

**Low-Effect Habitat Conservation Plan for  
the Issuance of an Incidental Take Permit for the  
Federally Endangered Morro Shoulderband Snail  
on the Gosnell Project Site,  
Los Osos, San Luis Obispo County**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

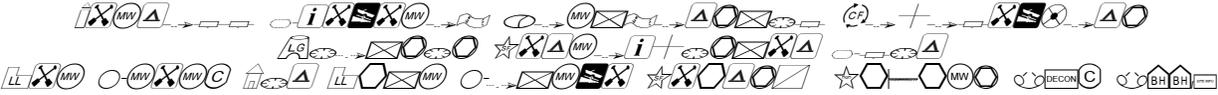
Robert C. and Holly R. Gosnell have applied for a permit pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544, 87 Stat. 884) as amended (Act), from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) for incidental take of the federally endangered Morro shoulderband snail (*Helminthoglypta walkeriana*). The Gosnells are requesting the Section 10(a)(1)(B) incidental take permit be issued for a period of 25 years.

The incidental take would occur as result of the Gosnells' proposed single-family residential development project located at 1194 Al Sereno Lane (APN 74-323-057), in the community of Los Osos, San Luis Obispo County, California. The development (12,245 square feet) will occur on a 27,273 square foot parcel of land (project site) characterized by a mixture of intact and degraded coastal sage scrub (Morro Group, Inc. 2000).

This Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) summarizes the project and identifies the responsibilities of the Service, the Gosnells, and their successors and assigns. It describes measures that will be implemented by the Gosnells to minimize and mitigate the impacts of the proposed project on the Morro shoulderband snail and its habitat including:

- a) pre-construction surveys;
- b) installation of construction fencing prior to ground disturbance;
- c) dedication of a conservation easement preserving coastal sage scrub habitat on-site; and,
- d) a contribution of funds to be put toward the acquisition and preservation of the Powell II property, a site historically occupied by Morro shoulderband snails.

This HCP also describes measures to ensure that the elements of the plan are properly implemented. Funding sources for implementation, actions to be taken for changed circumstances and unforeseen events, alternatives to the proposed project, and other measures required by the Service are also discussed.



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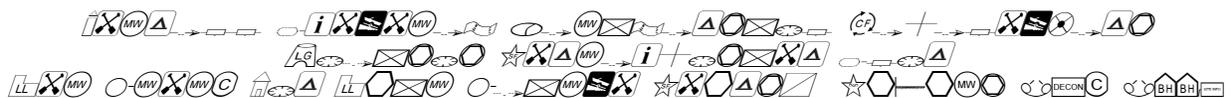
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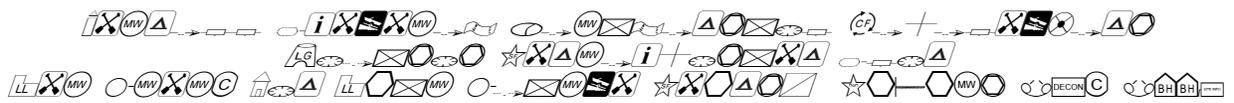
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The land slopes gently toward the north, includes a long rectangular driveway access, and is bordered by fenced yards with established residences to the north, east, and south. There is an undeveloped one acre lot to the west of the property which is characterized by mature coastal sage scrub (Morro Group, Inc. 2000).

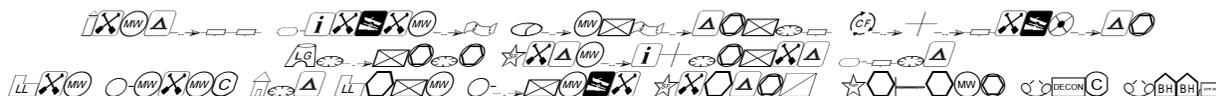
The Gosnell property contains a mixture of native and introduced plant species including mock heather (*Ericameria ericoides*), California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), ceanothus (*Ceanothus cuneatus*), coastal buckwheat (*Eriogonum parvifolium*), Morro manzanita (*Arctostaphylos morroensis*) [a federally threatened species], California croton (*Croton californicus*), horkelia (*Horkelia cuneata*), deerweed (*Lotus scoparius*), telegraph weed (*Heterotheca grandiflora*), eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus sp.*), and veldt grass (*Ehrharta calycina*). The eastern portion of the lot is densely covered with mature coastal sage scrub, dominated by ceanothus and mock heather (Figure 2). The western half of the lot and driveway access have been previously disturbed and are now dominated by veldt grass and other exotic species. The eastern half is dominated by native coastal sage scrub, which is habitat for Morro shoulderband snails. The amount of coastal scrub on the lot is estimated to cover approximately 16,000 square feet.

