



Dublin Development Threatens One of Largest Burrowing Owl Colonies in Alameda County

U.S. Military Land Exchange Gives Burrowing Owl Habitat to Developers

For Immediate Release, September 30, 2013

Contact: Jeff Miller, Alameda Creek Alliance, (510) 499-9185

Dublin, CA – The City of Dublin’s land exchange with the U.S. military will allow residential and commercial development on 189 acres of mostly open grassland at Camp Parks Reserve Forces Training Area, consequently threatening one of the few remaining breeding colonies of burrowing owls in Alameda County. Other than the burrowing owl population at Altamont Pass, the colony at Camp Parks is the largest in Alameda County and the Livermore-Amador Valley.

“The development planned for the open grasslands at Camp Parks could eliminate this important burrowing owl colony,” said Jeff Miller, director of the Alameda Creek Alliance. “Who is going to protect the owls? The military transferred the responsibility to the developer, yet there are no plans to preserve the owl colony in the exchange area. Dublin’s plan proposes evicting owls from the path of development and destroying owl nesting habitat, which the state Fish and Wildlife Department routinely allows.”

Camp Parks, just north of the East Dublin BART station, is one of the few remaining relatively undeveloped portions of the Livermore-Amador Valley. The U.S. military transferred 189 acres of public land at the southern end of the Camp Parks military training facility to the City of Dublin for urban development. This exchange is among the largest-ever military reserve property exchange agreements executed by the Department of Defense. SunCal, one of the nation’s largest land developers, is planning six major development projects at Camp Parks including the nearly 2,000-home “Dublin Crossing” development. In exchange for the 189 acres, SunCal agreed to construct new military facilities worth \$66 million, which will lead to further destruction of burrowing owl habitat in the northern portion of Camp Parks.

Burrowing owl populations are declining dramatically in the Bay Area and statewide. As burrowing owls have been evicted or displaced by development, breeding colonies have disappeared from more than half of their former locations in the Bay Area in the past few decades. Despite their imperiled status, burrowing owls do not have state or federal protection. California lists the burrowing owl as a “species of concern” but provides no protection for owl habitat and routinely approves eviction of burrowing owls from known breeding locations to allow development.

According to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, there were 12 pairs of nesting burrowing owls documented at Camp Parks in 2009 and 14 pairs in 2010. The 189-acre land exchange area had 5 nesting pairs of burrowing owls in 2009 and 2 pairs in 2010.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife has provided recommendations to the military that they should conserve burrowing owl habitat at Camp Parks and avoid any impacts to nesting burrowing owls or their habitat. Neither Camp Parks staff nor the City of Dublin have responded to requests for information about whether burrowing owl habitat and nest burrows will be protected, or whether there will be mitigation for evicting or displacing the owls.