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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 27, 2008

Barker Ranch Update

Inyo County Sheriff Bill Lutze announced today that analysis of the reports and information gathered about sites of interest warrant further soil testing on Barker Ranch and Myers Ranch before any final decision is made to excavate in search of bodies.

"Myers Ranch is private property, Barker Ranch is National Park Property, and both are compelling reasons to be as cautious as possible and use every reasonable testing method available before disturbing the ground with excavation," Lutze said in reaching his decision.

Forensic experts report that methods are available to test the soil with minimal intrusion while being able to determine with a high degree of reliability whether bodies are buried in a location.

Forensic teams will focus on a very few spots in which search dogs recently indicated possible findings of dead bodies with some consistency. The various dogs gave inconsistent findings at many spots on the ranch property and all dogs were not controlled in the same manner accepted by recognized dog search organizations. The Sheriff's Office will determine whether to keep testing soil if the tests at the few "hot spots" fail to find bodies buried during the Manson era.

These further forensic searches will be closed to the news media to protect both the integrity of the testing and property rights of the owner. A news release will be issued to report findings to the media, expected by about April 25th. If forensic testing warrants further excavation, the Sheriff's Office will determine whether and how a limited number of reporters might be accommodated at any "dig" site.

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