



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Project No. 658785

SCH No. 2021

SUBJECT: Ruffin Canyon Open Space Trail: The project is the adoption of the Ruffin Canyon Open Space Trails Plan which proposes the expansion of an existing trail system. The Plan would provide a cohesive trail plan for Ruffin Canyon Open Space and provide connection between the Serra Mesa and Mission Valley Communities. The Plan provides guidance for the present and future use and maintenance of the trails within the Plan Area. Trails in this plan are open to pedestrian and bicycle users. The proposed project would create a new alignment in the southern section of the canyon where individuals are currently using a sewer access path that -does not serve as a safe and sustainable trail for public use. In addition, the report addresses the permitting of three existing trails within Ruffin Canyon. The project consists of approximately 2,658 feet of new trail within Ruffin Canyon, heading south from the intersection of the existing Ruffin Canyon and Shawn Canyon trails. In addition to the new trail construction, the study area includes permitting of the existing trial located in the upper section of Ruffin Canyon, and closure of approximately 2150 feet of existing trail alignment.

UPDATE: June 17, 2021

Revisions to this document have been made when compared to the Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (DMND). The project is now proposing the closure of approximately 2,150 feet of trail. The closure of this portion of the project would not result in any new impacts and is denoted by ~~strikeout~~ and underline in the Final Mitigated Negative Declaration.

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act, Section 15073.5 (c)(4), the addition of new information that clarifies, amplifies, or makes insignificant modification does not require recirculation as there are no new impacts and no new mitigation identified. An environmental document need only be recirculated when there is identification of new significant environmental impact or the addition of a new mitigation measure required to avoid a significant environmental impact. The addition of updated mitigation language within the environmental document does not affect the environmental analysis or conclusions of the MND.

APPLICANT: City of San Diego Parks and Recreation

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

See attached Initial Study.

II. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The project area is located in southwestern portion San Diego County within the southern Serra Mesa area in the west-central portion of the City of San Diego. It is located east of Interstate 805 and west of Interstate 15, north of Friars Road and south of Gramercy Drive within Ruffin Canyon. The project is located in the unsectioned portion of the Mission San Diego lands within Township 16 South, Range 2 West. The project area is shown on the La Jolla USGS 7.5'

III. DETERMINATION

The City of San Diego conducted an Initial Study (IS) which determined that the proposed project could have a significant environmental effect with regard to **Biological Resources and Cultural Resources**. Subsequent revisions in the project proposal create the specific mitigation identified in Section V of this Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND). The project as revised now avoids or mitigates the potentially significant environmental effects previously identified, and the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report will not be required.

IV. DOCUMENTATION

The attached Initial Study documents the reasons to support the above Determination.

V. MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM:

A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Plan Check Phase (prior to permit issuance)

1. Prior to Bid Opening/Bid Award or beginning any construction related activity on-site, the Development Services Department (DSD) Director's Environmental Designee (ED) shall review and approve all Construction Documents (CD) (plans, specification, details, etc.) to ensure the MMRP requirements have been incorporated. In addition, the ED shall verify that the MMRP Conditions/Notes that apply ONLY to the construction phases of this project are included VERBATIM, under the heading, "ENVIRONMENTAL/MITIGATION REQUIREMENTS."
2. These notes must be shown within the first three (3) sheets of the construction documents in the format specified for engineering construction document templates as shown on the City website: <http://www.sandiego.gov/developmentservices/industry/information/standtemp.shtml>.
3. The TITLE INDEX SHEET must also show on which pages the "Environmental/Mitigation Requirements" notes are provided.
4. SURETY AND COST RECOVERY. The DSD Director or City Manager may require appropriate surety instruments or bonds from private Permit. Holders to ensure the long-term performance or implementation of required mitigation measures or programs. The City is

authorized to recover its cost to offset the salary, overhead, and expenses for City personnel and programs to monitor qualifying projects.

Post Plan Check (After permit issuance/Prior to start of construction)

5. PRE-CONSTRUCTION MEETING is required ten (10) working days prior to beginning any work on this project. The Permit Holder/Owner is responsible to arrange and perform this meeting by contacting the City Resident Engineer (RE) of the Field Engineering Division and City staff from Mitigation Monitoring Coordination (MMC). Attendees must also include the Permit Holder's Representative(s), Job Site Superintendent, and the following consultants:

- Qualified biologist
- Qualified archaeologist and Native American monitor

Note: Failure of all responsible Permit Holder's representatives and consultants to attend shall require an additional meeting with all parties present.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

- a. The primary point of contact is the RE at the Field Engineering Division – 858-627-3200.
 - b. For clarification of environmental requirements, applicant is also required to call RE and MMC at 858-627-3360.
6. MMRP COMPLIANCE. This Project, Project Tracking System (PTS) Number 658785 and/or Environmental Document Number 658785, shall conform to the mitigation requirements contained in the associated Environmental Document and implemented to the satisfaction of the DSD's Environmental Designee (MMC) and the City Engineer (RE). The requirements may not be reduced or changed but may be annotated (i.e., to explain when and how compliance is being met and location of verifying proof, etc.). Additional clarifying information may also be added to other relevant plan sheets and/or specifications as appropriate (i.e., specific locations, times of monitoring, methodology, etc.).

Note: Permit Holder's Representatives must alert RE and MMC if there are any discrepancies in the plans or notes, or any changes due to field conditions. All conflicts must be approved by RE and MMC BEFORE the work is performed.

7. OTHER AGENCY REQUIREMENTS: Evidence of compliance with all other agency requirements or permits shall be submitted to the RE and MMC for review and acceptance prior to the beginning of work or within one week of the Permit Holder obtaining documentation of those permits or requirements. Evidence shall include copies of permits, letters of resolution or other documentation issued by the responsible agency: **None required.**
8. MONITORING EXHIBITS: All consultants are required to submit to RE and MMC, a monitoring exhibit on a 11x17 reduction of the appropriate construction plan, such as site plan, grading, landscape, etc., marked to clearly show the specific areas including the LIMIT OF WORK, scope of that discipline's work, and notes indicating when in the construction schedule that

work will be performed. When necessary for clarification, a detailed methodology of how the work will be performed shall be included.

Note: Surety and Cost Recovery- When deemed necessary by the DSD Director or City Manager, additional surety instruments or bonds from the private Permit Holder may be required to ensure the long-term performance or implementation of required mitigation measures or programs. The City is authorized to recover its cost to offset the salary, overhead, and expenses for City personnel and programs to monitor qualifying projects.

9. OTHER SUBMITTALS AND INSPECTIONS: The Permit Holder/Owner's representative shall submit all required documentation, verification letters, and requests for all associated inspections to the RE and MMC for approval per the following schedule:

DOCUMENT SUBMITTAL/INSPECTION CHECKLIST

Issue Area	Document Submittal	Associated Inspection/ Approvals/Notes
General	Consultant qualification letters	Prior to preconstruction meeting
General	Consultant construction monitoring exhibits	Prior to preconstruction meeting
Biological Resources (construction noise)	Acoustical analysis (if construction commences during the avian breeding season and adjacent habitat is occupied by gnatcatcher)	Prior to construction
Biological Resources	Monitoring reports	Following construction monitoring
Cultural Resources	Monitoring Reports	Following construction monitoring

B. SPECIFIC MMRP ISSUE AREA CONDITIONS REQUIREMENTS

BIO-1 Biological Resources-Upland Habitat : Prior to Bid Opening/Bid Award or beginning any construction related activity on-site, the Development Services Department (DSD) Director's Environmental Designee (ED) shall review and approve all Construction Documents (CD) (plans, specification, details, etc.) to ensure that the owner/permittee shall mitigate for direct impacts to Tier II and Tier IIIA vegetation communities, comprised of 0.15 acre of Diegan coastal sage scrub and 0.22 acre of southern mixed chaparral, would be mitigated at a 1:1 ratio would total a requirement of .37 acres. The .37 acres of impacts would be mitigated through payment into the City's Habitat Acquisition Fund (HAF), or through purchase of habitat through an approved mitigation bank such as the Cornerstone Lands Mitigation Bank.

BIO-2 Biological Resource Protection During Construction: Prior to Bid Opening/Bid Award or beginning any construction related activity on-site, the Environmental Designee shall verify that the following project requirements are shown on the construction plans:

- **Prior to Construction**

- **Biologist Verification** – The owner/permittee shall provide a letter to the City's Mitigation Monitoring Coordination (MMC) section stating that a Project Biologist (Qualified Biologist) as defined in the City of San Diego's Biological Guidelines (2012), has been retained to implement the project's biological monitoring program. The letter shall include the names and contact information of all persons involved in the biological monitoring of the project.
- **Preconstruction Meeting** – The Qualified Biologist shall attend the preconstruction meeting, discuss the project's biological monitoring program, and arrange to perform any follow up mitigation measures and reporting including site-specific monitoring, restoration or revegetation, and additional fauna/flora surveys/salvage.
- **Biological Documents** – The Qualified Biologist shall submit all required documentation to MMC verifying that any special mitigation reports including but not limited to, maps, plans, surveys, survey timelines, or buffers are completed or scheduled per City Biology Guidelines, Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP), Environmentally Sensitive Lands Ordinance (ESL), project permit conditions; California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); endangered species acts (ESAs); and/or other local, state or federal requirements.
- **Biological Construction Mitigation/Monitoring Exhibit** – The Qualified Biologist shall present a Biological Construction Mitigation/Monitoring Exhibit (BCME) which includes the biological documents in C above. In addition, include: restoration/revegetation plans, plant salvage/relocation requirements (e.g., coastal cactus wren plant salvage, burrowing owl exclusions, etc.), avian or other wildlife surveys/survey schedules (including general avian nesting and USFWS protocol), timing of surveys, wetland buffers, avian construction avoidance areas/noise buffers/ barriers, other impact avoidance areas, and any subsequent requirements determined by the Qualified Biologist and the City ADD/MMC. The BCME shall include a site plan, written and graphic depiction of the project's biological mitigation/monitoring program, and a schedule. Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the BCME shall be approved by MMC and referenced in the construction documents.
- **Avian Protection Requirements** – To avoid any direct impacts to any species identified as a listed, candidate, sensitive, or special status species in the MSCP, removal of habitat that supports active nests in the proposed area of disturbance shall occur outside of the breeding season for these species (February 1 to September 15). If removal of habitat in the proposed area of disturbance must occur during the breeding season, the Qualified Biologist shall conduct a pre-construction survey to determine the presence or absence of nesting birds on the proposed area of disturbance. The pre-construction survey shall be conducted within 10 calendar days prior to the start of construction activities (including removal of vegetation). The applicant shall submit the results of the pre-construction survey to City DSD for review and approval prior to initiating any construction activities. If nesting birds are detected, a letter report in conformance with the City's Biology Guidelines (i.e., appropriate follow up surveys, monitoring schedules, construction and noise

barriers/buffers, etc.) shall be prepared and include proposed measures to be implemented to ensure that take of birds or eggs or disturbance of breeding activities is avoided. The report or mitigation plan shall be submitted to the City for review and approval and implemented to the satisfaction of the City. The City's MMC Section and Biologist shall verify and approve that all measures identified in the report or mitigation plan are in place prior to and/or during construction.

- **Resource Delineation** – Prior to construction activities, the Qualified Biologist shall supervise the placement of orange construction fencing or equivalent along the limits of disturbance adjacent to sensitive biological habitats and verify compliance with any other project conditions as shown on the BCME. This phase shall include flagging plant specimens and delimiting buffers to protect sensitive biological resources (e.g., habitats/flora & fauna species, including nesting birds) during construction. Appropriate steps/care should be taken to minimize attraction of nest predators to the site.
- **Education** – Prior to commencement of construction activities, the Qualified Biologist shall meet with the owner/permittee or designee and the construction crew and conduct an on-site educational session regarding the need to avoid impacts outside of the approved construction area and to protect sensitive flora and fauna (e.g., explain the avian and wetland buffers, flag system for removal of invasive species or retention of sensitive plants, and clarify acceptable access routes/methods and staging areas, etc.).
- **During Construction**
 - **Monitoring** – All construction (including access/staging areas) shall be restricted to areas previously identified, proposed for development/staging, or previously disturbed as shown on "Exhibit A" and/or the BCME. The Qualified Biologist shall monitor construction activities as needed to ensure that construction activities do not encroach into biologically sensitive areas, or cause other similar damage, and that the work plan has been amended to accommodate any sensitive species located during the pre-construction surveys. In addition, the Qualified Biologist shall document field activity via the Consultant Site Visit Record (CSV). The CSV shall be emailed to MMC on the 1st day of monitoring, the 1st week of each month, the last day of monitoring, and immediately in the case of any undocumented condition or discovery.
 - **Subsequent Resource Identification** – The Qualified Biologist shall note/act to prevent any new disturbances to habitat, flora, and/or fauna onsite (e.g., flag plant specimens for avoidance during access, etc.). If active nests or other previously unknown sensitive resources are detected, all project activities that directly impact the resource shall be delayed until species specific local, state, or federal regulations have been determined and applied by the Qualified Biologist.

- **Post Construction Measures**

- In the event that impacts exceed previously allowed amounts, additional impacts shall be mitigated in accordance with City Biology Guidelines, ESL and MSCP, State CEQA, and other applicable local, state, and federal law. The Qualified Biologist shall submit a final BCME/report to the satisfaction of the City ADD/MMC within 30 days of construction completion.

CUL-1 Historical Resources (Archaeology): Prior to Permit Issuance

- Entitlements Plan Check
 - Prior to Bid Opening/Bid Award or beginning any construction related activity on-site, but prior to the first preconstruction meeting, whichever is applicable, the Assistant Deputy Director (ADD) Environmental designee shall verify that the requirements for Archaeological Monitoring and Native American monitoring have been noted on the applicable construction documents through the plan check process.
- Submit Letters of Qualification to ADD
 - The applicant shall submit a letter of verification to Mitigation Monitoring Coordination (MMC) identifying the Principal Investigator (PI) for the project and the names of all persons involved in the archaeological monitoring program, as defined in the City of San Diego Historical Resources Guidelines (HRG). If applicable, individuals involved in the archaeological monitoring program must have completed the 40-hour HAZWOPER training with certification documentation.
 - MMC shall provide a letter to the applicant confirming the qualifications of the PI and all persons involved in the archaeological monitoring of the project meet the qualifications established in the HRG.
 - Prior to the start of work, the applicant shall obtain written approval from MMC for any personnel changes associated with the monitoring program.

- **Prior to Start of Construction**

- Verification of Records Search
 - The PI shall provide verification to MMC that a site-specific records search (1/4-mile radius) has been completed. Verification includes but is not limited to a copy of a confirmation letter from South Coastal Information Center, or, if the search was in-house, a letter of verification from the PI stating that the search was completed.
 - The letter shall introduce any pertinent information concerning expectations and probabilities of discovery during trenching and/or grading activities.

- The PI may submit a detailed letter to MMC requesting a reduction to the ¼ mile radius.
- Principal Investigator Shall Attend Preconstruction Meetings
 - Prior to beginning any work that requires monitoring; the Applicant shall arrange a Preconstruction Meeting that shall include the PI, Native American consultant/monitor (where Native American resources may be impacted), Construction Manager (CM) and/or Grading Contractor, Resident Engineer (RE), Building Inspector (BI), if appropriate, and MMC. The qualified Archaeologist and Native American Monitor shall attend any grading/excavation related Preconstruction Meetings to make comments and/or suggestions concerning the Archaeological Monitoring program with the Construction Manager and/or Grading Contractor.
 - If the PI is unable to attend the Preconstruction Meeting, the Applicant shall schedule a focused Preconstruction Meeting with MMC, the PI, RE, CM or BI, if appropriate, prior to the start of any work that requires monitoring.
- Identify Areas to be Monitored
 - Prior to the start of any work that requires monitoring, the PI shall submit an Archaeological Monitoring Exhibit (AME) (with verification that the AME has been reviewed and approved by the Native American consultant/monitor when Native American resources may be impacted) based on the appropriate construction documents (reduced to 11x17) to MMC identifying the areas to be monitored including the delineation of grading/excavation limits.
 - The AME shall be based on the results of a site-specific records search as well as information regarding existing known soil conditions (native or formation).
- When Monitoring Will Occur
 - Prior to the start of any work, the PI shall also submit a construction schedule to MMC through the RE indicating when and where monitoring will occur.
 - The PI may submit a detailed letter to MMC prior to the start of work or during construction requesting a modification to the monitoring program. This request shall be based on relevant information such as review of final construction documents which indicate site conditions such as depth of excavation and/or site graded to bedrock, etc., which may reduce or increase the potential for resources to be present.

- **During Construction**

- Monitor(s) Shall be Present During Grading/Excavation/Trenching

- The Archaeological Monitor shall be present full-time during all soil disturbing and grading/excavation/trenching activities which could result in impacts to archaeological resources as identified on the AME. The Construction Manager is responsible for notifying the RE, PI, and MMC of changes to any construction activities such as in the case of a potential safety concern within the area being monitored. In certain circumstances OSHA safety requirements may necessitate modification of the AME.
 - The Native American consultant/monitor shall determine the extent of their presence during soil disturbing and grading/excavation/trenching activities based on the AME and provide that information to the PI and MMC. If prehistoric resources are encountered during the Native American consultant/monitor's absence, work shall stop and the Discovery Notification Process detailed in Section III.B-C and IV.A-D shall commence.
 - The PI may submit a detailed letter to MMC during construction requesting a modification to the monitoring program when a field condition such as modern disturbance post-dating the previous grading/trenching activities, presence of fossil formations, or when native soils are encountered that may reduce or increase the potential for resources to be present.
 - The archaeological and Native American consultant/monitor shall document field activity via the Consultant Site Visit Record (CSV). The CSV's shall be faxed by the CM to the RE the first day of monitoring, the last day of monitoring, monthly (Notification of Monitoring Completion), and in the case of ANY discoveries. The RE shall forward copies to MMC.

