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**News Release: San José Burrowing Owl Population  
Increases by 54 Percent in a Year**

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## **San José Burrowing Owl Population Increases by 54 Percent in a Year** City's habitat program serves as a regional conservation model

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## *News Release*

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

### **For Immediate Release**

September 10, 2015

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### **San José Burrowing Owl Population Increases by 54 Percent in a Year** *City's habitat program serves as a regional conservation model*

SAN JOSE, Calif. - Three years of successful habitat conservation efforts are paying off for San José's western burrowing owls. The San José-Santa Clara Regional Wastewater Facility's habitat management plan has increased the adult owl population by 54 percent compared to last year.

So far this year, Audubon Society birdlife surveyors have counted 20 adults and 46 chicks since the breeding season began in spring. In 2014, 13 adults and 27 chicks were observed during the same period, and only 13 adults and 12 chicks in 2013. San José's owl habitat is the only site in Santa Clara County experiencing population growth.

"Our owl management project shows how partnerships and science can produce impressive results in habitat conservation," said Kerrie Romanow, director of San José Environmental Services Department. "I'm proud of our work with the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society and San José State University, as it has increased the burrowing owl population at our site."

The western burrowing owl is a California State Species of Special Concern and has had significant population decreases for decades. Prior to 2012, burrowing owl sightings were rare, with no more than four owls generally seen during surveys.

The San José collaboration to protect burrowing owl habitat has been successful in reversing this downward trend at the Wastewater Facility. Audubon Society staff and members of San José State University Environmental Studies Department are both working with San José Environmental Services staff to manage the owl site and

monitor the population.

“Volunteers can’t wait to be a part of the program; it’s a great way to get our community members involved with their natural environment,” said Josh McCluskey, burrowing owl conservation project manager with the Audubon Society. “The increasing number of owls at the Wastewater Facility will encourage population dispersal throughout the region.”

San José’s burrowing owl population nests in the bufferlands surrounding the San José-Santa Clara Regional Wastewater Facility. In order to prevent further population decline, the Wastewater Facility’s master plan designated 180 acres of habitat for the protection of the owls.

Because burrowing owls nest in tunnels created by ground squirrels, a key step in their habitat conservation was to create conditions that would foster the ground squirrel population, allowing safety for owls against predators.

#### Photos & Video

View photos and video from the owl webcam on San José’s public Flickr photo stream (<https://flic.kr/ps/2TthZN>).

#### **About San José Environmental Services Department (ESD) and San José Green Vision**

San José, Capital of Silicon Valley, is the largest city in Northern California and the 10th largest city in the nation. The San José Environmental Services Department ([www.sjenvironment.org](http://www.sjenvironment.org/)) manages garbage and recycling services; watershed protection and pollution prevention; municipal drinking water and recycled water; community sustainability initiatives; and the San José-Santa Clara Regional Wastewater Facility. ESD's programs and initiatives align with the San José Green Vision ([www.sjenvironment.org/greenvision](http://www.sjenvironment.org/greenvision)), a long-term plan to create a sustainable future for our community.

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#### **About Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society**

The Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society was founded in 1926 and with over 3,000 members it is one of the largest National Audubon Society chapters in California. The mission of SCVAS is to preserve, enjoy, restore and foster public awareness of native birds and their ecosystems in Santa Clara County. For more information, go to [www.scvas.org](http://www.scvas.org).

#### **About San José State University Environmental Studies Department**

The Department of Environmental Studies at San José State University was established in 1970 as one of the first academic environmental studies programs in the U.S. Its mission is to provide a rigorous education that produces environmental thinkers to help solve the sustainability issues of our day. Find out more about our department at [www.sjsu.edu/envs/](http://www.sjsu.edu/envs/).

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