.

During this reporting period, repairs were made to fencing and gates at Steele Peak and Lake Mathews reserves.

3. Preparation of SKR Management Plans

No management plans have been received by the RCHCA for the reserves managed by federal and state agencies. These would include Potrero ACEC, Potrero Reserve, San Jacinto/Lake Perris Reserve, and Steele Peak Reserve.

The SWRCMSR RMC is preparing a management plan that will address SKR management on all the lands within the Reserve. The Lake Mathews portion of the Lake Mathews/Estelle Mountain Core Reserve is managed under the terms and conditions set forth in the Cooperative Agreement found in the Lake Mathews Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan, of which the RCHCA is a signatory. The RMC for the Lake Mathews portion of the Lake Mathews/Estelle Mountain Core Reserve is considering the preparation of a reserve management plan that would include the RCHCA held conservation easement on MWD lands. It is anticipated that a completed management plan would address management for SKR on the conservation easement lands. The Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan and Fire Management Plan for RCHCA Lands in the Lake Mathews and Steele Peak Reserves was adopted by the RCHCA Board at its June 21, 2007 meeting. At that time, the Board authorized staff to hire a Natural Resources Manager in order to begin active management of the lands covered by the Plan.

Management plans have been developed for both Motte Rimrock and Sycamore Canyon Reserves.

4. SKR Management Funding from Reserve Endowments

It is anticipated that these funds will be utilized upon approval of the respective management plans, work programs, and budgets for those reserves with an established endowment fund.

5. Invasive Species Control

Reserve managers regularly engage in an invasive species control program as needed within their respective reserves. Control of the following species continues to present an ongoing challenge for reserve managers:

- a. Argentine Ants
- b. Clustered Chamomile/Matricaria
- c. Perennial Pepper Weed
- d. Tamarisk
- e. Pepper Trees

**LAKE MATHEWS RESERVE ENDOWMENT INFORMATION
PROVIDED BY METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT THROUGH
JUNE 30, 2007**

Lake Mathews Reserve Account Summary FY 06/07 (7/1/06 - 6/30/07)

Beginning balance 7/1/06 = \$3,410,059

Ending balance 6/30/07 = \$3,480,110

Expenses by category:

- Management = \$45,136
 - \$41,890 Jones & Stokes interim management task
 - \$3,246 Applied EarthWorks – prescribed burn planning assistance for cultural resources
- Security = \$50,854 (Securitas, reserve guard)
- Interest income = \$177,086

Expenses shown during a 12-month period are sometimes influenced by timing of payment of invoices. For example, Securitas' annual contract is \$45,000, so billings during the fiscal year that exceed that amount are for work performed during the previous reporting period. Also, expenses are almost exclusively for labor, and do not include vehicle maintenance (fuel, repair, servicing, registration) or facility maintenance (CDF fire maintenance of office compound, utilities, repair & servicing of irrigation system, etc.), all of which MWD currently takes care of. When a reserve manager is hired, those expenses will come back to the reserve account.

Source: Metropolitan Water District

**RIVERSIDE COUNTY HABITAT
CONSERVATION AGENCY**

**FINANCIAL REPORT AS OF JUNE 2007 FISCAL YEAR END
INCLUDING BUDGETED VERSUS ACTUAL EXPENSES AND REVENUES**