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CALIFORNIA
FISH AND GAME
COMMISSION

Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard Talking Points

2015 JAN 21 PM 1:59

MLS

MR. President & Members of the Commission, my name is Steven Chaney, I live in San Diego County, and I am representing the Friends of Ocotillo Wells and the San Diego Off-Road Coalition. We would like to go on record as being opposed to the listing of the Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard (FTHL) as Endangered and recommend that you either reject outright or postpone this petition.

In the spring of 2010 I received my credentials to work with the Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard from the California Fish and Game Department and volunteered to work on the occupancy surveys at Ocotillo Wells (OW) SVRA. I have since participated in five occupancy surveys and one demographic survey at the park and one demographic survey for the 2014 SCORE race at Plaster City, so I have a pretty good working knowledge of the FTHL and I know just how difficult they are to find.

We are opposed to the change in listing for the following reasons;

There is not an adequate population base line, in this document, from which to draw the conclusion that the FTHL is experiencing a significant decline and is in serious danger of becoming extinct. On page 21 of the petition it is stated "Accurate estimates of species abundance are lacking for the FTHL". How can you decide to list the FTHL as endangered if we don't even know how many there are.

The listing change has been tried three times on the Federal level and failed all three times. This is basically the same petition.

We have had a Rangewide Management Strategy (RMS) Program in place since 1997 including regular coordination among the participating agencies through the Management Oversight Group and Interagency

Coordinating Committee. Unlike the petition we feel that the RMS is working to protect the FTHL.

The majority of habitat loss should be considered as historical.

When conditions are favorable the FTHL can have multiple clutches of eggs, instead of the usual clutch of five to seven eggs, so they should be able rebound from our current drought. A lot of our desert wildlife lives on a "Boom or Bust cycle".

I have personally witnessed the black harvester ants carrying Sahara mustard seed pods back to their nest. So maybe instead of being a threat, as this petition implies, this invasive may be beneficial to the FTHL by providing food for the harvester ants which are a staple of this lizards diet.

According to the ICC Annual Progress Report for 2013, on page 6 talking about the work being done at Ocotillo Wells SVRA, I quote "data developed from occupancy surveys for five previous years indicates a stable population of Flat-Tailed Horned Lizards in the park". Now, if a State Vehicular Recreation Area can have a stable population, then this indicates to me that Off-Roading is not as detrimental to the FTHL as the petition indicates.

Furthermore in 2005 Tyler Grant published his Thesis on the Effects of Off-Highway Vehicles on the FTHL. A study was performed on lizards during the hibernation season, which coincides with the off-highway vehicle recreation season. Lizards were equipped with radio-telemeters and followed into hibernation. A 100 m X 100 m plot was selected around each lizard and 36 lizards were divided into three treatment groups: high impact, low impact and control. Treatment consisted of timed riding of off-highway vehicles. In all treatment groups there was a 100% survival rate. It should be noted that very few

people recreate in the desert during the summer when the FTHL is most active.

The OW interpretive staff promotes the sustainability of our park by encouraging our visitors to follow the TREAD LIGHTY principals of responsible off-roading to minimize our impact on the environment.

Ocotillo Wells SVRA recently completed, in my opinion, a most successful FTHL demographic survey of a nine hectare plot in the area of Tarantula Wash. The official results have been reported to the ICC and they are a far cry from the results listed on page 12 of this petition where they claim "so few lizards were captured (nine in total between three plots), that survey efforts were discontinued". I hope you take the time to review the ICC reports before making your decision.

We feel that the change in listing would drastically affect the way that we recreate in the desert and will have a damaging effect on both the Off-Road industry and tourism in the Imperial Valley.

If you want to protect the FTHL and its habitat I suggest that you encourage our government to stop leasing our public lands for renewable energy and instead let them buy or lease the thousands of acres of fallow farm lands that can be found throughout Southern California. These lands are already disturbed and are no longer considered FTHL habitat.

Funding for surveys has always been problematic at best, so maybe we can tap into the Off Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Grant Program to help finance some of the much needed research on the FTHL.

In conclusion, just because something is rarely seen, doesn't mean it is rare and warrants listing as endangered.

