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# MEETING NOTICE AND AGENDA

## ENVIRONMENTAL MITIGATION PROGRAM WORKING GROUP

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

October 9, 2007  
 1 to 3 p.m.

SANDAG, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room A  
 401 B Street, Suite 800  
 San Diego, CA 92101-4231

Staff Contact: Keith Greer  
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 kgr@sandag.org

### AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

- REFINED HABITAT CONSERVATION COSTS FOR OCTOBER 12, 2007, POLICY BOARD
- NEW NATURAL LANDS STRATEGIES IN SANTA ANA MOUNTAINS: CAMP PENDLETON'S ENCROACHMENT PARTNERING PROGRAM
- COMPREHENSIVE COASTAL LAGOON ASSESSMENT

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# ENVIRONMENTAL MITIGATION PROGRAM WORKING GROUP

Tuesday, October 9, 2007

ITEM #		RECOMMENDATION
1.	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (Chair, Mayor Pro Tem Carrie Downey, City of Coronado)	
+2.	SUMMARY OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2007, MEETING  Review and approve the meeting summary of the September 11, 2007, meeting.	APPROVE
3.	PUBLIC COMMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS  Members of the public will have the opportunity to address the Environmental Mitigation Program Working Group (EMPWG) on any issue within the jurisdiction of the Working Group. Speakers are limited to three minutes each.	COMMENT
+4.	REFINED HABITAT CONSERVATION COSTS FOR OCTOBER 12, 2007, POLICY BOARD (Keith Greer and Dr. Jun Onaka)  Mr. Greer will provide information on the refined cost for regional habitat preservation to be presented to the SANDAG Policy Board on October 12, 2007. The refined cost is based on a range using the Integrated Regional Infrastructure Strategy (IRIS) model developed by Dr. Jun Onaka. Mr. Greer and Dr. Onaka will be available to discuss the assumptions and variables in the model.	DISCUSSION/ POSSIBLE ACTION
+5.	NEW NATURAL LANDS STRATEGIES IN SANTA ANA MOUNTAINS: CAMP PENDLETON'S ENCROACHMENT PARTNERING PROGRAM (Ken Quigley, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton)  Mr. Quigley will present the recent partnerships efforts between Marine Corps Base (MCB) Camp Pendleton, The Trust for Public Lands, the California Wildlife Conservation Board, and the Fallbrook Land Conservancy which has resulted in the conservation of 1206 acre under the authority of the National Defense Authorization Act 2003. By that Act, Congress granted the authority to military departments to partner with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and state and local governments to acquire land adjacent or proximate to military installations, to prevent incompatible development and preserve habitat that may eliminate or relieve current or anticipated environmental restrictions that could interfere with military training, testing, or operations. Camp Pendleton is active in a partnership effort, the South Coast Conservation Forum (SCCF), to investigate opportunities to acquire an interest in lands that could reduce the need for additional listings of species in the future, conserve watershed values, and buffer MCB from incompatible lands uses.	INFORMATION/ DISCUSSION

6. **COMPREHENSIVE COASTAL LAGOON ASSESSMENT (Bruce April, Caltrans ) - INFORMATION/  
TENTATIVE DISCUSSION**

Caltrans has been working with several leading scientists to develop a comprehensive evaluations of the needs for the coastal wetlands in San Diego, Mr. Bruce April will describe the study and how an agreement that was developed for Bolsa Chica, as described in January by Jack Fancher of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service, could be used to implement the needs identified in the study.

7. **AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE EMPWG MEETINGS (Keith Greer) INFORMATION**

Mr. Keith Greer will provide a schedule of future meeting agenda topics for the next three months.

