

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



3.4 ALTERNATIVES CONSERVATION STRATEGIES CONSIDERED IN THE CONSERVATION PLANNING PROCESS

A variety of alternatives were considered as part of the conservation planning process. The range of alternatives was defined by the MSHCP Advisory Committee and relates to the rough conservation locations, acreage estimates and species lists developed for the August 9, 1999?Draft MSHCP Proposal,” as reviewed by the Wildlife Agencies. The Alternatives definition was data driven and based on biological, land use, economic and regulatory consideration as well as the overall MSHCP planning principles described in *Section 1.0* of this document.

In addition to the alternatives identified by the stakeholders and described in detail below, a Description of Preliminary Alternatives was assembled and distributed to stakeholders in February 2000. Those alternatives were based on General Plan land use alternatives being developed as part of the RCIP General Plan Update. Those alternatives influenced the alternatives development process; however, it was decided to develop General Plan land use and MSHCP alternatives separately as part of the RCIP process, and the Preliminary Alternatives presented in the February 2000 document were not developed further.

3.4.1 Listed, Proposed and Strong Candidate Species Alternative

This alternative was developed at the request of the MSHCP Advisory Committee to depict a potential conservation scenario that would address listed, proposed and strong candidate species. A total of 32 listed and proposed species occur in the MSHCP Plan Area including the following: Swainson’s hawk, mountain plover, western yellow-billed cuckoo, southwestern willow flycatcher, peregrine falcon, bald eagle, coastal California gnatcatcher, least Bell’s vireo, San Bernardino kangaroo rat, Stephens’ kangaroo rat, arroyo toad, California red-legged frog, mountain yellow-legged frog, southern rubber boa, Quino checkerspot butterfly, Delhi Sands flower-loving fly, Riverside fairy shrimp, vernal pool fairy shrimp, Santa Ana sucker, Mohave tarplant, Munz’s onion, Parish’s meadowfoam, San Diego ambrosia, San Jacinto Valley crowscale, Nevin’s barberry, thread-leaved brodiaea, Vail Lake ceanothus, slender-horned spine flower, Santa Ana River woollystar, San Diego button-celery, spreading navarretia, and California Orcutt

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grass. In addition to the listed and proposed species, this alternative also considers conservation needs for the following seven species identified as “strong candidates” in discussions with the MSHCP Advisory Committee: tricolored blackbird (breeding colony), cactus wren, burrowing owl, western pond turtle, San Bernardino mountain kingsnake, San Diego mountain kingsnake and Los Angeles pocket mouse. The focus of Conservation for this alternative are these 39 listed, proposed and strong candidate species.

It should be noted that this alternative focuses largely on conservation of the 39 species noted above with less consideration of the draft Planning Agreement language and the broad-based NCCP biological tenets. While large Habitat blocks and broad Linkages are incorporated in this alternative in some areas to provide for an MSHCP Conservation Area scenario that would address the conservation needs of the focus species, less emphasis is placed in this alternative on broad-based ecosystem Conservation.

The generalized reserve configuration under this alternative is depicted in *Figure 3-36*. *Table 3-19* provides a summary of acreages potentially conserved under this alternative, by Vegetation Community. These acreages are estimates of areas that are anticipated to be conserved from within the generalized reserve configuration depicted in *Figure 3-36*. As shown in *Table 3-19*, under this alternative a total of 465,830 acres would be conserved, including 346,530 acres within existing Public/Quasi-Public Lands and 119,300 acres of Additional Reserve Lands.

New Core Areas in the Badlands, Vail Lake/Wilson Creek/Sage, and Anza Valley areas identified in the August 9 “Draft MSHCP Proposal,” were identified in this alternative. Conservation needs for the following species are located in these areas: *Badlands* - tricolored blackbird, cactus wren, Los Angeles pocket mouse; *Vail Lake/Wilson Creek/Sage* - Quino checkerspot butterfly, coastal California gnatcatcher, burrowing owl, least Bell’s vireo, arroyo toad, cactus wren, Vail Lake ceanothus, Nevin’s barberry, slender-horned spine flower; *Anza Valley* - cactus wren, Stephens’ kangaroo rat, Los Angeles pocket mouse, and Quino checkerspot butterfly.

