

Sage Hill Preserve Public Access Plan County of San Diego

Prepared for

**County of San Diego
Department of Parks and Recreation
9150 Chesapeake Drive, Suite 200
San Diego, California 92123**

Contact: Ms. Jennifer Haines

Prepared by



**Ecological
Conservation
& Management, Inc.**

6755 Mira Mesa Blvd, Suite 123413
San Diego, California 92121
858.842.7345

Contact: Tito Marchant

AECOM

9675 Businesspark Avenue
San Diego, California 92131
858.536.5610

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Appendix A PUBLIC USE ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) acquired the 234-acre Sage Hill Preserve (Preserve) in early 2009. The property is included in the proposed North County MSCP preserve system and consists of very high habitat value, as well as areas that have been marginally impacted by human activities (e.g., unofficial trail systems). The County is preparing a Resource Management Plan (RMP) that includes Area Specific Management Directives (ASMDs) for management of the Preserve. This Public Access Plan is intended to provide site specifics in regards to non-motorized multi-use trails, view points, access, and interpretive opportunities to assist DPR in developing the RMP.

1.1 Purpose of the Public Access Plan

The purpose of the Public Access Plan (Plan) is to identify the opportunities and constraints associated with public access and passive recreation within the Preserve. This analysis will be used to identify the most appropriate locations for access, trails, scenic experiences, educational signage and other associated facilities.

The Preserve will provide a setting for the public to experience the outdoors including both natural and cultural resources. Recreational opportunities will include walking, hiking, biking, horseback riding, and nature viewing. The Preserve is expected to enhance the quality of life both locally and regionally. With proper planning, natural resources and recreational opportunities can be sustained over the long term.

1.2 Background

This Plan is consistent with the San Diego County General Plan, DPR Strategic Plan, Community Trails Master Plan (CTMP), and the North County Multiple Species Conservation Program (North County MSCP). Goals and objectives from these plans are described below.

1.2.1 County Goals and Guidelines

County specific goals and guidelines used to guide the development of this Plan can be found in the San Diego County General Plan. Specifically, the Recreation and Public Facility Elements goals include providing a system of outdoor recreation facilities and trails to serve the needs of the community while preserving natural areas. The Preserve is located within the specific San Dieguito Community Plan. Additionally, the overall goal or mission of DPR is to provide opportunities for high quality parks and recreation experiences and to preserve regionally significant natural and cultural resources. DPR oversees the County Trails Program, which has developed the CTMP as the implementing document for the trails program. The purpose of the CTMP is to guide trail development and management in the unincorporated County. Countywide aspects of the CTMP include guidelines regarding trail planning and design, management, and implementation strategies. To this end, this Plan provides recommendations, which are meant to guide future public access and recreational use of the Preserve consistent with these goals and guidelines.

1.2.2 MSCP Goals and Guidelines

Underlying goals of the North County MSCP address both biological and social factors. The North County MSCP seeks to preserve ecosystem functions and values, maintain the range of natural biological communities and native species, and contribute to the recovery of sensitive species; and to protect the quality of life for residents and visitors by maintaining the scenic beauty, natural biodiversity, cultural resources, and recreational opportunities (County of San Diego 2009).

Appendix G of the North County MSCP, the Framework Resource Management Plan (FRMP), provides management guidelines for MSCP preserve areas. Per the FRMP, any new uses (i.e., new trails or recreational facilities) will not begin until baseline biological and management needs surveys have been conducted, including an inventory of existing trails. AECOM conducted these required baseline surveys at the Preserve in 2009 (AECOM 2010). The recommendations provided in this plan are consistent with the FRMP management guidelines regarding: siting criteria; recreation and public access; erosion control; fencing, signs, and lighting.

2.0 REGIONAL AND LOCAL SETTING

2.1 Preserve Location

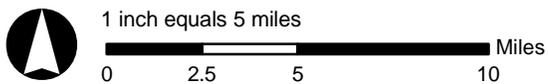
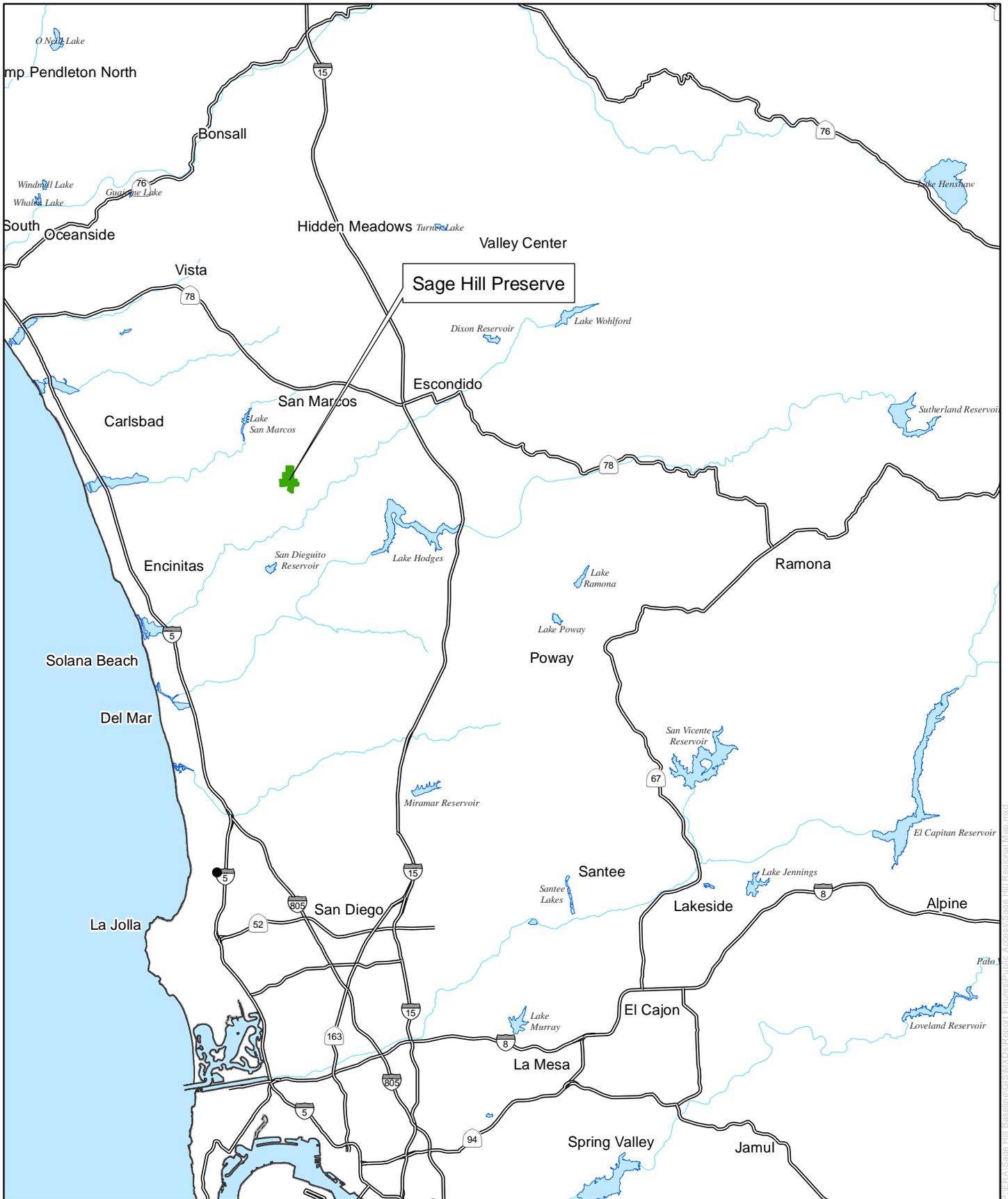
The Preserve is located in the community of Elfin Forest within unincorporated San Diego County between Fortuna del Norte and Carib Drive on the west, Questhaven Road on the north, Aguilera Lane on the east and Elfin Forest Road on the south (Figures 1 and 2). The Preserve is mapped in the Rancho Santa Fe USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle map at Township 12 South, Range 3 West, Section 34. The Preserve consists of assessor's parcel numbers 679-060-04, 679-060-06, 679-060-07, 679-080-10, 679-080-11, 679-100-01, 679-100-02, 679-100-03, 679-100-04, and 679-100-06.