8. **NEXT MEETING INFORMATION**

The next EMP Working Group meeting is scheduled for November 13, 2007, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

9. **ADJOURN**

+ next to an item indicates an attachment

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

October 9, 2007

AGENDA ITEM NO.: **2**

**Action Requested: APPROVE**

SUMMARY OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2007, MEETING

File Number 3002700

**Members in Attendance:**

Carrie Downey (Chair), City of Coronado  
Tom Oberbauer (Vice Chair), County of San Diego  
Bruce April, Caltrans  
Michael Beck, Endangered Habitats League  
Patti Brindle, City of Poway, North County Inland  
Jeanne Korsch, City of San Diego  
Dr. Robert Fisher, USGS  
Kevin Mallory, City of Santee, East Suburban Communities  
David Mayer, Department of Fish and Game  
Kathy Viatella, Nature Conservancy  
Jim Whalen, Alliance for Habitat Conservation  
Susan Wynn, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Emily Young, San Diego Foundation

**SANDAG Staff in Attendance:**

Keith Greer  
Kevin Wood  
Sue Carnevale

**Others in Attendance:**

Trish Boaz, County of San Diego  
Josh Garcia, City of San Diego  
Clark Winchell, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Andrea Bitterling, Helix Environmental Planning  
Susan Carter, San Dieguito River Park  
Scott Grimes, Endangered Habitats League  
Rachel Woodfield, Merkel & Associates  
Andrew Fisher, EDAW  
Lance Woolley, EDAW  
Carlton Rochester, USGS  
Dr. Drew Decker, USGS  
Markus Spiegelberg, Center for Natural Lands Management  
Kit Wilson, Environmental Land Solutions

Rich Geisler, J. Whalen Associates

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Carrie Downey, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m., welcomed the group, and introductions were made.

### **2. August 14, 2007, Meeting Summary**

Michael Beck, Endangered Habitats League, motioned to approve the August 14, 2007, meeting minutes. Tom Oberbauer, County of San Diego, seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

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

Members of the public had the opportunity to address the Environmental Mitigation Program Working Group (EMPWG) on any issue within the jurisdiction of the Working Group.

No other public comments were made.

### **4. Refining Habit Costs for Habitat Management and Monitoring**

Keith Greer, SANDAG, provided an overview of costs associated with habitat management and monitoring (see attached PowerPoint slides). This presentation was a continuation of discussions held during the August 14, 2007, EMPWG meeting. Keith indicated that on October 12, 2007, the Policy Board will take into consideration what direction to provide to staff on SANDAG involvement into investments into the regional infrastructure associated with stormwater management, beach sand replenishment, and habitat conservation. One of the requests from the Policy Board was to have staff present a refinement of the costs for regional habitat conservation planning – costs associated with the remaining land acquisition, land management, and regional biological monitoring.

The starting point for a refined estimate was numbers from the Integrated Regional Infrastructure Strategy (IRIS), an appendix to the Regional Comprehensive Plan approved by the SANDAG Board in July 2004. The IRIS estimates were based off of costs for NCCP/HCP implementation reported by the cities and the County in December 2003 when the RCP was drafted. The costs were updated in December 2006 to reflect inflation since the adoption of IRIS and presented to the Board in January 2007 and July 2007. The 2006 IRIS update, estimated that the comprehensive cost of regional habitat conservation was \$1.503 billion.

SANDAG staff solicited information on land acquisition, management, and monitoring costs from the jurisdictions with approved HCPs. Information from the County of San Diego and the Cities of San Diego and Carlsbad were used to analyze the estimated and actual cost of land management and monitoring. These three jurisdictions were selected since they represent a large portion of the region to be acquired and managed under the regional habitat conservation plans and have existing data on cost estimates for management and monitoring that could be readily allocated into the categories of management and monitoring identified by the EMPWG.

Mr. Greer compared the cost estimates under the IRIS, MHCP, MSCP, and numbers provided by the three jurisdictions. There was a close alignment of the cost for basic land/stewardship management and program administration between the jurisdictions. Adaptive management and regional monitoring had more variation and a different approach was selected for these categories.

Mr. Greer proposed the following changes to the IRIS model to refine the cost of Habitat Conservation:

- Land Stewardship Management: \$100-114/acre, Up from \$80/acre under IRIS 2006.
- Adaptive Management: \$30-34/acre. (30 percent of Land Management) Up from \$12/acre
- Regional Biological Monitoring: Mr. Greer proposed using one number for the whole region, \$1.98 Million. The IRIS estimate was \$6.9/Acre, which works out to \$1.65 million
- There was no suggested change to the costs for program administration, which was suggested to remain at \$9.9/acre.

