

2000 MSCP Annual Public Workshop - Summary Report

November 14, 2000

BACKGROUND:

On March 18, 1997, the San Diego City Council unanimously adopted the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), collectively referred to as the wildlife agencies, entered into an Implementing Agreement (I.A.) with the City on July 1997. The I.A. requires the City to prepare a report containing an annual accounting of the habitat acreage lost and conserved within the City's MSCP Subarea. In addition, the City and the wildlife agencies are required to jointly conduct a public workshop to disseminate and discuss the annual report.

The City's third MSCP Annual Report was submitted to the wildlife agencies on August 21, 2000 and was approved November 2000. The report identifies by project, the habitat loss and conservation from January 1, 1999 through the end of the 1999 calendar year.

In 1999, habitat conservation efforts within the City's MSCP preserve area, referred to as the Multi-Habitat Planning Area (MHPA), were focused on acquiring critical areas of sensitive habitat and securing wildlife corridors within the MHPA as well as initiating monitoring efforts. Acquisitions have been accomplished through public purchase and by directing private mitigation to parcels within the MHPA. The City and the Fish and Wildlife Service has also acquired habitat within the MHPA with state and federal funds. The City is continuing to increase its efforts for the restoration, monitoring and management of habitat within the MHPA as described further below.

ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY:

Within the reporting period (January 1, 1999 - December 31, 1999) 5,682 acres of habitat were conserved in or adjacent to the MHPA compared to the loss of 3,174 acres of habitat. Consistent with the design goals of the program, virtually all on the conserved habitat is located within the City's MSCP (5,262 acres), while 93 percent of habitat lost occurred outside the MHPA. Acres lost represents the acreage impacted by projects approved for construction within the reporting period. The 5,682 acres conserved include:

- 2,967 acres conserved through mitigation or exaction for project-level impacts;
- 2,715 acres conserved through the establishment of mitigation banks.

The habitat loss and conservation for the 1999 annual reporting period are summarized as follows:

Table 1 - 1999 HABITAT LOSS AND CONSERVATION

Habitat Type & Examples of Habitats	Habitat Loss (acres)		Habitat Conserved (acres)	
	1999	Cumulative ¹	1999	Cumulative ¹
Wetlands: Coastal Wetlands(Salt Pan/Salt Marsh) Riparian Habitats Freshwater Marsh Natural Flood Channel Disturbed Wetland Vernal Pools ² Marine Habitats(Pacific Ocean/Deep Bay) Eelgrass Beds (Shallow Bays)	25.7	29.9	509.9	4,719.2
TIER I (rare uplands): Southern Fore dunes Torrey Pines Forest Coastal Bluff Scrub Maritime Succulent Scrub Maritime Chaparral Native Grassland ³ Oak Woodlands	92.8	201.9	159.7	1,789.8
TIER II (uncommon uplands): Coastal Sage Scrub CSS/Chaparral	393.4	651.7	2,546.6	10,627.4
TIER III A (common uplands): Mixed Chaparral Chamise Chaparral	174.2	227	521.9	5,967.3
TIER III B (common uplands): Nonnative Grasslands	1,699.9	1,867	929.9	3,098.2
TIER IV (other uplands) Disturbed Agriculture Eucalyptus	280.5	624.3	835.5	2,784.3
Others: Beach Urban/Developed	506.7	582.1	65.4	936.6
Total	3,173	4,184	5,569	29,923

¹ Includes loss/gain from July 1997 through December 1999

² No approved loss of vernal pools in 1999

³ Based upon regional vegetation classifications, native grasslands are included with non-native grasslands

The above numbers were generated by a newly created geographic information software system for tracking habitat loss and gain. This system is known as “Habitrak” and is an extension to the City’s existing Geography Information System. This is the first year that the Habitrak system was used to compile the habitat loss/gain information and maps for the annual report. Habitrak was developed to facilitate and standardize the annual reports for each jurisdiction that participates in the MSCP. Funding for the software development was provided by a grant from the California Department of Fish and Game and administered by SANDAG.