- Discovery Notification Process

- In the event of a discovery, the Archaeological Monitor shall direct the contractor to temporarily divert all soil disturbing activities, including but not limited to digging, trenching, excavating, or grading activities in the area of discovery and in the area reasonably suspected to overlay adjacent resources and immediately notify the RE or BI, as appropriate.
 - The Monitor shall immediately notify the PI (unless Monitor is the PI) of the discovery.
 - The PI shall immediately notify MMC by phone of the discovery and shall also submit written documentation to MMC within 24 hours by fax or email with photos of the resource in context, if possible.

- No soil shall be exported off-site until a determination can be made regarding the significance of the resource specifically if Native American resources are encountered.
- o Determination of Significance
 - The PI and Native American consultant/monitor, where Native American resources are discovered shall evaluate the significance of the resource. If Human Remains are involved, follow protocol in Section IV below.
 - a. The PI shall immediately notify MMC by phone to discuss significance determination and shall also submit a letter to MMC indicating whether additional mitigation is required.
 - b. If the resource is significant, the PI shall submit an Archaeological Data Recovery Program (ADRP) which has been reviewed by the Native American consultant/monitor, and obtain written approval from MMC. Impacts to significant resources must be mitigated before ground disturbing activities in the area of discovery will be allowed to resume. Note: If a unique archaeological site is also an historical resource as defined in CEQA, then the limits on the amount(s) that a project applicant may be required to pay to cover mitigation costs as indicated in CEQA Section 21083.2 shall not apply.
 - c. If the resource is not significant, the PI shall submit a letter to MMC indicating that artifacts will be collected, curated, and documented in the Final Monitoring Report. The letter shall also indicate that that no further work is required.

- **Discovery of Human Remains**

If human remains are discovered, work shall halt in that area and no soil shall be exported off-site until a determination can be made regarding the provenance of the human remains; and the following procedures as set forth in CEQA Section 15064.5(e), the California Public Resources Code (Sec. 5097.98) and State Health and Safety Code (Sec. 7050.5) shall be undertaken:

- o Notification
 - Archaeological Monitor shall notify the RE or BI as appropriate, MMC, and the PI, if the Monitor is not qualified as a PI. MMC will notify the appropriate Senior Planner in the Environmental Analysis Section (EAS) of the Development Services Department to assist with the discovery notification process.
 - The PI shall notify the Medical Examiner after consultation with the RE, either in person or via telephone.

- Isolate discovery site
 - Work shall be directed away from the location of the discovery and any nearby area reasonably suspected to overlay adjacent human remains until a determination can be made by the Medical Examiner in consultation with the PI concerning the provenance of the remains.
 - The Medical Examiner, in consultation with the PI, will determine the need for a field examination to determine the provenance.
 - If a field examination is not warranted, the Medical Examiner will determine with input from the PI, if the remains are or are most likely to be of Native American origin.
- If Human Remains are determined to be Native American
 - The Medical Examiner will notify the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) within 24 hours. By law, ONLY the Medical Examiner can make this call.
 - NAHC will immediately identify the person or persons determined to be the Most Likely Descendent (MLD) and provide contact information.
 - The MLD will contact the PI within 24 hours or sooner after the Medical Examiner has completed coordination, to begin the consultation process in accordance with CEQA Section 15064.5(e), the California Public Resources and Health & Safety Codes.
 - The MLD will have 48 hours to make recommendations to the property owner or representative, for the treatment or disposition with proper dignity, of the human remains and associated grave goods.
 - Disposition of Native American Human Remains will be determined between the MLD and the PI, and, if:
 - a. The NAHC is unable to identify the MLD, OR the MLD failed to make a recommendation within 48 hours after being granted access to the site, OR;
 - b. The landowner or authorized representative rejects the recommendation of the MLD and mediation in accordance with PRC 5097.94 (k) by the NAHC fails to provide measures acceptable to the landowner, the landowner shall reinter the human remains and items associated with Native American human remains with appropriate dignity on the property in a location not subject to further and future subsurface disturbance, THEN
- a. To protect these sites, the landowner shall do one or more of the following:
 - 1. Record the site with the NAHC;
 - 2. Record an open space or conservation easement; or

3. Record a document with the County. The document shall be titled:

“Notice of Reinterment of Native American Remains” and shall include a legal description of the property, the name of the property owner, and the owner’s acknowledged signature, in addition to any other information required by PRC 5097.98. The document shall be indexed as a notice under the name of the owner.

- **Night and/or Weekend Work**

- If night and/or weekend work is included in the contract
 - When night and/or weekend work is included in the contract package, the extent and timing shall be presented and discussed at the Preconstruction meeting.
 - The following procedures shall be followed.
 - a. No Discoveries: In the event that no discoveries were encountered during night and/or weekend work, the PI shall record the information on the CSVr and submit to MMC via fax by 8AM of the next business day.
 - b. Discoveries: All discoveries shall be processed and documented using the existing procedures detailed in Sections III - During Construction, and IV - Discovery of Human Remains. Discovery of human remains shall always be treated as a significant discovery.
 - c. Potentially Significant Discoveries: If the PI determines that a potentially significant discovery has been made, the procedures detailed under Section III - During Construction and IV-Discovery of Human Remains shall be followed.
 - d. The PI shall immediately contact MMC, or by 8AM of the next business day to report and discuss the findings as indicated in Section III-B, unless other specific arrangements have been made.
- If night and/or weekend work becomes necessary during the course of construction:
 - The Construction Manager shall notify the RE, or BI, as appropriate, a minimum of 24 hours before the work is to begin.
 - The RE, or BI, as appropriate, shall notify MMC immediately.
 - All other procedures described above shall apply, as appropriate.

- **Post Construction**

- Preparation and Submittal of Draft Monitoring Report

- The PI shall submit two copies of the Draft Monitoring Report (even if negative), prepared in accordance with the Historical Resources Guidelines (Appendix C/D) which describes the results, analysis, and conclusions of all phases of the Archaeological Monitoring Program (with appropriate graphics) to MMC for review and approval within 90 days following the completion of monitoring. It should be noted that if the PI is unable to submit the Draft Monitoring Report within the allotted 90-day timeframe resulting from delays with analysis, special study results or other complex issues, a schedule shall be submitted to MMC establishing agreed due dates and the provision for submittal of monthly status reports until this measure can be met.

- a. For significant archaeological resources encountered during monitoring, the Archaeological Data Recovery Program shall be included in the Draft Monitoring Report.

- b. Recording Sites with State of California Department of Parks and Recreation

1. The PI shall be responsible for recording (on the appropriate State of California Department of Park and Recreation forms-DPR 523 A/B) any significant or potentially significant resources encountered during the Archaeological Monitoring Program in accordance with the City's Historical Resources Guidelines, and submittal of such forms to the South Coastal Information Center with the Final Monitoring Report.
2. MMC shall return the Draft Monitoring Report to the PI for revision or, for preparation of the Final Report.
3. The PI shall submit revised Draft Monitoring Report to MMC for approval.
4. MMC shall provide written verification to the PI of the approved report.
5. MMC shall notify the RE or BI, as appropriate, of receipt of all Draft Monitoring Report submittals and approvals.

- Handling of Artifacts

- The PI shall be responsible for ensuring that all cultural remains collected are cleaned and catalogued.
- The PI shall be responsible for ensuring that all artifacts are analyzed to identify function and chronology as they relate to the history of the area; that faunal

material is identified as to species; and that specialty studies are completed, as appropriate.

- The cost for curation is the responsibility of the property owner.
- Curation of artifacts: Accession Agreement and Acceptance Verification
 - The PI shall be responsible for ensuring that all artifacts associated with the survey, testing and/or data recovery for this project are permanently curated with an appropriate institution. This shall be completed in consultation with MMC and the Native American representative, as applicable.
 - The PI shall include the Acceptance Verification from the curation institution in the Final Monitoring Report submitted to the RE or BI and MMC.
 - When applicable to the situation, the PI shall include written verification from the Native American consultant/monitor indicating that Native American resources were treated in accordance with state law and/or applicable agreements. If the resources were reinterred, verification shall be provided to show what protective measures were taken to ensure no further disturbance occurs in accordance with Section IV – Discovery of Human Remains, Subsection 5.
- Final Monitoring Report(s)
 - The PI shall submit one copy of the approved Final Monitoring Report to the RE or BI as appropriate, and one copy to MMC (even if negative), within 90 days after notification from MMC that the draft report has been approved.
 - The RE shall, in no case, issue the Notice of Completion and/or release of the Performance Bond for grading until receiving a copy of the approved Final Monitoring Report from MMC which includes the Acceptance Verification from the curation institution.

VI. PUBLIC REVIEW DISTRIBUTION

Draft copies or notice of this Mitigated Negative Declaration have been distributed to:

Federal Government

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

State of California

State Clearinghouse
California Department of Fish and Wildlife

City of San Diego
Mayor's Office (91)
Councilmember Campillo, District 7 (MS 10A)
Development Services Department
Jeff Szymanski, EAS
Phil Lizzi, LDR Planning Review
Hoss Florezahihi, LDR Engineering
Jacobe Washburn, Geology
Karen Bucey, DPM
Planning Department
Dan Monroe, MSCP
Fire and Life Safety Services (79)
Library Department - Government Documents (81)
City Attorney (93C)

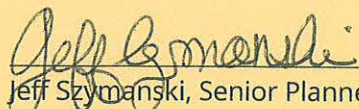
Other Organizations, Groups, and Interested Individuals

Serra Mesa Planning Group (263a)
Mary Johnson (263b)
Mission Valley Planning Group (331)
kevinjohnston1972@yahoo.com
clayton@sdcanyonlands.org
Carmen Lucas (206)
South Coastal Information Center (210)
San Diego Archaeological Center (212)
San Diego Natural History Museum (213)
Save Our Heritage Organization (214)
Ron Christman (215)
Clint Linton (215B)
Frank Brown, Inter-Tribal Cultural Resources Council (216)
Campo Band of Mission Indians (217)
San Diego County Archaeological Society, Inc. (218)
Native American Heritage Commission (222)
Kumeyaay Cultural Heritage Preservation (223)
Kumeyaay Cultural Repatriation Committee (225)
Native American Distribution – Public Notice Map Only (225A-S)

VII. RESULTS OF PUBLIC REVIEW

- () No comments were received during the public input period.
- () Comments were received but did not address the accuracy or completeness of the draft environmental document. No response is necessary and the letters are incorporated herein.
- (x) Comments addressing the accuracy or completeness of the draft environmental document were received during the public input period. The letters and responses are incorporated herein.

Copies of the draft Mitigated Negative Declaration, the Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Program and any Initial Study material are available in the office of the Development Services Department for review, or for purchase at the cost of reproduction.



Jeff Szymanski, Senior Planner
Development Services Department

February 26, 2021

Date of Draft Report

June 17, 2021

Date of Final Report

Analyst: Jeff Szymanski

Attachments: Initial Study Checklist
Figure 1 – Regional Location
Figure 2 Site map



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ecological Services

Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office

2177 Salk Avenue, Suite 250

Carlsbad, California 92008



In Reply Refer To:
FWS-SD-21B0094 -21TA0799

March 29, 2021
Sent Electronically

Jeff Szymanski
Environmental Planner
City of San Diego Development Services Center
1222 First Avenue, MS 501
San Diego, California 92101

Subject: City of San Diego Ruffin Canyon Open Space Trail Project, Project No. 658785 Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration

Dear Jeff Szymanski:

- ① This letter provides U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) comments on the draft Mitigated Negative Declaration (DMND) for the City of San Diego's (City) Ruffin Canyon Open Space Trail Project (project). The comments provided in this letter are based on information provided in the DMND and our knowledge of sensitive and declining species and their habitats in the region, and our participation in the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) and the City's MSCP Subarea Plan (SAP).

The primary concern and mandate of the Service is the protection of public fish and wildlife resources and their habitats. The Service has legal responsibility for the welfare of migratory birds, anadromous fish, and threatened and endangered animals and plants occurring in the United States. The Service is also responsible for administering the Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 (FESA), as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), including habitat conservation plans (HCP) developed under section 10(a)(1) of the Act. The City participates in the HCP program by implementing its approved MSCP SAP.

The project consists of adoption of the Ruffin Canyon Open Space Trails Plan, which will expand an existing trail system for the Ruffin Canyon Open Space and provide connection between the Serra Mesa and Mission Valley Communities. The project will approve the existing trail segments and construct approximately 2,658 feet of new trail that will bypass a current sewer access path that does not provide a safe and sustainable trail for public use. The project is within the City's MSCP SAP boundary and within the City's MSCP Multiple Habitat Planning Area (MHPA or preserve).

The project site supports 11 vegetation communities, including freshwater marsh, alkali marsh, southern willow scrub, non-native riparian, mule fat scrub, Diegan coastal sage scrub (including disturbed), broom baccharis scrub, coastal sage-chaparral scrub, southern mixed chaparral, non-native grassland, ornamental vegetation, disturbed habitat, and developed land. Special status wildlife species identified on site include the federally listed and SAP covered coastal California

Response to Comments

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR- US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE (March 29, 2021)

1. The first statement in the letter is an introduction to the comments from the Service. No response is required.

gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica californica*; gnatcatcher). Sensitive plant species identified on site these include the SAP covered coast San Diego barrel cactus (*Ferocactus viridescens*).

The project proposes to permanently impact 0.15 acre of Diegan coastal sage scrub, and 0.22 acre of southern mixed chaparral. The City will mitigate project impacts through payment into the City's Habitat Acquisition Fund (HAF), or through purchase of habitat through an approved mitigation bank such as the Cornerstone Lands Mitigation Bank.

The Service offers the following comments and recommendations to assist the City in avoiding, minimizing, and adequately mitigating project-related impacts to biological resources and to ensure that the project is consistent with, and does not adversely affect, ongoing regional habitat conservation planning efforts.

- ② Our primary concern is adoption of user created trails and constructing a new trail segment in the MHPA prior to completing a Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP) consistent with section 1.5.7 Overall Management Policies and Directives of the City's SAP. The proposed trails plan only addresses one aspect of preserve management (trail use) and will allow potential impacts to sensitive resources from this activity before an NRMP can be developed to address these impacts. Unaddressed trail user impacts could undermine the management of the preserve and reduce the overall habitat value of the preserve to sensitive resources, including the gnatcatcher. Therefore, we do not concur with adoption of the trails plan prior to completion of NRMP for this part of the MHPA.

- ③ Our second concern is mitigating project impacts to the MHPA through use of the HAF or purchase of habitat through an approved mitigation bank such as the Cornerstone Lands Mitigation Bank. Per section III.B.1.c.(4) of the City's Land Development Code Biology Guidelines, the HAF "...is intended to be used only for the mitigation of impacts to small, isolated sites with lower long-term conservation value." Although the project impacts are small, the project site is not isolated and has high long-term conservation value. Therefore, we strongly recommend the City explore mitigating onsite by restoring other user created trails near the project site and/or adding to ongoing restoration/enhancement activities by San Diego Canyonlands within Ruffin and Sandrock Canyons.

We recognize that there is substantial public interest in accessing the trails identified in the DMND. We appreciate your coordination on this issue and look forward to working collaboratively with you to ensure consistency with the City's SAP in a timely and efficient manner. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the DMND. If you have any questions, please contact Patrick Gower¹ of the Service.

Sincerely,
JONATHAN
SNYDER
Jonathan Snyder
Assistant Field Supervisor

Digitally signed by JONATHAN
SNYDER
Date: 2021.03.29 13:31:48 -07'00'

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR- US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE (March 29, 2021)
continued:

2. It is the goal and the intent of the City of San Diego to complete NRMPs for all areas it manages under the MSCP, and NRMPs are currently in-process for 5 areas within the MSCP Subarea Plan (SAP). A NRMP for the urban canyons, and Ruffin Canyon Open Space in particular, has not been initiated. However, because of the high importance of this trail connection to the communities of Serra Mesa and Mission Valley, the trail project is proposed at this time. The Trails Plan that has been developed and is proposed/evaluated in the MND and was written specifically to address NRMP management directives related to the trails in the canyon in order to allow for appropriate evaluation of the trail and impacts until an NRMP, incorporating the trails plan can be adopted. It is the position of the City of San Diego that the proposed trail plan, BTR, and MND adequately addresses the impacts of the proposed plan/project.
3. It is acknowledged that Ruffin Canyon Open Space is not isolated as it is mostly within the MHPA. The City of San Diego's intent to use the HAF or Cornerstone Lands Mitigation Bank is based on the small mitigation need from the project (0.37 acre). Onsite mitigation would require many years of onsite maintenance, monitoring, and reporting, so even if the project could be designed and installed with non-profit and volunteer support onsite mitigation would still be infeasible. Preparation of this plan and CEQA clearance has been provided by developer contribution funds and use of those funds are not available for the construction and mitigation of the project.

Although onsite mitigation is not proposed as part of the project, Ruffin Canyon is the site of a number of past and ongoing restoration projects, including extensive grant funding by the San Diego River Conservancy for work by San Diego Canyonlands under a Right of Entry Permit from the City to remove invasives and restore habitat within Ruffin and Sandrock Canyons.

