

## 2.2 Identification of Alternatives and Selection of Proposed Alternative

A wide range of potentially feasible alternatives was considered as part of the development of the Plan. The range of alternatives relates to the rough conservation locations, acreage estimates, and species lists developed for the *August 9, 1999, Draft MSHCP Proposal*. The range of alternatives considered was based on their feasibility, taking into account biological, land use, economic, regulatory, legal, and other considerations; their ability to reduce or avoid the Project's significant environmental impacts; and their consistency with the Project Objectives described in Section 1.0 of this document. In addition to the potential alternatives identified by the stakeholders and described in detail in this section, 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 have formed the alternative development process; however, it was decided to develop the General Plan separately from the MSHCP, so the Preliminary Alternatives presented in the February 2000 document were not developed further.

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 (discussed in Section 2.2.1). The MSHCP Advisory Committee also recommended identification of alternative conservation scenarios that could result in conservation of fewer species. The October 2000 *Alternatives Development Document* gave rise to several alternatives. 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 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. Also considered as part of this process were a No Project/No MSHCP Alternative and a modified reserve configuration alternative, which contemplated the conservation of 165 species. The No Project/No MSHCP Alternative and the modified reserve configuration alternative are discussed later in this chapter.

In general, the Lead Agencies (the County and the USFWS) concluded that the alternatives that resulted in conservation of fewer species were infeasible for economic and other reasons, conflicted with the Project Objectives identified in Section 1.2.2, and would not avoid or substantially lessen the Project's significant environmental impacts. They also concluded that the Modified Reserve Configuration Alternative was infeasible, conflicted with Project Objectives, and would not avoid or substantially lessen the Project's significant environmental impacts. Based on these general conclusions, the initial Conceptual Conservation Scenario (the Proposed Action), as refined by input from stakeholders and the County Board of Supervisors, was selected as the preferred alternative, and the conservation planning process proceeded with further development and refinement of that alternative.