

# RESOURCE MANAGEMENT & OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

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## BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

The Torrey Pines community consists of over 1,000 acres of open space, located primarily within five separate but related open space systems, each containing numerous sensitive environmental resources. These open space systems include, from the north part of the community to the south, San Dieguito River Valley, Crest Canyon, Torrey Pines Reserve Extension, Los Peñasquitos Lagoon and associated uplands, and the Carroll Canyon Wetlands/Wildlife Corridor (see **Figure 4**).

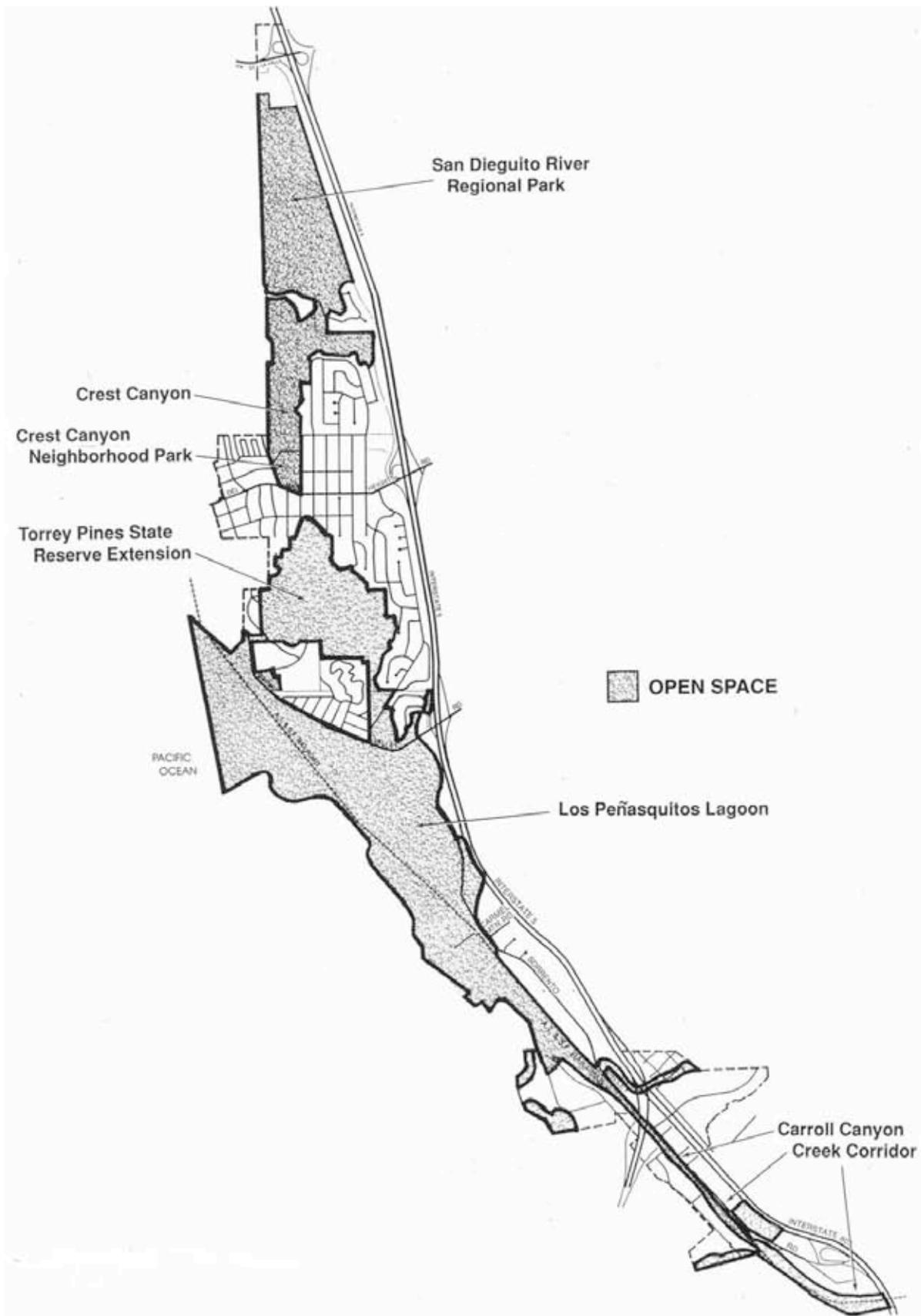
Except for a small portion at the south end of Sorrento Valley, all of the Torrey Pines community is in the Coastal Zone, and most of the wetlands, wetland buffers, shoreline coastal bluffs, and beaches are within the Sensitive Coastal Resource (SCR) Zone (see **Figure 5**).