Expenditure of HAF funding is essential to the City's ability to acquire lands targeted for conservation in the approved Core Habitat Areas in order to build out the MHPA preserve and achieve the City's overall conservation goals of the MSCP. For example, the process is currently underway to acquire high priority parcels in the East Elliott areas of Mission Trails Regional Park parcels using all of the currently available HAF funds for long term conservation. Similarly, use of the Cornerstone Lands Mitigation Bank contributes to the ongoing implementation of the MSCP and is allowable. The payment into the HAF would reduce impacts to below a level of significance.

¹ Patrick_Gower@fws.gov



State of California – Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
South Coast Region
3883 Ruffin Road
San Diego, CA 92123
(858) 467-4201
www.wildlife.ca.gov

GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE (April 2, 2021)

4. The first statement in the letter is an introduction to the comments from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. No response is required.

April 2, 2021

Jeffrey Szymanski
City of San Diego Development Services Center
1222 First Avenue, MS 501
San Diego, CA 92101
DSDEAS@sanidiego.gov

Subject: City of San Diego Ruffin Canyon Open Space Trail (PROJECT) Project No. 658785, Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND), SCH #2021020476

Dear Mr. Szymanski:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) received a Notice of Intent to Adopt an MND from the City of San Diego (CITY) for the Project pursuant the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines.¹

CDFW and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), collectively known as the Wildlife Agencies, conducted previous coordination with the City regarding the Project with a field visit on April 12, 2019, and email correspondence on June 03, 2019 and September 9, 2019. A discussion concerning the Project also occurred at the March 19, 2021 Boundary Line Adjustment (BLA) meeting attended by the Wildlife Agencies and City staff.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations regarding those activities involved in the Project that may affect California fish and wildlife. Likewise, we appreciate the opportunity to provide comments regarding those aspects of the Project that CDFW, by law, may be required to carry out or approve through the exercise of its own regulatory authority under the Fish and Game Code (FGC).

CDFW ROLE

CDFW is California's **Trustee Agency** for fish and wildlife resources and holds those resources in trust by statute for all the people of the State. (Fish & G. Code, §§ 711.7, subd. (a) & 1802; Pub. Resources Code, § 21070; CEQA Guidelines § 15386, subd. (a).) CDFW, in its trustee capacity, has jurisdiction over the conservation, protection, and management of fish, wildlife, native plants, and habitat necessary for biologically sustainable populations of those species. (*Id.*, § 1802.) Similarly, for purposes of CEQA, CDFW is charged by law to provide, as available, biological expertise during public agency environmental review efforts, focusing specifically on projects and related activities that have the potential to adversely affect fish and wildlife resources.

CDFW is also submitting comments as a **Responsible Agency** under CEQA. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21069; CEQA Guidelines, § 15381.) CDFW expects that it may need to exercise regulatory authority as provided by the Fish and Game Code. As proposed, for example, the Project may be subject to CDFW's lake and streambed alteration regulatory authority. (Fish & G. Code, § 1600 *et seq.*) Likewise, to the extent implementation of the Project as proposed may result

¹ CEQA is codified in the California Public Resources Code in section 21000 *et seq.* The "CEQA Guidelines" are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, commencing with section 15000.

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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE (April 2, 2021) continued

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in "take" as defined by State law of any species protected under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Fish & G. Code, § 2050 et seq.), the project proponent may seek related take authorization as provided by the Fish and Game Code.

CDFW also administers the Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) program, a California regional habitat conservation planning program. The City participates in the NCCP program by implementing its approved Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) Subarea Plan (SAP). The Multi-Habitat Preserve Area (MHPA) is the area from which a final headline reserve becomes established in the City to adequately conserve covered species pursuant to the SAP.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Proponent: City of San Diego Parks and Recreation, Open Space Division

Objective: The Project includes the adoption of the Ruffin Canyon Open Space Trail Plan (Plan) which describes the expansion of an existing trail system. The adoption would provide a cohesive Plan for the Ruffin Canyon Open Space, provide connection between the Serra Mesa and Mission Valley communities, and provide guidance for the present/future use and maintenance of the trails within the Plan Area. Trails in this Plan are open to pedestrian and bicycle users. The Project will create a new alignment in the southern section of the canyon. Currently, local hikers use a sewer access path, as an existing City utility path occurs within the central portion of Ruffin Canyon and Shawn Canyon. According to the MND, this path does not serve as a safe and sustainable trail for public use due to erosion and flooding. In addition, the Project addresses the authorization of three existing trails within Ruffin Canyon. The Project consists of approximately 2,658 feet of new trail within Ruffin Canyon, heading south from the intersection of the existing Ruffin Canyon and Shawn Canyon trails. In addition to the new trail construction, the Project includes authorization of the existing trail located in the upper section of Ruffin Canyon.

Location: The Project is located in City of San Diego Open Space, in the Serra Mesa and Mission Valley communities of the City of San Diego, west of Interstate 15 (I-15), east of I-805, and north of I-8. It is loosely bounded by Gramercy Drive to the north, Friars Road to the south, Mission Village Drive to the east, and Murray Ridge Road to the west.

Biological Setting: The entire Project site is within the MHPA. The study area includes the trail alignment and existing trail plus 15 to 20 feet on each side of the trail, and supports 15 vegetation communities/habitats: freshwater marsh, alkali marsh, southern willow scrub, non-native riparian, mule fat scrub, Diegan coastal sage scrub (including disturbed), broom baccharis scrub, coastal sage-chaparral scrub, southern mixed chaparral, non-native grassland, non-vegetated channel, ornamental vegetation, disturbed habitat, and developed land. It also includes one ephemeral drainage that flows down the center of the canyon and is a tributary to the San Diego River.

Special status wildlife species identified on site include the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) threatened and MSCP covered coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*), California Species of Special Concern and MSCP covered orange-throated whiptail (*Aspidoscelis hyperythra*). Three sensitive plant species were identified on site. These include the MSCP covered San Diego barrel cactus (*Ferocactus viridescens*), southwestern spiny rush (*Juncus acutus* ssp. *leopoldii*), California Native Plant Society (CNPS) rare plant rank 4.2), and San Diego viguiera (*Bahioopsis laciniata*, CNPS 4.3).

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The Project will permanently impact the following MSCP identified vegetation types as a result of the trail realignment: Tier II Diegan coastal sage scrub (0.15 acre) and Tier III southern mixed chaparral (0.22 acre). Proposed mitigation includes payment into the City's Habitat Acquisition Fund (HAF) at a 1:1 ratio for permanent impacts within the MHPA. The Project does not propose compensatory mitigation for the northern section of the trail alignment, which the City has classified as a Category 1 existing trail.

Timeframe: A timeframe was not provided for the Project.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CDFW offers the comments and recommendations below to assist the City in adequately identifying and/or mitigating the Project's significant, or potentially significant direct and indirect impacts on fish and wildlife (biological) resources. Editorial comments or other suggestions may also be included to improve the document. CDFW recommends the measures or revisions below be included in a science-based monitoring program that contains adaptive management strategies as part of the Project's CEQA mitigation, monitoring and reporting program (Public Resources Code, § 21081.6 and CEQA Guidelines, § 15097).

I. Potential Impacts to MSCP Covered Species

5 COMMENT #1

Coastal California Gnatcatcher

Section: MND - Biological Resources IV (a), Ruffin Canyon Trail Biological Resources Letter Report (BRLR), Plan, **Pages:** 2 and 13, 9, and Figure 5, respectively.

Issue: The BRLR and Figure 5 of the Plan identify six Coastal California gnatcatcher (gnatcatcher) territories on site, as well as describe historic occupation of the site by gnatcatchers. The City SAP requires avoidance of impacts to occupied gnatcatcher habitat within the MHPA during the breeding season (March 1 to August 15); however, the MND does not specify a mitigation measure to impose this MSCP requirement.

Recommended Mitigation Measure # CDFW-BIO-1a:

To reduce impacts to less than significant:

1. Prior to the issuance of any grading permit (for Public Utility Projects: prior to the preconstruction meeting), the City Manager (or appointed designee) shall verify that the MHPA boundaries and the following project requirements regarding the gnatcatcher are shown on the construction plans.

No clearing, grubbing, grading, or other construction activities shall occur between March 1 and August 15, the breeding season of the gnatcatcher, unless the following requirements have been met to the satisfaction of the City Manager:

- A. A qualified biologist (possessing a valid endangered species act section 10(a)(1)(a) recovery permit) shall survey those habitat areas within the MHPA that would be subject to construction noise levels exceeding 60 decibels [dB(A)] hourly average for the presence of the gnatcatcher. Surveys for the gnatcatcher shall be conducted

5. Acknowledged. This language is included on the site plans and will be included on any additional future construction documents.

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pursuant to the protocol survey guidelines established by the USFWS within the breeding season prior to the commencement of any construction. If gnatcatchers are present, then the following conditions must be met:

- Between March 1 and August 15, no clearing, grubbing, or grading of occupied gnatcatcher habitat shall be permitted. Areas restricted from such activities shall be staked or fenced under the supervision of a qualified biologist; and
- II. Between March 1 and August 15, no construction activities shall occur within any portion of the site where construction activities would result in noise levels exceeding 60 dB(A) hourly average at the edge of occupied gnatcatcher habitat. Prior to the commencement of construction activities during the breeding season, areas restricted from such activities shall be staked or fenced under the supervision of a qualified biologist; or
- III. At least two weeks prior to the commencement of construction activities, under the direction of a qualified acoustician, noise attenuation measures (e.g., berms, walls) shall be implemented to ensure that noise levels resulting from construction activities will not exceed 60 dB(A) hourly average at the edge of habitat occupied by the coastal California gnatcatcher.

II. MSCP Consistency

COMMENT #2

Potentially Significant Direct and Indirect Impacts to Riparian Resources and Sensitive Habitats in the MHPA

Section: MND-IV Biological Resources, BRLR-MSCP General Management Directives, Tables 2 and 3, Plan-Figure 3, **Pages:** 13, 11 and 16-18, 2 and 12 respectively

Issue: Neither the MND nor the BRLR identify the location and extent of jurisdictional wetland resources on site, although they are noted as present. The Project documents appear to be inconsistent in the treatment of the hydrologic feature that traverses the MHPA through Ruffin Canyon. The feature that the Project calls "existing Category 1 trails" in the northern section is the same feature that is identified as an "unvegetated streambed" in the southern portion of the Project area, due to increased erosion of fine sediment in the southern portion. Figure 3 of the Plan shows a blue line ephemeral drainage in what appears to be in the same alignment as the "existing trail" and sewer access road. Historic aerials from 1953 show that the alignment of the "existing trail" was an unvegetated channel feature, presumably until it was impacted in 1957 by placement of the sewer pipe. A wetland delineation is necessary to determine where jurisdictional areas occur in order to subsequently make decisions concerning avoidance and/or mitigation for direct impacts from trail development, as well as the need for ongoing impacts such as possible trimming of riparian vegetation. Resolution of impacts and mitigation may ultimately depend on development of a CDFW 1600 agreement.

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE (April 2, 2021) continued

6. A wetland delineation was completed in 2013 for the San Diego River Conservancy San Diego River Tributary Canyons Project by Environmental Science Associates (ESA). This delineation report was reviewed and verified in April 2021 to ensure that wetland conditions and parameters present in the initial 2013 report were still present onsite in 2021. City Biology staff conducted a wetland verification in April 2021, during the verification it was determined that the conditions represented in the 2013 report are still existing, no changes to the wetland delineation report are needed as they accurately represent the existing condition of the Ruffin Canyon wetland complex. The wetland delineation sheets are attached to the Revised Biology Report for the project. Although existing, the trail in the North Ruffin Finger, north of where the Taft Finger enters the main stem of Ruffin Canyon and connecting to Gramercy Drive at the north end, is now proposed for closure as part of an update to the plan. This approximately 2,150 feet of trail is proposed to be closed in response to resource agency comments received on the draft Ruffin Trail plan and in response to recent hydrologic changes in this section of the canyon that has washed out portions of the existing trail. This trail will be closed as part of the Project. No formal restoration is proposed at this location, a passive native vegetation restoration effort (Invasive species will be controlled as part of existing SD Canyonlands grant to remove non-native vegetation) is currently underway in the canyon. The potential for active vegetation and hydrologic restoration exists in this area, but cannot be implemented as part of this Project due to limited funding availability. For the remainder of the trail north of the Shawn Canyon Finger, the pre-existing trail is proposed to remain as-is. Project features in the form of, as-needed closures, signage, and approved trail features (i.e. puncheon bridges) would be used to mitigate any potential impacts that would have any "significant impact on existing hydrology." Therefore, a 1600 agreement is not anticipated to be required.

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Recommended Potentially Feasible Mitigation Measure(s)

Mitigation Measure #CDFW-BIO-2a:

To reduce impacts to less than significant The MND and the Plan shall include a delineation of the jurisdictional features on site. Any direct impacts from future improvements to riparian resources, including unvegetated streambed, will be mitigated accordingly per the City's Biology Guidelines. A CDFW 1600 agreement may require additional mitigation measures.

Mitigation Measure #CDFW-BIO-2b:

In addition to mitigation of impacts consistent with the City's Biology Guidelines, CDFW recommends that a Notification be submitted to CDFW pursuant to section 1600 *et seq.* of the Fish and Game Code for any potential modification to the bed, bank, or channel of the streambed, which includes potential crossing structures and vegetation modification on the stream bank.

COMMENT #3

Potentially Significant Direct and Indirect Impacts to Covered Species in the MHPA

Section: BRLR-MSCP General Management Directives, Plan-Figure 5, Pages: 16-18

Issue: The Plan as described in the MND and BRLR do not fully consider the impacts of trail use on covered species.

Specific impacts: The BRLR makes the conclusion, "[u]se of the trails in the Plan is not anticipated to significantly alter noise levels in the canyon, which is in an urban environment, completely surrounded by development. Trail use is likely to be intermittent, and generally occurring at levels similar to the surrounding developed parcels." CDFW believes the official designation and improved quality of the trail system is likely to increase use by the public above current level of unauthorized use.

Why impact would occur: The Plan proposes to include bicycle use, and improvement of the trail is likely going to increase use by bicycles and hikers. Additionally, CDFW is concerned that bicycle speed on trails can be an issue for MSCP covered and/or sensitive species including the orange-throated whiptail. Research by Vandeman (2008) indicates that an increase in mortality of small vertebrates can be expected wherever mountain bikes are ridden. CDFW is concerned that increased bicycle use, and particularly bicycles traveling at moderate speeds, may impact sensitive species in Ruffin Canyon.

Recommended Potentially Feasible Mitigation Measure(s)

Mitigation Measure #CDFW-BIO-3a:

To reduce impacts to less than significant: CDFW recommends that the Plan address impacts from bicycle use by imposing and enforcing speed limits. In addition, the City is reminded of its responsibilities to monitor and prevent users from going off trail or creating new unauthorized trails.

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE (April 2, 2021) continued

7. The imposition and enforcement of speed limits for users on bicycles on the trails in the Plan is infeasible. The narrow width of the new section of trail to be constructed (2-4 feet wide) as well as the narrow and cobbly nature of the existing portions of the trail should serve to some extent to slow users on bicycles on the trails. In addition, signs will be placed along the trails consistent with signs that are posted at other City Open Space Parks (see examples below). Most bicycle users do not utilize speedometers. Adoption of speed limits on trails would require a change in the Municipal Code to include enforcement of such a measure, while enforcement of a speed limit would be impractical, given the periodic rather than permanent and the enforcement mechanisms (ability to issue citations) of Open Space personnel. Currently the canyon is used by bikers and hikers who produce some level of noise and additional noise introduced by the project would be temporary and transitory in nature and would not result in significant impacts.



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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE (April 2, 2021) response #7 continued

Recommended Potentially Feasible Mitigation Measure(s)

Mitigation Measure #CDFW-BIO-2a:

To reduce impacts to less than significant The MND and the Plan shall include a delineation of the jurisdictional features on site. Any direct impacts from future improvements to riparian resources, including unvegetated streambed, will be mitigated accordingly per the City's Biology Guidelines. A CDFW 1600 agreement may require additional mitigation measures.

Mitigation Measure #CDFW-BIO-2b:

In addition to mitigation of impacts consistent with the City's Biology Guidelines, CDFW recommends that a Notification be submitted to CDFW pursuant to section 1600 *et seq.* of the Fish and Game Code for any potential modification to the bed, bank, or channel of the streambed, which includes potential crossing structures and vegetation modification on the stream bank.

COMMENT #3

Potentially Significant Direct and Indirect Impacts to Covered Species in the MHPA

Section: BRLR-MSCP General Management Directives, Plan-Figure 5, **Pages:** 16-18

Issue: The Plan as described in the MND and BRLR do not fully consider the impacts of trail use on covered species.

Specific impacts: The BRLR makes the conclusion, "[u]se of the trails in the Plan is not anticipated to significantly alter noise levels in the canyon, which is in an urban environment, completely surrounded by development. Trail use is likely to be intermittent, and generally occurring at levels similar to the surrounding developed parcels." CDFW believes the official designation and improved quality of the trail system is likely to increase use by the public above current level of unauthorized use.

