

MSCP South County Subarea Plan Highlights

Preserve Acquisitions



California Gnatcatcher

In 2017, two properties were acquired within the South County MSCP Preserve. The 69-acre property adjacent to existing County conserved lands (known as the San Vicente Connection) is located east of State Route 67 and consists of coastal sage scrub and oak woodland habitat. The 173-acre Dictionary Hill Preserve is located in Spring Valley and consists primarily of key coastal California gnatcatcher supporting coastal sage scrub habitat.

Land Stewardship

Comprehensive management and stewardship activities take place on all County land. In 2017, activities included invasive plant species treatment, unauthorized access control, trail rehabilitation, erosion control, replacement of dead trees, and fuel-load management activities. Educational outreach is also a critical component of land stewardship as visitors are made aware of the incredible diversity of San Diego County's plant and animal species and how to protect them for future generations via actions that can take place both on conserved lands and at home.

Biological Monitoring

Biological monitoring is a critical element in properly managing the County's open space lands. Threat assessments, habitat conditions and the presence of sensitive species are all identified during these surveys. Results help DPR respond quickly to any threats that may be affecting sensitive species, in addition to identifying when site conditions have changed, and management methods should be modified.

In 2017, tricolored blackbird and San Diego fairy shrimp surveys were conducted on Ramona Grasslands Preserve. Rare plant surveys for species, including San Diego thornmint and Encinitas baccharis, were completed on five County Preserves in 2017. The results of the surveys for San Diego thornmint on Sycamore Canyon/Goodan Ranch Preserve were used to develop a Weed Management Plan to address the threat of invasive, non-native plant species that are impacting this MSCP covered species.



San Diego Thornmint

Habitat Restoration and Enhancement

The County actively seeks grants to assist with stewardship activities that include habitat restoration, invasive non-native plant species management, and access control for County open space lands.

In 2017, two grants were awarded, with work slated to begin in 2018. The Natural Community Conservation Planning Local Assistance Grant will expand on current Quino checkerspot habitat restoration efforts in Otay. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife Watershed Restoration Grant Program Proposition 1 grant will complete critical planning efforts to restore the hydrology of the Tijuana River and habitat functions.



Tijuana River Valley Regional Park

Restoration efforts continued or started in 2017 from grants awarded during previous years – including the Tijuana River Valley Regional Park habitat restoration project along the Tijuana River. Restoration efforts, funded by the California River Parkways Grant Program, to treat invasive, non-native tamarisk and ice plant species, plant native plant species, and install a temporary irrigation system were completed.

Partnerships and Research

We grow our knowledge base on diverse biological habitats, plants and animals every year by encouraging research and partnering with universities, agencies, organizations, and other entities. Findings assist the County in identifying new biological threats that have the potential to impact sensitive on-site resources, as well as determine which management methods are appropriate for various habitats and situations.

In 2017, a few of the partners conducting research on multiple County properties included USGS monitoring the presence of coastal California gnatcatcher, the Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association examining the spread of the Kuroshio shot hole borer and best management practices for its prevention and eradication, and the San Diego State University Research Foundation studying the distribution of the Hermes copper butterfly, Harbison's dun skipper, and blister beetle.

North County and East County MSCP Plan Areas

County Owned Open Space Land in all 3 MSCP Plan Areas, as of Dec. 31, 2017	
South County	12,200
North County	11,800
East County	14,500
Total	38,500


The County continues its efforts with open space preservation in the entire County, not just within the South County MSCP Subarea Plan. In 2000, the County and Wildlife Agencies agreed to proceed with a draft North County MSCP Plan and future East County MSCP Plan. The draft North County Plan is currently under development, and the East County Plan will be developed in the future.



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20TH ANNIVERSARY

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

2017 MSCP AND PRESERVE LANDS STATUS REPORT



San Diego County MSCP History



Burrowing Owl

The Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) was envisioned to create the largest urban preserve in the country. In 1997, the County of San Diego (County), along with 11 other jurisdictions, developed the MSCP together with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Wildlife Agencies), and community stakeholders. As part of the MSCP, the MSCP South County Subarea Plan (South County MSCP) was established in 1997 between the County and Wildlife Agencies covering unincorporated County lands.

Benefits

This 50-year agreement preserves, protects and connects the most valuable biological habitats while allowing development to occur in less sensitive areas. While protecting sensitive biological habitats, the South County MSCP also allows for passive recreation/trail opportunities in select areas. Visitors learn about the vital role of conservation through a variety of environmental education activities that foster connections with nature.

2017 Key Accomplishments

Land Acquisition Highlights

- Two properties, totaling 242 acres, were acquired within the South County MSCP to protect coastal sage scrub, oak woodland and chaparral habitats

- The County, the Wildlife Agencies and private conservation partners have assembled 77,862 acres (79%) of the proposed 98,379-acre South County MSCP Preserve

Habitat Restoration Highlights



Coastal Cactus Wren

- Otay River Valley: Coastal cactus wren habitat restoration and protection efforts included treatment of invasive, non-native plant species, native plant species seed collection for future redistribution, and fencing to protect the restoration areas
- Otay Valley Regional Park: Threat reduction efforts to protect a Quino checkerspot butterfly population at the park included invasive, non-native plant species removal, preventing unauthorized off-road activity with fencing and signage, and biological monitoring
- Furby North Property: Fencing and signage was installed to prevent unauthorized access and protect sensitive vegetation communities, including maritime succulent scrub, Diegan Coastal sage scrub and vernal pools
- Tijuana River Valley Regional Park: Habitat restoration efforts along the Tijuana River included treating and removing invasive, non-native plant species and planting native plant species to improve the riparian corridor habitat

Research Highlights

- United States Geological Survey (USGS) began a 2-year study to determine the presence of American badgers on multiple open space properties owned and managed by the County
- San Diego State University continued to study the biology, distribution and threats to the Hermes copper butterfly, Harbison's dun skipper, and blister beetle on multiple County open space properties



Sycamore Canyon/Goodan Ranch County Preserve

County of San Diego Parks Open Spaces

The County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) owns more than 50,000 acres of land, 38,500 of which are open space land – often added through new land acquisitions. These properties are regularly maintained, managed and monitored, and habitat restoration and enhancement projects are continually implemented and completed by the County. Conservation research is also conducted on open space lands by County partners.

