



1.0 Introduction

The MSHCP's strategy for managing the MSHCP Conservation Area requires a balanced approach. It allocates responsibility for its assembly and long-term management to the County, state, and federal governments, the fourteen Cities in the western County, and private and public entities engaged in construction activities that potentially impact the species covered under the MSHCP. The MSHCP acknowledges the obligation of local projects, both public and private, to mitigate their impacts on species. To encourage Conservation on privately owned lands, the MSHCP's implementation strategy relies heavily on incentives. Where incentives are not sufficient, Conservation will require the purchase of properties from willing sellers.

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

1.2.1 Background

Historically, urban Development in Southern California has occurred in the coastal areas of Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego Counties, resulting in a significant loss of important biological resources in the region. The inland valleys and hillsides of Riverside and San Bernardino Counties have, until recently, remained largely rural, agricultural, and relatively undeveloped. Natural Habitats that were once common and extensive in Southern California have rapidly declined due to this historic Development pattern and to increasing Development pressure in the northwestern and southwestern parts of the County over the past 15 years.

The burden of mitigating the effects of urbanization now falls largely on the County, the Cities and private landowners who hold much of the last remaining intact Habitats in the region. As Development pressure has increased, so have conflicts between landowning interests and the state and federal regulatory processes associated with protecting Endangered, Threatened, and rare Species. Conflicts over species Conservation threaten the ability of local jurisdictions to plan for and provide the infrastructure necessary for economic development and a high quality of life in the County.

As urbanization has increased within the County, an increasing number of proponents of public and private Developments have been required to obtain "Take permits" from Wildlife Agencies for impacts to Endangered, Threatened, and rare Species and their Habitats. This process, however, has resulted in costly delays in public and private Development projects and an assemblage of unconnected Habitat areas created on a project-by-project basis. This piecemeal and uncoordinated effort to mitigate the effects of Development does not sustain wildlife mobility, genetic flow, or ecosystem health, which require large, interconnected natural areas.



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The County's population in 2000 was approximately 1.5 million people. Its population is expected to double by 2020, to reach approximately 3.5 million by 2030, and to be approximately 4.5 million by 2040, according to forecasts by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). This is nearly a 400% increase over the next 40 years. Most of Southern California's growth over the next 40 years is expected to occur in the Inland Empire (San Bernardino and Riverside Counties) (SCAG 2001). Accommodating an increase in population of this magnitude will involve urbanizing thousands of acres of undeveloped land and result in significant conflicts with regulations protecting species and their Habitats. Conflicts and delays will escalate costs for all Development projects, uncoordinated mitigation efforts will fragment Habitats, the region will miss opportunities to improve the quality of life and economic development opportunities for the current and future residents of the County will also not be realized.

1.2.2 Riverside County Integrated Project

The MSHCP is one element of a comprehensive regional planning effort begun in 1999. To accommodate the County's anticipated growth, the County must provide a range of housing alternatives, encourage economic development, create new jobs at a rate that exceeds its population growth, and build the supporting infrastructure. The natural question is how best to meet the demands of growth while protecting the environment. Local officials recognize that without a well-defined and implementable plan for the future, the County would face a very tenuous future.

To address this complex challenge, the Riverside County Board of Supervisors and the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) initiated the Riverside County Integrated Project (RCIP). RCIP includes:

- A Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP), which forms the nucleus of an open-space plan for the western part of the County.
- An updated General Plan for the unincorporated portion of the County; the General Plan addresses land use, circulation, housing and open space, conservation, and other mandatory elements in conformance with state statute. The General Plan includes several innovative programs, such as incentive programs, that will be utilized in implementing the MSHCP, programs to enhance transit alternatives, and programs that will encourage the development of mixed-use centers.