



RCHCA

RIVERSIDE COUNTY HABITAT CONSERVATION AGENCY

Stephens' Kangaroo Rat (SKR) Mitigation Fee Manual

PREPARED FOR:
RCHCA Member
Agencies

PREPARED BY:
Riverside County Habitat Conservation
Agency

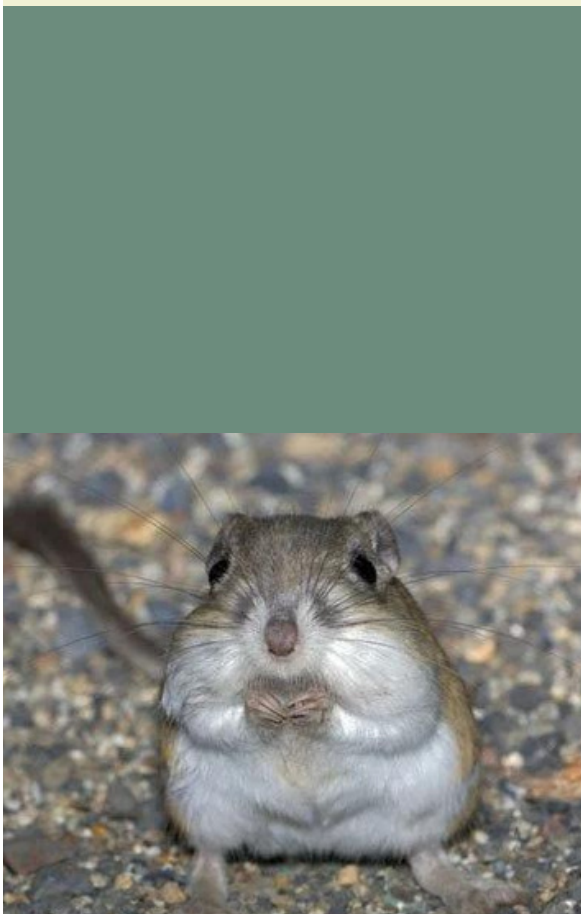
Revised 06/2026

FASCINATING SKR FACTS

1. Stephens' kangaroo rat is named after American zoologist Frank Stephens.
2. SKR have external fur-lined cheek pouches for carrying seeds.
3. They build complex burrows with separate rooms for sleeping, living, and food storage, where seeds can absorb up to 30% more moisture.
4. They are nocturnal with large, sensitive eyes that allow them to see in complete darkness.
5. Kangaroo rats get almost all their water by converting fats from dry seeds during digestion.
6. They can leap up to 9 feet in one bound, helping them escape predators, even snakes!

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Overview/Background

This manual provides guidance to jurisdictions on the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat (SKR) mitigation fee program, including fee calculation, collection, and remittance.



Overview

The Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency (RCHCA) was formed as a Joint Powers Authority to implement the SKR HCP. Today, there are eleven member jurisdictions in the SKR Plan Area (see Pg. 2).

RCHCA's activities include managing approximately 40,000 acres of reserve lands in Riverside County and biological research to study and protect the SKR population. As of 2022, the SKR is considered a threatened species, downlisted from its original endangered status. The SKR mitigation fee is a critical funding source for RCHCA's ongoing activities.

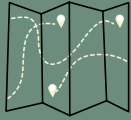
Background

Originally adopted in the late 1980s and last updated in 1996, the fee supports the RCHCA's ongoing responsibilities, including habitat management, monitoring, and compliance with state and federal endangered species laws