The Torrey Pines community is rich in valuable biological resources. The most sensitive of these habitats include Coastal Marsh, Riparian, Coastal Mixed Chaparral, Chamise Chaparral, Coastal Sage Scrub, Grasslands, and Torrey Pine Woodland (please see Biologically Sensitive Habitats maps, **Figures 19-21**, within the **Appendix**). The Torrey Pines community is also rich in cultural resources, with over 25 prehistoric and historic archaeological sites recorded as of 1981.

The Sorrento Valley/Los Peñasquitos Lagoon area of the Torrey Pines community is the site of the prehistoric Indian village of Ystagua. Ystagua has archaeological remnants unique to the area, and is considered a Multiple Resource Area (MRA) by the National Register of Historic Places Guidelines. The site has extensive middens and artifacts, and has burial sites with cremation remains that are of special concern to local Native Americans. This area is believed to have been the center of a resource network in which prehistoric man visited the lagoon and surrounding area for food and raw materials for tools. The value of this area has been extensively documented in the ethnographic and archaeological record.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) directs agencies to inventory cultural resources under their jurisdiction, and requires projects to consider impacts to archaeological, historic, and Native American resources. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) has made a national policy of preserving historic and cultural aspects of our national heritage. In addition, the General Plan discusses at length the “alarming rate of historical and archaeological site destruction” and the need for increased public efforts to slow the rate of destruction.

In addition to the sensitive coastal, biological and cultural resources found within the Torrey Pines community, several other environmental constraints exist including slopes of 25 percent or greater, floodplains, geologic hazards and wetlands (please see detailed Environmental Constraints maps, **Figures 22-24**, within the **Appendix**).



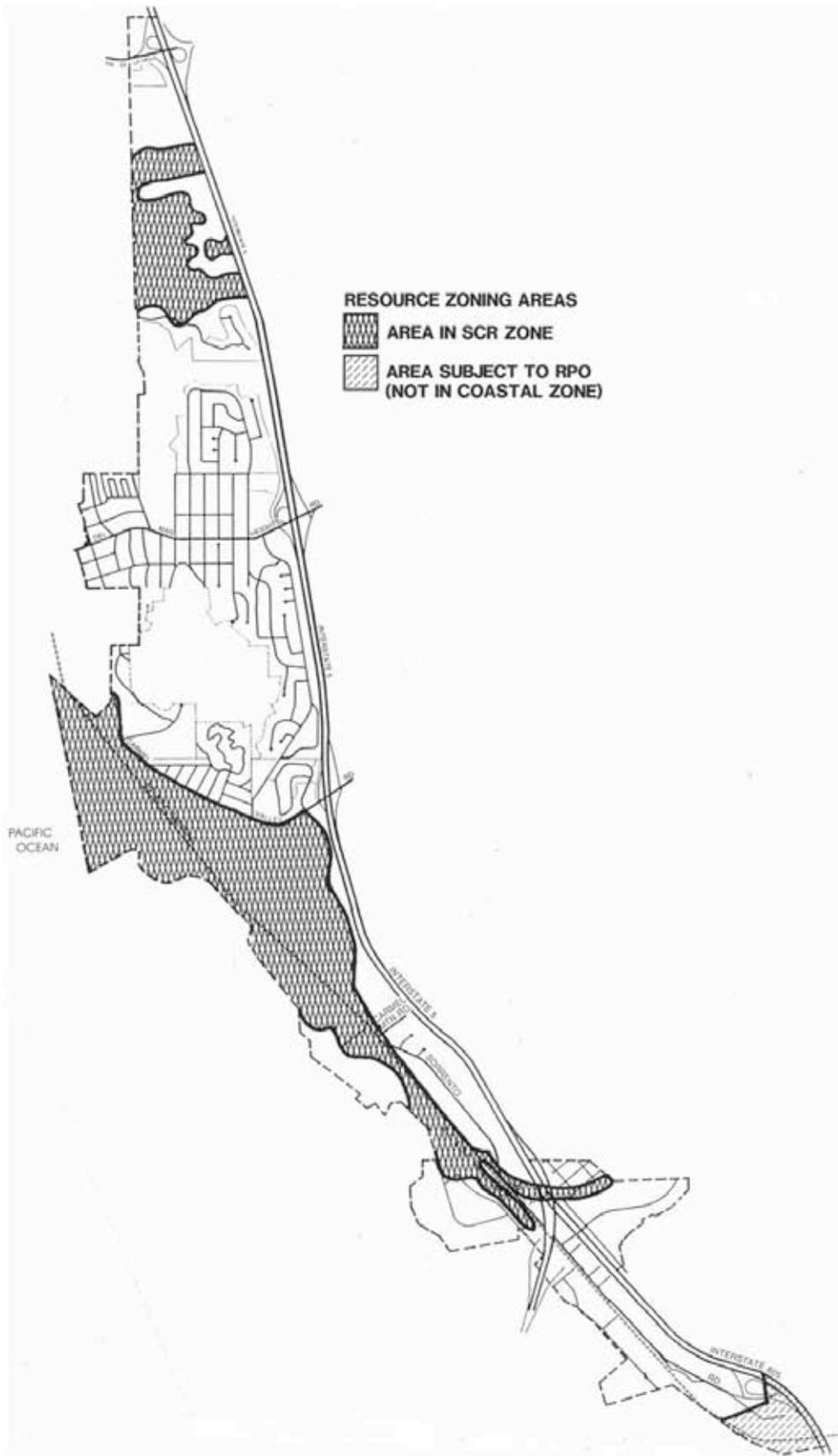
**Designated Open Space**  
**Torrey Pines Community Plan**

