



Preservation

The RCIP Vision directs that,

“Preserved multi-purpose open space is viewed as a critical part of the County’s system of public facilities and services required to improve the existing quality of life and accommodate new development. Strategies and incentives for voluntary preservation on private land are an integral part of the County’s policy/regulatory system and are referred to nationwide as model approaches.”

The following set of policies seeks to preserve natural resources that are endangered, threatened and irreplaceable. These resources deserve special protection in order to ensure their continued viability. Open space preservation can serve many purposes, including the preservation and enhancement of environmental resources for both ecological and recreational purposes, and the proper management of environmental hazards. In this General Plan, policies related to environmental hazards are contained in the Safety Element.



MULTIPLE SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLANS



- HCP**-Habitat Conservation Plan
- NEPA**-National Environmental Policy Act
- NCCP**-Natural Communities Conservation Plan
- CEQA**-California Environmental Quality Act
- CESA**-California Endangered Species Act
- FESA**-Federal Endangered Species Act

As urbanization has spread into Riverside County, community development has not only involved the local land use planning process, but coordination with state and federal wildlife agencies in order to attain “take permits” for impacts to endangered, threatened or otherwise sensitive species and their habitats. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Game, hereafter “Wildlife Agencies,” have authority to regulate the “take” of threatened, endangered or otherwise sensitive species. Taking is defined as "to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect" listed species. "Harm" includes destruction of a listed species' habitat. The wildlife agencies have authority to regulate this “take”. The process of issuing “take permits,” however, has resulted in costly delays for development interests in addition to the assemblage of piecemeal reserve systems addressing the needs of single species. Mitigation lands have been preserved, but these have generally been small, unconnected habitat areas in which it is more difficult to sustain wildlife mobility, genetic flow, or ecosystem health. Instead, large, interconnected natural areas are required to assure that the County’s entire ecosystem has the potential to remain healthy.

To address the issues of wildlife and habitat health and sustainability, the County has participated in the development of two Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plans (MSHCPs). These MSHCPs are intended to encompass the reserve areas and replace the implementation measures of the single-species habitat conservation plans formerly adopted by the County. These MSHCPs are stake-holder driven, comprehensive, and multi-jurisdictional, and focus on the conservation of both species and associated habitats, in order to address biological and ecological diversity conservation needs in Riverside County. These plans are two of several large multi-jurisdictional habitat planning efforts



within southern California which have been developed under the overall goal of maintaining biological diversity within a rapidly urbanizing region. The MSHCPs will allow the County and other local jurisdictions the ability to manage local land use decisions and maintain economic development flexibility, while providing a coordinated reserve system and implementation program that will facilitate the preservation of biological diversity as well as maintain the region’s quality of life.

**Coachella Valley Association of Governments
MSHCP Program Description**

The Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG) is preparing, on behalf of its member agencies, a proposed Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan that is intended to cover 28 species of plants and animals in the Coachella Valley. Currently, this plan proposes to conserve between 200,000 and 250,000 acres of privately owned land through general plan land use designations, zoning/ development standards and an aggressive acquisition program, for a total conservation area of between 700,000 and 750,000 acres.

Relationship to Area Plans

The Pass, Eastern Coachella Valley, Western Coachella Valley, and REMAP Area Plans are affected by the CVAG MSHCP. These area plans contain maps and general information about the proposed MSHCP. Consult the area plans for further information.

**Western Riverside County MSHCP Program
Description**



In western Riverside, a high density of rare species coincides with one of the most swiftly urbanizing areas of the country,



*– Scott Ferguson, Trust for Public Land
Senior Project Manager*

The Western Riverside County MSHCP study area encompasses approximately 1.26 million acres (approximately 1,997 square miles). This plan includes unincorporated and incorporated County land (excluding Indian land) west of the crest of the San Jacinto Mountains to the Orange County line. The plan is the largest HCP ever attempted and covers multiple species and multiple habitats within multiple jurisdictions. The plan covers a diverse landscape from urban cities to undeveloped foothills and montane forests. In addition to the presence of multiple habitats, the plan stretches across the Santa Ana Mountains, Riverside Lowlands, San Jacinto Foothills, San Jacinto Mountains, Aqua Tibia Mountains, Desert Transition and San Bernardino Mountains bio-regions.

This MSHCP will serve as a Habitat Conservation Plan pursuant to section 10(a)(1)(B) of the Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973, as well as a Natural Communities Conservation Plan under the NCCP Act of 1991. This MSHCP will be used to allow the County to “take” plant and wildlife species identified within the MSHCP through the local land use planning process. The intent of this plan is for the Wildlife Agencies to grant a “take authorization” for otherwise lawful actions that may incidentally take or harm individuals of a species or its habitat outside of preserve areas, in exchange for supporting assembly of a coordinated reserve system. Conservation and management duties as well as implementation assurances will be provided by the County and other signatory agencies or jurisdictions outlined as “take authorization holders” through development of an Implementing Agreement.