

1998 MSCP Annual Public Workshop- Summary Report

December 2, 1998

BACKGROUND:

On March 18, 1997, the San Diego City Council 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 in 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 first annual report was submitted on February 15, 1998. The annual report is available under separate cover and will be available at the workshop. The report identifies by project, the habitat loss and conservation from July 17, 1997 (the effective date of the Implementing Agreement) through the end of 1997 calendar year. The 1997 Annual Report showing the loss and conservation of habitat within the MSCP Subarea was accepted by the Wildlife Agencies in October 1997.

Habitat conservation efforts to date have focused on acquiring critical areas of sensitive habitat and securing wildlife corridors within the MHPA. These acquisitions have been accomplished through public purchase and directing private mitigation to parcels within the MHPA. In addition, the City has committed public lands, such as Mission Trails Regional Park, to the Preserve. The City and the Fish and Wildlife Service have also been acquiring habitat within the MHPA with state and federal funds. Concurrent with the land acquisition efforts, the City has secured grants for the restoration, monitoring and management of habitat within the MHPA.

ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY:

Within the reporting period (July 15, 1997 - December 31, 1998) 14,130 acres of habitat were conserved compared to a loss of 243 acres of habitat. Consistent with the design goals of the program, virtually all of the conserved habitat is located within the City's Multiple Habitat Planning Area (MHPA) while most habitat loss occurred outside the MHPA.

Acres lost represents the acreage impacted by development projects occurring within the reporting period. Acres conserved include lands conserved through mitigation for project -level impacts, lands conserved through exactions of private property during development entitlement process, acquired with public funds, or existing public lands

dedicated as part of the City's commitments under the MSCP. The habitat loss and conservation for the first annual reporting period is summarized as follows:

Habitat Type & Examples of Habitats	Acres Lost	Acres Conserved			
		Mitigation	Exaction/ Acquisition	Dedication	Total
Wetlands: Coastal Wetlands Riparian Habitats Freshwater Marsh Natural Flood Channel Disturbed Wetland Vernal Pools Marine Habitats Eelgrass Beds	1.3	0.9	386	948	1356
TIER 1 (rare uplands): Southern Foredunes Torrey Pines Forest Coastal Bluff Scrub Maritime Succulent Scrub Maritime Chaparral Native Grassland Oak Woodlands	95	139	121	223	483
TIER II (uncommon uplands): Coastal Sage Scrub CSS/Chaparral	125	171	414	6289	6874
TIER III A (common uplands): Mixed Chaparral Chamise Chaparral	22	13	343	2349	2705
TIER III B (common uplands): Non-native Grasslands	0	0	66	1678	1744
TIER IV (other uplands) Disturbed Agriculture Eucalyptus	0	0	39	929	968
Totals	243	323	3918 ²	9925	14130³

1. 0.42 acre loss of wetland habitat was mitigated through enhancement of an unspecified acreage of wetland habitat (see Kumeyaay Lake Camping Facilities EIR, DEP No. 91-0737).
2. Total acreage includes 248 acres exacted through the approval process for the redevelopment of the General Dynamics property.
3. 15,087 acre total conservation area in the 1997 Annual Report includes estimated acreage for the City land dedication that has since been revised and incorporated into the 14,130 acre total.

ADDITIONAL LAND ACQUISITIONS

Since December 31, 1997, the City of San Diego and U.S. Fish and Wildlife have acquired several key parcels which, while noted in this report, were not included in the 1997 annual report and will be included in the 1998 annual report.

- The City has recently acquired the 343 acre Konyn parcel located in the San Pasqual Valley. This land was acquired jointly with City funds and a \$2 million Coastal Conservancy grant.
- Also acquired this year were the Ostrow, Meese and Thayer properties (approx. 3.5 ac.) located in Otay Mesa. These degraded properties will be restored to vernal pool habitat which will help augment the existing vernal pool preserve as part of the California Terraces project.
- Based on the November 3rd public vote to authorize the NCFUA Subarea III Phase Shift, Pardee Construction Co. has dedicated to the City, 126 acres of sensitive southern maritime chaparral on Carmel Mountain for permanent habitat preservation and public enjoyment.
- The Fish and Wildlife Service has purchased approximately 51 acres of vernal pool habitat on Del Mar Mesa.
- Within the proposed South San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge 1400 acres of wetlands were acquired by the Port of San Diego through negotiations with the Western Salt Company. 1300 acres of which will be maintained and managed for their habitat values.

GRANTS

In the last year the City has aggressively pursued numerous state and federal grant opportunities.