**4**  
**FIGURE**

These biological and cultural resources continue to suffer degradation from a variety of sources. Los Peñasquitos Lagoon and the Carroll Canyon Creek corridor have been degraded by the development of adjacent residential and industrial properties, the construction of public utility and transportation projects, and increased sedimentation and decreased water quality from development in surrounding upstream communities. The Torrey Pines State Reserve Extension is impacted by residential encroachment from adjacent properties. Crest Canyon, because of its excellent access, is a heavily used area that suffers impacts from erosion. That portion of the San Dieguito River Valley Regional Open Space Park within Torrey Pines suffers from a history of sewage discharges, water diversions, sedimentation, human and pet intrusion, and extensive land filling for the Del Mar Racetrack and Fairgrounds.

## **GOALS**

1. Ensure long term sustainability of the unique ecosystems in the Torrey Pines community, including all soil, water, air, and biological components that interact to form healthy functioning ecosystems.
2. Conserve, restore, and enhance plant communities and wildlife habitat, especially habitat for rare, threatened, and endangered species.
3. Retain viable, connected systems of wildlife habitat, and maintain these areas in their natural state.
4. Identify, inventory and preserve the unique paleontological, archaeological, Native American, and historic resources of Torrey Pines for their educational, cultural, and scientific values.
5. Preserve, enhance and restore all natural open space and sensitive resource areas, including Los Peñasquitos Lagoon and associated uplands, Torrey Pines State Park and Reserve Extension areas with its distinctive sandstone bluffs and red rock, Crest Canyon, San Dieguito Lagoon and River Valley, the Carroll Canyon Wetland/Wildlife Corridor through Sorrento Valley, and all selected corridors providing linkage between these areas.
6. Establish a pedestrian/bicycle pathway system that links all open space areas, from Carroll Canyon in the south to the San Dieguito River Valley in the north. This pathway system shall be provided concurrent with adjacent development, and shall be designed consistent with the design guidelines provided within this Plan.