2.1.1 Service Area Description

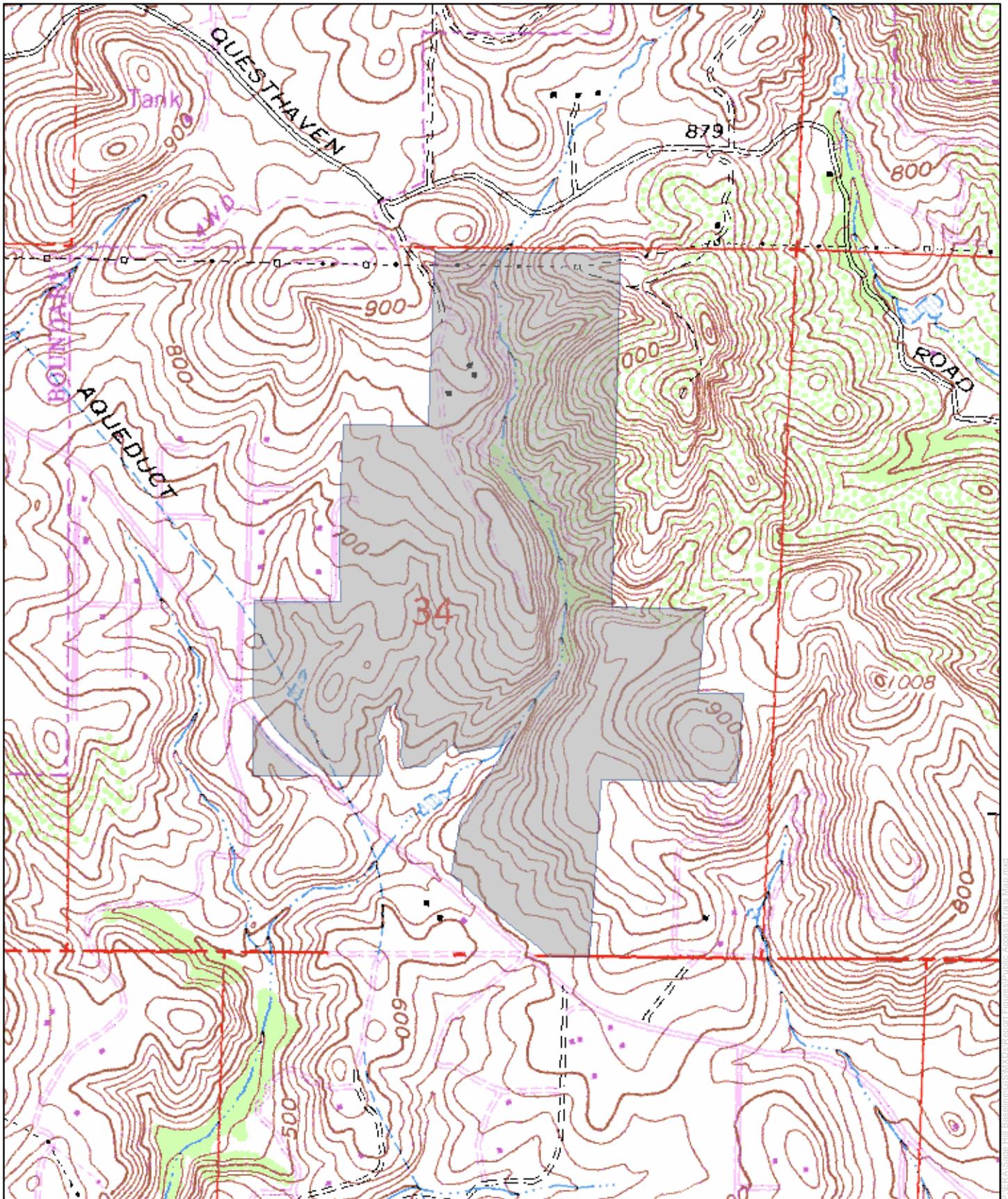
The Preserve is currently used by the local residents of the Elfin Forest community. The primary uses are; hiking, biking, running, and horseback riding. A community trail runs along Elfin Forest Road at the southern border of the Preserve. This trail serves as a connection from the neighborhood to the Preserve for local equestrians. It is expected that the Preserve will continue to be used primarily by surrounding residents.

2.2 Environmental Setting

The Preserve is located in the Peninsular Geomorphic Range, in the coastal foothills of western San Diego County, approximately 7.4 miles east of the Pacific Ocean. The Preserve's terrain contains primarily of moderate to steep slopes with some flat terrain along the top of the ridgelines. The elevation change is approximately 400 feet, ranging from 590 feet above mean sea level (MSL) near the southern edge of the preserve to 990 feet above MSL on the eastern edge (Figure 2). A canyon with a small, unnamed perennial stream bisects the Preserve from north to south (Figure 2).



Sage Hill Regional Map



Source: USGS (Rancho Santa Fe Quad), County of San Diego



Sage Hill USGS Vicinity Map

The Preserve is composed primarily of scrub and chaparral vegetation communities with smaller pockets of riparian forest, and marsh habitats. These vegetation communities are dominated by native plant species and are considered to be high quality habitat for local wildlife. The remainder of the Preserve is composed of non-native grasslands and disturbed habitat which includes the existing roads and trails found throughout the Preserve.

The Preserve is included in the North County MSCP preserve system and consists of valuable native habitats containing sensitive species, as well as areas that have been marginally impacted by human activities, such as unofficial trail systems, foundations of former buildings, former agricultural fields, and recreational use (Figure 1). The County of San Diego acquired the Preserve in February 23, 2009 and the Preserve is designated as a Pre-Approved Mitigation Area. It should be noted that the North County MSCP has not been approved by the resource agencies (California Department of Fish and Game and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) and is currently in draft form. A key feature of the North County MSCP is the focus of proposed conservation areas that are identified in the plan as pre-approved mitigation areas (PAMA). As proposed 80% of the natural habitats within the North County MSCP planning area are proposed for conservation.

2.3 Land Use

2.3.1 On-Site Land Use

The Preserve is currently not open to the public; however, adjacent land owners access the existing dirt roads within the property. Access to the Preserve occurs from several unofficial trail heads including: on the southern edge, along Elfin Forest Road; the western edge, along Carib Drive; and the northern edge, at Questhaven Road. A small dirt lot located at the southern border of the Preserve along Elfin Forest Road serves as the unofficial on-site parking and staging area. Current trail users include hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians.

2.3.2 Adjacent Properties

The land surrounding the Preserve is entirely private property consisting of single-family residential development along the southern, western, and northern edges. However; open space land is located directly east of the Preserve and is dominated by high quality scrub and chaparral vegetation communities.

2.4 Trails

2.4.1 Site Access

Access to the Preserve currently at six unofficial locations: two points along the southern Preserve border, along Elfin Forest Road; two locations on the western edge, along Carib Drive; one on Fortuna del Norte and one location at the northern Preserve boundary, at Questhaven Road (Figure 3).

Gates have been installed at the northern and western access locations to deter access at these points. In addition, fencing has been installed at the southern edge of the Preserve to prevent unauthorized motor vehicle access.

2.4.2 Existing Trails

The Preserve currently contains approximately 5 ½ miles of dirt roads and trails that traverse a large portion of the Preserve (Figure 3). The existing dirt roads range in width from six feet to fourteen feet. The single-track footpaths are approximately two feet wide. Existing dirt roads and trails run through the following habitats: non-native grassland; Diegan coastal sage scrub; southern maritime chaparral; coastal sage-chaparral scrub; coastal and valley freshwater marsh; and the understory of southern coast live oak riparian forest. The existing trail system provides access to the majority of the Preserve, through-trails between access points, as well as loop trails for all existing access points. There is however some redundancy between dirt roads and single-track footpaths that are addressed in the trail analysis in Section 4.0 below. Additionally, a community hiking and equestrian trail runs along the southwest boundary of the Preserve along Elfin Forest Road. This community trail provides access to the Preserve at two access points along Elfin Forest Road (Figure 3).

3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

3.1 Biological Resources

Vegetation on the Preserve is dominated by two vegetation communities: Diegan coastal sage scrub and southern maritime chaparral. The remainder is composed of six other vegetation types, including freshwater marsh, coastal sage-chaparral scrub, and southern coast live oak riparian forest. Non-native species dominate the non-native grassland, which occurs primarily as fuel modification zones along the outer edges of the Preserve; disturbed habitat, which includes the existing dirt roads and trails and an old agricultural area; and a tamarisk thicket (“tamarisk scrub”). Vegetation communities have been mapped and are thoroughly analyzed in the Baseline Biological Survey Report for the Preserve (AECOM 2009) (Figure 4).

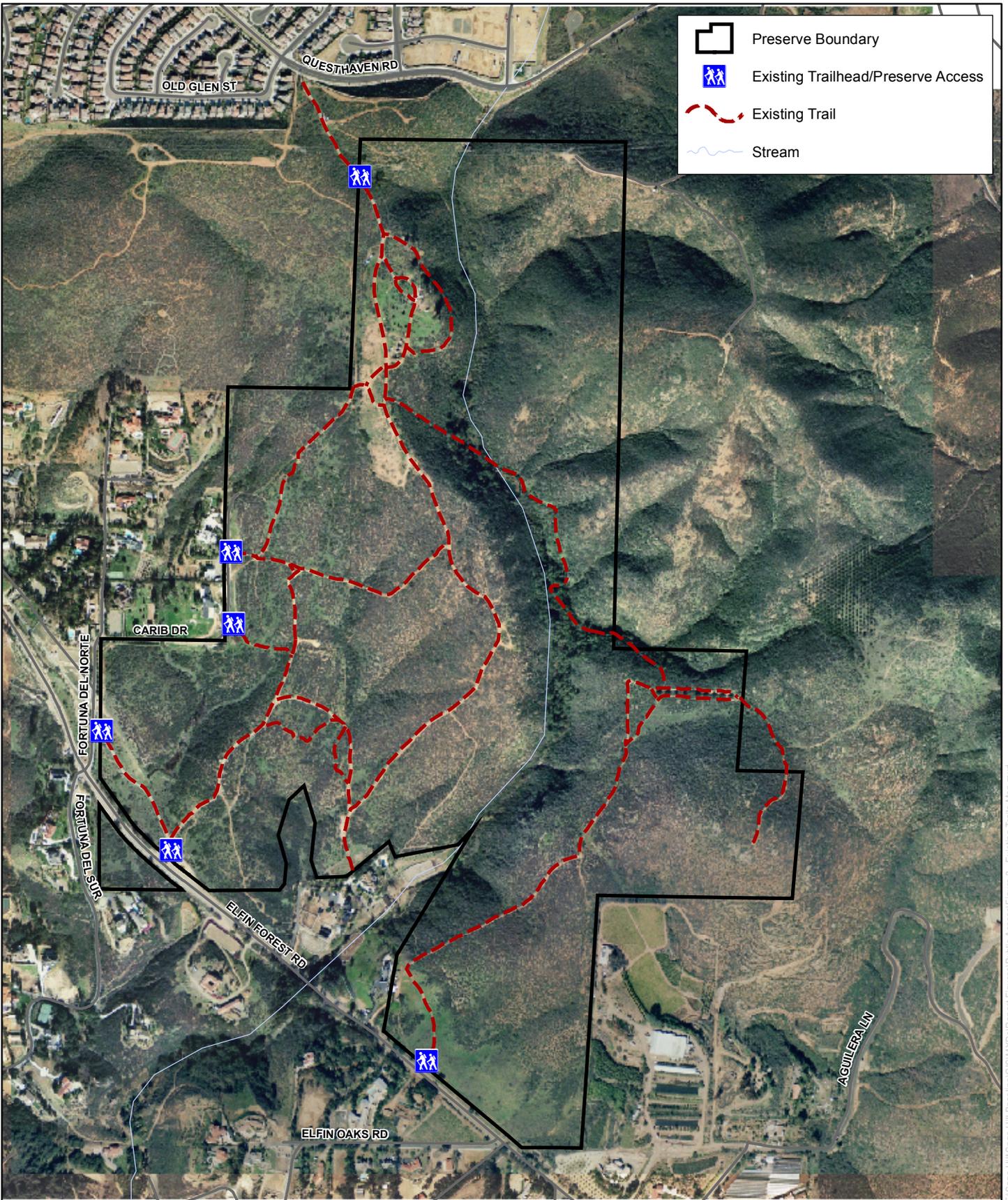
Thirteen (13) sensitive plant and wildlife species were recorded onsite. Three (3) sensitive plant species were found at the Preserve including: summer holly (*Comarostaphylis diversifolia* ssp. *diversifolia*) and wart-stemmed ceanothus (*Ceanothus verrucosus*), which are both North County MSCP covered species, and Palmer’s sagewort (*Artemisia palmeri*). Sensitive plant species were found as scattered individuals, in patches, and dominants of the southern maritime chaparral (Figure 5).