Discussion followed on what exactly was included under Adaptive Management and whether it included a contingency fund to deal with unforeseen circumstances (e.g., big events such as fires or floods), or whether it was being used regularly to deal with incremental changes in management objectives. Mr. Greer clarified that the suggested amount, 30 percent of Land Stewardship Management was intended to include 15 percent as a contingency as was indicated under the MHCP and 15 percent for yearly ongoing efforts to actively learn and adapt management activities accordingly.

Ms. Susan Wynn recommended a contingency be added, similar to Chula Vista requirement that covers unforeseen circumstances. Ms. Downey suggested that another line could be added to the cost estimate to cover unforeseen circumstances that would go into a fund that would be tapped only when needed. David Mayer, Department of Fish and Game, mentioned that a fire in a preserve would not necessarily require major modifications in management plans, and simply reprioritizing tasks would not require a separate contingency fund.

There were also questions whether \$2 million was enough for Regional Biological Monitoring. Mr. Greer explained that, barring any additional information, the \$2 million was based on a combination of the Conservation Biology Institute's recommendation to establish a regional entity \$1.18 million and an additional \$502,000 for consultants to implement monitoring.

Mr. Greer emphasized that the Board of Directors was interested in considering a range of costs associated with habit management, and that the group should not get too bogged down with the details on land management and monitoring costs which did not significantly contribute to the overall costs.

There was no consensus on the proposed refinement to the costs or methodology, but there was general agreement to have a range of investment options that covered as recommend by the Board of Directors. Mr. Greer indicated that the major factors that will affect the cost of the overall program are the *TransNet* Funds, the inclusions of an endowment, the inclusion of the East County

program, and the integration of existing funding sources. These were policy decisions with large implications for the regional costs.

Mr. Greer indicate that he would bring back a revised cost estimate to the next meeting associated with the October 12, 2007, Policy Board report.

## **5. California Gnatcatcher Population Assessment 2007**

Mr. Clark Winchell, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, presented the results of California Gnatcatcher population and post-fire recovery assessment. The goals of the study were to estimate the population of California gnatcatcher pairs in San Diego County, calculate the Percent Area Occupied of habitat in the County, improve the California gnatcatcher habitat model and evaluate the recovery following the 2003 fires, exploring the concept of "extinction and colonization" in space and time. A total of 409 points were surveyed selected from a 600-meter grid laid across the county. The points were selected to focus on higher quality habitat areas while also looking at some lower quality ones. Eleven technicians were trained and visited each site six times over a six-week period, noting the presence or absence of the birds as well as information on the weather, plant habitat, and geological notes about the site. All survey sites were on public or reserve land. Camp Pendleton was excluded due to logistical problems, but other military installations were surveyed.

Of 175 sites surveyed in both 2004 and 2007, the birds were present at 39 sites in 2004 and 44 sites in 2007. A point by point analysis showed that approximately 45 percent of the population moves between years. The statistical model is still undergoing revisions, so the estimates presented were considered only preliminary. The results showed increases in Percent Area Occupied for both High and Very High Quality Habitat Stratum. Very High went from 36 percent in 2004 to 41 percent in 2007 and High went from 16 percent to 26 percent. The confidence intervals were also smaller. The estimate for breeding pairs within the county was 1822. The survey also showed the 4.5 percent of Very High Quality Habitat that had burned was occupied.

A summary report will be provide to SANDAG in October as part of the grant process and a complete manuscript for scientific peer-review will be developed from the final data.

## **6. Post Fire Monitoring 2007**

Dr. Robert Fisher of U.S. Geological Survey presented the 2007 results of the post-fire monitoring program, which tracks the recovery of faunal communities in areas touched by the 2003 fires. Fire is a natural part of the ecosystem in Southern California, and local faunal communities are adapted to fire, but human activities have alternated the natural fire cycle.