### 1.1.3 Development Area

The proposed residence includes an 8,212 square-foot area for one single-family home and detached garage, and a 4,037 square-foot driveway. The development would encompass a total of 12,249 square feet (44.9 % of the lot). Development is proposed in the south-central portion of the lot (Figure 3).

### 1.1.4 On-site Conservation Area

Prior to surface disturbance or construction, the Gosnells will place a conservation easement (appendix A) over the undeveloped portion of their lot (15,022 square feet of coastal sage scrub) for the benefit of Morro shoulderband snails (Figure 3).





### 1.1.5 Off-site Mitigation Area

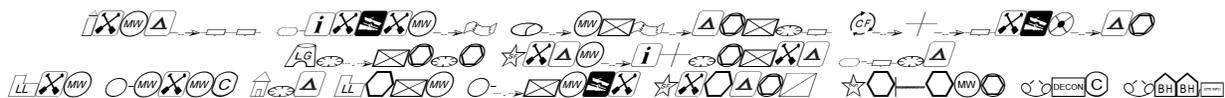
The Gosnells will donate \$15,325 (equal to 17,820 square feet) toward the purchase of the 40 acre Powell II property (Figure 4) (off-site mitigation area), located in northeastern Los Osos. The property contains areas of disturbed and undisturbed coastal dune scrub habitat (Morro Group, Inc. 2001a), and there is evidence that Morro shoulderband snails have previously occupied the property. During a site visit on December 11, 2001, the Morro Group observed more than 100 empty shells of Morro shoulderband snails on the property (Morro Group, Inc. 2001a). The disturbed areas of coastal dune scrub are recovering (Morro Group, Inc. 2001a).

The *Recovery Plan for the Morro Shoulderband Snail and Four Plants from Western San Luis Obispo County, California* (recovery plan) (Service 1998) acknowledges the importance of securing populations and habitats on unprotected private lands, and it identifies four key conservation planning areas: Morro Spit; West Pecho; South Los Osos; and Northeast Los Osos. The Powell II property is adjacent to the Northeast Los Osos conservation planning area, and the recovery plan identifies it as a potential restoration corridor. This property also contains 3.07 acres of critical habitat for the Morro shoulderband snail.

The Powell II property is contiguous with recently acquired and now protected State Park land. It is expected that after purchase the Powell II property will be managed by State Parks as a natural preserve pursuant to California Public Resource Code 5019.71., where, “The purpose of natural preserves shall be to preserve such features as rare or endangered plant and animal species and their supporting ecosystems...”.

## 2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Gosnells propose to develop 12,245 square feet of a 27,273 square-foot property in the community of Los Osos for construction of a single family residence, outdoor living area, garage, and driveway (Figure 2). The areas that would be graded or disturbed are collectively referred to as the development area. All aforementioned site improvements will occur within the development area. In addition, fire clearance and landscaping will be done in a manner that does not require any vegetation clearing outside the development area. The buildings will be constructed of fire resistant siding and include a sprinkler system for fire suppression in an effort to minimize the removal of coastal sage scrub for fire clearance.



## 2.1 REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

Section 9 of the Act prohibits the taking of any federally listed endangered or threatened species. Section 3(18) of the Act defines “take” to mean “to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct.” Service regulations (50 CFR 17.3) define “harm” to include significant habitat modification or degradation which actually kills or injures wildlife by significantly impairing essential behavioral patterns, including breeding, feeding or sheltering. Harassment is defined by the Service as an intentional or negligent action that creates the likelihood of injury to wildlife by annoying it to such an extent as to significantly disrupt normal behavior patterns which include, but are not limited to, breeding, feeding, or sheltering. The Act provides for civil and criminal penalties for the unlawful taking of listed species. Exemptions to the prohibitions against take may be obtained through coordination with the Service in two ways: through interagency consultation for projects with Federal involvement pursuant to section 7 or through the issuance of an incidental take permit under section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Act.

