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# MEETING NOTICE AND AGENDA

## ENVIRONMENTAL MITIGATION PROGRAM (EMP) WORKING GROUP

The Environmental Mitigation Program Working Group may take action on any item appearing on this agenda.

October 10, 2006

1 to 3 p.m.

SANDAG Board Room  
 401 B Street, Suite 800  
 San Diego, CA 92101-4231

Staff Contact: Keith Greer  
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### AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

- CONTINUED DISCUSSION ON FISCAL YEAR 2007 MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING ACTIVITIES AND FIVE-YEAR FUNDING STRATEGY
- CONTINUED DISCUSSION ON THE RECOMMENDATION FROM THE ACQUISITION OPPORTUNITIES SUBGROUP

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# ENVIRONMENTAL MITIGATION PROGRAM (EMP) WORKING GROUP

October 10, 2006

ITEM #		RECOMMENDATION
1.	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Chair, Councilmember Carrie Downey, City of Coronado)	
+2.	SEPTEMBER 12, 2006, MEETING SUMMARY  Review and approve the meeting summary of the September 12, 2006, meeting.	APPROVE
3.	PUBLIC COMMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS  Members of the public will have the opportunity to address the Environmental Mitigation Program (EMP) Working Group on any issue within the jurisdiction of the EMP Working Group. Speakers are limited to three minutes each.	COMMENT
+4.	CONTINUED DISCUSSION FOR FISCAL YEAR 2007 MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING ACTIVITIES AND FIVE-YEAR FUNDING STRATEGY  The EMP Working Group will continue to discuss recommendations made by the Management and Monitoring subgroup and presented at the September EMP Working Group meeting. The subgroup has identified management and monitoring activities that should be pursued over the next five years as economic benefit funds become available. The EMP Working Group will discuss recommendations for potential fiscal year 2007 funding, as well a five-year funding strategy.	DISCUSSION/ACTION
+5.	CONTINUED DISCUSSION ON THE RECOMMENDATION FROM THE ACQUISITION OPPORTUNITIES SUBGROUP (Vice Chair Tom Oberbauer)  The EMP Working Group will continue to discuss recommendations made by the Acquisition Opportunities subgroup and presented at the September EMP Working Group meeting. The subgroup has identified prioritization criteria and a process for acquisition of lands using funds from the Regional Habitat Conservation Fund. The EMP Working Group will continue to discuss the prioritization criteria, a recommended process, and outstanding issues.	DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION
6.	ADJOURN  The next EMP Working Group meeting is scheduled for November 14, 2006, from 1 to 3 p.m.	

+ next to an item indicates an attachment

**San Diego Association of Governments**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL MITIGATION PROGRAM**  
**(EMP) WORKING GROUP**

October 10, 2006

AGENDA ITEM NO.: **2**

**Action Requested: APPROVE**

SEPTEMBER 12, 2006, MEETING SUMMARY

File Number 3002700

**Members in Attendance:**

Carrie Downey, Councilmember, City of Coronado, Chair  
Tom Oberbauer, County of San Diego, Vice-Chair  
Craig Adams, San Diego Conservation Resources Network  
Jeannette Baker, Coastal Conservancy (Alternate)  
Michael Beck, Endangered Habitats League  
David Mayer, Department of Fish and Game  
Kevin Mallory, City of Santee, East Suburban Communities  
Deborah Ruddock, California Coastal Conservancy  
Susan Wynn, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services  
Emily Young, The San Diego Foundation

Bruce April, Caltrans  
Pat Brindle, City of Poway  
Mike Grim, City of Carlsbad  
Susanne Glasgow, Caltrans  
Kathy Viatella, The Nature Conservancy  
Jeanne Krosch, City of San Diego

**SANDAG Staff in Attendance:**

Keith Greer  
Bob Leiter  
Rob Rundle  
Theresa Brassington

Shelby Tucker  
John Kirk  
Sue Carnevale

**Others in Attendance:**

Jim Whalen, J. Whalen Associates  
Clare Billet, SDCRN  
Melanie Johnson Rocks, City of San Diego

Davida Locke, County of San Diego  
Trish Boaz, County of San Diego

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Chair Carrie Downey welcomed the EMP Working Group and started the meeting.

The EMP Working Group went around the room and introduced themselves.

Chair Downey welcomed Keith Greer in his new role at SANDAG.

## **2. August 8, 2006, Meeting Summary**

Mr. Craig Adams motioned to approve the August 8, 2006, meeting summary. Mr. Bruce April seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

## **3. Public Comments and Communications**

Susan Wynn presented Mr. Greer with a plaque commemorating his 16 years of service at the City of San Diego.

Mr. Greer introduced Jeanne Krosch, his replacement at the City of San Diego and Melanie Johnson-Rocks as Jeanne's alternate.

There were no further public comments.

## **4. Progress Report from the Acquisition Opportunities Subgroup**

Mr. Tom Oberbauer explained that the subcommittee had made modifications to the project review procedures and weighting criteria. Their task was to refine and revise the weighting criteria and to identify a process to review projects that come in. Mr. Oberbauer distributed a flowchart showing the conceptual process for reviewing land acquisition projects. He referred to the Eligibility Criteria and Prioritization Criteria as a guideline to be used in the evaluation process. He further noted that the criteria prioritization could be modified or adjusted as needed in the future. In some years, certain types of habitats may take priority. Then, once the project has been evaluated with the strategy, it would then be divided into urgent, critical, or necessary categories. With the eligibility and prioritization criteria, various types of projects could be evaluated and then be ranked through the process. Other issues, such as the definition of emergency criteria, have not been finalized. Mr. Oberbauer indicated that the subgroup supports the use of the emergency criteria category with language to be clarified. The weighting process still needs to be finalized. Also, the process for which projects get funding needs to be clarified. Periodic review of the project list and solicitation of projects are other topics to address. Also, is cost something that should be included in the prioritization process? Craig Adams stated that he didn't think the flowchart was clear. He would like a verbal description of the process. He stated that he would like to review and expand Prioritization Criteria #2 (Attachment 1).

Mr. Greer stated that the subgroup is using the same model that they established last year for allocation of monies. The goal was to marry available funding with potential projects. The first category in the model is Eligible Projects that meet criteria. Eligible Projects would then be prioritized. There would be a periodic review, be it annual, bi-annual, or as needed. Chair Downey stated that she liked the way the flowchart started out with the eligibility criteria and that the urgent, emergency needs could be factored in the prioritization process. She questioned how to factor the emergency needs if they occur mid way through the process? Ms. Wynn stated that emergency projects could be added mid-way through the process, but they would still have to go through the eligibility and prioritization process. Mr. Greer stated that emergency needs would be an amendment to the process, but that they would still need to be fully evaluated against the established list of prioritized projects.

Chair Downey asked how the Board could change the funding allocation after approving funds for a specific number of projects. She also asked how the owners would know when they are getting their projects acquired. Ms. Wynn stated that the funding is identified as allocated to a certain project, but the time frame is not necessarily specific. Mr. Oberbauer stated that as long as entities proposing land acquisition projects know that they are in the cue to receive funds, they may be comfortable making bridge loans in order to acquire land that might, otherwise, be lost. At least we have a mechanism to identify desired land, and funding could follow later. He also asked when would be the appropriate time in the process to do appraisals. Ms. Wynn stated that she would like to see a portfolio of sites that support landscape scale conservation so that we go beyond project-by-project conservation.

Chair Downey stated that the flowchart process makes sense. She thanked the subcommittee for taking the time to put together a comprehensive proposal. She also suggested that members reflect upon which method they prefer. She'd like to get a consensus on whether the process illustrated by the flowchart is the best way. Mr. Oberbauer asked the board members to consider whether they would prefer a policy-driven process (strategic plan of acquisition) or a project-by-project competitive process.