Ten (10) sensitive animal species were detected on the Preserve (Table 1). The coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*), a federally threatened species and California Species of Special Concern, was present throughout the coastal sage scrub. Up to six potential territories were observed, with individuals readily crossing trails, even when people were present.

Table 1
Sensitive Animal Species Observed in Sage Hill Preserve

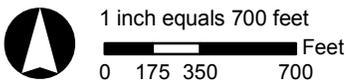
Common Name	Scientific Name	Status (Fed/State/County/MSCP)
Western Spadefoot	<i>Spea hammondi</i>	FSC/CSC/2/NCMSCP
Coast Horned Lizard	<i>Phrynosoma coronatum</i>	FSC/CSC/2/NCMSCP
Coastal California Gnatcatcher	<i>Polioptila californica californica</i>	FT/CSC/1/NCMSCP
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	<i>Aimophila ruficeps canescens</i>	FSC/CSC/1/NCMSCP
White-tailed Kite	<i>Elanus leucurus</i>	-/CFP/1
Cooper's Hawk	<i>Accipiter cooperi</i>	-/CSC/1
Dulzura California Pocket Mouse	<i>Chaetodipus californicus femoralis</i>	FSC/CSC/2
Northwestern San Diego Pocket Mouse	<i>Chaetodipus fallax fallax</i>	FSC/CSC/2
San Diego Desert Woodrat	<i>Neotoma lepida intermedia</i>	FSC/CSC/2
Yuma Myotis	<i>Myotis yumanensis</i>	FSC/CSC/2
State and Federal Listing Status		
FT Federally Threatened	CFP California Fully Protected Species	
FSC Federal Species of Concern	CSC California Species of Special Concern	
Sensitive Animals (County)		
1 Animals of high sensitivity (listed or specific natural history requirements)		
2 Animals declining, but not in immediate threat of extinction or extirpation		
NCMSCP North County MSCP Covered Species		

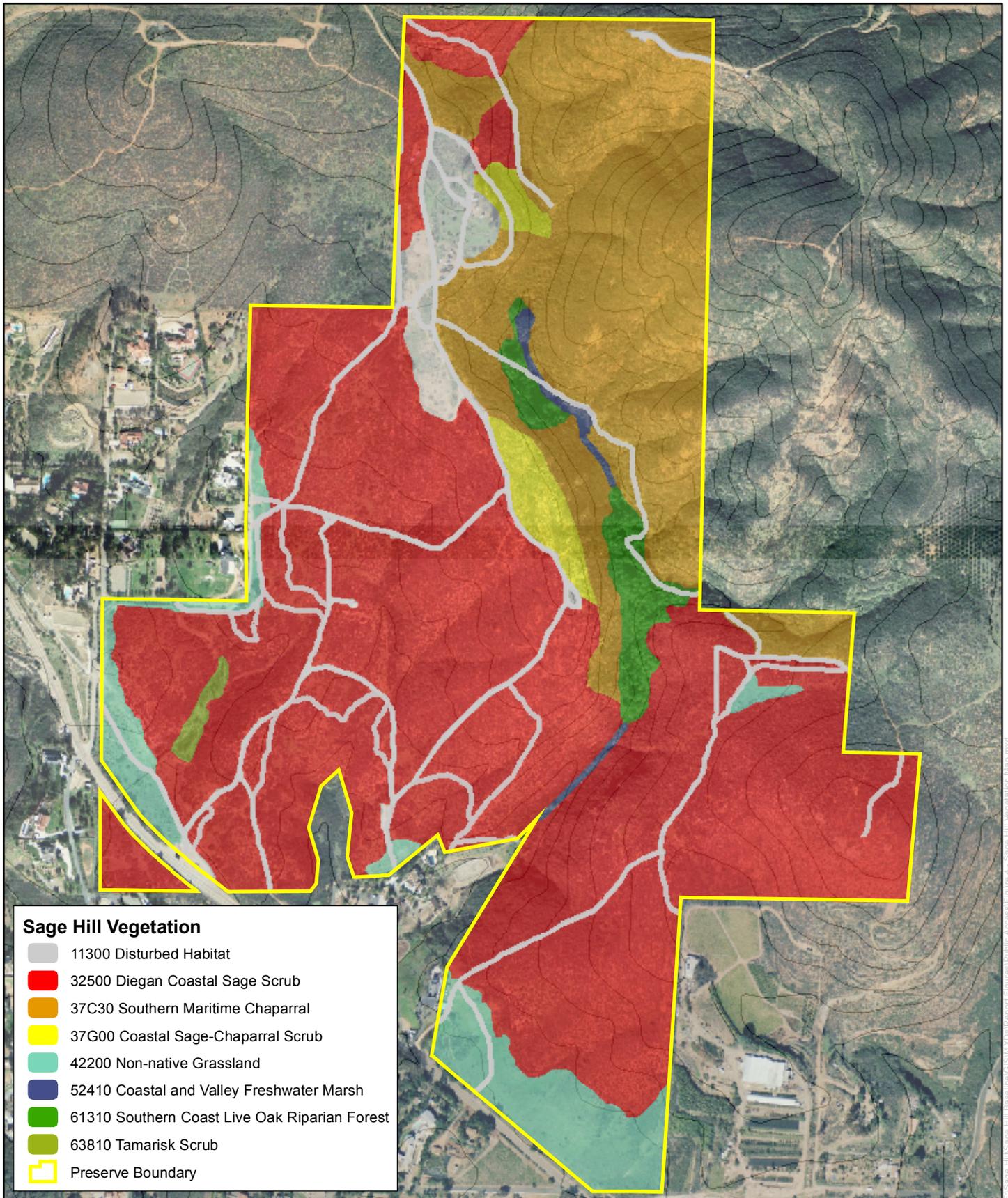
Existing Preserve trails move through a variety of vegetation communities and plant species, some of which are considered sensitive. Current public use (hiking, biking, and horseback riding) does not appear to have a significant impact on sensitive species because wildlife species were recorded using and crossing the trails. Also, several sensitive plant species occur immediately adjacent to existing trails. Public trail use would not impact these species. However, trail activities, such as maintenance, and construction or any new trail development should be conducted in a manner that would result in minimal impacts to sensitive plant and animal species.



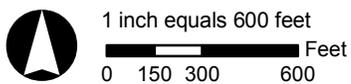
Source: AECOM (2009), County of San Diego (2008)

Sage Hill Preserve Existing Trail System and Access Points

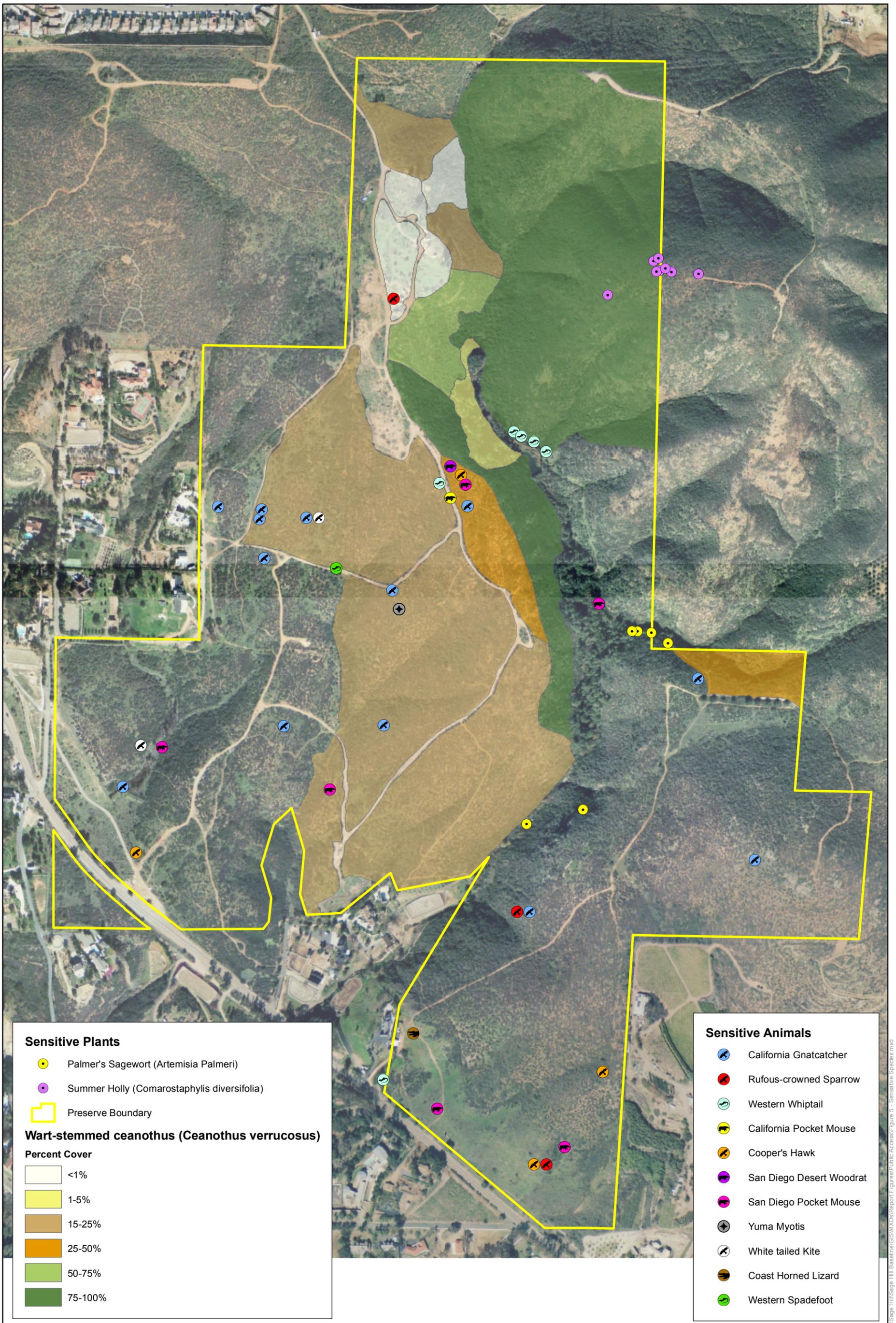




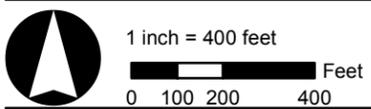
Source: AECOM (2009), County of San Diego (2008)