Why impact would occur: The Plan proposes to include bicycle use, and improvement of the trail is likely going to increase use by bicycles and hikers. Additionally, CDFW is concerned that bicycle speed on trails can be an issue for MSCP covered and/or sensitive species including the orange-throated whiptail. Research by Vandeman (2008) indicates that an increase in mortality of small vertebrates can be expected wherever mountain bikes are ridden. CDFW is concerned that increased bicycle use, and particularly bicycles traveling at moderate speeds, may impact sensitive species in Ruffin Canyon.

Recommended Potentially Feasible Mitigation Measure(s)

Mitigation Measure #CDFW-BIO-3a:

To reduce impacts to less than significant: CDFW recommends that the Plan address impacts from bicycle use by imposing and enforcing speed limits. In addition, the City is reminded of its responsibilities to monitor and prevent users from going off trail or creating new unauthorized trails.



Closure of the northwestern finger (from the Taft Finger north to Grammercy Drive is now included as part of the project. Although this will change a major use pattern that has existed in the canyon since the 1960s and 70s in some historic aerials (historicaerials.com – 1966, 1978; and google earth - 1994), recent hydrologic changes to this section of canyon have washed out major sections of the trail. Closure of this section will require signage, fencing, brushing in, and revegetation via passive and active means. Removal of existing wood structures (on the switchbacks down into the canyon and of puncheon bridges) will help deter continued use of this section. Planting of cuttings and continued invasive removal (that is ongoing as part of the River Conservancy-SD Canyonlands efforts) in the canyon bottom will be expanded to the trail tread itself and help restore the area. See revised Trail Plan Figure 4:

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Recommended Potentially Feasible Mitigation Measure(s)

Mitigation Measure #CDFW-BIO-2a:

To reduce impacts to less than significant The MND and the Plan shall include a delineation of the jurisdictional features on site. Any direct impacts from future improvements to riparian resources, including unvegetated streambed, will be mitigated accordingly per the City's Biology Guidelines. A CDFW 1600 agreement may require additional mitigation measures.

Mitigation Measure #CDFW-BIO-2b:

In addition to mitigation of impacts consistent with the City's Biology Guidelines, CDFW recommends that a Notification be submitted to CDFW pursuant to section 1600 *et seq.* of the Fish and Game Code for any potential modification to the bed, bank, or channel of the streambed, which includes potential crossing structures and vegetation modification on the stream bank.

COMMENT #3

Potentially Significant Direct and Indirect Impacts to Covered Species in the MHPA

Section: BRLR-MSCP General Management Directives, Plan-Figure 5, Pages: 16-18

Issue: The Plan as described in the MND and BRLR do not fully consider the impacts of trail use on covered species.

Specific impacts: The BRLR makes the conclusion, "[u]se of the trails in the Plan is not anticipated to significantly alter noise levels in the canyon, which is in an urban environment, completely surrounded by development. Trail use is likely to be intermittent, and generally occurring at levels similar to the surrounding developed parcels." CDFW believes the official designation and improved quality of the trail system is likely to increase use by the public above current level of unauthorized use.

Why impact would occur: The Plan proposes to include bicycle use, and improvement of the trail is likely going to increase use by bicycles and hikers. Additionally, CDFW is concerned that bicycle speed on trails can be an issue for MSCP covered and/or sensitive species including the orange-throated whiptail. Research by Vandeman (2008) indicates that an increase in mortality of small vertebrates can be expected wherever mountain bikes are ridden. CDFW is concerned that increased bicycle use, and particularly bicycles traveling at moderate speeds, may impact sensitive species in Ruffin Canyon.

Recommended Potentially Feasible Mitigation Measure(s)

Mitigation Measure #CDFW-BIO-3a:

To reduce impacts to less than significant: CDFW recommends that the Plan address impacts from bicycle use by imposing and enforcing speed limits. In addition, the City is reminded of its responsibilities to monitor and prevent users from going off trail or creating new unauthorized trails.

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Mitigation Measure #CDFW-REC-3b:

In addition, CDFW recommends closing the northwestern finger canyon of the proposed existing trail as part of approval of the Plan, due to the presence of sensitive wetlands including alkali and freshwater marsh, and riparian resources and the presence of a gnatcatcher territory directly on the trail.

COMMENT #4

Adoption of Trails Plan Prior to Establishment of a Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) or Area Specific Site Directives (ASMDs)

Section: Plan (B). Purpose, (3) Trails, Public Use and Recreation Guidelines (6) Implementation, **Pages:** 5, 16, and 28 respectively

Issue: The Final Multiple Species Conservation Plan Section 6.3.1, City's Implementing Agreement Section 10.6 A and B, and the City's SAP, call for the creation of a NRMP or ASMD for preserved lands. The Project will implement a Trail Plan prior to the implementation of a NRMP. Although the Plan identifies the natural resources adjacent to the trail and provides good baseline information for biological resources within Ruffin Canyon, a NRMP would provide a more comprehensive approach to addressing threats, stressors, and management of the sensitive plants, animals, and habitats within the canyon. CDFW appreciates that there is presently strong demand from the public to access more undeveloped areas due to Covid restrictions. However, from a process standpoint and to ensure that the MSCP objectives take priority over competing interests, CDFW strongly recommends that providing for trails and public access not be completed in advance of an area-wide analysis addressing all considerations as performed for a NRMP. As proposed, the City would be in a very difficult, if not impossible, position of withdrawing access opportunities after they have been approved through this trails plan. The creation of a designated public trail may preclude or substantially complicate future management options of a NRMP for Ruffin Canyon.

Specific impacts: A trail plan and a NRMP have different objectives in that the NRMP manages all the resources within a given preserve area, and monitoring is performed at a frequency to ensure adaptive management is performed to recognize and address threats in a timely manner. Including the trail aspects within a NRMP ensures the trail is evaluated, and managed for, as part of the larger landscape. Implementing a trails plan in Ruffin Canyon without a NRMP in effect allows both direct and indirect impacts before that section of MHPA becomes fully integrated into the City's MSCP preserve. Although the Project would provide mitigation for the direct impacts to habitats, a more vigilant management and oversight of this section of MHPA is needed to protect against deleterious edge effects from trail use over time. Additionally, a NRMP would include adaptive management thresholds for threats to covered and sensitive species and their habitats.

The Plan only commits to annual visits, which are not sufficient to inform management issues and perform adaptive management actions in order to protect biological values. In such urban areas, issues such flooding closures, invasive species, and particularly unauthorized trail use require more active management than can be provided through annual visits. The Plan states, "[s]pecific trail alignments have not been identified for major closure efforts at the time of the development of this plan." The Plan discusses closing Sandrock Canyon to trail use due to sustainability issues but does not provide any further direction for this outcome. Once trail segments have been opened, it should be expected that non-open sections will also receive

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE (April 2, 2021) continued

8. See response number 2 regarding NRMP adoption prior to this trails plan. Monthly monitoring visits have been added to the Plan. See sections 2.A, 2.D.2, and 3.A.2 of the updated plan.

The Trail Plan already includes signage of paths that are not being designated by the Plan. Additional language has been added to Section 3.A.B to clarify:
"It should be noted that continued utility maintenance access (Public Utilities and SDGE) is still required within lower Ruffin Canyon and the Sandrock finger, so rehabilitation and revegetation of these alignments is not proposed. Rather, public use of these access paths will be discouraged through signs indicating the approved trail routes. Additional signage will also be installed for other unauthorized trails not designated by the plan."

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significant use and create a high level of expectation that sections will ultimately become open in the future. Monitoring and enforcement must be sufficient to protect these lands before they become officially added into the MSCP preserve. For this reason, CDFW again cautions against approving a trails plan in advance of an approved NRMP, and further requests a much higher level of commitment by the City to monitor resources and control against use of unauthorized areas.

Recommended Potentially Feasible Recommendations and Mitigation Measure(s)

Mitigation Measure # CDFW-REC-4a:

To reduce impacts: Prior to adopting a Trails Plan, CDFW recommends the City develop a NRMP or ASMDs for Ruffin and Sandrock canyons. Absent completion of a NRMP or ASMDs, CDFW further recommends that the City commit to a minimum of monthly monitoring visits throughout the Ruffin Canyon MHPA to protect against adverse effects from recreational uses along or peripheral to the newly authorized trails.

Mitigation Measure # CDFW-BIO-4b:

To reduce impacts: If a Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP) is not developed per MSCP guidance, in lieu of a NRMP, the Plan shall describe appropriate procedures for trails closure, including signage for sections of unauthorized trails that are not being designated by the Plan.

III. Mitigation

COMMENT #5

Proposed Use of Habitat Acquisition Fund (HAF)

Section: MND Biological Resources, Page:13

Issue: The MND proposes to pay into the HAF to mitigate for impacts to sensitive habitats. Although the HAF provides a fast solution for the City to demonstrate mitigation for the Project impacts, CDFW believes that the impacts, especially the indirect impacts as discussed above, would be far better served by employing habitat restoration and enhancement within Ruffin Canyon. CDFW further notes that the City's Biology Guidelines (page 50) state that the HAF "is intended to be used only for the mitigation of impacts to small, isolated sites with lower long-term conservation value." CDFW believes Ruffin Canyon, as MHPA, is intended to provide long-term conservation value. Additionally, CDFW is concerned that the indirect effects of trail establishment and use without the offset of a NRMP and timely commitment by the City to manage the biological resources in Ruffin Canyon may easily lead to a reduction of the values in Ruffin Canyon. For this reason, rather than pay into the HAF, CDFW recommends mitigation be comprised of restoration and enhancement within the Ruffin Canyon MHPA. Such an effort would not only mitigate the direct impacts but would proactively provide much greater benefit to remaining resources which will be adversely affected by trail development and use.

Specific impacts: The MND proposes to mitigate direct impacts to Tier II Diegan coastal sage scrub (0.15 acre) and Tier IIIA southern mixed chaparral (0.22 acre) at a 1:1 ratio through payment into the City's HAF, or by purchase of habitat through an approved mitigation bank such as the Cornerstone Lands Mitigation Bank.

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE (April 2, 2021) continued

9. See response to USFWS letter Issue 2 regarding mitigation location and use of HAF or Cornerstone Lands. Invasive removal and restoration of the Sandrock Finger Canyon and large portions of the remainder of Ruffin Canyon is currently ongoing by San Diego Canyonlands with San Diego River Conservancy grant funding. Active trail closure and active and passive restoration of the trail footprint in the finger canyon is proposed, however the creation of a mitigation site is cost prohibitive, so HAF or Cornerstone lands purchase remains the feasible project mitigation alternative. Closure of the northwestern section will require signage, fencing, brushing in, and revegetation via passive and active means. Removal of existing wood structures (on the switchbacks down into the canyon and of puncheon bridges) will help deter continued use of this section. Planting of cuttings and continued invasive removal (that is ongoing as part of the River Conservancy-SD Canyonlands efforts) in the canyon bottom will be expanded to the trail head and would help restore the area.

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CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE (April 2, 2021) continued

10. Comments regarding suggestions, filing fees and the Conclusion have been duly noted.

Recommendations and Mitigation Measures: CDFW recommends that the City mitigate through restoration of disturbed habitats within Ruffin Canyon. This would more directly offset the adverse direct and indirect effects of allowing recreational access within the limited confines of Ruffin Canyon. CDFW believes this approach is more appropriate, particularly in the absence of the City's proposal to not complete a NRMP prior to designation of the new trail plan. The Wildlife Agencies are committed to working with the City to find an on-site mitigation solution which could have less financial impact than use of the HAF.

Mitigation Measure # CDFW-BIO-5a:

CDFW recommends inclusion of the following mitigation measure: The City shall develop an on-site mitigation plan to add and restore disturbed areas within sensitive habitats within closed areas of the MHPA.

Mitigation Measure # CDFW-REC-5b:

Additionally, CDFW recommends to close and designate areas within the northwestern finger of Ruffin Canyon or Sandrock Canyon to serve as mitigation for impacts within the MHPA. This can further include invasive species removal and restoration of native habitats in areas that were previously disturbed, and can include additional funding directed to ongoing, on-site restoration.

10 Editorial Comments and Suggestions

CEQA requires that information developed in environmental impact reports and negative declarations be incorporated into a database which may be used to make subsequent or supplemental environmental determinations. (Pub. Resources Code, § 21003, subd. (e).) Accordingly, please report any special status species and natural communities detected during Project surveys to the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB). The CNDDDB field survey form can be found at the following link: http://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/cnddb/pdfs/CNDDDB_FieldSurveyForm.pdf. The completed form can be mailed electronically to CNDDDB at the following email address: CNDDDB@wildlife.ca.gov. The types of information reported to CNDDDB can be found at the following link: http://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/cnddb/plants_and_animals.asp.

FILING FEES

The Project, as proposed, would have an impact on fish and/or wildlife, and assessment of filing fees is necessary. Fees are payable upon filing of the Notice of Determination by the Lead Agency and serve to help defray the cost of environmental review by CDFW. Payment of the fee is required in order for the underlying Project approval to be operative, vested, and final. (Cal. Code Regs, tit. 14, § 753.5; Fish & G. Code, § 711.4; Pub. Resources Code, § 21089.)

CONCLUSION

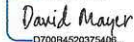
CDFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the MND to assist the City in identifying and mitigating Project impacts on biological resources.

Questions regarding this letter or further coordination should be directed to Elyse Levy, Senior Environmental Scientist, at Elyse.Levy@wildlife.ca.gov.

Jeffrey Szymanski
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Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:


D700B452037540B

David Mayer
Environmental Program Manager I
South Coast Region

STATE OF CALIFORNIA-DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE (April 2, 2021)

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Attachments:

Attachment A: Recommended Mitigation Measures

cc: CDFW

Jennifer Turner, San Diego – Jennifer.Turner@wildlife.ca.gov
Jennifer Ludovissy, San Diego – Jennifer.Ludovissy@wildlife.ca.gov
Susan Howell, San Diego – Susan.Howell@wildlife.ca.gov
CEQA Program Coordinator, Sacramento – CEQACommentLetters@wildlife.ca.gov

Jonathan Snyder, USFWS – Jonathan_d_Snyder@fws.gov
State Clearinghouse, Sacramento – State.Clearinghouse@opr.ca.gov

REFERENCES

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https://www.fws.gov/ventura/docs/species/protocols/cagn/coastal-gnatcatcher_survey-guidelines.pdf

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Attachment A: Recommendations and Mitigation Measures

Biological Resources	Mitigation Measures	Timing	Responsible Party
CDFW-BIO-1	<p>1. Prior to the issuance of any grading permit (for Public Utility Projects: prior to the preconstruction meeting), the City Manager (or appointed designee) shall verify that the MHPA boundaries and the following project requirements regarding the gnatcatcher are shown on the construction plans.</p> <p>No clearing, grubbing, grading, or other construction activities shall occur between March 1 and August 15, the breeding season of the gnatcatcher, unless the following requirements have been met to the satisfaction of the City Manager:</p> <p>A. A qualified biologist (possessing a valid endangered species act section 10(a)(1)(a) recovery permit) shall survey those habitat areas <u>within the MHPA</u> that would be subject to construction noise levels exceeding 60 decibels [dB(A)] hourly average for the presence of the gnatcatcher. Surveys for the gnatcatcher shall be conducted pursuant to the protocol survey guidelines established by the USFWS within the breeding season prior to the commencement of any construction. If gnatcatchers are present, then the following conditions must be met:</p> <p>I. Between March 1 and August 15, no clearing, grubbing, or grading of occupied gnatcatcher habitat shall be permitted. Areas restricted from such activities shall be staked or fenced under the supervision of a qualified biologist; <u>and</u></p> <p>III. Between March 1 and August 15, no construction activities shall occur within any portion of the site where construction activities would result in noise levels exceeding 60 dB(A) hourly average at the edge of</p>	Prior to, During Construction, and Implementation	City/Project Proponent

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	<p>occupied gnatcatcher habitat. Prior to the commencement of construction activities during the breeding season, areas restricted from such activities shall be staked or fenced under the supervision of a qualified biologist; <u>or</u></p> <p>iii. At least two weeks prior to the commencement of construction activities, under the direction of a qualified acoustician, noise attenuation measures (e.g., berms, walls) shall be implemented to ensure that noise levels resulting from construction activities will not exceed 60 dB(A) hourly average at the edge of habitat occupied by the coastal California gnatcatcher.</p>		
CDFW-BIO-2a	The MND and the Plan shall include a delineation of the jurisdictional features on site. Any direct impacts from future improvements to riparian resources, including unvegetated streambed, will be mitigated accordingly per the City's Biology Guidelines. A CDFW 1600 agreement may require additional mitigation measures.	Prior to, During Construction, and Implementation	City/Project Proponent
CDFW-BIO-2b	In addition to mitigation of impacts consistent with the City's Biology Guidelines, CDFW recommends that a Notification be submitted to CDFW pursuant to section 1600 et seq. of the Fish and Game Code for any potential modification to the bed, bank, or channel of the streambed, which includes potential crossing structures and vegetation modification on the stream bank.	Prior to, During Construction, and Implementation	City/Project Proponent
CDFW-BIO-3a	CDFW recommends that the Plan address impacts from bicycle use by imposing and enforcing speed limits. In addition, the City is reminded of its responsibilities to monitor and prevent users from going off trail or creating new unauthorized trails.	Prior to and During Implementation	City/ Project Proponent
CDFW-BIO-4a	Prior to adopting a Trails Plan, CDFW recommends the City develop a NRMP or ASMDs for Ruffin and Sandrock canyons. Absent completion of a NRMP or ASMDs, CDFW further recommends that the City commit to a minimum of monthly monitoring visits throughout the Ruffin Canyon MHPA to protect against adverse effects from	Prior to, During Construction, and Implementation	City/Project Proponent

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 City of San Diego
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	recreational uses along or peripheral to the newly authorized trails.		
CDFW-BIO-4b	If a Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP) is not developed per MSCP guidance, in lieu of a NMRP, the Plan shall describe appropriate procedures for trails closure, including signage for sections of unauthorized trails that are not being designated by the Plan.	Prior to, During Construction, and Implementation	City/Project Proponent
CDFW-BIO-5a	CDFW recommends inclusion of the following mitigation measure: The City shall develop an on-site mitigation plan to add and restore disturbed areas within sensitive habitats within closed areas of the MHPA.	Prior to, During Construction, and Implementation	City/Project Proponent
	Recommendations	Timing	Responsible Party
CDFW-REC-3b	In addition, CDFW recommends closing the northwestern finger canyon of the proposed existing trail as part of approval of the Plan, due to the presence of sensitive wetlands including alkali and freshwater marsh, and riparian resources and the presence of a gnatcatcher territory directly on the trail.	Prior to, During Construction, and Implementation	City/Project Proponent
CDFW-REC-5b	Additionally, CDFW recommends to close and designate areas within the northwestern finger of Ruffin Canyon or Sandrock Canyon to serve as mitigation for impacts within the MHPA. This can further include invasive species removal and restoration of native habitats in areas that were previously disturbed, and can include additional funding directed to ongoing, on-site restoration.	Prior to, During Construction, and Implementation	City/Project Proponent



San Diego County Archaeological Society, Inc.