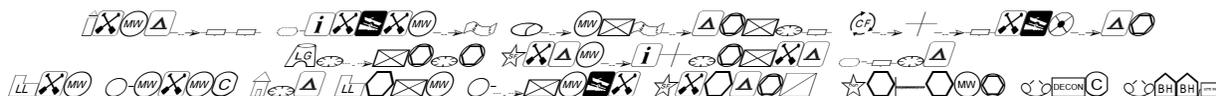
## 2.2 LOW-EFFECT HCP

Low-effect HCPs are defined by the Service (Service 1996) as involving:

- 1) minor or negligible effects on federally listed, proposed, or candidate species and their habitats covered under the HCP; and
- 2) minor or negligible effects on other environmental values or resources.

Low-effect incidental take permits are those permits that, despite their authorization of some small level of incidental take, individually and cumulatively have a minor or negligible effect on the species covered in the HCP. The determination of whether an HCP qualifies for the low-effect category must be based on its anticipated impacts prior to implementation of the mitigation plan.

Low-effect HCPs require publication of a Notice of Receipt of Permit Application in the *Federal Register* with a 30-day public comment period. The Gosnell HCP meets the low-effect criteria described above and documented in the Service’s Low-Effect HCP Screening Form/



Environmental Action Statement (Appendix B).

### 2.3 NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), requires that federal agencies analyze and disclose the environmental impacts of their proposed actions, and include public participation in the planning and implementation of their actions. Issuance of an incidental take permit by the Service is a federal action subject to NEPA compliance. Low-effect HCPs and their associated incidental take permits are considered categorical exclusions under NEPA, as provided by the *Department of Interior Manual 516DM2, Appendix 1, and 516DM6, Appendix 1.*

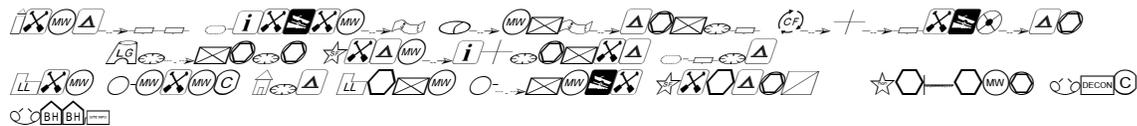
### 3.0 BIOLOGY

#### 3.1 Species Description and Status of the Morro Shoulderband Snail

The Service listed the Morro shoulderband snail as endangered on December 15, 1994 (50 *Federal Register* 64613). Hemphill (1911) first described the species and placed it in the genus *Helix*, recognizing 2 subspecies: the “typical form” from “San Luis Obispo, Cal.”, and “*Helix* var. *morroensis*” from “San Luis Obispo County, Cal.”. Field (1930) re-allocated *Helix walkeriana* to the genus *Helminthoglypta*. Pilsbury (1939) recorded specimens from Morro Peninsula and Morro Bay.

The Morro shoulderband snail occurs throughout the community of Los Osos (Service 1998). The recovery plan (Service 1998) described the known geographic range as “areas south of Morro Bay, west of Los Osos Creek and north of Hazard Canyon”. Subsequent reports have been received of specimens being found in the town of Morro Bay and the Chorro Valley (Walgren 2002). Historically the species has also been reported 5 km south of Cayucos (Roth 1973).

The Morro shoulderband snail is considered endangered because of loss of its natural habitat and fragmentation of its limited geographic range. The major threats are: the clearing of native vegetation, urban development, habitat degradation by invasive plant species (in particular,





Surveys for the Morro shoulderband snail, consistent with the Service's protocol (Service 1997), were conducted on the project site between January 27 and March 6, 2000 (Morro Group, Inc. 2000). During the fifth and final survey, three live Morro shoulderband snails and one weathered Morro shoulderband snail shell (Class C, 1.5-10 years old and older) (Roth 1985) were found along the western perimeter of the Gosnell property, but outside the boundaries of the development area.