- The City was awarded a \$97,510 grant to develop a management plan for a rare plant (San Diego ambrosia) located in Mission Trails Regional Park. A rough draft of the San Diego ambrosia management plan has been completed and is currently being reviewed by the City and wildlife agency staff. A public review of the draft plan will be forthcoming.
- The City was awarded \$43,000 for the restoration of degraded vernal pools in Otay Mesa. A vernal pool restoration plan has been completed and approved by the wildlife agencies. Work has begun to restore over 17,000 square feet of vernal pool surface area on a 2.5 acre parcel
- The State also awarded a grant for the development of a GIS tool for tracking the loss and conservation of habitat in the region. SANDAG was selected to provide

overall project management and contract administration services. After an RFP process, the landscape architectural firm of EDAW was selected based on their extensive GIS experience. Using ARCVIEW software, EDAW is developing a GIS tool designed to easily record, compile and analyze the variety of data layers necessary to track the performance of take authorization holders in implementing NCCP plans.

This year eleven grant proposals, totaling \$1,387,570, have been submitted to state and federal agencies to assist in the implementation of the MSCP. The proposals, grouped by type, are as follows:

Acquisition: Four grants, totaling \$999,900, from the California Transportation Commission for the acquisition of vernal pool habitat located on the Del Mar Mesa and southern Maritime Chaparral on Carmel Mountain (Carmel Valley Neighborhood 8A).

Management: Three grants under the NCCP grant program to develop; a natural resource management plan for Boden Canyon located north of the San Pasqual (\$93,298), a natural resource management plan for the Otay River Valley from the Salt Ponds west to Heritage Road. (\$75,000), and the restoration of 15 acres of old agricultural fields to coastal sage scrub in San Pasqual (\$107,771).

Monitoring: Three grants under the NCCP grant program to; develop remote sensing technologies for a more cost-effective method to fulfill the habitat quality monitoring obligations of the MSCP (\$151,141), implement the reptiles monitoring obligations of the MSCP (\$140,594); purchase geographic information system (GIS) hardware and software to allow the City to better manage and track the loss and gain of habitat as required under the MSCP (\$19,766).

Wetlands: The City is pursuing a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency to initiate the development of a watershed-level plan for the conservation of wetlands and permit streamlining (\$300,000).

TRAINING AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

Since the adoption of the MSCP Subarea Plan, the City staff has completed over a dozen training sessions and public outreach programs. Training sessions have been conducted for all City of San Diego personnel involved in the review of development projects, at both the staff and management levels. These sessions were jointly prepared and presented by City and wildlife agency MSCP staff. Wildlife agency staff were also in attendance at these training sessions. Public outreach activities have been conducted with Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs, San Diego City College, San Diego State University, Mission Trails Regional Park Citizen Advisory Committee and the

California League of Cities. Staff is currently developing a program on the MSCP which will air on the City's public cable channel.

Public access to information about the MSCP has become easier this year with the development of an MSCP data layer on the SANGIS interactive mapping web site (<http://www.sangis.org/intmaps>). Receiving over 1000 hits a day, this web site allows users to overlay parcels with the Multiple Habitat Planing Area and other pertinent geographic information. The City is working on a MSCP web page, which will allow users to view information on the MSCP, download resources such as the Subarea Plan and annual report, and provide links to other related habitat conservation sites, such as the California State Resources Agency CERES program.

MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Until a regional funding source is in place, management for biological resources has focused on maintaining the existing biological values of the habitat land under City control. Coordination amongst all of the existing agency land managers has started under the regional Habitat Management Technical Committee (HMTC). This committee addresses issues that affect the day-to-day, on the ground, management of open space reserves.

In addition to the HMTC, the City has initiated a joint discussions with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Refuges, Caltrans, California Department of Fish and Game and County of San Diego to develop an integrated approach for the management of public mitigation lands on Del Mar Mesa. The City, County, San Dieguito River Park JPA and the California Department of Fish and Game are also discussing an integrated management approach for public lands in Boden Canyon. Public access, enforcement, management, and biological monitoring are among the issues being discussed for both areas.

MONITORING EFFORTS

While local monitoring efforts have not yet been initiated the Biological Resources Division of the U.S. Geological Survey has established a Natural Communities Conservation Program (NCCP) task force to evaluate ecological monitoring methods of various existing and proposed habitat conservancy plans with a goal of creating regional consistency. This regional monitoring group is working through the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis in cooperation with the University of Santa Barbara. Several leading ecologists, such as Dr. Frank Davis, Dr. Barbara Kus, Dr. Ted Case, Dr. Pete Stein and Dr. Robert Fisher, serve on this taskforce.

