



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

LAND USE AGENDA ITEM

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DATE: June 4, 2025

02

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

2024 MULTIPLE SPECIES CONSERVATION PROGRAM SOUTH COUNTY SUBAREA PLAN ANNUAL REPORT AND RELATED CEQA EXEMPTION (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

San Diego county has one of the most diverse habitats in the United States, with over 200 rare, threatened, or endangered species inhabiting the region. To protect the region's biodiversity, in 1997, the County of San Diego (County) partnered with 11 other jurisdictions (partnering agencies), community stakeholders, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Wildlife Agencies) to develop the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP). The MSCP is a long-term regional habitat conservation program focused on balancing the protection of plant and animal species with recreation, development, and agricultural activities within the San Diego region. On October 22, 1997 (1), the County Board of Supervisors (Board) adopted the 50-year MSCP South County Subarea Plan, which includes the unincorporated areas in the southwestern portion of the region. The South County Subarea Plan requires the County, Wildlife Agencies, and partnering agencies to conserve 98,379 acres (MSCP Preserve) to successfully protect populations of MSCP-covered species, associated high-quality (intact and undisturbed) habitats, and the wildlife linkages between large, preserved areas. To create opportunities for residents and visitors to connect with nature, passive recreation is allowed within County preserve lands in areas where MSCP-covered species and habitats would not be impacted.

Every year, the County prepares an annual report that includes information about habitat conserved through acquisitions or dedications of preserve lands, habitat lost due to development, and the management and monitoring efforts performed to ensure the MSCP Preserve is functioning successfully. Some highlights from the 2024 MSCP Annual Report include:

- The County is ahead of its acquisition goals and is successfully managing and monitoring habitat in accordance with requirements established in the MSCP South County Subarea Plan.
- The County has successfully implemented the South County Subarea Plan for 27 years, adding 1,047 acres in 2024 through County, Federal, and State acquisitions and private

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development mitigation, which brings the conserved lands in this area to 83% of the 98,379-acre conservation goal (81,566 acres). Federal, State, County, and local non-profit partner acquisitions, as well as private development mitigation, all conserve lands that are included within the MSCP Preserve.

- The County's contribution toward the MSCP Preserve is about 13,729 acres, with 177 acres of County acquisitions adding to the MSCP Preserve in 2024. However, across the MSCP South County Subarea, the draft North County, and future East County Plan Areas, the County has acquired about 28,250 acres of preserve lands between 1998 and December 31, 2024. These County acquisitions have cost approximately \$246 million, of which about \$149 million was from County funding and about \$97 million was from partnering organizations and grants.
- Since the adoption of the South County Subarea Plan, the rate of conservation continues to be greater than the rate of development.
- Through management and monitoring activities, the County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) has identified about 188 special-status species living within County preserve lands, demonstrating that conservation efforts have been effective in protecting regionally important species and ensuring a thriving ecosystem. Two special-status species were observed through Target Monitoring Plan (TMP) monitoring efforts in 2024 that had not previously been observed and included Canada goose at Tijuana River Valley Regional Park and San Diego mesa mint at Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve.

As mentioned, in addition to the adopted South County Subarea Plan, there are two additional MSCP plan areas in the unincorporated county: the draft North County Plan and the future East County Plan. These additional plans are being pursued to bring many of the same environmental and economic benefits to the remainder of the County as have been realized through the South County Subarea Plan. Preparation of these additional plans will also fulfill the goals and policies of the County General Plan and mitigation requirements identified in the County General Plan Update Environmental Impact Report. On October 28, 2020 (6), the Board directed staff to develop a plan for the draft North County Plan Area. The draft North County Plan will cover the northwestern portion of the unincorporated area and is anticipated to be brought to the Board for consideration in Fiscal Year 2025-26. The eastern portion of the unincorporated area is covered by the future East County Plan, which will be prepared after the North County Plan is adopted.

