

3.0 Conservation Planning Process/ Description And Area Plan Criteria of the MSHCP Conservation Area



Given the uncertain application of reserve selection techniques and the broad range of additional issues that would be triggered from such approaches, DUDEK tends to agree with the assertion of Prendergast *et al.* (1999) that funds should be allocated for more pragmatic and policy-driven approaches to Conservation (*i.e.*, what are the jurisdictions actually capable of doing) rather than theoretical optimization of reserve design. Regardless of the reserve design selected, and whether it is algorithm-based or stakeholder-driven, the soundness of the MSHCP Conservation Area has to be evaluated by the Wildlife Agencies and other stakeholders.

Although specific reserve selection models were not developed and used for the reasons noted above, the concepts incorporated in the models and listed above (*e.g.*, diversity, size, representativeness, etc.) were considered in the conservation planning process. Values and goals for the conservation planning effort were identified as described in *Section 3.1.2* of this document. A comprehensive database was assembled as described in *Section 3.1.3* and conservation biology principles were considered as described in *Section 3.1.4*. Based on this framework, an initial Conservation scenario was developed for review by stakeholders with initial identification of potential acreage requirements. Development of this information was necessary for stakeholders to make decisions regarding the next steps in the conservation planning process. Subsequently, as described in *Section 3.1.7*, alternative conservation scenarios were developed for review by stakeholders and a recommended conservation scenario was selected. The recommended conservation scenario was then refined and analyzed as described in *Sections 3.1.8* and *3.2* of this document.

3.1.6 Conceptual Conservation Scenario

An initial reserve concept was developed to assist the MSHCP Advisory Committee in decisions to proceed with conservation planning efforts. This generalized Conceptual Conservation Scenario was developed based on the existing data and literature, habitat assessment workshops, species occurrence information, coastal sage scrub habitat quality modeling, existing and planned land uses, and general conservation biology principles summarized in the NCCP reserve design tenets. At the direction of the MSHCP Advisory Committee, the Conceptual Conservation Scenario was presented and described in narrative form. A map was not prepared. Also at the direction of the MSHCP Advisory Committee, the Conceptual Conservation Scenario was intended to address the life history requirements of as many species as possible on the species list developed by the MSHCP Advisory Committee (*Table 2-2*).

3.0 Conservation Planning Process/ Description And Area Plan Criteria of the MSHCP Conservation Area



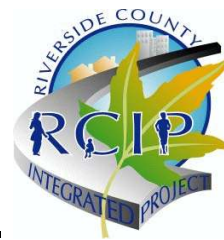
A key objective of the Conceptual Conservation Scenario was to develop a rough estimate of the number of acres needed to conserve the species on the species list developed by the Wildlife Agencies in concert with the MSHCP Advisory Committee (*Table 2-2*). To the extent possible, existing reserves and areas with multiple species and Habitat resources (*i.e.*, “hot spots”) were incorporated to design an efficient reserve. Core Areas were identified including areas in both existing Public/Quasi-Public Lands and new areas.

Potential Habitat Linkages connecting the core Habitat areas also were identified. Consideration of the species anticipated to utilize the Linkages helped determine if the Linkage should be designed as a landscape linkage containing biological features and resources for permanent residence, as a movement corridor primarily intended to convey larger wildlife or both. The San Jacinto River is an example of a landscape Linkage that is a Core Area for Narrow Endemic Plant Species but also serves as a movement corridor across the central portion of the Plan Area for species such as the bobcat. These Narrow Endemic Plant Species are dependent on the river’s hydrological processes to maintain the appropriate soil and Habitat features and a mechanism for dispersal. An example of a landscape linkage constrained by existing land use patterns is the upland connection between core Habitat areas in the Lake Skinner/Diamond Valley Lake area and the Estelle Mountains/Lake Mathews Reserve area. Patches of coastal sage scrub exist in this area that provide Habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher; however, existing conditions do not provide a continuous landscape connection suitable for less mobile species such as small mammals and reptiles. Examples of movement corridors unlikely to provide Live-In Habitat for most species include undercrossings of I-15 at Indian Canyon and Horsethief Canyon for bobcats and mountain lions moving between the Cleveland National Forest and the Estelle Mountains/Lake Mathews Reserve area.

Estimating rough acreages for Conservation was an important component of the Conceptual Conservation Scenario. This process involved:

- Step 1:** The narrative Conceptual Conservation Scenario was roughly mapped in the form of potential conservation analysis units. This rough map was intersected with the MSHCP vegetation map and vegetation acreages within each category were calculated using GIS.
- Step 2:** Consistent with the approach described in the August 9, 1999 “*Draft MSHCP Proposal*,” 100 percent of the areas characterized as developed on the vegetation map and 75 percent of the areas characterized as agriculture on the vegetation map were deleted from the acreage totals.

3.0 Conservation Planning Process/ Description And Area Plan Criteria of the MSHCP Conservation Area



Step 3: Areas developed since the MSHCP vegetation map was prepared (1995) were defined using the Existing Land Use coverage developed in 1999 for the RCIP. The Existing Land Use coverage is based on 1998 aerial photography and 1997 SCAG database. Acreage estimates were determined for areas that appear to have been developed since the MSHCP vegetation map was prepared and these acreages were deleted from the overall acreage totals.

Step 4: A global 10 percent reduction in total acreage was then assumed based on anticipated new information such as updated information regarding existing Development, updated information regarding Public/Quasi-Public Lands, updated information regarding Development approvals and Covered Activities.

A rough acreage estimate was derived from the four-step process described above and then an acreage range was applied under the assumption of various levels of species Conservation. The range of Conservation acreages in the Conceptual Conservation Scenario totaled 380,000 to 510,000 acres of private and Public/Quasi-Public Lands.

3.1.7 Informal Gap Analysis

➤ Methods

Based on the Conceptual Conservation Scenario described above, an informal gap analysis was conducted. This informal gap analysis is not to be confused with the formal Gap Analysis Program (GAP) described by Scott *et al.* (1993), but is based on the same principles (note use of lower case for “gap analysis”). The gap analysis identified areas as important for Conservation in the Conceptual Conservation Scenario but not currently in public ownership, *i.e.*, there is a lack (“gap”) of protection in these areas. The locations of existing designated open space lands and other public lands were mapped using GIS. The initial analysis was based on the status of land ownership map (*Figure 2-9*). Subsequently, a preliminary parcel-based Public/Quasi-Public Lands database was developed by County staff and was used for analysis. This database was then compared with a schematic map of the Conceptual Conservation Scenario using GIS to identify the gaps in Conservation and where land may need to be acquired to assemble the MSHCP Conservation Area.