



1.0 Introduction

1.2.3 Riverside County Conservation Planning Context

The County has had previous experience with single-species Habitat Conservation planning including the Fringe Toed Lizard HCP in the Coachella Valley in 1985 and later with the 1996 HCP for the Stephens' kangaroo rat in Western Riverside County. During the Stephens' kangaroo rat HCP planning process, multiple-species planning efforts occurred through the Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency (RCHCA) and through the Riverside County Regional Parks and Open Space District (RCRPOSD). In June 1992, RCHCA, RCRPOSD, and the Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG) initiated a program to develop a regional multiple-species plan for Western Riverside County. This effort began partially in response to the then-anticipated federal listing of the coastal California gnatcatcher as endangered under FESA. The initial multiple-species planning effort was intended to bring together the diverse assemblage of local and regional plans and develop a coordinated approach to protecting biodiversity on a regional basis. This effort focused on coastal sage scrub Habitat and resulted in the preparation of a Phase 1 document entitled *Information Collection and Evaluation* (Pacific Southwest Biological Services [PSBS]/KTU+A, February 1995).

As part of these initial multiple-species planning efforts, a Planning Agreement was drafted between the Wildlife Agencies and participating local entities (see *Appendix A* of this document.) Section 3 of the Planning Agreement presents the following goals and principles for development of the MSHCP:

1. During the development of the MSHCP and the development of both Conservation measures and assurances to landowners and users, develop a general agreement regarding the scope, cost, sources of funding, time required for completion, and other important principles concerning the Plan. Develop this general agreement in the first six months of the planning process.
2. In comparison to the option of mitigating for species and Habitat impacts on a project-by-project basis, the MSHCP must be more equitable and efficient, and less expensive and less time consuming.
3. The MSHCP must produce more biologically effective Habitat and species Conservation than the project-by-project alternative.

1.0 Introduction



4. Develop a comprehensive MSHCP that accomplishes the following:
 - Promotes the biological viability and recovery of Western Riverside County's ecosystems and Habitats and species dependent thereupon, toward a goal of reducing the need to list additional species in the future.
 - Provides a comprehensive means to coordinate, standardize, streamline, and ensure closure regarding mitigation requirements of the FESA, California Endangered Species Act (CESA), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), California Native Plant Protection Act (CNPPA), and other applicable laws and regulations related to biological and natural resources within the Plan Area.
 - Assures property owners, local governments, and other affected parties that Conservation measures undertaken for species and wildlife Habitat are adequately covered by the MSHCP and will satisfy mitigation requirements of the FESA, CESA, NEPA, CEQA, and CNPPA concerning impacts to those Covered Species and Habitats.
 - Establishes and emphasizes the use of incentives to encourage property owners to voluntarily conserve Habitat and species within the Plan Area as an alternative to regulatory mandates.
 - Facilitates economic growth and prosperity so that it occurs in a manner consistent with the Conservation of biological resources within the Plan Area.
 - Provides the basis for issuance of Incidental Take permits for listed species adequately covered by the MSHCP, by the USFWS and CDFG.
 - Provides for issuance of Incidental Take permits for species within the Plan Area that are adequately covered by the MSHCP, both listed and Unlisted Species.
 - Establishes consistent mitigation standards for MSHCP Covered Species for potential application by the USFWS under Section 7 of the FESA.



1.0 Introduction

5. Equitably distribute costs for the preparation and implementation of the MSHCP among local, state, and federal participants, including equitably distributing costs among both new Development and general contribution. Federal and state contributions shall be made as provided in the Implementing Agreement (IA) and the MSHCP.
6. Expedite the MSHCP development and approval process, and complete it within a reasonable period of time, taking into consideration the complexity of the issues involved. All parties agree to use their best efforts to ensure that, if all legal requirements are met, the MSHCP and its environmental documents will be completed and approved within two years of the commencement of the MSHCP planning process.
7. Through MSHCP Conservation actions, promote the recovery of species that occur within the Plan Area that are listed as threatened or endangered under CESA and/or FESA; taking into account factors related to the range of each species.
8. Decisions by all parties must be made in a timely fashion and in compliance with agreed time parameters.
9. Actively encourage public input and participation in order to obtain public support for the Conservation and economic benefits that the parties and participants seek from the MSHCP.

The County became the lead for the multiple-species planning effort with the initiation of the RCIP in 1999.

1.2.4 Regulatory Context

The approval of the MSHCP and execution of the IA by the Wildlife Agencies will allow them to issue Take Authorizations to the signatories of the IA. Issuance of Take Authorization to the local jurisdictions will allow Plan participants to implement land use decisions consistent with the MSHCP without project-by-project review and permitting by the Wildlife Agencies. A local, streamlined approach to planning for Endangered/sensitive Species will result in greater economic development certainty and provide for and maintain biological diversity by creating an interconnected MSHCP Conservation Area in the Plan Area. In addition to the preservation of species and associated Habitats, the MSHCP Conservation Area will provide open space and recreational opportunities, which will enhance the quality of life in Riverside County.