Mr. Whalen said that the funding needs to be sorted out first. He felt that the committee was putting the cart before the horse. He also noted that the working map discussed at the August EMP Working Group meeting wasn't well-received. Ms. Downey stated that the committee is going to use a conceptual flowchart rather than listing priorities on a map. Ms. Wynn stated that she would like to prioritize corridors or habitat types that only occur in certain areas, like vernal pools or Palomar Mountain linkages. She also mentioned that there are other issues beyond identifying parcels. Some may or may not have willing sellers. How much flexibility should there be? She also asked when approvals should be required in the process. She noted that an appraisal would be required before the acquisition.

Chair Downey noted that the SANDAG Board approved both the criteria and the process for distribution of last year's funds. The key was to prioritize the projects, and the unaffordable ones would fall off. Mr. Greer stated that the criteria and the general process should be presented to the SANDAG Board for adoption, and then the staff could figure out how the funding side will work. Mr. Leiter stated that the policy could be based on the budget. He suggested that they could present the budget and the criteria process to the Board. He felt that knowing time and budget constraints would clarify the process. He would advise that the Board use these criteria for the next five years unless conditions change. Mr. Adams stated that he doesn't like the project-driven process and prefers a policy-driven process. The eligibility and prioritizing criteria should be made public so that people know what is expected. He felt that there were still more issues to be clarified. Mr. Beck noted that the flowchart has two other related flowcharts that correlate to it. One chart was the financial aspects, and the other was the implementation flowchart. The implementation chart deals with the appraisal timing. He also suggested creating a transaction fund to cover the acquisition costs. He said that funding is a key element for both long and short term. Mr. Greer stated that there was general agreement to acquire land in the existing preserves first. Mr. Oberbauer stated that the criteria process will put those areas as a higher priority.

Chair Downey stated that she wants to deal with the issue of weighting at the next meeting and asked the members to submit their questions to Mr. Greer within the next two weeks.

## **5. Report on Revisions to Biological Monitoring Plans**

Mr. Greer gave a presentation on the Status of Revisions to the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) Monitoring Plan and distributed Biological Monitoring Plan Review handouts. He described past and current monitoring plans and discussed the following:

- How monitoring helps implement the Natural Communities Conservation Program (NCCP);
- Previous monitoring activities in MSCP; and
- Updates on the status of revisions to the MSCP Regional Monitoring Plan.

Mr. Greer gave a comparison of “Green Infrastructure” and other regional infrastructure and provided examples. He described how the revisions to the MSCP Regional Monitoring Plan help standardize the regional monitoring plans and create standardized protocols.

Mr. Greer outlined the most recent MSCP revisions including the following:

- Rare Covered Plants - U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS)
- Species Prioritization, Conceptual Models and Vegetation Monitoring Protocols - San Diego State University (SDSU)
- Covered Animals - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Mr. Greer compared single-species monitoring and large-scale ecosystem monitoring and the need to balance both. He described how monitoring should be coordinated at the preserve, regional, and Natural Communities Conservation Program (NCCP) levels. He also stressed the importance of standardized protocols and a single database, which would be available to the public. He also commented that monitoring should lead to management actions.

Mr. Greer reminded the subcommittee that the USFWS and the City of San Diego will be holding a workshop on covered animal monitoring plan revisions for the MSCP in October:

- Covered Animal Monitoring Workshop: October 16 from 9 a.m. - 12 noon, Mission Trails Park, San Diego.

Mr. Grim asked if the Multiple Habitat Conservation Program (MHCP) should be reviewed along with the MSCP. Ms. Wynn replied that conceptual ideas could apply to both plans, but protocols might differ. Mr. Beck stated that he understood the need to prioritize different species, but that he disagreed with the notion of using ecosystem monitoring as a surrogate for species because each species has its own trend. Ms. Wynn noted that most species are not surrogates for other endangered species. Mr. Greer clarified that both species-specific monitoring and landscape-level monitoring are needed; the discussion will be on the level of each monitoring type.

## **6. Progress Report from the Management and Monitoring Five-Year Funding Strategy Subgroup**

Ms. Wynn went over the five-year management and monitoring recommendations, which were attached to the agenda materials. Ms. Wynn referred to the draft Five-Year Budget and noted the matching funds not tied to *TransNet* funds. Funds have come from many other sources. She recommended a request for *TransNet* funds to employ a management coordinator to develop strategic plans for exotic weeds. She would also like to have funds available for implementation. She also pointed out that on the needs assessment chart’s databases need to be updated. The

vegetation database is overdue as it hasn't been redone since 1995. She pointed out that some of the funding for the protocols and implementations needs to be fleshed out. She stated that monitoring costs are higher than anticipated, but that monitoring is crucial to the success of the program.

Mr. Adams asked how post-catastrophe monitoring fit into the big budget picture. Ms Wynn stated that half of the reserve burned in the 2003 fires and that USGS has stepped up to take the lead on analyzing the impacts without dedicated funding. USFWS is also working with other funding sources, but the amounts are small, in the few thousands. The data is necessary to show scientific evidence that the species are recovering and that fire is part of the local natural process. She stressed the importance of post-fire monitoring in order to support and justify present plans.

Ms. Emily Young asked if the post-fire monitoring took global warming into account and if they were tracking normal regional climate or habitat changes. Ms. Wynn replied that the emphasis is on covered species and their recovery. USGS had collected previous data on local climates and habitats, prior to the fire, to be used as a baseline. Mr. Greer stated that it was his understanding that Robert Fisher has a well-documented program that tracks both pre-burn and post-burn data in order to track changes. Ms. Young stated that she would also like a broader view of changing climate regimes and how covered species are adapting to climate changes. Mr. Oberbauer stated that the data could help determine if there have been permanent changes because of the fires. Ms. Wynn said that data collection and analysis is ongoing and it that helps dictate management decisions. Chula Vista and Carlsbad have used the data in their plans and came up with acreages and frequencies of fires in their jurisdictions. She noted that the existing regional plans do not address the issue of global warming.

Mr. Michael Beck commented on using private sector funds in order to implement plans and leverage funds. The private fund sectors are looking for the following: a financing plan showing other funding partnerships, an implementation structure, a science-driven program, dedicated staff, coordination, and accountability.

Ms. Kathy Viatella asked how the agency justifies post-fire monitoring to the private funding agencies. We know that fires occur, and we don't want to have to repeat post-fire monitoring after each occurrence.

Mr. Whalen asked if the budget is meant to be comprehensive for the regional management and monitoring needs, and if so, how much of the region's needs does this plan meet. He further asked if this funding can be extended out to the future. Ms. Wynn replied that the funding plan is based on the funds made available through *TransNet*. The plan shows how the fund's allocations would be prioritized, but it does not meet all the needs of the region. Different jurisdictions, such as the county, the City of San Diego, and the City of Carlsbad are also monitoring and managing through their park and recreation staff. Ms. Wynn said she was unable to answer what percentage of the regional needs was met through the plan because the regional monitoring and management needs were still being developed. Mr. Greer commented that the regional monitoring needs are still being formulated. The three components will be done in a couple of years. Time will show how much funding is available currently and how much of a gap there is. Then perhaps *TransNet* or some other source can fill that gap and complete the regional funding reserve obligations.

Ms. Wynn referred back to Ms. Viatella's comment on post-fire monitoring needs and stated that post-fire monitoring would still be required in the future due to recent building and development that has changed the landscape. For example, a species response to fire a hundred years ago would be different from their response in a fragmented habitat environment. Ms. Viatella responded that

while she understood the importance of post-fire monitoring, the regional funding reserves are limited, and there needs to be a prioritization process to determine where the funds are allocated. Allocation needs to be done in the broad context of the overall regional needs. Ms. Wynn replied that monitoring helps to create management plans and determine what sort of responses will be required in the future.

Mr. Beck questioned how to assess how much of the regional needs are met by this level of expenditures. He stated that he had hoped to have enough understanding by this point to anticipate how much funding would be required in the long term. He stressed the importance of continuing this type of activity and multiplying it by the number of species. He also asked what level of endowment is needed to run this system into perpetuity. He added that one of the main points of Phase Two (potential future funding) isn't just the acquisition of land, but also the endowment system for management and monitoring. Ms. Downey replied that the issue of spending allocation priorities hasn't been discussed before and that it would be an issue to look at in the future.

