

**Appendix J:
Habitat Assessment**

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February 18, 2007

Mr. Michael Perry
California Collaborative Solutions
P. O. Box 706
Big Bear City, CA 92314

Dear Mr. Perry,

This letter reports my observations and evaluation of potential habitat for the Southern Rubber Boa (SRB, *Charina bottae umbratica*), a State of California Threatened Species, on two properties in the Big Bear Lake area on February 9, 2007. Accompanied by you, Lisa Kegarice, and Marni McKernan, I walked the 62 acre "Moon Camp Tract" in Fawnskin between about 11:20 AM and 12:20 PM. After lunch, you and I walked about half of the 160 acre "High Timber Ranch" tract in the Moonridge area, also driving to briefly view two other parts of the tract, between approximately 1:45 PM and 3:15 PM. Lisa and Marni accompanied us for a few minutes at the beginning of our walk there.

The Moon Camp Tract in Fawnskin is immediately adjacent to the north shore of Big Bear Lake and has a south-facing exposure at an elevation of about 6,800 feet. Roughly the western third of the tract is bounded by developed property while the eastern two thirds is bounded by Forest Service land on the north and, I believe, undeveloped private property on the east. The tract is quite dry, sloping unevenly upward to the north and east with a couple of shallow, dry ravines in the eastern portion. In the western portion, the vegetation is composed of an open stand of Jeffrey Pine, with a sparse understory of Great Basin Sagebrush and herbaceous plants. Here, there also is an open "pebble plain" habitat. The stands of pine become somewhat more dense in the eastern part of the tract with larger sagebrush shrubs. Throughout the tract, litter and duff are very thin, but there are a few moderately weathered, medium-sized logs scattered around. Significantly, there are no rock outcrops, which generally are used by SRBs for hibernation sites.

My assessment of the Moon Camp Tract is that it is poor SRB habitat. Further, it is outside of the area mapped as potential SRB habitat in the 1985 Forest Service habitat management guide for the SRB, and there have been no sightings of SRBs reported in the area. My recommendations for mitigating development of the tract are that trees and downed logs be allowed to remain in place, to the extent that clearing is not required by the development process, and that a 50 foot setback be maintained along the deepest ravine at the eastern edge of the property. These measures will serve to protect a limited amount of habitat for native wildlife, such as lizards, snakes, salamanders, chipmunks, mice and wood rats, as well as incidental SRBs.

The High Timber Ranch tract is located on Moonridge, immediately west of Sawmill Canyon and Sugarloaf, with developed property existing along the southwestern boundary. It has a north-facing exposure with several shallow ravines draining to the north-northwest and alternating with gently sloping ridges oriented in the same direction. The crowns of the ridges

are rather flat with small "pebble plain" habitats. Elevation at the upper levels of the property is about 7,200 feet. The vegetation is dominated by fairly open stands of Jeffrey Pine, mixed with small Black Oaks in much of the area. A shrubby understory is present in places, but with little sagebrush. Toward the eastern portion of the property there are occasional Pinyon Pines. Leaf litter and duff are moderately thick where there are Black Oaks, and well weathered medium-sized to large logs are common throughout the site. Significantly, again, no rock outcrops were observed.

My assessment of the High timber Ranch tract is that it is marginally suitable as SRB habitat. The northern exposure, denser vegetation, thicker layers of litter and duff, and greater abundance of large logs provide potential cover for SRBs and other forest floor wildlife. However, the site is outside of the area of potential habitat mapped in the 1985 SRB habitat guide, and no SRBs have been reported in the area. Still, I recommend that the portion of the site that I was not able to survey on foot be surveyed for rock outcrops by an experience field biologist, specifically Lisa Kegarice. Mitigations for development should be similar to those recommended for the Fawnskin site, with 50 foot setbacks along the ravines. If any rock outcrops 10 feet or greater in diameter are discovered in future surveys, they also should be protected by 50 foot setbacks.

I hope that the information and assessments I have provided above are sufficient for your purposes. Please find my invoice enclosed. If you have any questions or concerns, however, please do not hesitate to contact me by e-mail (grstewart@csupomon.edu) or phone (909-869-4093).

Sincerely yours,



Glenn R. Stewart, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus of Zoology
and Environmental Science

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May 1, 2007

Michael Perry
California Collaborative Solutions
P.O. Box 706
Big Bear City, CA 92314

RE: High Timber Ranch Survey

Dear Mr. Perry,

On February 9, 2007 I accompanied you and Dr. Glenn Stewart on a walking survey of the High Timber Ranch Property in the upper Moonridge area of Big Bear Lake. Dr. Stewart was able to survey approximately one half of the High Timber Ranch site that day and provided a February 18, 2007 letter report (attached) detailing his findings.

In his February 18, 2007 letter report, Dr. Stewart recommended that I survey the remainder of the High Timber site on foot to verify the absence of any rock outcrops.

On March 9, 2007, I surveyed the remainder of the site on foot with you and verified that there are no rock crops within the area of the site that Dr. Stewart did not survey on February 9, 2007.

If you need any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Kegarice'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Lisa Kegarice
Ecologist / Regulatory Specialist

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