

**Memorandum**

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**To** Rowan Percheron LLC

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**From** Richard Peel, Senior Consultant/Biologist

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**Date** May 2023

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**Reference** Percheron Data Center Project, Morrow County, Oregon

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**Subject** Washington Ground Squirrel Protocol Surveys

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This document describes the results of three surveys completed for Washington Ground Squirrels (*Urocitellus washingtoni*) (WGS) at the site of the proposed Rowan Percheron, LLC (Rowan) data center (Project Parcel or Project) in Morrow County, Oregon. The first of these surveys (Survey 1) was a clearance sweep conducted from Thursday, March 2 through Friday, March 3, 2023, within a 300-foot buffer of geotechnical drilling locations. Environmental Resources Management, Inc.'s (ERM) communication with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) confirmed that initial clearance sweeps would be sufficient for the geotechnical work to proceed outside of the approved WGS survey window. Additionally, two line transect surveys (Surveys 2 and 3) were completed on Thursday, April 6 and Friday, April 28, 2023, respectively. All surveys were completed in coordination and accordance with protocol provided by ODFW.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

A full area survey of WGS habitat and population was completed by Senior ERM Biologist, Richard Peel. The survey site is characterized as rural rangeland and located in Boardman, Oregon. An initial clearance sweep survey was completed from March 2 through March 3, 2023. Two protocol line transects surveys took place April 6 and April 28, 2023. Line transects surveys were organized in a grid format of parallel transects spaced at 60-meter intervals. No WGSs were observed throughout the duration of the surveys.

**SITE DESCRIPTION**

The site is located approximately 10 miles southwest of Boardman, Oregon. The surveys took place during the spring months, from the beginning of adult squirrels breeding season to the emergence and dispersal of juveniles. The surveys were completed in ideal weather to maximize the potential for observations. The site area is characterized as a grassland/shrub steppe community, comprised of sagebrush, grasses, and other shrub species. The site was observed to have mild disturbance from agriculture and rangeland use. The area is mapped as a potential WGS location by the ODFW Compass Mapper and appears to provide the general necessary habitat.