Habitat blocks included in the Conceptual Conservation Scenario but absent from this alternative include La Sierra Hills, Norco Hills and Jurupa Hills. While the La Sierra Hills and Norco Hills areas represent moderately large blocks of intact Habitat and support a variety of species, they do not support substantial populations or meet Habitat requirements for the focus species under this alternative, and therefore are not included in this alternative. Likewise, the Jurupa Hills do not

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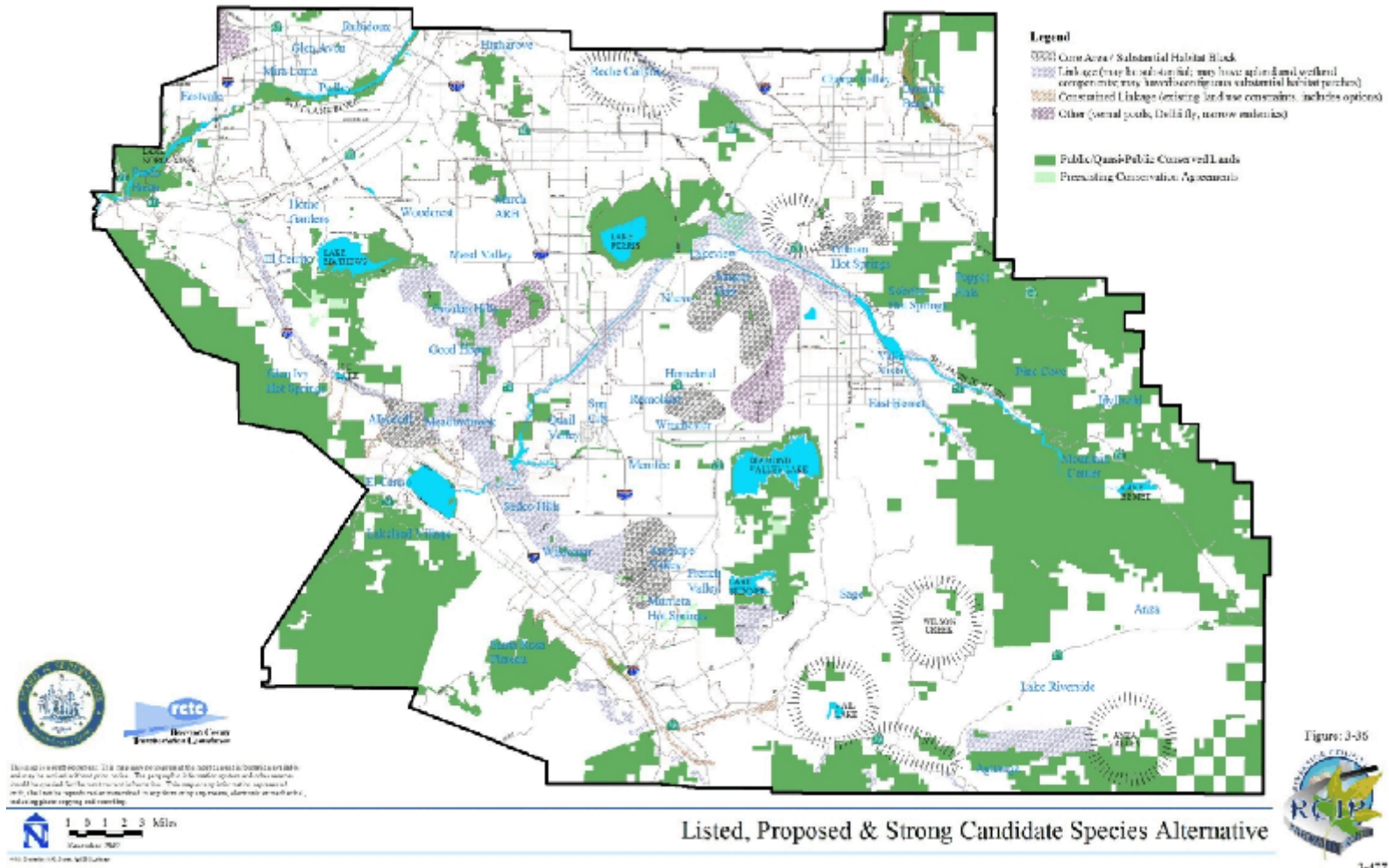


Figure 3-36
RIVERSIDE COUNTY
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support substantial populations of the focus species under this alternative. Scattered coastal California gnatcatcher observations are, however, known from the Jurupa Hills and this area may contribute to coastal California gnatcatcher conservation outside the MSHCP Plan Area. For this reason, the Jurupa Hills may need to be evaluated in greater detail should this alternative be selected for further study.