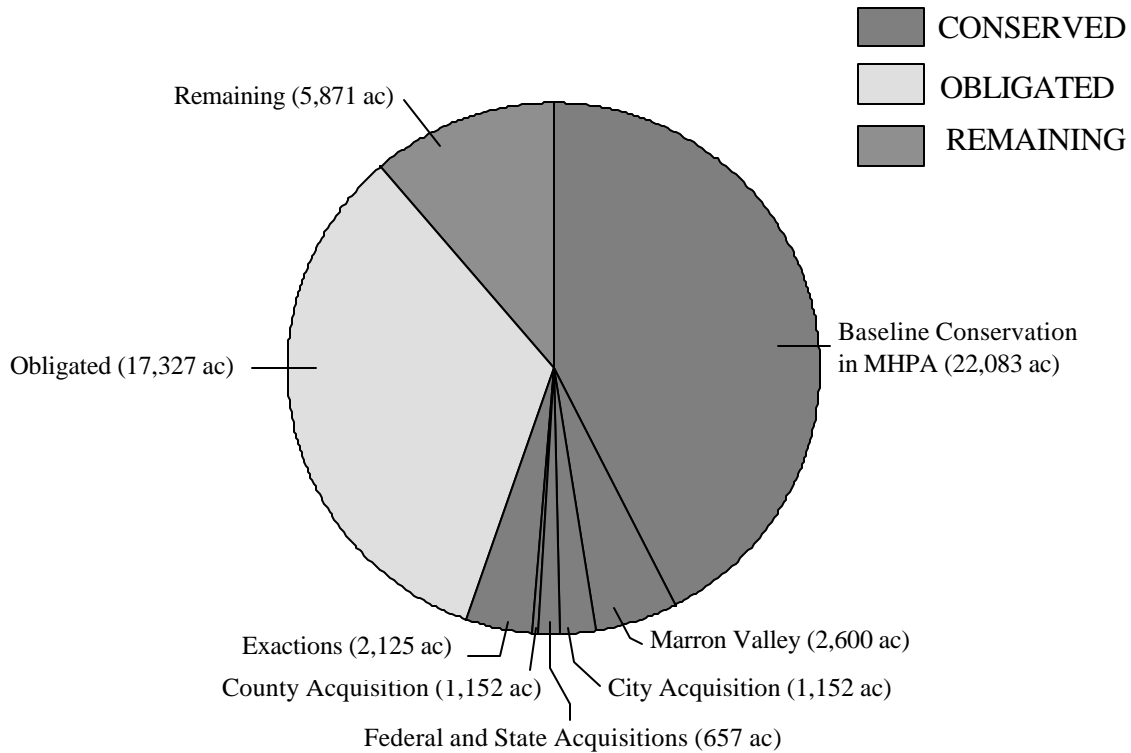
PUBLIC LAND ACQUISITIONS:

In 1999, the City of San Diego Council approved \$7,244,962 of City funds for land acquisitions. These funds were used to acquire the Torrey Surf parcel located on Carmel Mountain (\$1,511,000), and complete the acquisitions of the Mesa Top property (\$4,000,000) on Carmel Mountain, and San Dieguito Partnership property (\$1,733,962) in the San Dieguito River Valley. Additionally, as partial mitigation for the Emergency Water Storage project, the City is currently in negotiations with the County Water Authority (CWA) to obtain funding for the acquisition of 325 acres on the 633-acre Montana Mirador parcel located within the Rancho Peñasquitos community planning area. If approved by the CWA Board, the funds (\$4.4 million) to be provided to the City by the CWA for the acquisition of the Montana Mirador parcel (325 acres) would serve as the local funding match for the City’s Proposition 12 grant application to acquire the remainder of the Montana Mirador parcel.

Since the adoption of the MSCP Subarea Plan, efforts by the City, the County, wildlife agencies and private development interest to acquire habitat within the City’s MHPA have resulted in the conservation of 28,814 acres (See next page). Contributions by the City include dedications of existing public lands (22,083 acres), establishment of the Marron Valley Mitigation Bank (2,600 acres), City-funded acquisitions (1,152 acres), as well as mitigation and exactions for private development (2,125 acres). The County of San Diego has acquired 197 acres in the Tijuana River Valley. The Federal and State government has acquired 657 acres.

Conservation Status

November 14, 2000



PROJECT REVIEWS:

In 1999, 115 development projects were reviewed by the MSCP staff for consistency with the adopted MSCP Subarea Plan and implementing regulations. Development activity within the City of San Diego has continued at a brisk pace throughout 2000, with 141 projects reviewed year-to-date (Jan.-Sept.). City staff continues to ensure that the MHPA preserve design, land use adjacency guidelines, mitigation requirements and specific area management directives have been evaluated and, as appropriate, incorporated into project designs. Projects that comply with the policies of the MSCP are afforded "Third Party Beneficiary" status as provided for in the City's MSCP Implementing Agreement (Section 17.1).