Environmental Review Committee

6 March 2021

To: Mr. Jeffrey Szymanski
Development Services Department
City of San Diego
1222 First Avenue, Mail Station 501
San Diego, California 92101

Subject: Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration
Ruffin Canyon Open Space Trail
Project No. 658785

Dear Mr. Szymanski:

I have reviewed the subject DMND on behalf of this committee of the San Diego County Archaeological Society.

- ⑪ Based on the information contained in the DMND and the LSA archaeological report, we agree with the proposed monitoring program defined in the DMND.

Thank you for affording SDCAS participation in the DMND's public review period.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James W. Royle, Jr.", is written over the typed name.

James W. Royle, Jr., Chairperson
Environmental Review Committee

cc: LSA
SDCAS President
File

SAN DIEGO COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, Inc. (March 6, 2021)

11. Comment noted. The letter from the San Diego County Archaeological Society expresses agreement with the impact analysis of the MND and with the mitigation measures. No additional response is required.



San Diego Canyonlands

♦ 5106 Federal Blvd. #205, San Diego, CA 92105 ♦ 619-546-7707 ♦
♦ www.sdcanyonlands.org ♦

March 23, 2021

Jeff Szymanski, Environmental Planner
City of San Diego Development Services Center
1222 First Avenue, MS 501
San Diego, CA 92101
DSDEAS@sanidiego.gov

Re: Ruffin Canyon Open Space Trail, Project No. 658785, Serra Mesa & Mission Valley Community Plan Area, Council District 7

Dear Mr. Szymanski,


12 San Diego Canyonlands (Canyonlands) has been conducting restoration work within the Ruffin Canyon Open Space for the last two years, removing invasive and flammable Mexican fan palms (*Washingtonia robusta*) and other invasive species that have degraded riparian habitat. In this work we are restoring both native tree and shrub cover in the riparian zone as well as restoring upland slopes that have been invaded by non-native grasses and other plants from nearby managed landscapes.

Our organization has also participated in developing the concept for the proposed new trail alignment in southern Ruffin canyon that is described in the public notice as crossing an unsafe sewer maintenance path. This unsafe sewer path is, in fact, the degraded streambed of south Ruffin canyon, denuded of soil and free of native shrubs. While this section needs to remain clear for sewer maintenance activities, it is difficult walking and biking terrain, and requires that pedestrians and bikers cross riparian habitat to reach the safer path network to the north.

Canyonlands understands that a Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) is required by the MSCP for this area and has not been completed due to City of San Diego (City) budget constraints. All trail plans, especially new alignments, should be subject to the full environmental review required by CEQA. It is Canyonlands' considered opinion that the new trail alignment will reduce impacts in the Ruffin riparian zone, as well as making access safer for existing traffic. The proposed alignment has gone through careful review of potential habitat and cultural impacts. We feel that the same scrutiny that would be given to considering local impacts of the proposed trail in a NRMP has been applied in this project proposal, and we recommend that the City endorse and approve this project.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Clayton Tschudy
Executive Director
clayton@sdcanyonlands.org

SAN DIEGO CANYONLANDS (March 23, 2021)

12. The letter from San Diego Canyonlands identifies that they have been conducting restoration work in Ruffin Canyon. The letter also endorses the approval of the project.

Szymanski, Jeffrey

From: Phil Ouellette <philosfo@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 19, 2021 12:43 PM
To: DSD EAS
Cc: Christie Villarreal; Clayton Tschudy; Ball, Laura; Kevin Johnston
Subject: [EXTERNAL] (Serra Mesa and Mission Valley) Ruffin Canyon Open Space Trail / Project No. 658785 / Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration

****This email came from an external source. Be cautious about clicking on any links in this email or opening attachments.****

I am writing to record my personal support for the (Serra Mesa and Mission Valley) Ruffin Canyon Open Space Trail / Project No. 658785 and to represent considerations for the project on behalf of the Escala Master Homeowners' Association.

3 As a resident of the Escala community in Mission Valley I have hiked Ruffin Canyon often and especially enjoy the easy access provided by the trail structure in the northern portion of the canyon. Navigating the creek bed and sewer access in the southern portion of the canyon has always been challenging and a concern both physically for the hikers and environmentally for the wellbeing of the creek and surrounding canyon area. I believe a well groomed, accessible trail through the canyon (from Serra Mesa in the north to Mission Valley in the south) will be a benefit to the communities on both ends of the canyon providing recreational access to open space as well as increasing the frequency of responsible traffic in the canyon (and keeping undesirable activity in the canyon in check). As an Escala resident I would like for there to be easy access to the Escala owned portion of the canyon allowing for more frequent and accessible patrol by City Open Space Rangers and other authorities.

14 As an officer of the Escala Master Homeowners Association I have a responsibility to ensure the concerns of some members of our association are noted for the record as well. There is a concern that improvements in the canyon will result in increased foot traffic through our community by non-residents of Escala. There are additional concerns that our close location to homeless encampments on the San Diego River bed could result in spillover activity into Ruffin Canyon by that population should the trail improvements continue. To address some of these concerns I worked with San Diego Canyonlands and the City's Open Spaces department to modify the directions used to describe access to Ruffin Canyon through the Escala Community. While the City maintains easement rights on both Northside Drive and Fenton Parkway, the Escala Community is better served routing hikers to and from the Canyon using Fenton Parkway, a larger thoroughfare with clear sidewalk access to the canyon. While these modifications appeared in early documents describing the overall project, this stretch of trail access did not (need to) appear in the CEQA study and was not included in support documentation open for public comment. As (and if) the project continues I would like to ensure that the Escala Community continues to be involved in any messaging around canyon access and be a partner with the City, San Diego Canyonlands and Friends of Ruffin Canyon in developing any final instructions that describe access to the canyon through our community.

Best regards
Phil Ouellette
President, Escala Master Homeowners' Association
858-205-6003

PHIL OUELLETTE (March 19, 2021)

13. This comment documents the author's support for the project.
14. This comment also describes concerns from some in the community in regards to the project and how the concerns were addressed. The comment does not address the adequacy of the Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration.

March 3, 2021

Jeff Szymanski
Environmental Planner
City of San Diego Development Services

Dear Mr. Szymanski,

I am commenting on the Draft Mitigated Negative Declaration for project number 658785, the Ruffin Canyon Open Space Trail. I have not found any issues with the adequacy of the environmental analysis. Therefore, I am not requesting a response to this comment letter.

I wanted to take this opportunity to provide information for the project record on the support for the project within the Serra Mesa and Mission Valley Communities and the extensive public outreach process for the proposal over the last 12+ years.

15 Here is a brief breakdown of the community outreach process:

2009-2010

The Friends of Normal Heights Canyons and the Friends of Ruffin Canyon collaborate with Foothill Associates and the San Diego River Conservancy (SDRC) on the Tributary Canyons Project. Support for connecting Normal Heights and Serra Mesa to the San Diego River via safe canyon trails is built through community meetings and one result is a feasibility report published by SDRC in 2010.

2014

Members of the Friends of Ruffin Canyon serve on a committee of the Serra Mesa Planning Group to establish community priorities for the use of Development Impact Fees (DIF) from the Broadstone multi-family residential development. This process results in the Serra Mesa Planning Group and the Serra Recreation Advisory Group voting to recommend devoting \$100,000 of the DIF funds toward permitting costs for a safe Ruffin Trail connection to Mission Valley.

2015

The City Council accepts the recommendations of the community and appropriates the \$100,000 in Serra Mesa DIF funds to the Ruffin Trail connection permitting.

2016-2017

San Diego Canyonlands (SDCLC non-profit) leads a Canyon Enhancement Planning Process for Ruffin Canyon. In addition to the resulting development of a full Canyon Action Plan for Ruffin, this process again demonstrates strong support for a safe trail connection to Mission Valley. This process also leads to the shift of the Escala HOA Board to support for the trail connection. This Board manages the property at

KEVIN JOHNSTON (March 3, 2021)

15. The comment describes the community outreach that project proponent undertook for the project.

the southern end of the proposed trail, where there is an existing public access easement leading to a tunnel under Friars Road.

2019

With the City's Open Space Division preparing for a permit application for the Ruffin Trail connection, the Serra Mesa Planning Group and Mission Valley Planning Group consider the project for up to date recommendations. Both Planning Groups recommend approval again.

2020

The City's Open Space Division submits the application for the trail connection to the Development Services Department.

This safe trail connection will be a wonderful asset to the city, and the communities of Serra Mesa and Mission Valley, in particular. In addition to the recreation and nature education opportunities it will provide, I anticipate the improved trail experience will inspire the dedication of more residents in protecting our urban canyon ecosystems.

I want to thank all the city staff involved in the efforts to get the project to this stage, and I look forward to project approval and implementation.

Kevin Johnston
Serra Mesa resident
Friends of Ruffin Canyon member
San Diego Canyonlands Board of Directors
Email: kevinjohnston1972@yahoo.com

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INITIAL STUDY CHECKLIST

1. Project title/Project number: Ruffin Canyon Open Space Trail / 658785
2. Lead agency name and address: City of San Diego, 1222 First Avenue, MS-501, San Diego, California, 92101
3. Contact person and phone number: Jeff Szymanski/ (619) 446-5324
4. Project location: The Ruffin Canyon Open Space Trails Plan area is comprised of City of San Diego Open Space located in the Serra Mesa and Mission Valley communities of the City of San Diego, west of Interstate (I) I-15, east of I-805, and north of I-8,. It is loosely bounded by Gramercy Drive to the north, Friars Road to the south, Mission Village Drive to the East, and Murray Ridge Road to the west. The area is located in un-sectioned land in the Mission San Diego land grant within Townships 15 and 16 South, Range 2 West on the San Bernardino Base and Meridian U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-minute La Mesa and La Jolla quadrangle maps.
5. Project Applicant/Sponsor's name and address: Parks and Recreation Department, Open Space Division- 202 C Street MS 5D, San Diego, CA 92101
6. Community Plan designation: Open Space
7. Zoning: Open Space
8. Description of project (describe the whole action involved, including but not limited to, later phases of the project, and any secondary, support, or off-site features necessary for its implementation): The project is the adoption of the Ruffin Canyon Open Space Trails Plan which proposes the expansion of an existing trail system. The Plan would provide a cohesive trail plan for the Ruffin Canyon Open Space and provide connection between the Serra Mesa and Mission Valley Communities. The Plan provides guidance for the present and future use and maintenance of the trails within the Plan Area. Trails in this plan are open to pedestrian and bicycle users. The proposed project would create a new alignment in the southern section of the canyon where individuals are currently using a sewer access path which does not serve as a safe and sustainable trail for public use. In addition, the report addresses the permitting of three existing trails within Ruffin Canyon. The project consists of approximately 2,658 feet of new trail within Ruffin Canyon, heading south from the intersection of the existing Ruffin Canyon and Shawn Canyon trails. In addition to the new trail construction, the study area includes permitting of the existing trial located in the upper section of Ruffin Canyon. An existing City utility path occurs within the central portion of Ruffin Canyon and Shawn Canyon and is used for access/maintenance of the sewer lines. Currently, this path is also being used as a hiking/biking trail. Approximately 2150 feet of existing path would be closed.
9. Surrounding land uses and setting: The Plan area consists of an undeveloped open space area north of Mission Valley and west of Murphy Canyon. It includes City-owned open space parcels and an easement across undeveloped privately-owned homeowner's association (HOA) property

on the south end of the project. The north end of the project is bounded by a school site and residential development is located to the west, east and south.

10. Other public agencies whose approval is required (e.g., permits, financing approval, or participation agreement):

The City is the project Lead Agency under CEQA. In its role as Lead Agency, the City is responsible for ensuring the adequacy of this IS/MND. Implementation of the proposed project does not require that the City obtain any discretionary approvals, permits, licenses, certifications, or other entitlements from various state and local agencies.

11. Have California Native American tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project area requested consultation pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.3.1? If so, has consultation begun? The Lipay Nation of Santa Ysabel, Jamul Indian Village and the San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians all requested consultation pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.3.1. The City of San Diego sent notification to these three Native American Tribes on December 1, 2020. No responses were received within the 30-day period to request consultation and additional information. Please see Section XVII of the Initial Study for more information regarding the consultation.

Note: Conducting consultation early in the CEQA process allows tribal governments, lead agencies, and project proponents to discuss the level of environmental review, identify and address potential adverse impacts to tribal cultural resources, and reduce the potential for delay and conflict in the environmental review process. (See Public Resources Code section 21083.3.2.) Information may also be available from the California Native American Heritage Commission's Sacred Lands File per Public Resources Code section 5097.96 and the California Historical Resources Information System administered by the California Office of Historic Preservation. Please also note that Public Resources Code section 21082.3(c) contains provisions specific to confidentiality.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

<input type="checkbox"/> Aesthetics	<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture and Forestry Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> Air Quality
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biological Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cultural Resources	
<input type="checkbox"/> Geology and Soils	<input type="checkbox"/> Greenhouse Gas Emissions	<input type="checkbox"/> Hazards and Hazardous Materials
<input type="checkbox"/> Hydrology and Water Quality	<input type="checkbox"/> Land Use and Planning	<input type="checkbox"/> Mineral Resources
<input type="checkbox"/> Noise	<input type="checkbox"/> Population and Housing	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Services
<input type="checkbox"/> Recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation/Traffic	<input type="checkbox"/> Tribal Cultural Resources
<input type="checkbox"/> Utilities and Service Systems		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mandatory Findings of Significance

DETERMINATION

(To be completed by Lead Agency)

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

- ☐ The proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- ☒ Although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- ☐ The proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.
- ☐ The proposed project MAY have a “potentially significant impact” or “potentially significant unless mitigated” impact on the environment, but at least one effect (a) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and (b) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.
- ☐ Although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or (MITIGATED) NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or (MITIGATED) NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

1. A brief explanation is required for all answers except “No Impact” answers that are adequately supported by the information sources a lead agency cites in the parentheses following each question. A “No Impact” answer is adequately supported if the referenced information sources show that the impact simply does not apply to projects like the one involved (e.g., the project falls outside a fault rupture zone). A “No Impact” answer should be explained where it is based on project specific factors as well as general standards (e.g., the project will not expose sensitive receptors to pollutants, based on a project-specific screening analysis.)
2. All answers must take account of the whole action involved, including off-site as well as on-site, cumulative as well as project-level, indirect as well as direct, and construction as well as operational impacts.
3. Once the lead agency has determined that a particular physical impact may occur, then the checklist answers must indicate whether the impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, or less than significant. “Potentially Significant Impact” is appropriate if there is substantial evidence that an effect may be significant. If there are one or more “Potentially Significant Impact” entries when the determination is made, an EIR is required.
4. “Negative Declaration: Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated” applies where the incorporation of mitigation measures has reduced an effect from “Potentially Significant Impact” to a “Less Than Significant Impact.” The lead agency must describe the mitigation measures, and briefly explain how they reduce the effect to a less than significant level (mitigation measures from “Earlier Analyses,” as described in (5) below, may be cross-referenced).
5. Earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering, program EIR, or other CEQA process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or (mitigated) negative declaration. *Section 15063(c)(3)(D)*. In this case, a brief discussion should identify the following:
 - a. Earlier Analysis Used. Identify and state where they are available for review.
 - b. Impacts Adequately Addressed. Identify which effects from the above checklist were within the scope of and adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and state whether such effects were addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis.
 - c. Mitigation Measures. For effects that are “Less Than Significant With Mitigation Measures Incorporated,” describe the mitigation measures that were incorporated or refined from the earlier document and the extent to which they address site-specific conditions for the project.
6. Lead agencies are encouraged to incorporate into the checklist references to information sources for potential impacts (e.g., general plans, zoning ordinances). Reference to a previously prepared or outside document should, where appropriate, include a reference to the page or pages where the statement is substantiated.