Mr. Grim asked which agency would create the management coordinator position. Ms. Wynn replied that it hasn't been decided yet, but one possibility would be to house the position at USGS or perhaps create independent contractor positions. She stated that the ultimate deciding factor will be which option is the most cost-effective. Mr. Grim stated that other organizations would have their own programs, and there would be some cost savings in collapsing the combined efforts.

Mr. Adams commented that the new positions need to be clearly defined first before adding staff. He also asked what the overall structure was. Ms. Wynn replied that the positions and their duties were clearly defined, but the funding was not defined. She further added that it was difficult to put all of the information on the chart, and there was additional descriptions and information.

Mr. Greer proposed to write a more detailed list of information on the proposed management and monitoring recommendations and bring these to the group for discussion and possible action at the October 10, 2006, meeting.

## **7. Adjourn**

Meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m. The next EMP Working Group meeting is scheduled for October 10, 2006, from 1 to 3 p.m.

**San Diego Association of Governments**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL MITIGATION PROGRAM**  
**WORKING GROUP**

October 10, 2006

AGENDA ITEM NO.: **4**

**Action Requested: DISCUSSION/RECOMMENDATION**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2007 MANAGEMENT AND  
MONITORING ACTIVITIES AND FIVE-YEAR FUNDING STRATEGY

File Number 3002700

**Introduction**

At the September 12, 2006, Environmental Mitigation Program (EMP) Working Group meeting, Susan Wynn, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), presented recommendations made by the Management and Monitoring subgroup regarding funding priorities for regional management and monitoring activities. The Management and Monitoring subgroup identified the priorities in the needs assessment that should be funded in the first five years that Regional Habitat Conservation Funds are available and a recommended five-year funding strategy. At the direction of the EMP Working Group, it was requested that additional information be provided on the recommendations proposed for management and monitoring activities in the current fiscal year. This has been completed (Attachment 1), which included a summary of the proposed management and monitoring activities for the current fiscal year, or when funds become available, the proposed five-year, recommended funding strategy, and proposals on two of the activities (coastal sage scrub monitoring and post-fire monitoring).

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that the EMP Working Group provide comments on the recommendations for the current fiscal year management and monitoring activities and the conceptual five-year funding strategy and forward the recommendation to the Regional Planning Committee for its consideration. It is further recommended that the five-year funding strategy be considered a flexible document, with annual reviews to chart the course of management and monitoring activities with specific activities reviewed and recommended by the EMP Working Group on an annual basis.

**Discussion**

The subgroup has identified management and monitoring needs totaling \$2,000,000 for fiscal year 2007. These recommendations are inline with the needs assessment, and additional details on each proposal are provided in Attachment 1.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Recommended Funding</b>
<b>Regional Management</b>	
1.1 Management Coordinator	\$150,000
1.2 Invasive Weed Control and Removal	\$600,000
<b>Regional Monitoring</b>	
2.1 Program Developer	\$150,000
2.2 Monitoring Coordinator	\$150,000
2.3 Updated Vegetation Mapping	\$150,000
2.4 BIOS Database	\$50,000
2.5 Plant Monitoring Protocols	\$50,000
2.6 Gnatcatcher Monitoring	\$300,000
2.7 Post-Fire Monitoring	\$400,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,000,000</b>

In addition, the subgroup has identified a draft five-year funding strategy for management and monitoring as a blueprint for future funds as they become available. The subgroup has provided these recommendations for the EMP Working Group to consider and forward with a recommendation to the Regional Planning Committee.

Attachments: 1. Proposed FY 07 Recommendations for Management and Monitoring and Draft Regional Habitat Conservation Fund (RHCF) Five-Year Funding Strategy for Regional Management and Monitoring

Key Staff Contact: Keith Greer, (619) 699-7390, kgr@sandag.org

## Proposed Recommendations for Management and Monitoring

### Background

At the request of the EMP Working Group the following information is provided on the recommendations from the Management and Monitoring subgroup. For sake of clarity, management and monitoring activities have been separated into two categories. In practice, regional management and monitoring are overlapping activities. This document provides specific details on the recommendation for fiscal year 2007, or *when funds become available*, for management and monitoring and a proposed five-year funding strategy.

### Fiscal Year 2007: Summary of Proposed Recommendations

Activity	Recommended Funding
<b>Regional Management</b>	
1.1 Management Coordinator	\$150,000
1.2 Invasive Weed Control and Removal	\$600,000
<b>Regional Monitoring</b>	
2.1 Program Developer	\$150,000
2.2 Monitoring Coordinator	\$150,000
2.3 Updated Vegetation Mapping	\$150,000
2.4 BIOS Database	\$50,000
2.5 Plant Monitoring Protocols	\$50,000
2.6 Gnatcatcher Monitoring	\$300,000
2.7 Post-Fire Monitoring	\$400,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,000,000</b>

### Regional Management

Lands preserved as part of the regional conservation plans need to be actively managed to retain, and in many cases, enhance their quality as habitat for the covered species. The subgroup identified a preliminary list of regional management issues. These included; invasive plants, invasive animals, off-road vehicle impacts, use of grazing as a management tool, fire management, restoration of native habitats, erosion, and control of runoff. Based on experience in the region and existing institutional structure (i.e., San Diego Weed Management Area), it was agreed that the first regional monitoring effort should be a strategic approach toward invasive weed control. While many invasive weed efforts have occurred in the region, lack of a regional/watershed-level approach limits the long-term effectiveness of these programs.

## 1.1 Management Coordinator \$150,000

The subgroup is recommending hiring a management coordinator to initiate a regional effort to evaluate existing regional threats caused by invasive species, develop a strategic plan to for regional invasive weed control, and work with the existing land manager to implement the strategic plan. Specific tasks include:

- i. Establish or build off of existing weed advisor group to help identify regional invasive weed threats, prioritize weed species that are/or could be a regional threat to the preserve system, prioritize geographic areas for management, and establish weed management control techniques.
- ii. Identify land managers for each preserve area by watershed to establish what works and develop role descriptions for technical managers to coordinate and advise regional invasive control and management.
- iii. Work with advisor group and land managers to develop a multi-year strategic plan(s), including a budget, to address invasive weeds. Establish time frame for periodic review of the plan(s) to evaluate success.
- iv. Develop a regional Geographic Information System (GIS) database of invasive species locations and management and restoration activities. Track efforts and evaluate success of invasive control efforts.
- v. Work with advisor group, land managers, public agencies, and stakeholders within the watershed to allocate available funding for implementation (see item 1.2 below). Review budgets annually.
- vi. Oversee and manage contracts for fund distribution.

It was envisioned by the subgroup that this position would be a contract employee and report to the Program Developer (item 2.1 below).

## 1.2 Invasive Weed Control and Removal \$600,000

The subgroup is recommending allocating \$600,000 to initiate the invasive weed removal strategic plan. Timing and allocations of the funds would be established in the strategic plan. It was envisioned that the \$600,000 would only be the first allocation of a multi-year need to control key exotic species in the regional preserve system. The proposed five-year funding strategy outlines an estimate for the following years.

## **Regional Monitoring**

Lands preserved as part of the regional conservation plans need to be actively monitored to evaluate their success at effectively conserving the covered species and maintaining the process that allows for their persistence. Contractors, paid for by the state, are in various stages of updating a critical review of the biological monitoring plans for the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP). At the September 12, 2006, EMP Working Group meeting, the members were handed a summary of the existing and past biological monitoring conducted for the MSCP. The contractors working on the monitoring plans have consistently commented on the need for regional coordination and an institutional structure. The subgroup has identified a list of actions necessary to advance biological monitoring.

## 2.1 Program Developer \$150,000

The subgroup is recommending hiring a program developer to establish and coordinate a regional coordinating entity for management and monitoring. It is recommended that this position be an interim, two-year position until the program is established and an executive director or similar, permanent administrator can be hired. The director will be a contract employee of SANDAG or other agreed-upon existing agency/organization. Specific tasks include:

Define the role and functions of a regional coordinating entity.

