



Memorandum

Date:	March 8, 2011
To:	Sandi Rivera Alameda County Community Development Agency 224 W Winton Avenue, Room 110 Hayward, CA 94544
Cc:	SRC
From:	Doug Leslie
Subject:	Meeting of the Burrowing Owl Distribution and Abundance Study Subcommittee

At the SRC meeting held February 16–17, 2011, the SRC approved formation of a Burrowing Owl Distribution and Abundance Study Subcommittee and charged the MT with working with the subcommittee to finalize and implement a plan to study the distribution and abundance of burrowing owls in the APWRA. The objectives of this study are to estimate the size of the burrowing owl population in the APWRA and to model the distribution of burrowing owls to inform re-powering.

The MT met with the Burrowing Owl Distribution and Abundance Study Subcommittee (Jim Estep and Shawn Smallwood) on March 3, 2011, to work out details of the study plan outlined by Shawn Smallwood (P198). It was determined that ICF should develop a map of watersheds and sub-watersheds across the entire APWRA that will form the basis for sampling the APWRA for potentially breeding burrowing owls. The idea is to create areas of relatively uniform size based on watershed boundaries that can be visually searched from one or a few vantage points using binoculars and/or a spotting scope to locate all burrowing owls in the area. These areas are hereafter referred to as Area Constrained Viewsheds, or ACVs.

Once the initial map is created, a sample of ACVs will be selected at random using BLOBS as the basis for stratification to ensure geographic and topographic stratification across the APWRA. Selected ACVs will then be searched by scanning the ACV with binoculars and/or spotting scope and, when necessary, by walking transects through the area. Searching will continue until all burrowing owl pairs and/or single birds within an ACV are identified and mapped. A GPS unit will be used to document the exact location of each primary burrow corresponding with a pair or single bird. Searches will continue through the end of July or until young of the year fledge, whichever comes first.

The MT will solicit candidates for selection to implement this task. It was agreed that while previous experience with burrowing owls is important, it would also be important for potential applicants to have

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familiarity with the APWRA. In addition, the subcommittee would work with the selected candidate for the first week of surveys for purposes of training and quality control. When other members of the MT have time available, they will perform searches of ACVs to increase sample size.

The MT will create an electronic data collection system to ensure data is available as soon as possible after collection. The MT will perform initial analyses on abundance and distribution and produce one draft and one final report. Data will be available for use by anyone wishing to use it for turbine siting or other purposes.