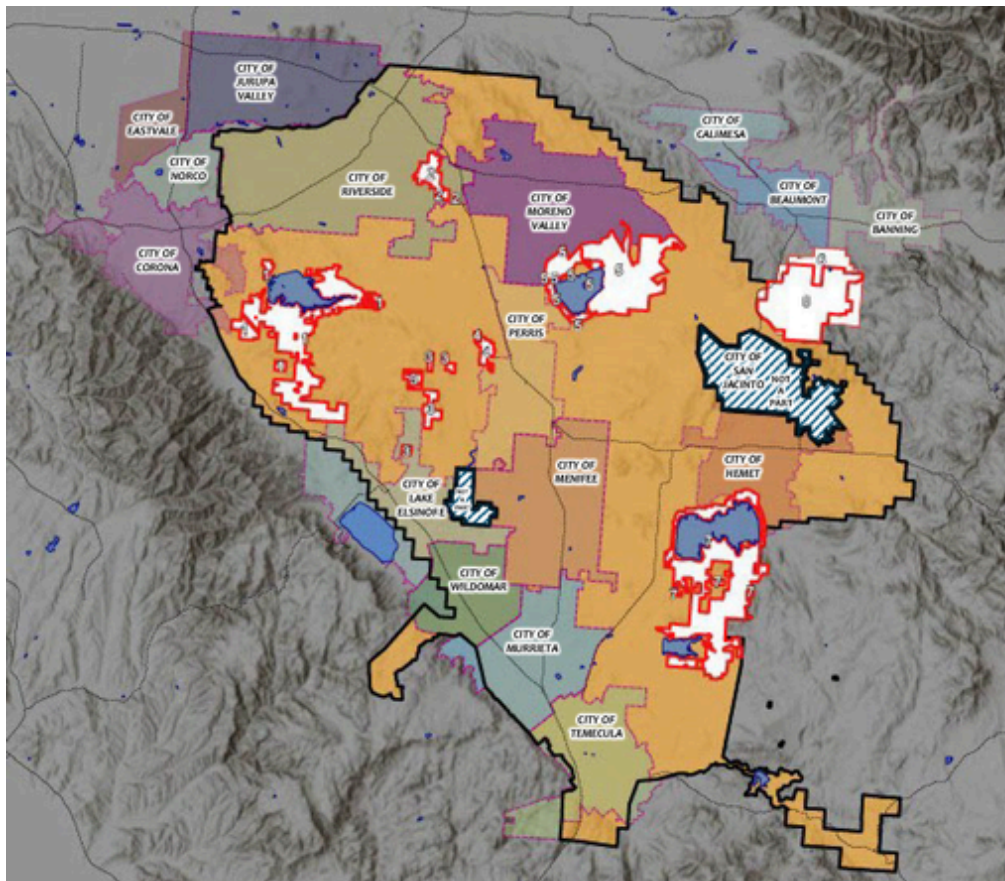
In 2026, the fee was updated through a Nexus Fee Study to ensure it reflects current costs and meets the requirements of the Mitigation Fee Act. The fee is applied to new development within the SKR Plan Area to mitigate impacts to the species and its habitat while allowing for streamlined permitting. To maintain its effectiveness over time, the fee will be automatically adjusted annually based on an inflation index.

SKR HCP Plan Area

SKR HCP Plan Area and Member Agencies

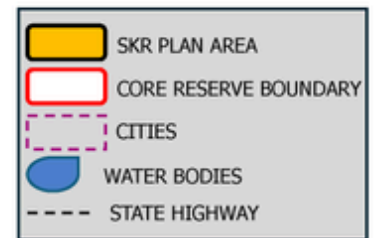
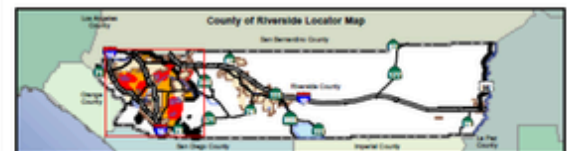


The SKR HCP Plan Area encompasses 533,954 acres in western Riverside County and includes the County of Riverside and the Cities of Corona, Hemet, Lake Elsinore, Menifee, Moreno Valley, Murrieta, Perris, Riverside, Temecula, and Wildomar. The SKR HCP provides these member agencies with incidental take authorization for SKR through permits issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife, with compliance achieved through implementation of the HCP, including payment of the SKR mitigation fee.