7. Supporting Information Sources: A source list should be attached, and other sources used or individuals contacted should be cited in the discussion.
8. This is only a suggested form, and lead agencies are free to use different formats; however, lead agencies should normally address the questions from this checklist that are relevant to a project's environmental effects in whatever format is selected.
9. The explanation of each issue should identify:
 - a. The significance criteria or threshold, if any, used to evaluate each question;
 - b. Where applicable, the City of San Diego's CEQA Significance Determination Thresholds (Thresholds) (City 2016) are identified and used to evaluate project impacts; and
 - c. The mitigation measure identified, if any, to reduce the impact to less than significant.

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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I. AESTHETICS

– Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

Pursuant to the City's Thresholds, projects that block public views from designated open space areas, roads, or scenic vistas to significant visual landmarks may result in significant impacts. A scenic vista is generally defined as a public viewpoint that provides expansive or notable views of a highly valued landscape and are typically identified in planning documents, such as a community plan, but can also include locally known areas or locations where high-quality public views are available.

Ruffin Canyon does contain natural visual resources and is located within Open Space but the project would not substantially change the existing visual character of the area. The majority of the trail project would utilize the existing informal foot paths and utility road and would not require substantial grading or vegetation removal. The trail project is not proposing to construct any above ground structures that would substantially affect a scenic vista or visual corridor. The proposed trail project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista and impacts would not occur.

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|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

As noted above pursuant to the City's Thresholds, projects that block public views from designated open space areas, roads, or scenic vistas to significant visual landmarks may result in significant impacts. State Scenic Highways are considered scenic vistas due to the visual attributes and resources that comprise their designation.

There are no designated State Scenic Highways within Ruffin Canyon. Therefore, the project would not substantially damage or block views of scenic resources, including those along a State Scenic Highway. No impacts would occur.

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

According to the City's Thresholds projects that severely contrast with the surrounding neighborhood character may result in a significant impact. To meet this threshold one or more of the following conditions must apply: the project would have to exceed the allowable height or bulk regulations and the height and bulk of the existing patterns of development in the vicinity of the project by a substantial margin; have an architectural style or use building materials in stark contrast to adjacent development where the adjacent development follows a single or common architectural theme (e.g., Gaslamp Quarter, Old Town); result in the physical loss, isolation or degradation of a community identification symbol or landmark (e.g., a stand of trees, coastal bluff, historic landmark) which is identified in the General Plan, applicable community plan or local coastal program; be located in a highly visible area (e.g., on a canyon edge, hilltop or adjacent to an interstate highway)

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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and would strongly contrast with the surrounding development or natural topography through excessive height, bulk signage or architectural projections; and/or the project would have a cumulative effect by opening up a new area for development or changing the overall character of the area.

Implementation of the project involves the permitting of a new trail system and is consistent with open space requirements. Some vegetation removal would be required along the trail alignment but the removal would not substantially alter the visual character of the canyon. The trail project would be visually compatible with the existing character and would not substantially degrade the visual character and quality of the site or the surrounding area.

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|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

According to the City's Thresholds, a project may have a significant light and glare impact if a project would be moderate to large in scale with more than 50 percent of any single elevation of a building's exterior built with a material with a light reflectivity greater than 30 percent (see Land Development Code Section 142.0730(a)), and the project is adjacent to a major public roadway or public area; or the project would shed substantial light onto adjacent, light-sensitive property or land use, or would emit a substantial amount of ambient light into the nighttime sky.

The project is not proposing any lighting and as such the project would not create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area; impacts would not occur.

II. AGRICULTURAL AND FOREST RESOURCES

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board.

Would the project:

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

Agricultural land is rated according to soil quality and irrigation status; the best quality land is called Prime Farmland. Unique farmland is land, other than prime farmland, that has combined conditions to produce sustained high quality and high yields of specialty crops. Farmland of Statewide Importance may include tracts of land that have been designated for agriculture by State law. In some areas that are not identified as having national or statewide importance, land is considered to be Farmland of Local Importance. The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP)

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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maintained by the California Department of Conservation (CDC) is the responsible state agency for overseeing the farmland classification. In addition, the City's Thresholds state that in relation to converting designated farmland, a determination of substantial amount cannot be based on any one numerical criterion (i.e., one acre), but rather on the economic viability of the area proposed to be converted. Another factor to be considered is the location of the area proposed for conversion.

According to the CDC's California Important Farmland Finder (CDC 2016), the project does not contain any Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. Agricultural land is not present on the site or in the general vicinity. As a result, the project would not result in the conversion of such lands to non-agricultural use. No impacts would occur.

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|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act Contract? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

The Williamson Act, also known as the California Land Conservation Act of 1965, enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space use; in return, landowners receive property tax assessments which are much lower than normal because they are based upon farming and open space uses as opposed to full market value. The Williamson Act is only applicable to parcels within an established agricultural preserve consisting of at least 20 acres of Prime Farmland, or at least 40 acres of land not designated as Prime Farmland. The Williamson Act is designed to prevent the premature and unnecessary conversion of open space lands and agricultural areas to urban uses.

As stated in item II(a), the project site is located in an area where neither farmland nor agricultural resources are present. Additionally, the project site is not encumbered by a Williamson Act Contract and would not affect any properties zoned for agricultural use or affected by a Williamson Act Contract, as there are none within the project vicinity. No impacts would occur.

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|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 1220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g))? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

Public Resources Code Section 12220(g) defines "forest land" as land that can support 10 percent native cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, and other public benefits. Based on this definition, no forest land occurs within or adjacent to the project site. Moreover, there is no land zoned as forest land or timberland that exists within the project site or within its vicinity. There are scattered trees throughout the site; however, there are no concentration of trees within the site that would constitute a forest. Therefore, the project would not conflict with existing zoning for or cause a rezoning of forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned Timberland Production. No impacts would occur.

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

As stated in II(c), there is no forest land present on the site or vicinity. The site has not been historically and is not currently used or planned to be used for forest land. As such, implementation of the proposed project would not result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use. No impact would occur.

e) Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Refer to II(a) through II(d), above. No existing agricultural or forest land uses are located in the proximity of the project site. Therefore, the project would not involve changes in the existing environment that could result in the conversion of farmland or forest land into non-agricultural or non-forest use. No impacts would occur.

III. AIR QUALITY

Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations.

Would the project:

a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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According to the City's Thresholds, a project may have a significant air quality impact if it could conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan. The construction of the trail project would only require the use of hand tools with no heavy machinery. The project does not have the scope which would potential conflict with air quality plans.

b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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The City's Thresholds state that a significant impact may occur if a project violates any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation. Please see response III (a), no impacts would occur.

c) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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The City's Thresholds state that a project may have a potentially significant air quality impact if it could result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including release of emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors). Please see response III (a), no impacts would occur.

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|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| d) Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

The City's Thresholds state that for a project proposing placement of sensitive receptors near an existing odor source, a significant odor impact will be identified if the project site is closer to the odor source than any existing sensitive receptor where there has been more than one confirmed or three confirmed complaints per year (averaged over a three- week period) about the odor source. Moreover, for projects proposing placement of sensitive receptors near a source of odors where there are currently no nearby existing receptors, the determination of significance should be based on the distance and frequency at which odor complaints from the public have occurred in the vicinity of a similar odor source at another location. Please see response III (a), no impacts would occur.

IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

– Would the project:

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|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|

The City's Thresholds state that significance of impacts to biological resources are assessed by City staff through the CEQA review process and through review of the project's consistency with the Environmentally Sensitive Lands (ESL) regulations, the Biology Guidelines (2018) and with the City's MSCP Subarea Plan (1997). Before a determination of the significance of an impact can be made, the presence and nature of the biological resources must be established. The City has established a two-step process that: (1) provides guidance to determine the extent of biological resources and values present on the site; and (2) based on the findings of Step 1, if significant biological resources are present, then a survey to determine the nature and extent of the biological resources on the site is warranted.

A biological letter report was prepared (City of San Diego, Parks and Recreation, Doug Allen Biologist III June 2019, updated April 2021), which presented the results of biological surveys conducted by the City of San Diego, Parks and Recreation Department for the proposed Ruffin Canyon Trail Realignment Project. The surveys were conducted to assess existing biological conditions, potential impacts, and identify the need for mitigation measures associated with the proposed public trail realignment within the Ruffin Canyon Open Space area to create a complete trail.

Prior to conducting biological field surveys, searches of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) sensitive species database, California Native Plant Society (CNPS) online database for the La Jolla

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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USGS topographic quadrangle, the San Diego River Tributary Canyons Project (ESA 2013), and the City's MSCP Subarea Plan for information regarding sensitive species known to occur within the vicinity of the project area were performed. A review of vegetation maps created by ESA (ESA 2013) was also performed and confirmed or updated during the 2018 and 2019 field surveys.

The study area (the trail alignment and existing trail plus 15 to 20 feet on each side of the trail) supports 14 vegetation communities/habitats: freshwater marsh, alkali marsh, southern willow scrub, non-native riparian, mule fat scrub, Diegan coastal sage scrub (including disturbed), broom baccharis scrub, coastal sage-chaparral scrub, southern mixed chaparral, non-native grassland, ornamental vegetation, disturbed habitat, and developed land. There is also non-vegetated wash habitat occurring in the southern portion of the canyon.

The project would result in direct impacts to the following sensitive vegetation communities: 0.15 acre of Diegan coastal sage scrub, and 0.22 acre of southern mixed chaparral. These impacts would be considered significant.

Impacts from the proposed project would also occur to ornamental (0.03 acre) and developed land (0.01 acre). Impacts to ornamental and developed land vegetation communities are determined to be not significant, these habitats are not considered sensitive. The North Ruffin Canyon trail, which includes portions of the City's Public Utilities Department access and maintenance road, passes through freshwater marsh, alkali marsh, southern willow scrub, non-native riparian, mulefat scrub, broom baccharis scrub, Diegan coastal sage scrub, Diegan coastal sage scrub/southern mixed chaparral, southern mixed chaparral, and non-native grassland. North Ruffin Canyon trail is a Category 1 Trail; therefore, no impact analysis or mitigation is required for permitting this trail.

South Ruffin Trail is a new trail alignment and is a Category 2 Trail. Southern Ruffin Trail starts at the intersection of North Ruffin Trail and Shawn Canyon Trail and heads south to the Escala Development.

Three sensitive plant species were observed in the study area during City's biological surveys in 2018 and 2019: San Diego barrel cactus, southwestern spiny rush, and San Diego County viguiera. No sensitive plant species will be impacted by the project as proposed. The proposed South Ruffin Canyon trail impacts will be designed and constructed to avoid any impacts to the sensitive plant species. The single San Diego barrel cactus and populations of San Diego viguiera that were located during the 2019 surveys would be avoided in the field by flagging by project biologist prior to construction and routing of the alignment in the field downslope of the plants. No Southwestern spiny rush are located in the vicinity of the new trail alignment.

Coastal California gnatcatcher was observed or detected during the general biological surveys. Most of the observations occurred on the western side of Ruffin Canyon during the 2017 protocol gnatcatcher surveys conducted by the City in 2017 (City 2017) and 2019. Approximately 0.15 acre of Diegan coastal sage scrub will be impacted by the construction of South Ruffin Canyon trail and no further vegetation impacts will occur from the existing trails. Impacts to coastal California gnatcatcher would be considered significant. Mitigation would be required to offset the impacts to 0.15 acre of Diegan coastal sage scrub. Orange throated whiptail was observed within the area of

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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the new South Ruffin Canyon trail alignment during the 2019 sensitive species surveys. This species is highly mobile, and it is anticipated that they will move out of the construction activity area, therefore no impacts are anticipated to this species as designed. No mitigation is required.

San Diego barrel cactus is the only MSCP-covered plant species observed within the study area. Routing of the trail in the field will avoid direct and indirect impact to this species by flagging and routing of the trail downslope of the single individual. This species will not be impacted by the project as designed. Coastal California gnatcatcher and orange throated whiptail were the only MSCP-covered animal species observed or detected in the study area. The project will implement area-specific management directives for the coastal California gnatcatcher by restricting clearing of vegetation to outside of the nesting period (i.e., no clearing between March 1 and August 15) or conducting protocol surveys to establish species absence if work is proposed in the nesting period. Orange throated whiptail is highly mobile, and it is anticipated that they will move out of the construction activity area, therefore no impacts are anticipated to this species as designed. No mitigation is required.

Direct impacts to Tier II and Tier IIIA vegetation communities, comprised of 0.15 acre of Diegan coastal sage scrub 0.22 acre of southern mixed chaparral, would be mitigated at a 1:1 ratio through payment into the City's Habitat Acquisition Fund (HAF), purchase of habitat through an approved mitigation bank such as the Cornerstone Lands Mitigation Bank. All mitigation is anticipated to occur within the MHPA. Impacts to other vegetation communities would not be significant and therefore would not require mitigation.

In addition to the payment into the HAF the project would also be required to implement a biological monitoring program to ensure that impacts to sensitive resources do not occur beyond those identified in this report.

- b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other community identified in local or regional plans, policies, and regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?



The proposed new trail alignment for South Ruffin Trail would cross USACE non-wetland WUS and CDFW stream channel (Figure 2). The crossing is a small portion of unvegetated channel consisting of cobble stones. This crossing will be left in its natural state with no improvements. No impacts to jurisdictional wetlands will occur from the project as designed. However, the existing trails crosses jurisdictional waters (stream channels) of North Ruffin Canyon Trail and Shawn Canyon Trail. Approximately 2150 feet of existing trail in North Ruffin Canyon, north and west of the Taft Canyon Finger, is proposed to be closed as part of the project. The existing puncheon bridges and other trail improvements in the section will be removed and revegetation allowed to occur. The North Ruffin Canyon trail south of the Taft finger will remain. These existing crossings occur on Category 1 trails; therefore, no mitigation is required. No improvements are proposed for these crossings but may require repair as part of regular trail maintenance.

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including but not limited to marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The study area contains waterways, wetlands, and riparian habitat that would be subject to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), and/or California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) jurisdiction. The project would avoid all impacts to these areas; therefore, no impact would occur to jurisdictional wetlands and waterways and no mitigation is required.

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|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|

Although the project would occur within the MHPA, project implementation would not result in substantial interference with wildlife movement through the MHPA or impede linkages or the use of wildlife nursery sites. The proposed trail and existing trails would continue to allow for wildlife movement through the canyon and would not impede linkages; thus, no significant impacts to wildlife corridors would occur.

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|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|

The project is consistent with the City's Biology Guidelines (2018) and ESL Regulations; no conflict with local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources would occur.

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|

The project would conform with the adopted City MSCP Subarea Plan (1997). The City's MSCP Subarea Plan addresses the impacts to preserve areas from adjacent development in Section 1.4.3, Land Use Adjacency Guidelines (LUAGs). The LUAGs provide requirements for land uses adjacent to the habitat preserve in order to minimize indirect impacts from drainage, toxics, lighting, noise, barriers, invasive species, brush management, and grading to the sensitive resources contained therein. The project's consistency with the City's LUAGs is summarized below:

Drainage

- *All new and proposed parking lots and developed areas in and adjacent to the preserve must not drain directly into the MHPA.*

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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- *All developed and paved areas must prevent the release of toxins, chemicals, petroleum products, exotic plant materials, and other elements that might degrade or harm the natural environment or ecosystem processes within the MHPA.*

Toxins

- *Land uses, such as recreation and agriculture, that use chemicals or generate by-products such as manure, that are potentially toxic or impactful to wildlife, sensitive species, habitat, or water quality need to incorporate measures to reduce impacts caused by the application and/or drainage of such materials into the MHPA.*

Lighting

- *Lighting of all developed adjacent areas should be directed away from the MHPA. Where necessary, development should provide adequate shielding with non-invasive plant materials (preferably native), berming, and/or other methods to protect the MHPA and sensitive species from night lighting.*

Noise

- *Uses in or adjacent to the MHPA should be designed to minimize noise impacts. Berms or walls should be constructed adjacent to commercial areas, recreational areas, and any other use that may introduce noises that could impact or interfere with wildlife use of the MHPA.*
- *Excessively noisy uses or activities adjacent to breeding areas must incorporate noise reduction measures and be curtailed during the breeding season of sensitive species.*

Barriers

- *New development adjacent to the MHPA may be required to provide barriers (e.g., non-invasive vegetation, rocks/boulders, fences, walls, and/or signage) along the MHPA boundaries to direct public access to appropriate locations and reduce domestic animal predation.*

Invasive Plant Species

- *No invasive non-native plant species shall be introduced into areas adjacent to the MHPA.*

Brush Management

- *New residential development located adjacent to and topographically above the MHPA (e.g., along canyon edges) must be set back from slope edges to incorporate Zone 1 brush management areas on the development pad and outside of the MHPA. Zones 2 and 3 will be combined into one zone (Zone 2) and may be located in the MHPA upon granting of an easement to the City (or other acceptable agency) except where narrow wildlife corridors require it to be located outside of the MHPA.*

Grading/Land Development

- *Manufactured slopes associated with site development shall be included within the development footprint for projects within or adjacent to the MHPA.*

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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- *Impacts from fugitive dust would be avoided and minimized through watering and other appropriate measures.*
- *All activities, vehicles, equipment, and construction materials shall be strictly limited to the fenced project footprint and the project shall be kept clean of trash and debris.*
- *Equipment maintenance, staging, and disposal of fuel, oil coolant shall occur outside of wetlands, and within designated areas in the fenced project impact limits only.*

As stated in item IV(a) above, the project may result in potential significant impacts to sensitive vegetation communities, and City ESL areas. Implementation of mitigation measures within the MMRP would ensure project consistency with the adopted City MSCP Subarea Plan (1997) and Land Development Manual Biology Guidelines (2018).