The discovery of more than 100 empty shells of Morro shoulderband snails on the Powell II mitigation property (Morro Group, Inc. 2001a) indicates the presence of the species there. Surveys that meet the Service's protocol (Service 1997) have not been completed.

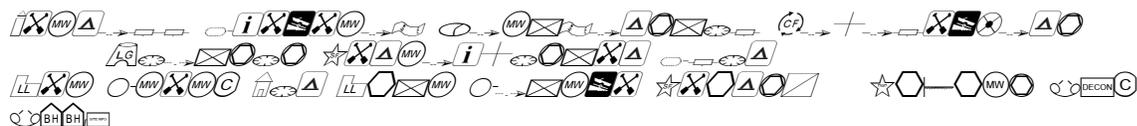
### 3.1.3 Morro Bay Kangaroo Rat

The existence of the federally endangered Morro Bay kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys heermanni morroensis*) has not been documented since 1991 (O'farrell 2000), when diagnostic signs of the species were observed on the Bayview site, north of Broderson Avenue, Los Osos. The Gosnell property lacks the habitat used by Morro Bay kangaroo rats, such as open and unvegetated areas of sandy soil. The proposed Gosnell project is not likely to result in take of any Morro Bay kangaroo rats. Consequently, this HCP will not address this species and a permit for incidental take is not requested.

### 3.1.4 Morro Manzanita

Morro manzanita is a federally threatened species, and it is included on List 1B: *Plants rare, threatened or endangered in California and elsewhere* of the California Native Plant Society. One large Morro manzanita and several seedlings are present in the in the northern and eastern sections of the on-site conservation area. Because there will be no disturbance, damage to or loss of the Morro manzanita plants, the species will not be covered in this HCP.

## 4.0 EXPECTED IMPACTS



#### 4.1 Morro Shoulderband Snail

The proposed residential development project would result in permanent loss of 12,245 square feet of existing and potential Morro shoulderband snail habitat, and it may cause direct mortality or injury to individuals as a result of ground disturbing activities during construction. All life stages of Morro shoulderband snails within the 12,245 square foot construction site may be lost. In the event Morro shoulderband snails enter the development area after construction is complete, they could be taken as a result of vehicle and foot traffic, activities of pets, gardening, and other activities related to human use. Morro shoulderband snails could also be taken during habitat enhancement activities within the on-site conservation area.

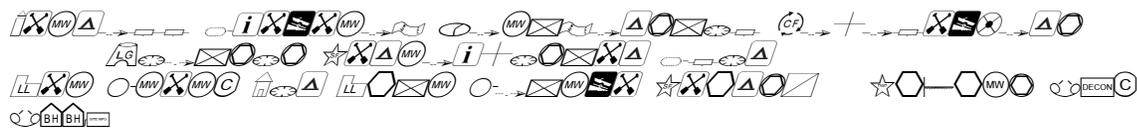
#### 5.0 TAKE OF COVERED SPECIES

Incidental take of Morro shoulderband snails may result during removal of 12,245 square feet of degraded coastal scrub in the development area. All Morro shoulderband snails found within the development area before construction begins will be moved to the on-site conservation area by Service-approved biologists. If Morro shoulderband snails move into the development area following construction, incidental take of Morro shoulderband snails may occur throughout the duration of the permit as a result of: vehicle and foot traffic, activities of pets, gardening, and other human related activities conducted in the development area. Incidental take of Morro shoulderband snails may also occur within the on-site conservation area during the removal of veldt grass. Because of its cryptic habits, the exact number of Morro shoulderband snails that may be taken cannot be determined. However, the number is expected to be minimal.

#### 6.0 MINIMIZATION MEASURES

##### 6.1 Pre-construction Surveys

Prior to initial ground or vegetation disturbance of the development area, a Service-approved biologist shall conduct a single survey of the development area for Morro shoulderband snails.