Sage Hill Vegetation Map



Source: AECOM (2009), ESRI (2008)



Sage Hill Preserve Sensitive Species

3.2 Cultural Resources

Twelve archaeological resources were identified within the Preserve during current survey efforts (Table 2). Several sites occur in the vicinity of existing trails including CA-SDI-4932, CA-SDI-15,354/H, CA-SDI-15,356, SH-H-7, and SH-H-8. The continued passive use of the existing trails through or near these sites is not anticipated to result in significant impacts because the use is not expected to induce erosion that could potentially expose buried sites. The remaining historic sites are based on the location of mid-century nursery, roads or aqueducts that have little or no above ground resources that could be impacted. However, should future trail maintenance activities require ground disturbance, further assessment would be required in order to assure no impacts occur to cultural resources. Similarly, if structures are proposed near the proposed Rocky Outcrop Viewpoint, CA-SDI-15,354/H would require further assessment and evaluation.

Table 2
Sage Hill Preserve Cultural Resources Recommendations

Trinomial or Primary or Temp Site#	Description	Evaluation Recommendation
CA-SDI-4496	Prehistoric site – lithic scatter/quarry/campsite	Not relocated
CA-SDI-4932	Prehistoric camp site – one milling feature, historic scatter	CEQA Significant; Avoidance and Preservation, or Treatment Plan
CA-SDI-15,353	Prehistoric camp site and milling site – four milling features	CEQA Significant; Avoidance and Preservation, or Treatment Plan
CA-SDI-15,354/H	Former historic farmstead residence location, trash scatter/trees; and prehistoric campsite location	CEQA Significant; Avoidance and Preservation, or Treatment Plan
CA-SDI-15,355	Prehistoric site – sparse lithic scatter	Not Significant
CA-SDI-15,356	Prehistoric site – sparse lithic scatter	Not Significant
SH-H-4	Mid 20 th -century nursery	Avoidance and Preservation
SH-H-5	Second San Diego Aqueduct	Avoidance and Preservation
SH-H-6	Water conveyance feature	Avoidance and Preservation
SH-H-7	Historic road alignment	Avoidance and Preservation
SH-H-8	Historic road alignment	Avoidance and Preservation

3.3 Easements

Several utility easements cross through the Preserve including San Diego Gas and Electric easements along the northern border, running east-west; and at the southwestern corner, running northwest-southeast. Olivenhain Municipal Water District and San Diego County Water Authority utility easements occur in the southwestern corner of the Preserve. These easements run parallel to each other in a northwest-southeast direction.

3.4 Topography and Soils

The Preserve consists of primarily moderate to steep slopes with some flat terrain along the top of the ridgelines. The elevation change is approximately 400 feet, ranging from 590 feet above mean sea level (amsl) near the southern edge of the Preserve to 990 feet amsl on the eastern edge. Most of the existing trail grades are appropriate for hiking, biking, and horseback riding. Trails that are considered too steep would be dangerous and promote excessive runoff and erosion. This plan includes trails recommended for closure and/or maintenance.

Preserve soils are composed of five soil series that range from moderate to very high in terms of erosion hazard. Routine maintenance will be required to maintain safe trail conditions, particularly during years that experience significant rainfall.

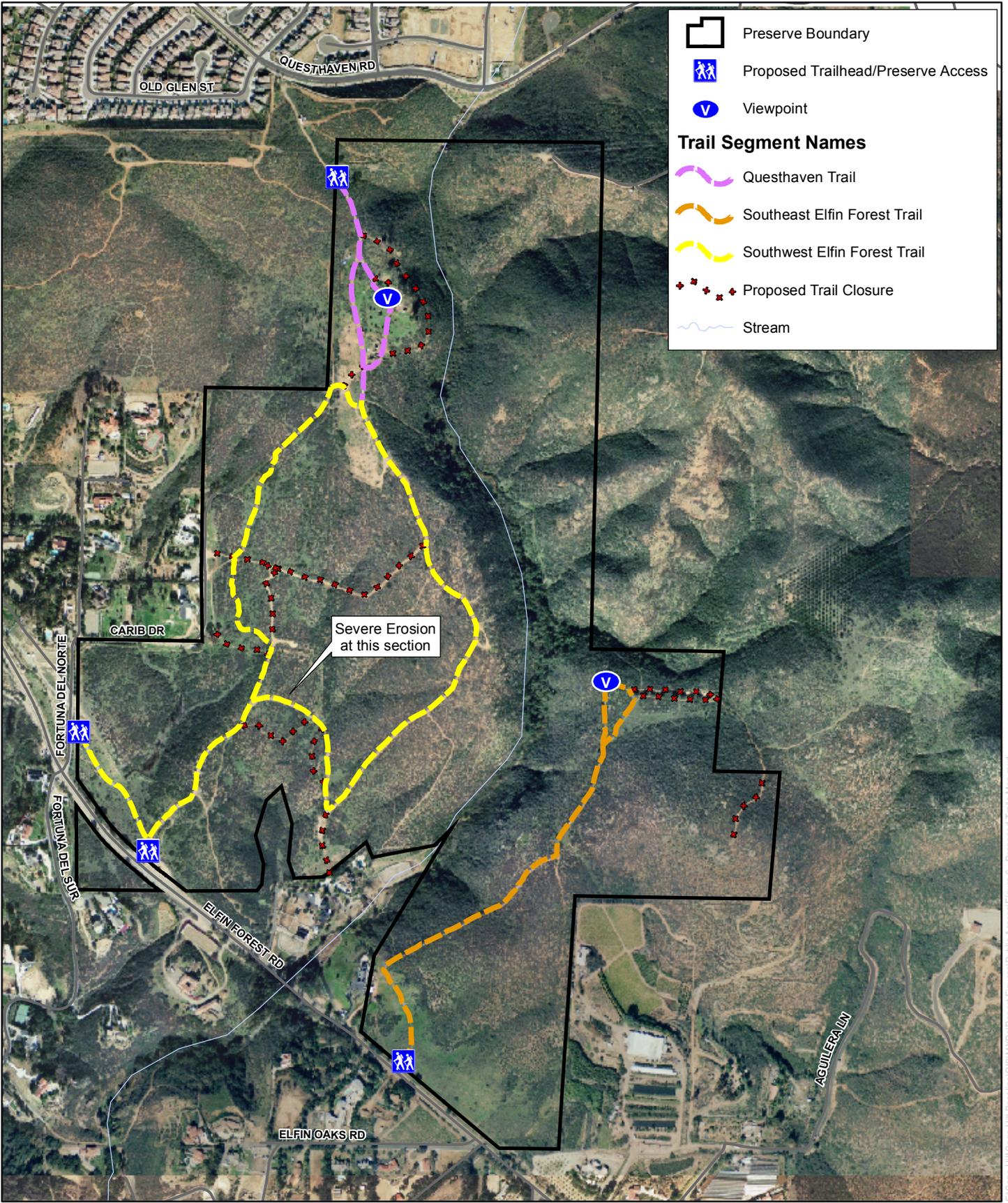
4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Fostering an appreciation of the Preserve is dependent upon providing opportunities for the public to experience the site and its many resources. A network of multi-use trails will allow visitors to explore the varied terrain, viewpoints, and natural habitats located within the Preserve.

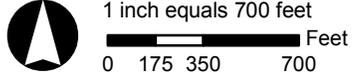
The following section outlines the Public Access Alternative 1, including trails, access points, staging areas and trail heads. This Alternative is discussed in detail because it meets the following objectives: cost effective; does not require additional environmental review/regulatory permitting; provides high number of trailheads; 2.4 miles of trails; two viewpoints; no additional structures (e.g. bridge); no additional trail easements; no impacts to biological or cultural resources; and provides adequate access for emergency personnel. Three other public access alternatives were analyzed in Appendix A which may meet all or some of the objectives met by Alternative 1. However, a preferred public access plan may combine elements of each alternative to ensure compatibility with the North County MSCP and mitigation bank requirements constraints which are not currently available. A preferred alternative will be chosen in consultation with the Wildlife Agencies.

All four of the alternatives follow existing trail alignments, as much as practicable in order to avoid new impacts to biological and cultural resources. The alternatives analysis was based on several factors including cost; requirements for additional environmental permitting; effect on biological and cultural resources; and Community Trails Master Plan (CTMP) guidelines. Figure 6 depicts Public Access Alternative 1 trail alignment. The other alternatives evaluated are included in Appendix A.

This section will discuss potential staging areas; trail alignments; destinations and viewpoints; fencing and gates; signage; and visitor safety and emergency services as they pertain to the Public Access Alternative 1.



Source: AECOM (2009), County of San Diego (2008)



Sage Hill Preserve Proposed Public Access Plan

F:\Sage Hill\Sage Hill Baseline\GIS\Map\XDS\Report\Figures\Public Access\Figure 6 - Proposed Trails Map.mxd

4.1 Trails and Access Points

Although the Preserve is not currently open to the public and there are no officially designated recreational trails, local residents have been utilizing the existing network of trails on-site. Currently, trails are being accessed from several unofficial points at north, south, and west sides of the Preserve. Existing trails range from two to sixteen feet wide and vary in grade from flat to steep. In order to provide Preserve visitors with a safe and enjoyable experience, it is necessary to establish an official trail alignment as well as designated access points.

