



## Lawsuit Challenges Dublin Development That Will Evict Burrowing Owls

*Inadequate Environmental Review for Project Displacing Second-largest Breeding Colony of Burrowing Owls in Alameda County*

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*Oakland, CA* – The Alameda Creek Alliance filed a lawsuit today challenging the City of Dublin’s approval of the Dublin Crossing Project, 189 acres of intensive residential and commercial development on former public land at Camp Parks Reserve Forces Training Area, which is home to one of the few remaining large breeding colonies of burrowing owls in Alameda County. The flawed Environmental Impact Report for the project did not disclose the regional significance of the burrowing owl colony that will be displaced by development and it was approved without disclosing adequate mitigation measures for impacts to burrowing owls.

“Burrowing owls are being rapidly eradicated from the Bay Area by urban development so it’s inappropriate to approve a project with such significant impacts on the only remaining large burrowing owl population in the Livermore-Amador Valley without an adequate environmental review and without disclosing up front what mitigation measures will be taken,” said Jeff Miller, director of the Alameda Creek Alliance.

Camp Parks, just north of the East Dublin BART station, is one of the few remaining relatively undeveloped portions of the Livermore-Amador Valley. In 2011 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, which could lead to further loss and degradation 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 adequate state or federal protection measures. California lists the burrowing owl as a “species of concern” but provides no protection for owl habitat, allows destruction of nesting burrows after nesting season, and routinely approves eviction of owls from breeding locations to allow development.

The breeding burrowing owl colony at Camp Parks is the largest in Alameda County other than at Altamont Pass, with more than 50 owls nesting there historically. In recent years, two to three dozen owls have nested on Camp Parks each summer. In 2013, 10 pairs of burrowing owls nested in the 189-acre project area that is to be developed.

The western burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*) is a small, ground-nesting bird of prairie and grassland habitats, which nests primarily in abandoned ground-squirrel burrows. California supports the largest remaining breeding and wintering populations of western burrowing owls. Burrowing owls in the Bay Area are threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation from urban development, elimination of burrowing rodents and destruction of burrows, pesticides, predation by pets and nonnative species, vehicle strikes

and collisions with wind turbines. The state allows landowners to evict and “passively relocate” owls from development sites, with inadequate mitigation and no assurances that relocated owls are able to survive.