

SECTION 3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

3.1 EXISTING INFORMATION

Three primary sources of information were used to describe the existing biological conditions in Escondido: (1) the regional MHCP digital database, developed by Ogden Environmental and Energy Services Co., Inc. (Ogden) and the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG); (2) environmental documents provided by the City of Escondido; and (3) A Guide to the Sensitive Plants and Animals of Escondido (Dillane et al. 1995). The regional database provided the following layers: vegetation communities, sensitive species locations (primarily sightings from 1985 through 1994), roads and parcel boundaries, and topographic and other features. This database was updated in 1998 using recent environmental documents provided by the City of Escondido. These documents included environmental impact reports, biological technical reports, letter reports detailing results of biological surveys, mitigation plans, and habitat management plans that provided sensitive species locations and vegetation maps.

Potential wildlife movement corridors and habitat linkages were evaluated using vegetation maps, sensitive species locations, MHCP habitat evaluation maps, aerial photographs, and a discussion paper entitled *Potential Biotic Corridors in the Escondido Area* (Dudek & Associates and Michael Brandman Associates 1991). Factors considered in this assessment included topography, quantity and quality of native habitats, and the location and biological requirements of target species. Additional details on methodology are provided in the MHCP Plan.

3.2 DISTRIBUTION OF NATURAL HABITATS IN ESCONDIDO

Located approximately 12 miles from the coast in northern San Diego County, the City of Escondido is a biologically unique area where inland flora and fauna integrate with more coastal forms. The Escondido subarea is a largely urban environment of approximately 24,624 acres, of which approximately 9,206 acres support natural habitats (Table 3-1; Figure 3-1). Within Escondido, a variety of factors, including local climate, soils, and topography, interact to produce distinct vegetation communities. The most abundant vegetation community in Escondido is chaparral, followed in order of decreasing

Table 3-1

**ACREAGE OF ESCONDIDO SUBAREA PLAN VEGETATION
COMMUNITIES WITHIN THE MHCP STUDY AREA AND
BIOLOGICAL CORE AND LINKAGE AREA (BCLA)**

Vegetation Community	Total Escondido Subarea Plan MHCP Study Area (acres)	Inside BCLA	
		Acres	% of BCLA Habitat in Escondido MHCP Study Area
Coastal Sage Scrub	2,252	1,731	77%
Chaparral	4,758	4,503	95%
Coastal Sage/Chaparral Mix	52	40	77%
Grassland	597	447	75%
Freshwater Marsh	37	24	65%
Riparian Forest	268	72	27%
Riparian Scrub	132	43	33%
Engelmann Oak Woodland	206	183	89%
Coast Live Oak Woodland	601	557	93%
Freshwater	239	227	95%
Disturbed Wetland	23	-	0%
Natural Floodchannel/Streambed	41	41	100%
Subtotal Natural Habitats	9,206	7,870	85%
Agriculture	2,091	-	-
Eucalyptus Woodland	94	-	-
Disturbed	105	-	-
Subtotal Other Vacant Land	2,290	-	-
Developed	13,127	-	-
TOTAL	24,624	-	-

Note: Numbers may not sum to totals as shown, due to rounding.