## METHODS

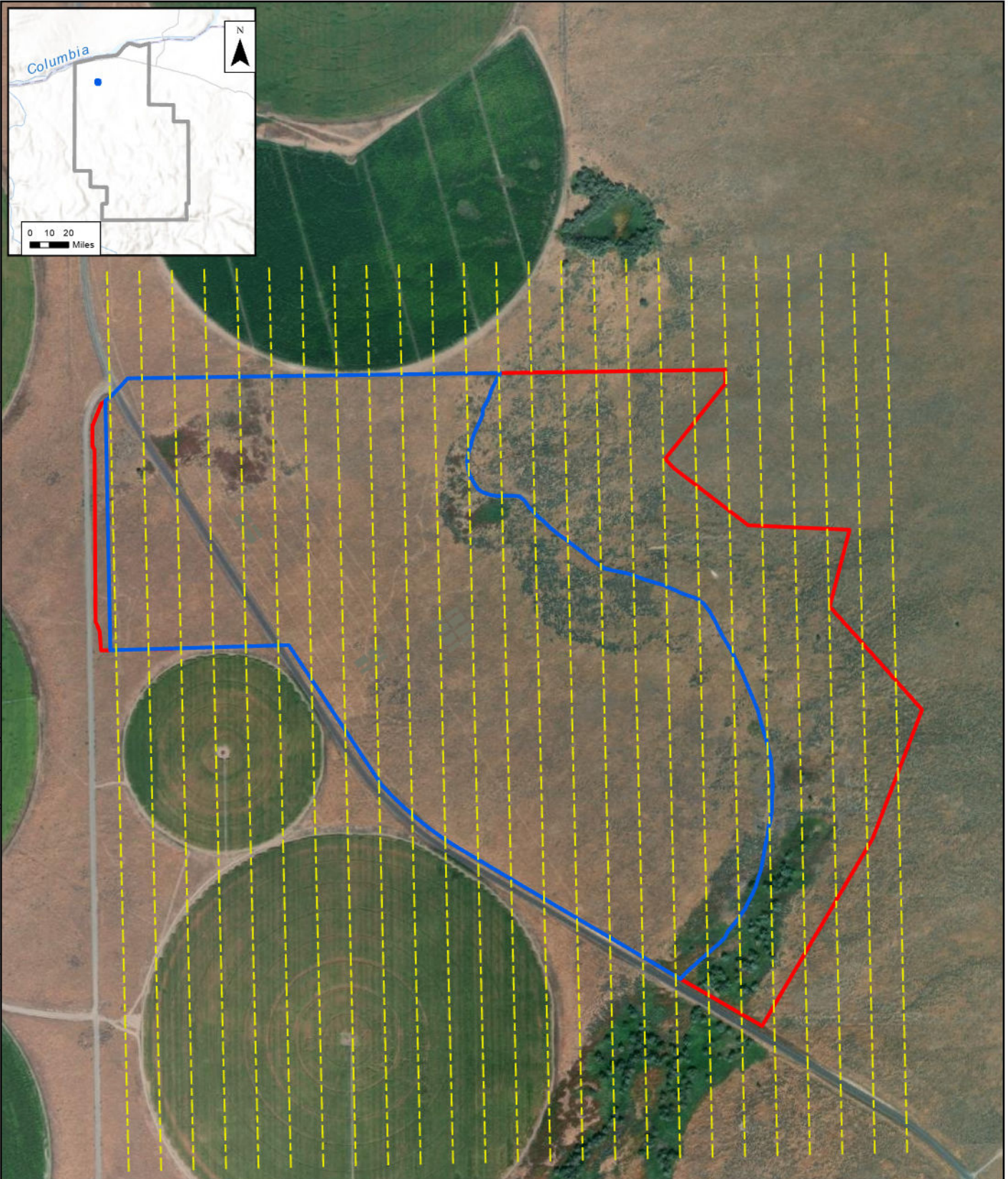
All surveys were completed using survey methods developed by ODFW and the referenced study “Status and habitat use of the Washington Ground Squirrel *Spermophilus washingtonion* State of Oregon Lands, South Boeving, Oregon in 1999.” As Survey 1 was conducted outside the recommended window, the methods were tailored to the presence of breeding adults and potential active burrow locations.

Surveys 2 and 3 were conducted during the period when juvenile squirrels are most active for emergence and dispersal. This was done to capitalize on the potential for alarm calls and surface observance. Line transects were spaced 60 meters (197 feet) apart for maximum WGS visual and audio confirmation. During Survey 2, the transects were aligned north-south. For Survey 3 the transects were rotated east-west to complete a grid coverage of the site or maximum detection. Confirmed detection of WGS is understood to be made by auditory or visual observation only. Additionally, any ground burrows that met the parameters of potential habitat were investigated and marked for signs of activity, such as scat, soil apron, bedding materials, or recent foraging. Rodent burrows were extremely common on the site and potential burrows were marked for due diligence.

## RESULTS

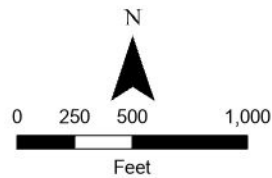
No visual or auditory confirmation of WGS was observed during the surveys. As WGS are known to appropriate burrows created by other rodent species, potential burrows were marked, but not accepted as confirmation of WGS presence. Although several burrows were observed to meet the requisite size parameters for WGS (4-8 inches in diameter), none of the burrows showed the additional signs of activity listed above. Other species of note observed onsite included white tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), and ring-necked pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*).

**FIGURE**



**Legend**

-  Project Footprint
-  Project Parcel
-  Bio Transects



**Figure 1**  
**Site Vicinity Map**  
 Percheron Data Center  
 Rowan Percheron, LLC  
 Morrow County, Oregon