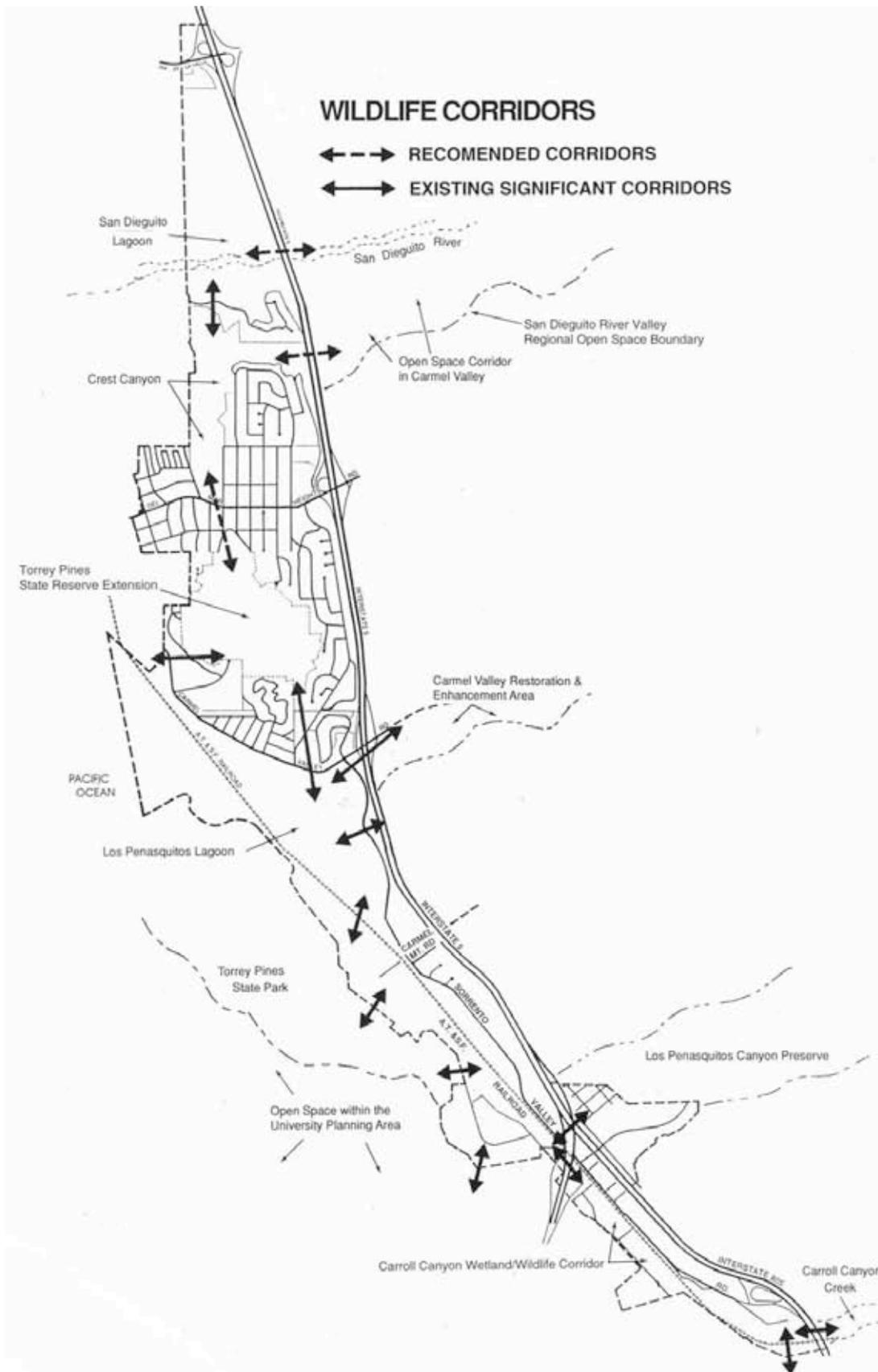


**Resource Zoning Areas**  
**Torrey Pines Community Plan**

**5**  
 FIGURE

## POLICIES

1. Land uses adjacent to environmentally sensitive habitats shall not negatively impact those areas.
2. Development impacts to rare, threatened, endangered, or candidate species shall be minimized or eliminated.
3. No filling, clearing, grubbing, or other disturbance of biologically sensitive habitats shall be permitted without approved mitigation plans.
4. Coastal lagoons and estuaries that are designated and zoned open space shall remain undeveloped.
5. Public access in areas of environmentally sensitive habitats shall be limited to low-intensity recreational, scientific, or educational use. Access shall be controlled or confined to designated trails or paths, and no access shall be approved which results in disruption of habitat.
6. New development adjacent to and impacting biologically sensitive areas shall be responsible for the restoration and enhancement of that area. In particular, when mitigation areas are needed for public projects, the disturbed areas in Crest Canyon should be revegetated with Coastal Mixed Chaparral and Torrey Pines.
7. Riparian vegetation in channels through the Sorrento Valley industrial area shall be preserved in its natural state in order to maintain its vital wildlife habitat value. When vegetation removal is necessary for flood control, the required state and federal permits shall be obtained.
8. Preserve and enhance all open space and wildlife corridors (see **Figure 6**), especially those linking Los Peñasquitos Lagoon with Torrey Pines State Reserve Extension and the Carroll Canyon Creek Corridor.
9. Crest Canyon shall be left in its natural state in order to preserve those biologically sensitive habitats identified within this park. A small portion of the parkland located adjacent to Del Mar Heights Road and Durango Drive should accommodate some limited passive park development.
10. Construction or improvements of roadways adjacent to biologically sensitive areas or open space shall be designed to avoid impacts, especially in wetlands and wetland buffer areas. Protection of sensitive habitats through buffers, realignments and reduced development areas shall also be considered.
11. New development, both public and private, should incorporate site planning and design features that avoid or mitigate impacts to cultural resources. When sufficient plan flexibility does not permit avoiding construction on cultural resource sites, mitigation shall be designed in accordance with guidelines of the State Office of Historic Preservation and the State of California Native American Heritage Commission.



**Wildlife Crossings/Linkages**  
**Torrey Pines Community Plan**

**6**  
 FIGURE

12. Maintain regulations that prohibit contaminated runoff from reaching any of the sensitive open space areas designated in this Plan.
13. Conditions of approval for all development that impacts adjacent open space areas should include restoration and enhancement measures for that particular area.
14. All Torrey Pine trees on public property should be preserved and protected.
15. Provide pedestrian/bicycle linkages so that all open space areas will be connected.

## **SPECIFIC PROPOSALS**

### **Wildlife Crossings/Linkages**

There are a number of existing and proposed wildlife crossings or linkages identified within the community planning area. These crossings are connections between open space systems that allow wildlife to pass unencumbered. As shown in **Figure 6**, there are presently 14 designated crossings throughout Torrey Pines. A majority of these crossings link Torrey Pines State Reserve with the reserve extension, Carroll Canyon Wetlands/Wildlife Corridor and the Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve. Those crossings, shown to link across I-5 and Interstate 805 (I-805), are coordinated with existing underpasses and bridges.