MHCP = Multiple Habitat Conservation Program

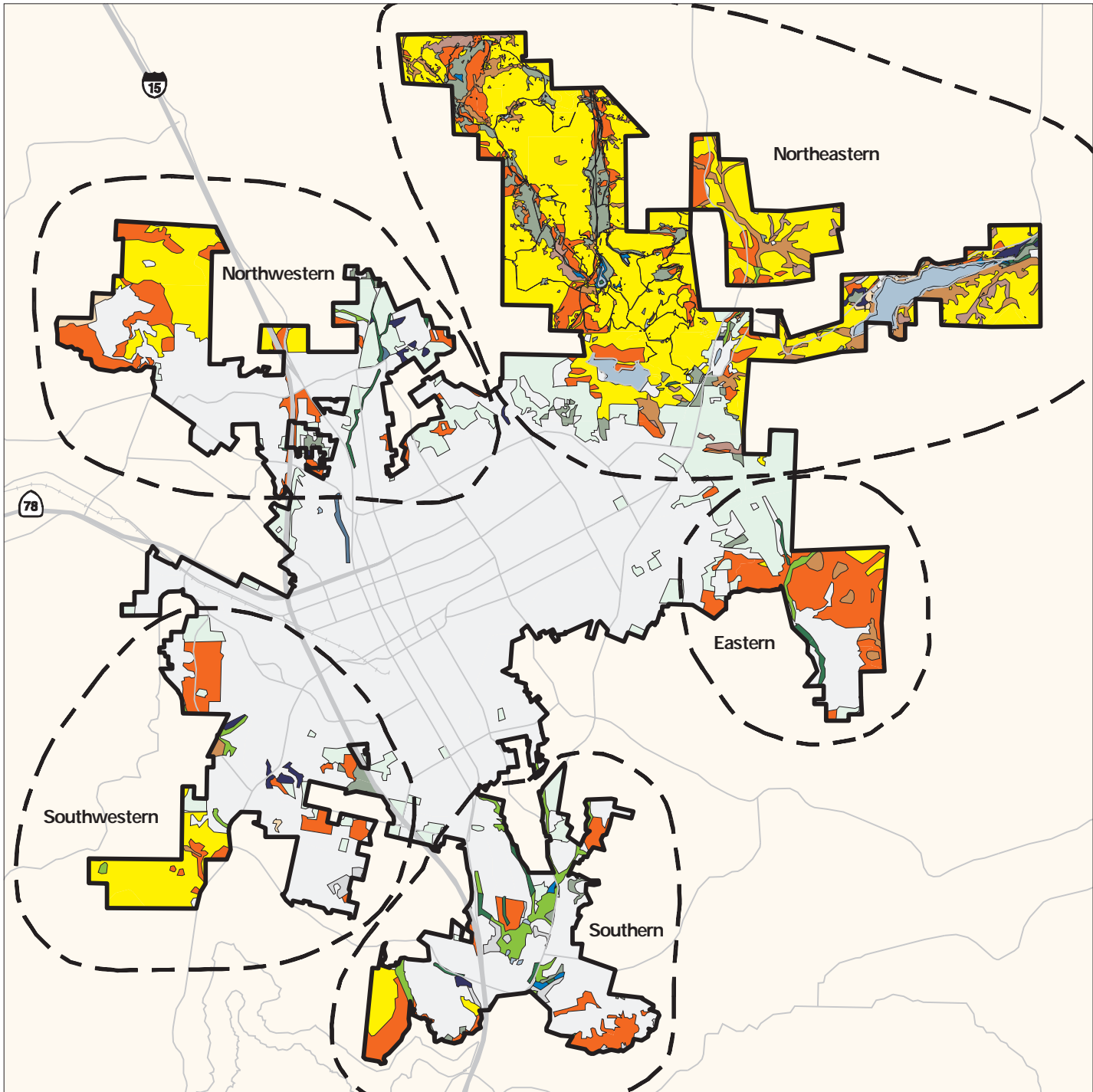
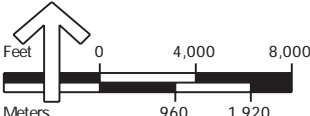


Figure 3-1
City of Escondido Subarea Plan
Vegetation Communities

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| Coastal Sage Scrub | Freshwater Marsh | Engelmann Oak Woodland | Disturbed Land |
| Chaparral | Riparian Forest | Eucalyptus Woodland | Agriculture |
| Coastal Sage/Chaparral Mix | Riparian Scrub | Open Water | Urban/Developed |
| Grassland | Coast Live Oak Woodland | Disturbed Wetland | |



abundance by coastal sage scrub, oak woodlands, grassland, and riparian habitats. In Escondido, stands of chaparral, coastal sage scrub, grassland, and wetland habitats that occur north of Dixon Reservoir have been identified as major stands in the MHCP. Stands of oak woodland, both north and south of Dixon Reservoir and at Lake Wohlford, are considered critical locations for conservation of this vegetation community in the MHCP (Ogden 1998).

A Guide to the Sensitive Plants and Animals of Escondido (Dillane et al. 1995) provides a description of each of the major vegetation communities occurring within the city, including a list of the dominant plant species and the typical wildlife species associated with each vegetation community.

Habitats regulated by the CDFG, USFWS, and ACOE within the planning area include coastal sage scrub, freshwater marsh, riparian habitats, and habitats that are known to support species listed under either state or federal ESAs. In total, there are about 460 acres of wetland habitats in Escondido (plus approximately 41 acres of natural floodchannel/streambed and 239 acres of open water) and about 2,300 acres of coastal sage scrub and coastal sage/chaparral mix.

Due to the high degree of urbanization in the central portions of Escondido, the only large blocks of natural habitats remaining in the city occur on its outer perimeter. Five large areas of natural habitats, located in the northeastern, eastern, southern, southwestern, and northwestern portions of the city (Figure 3-1), contain the vast majority of the city's remaining open space and have been identified as part of the BCLA for the MHCP. These core areas, particularly those in the northeastern and southern portions of the city, also contribute to regional landscape linkages that connect a number of diverse and sensitive habitats, plants, and animals between northern San Diego County's coastal environments and its more interior and drier foothill habitats.

The MHCP habitat evaluation model map, along with the MHCP database of target species information, vegetation communities, and basic tenets of preserve design, were used to develop the BCLA for the MHCP planning area (see MHCP Plan). The regional BCLA was used unrevised for the Escondido Subarea Plan because it was found to be an adequate representation of important biological areas for subarea planning as well (Figure 3-2). The BCLA is roughly equivalent to a biologically preferred preserve

alternative because it identifies all large, contiguous areas of habitat and all important functional linkages and movement corridors between them. The BCLA is also a starting point and an analytical tool for designing the preserve system. Table 3-1 summarizes acreages of vegetation communities in the BCLA.