Before any ground-disturbing activities occur on the property, the Gosnells or a Service-approved biologist shall remove at least 95% of the veldt grass from the on-site conservation area. Subsequently, annual removal of veldt grass shall be conducted as necessary to meet the success criteria described below. To minimize the potential for take of Morro shoulderband snails during veldt grass removal, this activity will only take place during the dry season when snails are known to be less active.

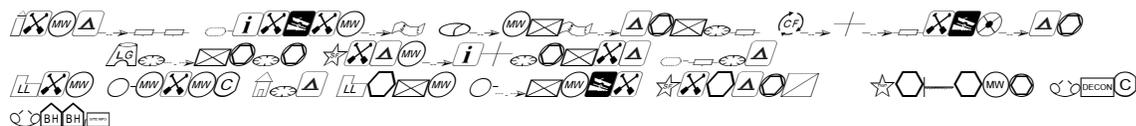
Successful management of the on-site conservation area will be recognized when veldt grass comprises no more than 5% of the total plant cover. The Gosnells or Service-approved biologists shall document the condition of the habitat in the on-site conservation area using photographs taken from permanent locations (photo points). Photographs shall be taken before and after the initial veldt grass removal effort and following all subsequent efforts throughout the duration of the permit. The number of photo points should be sufficient enough to document the condition of the habitat throughout the entire on-site conservation area.

Manual removal of veldt grass from the on-site conservation area shall be the only method used. Herbicides and pesticides shall not be used. Additional methods may be adapted over time, given new developments in techniques to manage native vegetation (e.g., techniques for non-native invasive plant removal) and only with Service approval.

## 7.2 Off-site Mitigation

The Gosnells will donate \$15,325 to the Bay Foundation as contribution toward the purchase of the Powell II property (APN 067-011-033). It is estimated that \$15,325 will fund the acquisition of 17,820 square feet of the 40-acre Powell II property. The property contains approximately 3.07 acres of critical habitat (unit 3) for the Morro shoulderband snail, and it is adjacent to the Northeast Los Osos Conservation Planning area described in the recovery plan (Service 1998). The vegetation type on the Powell II property is disturbed Dune Lupine-Goldenbush (Jones and Stokes, Inc. 1997), and there is also remnant and regenerating coastal dune scrub (Morro Group, Inc 2001a).

The Powell II property is an important component of the Los Osos/Baywood Park Greenbelt. It connects to other land occupied by Morro shoulderband snails and which is managed by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks). It is expected that State Parks will manage the property as a natural preserve pursuant to California Public Resource Code 5019.71., where, "The purpose of natural preserves shall be to preserve such features as rare or endangered

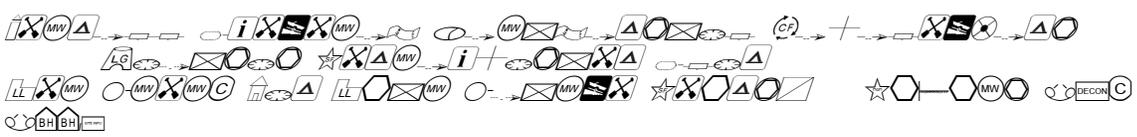




The Gosnells shall provide adequate funding for implementing the minimization and mitigation measures specified in this HCP, including:

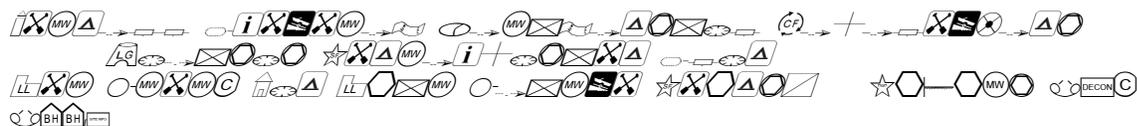
- 1) a pre-construction survey of the development area for live Morro shoulderband snails and relocation of them to the on-site conservation area;
- 2) fencing the on-site conservation area (and also any Morro manzanita outside this area) prior to commencement of the project;
- 3) completion of pre-construction environmental awareness training for construction crews by a service approved biologist;
- 4) establishing a perpetual conservation easement over 15,022 square feet of the project site where veldt grass comprises no more than 5% of the plant cover for the duration of the permit; and
- 5) contribution of funds to purchase 17,820 square feet of land with habitat for Morro shoulderband snails at the Powell II site.