SKR CORE RESERVES

1. Lake Mathews / Estelle Mountain
2. Sycamore Canyon
3. Steele Peak
4. Motte Rimrock
5. San Jacinto/Lake Perris
6. Potrero ACEC
7. Southwest Riverside County Multi-Species Reserve
8. San Jacinto Wildlife Area – Potrero Unit



Definitions



Agriculture

Ongoing or existing agricultural operations that do not result in the permanent conversion of land to non-agricultural uses. The conversion of agricultural land to urban or other non-agricultural uses constitutes Development and is subject to the mitigation fee unless otherwise exempted.

Development

Any activity that results in the conversion of land to a more intensive use and that requires discretionary or ministerial approval from a local agency. This includes, but is not limited to, grading, construction of structures, subdivision of land, installation of infrastructure, or any other activity that results in permanent impacts to land or habitat. Development does not include activities specifically exempted under the HCP, such as certain agricultural uses or maintenance activities, as defined by the implementing ordinance.

Fee Area

The geographic area within which the SKR mitigation fee is applicable. This area corresponds to the SKR Plan Area as defined in the HCP and includes all lands subject to the fee pursuant to the implementing ordinance.

Gross Acreage

Gross acreage is the total area of a legal parcel, expressed in acres, used to calculate SKR Mitigation Fee. Gross Acreage includes all land within the parcel boundaries regardless of constraints or intended use, including but not limited to rights-of-way, easements, undevelopable areas, and environmentally constrained lands. Note that Net Acreage (disturbed developed area) is not used in SKR mitigation fee calculations.

Dwelling/Residential Unit

A single unit, providing complete and independent living facilities for one or more persons, including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, cooking or sanitation.



Purpose of the Fee

The purpose of the SKR mitigation fee is to contribute to the funding required to implement the SKR HCP and, as a result, help maintain the incidental take permits for new private and public development in the SKR Plan Area under the federal and State Endangered Species Acts. Maintaining the incidental take permit is necessary to allow for future development, and without the development community paying for the cost of the SKR HCP, individual applicants would need to apply independently for development approval under federal and State law if the project impacts a threatened or endangered species. The federal Endangered Species Act specifically requires that the applicant for incidental take permit “ensure that adequate funding for the plan will be provided.” In addition, the Mitigation Fee helps provide the regional benefit of streamlined economic development in the SKR Plan Area as well as the management of the contiguous open spaces that serve as a community amenity.