The following sections describe each core area of natural habitat in the Escondido planning area, including each area's representative vegetation communities, the contribution each area may make as part of a regional linkage or wildlife movement corridor, and the federally or state listed species each area is known to support.

3.2.1 Northeastern Habitat Area

Northeast Escondido contains the largest, most contiguous block of natural habitats in the planning area. The majority of these natural lands are on the city's Daley Ranch property, which encompasses approximately 3,058 acres; city-owned water district property at Lake Wohlford and along Valley Center Road; and Lake Dixon and its surrounding native habitats. Dominant vegetation communities in the northeast portion of the city include chaparral, coastal sage scrub, oak woodland, and grassland. Other natural habitats include open water and riparian communities. The northeastern habitat area's large size and connection to even larger areas of undeveloped land in the unincorporated area east of Escondido make this one of the few areas in the MHCP capable of supporting such wide-ranging species as southern mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus fuliginata*), mountain lion (*Felis concolor*), and golden eagle. Other key resources associated with the northeast core include permanent water sources, such as Lake Dixon and Lake Wohlford, and oak woodlands. The Engelmann oak and coast live oak woodlands in this area are recognized in the MHCP as a critical location for Cooper's hawk populations. The northeast core is also considered a critical location for golden eagle foraging.

Although California gnatcatchers have occasionally been sighted in this area, coastal sage scrub habitats in the northeast core are generally considered suboptimal for the gnatcatcher because they are situated at the eastern edge of the species' distribution and above the typical elevational range of the species in San Diego County. The resulting climatic conditions (lower temperatures) constrain the gnatcatcher's ability to utilize these areas throughout the year. Only one gnatcatcher locality has been recorded in this

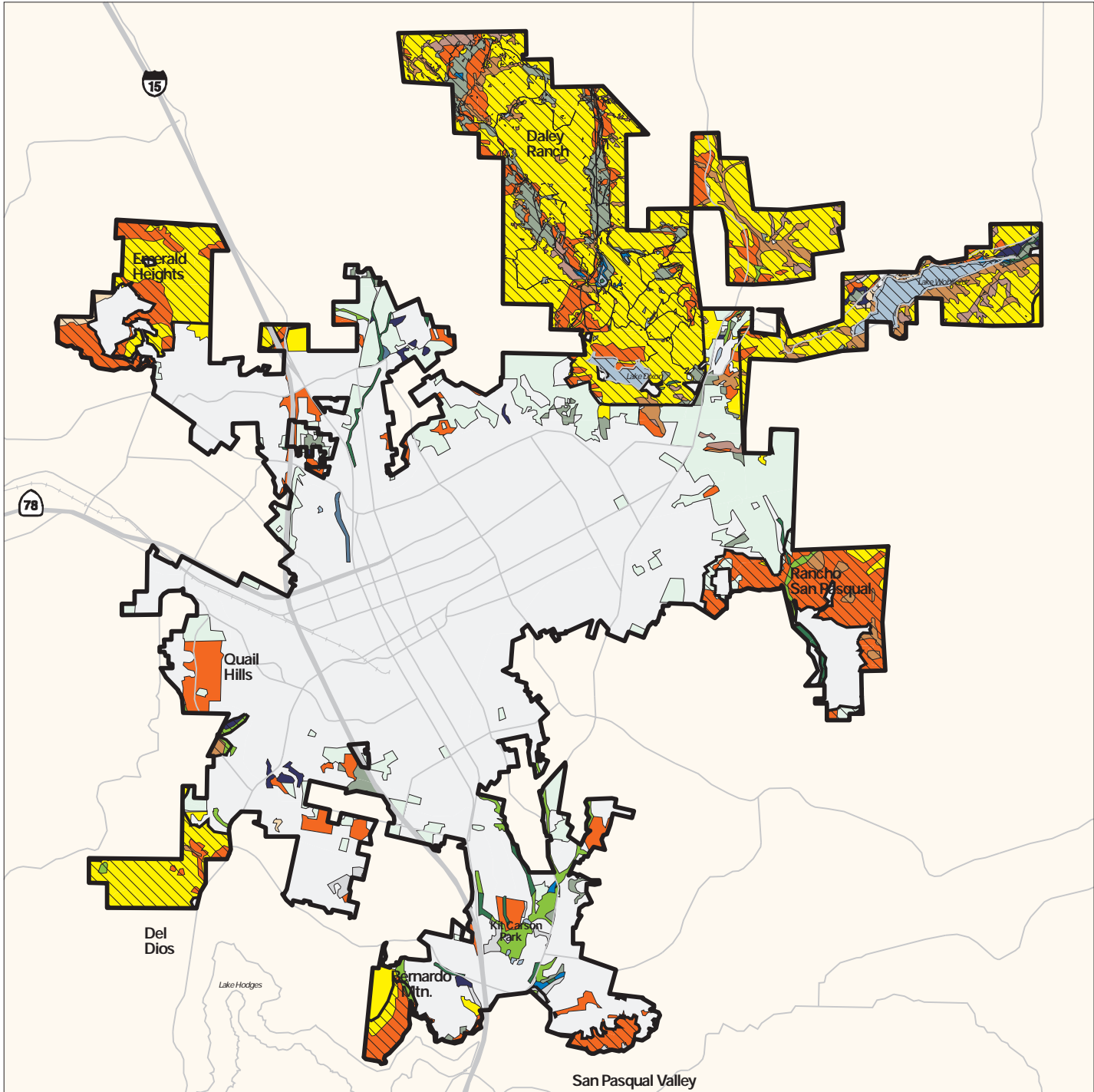
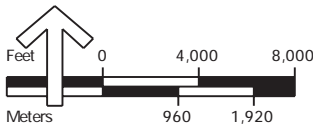