- i. Review other regional habitat preservation programs, institutional structures, and operations as models for a San Diego regional coordinating entity.
- ii. Define the roles and functions of staff of the regional coordinating entity, with a reporting structure.
- iii. Draft mission statement, charter, and bylaws.
- iv. Draft a scope of work and contract for the next three to five years based on the *TransNet* needs assessment.
- v. Draft a scope-of-work and structure for science advisors.
- vi. Identify complementary roles and in-kind contributions of agencies and partner groups, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS), San Diego Natural History Museum (SDNHM), Conservation Resource Network (CRN), etc.
- vii. Re-evaluate MSCP implementation committees (e.g., Interagency Coordinating Committee (ICC), Habitat Management Technical Committee (HMTC)).

## 2.2 Monitoring Coordinator \$150,000

The subgroup is recommending hiring a monitoring coordinator to initiate a regional effort and to coordinate, collect, and oversee that monitoring in the regional preserve system is being collected in a consistent, cost-effective manner that is scalable from the preserve-level, up to the level of the Southern California National Communities Conservation Program (NCCP). Specific tasks include:

- i. Coordinate the collection and analysis of monitoring data throughout San Diego County, with an emphasis on permitted jurisdictions within MSCP and Multiple Habitat Conservation Program (MHCP).
- ii. Coordinate with the wildlife agencies on the preparation of triennial reports on the monitoring efforts in San Diego County, which include development of monitoring priorities and management directives.
- iii. Coordinate with the wildlife agencies, other NCCP subregions and jurisdictions on technical matters, including standardizing field protocols, monitoring locations, data collection protocols, etc.
- iv. Coordinate and make recommendations for future grant proposals.

- v. Work with the wildlife agencies and science advisors to develop training workshops for field data collection efforts.
- vi. Coordinate biological monitoring efforts to track progress through GIS and associated databases.

### 2.3 Updated Vegetation Mapping \$150,000

The existing regional vegetation database is, in some areas, over ten years old. In addition, the vegetation classification error rates of 45 percent to 35 percent (SDSU 1995) and 34 percent (USFWS 2002). Since the regional vegetation maps were completed, the State of California has recommended a shift from the Holland Classification System to the Sawyer-Keeler-Wolf method. The latter method provides more information on the structure and floristic composition than the older Holland method. This will be especially useful in monitoring trends in vegetation change over time, which may be missed if the Holland method was employed. Todd Keeler-Wolf is interested in assisting the region on updating the regional vegetation mapping and has recently completed an effort for the San Dieguito River Park. The subgroup has recommended that the regional vegetation mapping be updated using the Sawyer-Keeler-Wolf method. Specific tasks include:

- i. Establish a technical working group to oversee re-mapping of vegetation, as needed, across the county, using the Sawyer-Keeler-Wolf method of classification.
- ii. Working under the supervision of Todd Keeler-Wolf at CDFG, contract out work for aerial photography (if needed), photo-interpretation, GIS mapping, field mapping, and verification.
- iii. Maintenance and updating of the vegetation database will be conducted by a GIS specialist proposed to be hired as outlined in the proposed five-year management and monitoring strategy.

### 2.4 BIOS Database \$50,000

The Biogeographical Information and Observation System (BIOS) is a data management system designed to explore the attributes and spatial distribution of biological organisms and systems studied by the Department of Fish and Game and Partners. The BIOS database has already been jointly funded and developed through CDFG and USGS and will act as a centralized hub for biological monitoring data. Already, some data from San Diego has been incorporated into the system. The CDFG and USGS are expanding this system to allow more monitoring data to be included. Presently, BIOS is a repository and query tool to view data. An important missing component is the on-line data entering and editing by the regional stakeholders. Specific tasks include:

- i. Update BIOS to allow for the on-line editing of existing BIOS data and expand BIOS to allow for the on-line addition of biological monitoring data from the regional stakeholders.
- ii. Enhance BIOS to allow for metadata and quality control of any data that is edited on-line by the stakeholders.
- iii. Create the necessary tools in BIOS to allow for the increased functionality of on-line data modification.

## 2.5 Rare Plant Monitoring Protocols \$50,000

The state has funded \$116,000 for the review and revisions to the rare plant monitoring plan. This effort is complete with the exception of the development of standardized protocols and regional training of the land managers and biological monitors that will implement the protocols in the field. Specific tasks include:

- i. Review the jurisdictions' rare plant monitoring data collected in 2006 under the recommendations of the USGS and scientific advisors.
- ii. Prepare standardized final protocols for monitoring rare plants.
- iii. The scientific advisors will provide a Monitoring and Adaptive Management workshop for jurisdictions and local monitoring stakeholders. The workshop would focus on current monitoring, analysis, and evaluation techniques for vegetation and plant populations; determination of objectives and requirements for monitoring studies; methods to ensure collection of accurate and precise data for special status plants or other plant populations; and practice collection (data and plant specimen) and recording skills in field sessions.

## 2.5 California Gnatcatcher Monitoring \$300,000

As the flagship species of the NCCP, monitoring of the California Gnatcatcher is required for the regional preserves. The USFWS has developed a new protocol for conducting California Gnatcatcher monitoring. The protocol was peer reviewed, and monitoring was completed in 2002 (Orange County and parts of San Diego County) and 2004 (MSCP areas only) using this new protocol. The subgroup supports the proposal to expand the monitoring in 2007 to conduct countywide monitoring of Gnatcatchers. This work would take place in late February 2007 for five weeks. A draft scope of work and budget is attached.

## 2.6 Post-Fire Monitoring \$400,000

Approximately 300,000 acres were burned in the Otay and Cedar Fires in San Diego County in the fall of 2003. This included approximately half of the natural lands of the San Diego County Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) planning area. The USGS, being coordinated with the USFWS, CDFG, and County of San Diego, is investigating how animal communities and specific target species will recover from and respond to these massive fires and resultant changes in vegetation communities, vegetation structure, and prey availability over a five-year time period beginning in 2005. The USGS has pre-fire data (some dating back to 1995) from within the footprint of both the Cedar and Otay Fires providing for a good pre- and post- burn analysis. The EMP Working Group recommended, and the SANDAG Board approved, that \$125,000 be granted toward this project last fiscal year. A draft scope of work and budget is attached.