DPR implements the MSCP in all three County MSCP planning areas through land acquisition, management, and monitoring of preserve lands to ensure preservation of sensitive species and habitat. DPR evaluates multiple factors when considering open space land for potential acquisition and inclusion into County Preserves, including biology, connectivity, accessibility, and value. The County's partnership with the Wildlife Agencies, through the MSCP, ensures the unincorporated area's rich biodiversity is conserved while allowing development to occur through the County's permitting process. Through Planning & Development Services' implementation of the MSCP, private development applicants can rely on the County's permits under the Federal Endangered

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Species Act, California Endangered Species Act, and State Natural Community Conservation Planning Act, eliminating the need for individual project-by-project permitting under these regulations.

Today's requested action is for the Board to receive the 2024 Annual Report. The Annual Report highlights management and stewardship of preserve lands and monitoring efforts conducted for sensitive plant and animal species within the South County Subarea Plan boundaries that ensure the long-term viability of habitat and species.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

1. Find that the proposed Board of Supervisors action is exempt from provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15061(b)(3) and 15378(b)(5) of the State CEQA Guidelines.
2. Receive the 2024 Multiple Species Conservation Program South County Subarea Plan Annual Report (Year 27) (Attachment A).

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Implementation of the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) South County Subarea Plan will ensure the continuation of accessible recreational and educational experiences for residents and visitors related to the natural and cultural resources of the region. It will have a positive impact on all residents and visitors by improving water and air quality and providing opportunities to engage in outdoor recreational experiences in the County of San Diego's parks and preserve lands.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Implementation of the MSCP South County Subarea Plan supports multiple County of San Diego Sustainability Goals including County Sustainability Goal No. 4 by expanding opportunities for community members to access outdoor recreation and nature, County Sustainability Goal No. 5 by protecting rivers and streams, and County Sustainability Goal No. 6 by protecting native ecosystems and habitats.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with the Board of Supervisors' acceptance of the 2024 Multiple Species Conservation Program South County Subarea Plan Annual Report. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

The San Diego County Parks Advisory Committee heard, as an informational item, the 2024 Multiple Species Conservation Program South County Subarea Plan Annual Report on April 11, 2025.

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BACKGROUND

San Diego county has one of the most diverse habitats in the United States, with over 200 rare, threatened, or endangered species inhabiting the region. In the early 1990s, urbanization of the region's natural lands threatened the biodiversity and long-term biological viability of this unique landscape. In 1997, the County of San Diego (County) partnered with 11 other jurisdictions, community stakeholders, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Wildlife Agencies) to develop the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) within the southwestern portion of our region. The MSCP seeks to conserve native habitats, plants, and animals for the enjoyment of future generations; protect the vast diversity of native plants and animals; and ensure opportunities for passive recreation. This unique regional conservation program, one of only 13 completed in California and with one of the largest covered species lists, works across jurisdictional boundaries, protects watersheds and water quality, and accommodates future growth by simplifying building regulations. It also ensures compliance with federal and State regulations, including the Federal Endangered Species Act, California Endangered Species Act, and State Natural Community Conservation Planning Act and associated permits.

On October 22, 1997 (1), the County Board of Supervisors (Board) adopted the 50-year MSCP South County Subarea Plan, which includes the unincorporated areas in the southwestern portion of the region. The South County Subarea Plan received final permit approval from the Wildlife Agencies in 1998. The South County Subarea Plan has 85 covered species within the MSCP Plan area that must be protected; these species were selected because they were listed as threatened or endangered when the South County Subarea Plan was adopted, were likely to become listed during the 50-year term of the South County Subarea Plan or determined to be important for regional conservation efforts. The 50-year permit requires the preservation, protection, and creation of connections between biologically valuable habitats while encouraging development in less sensitive areas. The County's partnership with the Wildlife Agencies through the MSCP ensures that the unincorporated area's rich biodiversity is conserved while allowing development to occur through the County's permitting process. The MSCP provides the basis for the County to receive an incidental take permit from the Wildlife Agencies, which can be issued under the Federal and State Endangered Species Acts for lawful projects that might result in impacts to endangered or threatened species or the species' habitats. This incidental take permit allows the County to directly issue permits to development projects that comply with the MSCP so that those projects do not have to secure their own incidental take permits from the Wildlife Agencies. This is one way the MSCP streamlines permitting, provides regional conservation of natural habitats, and facilitates economic growth in the unincorporated area.