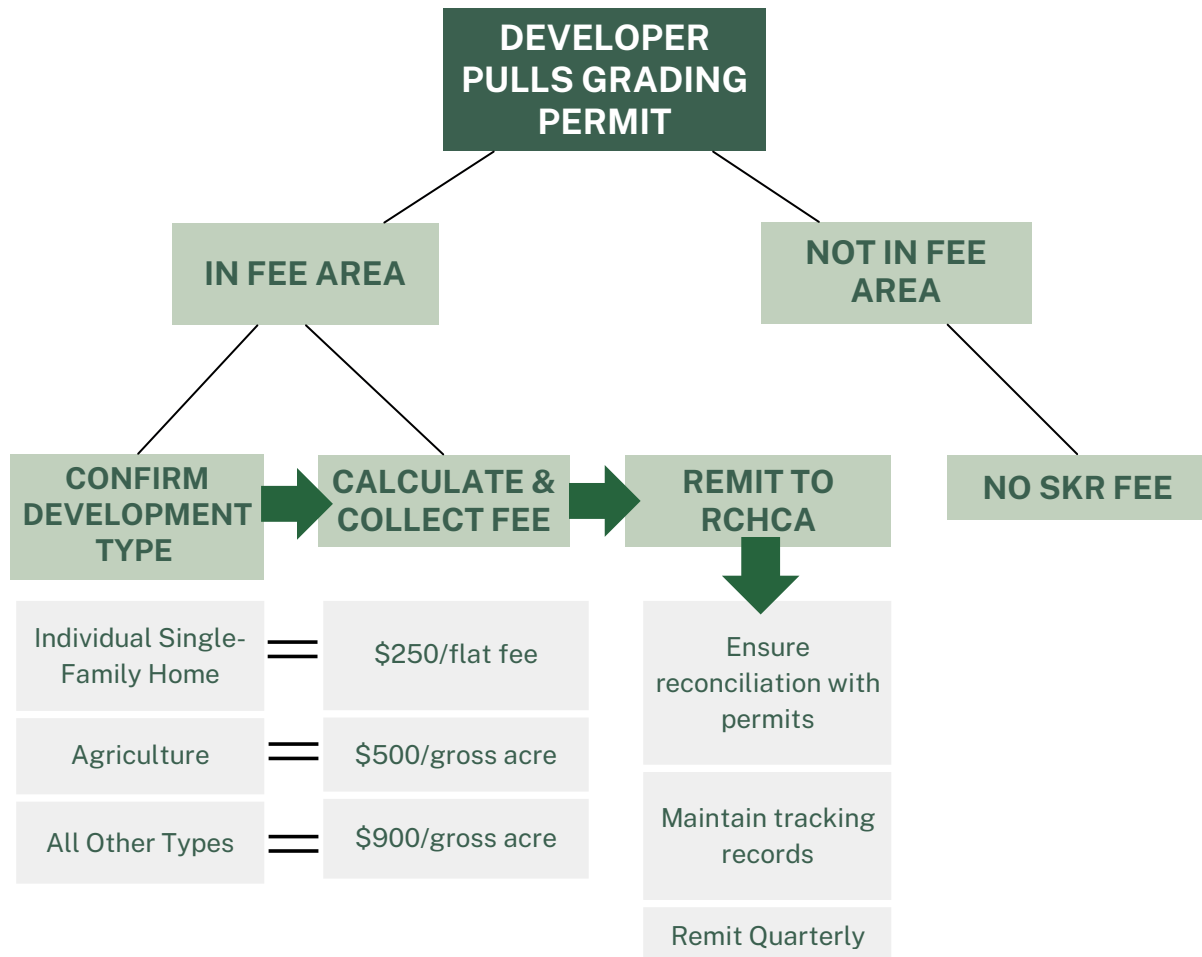
Fee Schedule

Refer to City Ordinance 663 for more details

DEVELOPMENT TYPE	FEE	UNIT BASIS
RESIDENTIAL, INDIVIDUAL SINGLE-FAMILY HOME CONSTRUCTION (SINGLE PARCEL)	\$250	Flat Fee
AGRICULTURE	\$500/gross acre	Gross Acre
NON-PROFIT	\$900/gross acre Reduce fee by 75%	Gross Acre
ALL OTHER DEVELOPMENT	\$900/gross acre	Gross Acre



SKR Mitigation Fee Collections Process



The SKR Mitigation Fee is collected prior to issuing the grading permit.

Verify that no SKR fee was collected for that parcel previously.

Exemptions

The following is a list of exemptions where the SKR Mitigation Fee does not apply

1. Reconstruction of structures damaged by natural causes.
2. Rehabilitation or remodeling of existing structures or additions.
3. Any parcel for which California Department of Fish and Wildlife and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have approved other mitigation procedures.
4. Any parcel used by local, state, or federal entities for governmental purposes (i.e. schools).
5. Any parcel for which the fee has been previously paid (exclusions apply, please see Ordinance 663 for details)