## Proposed Five-Year Funding Strategy

	TASK	YR-1	Matching \$	YR-2	YR-3	YR-4	YR-5
<b>REGIONAL MANAGEMENT</b>							
<b>1. Regional Coordination*</b>							
Management Coordinator	I.6	\$150,000		\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
Develop strategic plan to address invasive plants and animals	V.B.2;V.B.3						
Develop strategic plan to address habitat restoration	V.B.2;V.B.3						
Establish a Task Force of "experts"	III.B.1						
Coordinate with Ex.Com. for the SD County Weed Management Area	III.B.2						
Manage Contracts to Implement plans							
<b>2. Regional Management Implementation</b>							
Implement invasives control and removal	V.C.3	\$600,000		\$1,500,000	\$1,000,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Implement habitat restoration	V.C.8	\$0		\$0	\$1,000,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000
Other management needs tbd	V.C.1-10	\$0		\$350,000	\$350,000	\$350,000	\$350,000
<b>Subtotal Regional Management</b>		<b>\$750,000</b>		<b>\$2,000,000</b>	<b>\$2,500,000</b>	<b>\$2,500,000</b>	<b>\$2,500,000</b>
<b>REGIONAL MONITORING</b>							
<b>1. Regional Coordination*</b>							
Program Developer	I.2;I.3;I.4;I.5	\$150,000		\$150,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
Executive Director		\$0		\$0	\$250,000	\$250,000	\$250,000
			FWS/CDFG				
Monitoring Coordinator		\$150,000	- 2 FTE	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
GIS Specialist		\$0		\$0	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
Administrative Assistant		\$0		\$0	\$90,000	\$90,000	\$90,000
Biologist		\$0		\$0	\$0	\$150,000	\$150,000
Database Specialist		\$0		\$0	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
GIS/Database Technician		\$0		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$130,000
<b>2. Regional Data Bases</b>							
			SANDAG/FWS/Permittees				
HabiTrak Conserved Lands Data Base	II.A	\$0		\$0			
HabiTrak Application	II.B	\$0	\$100,000				
Conserved Lands (Transnet FY05-06)	II.C	\$0					
Habitat Preserve Planning Area	II.D	\$0	CDFG				
Ownership Database	II.E	\$0	SANDAG				
Species Databases	II.F.	\$0	USFWS				
			CDFG in-kind				
Vegetation database	II.G	\$150,000		\$150,000	\$150,000	\$0	\$0
			CDFG/USGS				
BIOS	II.H.28;II.H.30	\$50,000	-\$1,000,000	\$50,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
			CDFG/USGS				
			S-				
Data Mining	II.H.30	\$0	\$100,000				
<b>3. Protocols Development</b>							
			CDFG -				
Pilot testing and refinement of protocols (SDSU)	III.A.4	\$0	\$165,000	\$145,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
			CDFG -				
Plant monitoring plan revisions (USGS)	III.A.6	\$50,000	\$116,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$0	\$0
			CDFG -				
Animal monitoring plan revisions (USFWS)	III.A.6	\$0	\$168,000	CDFG	\$50,000	\$0	\$0
Protocol training/establishment of monitoring sites	III.A.5	\$0		\$0	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
<b>4. Regional Monitoring Implementation</b>							
Gnatcatcher monitoring	III.A.20	\$300,000		X	X	X	X
Post-fire monitoring	III.A.21	\$400,000	\$100,000	X	X	X	X
Other regional monitoring--tbd	III.A.20			\$1,305,000	\$1,360,000	\$1,460,000	\$1,330,000
Vernal Pools (plants/animals/morphology)							
Rare Plants							
Cactus wren monitoring							
Herp Arrays							
Grassland Raptor (BurrowingOwl) Surveys							
Arroyo Toad Surveys							
Corridor monitoring (species/technique tbd)							
Habitat monitoring							
Lagoon monitoring							
Upland and riparian avian community monitoring							
Mammal monitoring							
<b>Subtotal Regional Monitoring</b>		<b>\$1,250,000</b>		<b>\$2,000,000</b>	<b>\$2,500,000</b>	<b>\$2,500,000</b>	<b>\$2,500,000</b>
<b>TOTAL REGIONAL MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING</b>		<b>\$2,000,000</b>		<b>\$4,000,000</b>	<b>\$5,000,000</b>	<b>\$5,000,000</b>	<b>\$5,000,000</b>
TransNet Funding Available		\$2,000,000		\$4,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000
Other Funding Sources**		X		X	X	X	X

\*Note that as the number of positions and therefore funding for Regional Coordination increase, funding for Regional Data Bases, Protocols Development, and Implementation decreases, because it is assumed that the Regional Coordination staff is performing these functions.

\*\*USFWS, CDFG, USGS, jurisdictions, private foundations, etc.

**PROPOSAL: Estimation of San Diego County California Gnatcatcher Population Size and Recovery Following the 2003 October Wildfires**

United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) / POC Clark Winchell/September 20, 2006

The California Gnatcatcher has been, and continues to be, one of the flagship species of conservation efforts in Southern California. Transportation projects, such as the expansion of the I-15 corridor, have the potential to affect Gnatcatcher populations. Wildfire impacts on Gnatcatcher populations represent an additional conservation concern. Although the Gnatcatcher resides in scrub habitat that burn with some regularity, the impact of fire on Gnatcatcher populations change as the size and pattern of available habitat is altered due to direct loss by development and road construction. Roads, like fire, affect the functionality of preserve systems, and both need to be evaluated to determine how they are impacting the preserve's stated goals and objectives.

In 2002, the USFWS undertook the daunting task of estimating the number of California Gnatcatchers existing on conserved lands within Orange and San Diego Counties. (The results of this work are currently being reviewed for publication by the editors of the *Journal of Wildlife Management*). This sampling effort represented the first use of random sampling to estimate Gnatcatcher numbers, and the analysis met our primary objective of providing population estimates bounded by robust confidence intervals. Additionally, data on the environment and plant communities were collected and used to enhance existing California Gnatcatcher habitat models. These new habitat models provide information that will benefit Gnatcatcher habitat restoration efforts and inform preserve parcel acquisition.

Prior to the 2003 fires in San Diego County, the USFWS was planning to repeat the 2002 sampling effort for the breeding season of 2004, with an increase in sampling intensity and a focus strictly restricted to lands conserved within the San Diego MSCP. When the fires devastated much of the wild habitat, the USFWS adapted the study design to evaluate the 2003 fire impact on Gnatcatcher populations. These surveys were completed, and the data is currently being analyzed.

As expected, no California Gnatcatchers were located within the burn area during the 2004 surveys. However, the data collected established a solid baseline, and when combined with other data such as burn intensity, burn patterns, and distances from the burn, we have the opportunity to monitor Gnatcatcher recovery as burn areas re-vegetate.

The recovery of scrub habitat can take several years, and therefore, monitoring Gnatcatcher recovery in the burn area did not necessitate yearly monitoring. For this reason, no monitoring efforts were proposed for the 2005 or 2006 breeding season. The breeding season for 2007 presents a different situation. Past studies have indicated that Gnatcatchers begin to reoccupy habitat three to seven years after a fire. It would be advantageous to monitor during the 2007 breeding season, as recovery may be beginning in some areas, especially where the fire pattern was small, less intense and on the edge of unburned scrub habitat.

The USFWS proposes to conduct or oversee surveys in 2007 and to repeat its 2004 study and extend the study design to evaluate the California Gnatcatcher recovery throughout the entire area lost to the 2003 fires and across San Diego County.

Estimated Budgets:

USFWS conducts entire project			
Principle Investigator			\$73,000
Personnel management			
Data collection/field surveys			
Logistics coordination			
Analysis and report writing			
Twelve GS-5/6 Biological Aides			\$183,000
Training	2 weeks		
Study plot establishment	3 weeks		
Bird surveys/data collection	6 weeks		
Data QA/QC	3 weeks		
Materials			\$22,000
PDA for data recording and upload to BIOS			
Playback recorder for CAGN songs			
GPS units			
Compass			
Rangefinder			
ARC personal locator beacon			
Pocket weather station			
First aid kit			
Field (day) packs			
Camel (water) packs			
Supplies			\$17,000
Gasoline for vehicles			
Pin flags			
Flagging			
Pens			
Papers and office supplies			
		TOTAL	\$295,000

## **Scope of Work To Investigate the Response and Recovery of Plants and Animals to the 2003 San Diego Wildfires**

### **Introduction and Background**

Approximately 300,000 acres were burned in the Otay and Cedar Fires in San Diego County in the fall of 2003. This included approximately half of the natural lands of the San Diego County Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) planning area. In 2004, the NCCP Managers group decided that monitoring the response to these fires was a priority for the Natural Communities Conservation Program (NCCP). Thus, the U. S. Geological Survey (USGS), being coordinated with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), and County of San Diego, is investigating how animal communities and specific target species will recover from and respond to these massive fires and resultant changes in vegetation communities, vegetation structure, and prey availability over a five-year time period beginning in 2005. Funding that was not dedicated was made available to conduct this study so the USGS has been working to find sources of funding for the five years of field effort and a final year of analysis and writing.

The taxa being investigated include vegetation, invertebrates (selected terrestrial macro-invertebrate taxa, ants, and flying invertebrates), and vertebrates (reptiles, amphibians, small mammals, birds, bats, and carnivores). Investigations are including comparisons of post-burn conditions to pre-burn baseline conditions, based on the availability of USGS pre-burn data for all study taxa within the footprint of the fires, as well as comparisons of responses of the various taxa between burned and unburned control sites based on data collected over the five-year study. The ultimate goal of this study is to elucidate information that will aid in future land management/planning and reserve design decisions so that they include considerations of the effects of large wildfires on the biological community structure and function, and especially those species and habitats covered by Habitat Conservation Plans such as the San Diego County MSCP plan and inform them of the development of the East County MSCP plan.