There are three additional crossings recommended within the Plan, located in the northern portion of the planning area. These linkages would allow wildlife passage between the Torrey Pines State Park Reserve Extension and Crest Canyon, between Crest Canyon and the San Dieguito River Valley, and between the San Dieguito Lagoon and San Dieguito River Valley.

### **San Dieguito Lagoon and River Valley**

Approximately 200 acres of the San Dieguito River Valley Regional Open Space Park Focused Planning Area is encompassed within the northern portion of the Torrey Pines community planning area. This regional open space system extends for 55 miles from its source on Volcan Mountain, near Julian, to the ocean between Del Mar and Solana Beach.

The San Dieguito Lagoon is one of the few remaining coastal wetlands in California. It is a habitat for many threatened species, such as the endangered Least Tern. It is a critical site on the Pacific Flyway, which is rapidly being destroyed by development. Every effort should be made to protect and enhance this resource, including following the policies, some of which are contained within the San Dieguito Lagoon Enhancement Program.

1. New development or expansion of existing uses adjacent to the lagoon shall not encroach into or negatively impact this open space area.
2. The lagoon should be enlarged to enhance plant and animal habitats, and to create a sufficient tidal prism to ensure adequate water circulation and to keep the mouth of the river open.
3. The existing fairgrounds and parking shall be enhanced with landscaping and the sensitive habitat areas shall be buffered from fairgrounds activity. Activities of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Agricultural District shall not encroach into open space areas.
4. Development adjacent to the lagoon should be designed to avoid sedimentation, erosion or other potential impacts that degrade the quality of the water resources, and should preserve existing public views. The following measures to reduce grading impacts should be utilized where appropriate: minimize grading during the rainy season, install sediment basins and/or energy dissipating structures, and ensure revegetation and stabilization of slopes before the onset of the rainy season. To reduce visual impacts, development should be low-profile and screened from view by landscaped buffers.
5. Within the 100-year floodplain fringe of the San Dieguito River, fill for roads and other public improvements and/or permanent structures will be allowed only if such development is consistent with uses allowed pursuant to the A-1-10 Zone and other existing zoning, is capable of withstanding periodic flooding, and does not require the construction of offsite flood protective works. The following requirements shall also be met:
  - Existing environmentally sensitive habitat areas will not be significantly affected, and, that as a condition of development, significant new riparian corridors will be planted and maintained to function as enhanced wildlife corridors.
  - The design of the development incorporates the findings and recommendations of both a site-specific and coastal watershed hydrologic study in order that the development either assures that there will be no increase in the peak runoff rate from the fully developed site, and neither significantly increase nor contributes to downstream bank erosion and sedimentation, including wetlands, lagoons, and other environmentally sensitive habitat areas.
  - There will be no significant adverse water quality impacts to downstream wetland, lagoon and other environmentally sensitive habitat areas.
6. Protect, preserve and enhance the variety of natural features within the San Dieguito River Valley including the floodplain, the open waters of the lagoon and river, wetlands, marshlands and uplands.
7. Maintain and enhance the experience of nature within the lagoon by screening present conflicting uses, prohibiting future conflicting uses, retaining natural areas and promoting an expanded water body within the lagoon.

## **Crest Canyon**

Crest Canyon is composed of 134 acres of open space and ten acres of land dedicated by ordinance as a neighborhood park. It extends north from Del Mar Heights Road to San Dieguito Valley and includes native Coastal Sage Scrub, Torrey Pines Woodland, sandstone cliffs, and steep slopes.

1. The neighborhood park portion of Crest Canyon shall have limited development on the 1.5+ acres of semi-level land adjacent to view points, benches, trail heads, information signs and decomposed granite trails except where disabled access is viable.

The open space portion of the canyon shall be preserved. Limited public access shall be provided by defined trails under standards established for the preservation of biologically sensitive plants and wildlife.

2. Design of dwelling units adjacent to State Reserve Extension and Crest Canyon shall stress a blending of architecture with the natural terrain. Architectural shapes, bulk, materials, and landscaping should be carefully chosen to respect the physical constraints of the land.

## **Torrey Pines State Reserve Extension**

The Torrey Pines Reserve Extension includes over 180 acres of undeveloped property containing high quality Torrey Pines woodland habitat. The Reserve is an extension of Torrey Pines State Park, and is owned by and under the jurisdiction of the State of California Park and Recreation Department.



Residential development along the rim of the Reserve Extension represents the most significant encroachment problem, creating both visual and erosion impacts.