<b>Table 1. Estimated costs for implementation of the Gosnell HCP</b>
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Task	Assumptions	Unit Cost	Total Cost
Pre-construction survey and environmental training for construction crew	Applicant to contract with Service approved biologist	8 hours @ \$85/hour	\$680
Construction fencing	Applicant to install fencing	400 feet @ \$37.75/100 feet	\$150
On-site conservation area: vegetation monitoring and removal of non-native plant species	Applicant to complete	\$00	\$00
Annual report preparation	Applicant to complete	\$00	\$00
Off-site mitigation	Applicant to contribute \$15, 325 toward purchase of 40-acre Powell II property	17, 325 square feet @ \$37, 500/ acre	\$15, 325
<b>TOTAL</b>			\$16, 155

The total estimated cost for implementing this HCP will be \$16, 155. This cost includes a pre-construction survey for the Morro shoulderband snail, pre-construction environmental training for the construction crew, construction fencing, and the purchase of 17, 820 square feet of Morro shoulderband snail habitat with a sales value of \$15, 325. The Bay Foundation will accept \$15, 325 from the Gosnells, provide documentation to the Service upon its receipt, and also provide documentation to the Service that \$15, 325 was contributed toward acquisition of the Powell II property.



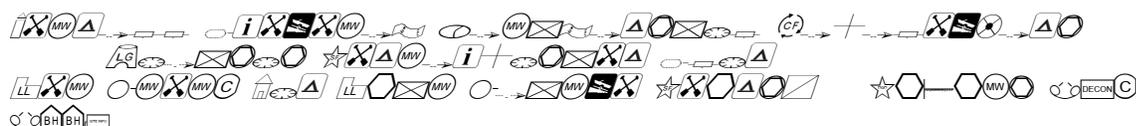
The Gosnells will remove the veldt grass and any other exotic plants and write the annual and subsequent monitoring reports. Consequently, an endowment or bond to provide funds for maintenance and report preparation has not been established. The Gosnells understand that a failure to fully implement the terms of this HCP could result in permit suspension or revocation.

## 11.0 CHANGED AND UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES

Section 10 regulations [50 CFR 17.22 (b)(2)(iii)] require that an HCP specify the procedures to be used for dealing with changed and unforeseen circumstances that may arise during the implementation of the HCP. In addition, the Habitat Conservation Plan Assurances (No Surprises) [Rule 50 CFR (b)(5) and (6): 63 F.R. 8859] defines changed and unforeseen circumstances and describes the obligations of the permittee and the Service. The purpose of the Assurances Rule is to provide assurance to the non-Federal landowners participating in habitat conservation planning under the Act that no additional land restrictions or financial compensation will be required for species adequately covered by a properly implemented HCP, in light of unforeseen circumstances, without the consent of the permittee.

### 11.1 Changed Circumstances

Changed circumstances are defined as changes in circumstances affecting a species or geographic area covered by an HCP that can reasonably be anticipated by plan developers and the Service and for which contingency plans can be prepared (e.g., the new listing of species, a fire or other natural catastrophic event in areas prone to such event). If additional conservation and mitigation measures are deemed necessary to respond to changed circumstances and these additional measures were already provided for in the plan's operating conservation program (e.g., the conservation management activities or mitigation measures expressly agreed to in the HCP), then the permittee will implement those measures as specified in the plan. However, if additional conservation management and mitigation measures are deemed necessary to respond to changed circumstances and such measures were not provided for in the plan's operating conservation program, the Service will not require these additional measures without the consent of the permittee, provided that the HCP is being "properly implemented"(properly implemented



means the commitments and the provisions of the HCP have been or are fully implemented).

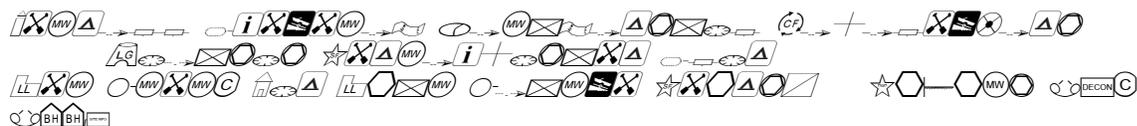
In this HCP, foreseeable changed circumstances are the new listing of a species, and the discovery of Morro bay kangaroo rats within the project site. The Gosnells will address these events, in consultation with the Service, as described below.