### **Study Sites**

The USGS has pre-fire data (some dating back to 1995) from within the footprint of both the Cedar and Otay Fires. The sites below were selected to incorporate a diversity of habitats and species into the post-burn study design. *We are collecting monitoring data for at least 15 species covered by the San Diego MSCP in the design of this study.* We are also developing draft sampling protocols for all of the sampling techniques that we are implementing in this study.

Cedar Fire Footprint:

*Santa Ysabel Open Space Preserve (SYOSP)* – managed by the County of San Diego, the USGS conducted a multi-taxa inventory study at this site from 2002 through 2003 (Hathaway et al., 2004). This site was partially burned during the Cedar Fire in 2003.

*Elliot Chaparral Reserve (EII)* – managed by the University of California Reserve System, the USGS conducted pitfall trapping at this study site from 1995 through 2001 (Rochester et al., 2001). Macro-invertebrates were collected here from 1998 through 2001. This site was completely burned during the Cedar Fire in 2003.

## Otay Fire Footprint:

*Rancho Jamul Ecological Reserve (RJER)* – managed by the California Department of Fish and Game, the USGS conducted a multi-taxa inventory study at this site from 2000 through 2002 (Hathaway et al., 2002). This site was partially burned in the Otay Fire in 2003. Hollenbeck Canyon Wildlife Area, which is adjacent to RJER, will also be used for some of the non-burn control sites as USGS has pre-existing data for this site (Madden-Smith et al., 2004).

*Little Cedar Ridge, Otay Mountain (LCR)* – managed by the Bureau of Land Management, the USGS conducted pitfall trapping at this site from 1995 through 2000 (Rochester et al., 2001). Macro-invertebrates were collected here from 1998 through 2000. This site was completely burned in the Otay Fire in 2003.

## Summary of Research Components

### 1. Vegetation

- Transects – standardized vegetation transects were conducted at all four study sites listed above prior to the 2003 wildfires. Initial post-fire burn severity measures of vegetation were taken in 2005, and standardized vegetation transects are being conducted each year of the five-year study.

### 2. Ants

- Ant Traps – ant traps were collected using a standardized technique at two study sites (SYOSP, RJER) listed above prior to the 2003 fires and are being collected at all four sites during each year of the five-year study.

### 3. Macro-Invertebrates

- Pitfall Trapping – terrestrial invertebrates were collected using pitfall trapping at all four study sites listed above prior to the 2003 fires and are being collected during each year of the five-year study. These invertebrates have been stored at USGS lab since collection. They are being sorted and identified through this project.
- Flytraps – flying invertebrates are being sampled using flypaper at two of the study sites, SYOSP and RJER, during each year of the five-year study in conjunction with bird point count stations and bat detector stations (see below).

### 4. Reptiles and Amphibians

- Pitfall Trapping – reptiles and amphibians were sampled using pitfall trapping at all four study sites listed above prior to the 2003 fires and are being sampled during each year of the five-year study.

### 5. Small Terrestrial Mammals

- Pitfall Trapping – small mammals were sampled using pitfall trapping at all four study sites listed above prior to the 2003 fires and are being sampled during each year of the five-year study.
- Box Traps – small mammals were also sampled using box traps at RJER prior to the 2003 fires, and are being sampled using box traps at all four sites during each year of the five-year study.

#### 6. Birds

- Point Counts – birds were sampled using point counts at two of the study sites, SYOSP and RJER, prior to the fires in 2003 and are being sampled at the same sites during each year of the five-year study.

#### 7. Bats

- Anabat Stations – bats were sampled using a combination of mist-netting, anabat bat detector stations, and roost searches at two study sites, SYOSP and RJER, prior to the 2003 fires. In 2005, bats were again sampled at the same sites using the same techniques. Starting in 2006, bats will be sampled at the same sites, but using anabat bat detector stations only and will be sampled each year of the five-year study.

#### 8. Carnivores

- Track Stations – carnivores were sampled using track stations at two study sites, SYOSP and RJER, prior to the 2003 fires. They will be sampled using the same technique at the same sites each year of the five-year study starting in 2006.
- Cameras – carnivores were sampled using fixed wildlife monitoring cameras at two study sites, SYOSP and RJER, prior to the 2003 fires. They will be sampled using the same technique at the same sites each year of the five-year study starting in 2006.

### **Summary of Work Already Completed**

The USGS has already begun this five-year, post-fire response and recovery study, starting in 2005, with funding provided by the USFWS, CDFG, and matching USGS funds. In 2005, we selected our study sites, rebuilt our burned pitfall trap arrays, set up our bird and bat monitoring stations, and began year one of data collection for all taxa being investigated, except for carnivores. In 2006, with partial funding provided by the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) and a majority of USGS funds, we made minor revisions to the study design and are in the midst of year two of data collection, which will include carnivores.

The funding requested from SANDAG, if fully funded, will cover expenses for completing the field efforts, data analysis, and write-up through completion of the project in 2010. Any funding shortfalls from the attached budgets will be attempted to be made up through funding from additional interested agencies.

### **Products**

All field data will be entered into the CDFG BIOS system, consistent with the multi-taxa database being implemented by USGS.

An interim report with preliminary analyses will be submitted in the winter/spring of 2007.

A final report with complete analyses will be submitted after five years of data collection, in the spring of 2010.

Several standardized wildlife survey protocols (ants, macro-invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, small mammals, bats, carnivores) are being used during this study, and these will be written-up and submitted as products. These protocols will be useful to all agencies for standardization of future wildlife studies. These protocols will be available for integration into the long-term monitoring program for the reserves.

Several management-relevant manuscripts will result from this study. Some examples of the types of manuscripts we are planning to produce include:

- Response of Native Fauna to Landscape-Level Vegetative Conversions: Implications for Reserve Design and Adaptive Management
- Post-Fire Recovery of Fauna in a Mediterranean Ecosystem
- Impacts of Large Fires on Selected NCCP-Covered Species in San Diego County, California

## **Budget**

See attached document.

## **References**

Hathaway, S.A., O'Leary, J., Fisher, R.N., Rochester, C., Brehme, C., Haas, C., McMillan, S., Mendelsohn, M., Stokes, D., Pease, K., Brown, C., Yang, B., Ervin, E., M. Warburton and M. Madden-Smith 2002. Baseline Biodiversity Survey for the Rancho Jamul Ecological Reserve. Prepared for the California Department of Fish and Game, 128 pages.

Hathaway, S., R. Fisher, C. Rochester, C. Haas, M. Mendelsohn, G. Turschak, D. Stokes, M. Madden-Smith, E. Ervin, K. Pease, and C. Brown, 2004. Baseline Biodiversity Survey for the Santa Ysabel Ranch Open Space Preserve. USGS Technical Report. Prepared for The Nature Conservancy and San Diego County Department of Parks and Recreation. 119 pages.

Madden-Smith, M.C., Brehme, C.S., Mendelsohn, M.B., Clark, D.R., Rochester, C.J., Matsuda, T., Hathaway, S.A., and R.N. Fisher, 2004. Baseline Biodiversity Survey for the Hollenbeck Canyon Wildlife Area and Continued Bird Monitoring at the Rancho Jamul Ecological Reserve, 2003-2004. Prepared for the California Department of Fish and Game, 86 pages.

Rochester, C., Hathaway, S., Brown, C., Pease, K., Fisher, R.N., 2001. Herpetofaunal Monitoring in MSCP Region of San Diego. Prepared for City of San Diego, 91 pages.