1. New development, both public and private, shall not encroach into or negatively impact the Reserve Extension. Adequate buffer areas and appropriate landscaped screening shall be provided and maintained between development and the Reserve Extension to avoid significant visual and erosion impacts from construction.
2. Both wildlife corridors (Portofino and Via Mar Valle) shall be preserved and enhanced to provide appropriate wildlife linkage to Los Peñasquitos Lagoon.
3. Future development adjacent to the Torrey Pines Reserve Extension area shall provide for adequate buffer areas. Development proposals shall provide adequate setbacks to avoid significant erosion, visual, or sediment impacts from construction. Setbacks also shall be provided to prevent the necessity of firebreaks being constructed on reserve property.
4. Landscaping of properties adjacent to the Extension shall not use invasive plant species. Landscaping adjacent to this area should use plant species naturally occurring in that area.

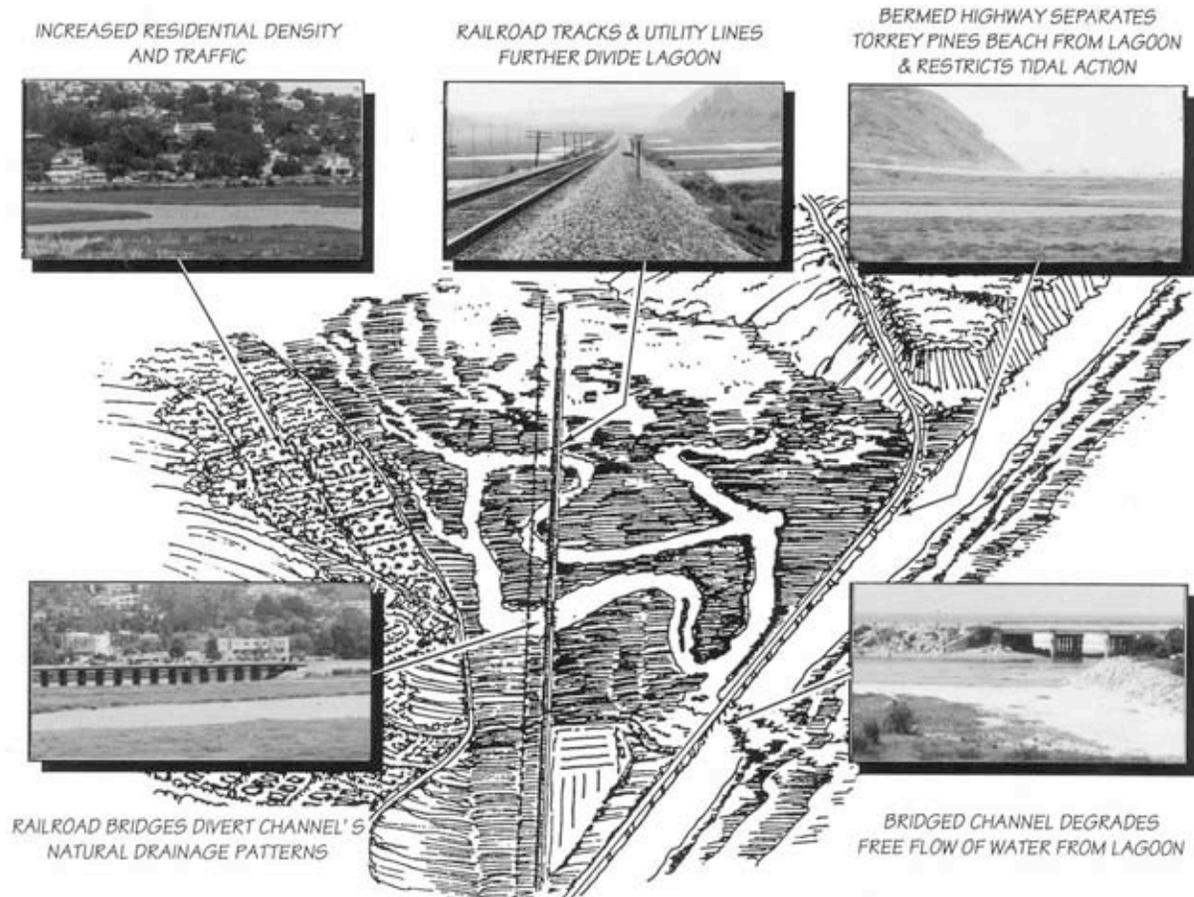
### **Los Peñasquitos Lagoon**

Los Peñasquitos Lagoon is one of the few remaining tidal estuaries in Southern California and is particularly important among San Diego County's estuaries because of its proximity to the Torrey Pines State Reserve and Beach. The lagoon and associated upland serves as a major stopping point for migratory birds and also has a large residential bird population. Los Peñasquitos Lagoon is a good example of the unique biological community of plants associated with the transition zone between marine and fresh water environment.

The reserve extension is isolated from Torrey Pines State Park, is surrounded on all sides by residential development, and is linked inadequately to Los Peñasquitos Lagoon through two corridors. One corridor links the southeast portion of the reserve to the lagoon by traversing Portofino Drive and Carmel Valley Road, and the other is in the southwest portion of the reserve just south of Via Mar Valle.