The South County Subarea Plan protects habitat and species through the acquisition, management, and monitoring of dedicated preserve lands and MSCP-covered plant and animal species. Acquisitions of preserve lands are focused within the South County Subarea Plan's Pre-Approved Mitigation Area (PAMA) and hardline preserve areas. These are lands that have been identified as having high-quality habitat or as contributing to regional habitat linkages that connect large tracts of habitat. These regional habitat linkages are critical for the long-term conservation of MSCP-covered species as they allow for movement of species between large, conserved areas of high-

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quality habitat. Habitat that is mostly intact or has not been degraded by impacts from development activities or a high frequency of fires is generally considered to be high-quality.

The Department of Parks and Recreation’s (DPR) analysis of potential open space acquisitions includes a sustainability perspective with a cross-departmental Acquisition Roundtable team consisting of staff from the Land Use and Environment Group (LUEG), Department of General Services (DGS), the Department of Public Works (DPW), the Department of Environmental Health and Quality (DEHQ), Planning & Development Services (PDS), and Agriculture, Weights and Measures (AWM). This coordination ensures alignment with the County’s sustainability efforts including habitat and species conservation, connectivity, public access, flood and stormwater control, fire risk reduction, groundwater conservation, water and air quality, and achievement of greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions and other climate goals under the 2024 Climate Action Plan (CAP) and Regional Decarbonization Framework.

In addition to the adopted South County Subarea Plan, there are two additional MSCP Plan areas in the unincorporated county: the draft North County Plan and future East County Plan. On October 28, 2020 (6), the Board directed staff to develop a plan for the draft North County Plan Area for the northwestern portion of the unincorporated area—it is anticipated to be completed in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-26. The eastern portion of the unincorporated area will be covered by the future East County Plan. Each MSCP Plan has been or will be designed to meet the needs of the habitats and species located within its respective Plan Area’s unique geography. All three MSCP Plans comprise the County’s MSCP.

The MSCP protects the region’s biodiversity and facilitates species adaptation in the face of climate change. Conserving existing habitat, restoring habitat to high-quality habitat, and minimizing threats from invasive, non-native species ensures native species can successfully adapt and shift their distributions in response to changing climate conditions. Successful implementation of the MSCP supports the County’s dedication to reducing GHG emissions by acquiring preserve lands that could otherwise be developed. The 2024 Climate Action Plan requires the County to acquire 11,000 acres of conservation lands by 2030; acquisitions associated with the MSCP help to fulfill this measure.

The South County Subarea Plan’s Implementing Agreement (IA) between the County and the Wildlife Agencies requires the County to prepare an annual report that includes information about habitat gained through acquisitions or dedications of preserve lands, habitat lost due to development projects, and the management and monitoring efforts performed to ensure success of the South County Subarea Plan. The 2024 MSCP South County Subarea Plan Annual Report (Annual Report) covers the period of January 1, 2024, through December 31, 2024 (Attachment A). The Annual Report addresses conservation and development of lands, management and monitoring of preserve lands, and private mitigation within the South County Subarea Plan’s boundaries. The Annual Report also includes a summary of County acquisitions of preserve lands in the draft North County and future East County MSCP Plan Areas. The reporting period for the Annual Report and past annual reports has been based on the calendar year. Future reporting periods may be adjusted to align with the County’s fiscal year from July 1 through June 30.