Over 50 percent of the San Diego County MSCP area burned in Otay and Cedar Fires in the fall of 2003. Using a rich pre-burn multitaxa dataset, and post fire studies, the USGS has been analyzing the effect of the fires on seven different animal communities (invertebrates, reptile, amphibian, small mammals, birds, bats, carnivores) in four different habitats types (CSS, Chap, Grassland, Woodlands). The first two years of data of the five-year study were presented.

The U.C. Elliot Reserve and Little Cedar Ridge were studied since both contain a variety of habitat types and species. The same survey protocols were used before and after the fire, when both areas burned completely, so the results could be directly compared. The post-fire study showed a substantial “homogenization” in the faunal communities between the sites: the species that had differentiated the sites disappeared while species that the sites had in common thrived. The species that showed losses were those more susceptible to direct mortality as well as cover and litter loss, including salamanders, small snakes, shrews, and woodrats. The species that thrived were generalists including whiptails, western toads, side-blotched lizards, deer mice, kangaroo rats, and lesser goldfinches. More years of data will allow a better analysis of the recovery, but the preliminary study shows that the conversion of scrub habitat to grass land limits faunal diversity. In the future faunal communities could be estimated based on vegetation monitoring.

Carlton Rochester, USGS, showed how the data from the post-fire recovery study was integrated in the California Department of Fish and Game’s Biographic Information & Observation System (BIOS). Multitaxa data from a variety of sources is included in BIOS, which is viewable from the DFG Web site. Certain layers are available to the general public while other layers are available to land managers and researchers who apply for privileged access.

## **8. Adjourn**

Ms. Downey adjourned the meeting at 3:02 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for October 9, 2007, from 1 p.m. to 3 pm.

Attachment: 1. Refining Cost Estimates for Habitat Management and Monitoring

## Refining Cost Estimates for Habitat Management and Monitoring

September 11, 2007  
EMP Working Group

## Estimate of Regional Cost for Habitat Preservation

2006 \$ Millions	MHCP	MSCP South	North MSCP	East MSCP	TOTAL
Total one-time cost (acquisitions)	\$48	\$180	\$222	\$101	\$550
Sum of annual recurring cost (manage & monitor)	\$55	\$248	\$155	\$70	\$528
Payment to Endowment	\$44	\$200	\$125	\$57	\$426
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$147	\$628	\$507	\$228	\$1,503

Update 12/14/2006

See Item 4, page 30

## Land Management and Monitoring Categories

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Land/ Stewardship Management</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Adaptive Manag. <i>Contingency</i></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Preparation of ASMDs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Start-Up Costs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Regional Biological Monitoring</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Program Administration</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> On-going</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> On-going</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> One-time</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> One-time</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> On-going</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> On-going</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

See Item 4, page 30-31

## Estimated Cost Comparison

### On-going Costs

Category	MSCP South	MHCP	IRIS
Land Mang.	\$51-\$64 /ac	\$144/ac	\$80/ac
Adaptive Mang.	Not Identified	\$21/ac	\$12/ac
Regional Bio Monitoring	\$1.4 - \$5.3/ac <span style="color: #A52A2A;">(avg. \$220 K)</span>	Part of Mang.	\$6.9/ac <span style="color: #A52A2A;">(\$1.65 M)</span>
Program Adm.	\$2.9 - \$16.9/ac	\$32.8/ac	\$9.9/ac
<b>On-going M&amp;M Cost/Ac</b>	<b>\$52 - \$68/ac</b>	<b>\$198/ac</b>	<b>\$109/ac</b>

2006 \$

## Estimated Cost Comparison

### On-going Costs

Category	IRIS	County	City SD	Carlsbad OSMP
Land Mang.	\$80/ac	\$100/ac	\$114/ac	\$107/ac
Adaptive Mang.	\$12/ac	\$50/ac	\$32/ac	\$28/ac
Regional Bio Monitoring	\$6.9/ac (\$1.65 M)	\$50/ac	\$7.3/ac	\$72/ac
Program Adm.	\$9.9/ac	Included above	\$11.7/ac	\$10.3/ac