In the past sixty years, Los Peñasquitos Lagoon has evolved from a tidal estuary to a lagoon that is closed to tidal action for long periods of time. The major factors degrading the lagoon have been: 1) The construction of a railroad embankment that cut off lagoon channels; 2) The construction of North Torrey Pines Road and bridge along the barrier beach that restricted the location of the lagoon mouth; 3) Construction of the north beach parking lot in historic tidal areas; 4) Increased sediment from changing land uses upstream, and; 5) Decreased water quality from urban runoff and sewage effluent.

## Los Peñasquitos Lagoon Impacts



The Plan concurs with the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon Enhancement Plan and Program, which has been developed to provide the measures necessary for restoring and enhancing the environmental qualities of the lagoon, including:

1. Development of new public facility and utility projects that traverse or impact Los Peñasquitos Lagoon should either be rerouted out of the lagoon, or be designed to minimize or eliminate impacts to the lagoon. Mitigation for these projects should include restoration and enhancement to the lagoon.
2. Any future improvements to the railroad, roads or utilities traversing Los Peñasquitos Lagoon shall be designed to enhance the health and ecological value of the lagoon, as recommended in the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon Enhancement Plan and Program.
3. Any improvements to roadways adjacent to or bordering the lagoon (Carmel Valley Road, Sorrento Valley Road, North Torrey Pines Road) shall not encroach within the wetland area of the lagoon, unless specifically authorized herein.
4. All wetland/wildlife corridor links to the lagoon including the links from Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, Carroll Canyon and the Torrey Pines Reserve Extension area shall be enhanced and protected.

5. Plans for future removal or rerouting of the electrical utility lines that transect Los Peñasquitos Lagoon shall be given high priority.
6. Public access and educational opportunities shall be provided consistent with resource protection.
7. The lagoon mouth shall be opened regularly (or as recommended in the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon Restoration and Enhancement Plan) to enhance the health and ecological value of the lagoon.
8. Erosion and siltation control measures shall be required for all developments proposed within the total watershed of Los Peñasquitos Lagoon.
9. Any future changes in the design of the North Torrey Pines Road and bridge shall be designed such that the ecosystem of the lagoon is maintained and, if possible, enhanced.
10. Applicants for coastal development permits for projects located in the watershed of Los Peñasquitos Lagoon shall, in addition to meeting all other requirements, enter into an agreement with the City of San Diego and the State Coastal Conservancy as a condition of development approval to pay a Los Peñasquitos watershed restoration and enhancement fee to the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon Fund for restoration of the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon and watershed.

### **Carroll Canyon Wetland/Wildlife Corridor**

This open space corridor runs the length of Sorrento Valley and provides an important linkage between Carroll Canyon and Los Peñasquitos Lagoon. The majority of this corridor is privately owned and consists primarily of wetlands containing riparian vegetation. Some portions of this corridor have been channelized and most of it has experienced urban encroachment. However, this area continues to support riparian habitat and provides a significant linkage for many plant and animal species between two significant open space resource areas.

1. All new development proposed adjacent to this open space corridor shall incorporate the urban design guidelines located within the **Industrial Element** as appropriate.
2. New development proposed adjacent to this open space corridor shall not contribute to increased sediment loading of the wetland, disturbance of its habitat values, or otherwise impair the functional capacity of the wetland.
3. New development proposed adjacent to and impacting this open space corridor shall enhance and improve the habitat value of this system.
4. All mature trees and other significant existing vegetation in this system shall be protected, including the riparian habitat located in the existing concrete-lined channels.

5. All new development proposed adjacent to this corridor shall submit a pedestrian/bicycle pathway plan, indicating the construction of their portion of the pathway consistent with the community-wide pathway system and the industrial development design guidelines contained in the **Industrial Element**.
6. Within the 100-year floodplain fringe of Sorrento Valley, fill for roads, public improvements, or other permanent structures will only be allowed if it can be shown that all of the following will be met:
  - a. Existing environmentally sensitive habitat areas will not be significantly adversely affected.
  - b. Increased erodible flood flow velocities will not occur.
  - c. Areas to be filled do not create unplanned detention/siltation.
  - d. Any loss or degrading of existing wildlife habitat areas will be appropriately mitigated.
  - e. Increases in post-construction runoff and sediment above the ten-year storm frequency preconstruction condition, will be mitigated.
  - f. Appropriate upstream national pollution discharge elimination system criteria will be implemented to maintain the water quality of the downstream wetlands.
  - g. If existing sensitive environmental areas are affected, then suitable mitigation will be provided.

### **Brush Management**

Because of the abundance of natural open space areas including canyons rich with native vegetation, special brush management consideration and enforcement should be provided within the Torrey Pines planning area.