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MSCP South County Subarea Plan Preserve Assemblage

The goal of the South County Subarea Plan is to assemble a 98,379-acre South County Subarea Plan Preserve (MSCP Preserve). The MSCP Preserve is assembled through preserve lands acquired prior to 1998 (baseline conserved lands), lands acquired since 1998 by the County and its federal, State, and local non-profit partners (conserved lands), and lands added to the MSCP Preserve through mitigation from private development projects (private mitigation). In the first 27 years of the 50-year South County Subarea Plan implementation, the County and its public agency and local non-profit partners have assembled 81,566 acres (83%) of the proposed 98,739-acre MSCP Preserve. County preserve lands contribute about 13,700 acres (17%) to the assembled MSCP Preserve. Federal and State conserved lands contribute about 61% (about 50,100 acres) of the assembled MSCP Preserve, while local non-profit acquisitions have contributed about 4% (about 3,300 acres), and private mitigation has contributed about 18% (about 14,300 acres) to the MSCP Preserve. As the MSCP Preserve nears its preservation goal and to ensure that the assembled MSCP Preserve is functioning successfully and fully supporting the MSCP-covered species, additional lands beyond the original 98,379-acre goal may need to be acquired. The County regularly coordinates with the Wildlife Agencies to evaluate all the goals and objectives included within the South County Subarea Plan and will work with the Wildlife Agencies to ensure all requirements have been fulfilled prior to the end of the 50-year term.

MSCP South County Subarea Plan Habitat Gains and Losses

Lands conserved within the South County Subarea Plan boundaries are tracked annually and reported in the Annual Report. During the 2024 reporting period, January 1 through December 31, 2024, 1,047 acres of habitat were added to the MSCP Preserve (conserved within the PAMA and hardline preserve areas) through County, federal, and State acquisitions, and private mitigation—the County contributions to this total was 177 acres in 2024. County preserve lands contribute about 13,729 acres to the County-conserved lands within the South County Subarea Plan Area. From 1998 through December 31, 2024, about \$91 million has been spent on County acquisitions within the South County Subarea Plan Area, of which about \$56 million is from County funding and \$35 million is from grants to acquire or assist with the acquisition of about 8,830 acres.

The County evaluates multiple factors when considering preserve lands for potential acquisition and inclusion into County preserve lands, including biology, connectivity, accessibility, and value. Foremost is an evaluation of wildlife biology. The land should include quality habitat and/or opportunities to restore habitat that supports regional biodiversity. Connectivity is another factor the County considers, where the County seeks land that supports wildlife corridors and connectivity for sustainable wildlife movement. Connectivity to County preserve lands make long-term management and stewardship more efficient because the same operational team can perform those functions. Adjacent property preserves not only the habitat but also the financial resources that help extend the County's reach and maximize resources. Accessibility to potential acquisitions is another factor considered. The County must be able to access all its lands to meet stewardship and monitoring requirements as well as potential access to the public for passive recreation and environmental education where appropriate. Limited and sustainable public access that does not negatively impact sensitive resources is an integral part of the MSCP. Lastly, the County considers financial and economic value to ensure that public resources are wisely invested. The County only considers land with willing sellers who agree to sell at the appraised value or less.

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Impacts from development within the South County Subarea Plan boundaries are tracked annually and reported in the Annual Report. The South County Subarea Plan requires that the rate of development and associated habitat impacts within the South County Subarea Plan boundaries must not exceed the rate of conservation of preserve lands. The goal is to ensure that impacts or reduction of habitat occur at a similar rate to the conservation of habitat. This requirement, which is included in the South County Subarea Plan, is referred to as “rough step” as the two actions need to occur within “step” of each other and be balanced. The acreage of habitat impacted by development and the acreage of conserved preserve lands are compared in the Annual Report to determine if the County is meeting the rough step requirement.