Remittance

Section 3.10.1 **Contribution of Mitigation Fees**

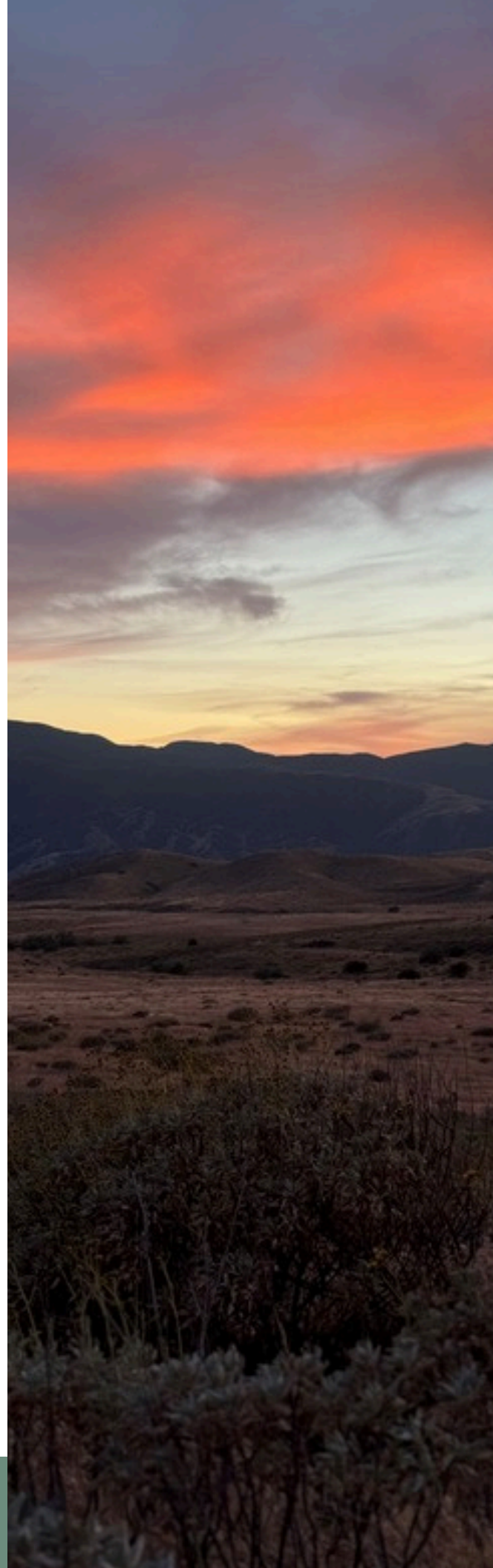
All mitigation fees collected for the Stephens' kangaroo rat shall be forwarded to the RCHCA quarterly:

for the period of
April 1 through June 30 before July 31;

for the period of
July 1 through September 30 before
October 31;

for the period of
October 1 through December 31 before
January 31;

and for the period of
January 1 through March 31 before April 30
of each fiscal year.



Examples and Common Errors

COMMON ERRORS



Here are some common errors when calculating SKR mitigation fees:

- Using net acreage instead of gross acreage
- Applying the unit fee for tract developments where the parcel has been subdivided

Example 1:

A home developer is putting in a 30-acre tract development with 100 homes.

Gross acreage is used for subdivision, tract, and multi-residential development.



30 acres x \$900
The SKR fee is \$27,000

Example 2:

Mr. and Ms. Johnson purchased a 2 acre plot of land, and want to build a single family house on it.

For individual single family homes on single parcels, the \$250 flat fee applies.



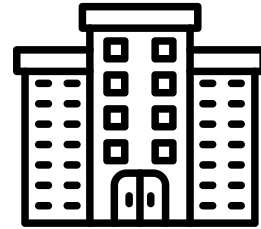
1 SFR X \$250
The SKR fee is \$250

Examples Continued

Example 3:

A developer is putting in an apartment complex on 5 acres. There are 250 units within the complex.

Since this is multi-residential development, the gross acre fee applies.

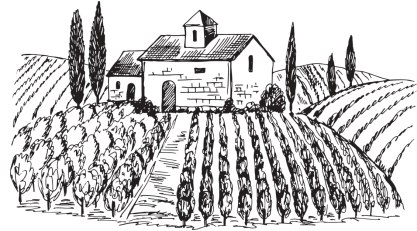


5 acres x \$900
The SKR fee is \$4,500

Example 4:

A winery in Temecula is putting in a new ag. out-building on an 3-acre undeveloped plot of their land.

A winery out-building would qualify as agriculture, so the ag. gross acreage fee of \$500 applies.

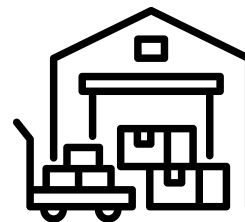


3 acres X \$500
The SKR fee is \$1,500

Example 5:

Amazon is putting in a warehouse on 90 acres. The property was previously developed, but before 1996 when the SKR fee went into effect, so no SKR fee was paid.

This would be other development. The gross acre fee applies.



90 acres x \$900
The SKR fee is \$81,000

Contact us for any questions

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