2006 \$

## Estimated Cost Comparison

### On-going Costs

Category	MSCP South	MHCP	IRIS	Proposal
Land Mang.	\$51-\$64 /ac	\$144/ac	\$80/ac	\$100 - \$114/ac
Adaptive Mang.	Not Identified	\$21/ac	\$12/ac	\$30 - \$32/ac
Regional Bio Monitoring	Avg. \$220K	Part of Mang.	\$1.65 M	\$1.98 M
Program Adm.	\$2.9 - \$16.9/ac	\$32.8/ac	\$9.9/ac	\$9.9/ac

2006 \$

## Estimated Cost Comparison Ongoing Costs

Category	IRIS	MSHCP W. Riverside	MSHCP Coachella	Proposal
Land Mang.	\$80/ac	avg. \$41/ac	avg. \$48/ac	\$100 - \$114/ac
Adaptive Mang.	\$12/ac	avg. \$20.7/ac	avg. \$2.6/ac	\$30 - \$32/ac
Regional Bio Monitoring	\$1.65 M (\$6.9/ac)	\$1.64 M (10.8/ac)	\$8.8 M (\$55.1/ac)	\$1.98 M (\$8.26/ac)
Program Adm.	\$9.9/ac (5.9% - 6.6%)	\$5.31/ac (6.8%)	\$23.3/ac (18.1%)	\$9.9/ac (5.9% - 6.6%)
<b>On-going M&amp;M Cost/Ac</b>	\$109/ac	\$79.3/ac	\$129/ ac	\$148/ac - \$164/ac

2006 \$

## Estimated Cost Comparison One-Time Costs

Category	MSCP South	MHCP	IRIS
ASMD Prep	Not Identified	Part of Mang	\$13.0 M
Start-Up Costs	Not Identified	\$6.65 M	\$129.3 M
<b>On-going M&amp;M Cost/Ac</b>	Not Identified	\$6.65 M	\$142.3 M

2006 \$

## Estimated Cost Comparison

### One-Time Costs

Category	IRIS	County	City SD	Carlsbad OSMP
ASMD Prep	\$13.0 M	\$9.6 M	Not Identified	\$0.95 M
Proposal: No Change to IRIS				
Start-Up Costs	\$129.3 M	\$15.8 M	Not Identified	\$1.6 M
Proposal: No Change to IRIS				
On-going M&M Cost/Ac	\$142.3 M	\$25.4 M	Not Identified	\$2.55 M

2006 \$

## Next Steps

- Run IRIS using Revised Costs
- Develop Range of Cost Estimates
  - Endowment
  - East County Program
  - Existing Funding Sources
- EMPWG review and recommend(?) on Oct. 9

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

October 9, 2007

AGENDA ITEM NO.: **4**

**Action Requested: DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION**

REFINED HABITAT CONSERVATION COSTS FOR  
OCTOBER 12, 2007, POLICY BOARD

File Number 3002700

**Introduction**

On July 13, 2007, the SANDAG Policy Board held a workshop on Habitat Conservation. As a result of the workshop, the SANDAG Policy Board has directed staff to work with the local jurisdiction, stakeholders and knowledge experts to refine the cost associated with the regional habitat conservation plans, if possible. SANDAG staff has been directed to present refined costs at the October 12, 2007, Policy Board Meeting for future discussion by the Board. The Environmental Mitigation Program Working Group (EMPWG) is assisting SANDAG staff with the review of the cost to implement the regional habitat conservation plans.

At the August 14, 2007, meeting of the EMP Working Group, the members heard presentations from Dr. Jun Onaka, the County of San Diego, and the City of Carlsbad on their cost estimates for habitat conservation planning implementation. These presentations represented three different approaches toward understanding the true cost of land management. At the September 11, 2007, meeting of the EMPWG, SANDAG staff presented a comparison of cost estimates under the Integrated Regional Infrastructure Strategy (IRIS), Multiple Habitat Conservation Plan (MHCP), Multiple Species Conservation Plan (MSCP) South, and numbers from the County of San Diego and the Cities of San Diego and Carlsbad for the estimated and actual cost of land management and monitoring. These three jurisdictions were selected since they represent a large portion of the region to be acquired and managed under the regional habitat conservation plans and have existing data on cost estimates for management and monitoring that could be readily allocated into the categories of management and monitoring identified by the EMPWG in August and September. There was no consensus on the proposed refinement to the costs or methodology, but there was general agreement to have a range of investment options as recommended by the Board of Directors.