The County is meeting the South County Subarea Plan’s rough step requirement as it has been every year. Since the adoption of the South County Subarea Plan, the rate of conservation continues to be greater than the rate of development. In addition to the 1,047 acres of preserve lands conserved in the PAMA and hardline preserve areas in 2024, 599 additional acres were conserved within the South County Subarea Plan’s boundaries (a total 1,646-acre gain). This additional conserved land includes a variety of habitat types, including Diegan coastal sage scrub, southern mixed chaparral, coast live oak riparian habitat chamise chaparral, Engelman oak woodland, and grassland habitat. These types of habitat support species such as the coastal California gnatcatcher and least Bell’s vireo and facilitate the movement of wildlife species such as mountain lions and deer. During the same reporting period, 9.7 acres within PAMA were impacted by development, and another 100.5 acres of habitat were impacted by development within the South County Subarea Plan’s boundaries (a total 110.2-acre loss). Most habitat losses occur outside PAMA and hardline preserve areas, and most habitat gains occur inside PAMA and hardline preserve areas.

MSCP South County Subarea Plan Preserve Management and Monitoring

The South County Subarea Plan has 85 covered species within the MSCP Plan Area (Attachment B) that must be protected. The County is obligated to meet certain management and monitoring requirements for the protection of these MSCP-covered species. MSCP Preserve monitoring assesses the success of the South County Subarea Plan and ensures that the habitats and species conserved on the preserve lands are successfully maintained and enhanced. DPR implements the MSCP in all three MSCP planning areas through land acquisition, management, and monitoring of preserve lands (County Preserves) to ensure the preservation of significant natural resources and enhance quality of life for our residents and visitors. DPR maintains its commitment to its parks and preserve lands conservation program by continuing to allocate funding for the management and monitoring of County Preserves.

The MSCP monitoring program on County Preserves includes various monitoring efforts, including implementation of the Targeted Monitoring Plan (TMP), baseline inventory surveys, research partnerships, and special-status species monitoring. DPR manages and monitors vegetation communities within County preserve lands that provide habitat for these special-status species and MSCP-covered species. In addition, DPR manages and monitors MSCP-covered species at the species level. MSCP-covered species monitoring focuses on species for which population-level monitoring is considered critical for effective management. DPR conducts

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biological monitoring of sensitive plants, animals, and habitats by conducting baseline surveys and implementation of the TMP. The TMP includes focused goals and objectives as well as detailed monitoring protocols for specific plant and animal species and habitat types. The TMP is implemented annually and provides important data to measure the success of meeting the MSCP species-specific goals and objectives. Baseline surveys are used to document all plant and animal species and habitats (including sensitive species and habitats), identify and address habitat stressors/threats, and map invasive plants and animals. Baseline surveys are conducted on properties after acquisition. The data collected from the baseline surveys are used to develop preserve-specific Resource Management Plans (RMPs).

In addition to baseline surveys, additional special-status species monitoring is conducted at certain County Preserves. Additionally, residual dry matter (RDM) surveys are conducted annually at Ramona Grasslands Preserve and Santa Ysabel Preserve. RDM monitoring (performed annually in the Fall) ensures that the grassland habitat is being managed appropriately for special-status species.

Through management and monitoring activities, DPR has identified about 188 special-status species living within County preserve lands, demonstrating that conservation efforts have been effective in protecting regionally important species and ensuring a thriving ecosystem. Two special-status species were observed through TMP monitoring efforts in 2024 that had not previously been observed and included Canada goose at Tijuana River Valley Regional Park and San Diego mesa mint at Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve. Special-status species are those whose population status has been found to be in decline or non-sustainable without conservation measures. These species are listed or are candidates to be listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act, California Endangered Species Act, State Species of Special Concern, or are found on other watch lists. Not all special-status species are MSCP-covered species. MSCP-covered species include species that, if present, indicate that the habitat and other species living in that same habitat should be doing well or were species that could have been impacted by County or private development activities.

Over 49 of the 188 special-status species found on County Preserves are covered by the MSCP. As shown in Attachment C, the monitoring data demonstrates that species populations on County Preserves are successfully conserved, and that DPR's continuous management of habitat provides an ongoing benefit to species survival. The monitoring data also demonstrates that conservation goals of at least five MSCP-covered species, all of which can be found in County Preserves, have been successfully met. The conservation status of these species, which include felt-leaved monardella, Lakeside ceanothus, Orcutt's bird's beak, snake cholla, Tecate cypress, and Thorne's hairstreak butterfly, is categorized as "achieved" by the Wildlife Agencies. All monitoring is used to determine the functionality of the South County Subarea Plan MSCP Preserve and to make data-based management decisions to further protect species.