Figure 3-2
City of Escondido Subarea Plan
Vegetation Communities Inside the Biological Core & Linkage Area (BCLA)

- | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| Coastal Sage Scrub | Freshwater Marsh | Engelmann Oak Woodland | Disturbed Land |
| Chaparral | Riparian Forest | Eucalyptus Woodland | Agriculture |
| Coastal Sage/Chaparral Mix | Riparian Scrub | Open Water | Urban/Developed |
| Grassland | Coast Live Oak Woodland | Disturbed Wetland | Inside the BCLA |



area despite extensive surveys there. The northeastern habitat area is immediately adjacent to the North County Subarea of the MSCP.

3.2.2 Eastern Habitat Area

Coastal sage scrub is the dominant vegetation community in the eastern portion of the planning area. Large patches of coastal sage scrub extend beyond the city's boundary and into the planning areas for the City and County of San Diego subarea plans. Other important resources in this area include patches of oak woodland and riparian habitats associated with Cloverdale Creek, a north-south drainage that provides wildlife movement. Although the cactus wren and least Bell's vireo are the only priority species documented from this area, multiple California gnatcatcher sightings occur outside the city boundaries to the south and east. Due to the close proximity of breeding gnatcatchers and the ongoing recovery of coastal sage scrub in portions of the eastern core, this area likely contains potential breeding and dispersal value for the species. The eastern habitat area is comprised largely of Rancho San Pasqual, which has been partially developed, and open space area to the west, owned by the Rancho San Pasqual Homeowners Association. As of September 2000, it is assumed that the 1,590-acre Valley View property to the east of Rancho San Pasqual is not a part of the Escondido Subarea Plan. Approximately the southern two-thirds of the property is within the County's approved MSCP Subarea Plan, and would be reviewed for compliance with the County's Implementing Agreement. The northern one-third of the property is within the County's future North County MSCP Subarea. The eastern habitat area is west and adjacent to the City of San Diego MSCP boundary.

3.2.3 Southern Habitat Area

Natural habitats in the southern portion of the planning area are patchily distributed along the western end of the San Pasqual Valley, the northern shore of Lake Hodges, and in the vicinity of Kit Carson Park. Coastal sage scrub, chaparral, riparian habitats, and oak woodland are the dominant communities. The natural habitats bordering Lake Hodges and the San Pasqual Valley contribute to one of the largest, continuous blocks of habitat in San Diego County, providing a major east-west regional corridor along the San Dieguito River, much of which is conserved through the MSCP. These habitats also support a major population of wart-stemmed ceanothus and important gnatcatcher and

cactus wren populations that contribute significantly to regional population centers both east and west of Interstate 15. The cactus wren locations in the area are listed as critical in the MHCP.

The naturally vegetated slopes above the western portion of San Pasqual Valley buffer the floodplain and riparian communities associated with the San Dieguito River. The riparian and floodplain communities provide important habitat for raptors such as burrowing owl, golden eagle, and northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*); shorebirds, such as long-billed curlew and mountain plover (*Charadrius montanus*); and riparian woodland specialists, such as least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*). To the north of the San Pasqual Valley, potential least Bell's vireo breeding habitat has been identified in Kit Carson Park, and the MHCP database indicates one vireo point locality in this area. Some of the sage scrub in Kit Carson Park is occupied by the California gnatcatcher.

The southern habitat area is comprised of Kit Carson Park, Vineyard at Escondido Golf Course, and various privately owned parcels including Bernardo Mountain, Tract 514, and parcels in the Sonata area. Three small creeks run south along Bear Valley Parkway, through Kit Carson Park and the golf course. There are several large patches of riparian forest along these creeks in this area.