CONSERVATION BANKS:

Marron Valley - On December 7, 1999 the City placed a conservation easement on this 2,600 acre property. Marron Valley is located east of Otay Mountain along the U.S./Mexico border. This is the first of the four phases wherein Water Department lands are conserved through a mitigation bank. The City has been granted 1,000 acres of upland mitigation credit for Marron Valley by the wildlife agencies. The City is currently developing a management plan for the valley, as described below, and is in the process of determining the value of the mitigation credits.

GRANTS:

Grant funding is a key component to the successful implementation of the MSCP Subarea Plan. Below is a summary of the current grant projects. These projects are further described within the Management Activities and Monitoring Efforts sections of this report. In 1999 and 2000, the City of San Diego has secured \$6.5 million in grant funding for acquisition, management and monitoring of lands within the MSCP.

Table 2 - 1999/2000 GRANTS

GRANT TYPE	GRANTOR	1999	2000
Natural Communities Conservation Planning (NCCP)	California Department of Fish and Game	Awarded four grants for MSCP monitoring and management activities	Awarded six grants for MSCP monitoring and management activities
Environment Enhancement and Mitigation Program (EEMP)	State Resources Agency of California	Awarded grant for acquisition of vernal pool habitat on Del Mar Mesa	
Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB)	State of California Wildlife Conservation Board		Awarded grant for acquisition of vernal pool habitat on Del Mar Mesa. Awarded grant for partial acquisition of a property in Carmel Mountain
Coastal Conservancy	California Coastal Conservancy		Awarded grant for partial acquisition of a property in Carmel Mountain

MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES:

In accordance with the City's Implementing Agreement (I.A.), Section 10.6B, the City is obligated to prepare a Framework Management Plan within six months after the adoption of the MSCP Subarea Plan. The City's MSCP Subarea Plan was adopted by the City Council in March 1997. A Framework Management Plan was included as Section 1.5 of the Subarea Plan. Therefore, the City has fulfilled their obligations pursuant to Section 10.6B of the I.A.

Until a regional funding source is in place, management for biological resources has been focused on maintaining the existing biological values of the habitat land under City control. Opportunities for specific biological management activities have been pursued when local or grant funding could be obtained. Various funding sources and associated management activities that are currently underway are described below:

- < The proposed FY2001 Park and Recreation Department Budget includes \$1,713,436 for Open Space/MSCP Lands Management. Of this amount \$314,000 is new funding to cover the additional costs attributable to the larger inventory of public lands resulting from the acquisition of MSCP open

space and increased levels of management for the existing Park Open Space lands.

< The following (Area-Specific) Management Plans are completed or underway:

Table 3 - TABLE SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT PLANS

LOCATION	ACTIVITY	STATUS
Pacific Highlands Ranch	City Council approved preparation of a 2,400 acre management plan in July 1999	A Master Revegetation Plan is currently being reviewed by City staff. The plan is scheduled to be completed prior to the final phase of project development
Mission Trails Regional Park	San Diego Ambrosia Management Plan: Funded by a NCCP grant, this project identifies the distribution of San Diego Ambrosia within Mission Trails Regional Park	The Final Management Plan was adopted by the Mission Trails Taskforce on May 15, 2000
Rancho Encantada, a 1,500 acre parcel located adjacent to Sycamore County Park	Under the direction of the City, McMillin Development Company is preparing a management plan for this property	City staff has reviewed the first draft of the management plan. Scheduled completion date is November 2000
Boden Canyon	Funded by a grant awarded to the City of San Diego, the San Dieguito JPA is preparing a joint management plan for publically owned lands in Boden Canyon	The first public workshop was held in September 2000. Scheduled completion date is March 2001
Otay River Valley Management Plan	Funded by a NCCP grant and with a \$68,490 match from the City of San Diego, the Park and Recreation Department is preparing a management plan for the Otay River Valley between I-5 and I-805	A consultant has been hired to prepare the plan which is currently in the data collection phase. Scheduled completion date is March 2001
Marron Valley Management Plan	City of San Diego Water Department has provided \$87,186 to prepare a management plan for the 2,600 acre Marron Valley Cornerstone Mitigation Bank	A consultant team has collected data on sensitive species and updated the natural resource information. Scheduled completion date is June 2001
Carmel Mountain and Del Mar Mesa	The City and the USFWS Refuges Division are preparing an interagency management plan for Carmel Mountain and Del Mar Mesa. The project is funded by a NCCP grant, a USFWS Challenge Grant and a City match of \$27,134	Initiated in October 2000, the scheduled completion date is March 2002

< The following Management activities are completed or underway:

Table 4 - MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES COMPLETED OR UNDERWAY

LOCATION	ACTIVITY	STATUS
Brammer Lease: San Pasqual River Valley	Funded by a NCCP grant, the City is restoring 15 acres of existing agricultural fields in the San Pasqual River Valley to coastal sage scrub. The restored habitat will provide connectivity between the San Pasqual River Valley and existing uplands containing gnatcatcher and other sensitive species	The site was cleared and “imprinted” with seed from coastal sage scrub species in January 2000. Maintenance and monitoring will continue for the next three years
Lopez Canyon	Working with the Friends of Los Peñasquitos Canyon (Friends) and the California Native Plant Society, the City has secured a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the State of California to restore the hydrology of Lopez Canyon for the protection and reestablishment of willow Monardella (<i>Monardella linoides</i> ssp. <i>viminea</i>)	Currently the City and the Friends are collecting seed from various populations occurring on publically owned land. In 2001, the Friends will be constructing gabion walls to prevent undercutting of the alluvial benches on which the willow Monardella occurs. The seed and other source material will be used to establish new populations

MONITORING EFFORTS:

City staff has initiated a phased program for MSCP preserve monitoring. The following summarizes the status of current and proposed monitoring activities:

- < In FY2000 the City has budgeted \$172,000 for MSCP monitoring. Specific monitoring efforts set for Spring 2001 are currently being discussed with the wildlife agencies.
- < Habitat Quality Pilot Project (SDSU): Working with Drs. Doug Stow and John O’Leary of SDSU, this project is evaluating remote sensing for monitoring existing habitat conditions and the detection of changes over time. Dr. O’Leary has established the first two permanent habitat quality monitoring plots (Mission Trails and Crestridge). Draft products are being reviewed by SDSU, the City, and the wildlife agencies. This project is funded by a NCCP grant. The scheduled completion date is March 2001.
- < CSS Reptile Monitoring (SDSU-BRD): Dr. Robert Fisher’s group is continuing to implement pitfall trappings at ten sites throughout the MSCP. The project has added three new research sites to the existing locations which have been monitored for the past five years. A preliminary status report covering the period from October 1999 through February 2000 has been submitted to the City for review. The scheduled completion date is March 2001. The project is funded by a NCCP Grant. The State has recently funded two sampling locations, located on Carmel Mountain and Del Mar Mesa, which are scheduled to be operational by Spring, 2001.

< Priority Plant Monitoring: For the last two years City staff has conducted quantitative monitoring of the *short-leaved dudleya* on Carmel Mountain pursuant to the MSCP Monitoring Plan protocols. In 2000, City staff monitored the following additional species:

- San Diego thornmint (PQ Preserve, Saber Springs, Black Mtn. Ranch)
- Nuttall's lotus: (Mission Bay)
- Ambrosia pumila: (Mission Trails Regional Park).
- Willowy Monardella: (Lopez Canyon, Upper Sycamore, Otay Lakes)

In Spring 2001, City staff, along with Conservation Biology Institute (CBI), will conduct baseline surveys for all 1st and 2nd priority plant species within the City of San Diego per the methodology described in the MSCP Monitoring Program.

< Quino Checkerspot Butterfly: City staff has conducted surveys throughout City-owned land during the 1998, 1999 and 2000 flight season. Focused surveys will also be conducted in the 2001 flight season.

< Develop Monitoring Database: City staff will be working with SANDAG, the County and the wildlife agencies on a pilot project for the development of a monitoring database to track the monitoring and management activities. This project is funded by a NCCP grant. It is proposed that the information from this database will be made available via the Internet to interested stakeholders.

TRAINING AND PUBLIC OUTREACH:

Beginning in late 1998, members of the public and government staff have been able to access information on the MSCP through the City's web site. Located at www.sannet.gov/mscp/, the site contains general information on the MSCP, as well as specific documents, maps and contact information.

The City has provided several training sessions on wetlands and wetland regulations to City staff. In January 2000, City staff from MSCP and the Environmental Analysis Section provided wetland training to approximately fifty members of the City's Planning and Development Review staff. In March 2000, MSCP staff organized a presentation by the Environmental Protection Agency to provide specific training on the federal Clean Water Act and mitigation guidelines to City planning, environmental, and permit review staff.