DPR conducts species and habitat monitoring on County Preserves to ensure that not only are the species and habitats conserved properly, but that appropriate adaptive management strategies are identified and implemented as quickly as possible when needed. As the monitoring data is collected each year, species trends are more deeply understood and assist DPR with the successful

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conservation and sustaining of the species. In addition to determining when adaptive management strategies need to be implemented for species threatened by identified stressors, such as invasive, non-native plant species, TMP survey results also identify species that are stable or increasing in numbers. Between 2021 and 2024, Orcutt's bird's beak population estimates increased at Tijuana River Valley Regional Park due to management actions, including invasive plant species treatment performed in 2021 and 2023. Between 2015 and 2024, other species populations, such as willow monardella at Sycamore Canyon and Goodan Ranch Preserve, were stable and successfully conserved. Species population numbers or presence/absence on County Preserves are greatly influenced by winter storms and will vary each year based on winter and spring rainfall amounts and air temperatures. When drought conditions are present and below average or late rainstorms occur, fewer plants in a population are expected the following spring. One such scenario has been observed for San Diego thornmint at Sycamore Canyon and Goodan Ranch Preserve. Annual monitoring results have shown that perfect conditions (including air temperatures and above-average rainfall amounts) resulted in an incredibly abundant growing season in 2017 with an estimated population size of over 700,000 individuals. In 2022, an estimated population of approximately 42,000 individuals was observed due to an increase in rainfall compared to 2021. In 2023 and 2024, considered above-average rain years, an estimated population of approximately 46,000 and 36,788 individuals respectively were observed. Such trends are expected, but when the population numbers decline substantially during optimal rainfall years and growing conditions, monitoring results alert DPR that adaptive management strategies need to be implemented. DPR's monitoring efforts on County Preserves are critical to ensuring that MSCP-covered species and habitats are successfully conserved and sustained on DPR preserve lands. However, they do not show the status of the MSCP-covered species and habitats for the entirety of the MSCP Preserve, as County Preserves contribute 17% (approximately 13,729 acres) to the total area within the MSCP Preserve and DPR conducts monitoring on County-owned lands. DPR monitoring efforts and results are provided in detail in the Annual Report.

During the 50-year MSCP permit period, the County and MSCP partners understood that once the MSCP Preserve had reached a large size, the focus on the MSCP Preserve would shift from the assemblage of preserve lands to ensuring that the MSCP Preserve is successfully functioning and meeting the MSCP goals and objectives. As the MSCP Preserve is now 81,566 acres (83% of the preservation goal), DPR is working with its federal, State, and local partners to assess the overall MSCP Preserve goals and objectives. This includes analyzing, from a regional perspective, habitat and species monitoring data across the 81,566 acres. This effort will be ongoing through the term of the permit in 2048.

In addition, the County's MSCP-related acquisitions focus on buying lands that contain high-quality habitat with the intent of conserving species in perpetuity. Since 1998, the County has purchased properties that support 20 MSCP-covered species that were not previously found in other County Preserves. These acquisitions provide long-term protection for the species and ensure that they will not be impacted by other land uses such as development. One example is the acquisition of Lusardi Creek Preserve, which supports a stable population of Del Mar manzanita. Del Mar manzanita is a federally endangered shrub found in the region and in Baja California. By purchasing this property, the County has ensured that the population of Del Mar manzanita will be protected in perpetuity.

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The County provides land stewardship of County Preserves through habitat restoration, invasive plant and animal control, replacement tree planting and inventory, access control, fire management, and environmental education. Land stewardship activities are guided by preserve-specific RMPs, annual work plans, and monitoring activities. RMPs provide guidance for the continued management and protection of biological and cultural resources. Management and maintenance of County Preserves are conducted by staff and volunteers who implement stewardship activities such as installing fencing and signage, patrolling preserve lands, managing public access areas, removing invasive plant species, and planting trees and native vegetation.