**TABLE 3-19. LISTED, PROPOSED AND STRONG CANDIDATE SPECIES
ALTERNATIVE VEGETATION SUMMARY**

Vegetation Type	Total Acres in Plan Area	Total Acres in Existing Public/Quasi-Public Lands	Total Acres of Additional Reserve Lands	Total Acres Conserved	Percent of Total Vegetation Community Acres Conserved in Plan Area
Agriculture	169,480	11,480	14,900	26,380	16%
Chaparral	434,950	207,380	39,610	246,990	57%
Cismontane Alkali Marsh	1,260	<5	<5	<5	<1%
Coastal Sage Scrub	156,450	34,560	39,180	73,740	47%
Desert Scrubs	14,570	1,310	150	1,460	10%
Grassland	154,140	22,810	15,220	38,030	25%
Meadows and Marshes	1,020	330	100	430	42%
Montane Coniferous Forest	29,910	20,480	30	20,510	69%
Playas and Vernal Pools	7,910	2,920	2,930	5,850	74%
Riparian Scrub, Woodland, Forest	15,030	7,270	2,100	9,370	62%
Riversidean Alluvial Fan Sage Scrub	7,940	2,060	2,380	4,440	56%
Unknown	1,350	1,230	10	1,240	92%
Water	12,210	9,150	940	10,090	83%
Woodlands and Forests	34,300	20,770	1,750	22,520	66%
Developed or Disturbed Land	218,260	4,780	–	4,780	2%
TOTALS	1,258,780	346,530	119,300	465,830	

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A variety of Linkages and Constrained Linkages are included in the Conceptual Conservation Scenario but absent from this alternative including substantial Linkages east of Lake Skinner and Diamond Valley Lake; the upland portions of the Linkage along Temescal Wash north of Alberhill; the Tenaja corridor Linkage; and the Cahuilla Creek Linkage east of the Vail Lake/Wilson Creek/Sage Core Area. Constrained Linkages absent from this alternative include lower Warm Springs and Tocalota Creeks; a variety of optional Linkages along upper Warm Springs Creek and in the French Valley area; Linkages to the Santa Ana River via Springbrook Wash and channelized portions of Temescal Wash; and Linkages in the Cherry Valley, Banning Bench and Banning Idyllwild panoramic highway areas. Although these Linkages would contribute to the overall Conceptual Conservation Scenario, they do not provide substantial support for the focus species under this alternative and so are not depicted under this alternative scenario. The channelized portion of Temescal Creek may support breeding for the Santa Ana sucker and this area would need to be considered for inclusion in the MSHCP Conservation Area under this alternative.

3.4.2 Listed and Proposed Species Alternative

This alternative was developed at the request of the MSHCP Advisory Committee to depict a potential conservation scenario that would address only listed and proposed species. A total of 32 listed and proposed species occur in the MSHCP Plan Area as listed in the description for the Listed, Proposed and Strong Candidates alternative. It should be noted that this alternative focuses largely on the conservation of the 32 listed and proposed species within the MSHCP Plan Area, with less consideration of the broad-based NCCP biological tenets. While large Habitat blocks and broad Linkages are incorporated in this alternative in some areas to provide for a conservation scenario that would address the conservation needs of the listed and proposed species, less emphasis is placed in this alternative on broad-based ecosystem conservation.

The generalized reserve configuration under this alternative is depicted in *Figure 3-37*. *Table 3-20* provides a summary of acreages potentially conserved under this alternative, by Vegetation Community. These acreages are estimates of areas that are anticipated to be conserved from within the generalized reserve configuration depicted in *Figure 3-37*. As shown in *Table 3-20*, under this alternative a total of 439,140 acres would be conserved, including 346,530 acres within existing Public/Quasi-Public Lands and 92,610 acres of Additional Reserve Lands.