If a species that is not covered by the HCP but which may be affected by activities covered by the HCP is newly listed under the Act during the term of the section 10 permit, the section 10 permit will be reevaluated by the Service and the HCP covered activities may be modified, as necessary. This is to insure that the activities covered under the HCP are not likely to jeopardize or result in the take of the newly listed species or adversely modify any newly designated critical habitat. The Gosnells shall implement such modifications as deemed necessary by the Service. The Gosnells shall continue to implement such modifications until they have applied for and the Service has approved an amendment of the Section 10 permit, in accordance with applicable statutory and regulatory requirements, to cover the newly listed species or until the Service notifies the Gosnells in writing that such modifications to the HCP covered activities are no longer required.

If Morro Bay kangaroo rats are discovered within the project site, then the Gosnells shall immediately notify the Service of the sighting. The Service will then evaluate this new information and determine what, if any, HCP covered activities may result in incidental take of the species. If HCP covered activities would likely result in incidental take of this species, the incidental take permit shall either be amended to cover that species or the Gosnells shall modify their activities on the site, to the extent determined by the Service to be necessary, to avoid take of the Morro Bay kangaroo rat.

### 11.2 Unforeseen Circumstances

The policy defines unforeseen circumstances as changes in circumstances that affect a species or geographic area covered by the HCP which could not reasonably be anticipated by plan developers and the Service at the time of the plan's negotiation and development, and that result in a substantial and adverse change in the status of the covered species. The purpose of the Assurances Rule is to provide assurances to non-federal landowners participating in habitat



conservation planning under the Act that no additional land restrictions or financial compensation will be required for species adequately covered by a properly implemented HCP, in light of unforeseen circumstances, without the consent of the permittee.

In case of an unforeseen event, the Gosnells shall immediately notify the Service staff who have functioned as the principal contacts for the proposed action. In determining whether such an event constitutes an unforeseen circumstance, the Service shall consider, but not be limited to, the following factors: size of the current range of the affected species; percentage of range adversely affected by the HCP; percentage of range conserved by the HCP; ecological significance of that portion of the range affected by the HCP; level of knowledge about the affected species and the degree of specificity of the species' conservation program under the HCP; and whether failure to adopt additional conservation measures would appreciably reduce the likelihood of survival and recovery of the affected species.

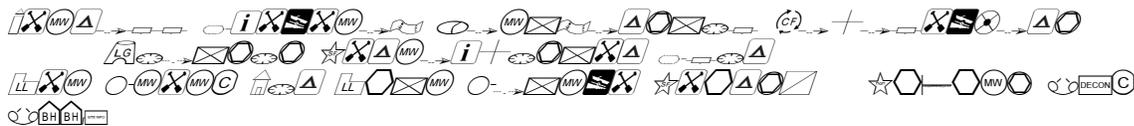
If the Service determines that additional conservation and mitigation measures are necessary to respond to the unforeseen circumstances where the HCP is being properly implemented, they shall involve the commitment of additional land, funds, or restrictions on the use of land or other natural resources otherwise available for development or use under the original terms of the HCP, only with the consent of the Gosnells.

## 12.0 PERMIT AMENDMENT/RENEWAL PROCESS

### 12.1 Amendments to the Permit

During the specified permit period, amendment of the Section 10(a)(1)(B) permit for the Gosnells' project would be required for any of the following changes:

- a) significant revision to the boundary of the project site, on-site conservation area, development area, or off-site mitigation area;
- b) the new listing under the Act of a species not currently addressed in this HCP and which may be taken by project activities;
- c) modification of any project action or minimization or mitigation measure in the HCP, including funding, that may significantly affect authorized take levels,



- effects to the Morro shoulderband snail, or the nature or scope of the mitigation program; or,
- d) any other modification of the project likely to result in significant adverse effects to Morro shoulderband snails not addressed in the original HCP and permit application.