4.1.1 Access Points, Staging Areas and Other Trailheads

Currently, there are several locations that the public is currently using to access the Preserve. Some of these access points will be closed so that access can be directed to official access points that will have appropriate amenities and will be properly maintained. Figure 6 illustrates the four proposed access point locations; one at the north end of the Preserve south of Questhaven Road, and three located along Elfin Forest Road at the southern edge of the Preserve. Gates have been installed along Carib Drive to inhibit access to the Preserve from this location, because there is no public parking option within this residential community. To the north, public parking is allowable along Questhaven Road; however, hikers must pass through two private properties along an existing dirt road utility easement approximately 600-feet in length to reach the Preserve's access point.

4.1.2 Trail Alignments and Features

Trails on the Preserve are classified under the specialty trails category as "Preserve trails" in the CTMP. This classification of trails is described as: often existing, informal trails and/or emergency service roads that can provide valuable trail experiences. "Preserve trails" should be designed to minimize impacts, but retain a high quality trail user experience. The intended recreational uses of the proposed multi-use trails are hiking, horseback riding, and mountain bike riding. These activities should only take place on designated trails.

Public Access Alternative 1 includes a trail alignment that winds through much of the Preserve and offers many viewpoints and scenic vistas; habitat diversity; interesting geological features; and water sources. The trails also vary in length and difficulty, offering a varying level of rigor for visitors to choose from (Figure 6). This alternative includes approximately 2.4 miles of trails that traverse much of the Preserve. Public Access Alternative 1 follows existing trails and does not propose any new trails. In order to reduce edge effect and potential erosion issues, several redundant trails are proposed to be closed for passive restoration (Figure 6). A majority of the trail sections are in fair shape with some mild to moderate erosion issues.

Portions of existing trails would be closed because of excessive erosion, inappropriate grade, or trail redundancy and recommended for restoration efforts where appropriate (Figures 7 and 8). One short trail section in the southern portion of the main loop is quite steep and therefore has experienced some severe erosion from recent rains (Figure 6). Soil erosion has resulted in deep ruts and rocky conditions throughout much of that trail section. This section could potentially present safety issues for Preserve visitors and therefore requires maintenance.

A description of trail user opportunities, such as viewpoints, habitats, and geologic features are outlined below. As seen in Figure 6, the trail alignment has been broken up into three segments in order to identify and describe feature locations.



Community Trail on Eastern Side of Preserve



Community Trail on Western Side of Preserve

Source: AECOM; 2009

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Eastern Trail Heading North Through Diegan Coastal Sage Scrub from Elfin Forest Road:
Southeast Elfin Forest Trail



Western Trail Heading North Through Diegan Coastal Sage Scrub from Elfin Forest Road:
Southwest Elfin Forest Trail

Source: AECOM; 2009

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Eastern Trail Heading North Through Diegan Coastal Sage Scrub Toward the Eastern Viewpoint



Oak Woodland Trail Heading North From Olive Trees Toward Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest

Source: AECOM; 2009

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Eastern Viewpoint Looking West



Eastern Viewpoint Looking South

Source: AECOM; 2009

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Eastern Viewpoint Looking East



Eastern Viewpoint Looking North

Source: AECOM; 2009

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Northwest Viewpoint Looking North



Northwest Viewpoint Looking East

Source: AECOM; 2009

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No Scale

Viewpoint Photos

AECOM

Figure 8b



Rocky Outcrop Viewpoint Looking Northwest

Source: AECOM; 2009

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No Scale

Viewpoint Photos

AECOM

Figure 8c

Southeast Elfin Forest Trail

The Southeast Elfin Forest Trail is an existing trail approximately six to eight feet wide and begins at Elfin Forest Road near Elfin Oaks Road and climbs up a moderate slope through Diegan coastal sage scrub to the Rocky Outcrop Overlook where it has a small loop. The Rocky Outcrop Overlook offers views of the live oak riparian forest in the valley below, views to the rocky outcrop geologic feature directly to the west, and outstanding Pacific Ocean views for the westerly hike back down the hill (Figure 6). The current trail extends to the north and northeast outside of the Preserve. The extension of the Southeast Elfin Forest Trail, past the Rocky Outcrop Overlook is proposed for closure. Most of this trail is in good condition and meets “Preserve trail” guidelines of the CTMP. The Elfin Forest/Harmony Grove Fire Department also requires that this trail be maintained as a potential look-out point for the Preserve and a fire break for fighting potential fires on the Preserve.

Southwest Elfin Forest Trail

The Southwest Elfin Forest Trail is the major loop component of the Public Access Alternative 1 trail alignment. It varies from approximately six to fourteen feet wide and begins in the small dirt lot along Elfin Forest Road near Fortuna Del Norte (Figure 6). The trail loops through Diegan coastal sage scrub over moderate to easy terrain, eventually connecting to the Questhaven Trail to the north. Although this trail does not offer any official viewpoints, there are several stretches of the trail where clear views of the Pacific Ocean can be viewed on a clear day.

In addition, the Diegan coastal sage scrub habitat provides good wildlife viewing and interpretive opportunities. In this portion of the Preserve, California gnatcatchers, white-tailed kite, western spadefoot toad, San Diego pocketmouse, and wart-stemmed ceanothus were observed. In order to reduce potential direct and indirect impacts associated with trail use, a number of redundant trails are proposed to be closed (Figure 6).

Trails in this section meet “Preserve trail” guidelines of the CTMP. This section of trails is in fair to good shape with the exception of the short section at the southern end that needs maintenance due to erosion. The trail that bisects the loop is proposed to be closed because it goes through a small drainage and is extremely steep to the east of the drainage. Sediment from the eroded slope is being deposited in the ephemeral drainage below. In addition, this area is proposed to be restored including installation of erosion control devices.

This trail segment also includes a spur that incorporates the existing community trail system along Elfin Forest Road.

Questhaven Trail

The Questhaven Trail is currently approximately ten to fourteen feet wide. It begins at the northwestern most corner of the Preserve (Figure 6). Access to this trailhead occurs at Questhaven Road near the intersection with Old Glen Street and Grain Mill Road. The Preserve access point occurs approximately 600 feet from Questhaven Road along an existing utility easement. The trail travels south through coastal sage scrub and chaparral, eventually reaching the Northwest Viewpoint and a disturbed area once containing a plant nursery and now supporting various species of non-native and invasive plants. The Questhaven trail also connects to the Southwest Elfin Forest Trail.

The Northwest Viewpoint offers views of the Pacific Ocean to the west as well as views of a mountain peak and canyon to the east. This section of trail is in fair to good condition and may require some maintenance for erosion. Restoration opportunities are recommended at the location of the old plant nursery since this area is now mostly supporting non-native and invasive plant species. Trails in this section meet "Preserve trail" guidelines of the CTMP.

4.1.3 Destinations and Viewpoints

There are countless opportunities for extraordinary views located throughout the Preserve and in addition to official viewpoints there are several locations where, depending on weather and sky conditions, views of the Pacific Ocean and surrounding nature can be observed. Because of the coastal sage scrub and chaparral habitat surrounding the trails, opportunities for hearing and viewing many different bird species exist throughout virtually all of the trails of Public Access Alternative 1. Alternative 1 also offers three notable viewpoints (Figure 6 and 8) that were chosen based on their accessibility from trails and exceptionally scenic vistas (Figure 6). Each of these viewpoints provides opportunities for educational signage, as described in the following section.

Northwest Viewpoint

The Northwest Viewpoint is found in the disturbed area along the Questhaven Trail (Figures 6 and 8). The view to the north looks straight up the valley to the residential area on the north side of the Preserve. The view to the east looks out over hillsides of chaparral. This viewpoint is a good location for viewing birds, particularly a variety of raptors and also the California Gnatcatcher. This location provides educational opportunities for topics such as watersheds, coastal sage scrub, chaparral habitats, sensitive species, and the MSCP.

Rocky Outcrop Viewpoint

The Rocky Outcrop Viewpoint is found on a plateau along the Southeast Elfin Forest Trail and looks out over the live oak riparian forest in the drainage below. It also offers views of the rocky outcrop geologic feature directly to the west (Figures 6 and 8). This location provides educational opportunities for topics such as watersheds, urban run-off, riparian habitats, and sensitive species.

4.2 Fencing and Gates

The use of appropriate fencing and gates can serve to control access to the Preserve. Gates can be installed to discourage off-highway vehicle use while providing access to authorized maintenance and safety vehicles.

Temporary barriers may be necessary to control temporary trail closures or redirect visitors when an area is experiencing heightened sensitivity; such as, trail maintenance, restoration, or during the breeding season of a sensitive species. Appropriate fencing or barrier materials should be selected based on location, surroundings, and use. When possible, natural materials should be utilized that do not cause a barrier to wildlife and are less visually intrusive than other materials.

Gates and fencing were installed by DPR at the access points along Elfin Forest Road to restrict Preserve access by off-road vehicles. Only authorized personnel are allowed to access these gates. Gates are also proposed to be installed along Carib Road (Figure 7) to restrict access

because there are no approved parking facilities available in this residential community. Only authorized personnel would be able to gain Preserve access at this location too.

4.3 Signage

Educational signage that serves to highlight or point out elements of the natural environment is typically perceived as an effective way to engage the public in interacting with the natural environment. The use of educational and interpretive signage is needed to increase visitor knowledge of the ecology, geology, and history of the Preserve and the surrounding area. Signage also offers an opportunity to educate the public on low-impact visitor techniques and Preserve safety issues. As mentioned previously, the proposed viewpoints provide opportunities for educational signage including:

- The North County MSCP
- Sensitive Resources (i.e., California gnatcatchers)
- Watershed
- Water Quality

The following is a list of Preserve use restrictions that should be posted on appropriate signage at trailheads. Appropriate law enforcement agents would be responsible for enforcing the restrictions.

