

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.