



## WEED ABATEMENT PROCEDURES FOR PROPERTY WITHIN THE HABITAT RANGE OF THE BURROWING OWL

### **POLICY**

The Western Burrowing Owl (*Athene Cunicularia*) is a 9-inch tall bird of prey that nests in the abandoned ground squirrel burrows. The Burrowing Owl preys upon small rodents and insects and inhabits flat grassland areas where ground squirrels can be found.

Both the State and Federal Governments classify the Western Burrowing Owl as a "Species of Special Concern." This classification makes it necessary to alter weed abatement procedures for property within the habitat range of the Western Burrowing Owl.

The City of Santa Clara contracts with private contractors to perform weed abatement on City property. The weed abatement is performed in order to reduce the fire hazard severity that the properties may pose to the surrounding area.

When weed abatement is to be performed, it is the City's policy that disruption of the habitat be minimized on undeveloped parcels where Burrowing Owls have been identified. Since Burrowing Owls are state and federally protected, destroying a burrowing owl nest or killing an owl is punishable under both State and Federal laws.

### **PROCEDURE**

1. Prior to the commencement of weed abatement operations on property within the habitat range of the Burrowing Owl, a survey of the property shall be conducted. The survey is intended to identify all active Burrowing Owl nest sites. A qualified person shall conduct the survey. The nest sites shall be clearly marked.
2. Property identified as being inhabited by Burrowing Owls shall be mowed. All areas within 25 feet of any active nesting site shall be left undisturbed. If the weeds within 25 feet must be removed, then the work shall be done by hand since the use of tractors may damage the burrows threatening the owls.
3. On properties that have been determined not to be inhabited by Burrowing Owls, the weeds may be abated in any approved manner including disking.



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4. Approved herbicides may be used to prevent the growth of weeds. The application of herbicides must be done in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.
5. An informational flier shall be made available, from the Fire Department, concerning the City's policy regarding weed abatement procedures within the habitat range of the Burrowing Owl.

**Reference:**

***City Council-approved policy 12/18/90 and 5/11/99***