Thank You,

Charles Steven Chaney

Charles Chaney



- 1 Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard
- 2 Desert Horned Lizard
- 3 Sahara mustard seed pod being carried by a Harvester Ant
- 4 Two Flat-Tailed Horned Lizards
- 5 Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard on the sand
- 6 Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard buried in the sand (follow the tracks)
- 7 Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard buried in sand (note the horns)
- 8 Where's Waldo?
- 9 Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard sunning himself on rock
- 10 Baby Flat-Tailed Horned Lizard (that is a nickel)

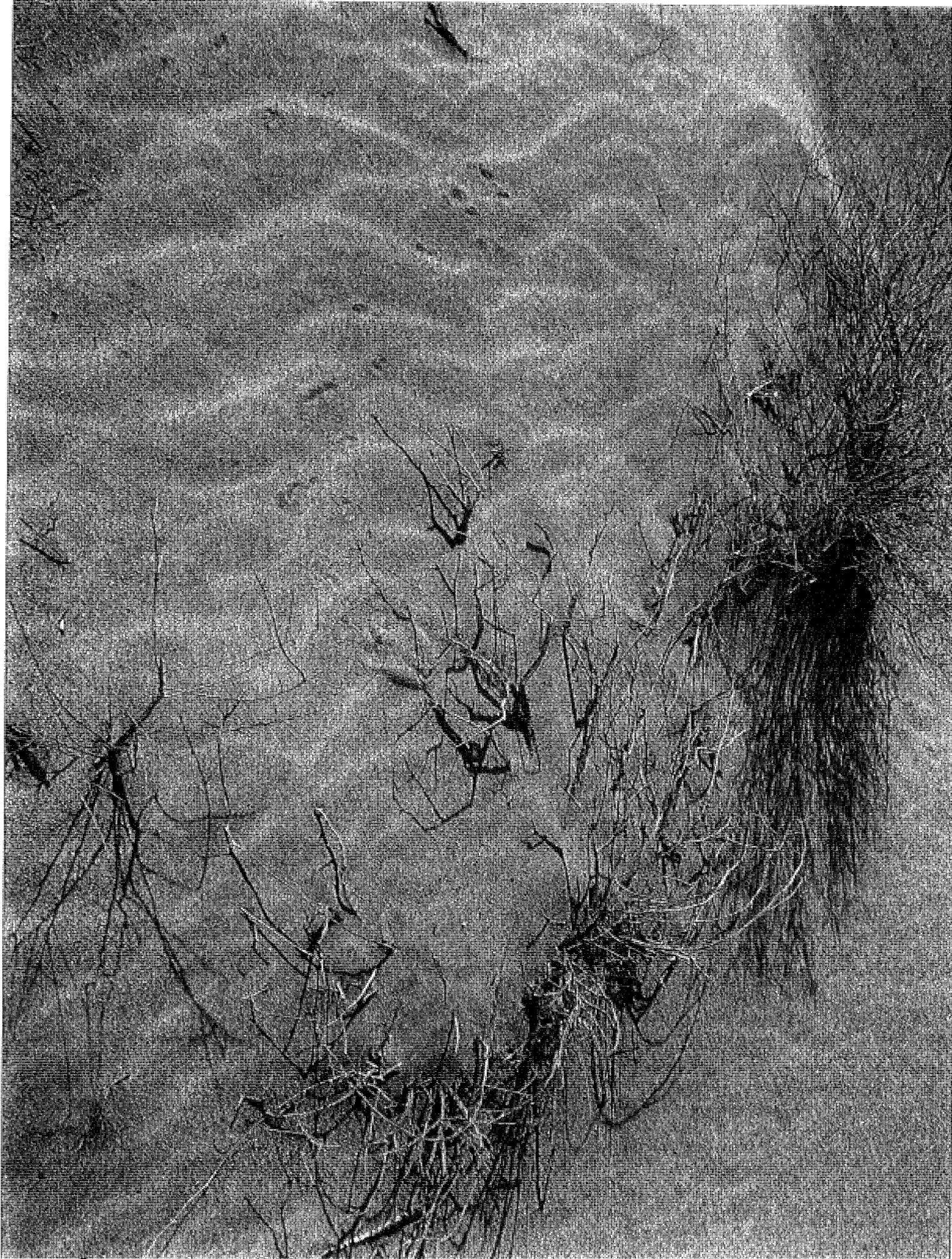






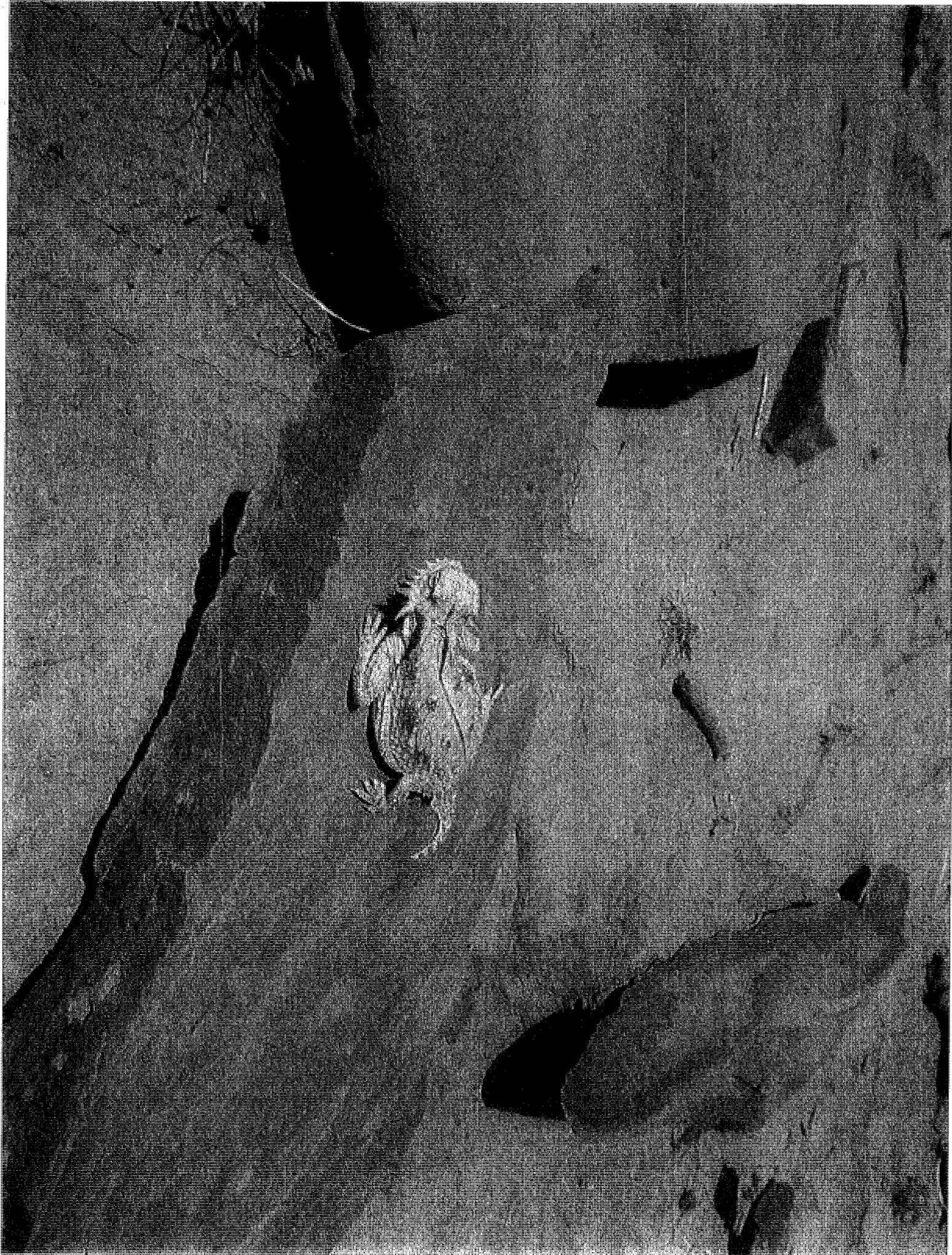












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California Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
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ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, Governor
DONALD KOCH, Director



May 12, 2010

Subject: Authorization for Steve Chaney

To whom it may concern,

Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations authorizes the Department of Fish and Game (the Department) to regulate the take and possession of wildlife in the State of California.

This letter provides proof of authorization by the Department for the individual named below to take, possess, and transport **Flat-tailed Horned Lizards** (*Phrynosoma mcallii*) out of harm's way, while performing the duties of biological monitor, as part of mitigation requirements for construction or other activities which place individual lizards at risk. This person is also authorized to possess lizards briefly for data collection, during surveys conducted for public agencies. He/she has completed Department-approved training in tracking and finding Flat-tailed Horned Lizards.

This authorization does not permit activities, such trapping, marking, or sacrifice of lizards, which otherwise would require the possession of a current Scientific Collecting Permit issued by the Department.

This authorization is in effect permanently, unless revoked, at the Department's discretion.

Sincerely,

Craig J. Weightman
Senior Environmental Scientist
Inland Deserts Region

Authorized Individual:

Steve Chaney
10120 Pino Dr.
Lakeside, CA 92040