**Budget**

<b>USGS Post-fire Response and Recovery Study Budget</b>	<b><i>FY06</i></b>	<b><i>FY07</i></b>	<b><i>FY08</i></b>	<b><i>FY09</i></b>	<b><i>FY10</i></b>	<b><i>Total</i></b>
<b>Salary</b>	\$204,178.67	\$ 390,339.96	\$ 387,266.14	\$ 423,012.43	\$ 329,623.38	\$ 1,734,420.58
Field work (e.g., reconnaissance, site construction and removal, coordination, permits, surveys), lab work (e.g., curation and species identification), data management (e.g., palm form maintenance, data entry, QA/QC, spatial and metadata development, analysis), and reporting						
<b>Travel</b>	\$ 15,912.00	\$ 30,012.00	\$ 30,012.00	\$ 30,012.00	\$ 8,912.00	\$ 114,860.00
Vehicles and when necessary over night trips to remote sites (e.g., per diem, campsite costs)						
<b>Equipment</b>	\$ 30,144.00	\$ 13,976.27	\$ 13,871.27	\$ 13,871.27	\$ 6,070.00	\$ 77,932.81
<b>Subtotal</b>	\$250,234.67	\$ 434,328.23	\$ 431,149.41	\$ 466,895.70	\$ 344,605.38	\$ 1,927,213.39
<b>Facilities Charges (Stable For FY06 Subject to Change in Subsequent Fiscal Years)</b>	\$ 15,014.08	\$ 26,059.69	\$ 25,868.96	\$ 28,013.74	\$ 20,676.32	\$ 115,632.79
<b>Overhead (Stable For FY06 Subject to Change in Subsequent Fiscal Years)</b>	\$110,555.68	\$ 191,889.69	\$ 190,485.26	\$ 206,278.25	\$ 152,249.42	\$ 851,458.30
<b>TOTAL (Stable For FY06 Subject to Change in Subsequent Fiscal Years)</b>	\$375,804.43	\$ 652,277.61	\$ 647,503.63	\$ 701,187.69	\$ 517,531.12	\$ 2,894,304.48

**San Diego Association of Governments**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL MITIGATION PROGRAM**  
**WORKING GROUP**

October 10, 2006

AGENDA ITEM NO.: **5**

**Action Requested: DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION**

DISCUSSION ON THE RECOMMENDATION FROM THE  
ACQUISITION OPPORTUNITIES SUBGROUP

File Number 3002700

**Introduction**

At the September 12, 2006, Environmental Mitigation Program (EMP) Working Group meeting, the opportunities subgroup reported on their progress on the development of criteria and the process related to the formation of land acquisition opportunity areas for use as Regional Habitat Conservation Fund (RHCF) monies become available. A set of eligibility and prioritization criteria was discussed, as well as a process flowchart and a list of outstanding policy issues.

**Recommendation**

The subgroup is recommending that the EMP Working Group discuss and approve the criteria for eligibility and prioritization and an additional criterion for emergency projects.

**Discussion**

At the EMP Working Group meeting on August 8, the EMP Working Group requested that the subgroup reconvene to discuss several items which are listed below. The subgroup met on August 30 and presented its recommendations on September 12 to the EMP Working Group. The EMP Working Group discussed these issues and will engage in addition discussions at its October 10 meeting.

*Land Acquisition Criteria*

The EMP Working Group made recommendations to the subgroup on potential changes to the RHCF criteria for land acquisition. The subgroup reviewed and refined the list of criteria, which is included as Attachment 1.

The opportunities subgroup also has discussed an emergency criterion, which could be considered if a particular property was in imminent threat of loss unless immediate action was taken (Attachment 2). The subgroup supported the concept of an emergency criterion, but they did not come to resolution on the language.

It is expected that the land acquisition eligibility and prioritization criteria, would also apply to a project being considered as an emergency. If eligible the emergency project will be included in the

prioritized list of projects and the list will be reprioritized accordingly. The EMP Working Group will make recommendations on the allocation of the RHCF to the Regional Planning Committee (RPC) and the Board. The Board will make the final determination on the expenditure of funds.

*Process for Prioritization and Selection*

At the September 12 EMP Working Group meeting a proposed process flowchart was handed out. The Vice-Chair explained how proposed acquisition projects would be prioritized and an acquisition list would be developed. In addition, at the EMP Working Group several outstanding policy-level questions were identified that needed further discussion. SANDAG staff has identified these issues and provided a brief discussion of each along with the process flowchart (Attachment 3). These issues will continue to be discussed at the October 10 EMP Working Group meeting.

- Attachments:
1. Land Acquisition Opportunities Subgroup RHCF Criteria for Land Acquisition
  2. Land Acquisition Opportunities Subgroup Emergency Criterion
  3. Proposed Flowchart and Outstanding Issues

Key Staff Contact: Keith Greer, (619) 699-7390, [kgr@sandag.org](mailto:kgr@sandag.org)

### **Land Acquisition Opportunities Subgroup Regional Habitat Conservation Fund Criteria for Land Acquisition**

The following considerations are intended to be used in the evaluation process to determine if lands should be acquired using funds from the *TransNet* Environmental

Mitigation Program Regional Habitat Conservation Fund (RHCF). These funds will be earned through the economic benefit of acquiring transportation-project mitigation lands in advance of need, in larger blocks, and at a lower cost, and will be used for regional habitat acquisition, management, and monitoring activities necessary to implement the regional habitat conservation plans. The criteria listed below addresses broad-level biological considerations to determine if land should be eligible for acquisition or restoration.

#### **Eligibility Criteria**

- A. The site is not under negotiation to be purchased for transportation-project mitigation
- B. Area or properties exist where there are known willing sellers or options are let
- C. The site contributes to or substantially improves the regional preserve needs by being located within an existing pre-approved mitigation Area or other conservation-area designation associated with either an open space program or Natural Communities Conservation Program (NCCP)
- D. The proposed acquisition will contribute to the success of the San Diego regional NCCP

#### **Prioritization Criteria**

- 1. The site serves to further key goals outlined in an accepted resource management plan (for example, watershed assessment, watershed management plan, restoration plan, Southern California Wetland Recovery Project's Regional Strategy and Work Plan).
- 2. Lands contain regionally critical vegetation communities such as vernal pools, maritime chaparral, coastal sandstones or clay soil, or habitat for critically sensitive species (for example, the Thread Leaved Brodiaea (*Brodiaea Filifolia*) or Quino Checkerspot Butterfly).
- 3. Site provides for a critical missing piece to connect existing preserve lands.
- 4. Working landscapes that provide the conservation values described above may be considered (e.g., certain farmlands).
- 5. Acquisition is being funded through a partnership of government, non-profit agencies and/or private landowners (leveraging additional available funding).
- 6. There are pressures for the loss of habitat, there is an unusual opportunity for purchase, or there is an extraordinary threat to important conservation land.
- 7. Long-term management and ownership of the land has been identified.

8. The proposed acquisition is supported by the appropriate jurisdiction/permit holder and/or wildlife agencies.
9. Emergency land acquisition that could be lost without immediate action.

## **Land Acquisition Opportunities Subgroup Emergency Criterion**

### **Background**

Due to historic species' losses and landscape fragmentation, building the Natural Communities Conservation Program (NCCP) reserve has required emergency acquisition of land critical to the creation of the "proposed" reserve. Critical species populations, corridors, linkages, and/or rare vegetation communities, coupled with threat of development, have driven these decisions. Past examples include Los Montonyas, Carmel Mountain, Torrey Surf, and many others. Implementation of a viable reserve and the successful conservation of covered species are directly linked to local government permit authority and third-party assurances.

The proposed criteria is intended to provide a pathway for emergency situations, while acquisition criteria is being developed by the EMP Working Group. It is assumed that the eventual acquisition criteria will include opportunity, threat, and emergency considerations and will subsume the emergency criteria proposed below. In the interim, if adopted by the EMP Working Group, the Transportation Committee, and the SANDAG Board, this policy would allow projects to be identified as first and/or highest priority for acquisition with Regional Habitat Conservation Funds as those funds become available for acquisition purposes. Additionally, the policy and criteria could be applied to *TransNet* mitigation fund expenditures by agreement of the appropriate decision makers (Caltrans, wildlife agencies, SANDAG).

The EMP Working Group has previously adopted criteria for land management-related emergency circumstances.