V. CULTURAL RESOURCES

– Would the project:

- a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to §15064.5? ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐

According to the City's Thresholds, for the purposes of CEQA, a significant historic resource is one which qualifies for the California Register of Historical Resources or is listed in a local historic register or deemed significant in a historical resource survey, as provided under Section 5024.1(g) of the Public Resources Code. A resource that is not listed in, or determined to be eligible for listing in, the California Register of Historical Resources, not included in a local register of historic resources, or not deemed significant in a historical resource survey may nonetheless be historically significant for purposes of CEQA.

The City's determination of significance of impacts on historical resources is based on the criteria found in Section 15064.5 of the State CEQA Guidelines. For additional information, see the City's Historical Resources Guidelines. The determination of significance for historic buildings, structures, objects, and landscapes is based on age, location, context, association with an important person or event, uniqueness, and integrity.

The project site is in an area known to contain sensitive archaeological resources and is located on the City's Historical Sensitivity map. Therefore, a record search of the California Historic Resources Information System (CHRIS) digital database was reviewed by qualified archaeological City staff to determine presence or absence of potential resources within the project site. The CHRIS search did not identify any archaeological resources within or adjacent to the site. However, because the project is located in a generally sensitive area where prior development has not occurred, an archaeological resources survey was performed (LSA, February 2019). LSA completed a field reconnaissance survey on February 11, 2019 of the portion of the project that includes the trail realignment. Some of the area designated for trail realignment was not accessible due to heavy vegetation. Vegetation consisted of native coastal sage scrub, and some sparse riparian species. In areas where the surface was visible, no cultural material was observed.

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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Although no cultural resources were observed within the trail realignment, access to the trail was limited by dense vegetation. The area has not been previously surveyed, and areas along natural drainage features should be treated as having a high potential for cultural resources.

Additionally, the trail will be located along the base of the mesa and above the main channel of the drainage, which suggests the potential for buried resources. Archaeological and Native American monitoring is recommended during initial ground disturbance and vegetation clearing for the new trail alignment.

All potential impacts related to the presence of archeological resources at the site would be reduced and addressed through the purview of the qualified monitors. Monitoring would occur at all stages of ground-disturbing activities at the site. Furthermore, the Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Program (MMRP), as detailed within Section V of the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND), require the archaeological and Native American monitoring. With implementation of the cultural resources monitoring program, potential impacts on historical resources would be reduced to less than significant.

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| b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to §15064.5? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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Refer to response V (a) above.

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| c) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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The project is only proposing minor grading and would not result in impacts to paleontological resources.

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| d) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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The project site is not located within or near a formal cemetery and is not known to be located on a burial ground. However, Section IV of the MMRP contains provisions for the discovery of human remains. If human remains are discovered, work shall halt in that area and no soil shall be exported off-site until a determination can be made regarding the provenance of the human remains; and the following procedures as set forth in CEQA Section 15064.5(e), the California Public Resources Code (Sec. 5097.98) and State Health and Safety Code (Sec. 7050.5) shall be undertaken. Based upon the required mitigation measure impacts would be less than significant.

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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VI. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

– Would the project:

a) Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:

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| i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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The project site is not located within an Alquist-Priolo Fault Zone and it is not located in proximity to any faults. The project is not proposing to construct structures and is proposing to connect into an existing hiking trail. A substantial amount of people would not be exposed to geologic hazards as a result of the project

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| ii) Strong seismic ground shaking? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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The project site, like most of southern California, is within a seismically active area and, therefore, can be subject to strong seismic ground motion. However, the project is not proposing to construct structures and is proposing to connect into an existing hiking trail which would not have the potential to induce ground shaking.

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| iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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Liquefaction is a soil phenomenon in which water-saturated soils lose strength when subject to the forces of intense and prolonged ground shaking. Liquefaction generally occurs in areas where four criteria are met: (1) the site is subject to seismic activity, (2) on-site soil consists of cohesionless soil or silt and clay with low plasticity, (3) groundwater is encountered within 50 feet of the surface, and (4) soil relative densities are less than 70 percent. Within the project site, the potential for liquefaction or other seismic-related ground failure is considered to be low as the potential for susceptibility for liquefaction has not been identified on the City Seismic Safety Study Geologic Hazard Maps. No impacts are anticipated.

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| iv) Landslides? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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The project would not expose people or structures to the risk of loss, injury, or death involving landslides. See response V. a) i) There would be no impacts in this category.

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The project would be required to remove some vegetation. However, the trail would be constructed along contours using trail Best Management Practices that would minimize future erosion and trail maintenance.

c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction, or collapse?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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The proposed project would not be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project. As discussed in VI(a)(iii) and VI(a)(iv), the project site is not likely to be subject to landslides, and the potential for liquefaction is low. The project would be constructed consistent with proper engineering design, in accordance with the CBC. Integration of appropriate engineering design measures and standard construction practices are verified prior to the issuance of building permits. Through this process, project design is required to demonstrate that potential impacts from geologic hazards would be reduced to an acceptable level of risk. As such impacts would be less than significant.

d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Please see VI a ii and iii.

e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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The project does not propose the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems; the project site would be served by the existing public sewer system. Therefore, no impacts with regard to the capability of soils to adequately support the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems would occur.

VII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

– Would the project:

a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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On July 12, 2016, the City of San Diego adopted the Climate Action Plan (CAP) Consistency Checklist, which requires all projects subject to discretionary review to demonstrate consistency with the

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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Climate Action Plan. For project-level environmental documents, significance of greenhouse gas emissions is determined through the CAP Consistency Checklist.

The City's CAP outlines the actions that the City will undertake to achieve its proportional share of State greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions. A CAP Consistency Checklist (Checklist) is part of the CAP and contains measures that are required to be implemented on a project-by-project basis to ensure that the specified emission targets identified in the CAP are achieved. Projects that are consistent with the CAP as determined through the use of this Checklist may rely on the CAP for the cumulative impacts of GHG emissions.

The project is consistent with the existing General Plan and Community Plan land use and zoning designations. Furthermore, based upon review and evaluation of the completed CAP Consistency Check List and the project is consistent with the applicable strategies and actions of the CAP. Therefore, the project is consistent with the assumptions for relevant CAP strategies toward achieving the identified GHG reduction targets, and impacts from greenhouse gas emissions are considered less than significant. No mitigation is required.

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| b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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The project would not conflict with an applicable plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purposes of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases. The project is consistent with the existing General Plan and Community Plan land use and zoning designations. Further based upon review And evaluation of the completed CAP Consistency Checklist for the project, the project is consistent with the applicable strategies and actions of the CAP. Therefore, the project is consistent with the assumptions for relevant CAP strategies toward achieving the identified GHG reduction targets. Impacts would not occur and mitigation is not required.

VIII. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

– Would the project:

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|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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The City's Thresholds states that significant impacts may occur if a project proposes the handling, storage, and treatment of hazardous materials. Construction of the project would not require the use of hazardous materials and would not routinely transport, use or dispose of hazardous materials. Therefore, the trail would not create a significant hazard to the public or environment.

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

See VIII a) no public health hazards have been associated with this project.

c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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The City's Thresholds states that significant impacts may occur if a project proposes the handling, storage, and treatment of hazardous materials.

See VIII a) no public health hazards have been associated with this project.

d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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See VIII(b) above for applicable City Threshold related to listed hazardous materials sites. Government Code 65962.5 stipulates that the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), the Department of Health Services (DHS), the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), and any local enforcement agency, as designated by Section 18051, Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR), identify and update annually a list of sites that have been reported to have certain types of contamination. The SWRCB GeoTracker database and the DTSC EnviroStor database provide information on hazardous materials sites. GeoTracker is a database and geographic information system (GIS) that provides online access to environmental data. It tracks regulatory data about leaking underground storage tanks (LUSTs), Department of Defense, Spills-Leaks-Investigations-Cleanups, and landfill sites. EnviroStor is an online database search and GIS tool for identifying sites that have known contamination or sites where there may be reasons to investigate further. It also identifies facilities that are authorized to treat, store, dispose, or transfer hazardous waste.

There are no past uses that caused contamination or potential contaminants of concern listed for the site.

There would not be a significant hazard to the public or the environment related to listings on hazardous materials sites because the project site does not have any listings, and the listings within 1,000 feet of the site do not include active spills. The project site is not listed on any database compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and thus, no impact would occur.

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within 2 miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The City's Thresholds state that a project may result in a significant impact if it is located in a designated airport influence area and where the FAA has reached a determination of "hazard" through FAA Form 7460-1, "Notice of Proposed Construction or Alteration", inconsistent with an ALUCP, within the boundaries of an ALP, or two nautical miles of a public or public use airport.

The project site is not located within the boundaries of an airport land use plan. The project is not located within the flight path or within airport overlay zones and therefore would not introduce any new features that would create a flight hazard.

f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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The project is not within the vicinity of a private airstrip. No impacts would occur.

g) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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The trail project is connecting into an existing trail system and would not interfere with any adopted emergency plans.

h) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Since the project is not introducing habitable structures to the area the project would not have the potential to expose people and structures to a significant loss, injury or death from a wildland fire.

IX. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

– Would the project:

a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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The project would be required to remove some vegetation. However, the trail would be constructed along contours using trail Best Management Practices (BMPs) that would minimize future erosion

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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and trail maintenance. Standard BMPs would ensure that the project would not violate water quality standards or adversely affect any downstream resources within Ruffin Canyon.

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| b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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The City's Thresholds state there may be significant impacts on hydrologic conditions and well-water supplies if a project would result in decreased aquifer recharge because the area available for aquifer recharge is reduced. In addition, if a project would result in extraction of water from an aquifer, impacts on hydrologic conditions would be significant if there would be a net deficit in the aquifer volume or a reduction in the local groundwater table. Lastly, projects which would create over 1.0 acres of impermeable hardscape in areas utilizing well-water and projects which would install groundwater extraction wells may result in significant impacts.

The project does not propose the use of groundwater. Furthermore, the project would not introduce a substantially large amount of new impervious surfaces over ground that could interfere with groundwater recharge. Therefore, the trail project would not substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge.

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| c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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The City's Thresholds state that projects that would result in substantial changes to stream-flow velocities or quantities may result in a significant impact. Significant impacts may also occur to downstream properties and/or environmental resources if drainage patterns are changed.

The trail project is designed to augment and use the existing drainage features of the land. The overall drainage pattern would not be altered.

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| d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner, which would result in flooding on- or off-site? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

The City's Thresholds state that Significant impacts may occur to downstream properties and/or environmental resources if drainage patterns are changed and that if a project would result in increased flooding on- or off-site, there may be significant impacts on upstream or downstream properties and to environmental resources.

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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Please see IX.c. Since the project would not substantially alter the existing drainage patterns and would not introduce a large quantity of impermeable surfaces the rate of surface runoff would not be substantially increased.

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| e) Create or contribute runoff water, which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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Trail BMP's, and compliance with the City Stormwater Regulations would prevent or effectively minimize short-term construction and long-term runoff operational impacts. Therefore, the trail project would not contribute runoff water that would exceed the capacity of existing storm water systems.

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| f) Otherwise substantially degrade water quality? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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Conformance to BMPs for the project and compliance with the City's Stormwater Regulations would prevent or effectively minimize and preclude impacts to water quality.

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| g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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The City's Thresholds state that a project may have significant impacts if the project would impose flood hazards on other properties or if a project proposes to develop wholly or partially within the 100-year floodplain identified in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) maps.

The project would construct a trail and no housing is being proposed.

No impacts would occur.

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| h) Place within a 100-year flood hazard area, structures that would impede or redirect flood flows? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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The City's Thresholds state that a project may have significant impacts if the project would impose flood hazards on other properties or if a project proposes to develop wholly or partially within the 100-year floodplain identified in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) maps.

No structures are being proposed in a 100 year-flood hazard area and the trail project would not impede or redirect flood flows. No impacts would occur.

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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X. LAND USE AND PLANNING

– Would the project:

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|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Physically divide an established community? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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The physical division of an established community typically refers to the construction of a linear feature, such as an interstate highway or railroad tracks, or removal of a means of access, such as a local road or bridge that would impact mobility within an existing community or between a community and outlying area. Implementation of the project would involve the development of trails within City owned open space. The trail is connecting into an existing trail system and could potentially connect divided communities. Therefore, the project would not physically divide an established community and no impacts would occur.

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| b) Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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The City's Thresholds state that land use impacts would occur if a project would be inconsistent or conflict with the environmental goals, objectives, or guidelines of a community or general plan, an adopted land use designation or intensity. The trail plan project has been reviewed for consistency with applicable land use plans and was found to be consistent with both the Serra Mesa and Mission Valley community plans.

Furthermore, the trail plan has been prepared in response to Community interest in a trails plan that would connect the communities of Serra Mesa and Mission Valley. The Plan provides upland neighborhood connections for Serra Mesa and Mission Valley residents, connecting on the south end to an Urban Walk that would connect to the San Diego River, and provide improved connections to and within Ruffin Canyon Open Space. The existing Community Plans for Serra Mesa and Mission Valley date to 1977 and 1985, respectively. The Serra Mesa Community Plan Bikeway and Pedestrian Pathways map did not specifically identify trails the Open Space Area, however language does allow for hiking within open space. The Mission Valley Community Plan Pedestrian Circulation System map includes a northern connection to Ruffin Canyon as a "Major Pedestrian Path." In 2013 the San Diego River Conservancy and State Coastal Conservancy, in cooperation with the City of San Diego and local community groups conducted an Initial Study and MND for a trail alignment. Early in the environmental analysis and design process at that time, the proposed trail system consisted of two trails: the Ruffin Canyon Trail and the Sandroock Canyon Trail (the finger canyon west of the main Ruffin Canyon Trunk).

The two trails would have met at the junction of the two canyon drainages. Severe constraints were identified with the Sandroock Canyon Trails, including steep slopes, and property issues. The Sandroock Canyon finger is still not considered feasible at this time, and so not included in the Plan. The alignment considered at that time would have also rerouted a significant section of the upper Ruffin trail onto the western side slopes of the Open Space. Instead, this plan uses existing trail alignments and utility access paths in northern Ruffin, Taft, and Shawn finger.

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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The project is consistent with land use plans and is being designed to address community concerns and goals. No impacts under this category would occur.

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| c) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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Refer to IV(e) and (f). The City is a participant in the MSCP, a comprehensive, long-term habitat conservation program designed to provide permit issuance authority for take of covered species to the local regulatory agencies. The MSCP is implemented in the City through the City's MSCP Subarea Plan (1997). Additionally, the project would conform to the City's MSCP Subarea Plan as discussed under Biological Resources section.

The majority of the proposed trail is located within the City of San Diego's Multiple Habitat Planning Area (MHPA). Pursuant to Section 1.4 of the City of San Diego MSCP Subarea Plan, passive recreation is considered 'conditionally compatible with the biological objectives of the MSCP' and therefore trails may be allowed within the MHPA. The proposed project would be in conformance with the City of San Diego MSCP Subarea Plan Land Use Adjacency Guidelines (Section 1.4.3) and General Management Directives (Section 1.5.2) for public access, trails and recreation, which are designed to minimize the effects of the proposed trail within the MHPA. The proposed project does not include plantings, lighting, drainage or toxic chemical sources, or brush management requirements; and allowed trail uses will not be excessively noisy. Public access will be directed to the trailhead through use of signs, and barriers will be installed along adjacent private properties to prohibit access. Considerable introduction of noise would be limited to the construction/widening phase: Habitat clearing shall occur outside of the California gnatcatcher breeding season (March 1-August 15). Nesting bird surveys would be conducted prior to any non-mechanized construction during the breeding season; if nests were observed, work would be rescheduled or redirected to other areas. The project would also implement the MSCP Land Use Adjacency Guidelines (LUAGs) and avoidance and minimization measures as a feature of the project. Adherence to the LUAGs would preclude impacts the MSCP.

XI. MINERAL RESOURCES

- Would the project:

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| a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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The area surrounding the project is not being used for the recovery of mineral resources. Similarly, the area surrounding the project site is not designated for the recovery of mineral resources on the City of San Diego General Plan Land Use Map. Therefore, the park project would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource.

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| b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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Refer to XI(a), above. The project area is not used for mineral extraction and is not known as a locally important mineral resource recovery site. Further, the project area is not delineated on any plan for mineral resource recovery uses. As such, no impacts would occur.

XII. NOISE

– Would the project result in:

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| a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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The trail project does not have the capability of generating excessive amounts of noise. No noise ordinances would be exceeded.

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| b) Generation of excessive ground borne vibration or ground borne noise levels? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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Please see XII a.

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| c) A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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Refer to response XI(a). The project would not result in a significant permanent noise increase. Impacts would not occur.

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|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| d) A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above existing without the project? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

Refer to response XI(a). The project would not result in a significant temporary or periodic noise increase. Impacts would be less than significant.

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| e) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the area to excessive noise levels? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

The proposed project is not located within the boundaries of an existing airport land use plan and therefore the project could not expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels beyond those associated with the existing conditions.

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The project is not located within the vicinity of a private airstrip. No impacts would occur.

XIII. POPULATION AND HOUSING

– Would the project:

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

The project would construct a hiking trail on City-owned open space. The project would not extend any existing roadways into an undeveloped area or introduce any new roadways that could induce growth. Therefore, the project would not induce substantial population growth.