- All trail users should remain on designated trails for protection of adjacent sensitive resources and for their personal safety
- No unauthorized motorized vehicles shall be driven on any trails within the Preserve. Authorized vehicles include emergency vehicles, Park Rangers' vehicles, or utility maintenance personnel (including SDG&E) vehicles
- Hunting or discharge of firearms is an incompatible use in the Preserve, except for law enforcement, and/or emergency purposes
- Poaching or collecting plant or animal species, archaeological or historical artifacts or fossils from the Preserve is prohibited
- No fishing, swimming, or wading in creeks
- No Camping (including homeless and itinerant worker camps)
- No Feeding of wildlife
- No Domestic animals, except horses and leashed dogs
- No Smoking
- No Campfires/Open Flames
- No Off-trail biking, equestrian use, or hiking
- No Littering

4.4 Visitor Safety and Emergency Services

Policies regarding allowable activities on the Preserve are important for personal safety as well as to maintain the condition of the Preserve. Section 4.3 lists the use restrictions including no fire arms, no camping, no swimming, and no recreational off-road vehicle use. These policies should be communicated through appropriate signage and are ultimately enforced by the appropriate law enforcement agency; the San Diego County Sheriff Department. In addition, the Elfin Forest/Harmony Grove Fire Department, located southeast of the Preserve along Elfin Forest Road, would be among the first responders should an emergency situation occur on the Preserve.

Fire Chief Frank Twohy of the Elfin Forest Harmony Grove Fire Department was consulted by AECOM regarding Preserve access for emergency service personnel on March 16, 2010. The existing access points were deemed adequate for fire equipment responding to emergencies on the Preserve. Also, the proposed access points would also serve as temporary staging areas in case of an emergency. Chief Twohy highly recommended that the Southeast Elfin Forest Trail be kept open to serve as access to the eastern portion of the Preserve.

The following additional recommendations will help to ensure that Preserve visitors have a safe experience:

- Proper signage to inform the public about potentially dangerous wildlife, and fire hazards;
- Posted local emergency phone numbers;
- Proper maintenance of trails and associated facilities; and
- Posting of mileage markers along trails in order for injured individuals to provide their exact location to emergency personnel. This system would also provide a framework for locating and combating fires.



Southwestern Preserve Access Point - Located on Elfin Forest Road



Southeastern Preserve Access Point - Located on Elfin Forest Road

Source: AECOM; 2009

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Northwest Access Point - Located on Questhaven Road

Source: AECOM; 2009

No Scale

Access Point Photos

AECOM

Figure 9a

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5.0 REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A - PUBLIC USE ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

The goal of the Public Use Alternatives Analysis (Analysis) is to conduct an analysis on four viable public access alternatives (1, 2, 3a, 3b) (Figures 1 through 4). All four of the alternative trail alignments utilize existing trails, with the exception of a very short section (approximately 35 feet) of alternative 3b that runs through the property of a private residence. The use of existing trails helps to minimize potential impacts to environmental and cultural resources as well as minimizing costs associated with trail construction.

The following ten categories were used to analyze the four alternatives. A summary of the four alternatives evaluated is included in Table 1. It is assumed that there are no biological resources impacts associated with each alternative.

Potential Cost

This category was assigned a cost of high (H), medium (M), or low (L) based on expected costs associated with the alternative. Expected costs may include: trail construction; additional environmental review fees; federal or state agency permitting fees; required structures, for example a bridge for creek crossing; or the need to acquire an easement(s).

Requires Additional Environmental Review/Regulatory Permitting

This category was assigned a yes (Y) or no (N) based on any expected environmental review or regulatory permitting issues.

Number of Trailheads

This category is, simply put, the number of trailheads that is proposed for the given alternative.

Distance (in miles)

This is the distance of trails offered for each alternative.

Number of Viewpoints

This category is the number of viewpoints that is proposed for the given alternative.

Requires a Bridge or Other Structure

This category was assigned a yes (Y) or no (N) based on the need for any additional structures such as a bridge for creek crossing.

Requires Additional Easement(s)

This category was assigned the number of easements that an alternative would require. Easements were only required where a trail crossed outside of the Preserve.

Cultural Resources

This category was assigned a yes (Y) or no (N) based on an alternatives potential to have new impacts on cultural resources.

Portion of Trail in close Proximity to a Residence

This category was assigned a yes (Y) or no (N) based on proximity of a given trail to any residences. This category was assigned a yes (Y) if any portion of a trail was within 100 feet of a residence. This category was derived based on the County Master Trail Plan guidelines.

Provides Adequate Access for Emergency Personnel

This category was assigned a yes (Y) or no (N) based on vehicular access to most areas of the Preserve. Adequate access was determined through consultation with Fire Chief Frank Twohy from the Elfin Forest/Harmony Grove Fire Department.

Alternative 1

Alternative 1 (Figure 1) includes loop trails and viewpoints on both the west and east portions of the Preserve. It includes approximately 2.4 miles of existing trails that traverse much of the Preserve and does not propose any new trails. In order to reduce edge effect and potential erosion issues, several redundant trails are proposed to be closed (Public Access Plan, Figure 6). A majority of the trail sections are in fair shape with some mild to moderate erosion issues.

Potential Cost

Alternative 1 was assigned a low (L) based on the fact that associated trails are composed entirely of existing trails that would require minimal or no construction. No environmental review or permitting fees are anticipated. It requires no structures to be installed and it does not require the appropriation of any easements.

Requires Additional Environmental Review/Regulatory Permitting

Alternative 1 consists of existing trails and does not propose any activities that would require additional environmental review or regulatory permitting.

Number of Trailheads

Alternative 1 proposes four trailheads; two at the southern end of the Preserve, one at the western edge, and one at the northwestern corner.

Distance (in miles)

Alternative 1 consists of approximately 2.4 miles of trails.

Number of Viewpoints

Alternative 1 has two designated viewpoints; the Northwest Viewpoint and Rocky Outcrop Viewpoint.

Requires a Bridge or Other Structure

Alternative 1 does not propose any bridges or other structures.

Requires Additional Easement(s)

Alternative 1 trails do not cross over any property outside of the Preserve and therefore does not require any additional easements.

Avoids Cultural Resources

Although several sites occur in the vicinity of existing trails, this alternative would not result in any new impacts to cultural resources. Similarly, the use of the existing trails through or near these sites is not anticipated to result in significant impacts since approved Preserve activities are not expected to induce erosion that could potentially expose buried sites. Additionally, the remaining historic sites are based on the location of mid-century nursery, roads or aqueducts that have little or no above ground resources that could be impacted. However, if future trail maintenance activities requires ground disturbance, further assessment would be required in order to assure no impacts occur to cultural resources

Portion of Trail is Close to a Residence

One short section of the Southeast Elfin Forest Trail passes within 100 feet of a residence.

Provides Adequate Access for Emergency Personnel

Alternative 1 includes access to most areas of the Preserve. It should be noted that Fire Chief Frank Twohy expressed that it was very important to keep the southeastern access point in order to have adequate Preserve access for emergency personnel.

Alternative 2

Alternative 2 is very similar to Alternative 1 except that it does not include the Southeast Elfin Forest Trail. This alternative follows existing trails and does not propose any new trails. In order to reduce edge effect and potential erosion issues, several redundant trails are proposed to be closed (Public Access Plan, Figure 6). A majority of the trail sections are in fair shape with some mild to moderate erosion issues.

Potential Cost

Alternative 2 was assigned a low (L) based on the fact that associated trails are composed entirely of existing trails that would require minimal or no construction; no environmental review or permitting fees are anticipated; it requires no structures to be installed; and it does not require the appropriation of any easements.

Requires Additional Environmental Review/Regulatory Permitting

Alternative 2 consists of existing trails and does not propose any activities that would require additional environmental review or regulatory permitting.

Number of Trailheads

Alternative 2 proposes three trailheads; one at the southern end of the Preserve, one at the western edge, and one at the northwestern corner.

Distance (in miles)

Alternative 2 consists of approximately 1.8 miles of trails.

Number of Viewpoints

Alternative 2 has one designated viewpoint, the Northwest Viewpoint.

Requires a Bridge or Other Structure

Alternative 2 does not propose any bridges or other structures.

Requires Additional Easement(s)

Alternative 2 trails do not cross over any property outside of the Preserve and therefore does not require any additional easements.

Cultural Resources

Although several sites occur in the vicinity of existing trails, no new cultural resource impacts are anticipated through the implementation of Alternative 2. Additionally, remaining historic sites are based on the location of mid-century nursery, roads or aqueducts that have little or no above ground resources that could be impacted. However, if future trail maintenance activities

require ground disturbance, further assessment would be required in order to assure no impacts occur to cultural resources

Portion of Trail is Close to a Residence

Alternative 2 is the only alternative that does not pass within 100 feet of any residences.

Provides Adequate Access for Emergency Personnel

Alternative 2 is the only alternative that was assigned a no (N) in this category. Alternative 2 omits the southeastern access point along Elfin Forest Road and therefore offers no access to the southeastern portion of the Preserve. It should be noted that Fire Chief Frank Twohy expressed that it was very important to keep the southeastern access point in order to have adequate access for emergency personnel.

Alternative 3a

This alternative includes approximately 2.8 miles of trails that traverse much of the Preserve (Figure 3). Alternative 3a follows existing trails and does not propose any new trails. This alternative is however, the only one that proposes the Oak Woodland Trail which descends, from the Questhaven Trail, into coast live oak riparian forest and travels along the stream channel through freshwater marsh and at times under dense canopy cover. This alternative also proposes a footbridge (Figure 3) that would be used to cross the creek at the marshy area in order to reduce impacts to the creek. In order to reduce edge effect and potential erosion issues, several redundant trails are proposed to be closed (Public Access Plan, Figure 6). A majority of the trail sections are in fair shape with some mild to moderate erosion issues.

Potential Cost

Alternative 3a was assigned a high (H) because it would require the installation of a bridge to cross marsh habitat. This activity would be expected to require state and federal agency permitting for impacts to riparian habitat in addition to the cost of bridge construction. Additionally, this alternative would require an easement where the trail crosses a short section of non-Preserve property.

Requires Additional Environmental Review/Regulatory Permitting

Alternative 3a is the only alternative to receive a yes (Y) in this category. This is based on the proposed footbridge at the a creek crossing which would require state and federal agency permitting for impacts to riparian habitat.

Number of Trailheads

Alternative 3a proposes four trailheads: two at the southern end of the Preserve, one at the western edge, and one at the northwestern corner.

