

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS - LAND USE
WEDNESDAY, MAY 24, 2023**

MINUTE ORDER NO. 6

**SUBJECT: 2022 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, community stakeholders, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and 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).

The South County Subarea MSCP Preserve goal of 98,379 acres was determined by the area needed to successfully conserve populations of MSCP covered species, associated high-quality habitats, and wildlife linkages between large, conserved areas. Habitat that is mostly intact or has not been degraded by impacts such as from development activities or a high frequency of fires is generally considered to be high-quality. 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 habitat would not be impacted.

In addition to the adopted South County Subarea Plan, there are two additional MSCP plan areas in the unincorporated area: 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. 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. 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 the MSCP, development applicants can rely on the County's permits under the Federal Endangered 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.

The South County Subarea Plan Implementing Agreement (IA) between the County and Wildlife Agencies became effective on March 17, 1998. Per the IA, the County prepares an annual report that includes information about habitat gained through acquisitions or dedications of preserve lands, habitat lost due to development, and the management and monitoring efforts performed to ensure the assembled MSCP Preserve is functioning successfully. The 2022 MSCP South County Subarea Plan

Annual Report (Annual Report) summarizes habitat gains and losses as well as County management and monitoring programs within the South County Subarea Plan boundaries for the period of January 1, 2022, through December 31, 2022.

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) implements the MSCP in all three MSCP planning areas through land acquisition, management, and monitoring of preserve lands to ensure preservation of sensitive species and habitat. The acquisition criteria for County preserve land includes high-quality habitat and biodiversity, biological connectivity, access, and value. DPR works closely with an enterprise-wide acquisition roundtable team to analyze potential acquisitions from a multi-faceted perspective to ensure alignment with the County's sustainability programs including the Climate Action Plan (CAP) update, water quality protection, and Regional Decarbonization Framework (RDF). County departments participating in the acquisition roundtable include Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Public Works, Department of Environmental Health and Quality, Planning & Development Services, Agriculture, Weights and Measures, Department of General Services, and Office of Sustainability and Environmental Justice.

In 2022, 132 acres of land were added to the MSCP Preserve through County and local non-profit partner acquisitions and private development mitigation. The County has successfully implemented the South County Subarea Plan for 25 years, with the assembled 80,108 acres of the MSCP Preserve, which represents 81% of the 98,379-acre conservation goal. Federal, State, County, and local non-profit partner acquisitions, as well as private development mitigation all contribute to the assemblage of the MSCP Preserve.

As stated in the Annual Report, since 1998 and through December 31, 2022, the County has acquired approximately 26,670 acres of preserve lands within the County's adopted MSCP South County Subarea, the draft North County, and future East County Plan Areas. During this time, approximately \$233 million has been spent on County acquisitions in all three MSCP Plan areas, of which approximately \$136 million is from County funding and \$96 million is from partnering organizations and grants. Since 1998 through December 31, 2022, the County's contribution towards the MSCP Preserve is approximately 13,380 acres and includes baseline acquisitions made prior to 1998 and acquisitions after 1998 through December 31, 2022.

The South County Subarea Plan has 85 covered species within the MSCP Plan area 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. 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. In addition to the monitoring on County Preserves, 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 80,108 acres. This effort will be ongoing through the term of the permit.

Today's requested action is to receive the 2022 Annual Report. The Annual Report highlights the monitoring efforts conducted for sensitive plant and animal species within the South County Subarea Plan boundaries that ensures long-term viability of habitat and species. In addition, the Annual Report highlights land stewardship activities for preserve lands, such as installing fencing and signage, patrolling preserve lands, managing public access areas, treating invasive species, and planting trees and vegetation. Through implementation of the County's 2018 Climate Action Plan measures, conservation of preserve lands from 2015-2022 has reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 9,457 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent. This reduction is comparable to eliminating the GHG emissions produced by about 2,038 gasoline powered vehicles driven over one year, representing over 23,474,218 million miles driven.

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 2022 Multiple Species Conservation Program South County Subarea Plan Annual Report (Year 25) (Attachment A).

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Implementation of the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) South County Subarea Plan will ensure 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 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 2022 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

ACTION:

ON MOTION of Supervisor Anderson, seconded by Supervisor Desmond, the Board of Supervisors took action as recommended, on Consent.

AYES: Vargas, Anderson, Desmond

NOT PRESENT: Lawson-Remer

ABSENT: (District 4 Seat Vacant)

State of California)

County of San Diego) §

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of the Original entered in the Minutes of the Board of Supervisors.

ANDREW POTTER

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors



Signed

by Andrew Potter