3.2.4 Southwestern Habitat Area

Chaparral and coastal sage scrub dominate the southwest portion of Escondido, with small amounts of oak woodland and riparian habitats. Although coastal sage scrub habitats in this area are known to support at least eight pairs of California gnatcatchers, sage scrub habitats in this area are not well connected to regionally important core populations or linkages, especially within the Quail Hills Specific Plan Area. Encinitas baccharis (*Baccharis vanessae*), an MHCP narrow endemic and a federally and state listed species, is also known from the Mount Israel/Del Dios area in the southwestern portion of the planning area. The MSCP planning area is to the south and west of the southwestern habitat area.

The southwestern habitat area encompasses the privately owned Montreux parcel and parcels in the Del Dios area, including the Dorn-Rogers property and Tract 725. The

Quail Hills industrial area (Tract 677-R) occurs in the Moorhen portion of this habitat area and is dominated by coastal sage scrub. The city-owned Summer Creek property also occurs in this southwestern area. Escondido Creek is constrained by existing development in this habitat area, although there is one relatively short segment of riparian forest habitat.

3.2.5 Northwestern Habitat Area

Natural habitats in the northwestern portion of Escondido are dominated by chaparral and coastal sage scrub. Because the northwest core area is constrained by urban development to the south and agricultural lands to the north and west, the opportunity for this area to function as a regional wildlife movement corridor has been constrained. Priority species occurring in the northwest core include California gnatcatcher (i.e., two localities in the MHCP database and two adjacent to the area) and San Diego thornmint. The North County MSCP subarea is north of this habitat area.

The northwestern habitat area is made up of privately owned parcels including Escondido Highlands, Country Club Woods, and parcels around North Centre City Parkway/Nutmeg, as well as the city-owned Jesmond Dene Park and MacLeod Park. Several sections of Reidy Creek still retain a moderate amount of riparian scrub habitat.

3.3 SENSITIVE SPECIES

Volume II of the MHCP Plan (Ogden 2000) and the MHCP Biological Goals, Standards, and Guidelines (Ogden 1998) provide biological information on each of the 77 MHCP species (48 animals and 29 plants), including the 47 species (32 animals and 15 plants) that occur or potentially occur in Escondido and therefore are evaluated for coverage under the Escondido Subarea Plan (discussed in Section 4.2). MHCP Volume II provides information for each species regarding their conservation status, distribution, habitat requirements, locations of major and critical populations or habitat areas, threats to species' survival, and special considerations for preserve design and management. Populations identified as major populations are those considered sufficiently large to be self-sustaining with a minimum of active or intensive management intervention, and hence are important to preserve design. Critical locations are those areas that must be substantially conserved for a species to be considered covered by the MHCP or a subarea

plan. Critical locations may include major or important populations as well as areas otherwise critical to species' conservation, such as key corridors, linkages, or nesting sites. Section 4 of MHCP Volume II provides maps for each individual species and depicts observations and major/critical locations.

Species' locations in the GIS database represent documented survey localities. The documented localities for plant species represent either individual specimens or discrete populations. Documented localities for wildlife species represent either individuals, or in the case of birds, individuals or pairs. Due to inconsistent survey methods, surveys conducted over an approximate 10-year period, and the existence of properties that have not been comprehensively surveyed, the localities in the MHCP database for these species do not represent population estimates.

3.3.1 Sensitive Plants

Of the 29 plant species being considered for coverage under the MHCP, 15 are known to occur or have the potential to occur in Escondido, based on known ranges and habitat affinities (Table 3-2), including three federal/state listed MHCP narrow endemic species, San Diego thornmint (*Acanthomintha ilicifolia*), Encinitas baccharis, and thread-leaved brodiaea (*Brodiaea filifolia*). In 1992, a critical location of San Diego thornmint was noted within open space managed by Palos Vista (now called Emerald Heights) about 0.25 mile from a previous population that was transplanted to the Wild Animal Park in 1988 (Dillane et al. 1995). Encinitas baccharis occurs in the Mount Israel/Del Dios area (Dillane et al. 1995) in the southwestern portion of the city, although no specific mapping is available. Pacific Southwest Biological Services (PSBS) searched for but did not find Encinitas baccharis on the 80-acre Rogers-Del Dios property (PSBS 1991). Thread-leaved brodiaea has the potential to occur in Escondido but has not been recorded.

Major populations of four MHCP plant species occur in Escondido (Ogden 1998): San Diego thornmint, wart-stemmed ceanothus (*Ceanothus verrucosus*), and summer holly (*Comarostaphylis diversifolia* ssp. *diversifolia*) in the southern and southwestern areas of the city and Engelmann oak (*Quercus engelmannii*) on Daley Ranch and other locations in the northeastern areas of the city.

