

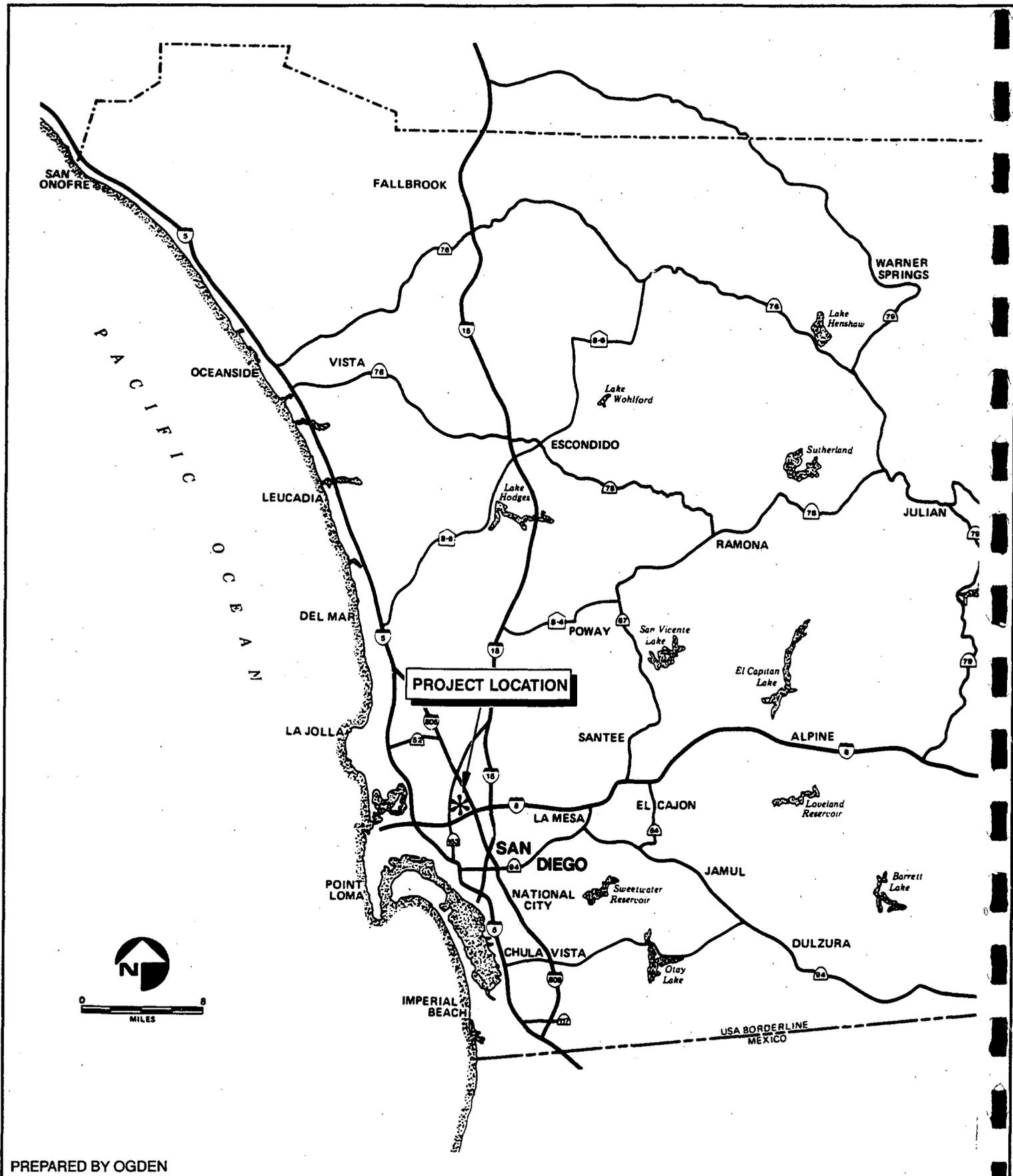
INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The First San Diego River Improvement Project (FSDRIP) is located between Qualcomm Way and Highway 163 along the San Diego River (Figure 1) in Mission Valley. FSDRIP refers to the area included in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit which allowed the channelization of the San Diego River in this area and required the revegetation of the banks and buffer areas. The implementation of the FSDRIP flood control project allowed the FSDRIP landowners to proceed with development as outlined in the FSDRIP Specific Plan. This Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) is intended as a tool to ensure protection of natural resources created by the FSDRIP Revegetation Plan and to continue meeting original permit requirements while accommodating compatible human activities. To avoid confusion when referencing the various aspects of FSDRIP, the flood control channel, mitigation area, and buffer zones, which are the focus of this NRMP, will be referred to as FSDRIP and the adjacent development will be referred to as the FSDRIP Specific Plan area.

The purpose and objectives of the NRMP are established as long-range, 100-year goals. The plan itself will be updated every eight to ten years, as appropriate, and subject to approval by original permitting agencies, including the City of San Diego, with input from the FSDRIP Advisory Committee and the Maintenance Assessment District (MAD). A major goal of this plan is to demonstrate the City and public recognition of the biological resources found in FSDRIP. This NRMP provides guidance for the protection of natural resources, maintenance of original permit goals, and remedial measures to revegetate natural habitat disturbed by either natural disasters (e.g., flooding), or human disturbances (e.g., vandalism, adjacent development impacts, sewer maintenance, and flood control).

