



ANTELOPE VALLEY CONSERVANCY
PO Box 8, Lake Hughes, CA 93532--0008
Tele (661) 943-9000

www.avconservancy.org avconservancy@yahoo.com

"Biological integrity, fiscal accountability, and community transparency"

October 3, 2024

California Fish and Game Commission
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

via email to fgc@fgc.ca.gov

Madam President and Members of the Commission,

Thank you for this opportunity to express Antelope Valley Conservancy's **strong support** for listing the western burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*) as a candidate species for protection under the California Endangered Species Act.

The loss of burrowing owls is an issue that is important to Antelope Valley Conservancy. The City of Lancaster was once home to several Audubon Society listed burrowing owl burrow sites, including one located near 40th Street West and Avenue K. In the early 2000's, these burrow sites were intentionally destroyed without any consequences or mitigation. The destruction of these burrow sites is one of the reasons why Antelope Valley Conservancy now preserves desert scrub habitat to protect land for burrowing owls.

The Antelope Valley's building boom of the 1980's and 1990's continues into the present day. The relative affordability of land in this region when compared to southern Los Angeles County encourages the many distribution centers, warehouses, and housing developments that appear every year. When burrowing owls are found on lands slated for development, their burrows are closed off and they are chased away. With decreasing available habitat and extirpation of other burrowing species, burrowing owl families continue to disappear. How much habitat must be lost before the species is considered deserving of state protection?

As a candidate species under CESA, vulnerable populations of burrowing owls would be protected from further harm while the California Department of Fish and Wildlife conducts a full status review for the species. With state protection, burrowing owls would finally receive compensatory mitigation to fund meaningful conservation, and those who harm them would face penalties.

Antelope Valley Conservancy strongly hopes that the Commission will choose to list the western burrowing owl as a candidate species under CESA.

By Resolution of the
Board of Directors of
ANTELOPE VALLEY CONSERVANCY

Attested by Wendy Schiff, Corporate Secretary