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES:

Local Regional Funding - City of San Diego efforts within the first year of

implementing the MSCP have focused on securing short term funding for immediate acquisition opportunities. To date, more than \$9.5 million has been secured, \$7.5 million of which, are City funds from a variety of sources such as the General Fund, and public and private mitigation funds for projects in the City. An additional \$6.5 million in prospective funding has also been identified as available in 1999, the majority of which are City and local funds.

Under the terms of the I.A., the City of San Diego, working cooperatively with other local jurisdictions, has three years from the effective date of the I.A. to establish a local regional funding source (until July 2001). Efforts to secure long term local regional funding are accelerating as the North County, Multiple Habitat Conservation Program (MHCP) nears completion. In anticipation of a public vote, polling by a national conservation group is now being conducted to determine the level of support for a ballot measure to fund implementation of sub-regional habitat conservation plans (e.g. MSCP, MHCP, MHCOP) within the County.

Avoidance of Wetland Impacts - The MSCP Implementing Agreement and the existing Resource Protection Ordinance require, except under very limited circumstances, avoidance of impacts to all wetlands regardless of the quality, condition or ecological functioning of the wetland. Impacts, when unavoidable, can only be approved through a "deviation" process which requires decision makers to make supplemental findings. As a result of the recent approval of the Mira Mesa Market Center project, City Council has directed City Staff to clarify the use of the deviation process. Staff is currently working with representatives of the development industry and environmental community, the Wetlands Advisory Board and the City Attorney's office, to provide this clarification. A report on this issue will be provided to the City Council in early 1999.

Status of Implementing Regulations - The MSCP Implementing Agreement required the City to adopt implementing regulations within six months of the effective date of the I.A. (July 17, 1998). In November 1997, the City Council adopted the Land Development Code (LDC), which includes the MSCP implementing regulations. A Local Coastal Program amendment application for the LDC was submitted to the California Coastal Commission in December 1997 and deemed complete in January, 1998. Because of the considerable size and complexity of the application, the Coastal Commission hearing was not conducted until October 1998. At the October hearing, action on the LDC was continued until February 1999, to allow City and Coastal Commission staff time to resolve various issues of consistency with the State Coastal Act. The key issues include views, parking and public access requirements, and specific development regulations for sensitive coastal resources such as steep hillsides, brush management and wetlands protection.

To ensure compliance with the terms of the I.A., the City amended the Resource Protection Ordinance in February 1998 to incorporate the concepts and details of the draft MSCP implementing regulations. These amendments are in effect throughout the City except for the Coastal zone.

New Listings - On October 13, 1998, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that the seven San Diego County plants will be listed as either endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

Willow monardella*	<i>Monardella linoidea</i> ssp. <i>viminea</i>
Nevin's barberry*	<i>Berberis nevinii</i>
Mexican flannelbush*	<i>Fremontodendron mexicanum</i>
Thread-leaved brodiaea**	<i>Brodiaea filifolia</i>
spreading navarretia**	<i>Navarretia fossalis</i>
San Diego thornmint**	<i>Acanthomintha ilicifolia</i>
Otay tarplant**	<i>Hemizonia conjugens</i> .

*Listed as endangered

**Listed as threatened

These listings were effective November 12, 1998. Of these seven plants, six occur within the limits of the City of San Diego and are covered by the City of San Diego's Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP). The only newly listed plant that does not occur in the City of San Diego is Mexican flannelbush. This plant has been historically found on Boundary Monument and in the Jamul Mountains but currently is only found at Arroyo Seco in Baja California and in Cedar Canyon on Otay Mountain. The plant population located on Otay Mountain occurs on Bureau of Land Management property (Federal Register Volume 63, Number 197, Page 54958). Mexican flannelbush is not expected on any projects within the City of San Diego and, therefore, does not require coverage under the MSCP. The remaining six plants were covered under the MSCP before they were listed, and therefore, will continue to be regulated under the City of San Diego's MSCP without requiring a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

CONCLUSION

Since the adoption of the City's MSCP Subarea Plan in July 1997 significant achievements have occurred which contribute to the successful implementation of the City's MSCP Subarea plan. In addition to the dedication of 12,759 acres of existing public lands, 1,371 acres of private lands have been conserved through mitigation, exactions or public acquisitions. During this period 243 acres of habitat were impacted, resulting in 5.6 acres of private lands conserved for acre each impacted. During 1997, \$141,000 were obtained through NCCP grants for management and restoration efforts within the City's Preserve. In addition, the City has submitted eleven grant proposals totaling \$1.3 million for acquisition, monitoring and management efforts. The City has been engaged in numerous training and public outreach programs designed to educate City staff and the public on the purpose, function and value of the MSCP.

The City is achieving all of the program objectives and is proactively seeking ways to secure local regional funding to ensure the long term success of the MSCP.

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