### **Policy Question**

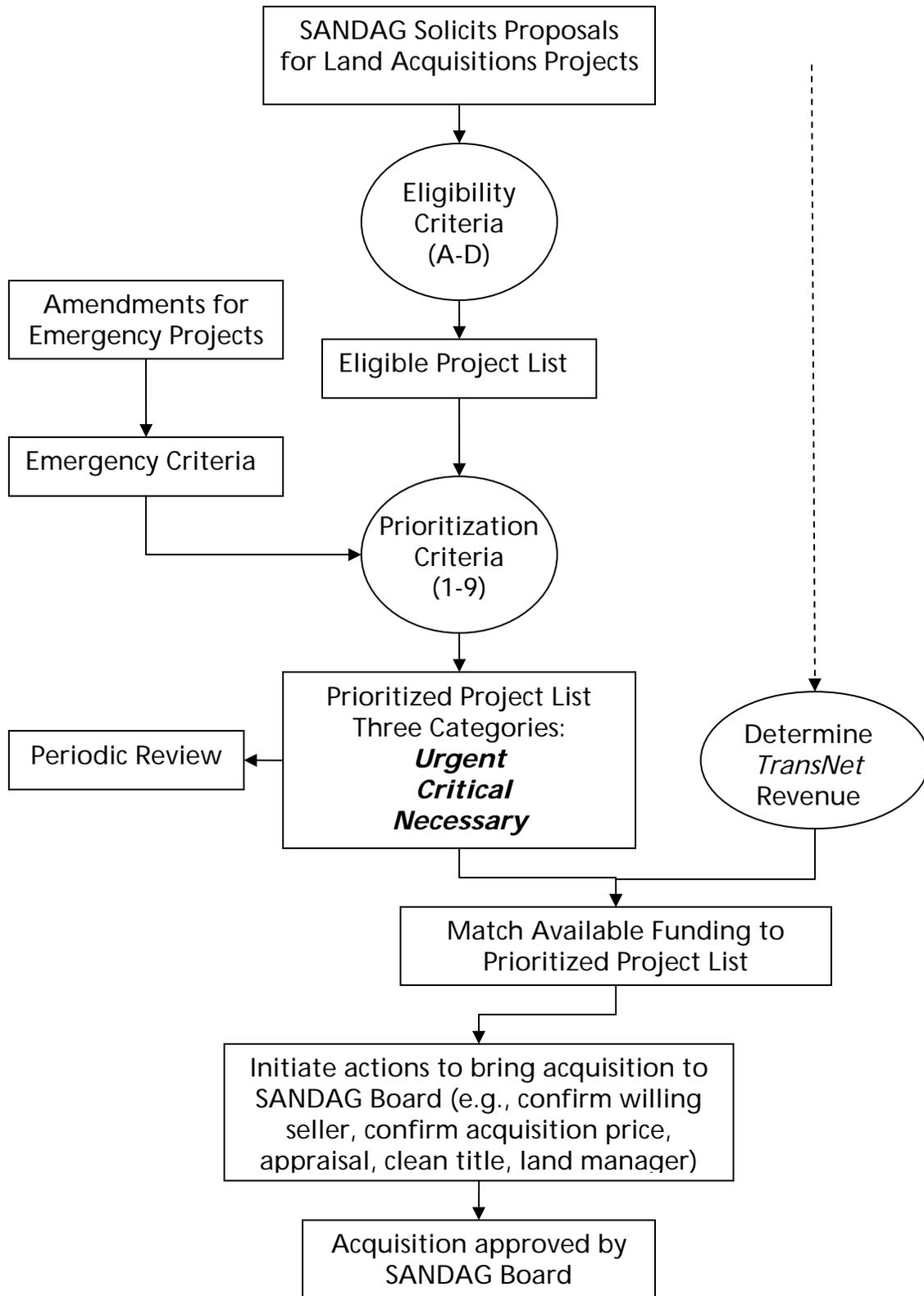
Will the EMP Working Group propose adoption of interim emergency acquisition criteria to the SANDAG Board?

### **Proposed Criteria**

The proposed acquisition will contribute to the success of the San Diego regional NCCP, is supported by the appropriate jurisdiction/permit holder and wildlife agencies, and could be lost without immediate action.

### **Alternative Criteria**

The proposed acquisition is critical for the success of the regional NCCP Plan and could be lost without immediate action.



## Outstanding Discussion Items

### 1. **Process for determining which projects get funding and when?**

*Discussion:* The proposal recommends a competitive process in which acquisition projects are first determined to be eligible and then are prioritized into a list for the SANDAG Board to approve. This list would serve as the basis for future acquisition when Regional Habitat Conservation Fund (RHCF) monies become available. It could also serve to help future capital projects identify and acquire mitigation lands. The list would be reviewed periodically and projects could be added, deleted, and re-prioritized as needed. Once a project is placed on the list, who will decide which project(s) gets funded first?

### 2. **Periodic Review of Prioritization Project List: How often should the list be reviewed? Would a new solicitation of projects be required?**

*Discussion:* Under the proposed prioritization list process, projects would be submitted, reviewed, and prioritized on a periodic cycle. An outstanding issue is the length between review cycles. An annual or bi-annual review has been suggested. Given the solicitation and prioritization process and approval of the list, a bi-annual review period appears to be more realistic. Alternatively, a formal solicitation could be requested every two years, with an annual review of the list, including any proposed projects that have been submitted during that year.

### 3. **Definition of Emergency Criteria: *The proposed acquisition is critical for the success of the Regional Natural Communities Conservation Program (NCCP) Plan and could be lost without immediate actions.***

*Discussion:* As proposed a list of prioritized projects will be developed and reviewed on a periodic basis. It has been suggested that an emergency criteria be developed to allow for flexibility to add projects between the review cycles to capture opportunities that arise. It has been suggested that the criteria be flexible, but also to limit those projects to emergencies for which acquisition is critical to the NCCP and could be lost without immediate action. The above-italicized sentence has been suggested for discussion.

### 4. **Should the prioritization criteria be weighted and by how much?**

*Discussion:* The EMP Working Group has been presented with nine criteria to help prioritize proposed land acquisition projects. These criteria were established to help develop a clear, objective way of prioritizing projects. If these criteria are used, are some of these criteria more important than others for the prioritization of projects? If so, then should certain criteria be weighted to increase their importance in the prioritization process? Weighting criteria was used in the SANDAG Smart Growth Incentive Program.

### 5. **Can the appraisals and title reports be paid for prior to SANDAG Board's approval to acquire?**

*Discussion:* Establishing a purchase contract for the SANDAG Board to consider will require funding for actions related to appraisals, title reports, due diligence actions, contract preparation and review, escrow, and similar actions. Should a special fund be created to use for these actions for the project on the prioritization list? An alternative approach would be to get SANDAG Board approval for expenditure of funds for these necessary actions once a willing

seller is confirmed. Under the later approach, the project would have to go back to SANDAG Board to approve the funding of the acquisition.

**6. Is cost a factor in the prioritization of projects? Is amount of matching funds a factor?**

*Discussion:* Larger projects (multiple parcels, large acreage) will cost more to acquire. In balancing the limited available funding, does cost of the overall project become a factor? Similarly, if a project is almost fully funded, does leveraging the RHCF monies with other matching funds become a prioritization criterion?

**7. Should a separate strategic plan for acquisition be developed or are the prioritization criteria flexible enough to include a strategy?**

*Discussion:* A key discussion of the acquisition subgroup surrounded the concept of the development of a strategic plan for the acquisition of key areas of biological resource, such as linkages and/or unique habitats. Item #2 in the prioritization criteria could be revised to clarify that these areas are of higher value. Conversely, a separate strategy document could be developed, which is reference by Item #2 during the prioritization process.

**8. Should the prioritization list be left as ranked values or categorized?**

*Discussion:* As proposed in the flowchart, once a project is prioritized, it would fall amongst a list of projects, and be placed into one of three categories based upon its need for acquisition: urgent, critical, and needed. There were questions at the EMP Working Group on the definitions of these categories and if a simple ranking would suffice. The goal of the proposal was to recognize that the ranking was not absolute, and flexibility for acquisition within the highest ranking projects was recommended.