Table 3-2

**MHCP SPECIES OCCURRING OR POTENTIALLY OCCURRING IN ESCONDIDO
(based on MHCP database and Dillane et al. 1995)**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status ¹	CNPS, RED List, Code ²	Habitat ³	Localities in MHCP Database in Escondido
Plants					
<i>Acanthomintha ilicifolia</i> ⁿ	San Diego Thornmint	FE/CE	1B, 2-3-2	G, CSS	1
<i>Ambrosia pumila</i>	San Diego Ambrosia	FSC */	1B, 3-3-2	CSS	
<i>Arctostaphylos glandulosa</i> ssp. <i>crassifolia</i>	Del Mar Manzanita	FE/	1B, 3-3-2	SMC	
<i>Baccharis vanessae</i> ⁿ	Encinitas Baccharis	FT/CE	1B, 2-3-3	CHP	not mapped
<i>Brodiaea filifolia</i>	Thread-leaved Brodiaea	FT/CE	1B, 3-3-3	VP, G, seeps, wet meadows	
<i>Brodiaea orcuttii</i>	Orcutt's Brodiaea	FSC */	1B, 1-3-2	VP, G, seeps, wet meadows	4
<i>Ceanothus verrucosus</i>	Wart-stemmed Ceanothus	FSC */	2, 1-2-1	CHP, SMC	29
<i>Comarostaphylys diversifolia</i> ssp. <i>diversifolia</i>	Summer holly	FSC */	1B, 2-2-2	CHP	6
<i>Dudleya variegata</i>	Variegated Dudleya	FSC */	1B, 2-2-2	CSS	
<i>Dudleya viscida</i>	Sticky Dudleya	FSC */	1B, 3-2-3	CSS, CHP	
<i>Ferocactus viridescens</i>	San Diego Barrel Cactus	FSC */	2, 1-3-1	CSS, CHP, MSS	
<i>Iva hayesiana</i>	San Diego Marsh-elder	FSC */	2, 2-2-1	AM, RP	
<i>Muilla clevelandii</i> ⁿ	San Diego Goldenstar	FSC */	1B, 2-2-2	G, CHP, CSS (openings)	
<i>Quercus engelmannii</i>	Engelmann Oak	None	4, 1-2-2	CHP, CLOW, G	72
<i>Tetracoccus dioicus</i>	Parry's Tetracoccus	FSC */	1B, 3-2-2	CHP, CSS	not mapped
Invertebrates					
<i>Euphyes vestris harbisoni</i>	Harbison's Dun Skipper	FSC */		RW, RS, OW (rip)	3
<i>Lycaena hermes</i>	Hermes Copper	FSC */		CSS, CHP	
<i>Euphydryas editha quino</i>	Quino Checkerspot	FE/		CSS, VP, NG	
Amphibians and Reptiles					
<i>Scaphiopus hammondii</i>	Western Spadefoot Toad	/CSC		Aquatic, G	2
<i>Rana aurora draytonii</i>	California Red-legged Frog	FT/CSC		Aquatic, RP	
<i>Clemmys marmorata pallida</i>	Southwestern Pond Turtle	FSC */CSC		Aquatic, RP	1
<i>Phrynosoma coronatum blainvillei</i>	San Diego Horned Lizard	FSC */CSC		CSS, CHP	15
<i>Cnemidophorus hyperythrus beldingi</i>	Orange-throated Whiptail	FSC */CSC		CSS, CHP, G	10
Birds					
<i>Plegadis chihi</i>	White-faced Ibis	FSC */CSC		Estuaries, SM	1
<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Northern Harrier	/CSC		G, SM, FWM, AG, open CSS	1

Table 3-2 (Continued)

**MHCP SPECIES OCCURRING OR POTENTIALLY OCCURRING IN ESCONDIDO
(based on MHCP database and Dillane et al. 1995)**

Scientific Name	Common Name	Status ¹	CNPS, RED List, Code ²	Habitat ³	Localities in MHCP Database in Escondido
Birds (continued)					
<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>	Cooper's Hawk	/CSC		RW, OW (breeding)	4
<i>Numenius americanus</i>	Long-billed Curlew	FSC */CSC		SM, mudflats, G, fallow AG	1
<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	Golden Eagle	BEPA/CSC		CSS, CHP, G	7
<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Osprey	/CSC		Open water, wetland	2
<i>Speotyto cunicularia hypugaea</i>	Burrowing Owl	FSC */CSC		G, coastal strand, AG	
<i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>	Southwestern Willow Flycatcher	FE/CE		RW	
<i>Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus cousei</i>	Coastal Cactus Wren	FSC */CSC		CSS, cactus patches	25
<i>Polioptila californica californica</i>	California Gnatcatcher	FT/CSC		CSS	21
<i>Sialia mexicana</i>	Western Bluebird	None		OW (edges), G	1
<i>Vireo bellii pusillus</i>	Least Bell's Vireo	FE/CE		RW	1
<i>Icteria virens</i>	Yellow-breasted Chat	/CSC		RW	1
<i>Aimophila ruficeps canescens</i>	Rufous-crowned Sparrow	FSC */CSC		CSS	10
<i>Amphispiza belli belli</i>	Bell's Sage Sparrow	FSC */CSC		CSS, CHP	5
<i>Ammodramus savannarum</i>	Grasshopper Sparrow	None		G	1
<i>Agelaius tricolor</i>	Tricolored Blackbird	FSC */CSC		FWM, G, AG	2
Mammals					
<i>Corynorhinus townsendii pallescens</i>	Townsend's Western Big- eared Bat	FSC */CSC		Caves, mines, buildings, OW, RW, CHP	
<i>Eumops perotis californicus</i>	California Mastiff Bat	FSC */CSC		Cliffs, crevices, CHP, G, CSS	
<i>Dipodomys stephensi</i>	Stephens' Kangaroo Rat	FE/CT		G, sparse CSS	
<i>Chaetodipus fallax fallax</i>	Northwestern San Diego Pocket Mouse	FSC */CSC		CSS, CHP, G	
<i>Lepus californicus bennettii</i>	San Diego Black-tailed Jackrabbit	FSC */CSC		CSS, G, CHP	1
<i>Felis concolor</i>	Mountain Lion	CA protected		CSS, CHP, RW	
<i>Odocoileus hemionus fuliginata</i>	Southern Mule Deer	CA game species		CHP, CSS, RW	3

