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STATUS OF THE ENDANGERED MORRO BAY KANGAROO RAT IN 2011

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Ecology and Management of Small Mammals II *Friday, 9:05 a.m., Arlington*

Abstract: The Morro Bay kangaroo rat *Dipodomys heermanni morroensis* is endemic to Los Osos, San Luis Obispo County, California. It was listed as endangered in 1970, and recovery efforts have not been successful. The last capture occurred in 1988, and the last captive individual died in 1993. There are two main causes of decline. First, direct loss of habitat has occurred by development in Los Osos. Second, due to the absence of fire, its optimal habitat comprising the early seral stages of coastal dune scrub has progressed to dense, mature plant communities lacking open spaces for hopping and growth of their annual food plants. Despite many trapping efforts since 1988, the Morro Bay kangaroo rat has not been captured again. However, we have observed recent potential signs at several historic sites suggesting that some isolated colonies may still persist. In addition, we have been unable to search on several large private properties, including two where the taxon previously occurred. We will continue searching in 2011, which will include trapping and possibly habitat restoration by prescribed fire at the sites with potential signs.