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| b) Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

The project would develop a trail plan and would not remove and would not result in the displacement of any existing housing, or otherwise affect existing housing in any way that would necessitate the construction of replacement housing.

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| c) Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

Refer to XII(a) above. No impacts would occur.

XIV. PUBLIC SERVICES

- a) Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:

- | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| i) Fire protection | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

Since the trail project would not result in population growth the project would not trigger the need to construct or alter governmental facilities including fire protection facilities

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ii) Police protection | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

The project would not physically alter any police protection facilities. The construction of a trail would not trigger the need to construct or alter police protection facilities.

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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iii) Schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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The project would not trigger the need to physically alter any schools. Additionally, the project would not include construction of future housing or induce growth that could increase demand for schools in the area.

iv) Parks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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The project involves the construction of a trail and would not require the construction of new parks.

v) Other public facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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The trail would not increase the demand for electricity, gas, or other public facilities.

XV. RECREATION

a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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The trail project would connect into an existing trail system which would provide connection to two different communities. No deterioration of recreation facilities would occur.

b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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See XV(a). The proposed project does not involve or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities. Therefore, no impacts would occur.

XVI. TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC

– Would the project or plan/policy:

a) Conflict with an adopted program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the transportation system, including transit, roadways, bicycle and pedestrian facilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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The project would not have the scope or scale that would introduce a substantial amount of vehicle trips into the area. Therefore, no conflicts with circulation systems would occur.

b) Would the project or plan/policy result in VMT exceeding thresholds identified in the City of San Diego Transportation Study Manual.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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The proposed project is the development of a trail plan and would not result in VMT exceeding thresholds identified in the City of San Diego Transportation Study Manual.

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

The trail project was designed to meet City design standards and, therefore, would meet existing levels of safety.

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| e) Result in inadequate emergency access? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

The project does not have the scope or scale that would affect any emergency access areas.

XVII. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

– Would the project a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code Section 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code Section 5020.1(k), or | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

As detailed in Section V(b) of this IS/MND, the project region is known to have cultural significance for the Kumeyaay and Mission people. An archaeological survey was conducted, and no cultural resources were identified within the project area during the field investigation of the site.

The Lipay Nation of Santa Ysabel, Jamul Indian Village and the San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians all requested consultation pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.3.1. The City of San Diego sent notification to these three Native American Tribes on December 1, 2020. No responses were received within the 30-day period to request consultation and additional information.

- | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| b) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

Refer to XVIII(a) above. Tribal Cultural Resources were not identified through the consultation process and the City and impacts to significant resource would not occur.

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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XVIII. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

– Would the project:

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|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a) Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

The trail project is expected to result in very little wastewater and would not exceed the requirements of the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| b) Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment or storm water treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

Adequate services are available to serve the project. Impacts would not occur.

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| c) Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

The project would not result in a substantial increase in impervious surface area and would not result in substantial quantities of runoff which would require new or expanded treatment facilities. Therefore, the proposed project would not require the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities.

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|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| d) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

The project would not require a substantial need for water resources and consumption would be minimal therefore the trail would not impact existing water supplies.

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| e) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

The project would not generate wastewater and, therefore, would not impact existing wastewater treatment provider.

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
f) Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Construction of the project would likely generate minimal waste associated with construction activities. Operation of the project would generate minimal solid waste associated with this category and, therefore, would not affect the permitted capacity of the landfill serve the project area

g) Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Refer to XVIII(f), above. By incorporating the waste reduction, recycling, and diversion measures outlined in the project's WMP, the project would comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste, including but not limited to the State of California Integrated Waste management Act, the City of San Diego's CEQA Significance Determination Thresholds, and the City of San Diego's Refuse and Recyclable Materials Storage Ordinance. Impacts would be less than significant.

XX. WILDFIRE – Would the project:

a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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The City of San Diego participates in the San Diego County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan. The project complies with the General Plan and is consistent with the La Jolla Community Plan's land use and the Land Development Code's zoning designation. The project is within a natural canyon system but surrounded by an urbanized area of San Diego and construction of trail to an existing trail would not disrupt any emergency evacuation routes as identified in the Hazard Mitigation Plan. Therefore, the project would have a less-than-significant impact on an emergency response and evacuation plan during construction and operation.

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to, pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of wildfire?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The proposed trail project is within a naturalized area. Due to the location of the project, there would be limited potential to expose occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of wildfire. Therefore, impacts would remain below a level of significance.

c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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The project would install a trail system and no new construction of roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines, or other utilities would be constructed that would exacerbate fire risk, therefore impacts would be less-than significant.

d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Refer to response XX (b) above. Additionally, the project would comply with the City's appropriate Best Management Practices (BMP) for drainage and would not expose people or structures to significant risks as a result of run-off, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes. Therefore, less than-significant impact would result.

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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XIX. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

- a) Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?

☐
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Potentially significant impacts to the environment resulting from the proposed project have been identified for the areas of biological resources and cultural resources. The project would not substantially degrade the quality of the environment, cause fish or wildlife populations to drop below self-sustaining levels or threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community. The project has the potential to cause direct and indirect impacts to sensitive vegetation communities, including to on-site sensitive vegetation and adjacent sensitive wetland and upland habitat. Impacts would be reduced to below a level of significance through the implementation of mitigation measures.

The project is not expected to impact resources related to major periods of California history or prehistory. Based on the cultural sensitivity of the project region, however, the project would have the potential to impact unknown subsurface cultural and tribal cultural resources if the undeveloped portion of the project site would be disturbed. However, with implementation of mitigation measure CUL-1, impacts to cultural resources and tribal cultural resources would be less than significant.

- b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?

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Cumulative environmental impacts are those impacts that by themselves are not significant, but when considered with impacts occurring from other projects in the vicinity would result in a cumulative impact. Related projects considered to have the potential of creating cumulative impacts in association with the project consist of projects that are reasonably foreseeable and that would be constructed or operated during the life of the project. The project would be in a developed area that is largely built out. No other construction projects are anticipated in the immediate area of the project.

and emissions of criteria pollutants and precursors related to implementation of the project would not be cumulatively considerable. Similarly, the project would have a less than significant impact in

Issue	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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The Archeological Report prepared for the project did not identify any known resources). However, impacts related to cultural resources were conservatively determined to be potentially significant if, yet unknown and unanticipated resources are unearthed during clearing and grading activities. With implementation of CUL-1, impacts related to cultural resources would be less than significant, and the project would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact to cultural resources.

Other future projects within the surrounding area would be required to comply with applicable local, state, and federal regulations to reduce potential impacts to less than significant, or to the extent possible. As such, the project is not anticipated to contribute to potentially significant cumulative environmental impacts. Project cumulative impacts would be less than significant.

- c) Does the project have environmental effects that will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?
- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|

The air quality analysis summarized in Section III, Air Quality of this IS/MND identified that the Project would not have significant impacts in relation to toxic air contaminants and other air quality health concerns. Other issue areas that could potentially create substantial adverse effects on human beings such as hazardous materials or waste, risk of fire or floods, and construction and operational noise were also determined to be less than significant. Thus, as evidenced by the Initial Study Checklist, no other substantial adverse effects on human beings, either indirectly or directly, would occur because of project implementation.

INITIAL STUDY CHECKLIST REFERENCES

I. Aesthetics / Neighborhood Character

- ☒ City of San Diego General Plan
- ☒ Community Plan: Kearny Mesa Community Plan
- ☒ Other: California State Scenic Highway Mapping System

II. Agricultural Resources & Forest Resources

- ☐ City of San Diego General Plan
- ☐ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Survey - San Diego Area, California, Part I and II, 1973
- ☐ California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997)
- ☐ Site Specific Report:
- ☒ Other:
 - California Department of Conservation. 2016. California Important Farmland Finder.

III. Air Quality

- ☐ California Clean Air Act Guidelines (Indirect Source Control Programs) 1990
- ☒ Regional Air Quality Strategies (RAQS) - APCD
- ☐ Site Specific Report:
- ☐ Other:

IV. Biology

- ☒ City of San Diego, Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP), Subarea Plan, 1997
- ☐ City of San Diego, MSCP, "Vegetation Communities with Sensitive Species and Vernal Pools" Maps, 1996
- ☒ City of San Diego, MSCP, "Multiple Habitat Planning Area" maps, 1997
- ☐ Community Plan – Kearny Mesa Community Plan
- ☐ California Department of Fish and Game, California Natural Diversity Database, "State and Federally-listed Endangered, Threatened, and Rare Plants of California," January 2001
- ☐ California Department of Fish and Game, California Natural Diversity Database, "State and Federally-listed Endangered and Threatened Animals of California," January 2001
- ☐ City of San Diego Land Development Code Biology Guidelines
- ☒ Site Specific Report: biological letter report (City of San Diego, Parks and Recreation, Doug Allen Biologist III June 2019, revised May 2021)

V. Cultural Resources (includes Historical Resources)

- ☐ City of San Diego Historical Resources Guidelines
- ☐ City of San Diego Archaeology Library
- ☐ Historical Resources Board List
- ☐ Community Historical Survey
- ☒ Site Specific Report:
- ☒ Other: (LSA, February 2019)

VI. Geology/Soils

- ☒ City of San Diego Seismic Safety Study
- ☐ U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Survey - San Diego Area, California, Part I and II, December 1973 and Part III, 1975
- ☐ Site Specific Report:
- ☒ Other: City of San Diego General Plan

VII. Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- ☒ Site Specific Report: Climate Action Plan Consistency Checklist.

VIII. Hazards and Hazardous Materials

- ☐ San Diego County Hazardous Materials Environmental Assessment Listing
- ☐ San Diego County Hazardous Materials Management Division
- ☐ FAA Determination
- ☐ State Assessment and Mitigation, Unauthorized Release Listing, Public Use Authorized
- ☐ Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan – MCAS Miramar; Montgomery Field
- ☐ Site Specific Report:
- ☒ Other: City of San Diego Fire-Rescue Department. 2009. Official Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map. Grid Tile: 28. February 24.

IX. Hydrology/Drainage

- ☒ Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM)
- ☐ Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), National Flood Insurance Program-Flood Boundary and Floodway Map
- ☐ Clean Water Act Section 303(b) list, http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/tmdl/303d_lists.html
- ☐ Site Specific Report:

X. Land Use and Planning

- ☐ City of San Diego General Plan
- ☒ Community Plan: Serra Mesa and Mission Valley
- ☐ Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan
- ☒ City of San Diego Zoning Maps
- ☐ FAA Determination:
- ☐ Other Plans:

XI. Mineral Resources

- ☐ California Department of Conservation - Division of Mines and Geology, Mineral Land Classification
- ☐ Division of Mines and Geology, Special Report 153 - Significant Resources Maps
- ☒ City of San Diego General Plan: Conservation Element
- ☐ Site Specific Report:

XII. Noise

- ☒ City of San Diego General Plan
- ☒ Community Plan: Uptown
- ☐ San Diego International Airport - Lindbergh Field CNEL Maps
- ☐ Brown Field Airport Master Plan CNEL Maps
- ☐ Montgomery Field CNEL Maps
- ☐ San Diego Association of Governments - San Diego Regional Average Weekday Traffic Volumes
- ☐ San Diego Metropolitan Area Average Weekday Traffic Volume Maps, SANDAG
- ☐ Site Specific Reports:

XIII. Paleontological Resources

- ☒ City of San Diego Paleontological Guidelines
- ☐ Deméré, Thomas A., and Stephen L. Walsh, "Paleontological Resources City of San Diego," Department of Paleontology San Diego Natural History Museum, 1996
- ☐ Kennedy, Michael P., and Gary L. Peterson, "Geology of the San Diego Metropolitan Area, California. Del Mar, La Jolla, Point Loma, La Mesa, Poway, and SW 1/4 Escondido 7 1/2 Minute Quadrangles," *California Division of Mines and Geology Bulletin* 200, Sacramento, 1975
- ☐ Kennedy, Michael P., and Siang S. Tan, "Geology of National City, Imperial Beach and Otay Mesa Quadrangles, Southern San Diego Metropolitan Area, California," Map Sheet 29, 1977
- ☐ Site Specific Report:

XIV. Population / Housing

- ☐ City of San Diego General Plan
- ☐ Community Plan
- ☐ Series 11/Series 12 Population Forecasts, SANDAG
- ☐ Other:

XV. Public Services

- ☐ City of San Diego General Plan
- ☐ Community Plan

XVI. Recreational Resources

- ☐ City of San Diego General Plan
- ☐ Community Plan
- ☐ Department of Park and Recreation
- ☐ City of San Diego - San Diego Regional Bicycling Map
- ☐ Additional Resources:

XVII. Transportation / Circulation

- ☒ City of San Diego General Plan
- ☒ Community Plan: Mission Valley and Serra Mesa
- ☐ San Diego Metropolitan Area Average Weekday Traffic Volume Maps, SANDAG
- ☐ San Diego Region Weekday Traffic Volumes, SANDAG
- ☐ Site Specific Report:
- ☐ Other:

XVIII. Utilities

- ☐ Site Specific Report:

XIX. Water Conservation

- ☐ Sunset Magazine, *New Western Garden Book*, Rev. ed. Menlo Park, CA: Sunset Magazine

XX. Water Quality

- ☐ Clean Water Act Section 303(b) list, http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/tmdl/303d_lists.html.
- ☐ Site Specific Report:

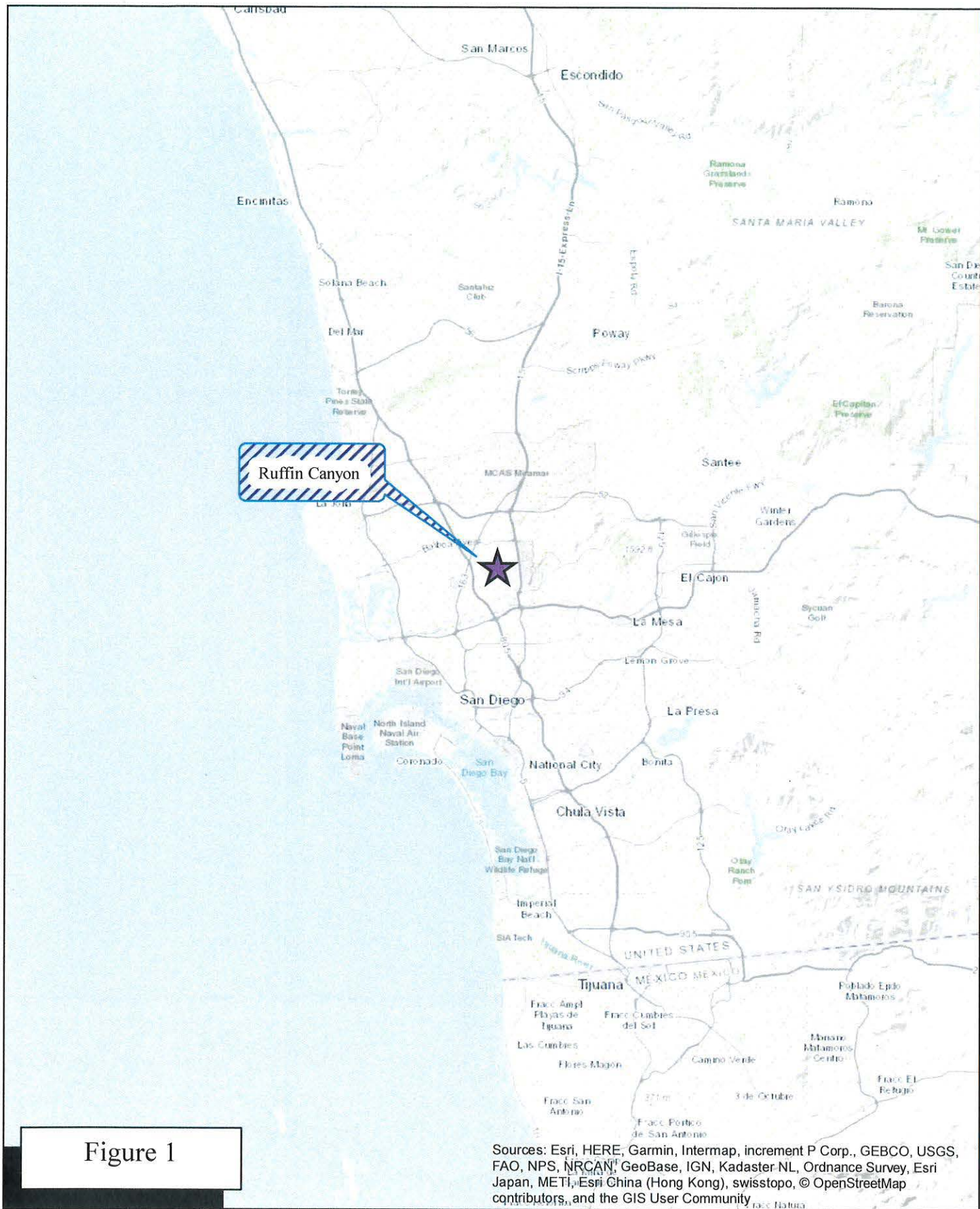




Figure 2 – Trails Plan (Project)

0 250 500 1,000 Feet

The City of
SAN DIEGO

- Drainage crossing
- Existing Trail (Category 1)
- New Trail Alignment (Category 2)
- Both Existing Trail Cat 1 and Utility Access Path
- Utility Access Road

- MHPA
- City Open Space
- Escala HOA
- San Diego Unified School District