Table 3-2 (Continued)

**MHCP SPECIES OCCURRING OR POTENTIALLY OCCURRING IN ESCONDIDO
(based on MHCP database and Dillane et al. 1995)**

n = narrow endemic plants as determined by MHCP process

¹Status (Federal/State)

FE = Federally endangered
PE = Proposed for federal listing as endangered
FT = Federally threatened
PT = Proposed for federal listing as threatened
C = Candidate for federal listing
BEPA = Bald Eagle Protection Act
CE = State endangered
CT = State threatened
CSC = State Species of Special Concern
FSC * = Federal Species of Concern; formerly Category 2 or Category 3 candidate or proposed for federal listing
FSC † = Federal Species of Concern; proposed rule to list as endangered or threatened has been withdrawn
protected = moratorium on hunting
none = no federal or state status

²California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Status

List of Species Designation

1B = Rare or endangered in California and elsewhere (meets CDFG criteria for rare or endangered listing)
2 = Rare or endangered in California, more common elsewhere
3 = Plants about which more information is needed
4 = Plants of limited distribution

R-E-D Code

R - Rarity

1 = Rare, but found in sufficient numbers and distributed widely enough that the potential for extinction or extirpation is low
2 = Occurrences confined to several populations or one extended population
3 = Occurrence limited to one or a few highly restricted populations, or present in such small numbers that it is seldom reported

E - Endangerment

1 = Not endangered
2 = Endangered in a portion of its range
3 = Endangered throughout its range

D - Distribution

1 = More or less widespread outside California
2 = Rare outside California
3 = Endemic to California

³Habitat (Holland 1986)

AG = Agriculture
AM = Alkali marsh
CB = Coastal bluff scrub
CHP = Chaparral
CLOW = Coast live oak woodland
CSS = Coastal sage scrub
FWM = Freshwater marsh
G = Grassland
MSS = Maritime succulent scrub
OW = Oak woodland
RF = Riparian forest
RP = Riparian
RS = Riparian scrub
RW = Riparian woodland
SM = Salt marsh
SMC = Southern maritime chaparral
VP = Vernal pool

3.3.2 Sensitive Wildlife

Of the 48 animal species being considered for coverage under the MHCP, 32 are known to occur or have the potential to occur in Escondido based on known ranges and habitat affinities (Table 3-2). Escondido supports critical locations for six wildlife species (Ogden 1998): Harbison's dun skipper (*Euphyes vestris harbisoni*), southwestern pond turtle (*Clemmys marmorata pallida*), coastal cactus wren, Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) (based on potential foraging habitat), and burrowing owl (*Speotyto cunicularia hypugaea*) (based on potential habitat). MHCP Volume II (2000) provides detailed descriptions of these species and the critical locations.

Coastal Cactus Wren Distribution

Escondido supports the only major population of cactus wrens and the only critical locations for the species' conservation in the MHCP planning area. In total, 25 cactus wren localities have been documented in Escondido, with almost all localities on the south-facing slopes of the San Dieguito River Valley (San Pasqual Valley) (Figure 3-3). All currently known cactus wren localities in Escondido are within the BCLA. The cactus wrens in the Escondido planning area and the coastal sage scrub habitats that support them contribute significantly to the Lake Hodges/San Pasqual Valley population of cactus wrens, one of the largest and most important core populations for the species remaining in San Diego County. In an effort to contribute to the regional stability of this species, significant conservation of existing cactus wren localities is a primary focus of the Escondido Subarea Plan.