Distance (in miles)

Alternative 3a consists of approximately 2.8 miles of trails.

Number of Viewpoints

Alternative 3a is the only one that offers three designated viewpoints; the Northwest Viewpoint, the Oak woodland Viewpoint, and the Rocky Outcrop Viewpoint (Figure 3). The Oak woodland Viewpoint is found on a high point midway along the Oak Woodland Trail. It looks down on the pond and fresh water marsh areas within the stream channel.

Requires a Bridge or Other Structure

Alternative 3a proposes a footbridge for crossing the marsh area.

Requires Additional Easement(s)

Alternative 3a would require one easement where a short section of the Oak woodland Trail crosses outside of the Preserve boundary (Figure 3).

Cultural Resources

Although several sites occur in the vicinity of existing trails, no new cultural resources impacts are anticipated through implementation of Alternative 3a. Additionally, remaining historic sites are based on the location of mid-century nursery, roads or aqueducts that have little or no above ground resources that could be impacted. However, if future trail maintenance activities require ground disturbance, further assessment would be required in order to assure no impacts occur to cultural resources.

Portion of Trail is Close to a Residence

One short section of the Southeast Elfin Forest Trail passes within 100 feet of a residence (Figure 3).

Provides Adequate Access for Emergency Personnel

Alternative 3a includes access to most areas of the Preserve. It should be noted that Fire Chief Frank Twohy expressed that it was very important to keep the southeastern access point in order to have adequate Preserve access for emergency personnel.

Alternative 3b

Alternative 3b is essentially the same as Alternative 1, with the exception of an additional footbridge that crosses the drainage at the southern most portion of the Preserve. Depending on the exact location of the trail and easement may be required.

Potential Cost

Alternative 3b was assigned a medium (M) because although most of this alternative is composed of existing trails, a new segment of approximately 600 feet would need to be constructed (Figure 4). In addition, this alternative would require an easement where a short portion of a trail crosses over some neighboring residential property. No environmental review or permitting fees are anticipated because no native habitats or impacts to jurisdictional waters are anticipated. Also, no structures would be required at the creek crossing.

Requires Additional Environmental Review/Regulatory Permitting

Alternative 3b is based off of the existing trail system. Although this alternative does propose the construction of a new segment of trail, this activity is not expected to have a significant impact on sensitive habitat or wildlife that would require additional environmental review or regulatory permitting.

Number of Trailheads

Alternative 3b proposes four trailheads: two at the southern end of the Preserve, one at the western edge, and one at the northwestern corner.

Distance (in miles)

Alternative 3b consists of approximately 2.8 miles of trails.

Number of Viewpoints

Alternative 3b has two designated viewpoints; the Northwest Viewpoint and Rocky Outcrop Viewpoint.

Requires a Bridge or Other Structure

Alternative 3b proposes a footbridge for crossing the marsh area.

Requires Additional Easement(s)

Alternative 3b would require one easement where a short section of proposed new trail crosses outside of the Preserve boundary.

Cultural Resources

Although several sites occur in the vicinity of existing trails, no new cultural resource impacts are anticipated if Alternative 3b is implemented. Additionally, remaining historic sites are based on the location of mid-century nursery, roads or aqueducts that have little or no above ground resources that could be impacted. However, if future trail maintenance activities require ground disturbance, further assessment would be required in order to assure no impacts occur to cultural resources.

Portion of Trail is Close to a Residence

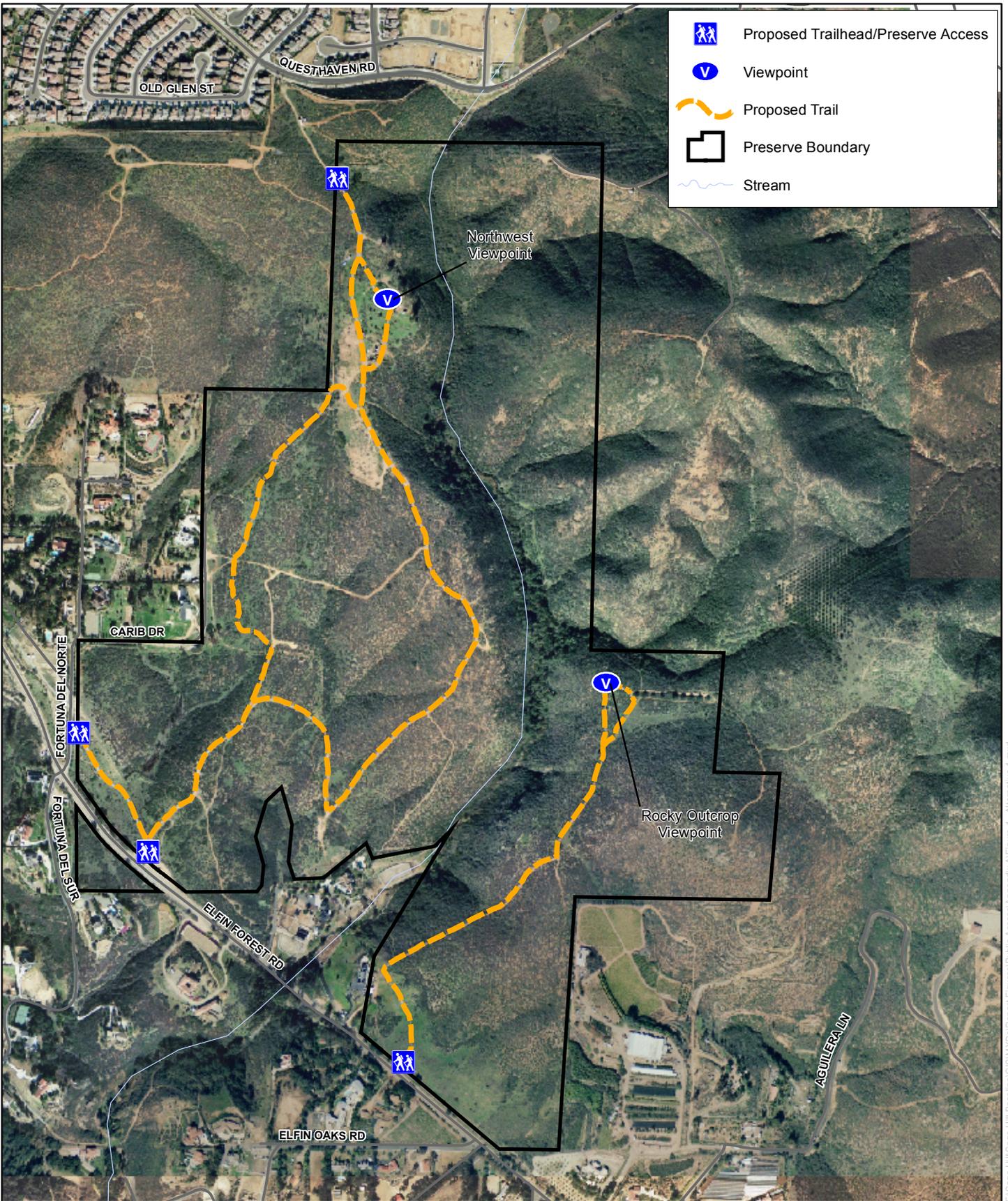
One short section of the Southeast Elfin Forest Trail passes within 100 feet of the residence located within the drainage.

Provides Adequate Access for Emergency Personnel

Alternative 3b includes access to most areas of the Preserve. It should be noted that Fire Chief Frank Twohy expressed that it was very important to keep the southeastern access point in order to have adequate Preserve access for emergency personnel.

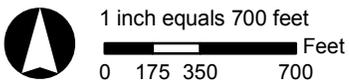
**Table 1
Summary of Alternatives Analysis**

	Potential Cost	Requires Additional Environmental Review/Regulatory Permitting	Number of Trailheads	Distance (miles)	Number of Viewpoints	Requires a Bridge or Other Structure	Requires Additional Easement(s)	Cultural Resources Impacts	Portion of Trail Close to a Residence	Provides Adequate Access for Emergency Personnel
Alternative 1	L	N	4	2.4	2	N	0	N	Y	Y
Alternative 2	L	N	3	1.8	1	N	0	N	N	N
Alternative 3a	H	Y	4	2.8	3	Y	1	N	Y	Y
Alternative 3b	M	Y	4	2.8	2	Y	1	N	Y	Y