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES:

Regional Funding: Section 11.2C of the MSCP Implementing Agreement requires the City, in cooperation with other participating local jurisdictions, to establish a long-term regional funding source within three years (July 2000) of the effective date of the City's Implementing Agreement. In July 2000 the SANDAG Board considered a proposal to extend the 1/2 cent sales tax, TRANSNET, by thirty (30) years. The proposed extension would have generated \$7 billion, with a 20% share for park and open space programs including regional habitat plans such as the MSCP and the MHCP. After

receiving public input, the SANDAG Board referred the proposal to the Regional Transportation Plan Citizen Advisory Committee (RTP CAC) for further refinement. In addition to addressing the local regional funding requirements of regional habitat conservation plans, the RTP CAC is also addressing the funding needs of the Regional Transportation Plan and MTDB's recently adopted "Transit First" alternative as they relate to the City and County General Plan updates. The November 2002 election is being considered for a TRANSNET re-authorization ballot measure.

Section 11.2C.3 of the MSCP Implementing Agreement recognizes that establishing a local regional funding source by July 2000 may be compromised if other jurisdictions fail to obtain approval of a Subarea Plan. To date, only three of the 12 jurisdictions in the MSCP planning areas have approved Subarea Plans (San Diego, Poway and the County of San Diego). The Implementing Agreement also requires that if a regional funding source has not been established by July 2000, ". . . the City shall establish and implement a funding source adequate to meet its share of MSCP and Subarea Plan implementation costs while continuing to pursue, with other participating local jurisdictions, establishment of a regional funding source."

The San Diego City Council is scheduled to consider a three year funding plan (FY 2002-2004) on November 20, 2000. The wildlife agencies have indicated that the proposed three year funding plan would, in their view, satisfy the requirements of Section 11.2C.3 of the Implementing Agreement.

In March 2000, the voters approved Proposition 12 (Parks and Open Space Bond). Included in Proposition 12 is a \$100 million earmark for open space acquisition in jurisdictions with approved Natural Communities Conservation Plans (NCCP). The MSCP is one of two such plans within the state. Orange County has an approved NCCP plan for the Central County area. Proposition 12 funds will be available through competitive grants.

MSCP Lawsuit Status: The Center for Biological Diversity has filed suit against the United States Fish and Wildlife Services (FWS) and the City over the regulation of vernal pools under the MSCP. Plaintiffs contend, among other things, the FWS violated the Endangered Species Act when it found that the MSCP will not appreciably reduce the likelihood of the survival and recovery of five plant and two animal species typically found in vernal pools. Under the MSCP, a developer is required to avoid vernal pools to the maximum extent practicable and fully mitigate for any loss of vernal pool resources that cannot be practically avoided. The City and the FWS believe the MSCP's treatment of vernal pools is fully consistent with the Endangered Species Act.

Wetland Regulations: City Council has directed staff to provide clarifying language to the existing wetland regulations that are incorporated in the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Ordinance of the Municipal Code. Staff has been working with a group of stakeholders from the development and environmental communities, as well as the City's Wetland Advisory Board to explore options for clarifying the wetland regulation language. It is hoped that a consensus can be reached with the various stakeholders such that revisions to the ESL Ordinance can be docketed for Council consideration in Spring 2001.

Border Security Road and Fence: A Focus Group was established in March 1999 to review the environmental issues associated with the Border Patrol Security Road project. The proposed security road and fence project would be located along the U.S./Mexico Border extending inland from the Pacific Ocean approximately fourteen miles. The Focus Group organized by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the Army Corps of Engineers includes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, State Parks, California Department of Fish and Game, local agency representatives as well as community and environmental organizations. SANDAG is acting as a facilitator for the focus group. Portions of the City's MSCP potentially impacted by the Border Security Road include the Tijuana River Valley and Otay Mesa (Spring Canyon) areas.

CONCLUSION:

Since the adoption of the City's MSCP Subarea Plan in July 1997, significant achievements have occurred which continue to contribute to the successful implementation of the City's MSCP Subarea Plan. During the 1999 reporting period, 5,682 acres of habitat was conserved mainly within or adjacent to the MHPA. Of the 3,174 acres of habitat that were impacted through approved projects within this same time period, 93 percent of the loss occurred outside of the MHPA. In 1999, 115 projects were reviewed for consistency with the City's MSCP Subarea Plan and many of these projects have benefitted from the City's streamlined permit process.

The City continues to be successful in securing state and federal grants, many of which have been instrumental in initiating the management and monitoring activities as described in this report. In addition, the City is engaged in numerous training and public outreach programs designed to provide continuing education to City staff and the public on the MSCP. The City's MSCP Subarea Plan program objectives for the first three years have been achieved.

Thomas T. Story, Deputy Director
Planning and Development Review

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