Currently all development within Torrey Pines must comply with the Uniform Fire Code and Section 6 (Brush Management) of the City of San Diego's Landscape Technical Manual. In summary, these codes state that brush or native vegetative growth on steep slopes must be controlled to protect existing and proposed structures from fire hazards.

The Torrey Pines community includes numerous publicly-owned open space areas containing biologically sensitive wildlife and vegetation. In most cases, the vegetation provides the very basis for the biological community that exists within these public areas. Removal or disturbance of vegetation to reduce wildfire potential can be ecologically disruptive. In order to protect these sensitive areas, resource management policies of the City of San Diego and the State of California discourage the removal of vegetation for wildfire reduction within public parkland when it becomes ecologically disruptive.

Ecologically beneficial methods to reduce wildfire potential in public parklands do exist. Prescribed fire, which mimics a natural process, is an example of an ecological, efficient and effective means of reducing wildfire danger. Alternatives that balance the needs for resource management with public safety should continue to be explored through the cooperative efforts of the citizens and responsible public agencies.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

The specific proposals and design guidelines for development adjacent to environmentally sensitive areas currently can only be implemented through the discretionary review process. The update to the City's zoning code should establish new zones that provide adequate development regulations to protect the City's sensitive environmental resources.

**Appendix E** of this Plan contains additional land use policies developed by the City of San Diego and approved by the Coastal Commission that are incorporated into this Plan and which apply to all development located in the coastal zone.

In order to implement the open space recommendations of this plan, all properties designated open space and recommended to be preserved as open space shall be rezoned to the appropriate Open Space (OS) Zone (see **Figure 25** in the **Appendix**).

Several properties within the planning area are designated but not zoned open space. Most of these areas are privately owned, and contain some limited sensitive cultural or biologically sensitive resources. These areas and all areas covered by this Plan should be allowed to develop in compliance with the underlying zone as well as all applicable resource protection regulations such as the Sensitive Coastal Resource Zone, Hillside Review, Coastal Regulations, Archaeology/Paleontology Regulations, Flood Plain and Floodway Ordinances, etc.

## ACTION PLAN

Implementation Measures	Timing	Responsibility for Implementation	Source of Funding
Reduce or eliminate impacts to environmentally sensitive areas.	During review and analysis of project	Planning Department, Coastal Commission	Project Applicant
Create/implement restoration and enhancement plans for those areas impacted by new development.	Add as condition at time of project approval	Planning Department, Coastal Commission	Project Applicant
The design of transportation improvements shall minimize or eliminate impacts to Los Peñasquitos Lagoon.	During preliminary design stage	The Preliminary Engineering Section of the Engineering & Development Department	City of San Diego, CIP and/or FBA
Implement runoff and erosion control measures to reduce siltation in Los Peñasquitos Lagoon.	Erosion control plans to be submitted with project.	Planning Department, Coastal Commission	Project Applicant
Where feasible, remove or reroute public utilities from within Los Peñasquitos Lagoon.	At time of utility improvements or replacement	SDG&E, Water Utilities	SDG&E, City of San Diego
Preserve significant Torrey Pine trees on public property.	Immediately	City of San Diego, State of California	City of San Diego, State of California
Preserve those wildlife corridors that link Los Peñasquitos Lagoon with Torrey Pines State Reserve Extension and the Carroll Creek Canyon Corridor.	Adoption of this Plan which designates and rezones these areas as Open Space	Planning Department, City Council, Coastal Commission	State of California
Open mouth of Los Peñasquitos Lagoon to enhance the ecological value of the lagoon.	Regularly, as recommended in the Los Peñasquitos Restoration and Enhancement Plan	City of San Diego	State of California
Seek alternative funding sources to provide for the sensitive design of public utility and facility projects adjacent to sensitive environmental areas.	Immediately	The Preliminary Engineering Section of the Engineering & Development Department	City of San Diego
Enhance and protect San Dieguito Lagoon.	Immediately	Adjacent Public Jurisdiction	Public
Preserve those wildlife corridors that link Los Peñasquitos Lagoon with Torrey Pines State Reserve Extension and the Carroll Creek Corridor.	Adoption of this Plan which designates and rezones these areas as Open Space	Planning Department, City Council, Coastal Commission	City of San Diego
Open mouth of Los Peñasquitos Lagoon to enhance the ecological value of the lagoon.	Regularly, as recommended in the Los Peñasquitos Restoration and Enhancement Plan	City of San Diego	City of San Diego

**ACTION PLAN (continued)**

<b>Implementation Measures</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Responsibility for Implementation</b>	<b>Source of Funding</b>
Seek alternative funding sources to provide for the sensitive design of public utility and facility projects adjacent to sensitive environmental areas.	Immediately	The Preliminary Engineering Section of the Engineering & Development Department	City of San Diego
Enhance and protect San Dieguito Lagoon.	Immediately	Adjacent Public Jurisdiction	Public