Besides the protection and preservation of sensitive natural resources, this plan also delineates acceptable public and recreational uses of FSDRIP. Public use, however, is secondary and all public activities that have a detrimental effect on FSDRIP will not be allowed.



PREPARED BY OGDEN

REGIONAL LOCATION MAP

CITY OF SAN DIEGO PARK & RECREATION DEPT.



FIGURE

1

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the FSDRIP Natural Resource Management Plan are:

1. To establish management practices which will preserve and protect biological resources according to original permit requirements (U.S. Army Corps Permit No. 84-132);
2. To provide for public uses which will not negatively impact FSDRIP's biological resources;
3. To maintain the flood control capacity of the channel within FSDRIP per City of San Diego Engineering Department standards;
4. To emphasize improvements needed for environmental protection, interpretation, picnicking, walking, jogging, bicycling, and other low-intensity, nondisruptive recreational activities;
5. To ensure that improvements and maintenance consider and provide for public safety;
6. To control problem erosion along the San Diego River and river banks within FSDRIP;
7. To discourage illegal activities; and
8. To develop a reporting and enforcement procedure to prevent encroachment or impact from adjacent development and residents.

HISTORY

Mission Valley existed for many years as a broad, flat floodplain first used by local native peoples. Later, Spanish and western settlers farmed or grazed cattle over the area. The river was

relatively ephemeral and probably supported full surface flows only during the winter months. Winter floods regularly reconfigured the sparsely vegetated riparian channel located on the broad valley floor. In the late 1950's, after World War II, Mission Valley became the location for a number of commercial shopping malls, such as Mission Valley Center. Areas within FSDRIP were utilized for sand and gravel operations (CalMat) and a brick-making facility (Hazard Company). Scattered housing developments also began to develop in the valley including the Park Villa Condominiums, which was built along the FSDRIP's edge, north and east of Mission Center Road. The increased urbanization of the river's watershed had two consequences. First, river flows increased, particularly during the winter storm period, as the river's watershed was paved and became increasingly impervious to water penetration. Summer flows also gradually rose as irrigation runoff from urbanized areas of the watershed increased during the dry summer months. With a more dependable waterflow, the river itself changed, becoming a more year-round water source. With this change, a larger, dense, and more permanent riparian woodland developed. Secondly, as the valley became a major regional commercial center, the value of land along the river's edge increased. The river also became a backyard dumping ground during this period of urbanization. As a result, large patches of the floodplain remained disturbed or covered with exotic plant species introduced through past disturbance. Within FSDRIP, major sections of the site were covered with the invasive giant reed (*Arundo donax*) and the floating aquatic ludwigia (*Ludwigia peploides*).

The idea for the FSDRIP Specific Plan originated in the 1970's. Property owners along a portion of the San Diego River were unable to develop their properties because they were flooded by winter storms. A Specific Plan for development was prepared which addresses potential development of private properties based on improvements for the San Diego River directed at controlling seasonal flooding. The flood control plan for the San Diego River went through various stages of design, evolving from a concrete-lined channel to a grass-lined channel with ornamental landscaping. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (CORPS), however, could not permit a channel which eliminated the existing natural wetland values under the recently passed Federal Clean Water Act. Based on advice from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), a FSDRIP Revegetation Plan was developed to maintain wetland habitat values by creating a flood control channel revegetated along its edges with native riparian woodland and freshwater marsh cover.

Subsequent to approval of the FSDRIP Specific Plan, the City of San Diego entered into a Development Agreement with the property owners benefitting from approval of the Specific Plan. In exchange for assurance that development of their property could proceed in accordance with the Agreement, the property owners agreed to fund the necessary flood control improvements, including creation and long-term maintenance of the mitigation area. The FSDRIP Maintenance Assessment District was established which includes all benefitting property owners and which pays for on-going monitoring and management of resources within FSDRIP. Each of the benefitting property owners contributes to this assessment district based on the amount of benefit to property owned within the district.

In 1987, after final plan review and approval by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) and CORPS, construction on FSDRIP began. The City took on the responsibility of overseeing the habitat restoration. Phase I of FSDRIP, located between Highway 163 and Mission Center Road, was completed in May of 1988. Phases IIA and IIB, located between Mission Center Road and Qualcomm Way were completed in January of 1989. After installation, FSDRIP was required to meet growth and cover standards set by the resource agency original permit conditions. To substantiate that success measures were being met, data was collected from vegetation line transects at FSDRIP, and annual reports were prepared analyzing the progress of the revegetation efforts. Regular bird surveys, as well as monthly horticultural reviews of FSDRIP maintenance effort, were a part of this monitoring effort. Remedial measures were implemented, if necessary, to ensure FSDRIP progressed sufficiently to meet success standards. An Advisory Board, comprised of City of San Diego staff, a property owner representative, an environmental consultant, and resource agency staff, reviewed annual reports analyzing the data collected and approved or disapproved remedial measures recommended by the environmental consultant.

FSDRIP vegetation progressed well, and in 1995, the CORPS and CDFG agreed that FSDRIP could be considered successful with this NRMP as the last requirement of the CORPS for final permit approval.