

3.6 Recreation: Parklands, Recreation Areas, and Wildlife Refuges

The Winchester to Temecula Corridor (WT Corridor) study area includes a number of municipal parks, recreational facilities, conservation areas, and wildlife refuges. These public lands were identified through early coordination and were mapped as control points to guide the early planning of the project. Public parklands and wildlife refuges are important resources because these lands have special status under the provisions of Section 4(f) of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1968 (now codified as 49 USC 303). Through early identification of these resources, opportunities for avoidance were considered in the earliest stages of project planning (please refer to CETAP Working Papers 1 through 7a/7b prepared by Transcore, 1999-2000). A separate Section 4(f) analysis is provided in Chapter 5.0 of this EIS/EIR. This section provides a review of existing and planned recreational resources within the WT Corridor.

3.6.1 City/County/State Parks and Recreation Areas

The parks and recreation areas located within the WT Corridor were mapped and are listed in Table 3.6.A. The inventory of parks and recreation resources included municipal, county, State and national parks, playgrounds and playing fields open to the public for walk-on or scheduled/league use, and recreation areas such as publicly accessible lakes. Recreational areas within the WT Corridor are shown in Figure 3.6.1. Park and recreation areas located within 0.4 km (0.25 mi) on either side of the bandwidths were also identified. All of the parklands are located outside of the bandwidths but within the 0.4 km (0.25 mi) study area, with the exception of Diamond Valley Lake.

3.6.1.1 Lake Skinner Regional Park

Lake Skinner Regional Park consists of 2,446 hectares (ha) (6,040 acres [ac]), including Lake Skinner, a man-made lake operated by Metropolitan Water District (MWD), and it affords activities such as fishing, boating, hiking, and camping. Lake Skinner is an important recreational resource within the region. The alternatives closest to Lake Skinner are approximately 1.6 km (1.0 mi) away, along Butterfield Stage Road (Alternatives 5a and 5b).

3.6.1.2 Diamond Valley Lake

Diamond Valley Lake is a 1,822 ha (4,500 ac) lake that is owned and operated by MWD. The primary purpose of Diamond Valley Lake is to provide a six month emergency supply of water to Southern California. There are currently no existing recreation resources at Diamond Valley Lake, and current, pending plans call for two museums (The Western Center for Archaeology and Paleontology, and the Southern California Water Education Center), a youth camp, and recreational water use at the eastern end of the lake. Although future recreation uses for the western portion of the

Table 3.6.A - Existing City/County/State Parklands

Alternative	Resource	Jurisdiction	Size/Facilities	Information Source	Comments
1, 3, 5a, 5b	Diamond Valley Lake	Unincorporated County/Hemet	58.73 ha (145 ac)	MWD website	Water reservoir and limited-use recreation
5a	John Magee Park	Temecula	0.41 ha (1 ac)	City of Temecula Community Services Department	Developed park facility - 44656 Corie Veranos
5a	Pala Community Park	Temecula	4.05 ha (10 ac)	City of Temecula Community Services Department	Developed park facility - 44900 Temecula Lane
5a	Paloma Del Sol Park	Temecula	3.65 ha (9 ac)	City of Temecula Community Services Department	Developed park facility - 32099 De Portola Road
5a	Rotary Park	Temecula	0.1 ha (0.25 ac)	City of Temecula Community Services Department	Developed park facility - 20016 Pujol Street
5a	Sam Hicks Monument Park	Temecula	1.36 ha (3.35 ac)	City of Temecula Community Services Department	Developed park facility - 41970 Morena Drive
5a	Temecula Duck Pond	Temecula	2.03 ha (5 ac)	City of Temecula Community Services Department	Developed park facility - 28250 Ynez Road/Rancho California Road
5a, 5b	Butterfield Stage Park	Temecula	1.22 ha (3 ac)	City of Temecula Community Services Department	Developed park facility - 33654 De Portola Road
5b	Loma Linda Park	Temecula	1.22 ha (3 ac)	City of Temecula Community Services Department	Developed park facility - E. Loma Linda Road
H	Alta Murrieta Sports Park	Murrieta	4.46 ha (11 ac)	City of Murrieta Parks and Recreation Department	Developed park facility - Alta Murrieta
H	Barratt Park	Murrieta	1.62 ha (4 ac)	City of Murrieta Parks and Recreation Department	Developed park facility - Las Brisas Road
H	Meadowridge Park	Murrieta	1.5 ha (3.7 ac)	City of Murrieta Parks and Recreation Department	Developed park facility - Hancock
H	Rancho Acacia	Murrieta	6.2 ha (15.3 ac)	City of Murrieta Parks and Recreation Department	Developed park facility - Whitewood

Figure 3.6.1 - Recreation Areas

site, which may possibly be affected by the WT Corridor project, are contemplated, there are no plans approved or being developed at this time for such use.¹

3.6.2 National and State Parks

There are no National or State parks within or adjacent to the WT Corridor alternatives. The closest State Park, Lake Perris, is approximately 16 km (10 mi) from the nearest WT Corridor alternative.

3.6.3 Conservation Areas/Wildlife Areas

3.6.3.1 Santa Margarita Ecological Reserve

The Santa Margarita Ecological Reserve (SMER) is a field station of San Diego State University (SDSU). SMER is one of four SDSU field stations. The reserves are dedicated to teaching and research in the field sciences. SMER encompasses a total area of 1,759 ha (4,344 ac) and was established in 1962. It is located about 3 km (1.8 mi) south of Temecula (Figure 5.1). The core property of the reserve was acquired by CSU San Diego through court settlement of a private estate. Additional adjacent lands are leased from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Several parcels were recently acquired by The Nature Conservancy with funds from the California Department of Transportation. The MWD of Southern California has a right-of-way across the reserve for the San Diego Aqueduct and cooperates in aspects of reserve management. All of the reserve lands are managed by SMER, and research is primarily directed to aspects of plant and ecosystem terrestrial and riparian ecology. The Santa Margarita Ecological Reserve Area of Critical Environmental Concern (BLM designation) is managed as a core reserve while still permitting educational and scientific research activities.

3.6.4 Schools

While the primary purpose of school playgrounds is structured physical education classes and recreation for students, such lands may also serve public recreational needs. When the playground is open to the public and serves either organized or recreational needs (walk-on activity), it is considered a recreational resource (FHWA, Section 4(f) Policy Paper, 1989). As shown in Table 3.6.B, only one school is located within the WT Corridor, within the public school district of Murrieta Valley Unified School District (USD). It is the policy of the public school district to allow recreational uses on school property after regular school hours. The individual schools determine what uses will be permitted on school property. Some common uses include organized and informal sporting events and practices, and walk-on use of playground equipment.

¹ Telephone conversations: Mr. Leslie Barrett, Senior Engineer, MWD, June 17 and 28, 2002.