Public access to the County Preserves and educational efforts through the MSCP are critical for the region's residents and visitors to learn about the vital role of conservation through passive recreational opportunities. Public access occurs in areas of the County Preserves that will not impact sensitive biological and cultural resources while maximizing visitor enjoyment and balancing the needs of stakeholders. Passive recreation opportunities are determined during the development of preserve-specific RMPs. Visitors are encouraged to connect with nature by accessing the County Preserves on approved trails and through environmental education programs, such as ranger or docent (DPR-trained volunteers) led hikes, as well as informational signs placed along the trails. Environmental education programs include classes on the native flora and fauna found in the San Diego region. DPR field staff and volunteers implement education and informational programs to connect people to nature, thereby allowing residents and visitors to understand the importance of conserving natural resources and helping to inspire the next generation of environmental stewards. The implemented land stewardship activities and the MSCP-covered species and habitats benefited are detailed in the Annual Report.

MSCP South County Subarea Plan Private Mitigation Lands

As a condition of approval, private development projects that impact biological resources are required to prepare RMPs when project mitigation exceeds 50 acres or if a particularly sensitive resource requires active management. The private RMPs are approved by the County Department of Planning & Development Services (PDS). Private RMP annual reports focus on the sensitive resources at each mitigation site and detail the monitoring and habitat management activities implemented during the reporting period. Management activities may include controlling unauthorized access to the mitigation site through fencing, signage, and patrolling. Seven new private RMPs began reporting in 2024, increasing the total number of private RMPs within the South County Subarea from 19 to 26. In 2024, 21 of the 26 (81%) private mitigation land RMP annual reports were submitted to PDS and documented 23 MSCP-covered species. The County continues to evaluate options to improve private RMP annual report submissions from private development, including additional correspondence and meeting requests with responsible entities and individuals, engagement with the land management community for assistance when required, and ensuring easements or management agreements are in place to prevent a lack of reporting.

Draft North County and Future East County MSCP Preserves

In addition to South County Subarea Plan acquisitions, the County acquires important preserve lands for conservation in the draft North County and future East County Plan areas. In 2024, the County acquired 783 acres in the draft North County Plan Area, with no acquisitions in the

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proposed East County Plan Area. From 1998 through December 31, 2024, the County has acquired approximately 28,250 acres of preserve lands in all three plan areas. Approximately 16,600 acres in the draft North County and another 2,820 acres within the proposed East County Plan Areas contribute to the 28,250 acres of conserved preserve lands acquired in the unincorporated area since 1998. These acreage allocations reflect the updated draft North County Plan boundaries.

ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

Today's action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15061(b)(3) and 15378(b)(5) of the State CEQA Guidelines. The action before the Board of Supervisors is to receive the 2024 Multiple Species Conservation Program South County Subarea Plan Annual Report, which is a governmental administrative activity. Therefore, the action is not a project as defined by Section 15378(b)(5) of the State CEQA Guidelines. Additionally, today's action to receive the 2024 Multiple Species Conservation Program South County Plan Annual Report is covered by the commonsense exemption which states that CEQA only applies to projects that have the potential to cause a significant effect on the environment. It can be seen with certainty that today's action will not result in a significant effect on the environment because it is administrative in nature.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's proposed action to receive the 2024 Multiple Species Conservation Program South County Subarea Plan Annual Report supports the Sustainability Initiative in the County of San Diego's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan by promoting natural resource management strategies that ensure environmental preservation and cultivating a natural environment for residents, visitors, and future generations to enjoy.

Respectfully submitted,



DAHVIA LYNCH

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)

Note: Due to the size of the attachments, the documents are available online through the Clerk of the Board's website at www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/cob/bosa.html.

Attachment A – Multiple Species Conservation Program South County Subarea Plan Annual Report (Year 27)

Attachment B – MSCP Covered Species List

Attachment C – MSCP Covered Species on County Preserves and Current Status