California Gnatcatcher Distribution

California gnatcatchers are distributed in remnant patches of coastal sage scrub in Escondido (Figure 3-3). Approximately 21 gnatcatcher localities have been documented within the Escondido planning area; approximately 50 percent of these are in the BCLA. Although no critical locations or major populations of California gnatcatchers have been identified in Escondido (per MHCP Standards and Guidelines), gnatcatchers on the south-facing slopes of the San Dieguito River Valley contribute to the regional core

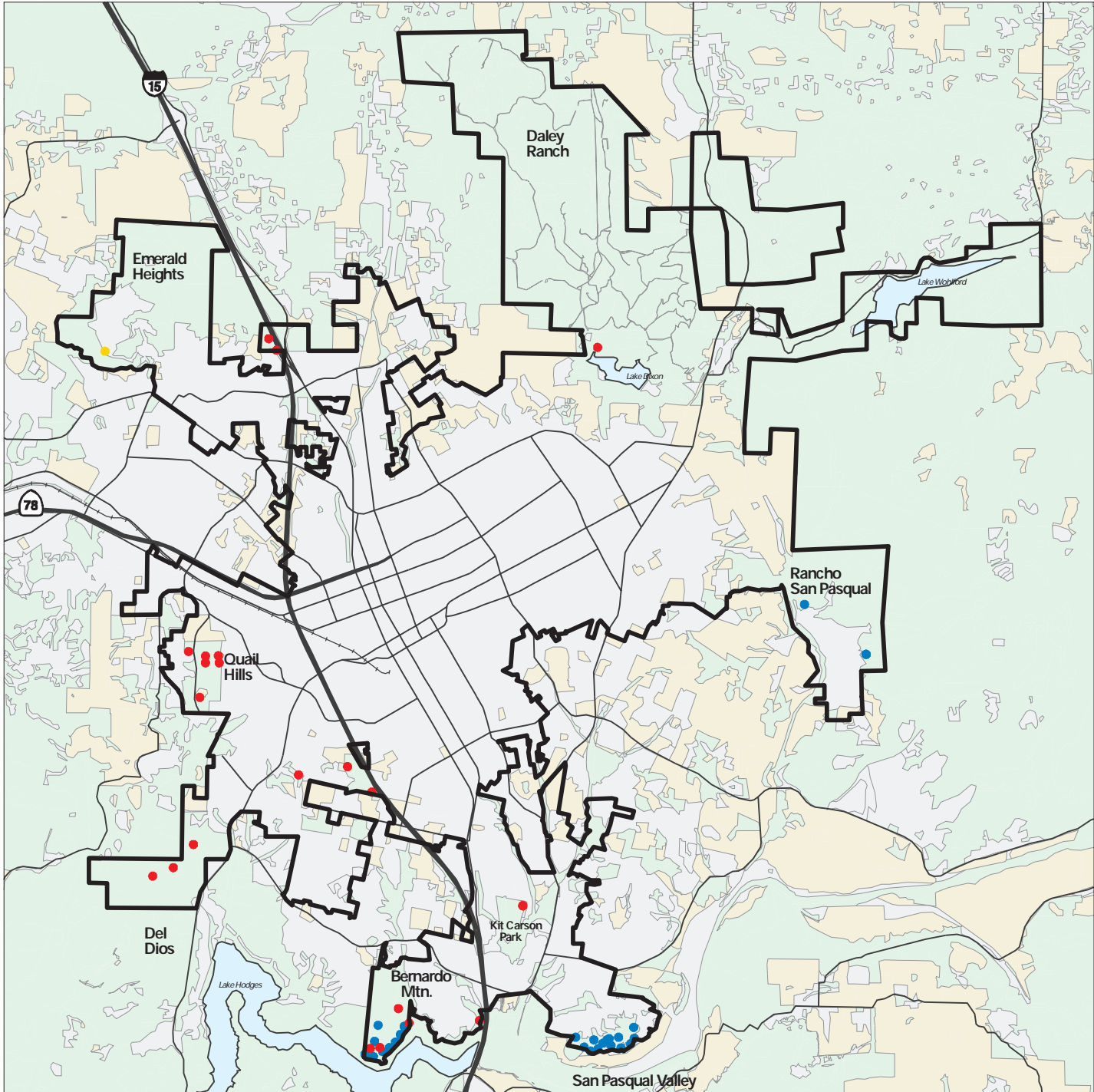
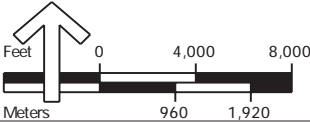


Figure 3-3
City of Escondido Subarea Plan
Locations of Gnatcatchers, Cactus Wrens & Narrow Endemics

- Natural Habitats
- Agricultural Land
- Developed and Disturbed Land
- California Gnatcatcher
- Coastal Cactus Wren
- Narrow Endemic (San Diego thorn-mint)



population of this species in the Lake Hodges/San Pasqual Valley area. In the vicinity of Interstate 15, the Lake Hodges/San Pasqual Valley linkage is constrained by urban development, both to the north and to the south. The gnatcatcher-occupied coastal sage scrub that remains on the adjacent slopes of the valley in this constrained section is critical to the species' demographic connectivity in this region. Because of their high biological value, substantial conservation of these habitats in the northern portion of the valley is an important goal of the Escondido Subarea Plan.

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