

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.

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➤ Results

The gap analysis identified 153,000 acres needed for Conservation that are not currently in public ownership (*i.e.*, the area within the generalized Conceptual Conservation Scenario that currently is unprotected). The gaps in protection include portions of core resource areas, landscape linkages, movement corridors or Constrained Linkages, and other important localized resource areas such as vernal pool and the Delhi Sands flower-loving fly Habitat areas.

A narrative summary of the gaps in protection resulting from the analysis is provided below:

Northwest Section of Plan Area

- Core Habitat areas for the coastal California gnatcatcher north and south of SR-74 in the vicinity of the areas of the proposed North Peak Conservation Bank.
- Connection of the core Habitat areas to Kabian Park mentioned in the previous bullet.
- Connection between Lake Mathews/Estelle Mountain Reserve and the Santa Ana River via Temescal Wash (including existing channelized portions of Temescal Wash).
- Interconnection of the following areas: Motte-Rimrock Reserve, Steele Peak, Lake Mathews/Estelle Mountain Reserve and Harford Springs Park. The northwesterly connection should be made through the Gavilan Hills/Gavilan Plateau area.
- Connection of the reserves (mentioned in the previous bullet) to the Cleveland National Forest via Indian Canyon and a potential additional connection to the forest in the Alberhill and Horsethief Canyon areas.
- An upland connection from the Lake Mathews/Estelle Mountain Reserve southerly to the Sedco Hills, including Linkages between existing Bureau of Land Management (BLM) parcels.
- Connection between Sycamore Canyon Reserve and Box Springs Mountain Reserve.
- Protection of upland resources in the Jurupa Mountains.
- Protection of Habitat supporting Delhi Sands flower-loving fly in the northwest portion of the Plan Area.

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Northeast Section of Plan Area

- Core Habitat areas in the Badlands including the Potrero Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and San Timoteo Creek.
- Connection between the Badlands and the San Bernardino National Forest to the north via Little San Gorgonio Creek.
- Connection between the Badlands and the San Bernardino National Forest via Cherry Valley and Noble Creek.
- Conservation of Habitat resources within the Upper San Jacinto River floodplain from San Bernardino National Forest to the San Jacinto Wildlife Area, incorporating Mystic Lake.
- Connection between the Badlands and the San Bernardino County valley region via San Timoteo Creek.
- Non-contiguous reserves specifically for Conservation of plants and vernal pool Habitat in the San Jacinto/Hemet area.
- Non-contiguous reserve in the Lakeview Mountains.

Southwest Section of Plan Area

- Conservation of Habitat resources associated with Willow soils along the San Jacinto River and connection through Kabian Park and Canyon Lake.
- Continuation of upland connection from Lake Mathews area southeasterly via Sedco Hills, Wildomar and into the Antelope Valley/French Valley area.
- Linkage from Steele Peak to Kabian Park through Wasson Canyon and over SR-74.
- Core Habitat area at Alberhill.
- Connection along Murrieta Creek from Temecula Creek to Cole Canyon Creek.
- New Core Area in French Valley south of Scott Road and east of I-215 incorporating upland Habitat resources and soils supporting sensitive plant species.
- Connection of aforementioned French Valley Core Area to the Southwest Riverside County Multi-Species Reserve.
- Upland connection from the Santa Rosa Plateau to northern San Diego County.

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Southeast Section of Plan Area

- New Core Areas in Wilson Valley, Vail Lake, Sage Area, Anza Valley and connections between these areas via Temecula Creek, Wilson Creek, Cahuilla Creek, Tule Creek, Kolb Creek, and Arroyo Seco Creek.
- Connections from the existing reserves in the Diamond Valley Lake and Lake Skinner areas via Warm Springs Creek to the southwest, converging at Murrieta Creek.
- Connection from Vail Lake to Santa Margarita River via Temecula Creek.
- Connections from the Wilson Valley area to the Diamond Valley Lake/Lake Skinner area via Tualota Creek to the south and the Mica Butte/Cactus Valley area to the north.
- Connection to San Diego County via Pechanga Creek east of I-15.
- Connection along Bautista Creek from the San Bernardino National Forest to the San Jacinto River confluence.

3.1.8 Identification of Alternatives and Selection of Proposed Alternative

As directed by the MSHCP Advisory Committee, the initial conservation planning process focused on identifying acreage requirements for a conservation scenario that would conserve the majority of species from the initial species list (*Table 2-2*). The MSHCP Advisory Committee also requested identification of alternative conservation scenarios that could result in Conservation of fewer species. These alternative conservation scenarios were identified as the Listed and Proposed Species Alternative, the Listed, Proposed and Strong Candidate Species Alternative, and the Existing Reserves Alternative. These alternatives were developed and analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively using the MSHCP database in the same manner as the Conceptual Conservation Scenario. Schematic maps were developed for GIS analysis and visual display purposes for stakeholders. The alternatives are summarized in *Section 3.4* of this document and in the MSHCP Alternatives Development Document (DUDEK, October 2000). Also considered as part of this process were a No Project/No MSHCP Alternative and a “more biologically robust” alternative. The No Project/No MSHCP Alternative is summarized in *Section 3.4* and in the Alternatives Development Document and the “more biologically robust” alternative is discussed in detail in the MSHCP EIR/EIS and briefly in *Section 9.0* of this document.