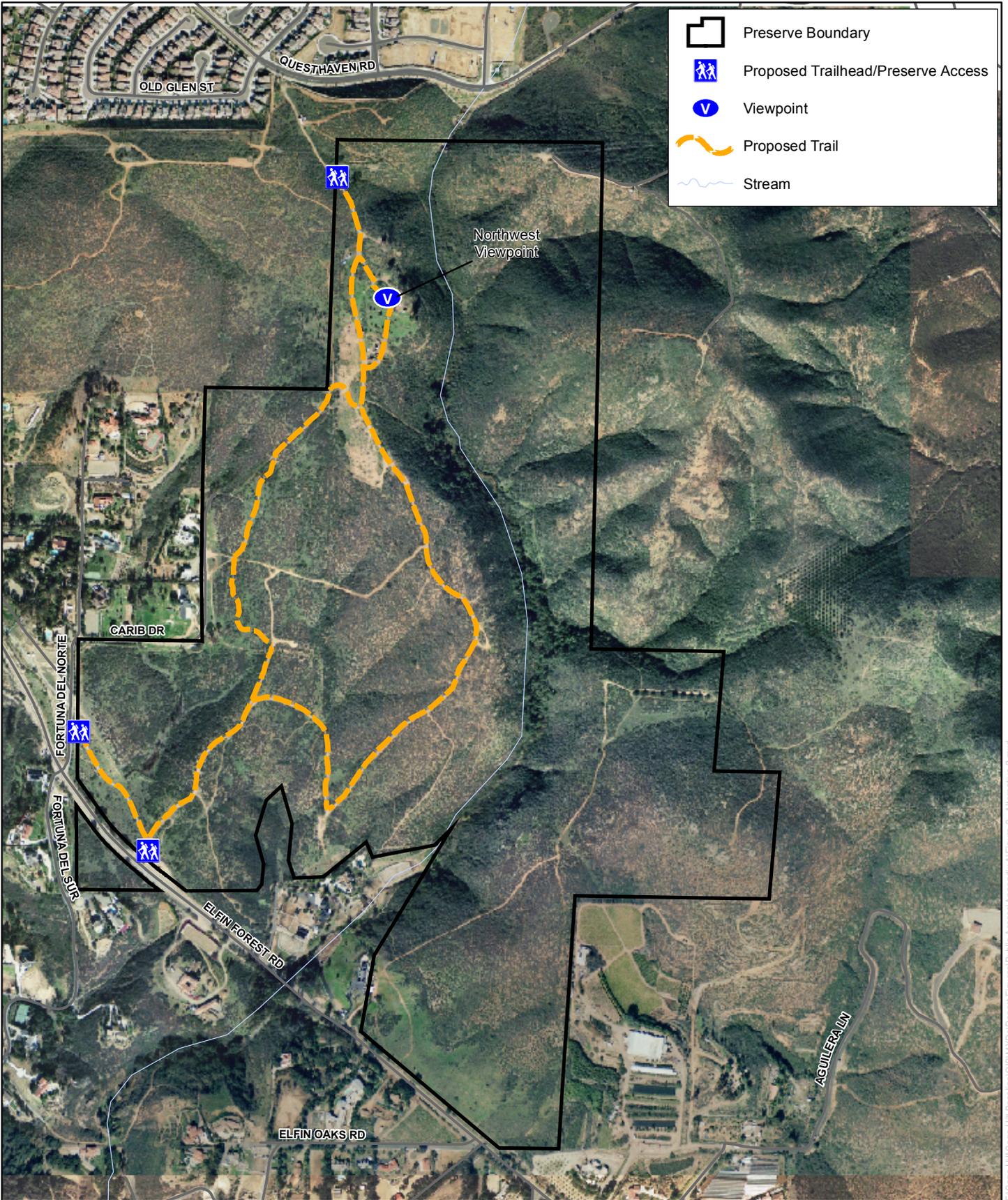


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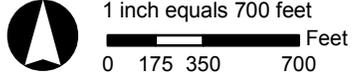
Source: AECOM (2009), County of San Diego (2008)



Public Access - Alternative 1

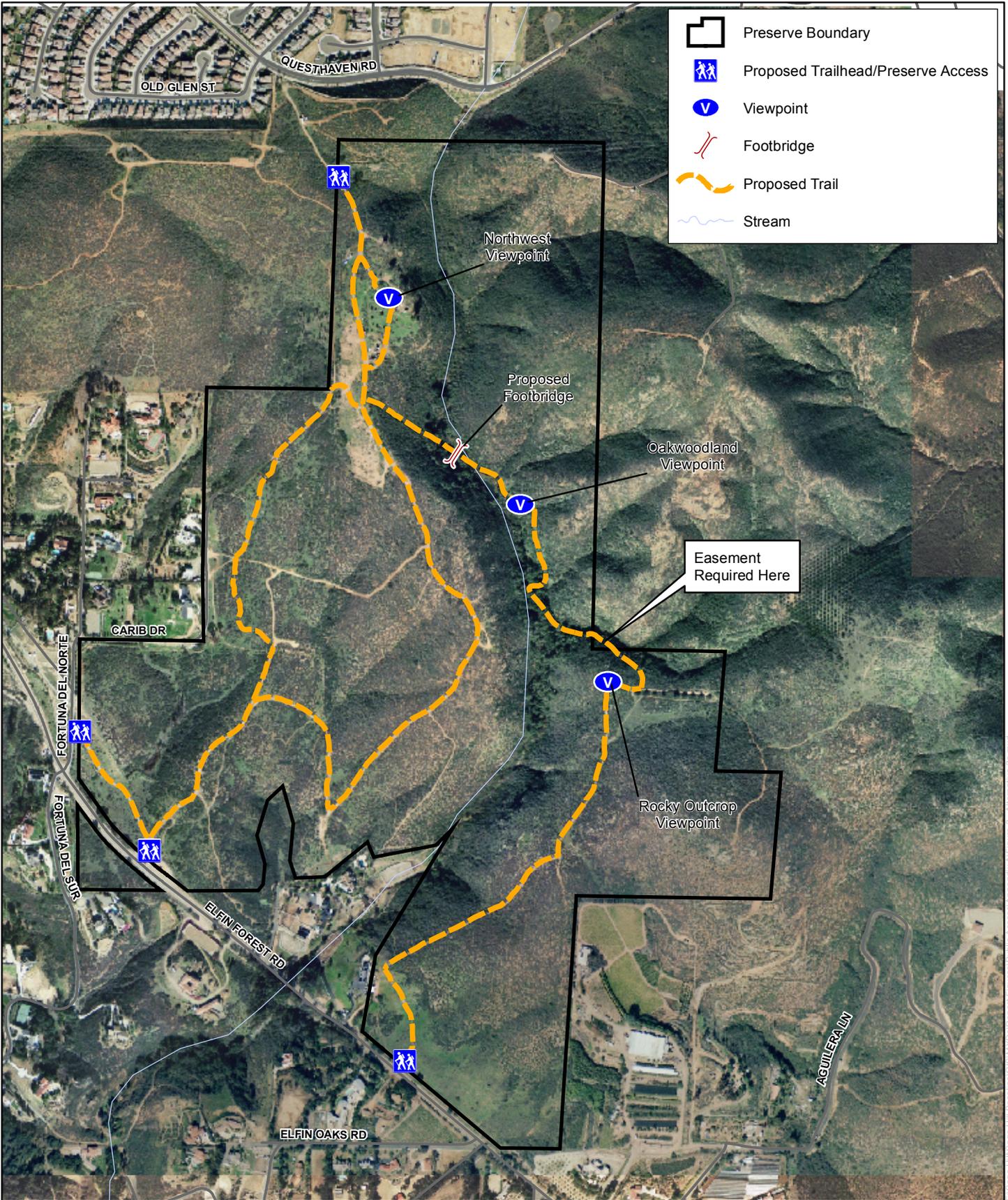


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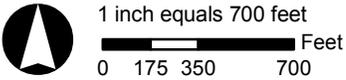


Public Access - Alternative 2

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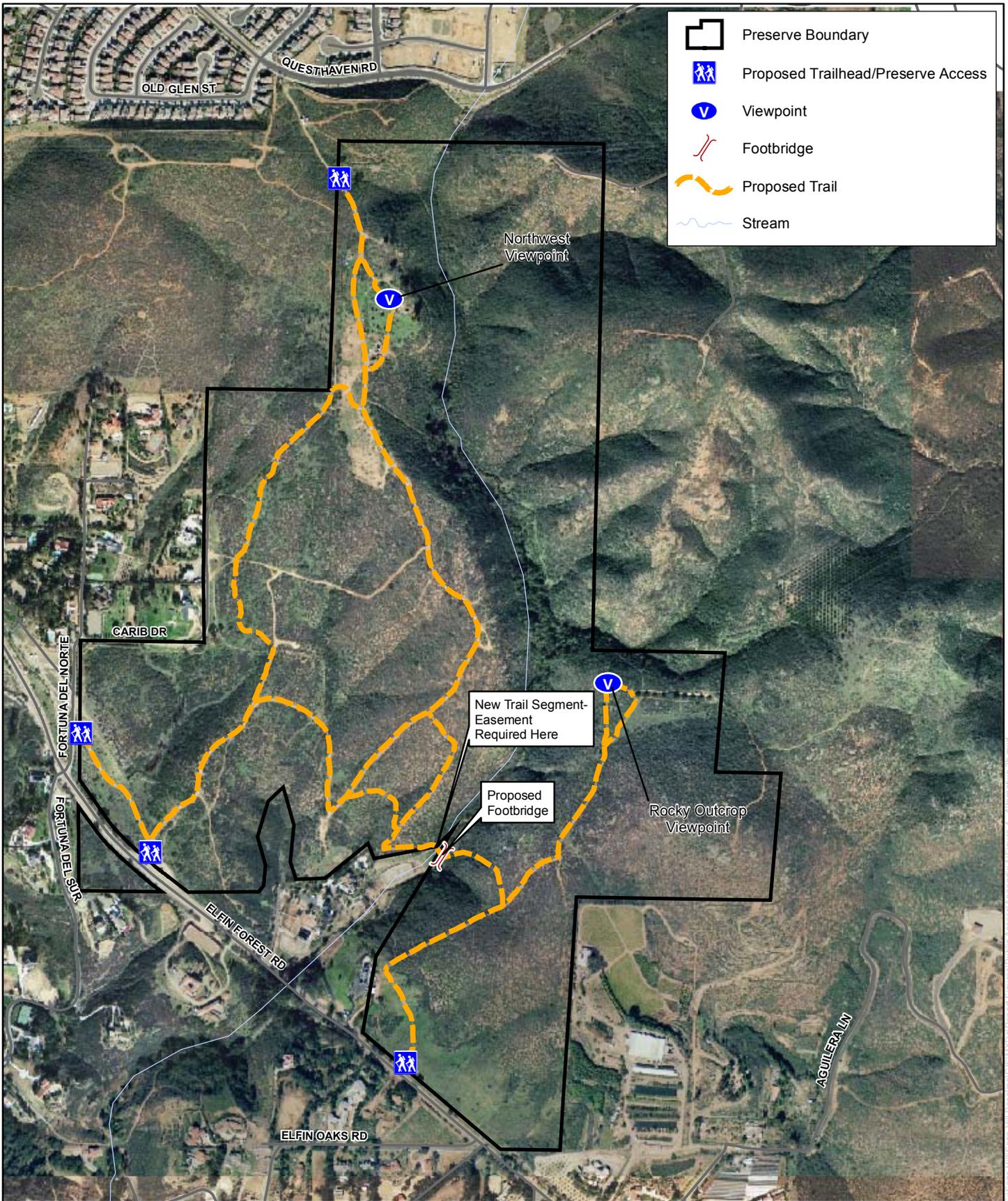


Source: AECOM (2009), County of San Diego (2008)

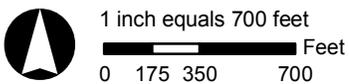


Public Access - Alternative 3a

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Source: AECOM (2009), County of San Diego (2008)



Public Access - Alternative 3b