## 12.2 Amendments to the HCP

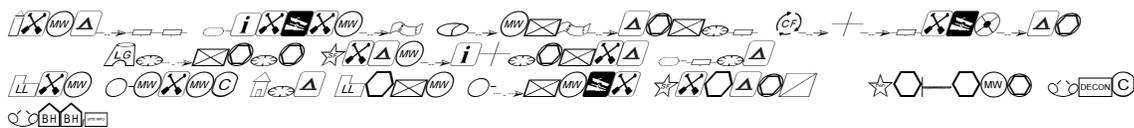
This HCP, under certain circumstances, may be amended without amending its associated permit, provided that such amendments are of a minor or technical nature and that the effect on Morro shoulderband snails and levels of take resulting from the amendment are not significantly different from those described in the original HCP. Examples of minor amendments that would not require permit amendment include:

- a) minor revisions to monitoring or reporting protocols;
- b) minor revisions to the HCP's plan area or boundaries; and,
- c) minor revisions in project design and construction procedures.

To amend the HCP without amending the permit, the Gosnells must submit to the Service in writing a description of the proposed amendment, an explanation of why the amendment is necessary or desirable, and an explanation of why the effects of the proposed amendment are not believed to be significantly different from those described in the original HCP. If the Service concurs, it shall authorize the amendment in writing, which becomes effective upon the date of the Service's written authorization.

## 12.3 Permit Renewal

Upon expiration, the Gosnell's Section 10(a)(1)(B) permit may be renewed, if necessary, without the issuance of a new permit, provided that the permit is renewable, and that biological circumstances and other pertinent factors affecting the Morro shoulderband snail at the project site are not significantly different than those described in the original HCP. At least thirty days prior to the expiration of this permit, the Gosnells shall submit to the Service, in writing:





27,273 square-foot parcel are degraded due to the presence and abundance of non-native plants. Without the HCP, habitat quality would probably continue to decline and no on-site or off-site habitat would be protected to benefit the Morro shoulderband snail. Therefore, the no-action alternative is concluded to be of lesser conservation value to the Morro shoulderband snail than the proposed project and accompanying HCP. It would also result in an unnecessary economic burden on the Gosnells. For these reasons, the No-action Alternative was rejected.

### 13.2 Alternative 2: Redesign Project

Under this alternative, the development area would be reduced or relocated elsewhere on the property. The designated development area is on a portion of the property that is dominated by non-native veldt grass. The configuration and location of the development area were selected to minimize impacts to the portion of the property that is dominated by native species and which offers the best habitat for Morro shoulderband snails. Relocation of the development area would result in a greater disturbance to intact, coastal scrub and greater impacts to Morro shoulderband snails. A reduction of the development area is not economically feasible because the proposed project has already been designed to meet the minimum needs of the Gosnells. For these reasons, the Redesign Project Alternative was rejected.

### 13.3 Alternative 3: Proposed Action

Under this alternative, the development area is 12,245 square feet of degraded coastal scrub dominated by non-native veldt grass. By confining development to this disturbed area, the remaining coastal scrub on the property is preserved for the benefit of Morro shoulderband snails through a perpetual conservation easement. The veldt grass and other invasive plant species will be removed from the on-site conservation area prior to grading of the development area. Annual removal of veldt grass and other invasive plant species will result in a stand of coastal scrub that is comprised of at least 95% native plant species. The proposed action includes contribution of \$15, 325 toward the purchase of 40-acres of land with Morro shoulderband snail habitat, which is contiguous with several other large tracts of preserved habitat. For these reasons, the Proposed Action Alternative is preferred.

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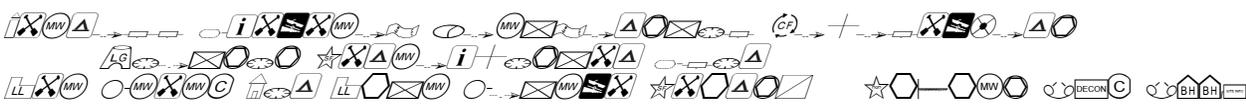
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