

SECTION 2.0

PLAN AREA DESCRIPTION AND SETTING

This section describes the biological setting, land use, and demographic context for the MSHCP Plan Area. It also summarizes data sources used to develop the MSHCP, discusses the limitations of those data sources, and outlines features incorporated into the MSHCP to address those limitations.

The general setting of the Plan Area is characterized by rural, urban and suburban Development intermixed with Agricultural Operations and large areas of undeveloped land. Large blocks of land along the southern, eastern, and western boundaries of the Plan Area consist of National Forest lands. The topography is generally lowland valleys intersected with rolling hills surrounded by mountain ranges. Lowland valleys occur at elevations below 600 m (2,000 ft), and hillsides dominated by scrub/chaparral occur at elevations of 600-900 m (2,000-3,000 ft). Mountainous areas within the Plan Area range from 900 m to over 3,000 m (3,000-10,000 ft) above mean sea level.

2.1 EXISTING BIOLOGICAL SETTING

2.1.1 Data Sources and Limitations

A comprehensive biological and physical database that includes information on vegetation, species occurrences, wetlands, topography, soils, and aerial photography is available for the MSHCP Plan Area and was used in the development of the Plan. This section describes the sources for and limitations of the various data layers used to develop the MSHCP.

MSHCP VEGETATION. The MSHCP vegetation map is depicted in *Figure 2-1*. This map was prepared by Pacific Southwest Biological Services (PSBS) and KTU+A in 1995. The methodology used to assemble the map is described in detail in the *Western Riverside County Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan Phase I Information Collection and Evaluation Report* (PSBS and KTU+A, February 1995). Data sources included aerial photography (1 in. = 2,000 ft, 1992–1993) and existing generalized vegetation maps (California Natural Diversity Data Base [CNDDDB], Weislander Statewide Vegetation Survey, U.C. Santa Barbara Southern California Ecoregion “GAP” Analysis, 1991 Dangermond/RECON MSHCP Strategy Report). Methods used to create and interpret vegetation data include aerial photographs, edge matching, digitizing, and geographically registering the data. Areas of concern were ground-truthed. Vegetation types were classified according to Holland (1986).