Since the last working group meeting, SANDAG staff has worked with Dr. Jun Onaka to update the cost of habitat conservation previously developed under the IRIS and presented to the Board on January 12 and July 13, 2007.

## **Discussion**

Attachment 1 shows a table indicating a range of cost habitat conservation from \$1.766 billion to \$2.381 billion. These numbers are based upon the IRIS model as updated in 2006. The cost have been refined to reflecting the latest numbers from the jurisdictions on habitat conservation planning needs (acquisition, land/stewardship management, and adaptive management cost), as presented to the EMPWG on September 11, 2007. In addition, a \$4 million/annual cost associated with regional biological monitoring has been added, and a 10 percent contingency cost on annual expenditures to cover unforeseen circumstances. The range is rising dependent on the amount of land managed with public funds for land stewardship in the County of San Diego.

As discussed in the September meeting of the EMPWG, several policy decisions can reduce this estimated need by \$200 million to \$950 million. SANDAG staff will be providing a summary of these numbers to the Policy Board on October 12, 2007, and recommending that these policy decisions and their implications be addressed at a subsequent meeting in association with additional polling on the level of voter interest in investing in habitat conservation.

Attachment: 1. Refined Cost Estimates for Regional Habitat Conservation

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

**San Diego's Regional HCP Implementation**  
**RANGE OF COST ESTIMATES FOR HABITAT CONSERVATION**  
(Millions of 2006 Dollars)

Oct. 9, 2007

MODIFICATIONS	Alternative 1		Alternative 2	
IRIS Base Case (2003; updated for inflation in December 2006)	\$1,503	<i>Base</i>	\$1,503	<i>Base</i>
Change in One-time Costs, Primarily Habitat Acquisition and Restoration [1]	(85)	<i>Updated per Jurisdiction Numbers (Sept -2007)</i>	(85)	<i>Updated per Jurisdiction Numbers (Sept -2007)</i>
Change in Management Costs (Including Contributions to Endowment) [2]	229	<i>Updated per Jurisdiction Numbers (Sept -2007)</i>	229	<i>Updated per Jurisdiction Numbers (Sept -2007)</i>
Contingency for Annual Recurring Costs [3]	118	10%	118	10%
Change in Acres of Private Habitat Under Public Land/Stewardship Management [4]	0	<i>None</i>	616	<i>Add'l lands under mgt.</i>
<b>Revised Range of Costs</b>	<b>\$1,766</b>	Million	<b>\$2,381</b>	Million

1. Refined estimate of habitat acquisition costs per jurisdictions' number provided in September 2007.
2. Costs of land/stewardship management and adaptive management per jurisdictions' numbers provide in September 2007, and \$4 million/ annually for regional biological monitoring.
3. Contingency primarily for adaptive management in response to infrequent events, such as floods and fires.
4. Alternative 1 assumes that the County of San Diego will require privately funded endowment to pay for land/stewardship management of privately dedicated lands. Public funding for adaptive management and regional biological monitoring would still be required . In Alternative 2, it is assumed that such endowments would not exist, resulting in the add'l need for publicly funded land stewardship management

Policy Decisions that Could Affect Range				
Application of Conservation Funds from TransNet [5]	(200)	Yes	(200)	Yes
Endowment Included or Excluded [6]	0	<i>Included</i>	(581)	<i>Excluded</i>
Funding for MSCP East County Included or Excluded [7]	0	<i>Included</i>	(170)	<i>Excluded</i>
<b>Required Regional Funding</b>	<b>(\$200)</b>	Million	<b>(\$951)</b>	Million

5. Per June 13, 2006 meeting with SANDAG, CALTRANS, USFWS, CDFG, County and City of San Diego and EHL.
6. Exclusion of endowment eliminates the need for annual contributions to establish the endowment.
7. One-time cost and present value of recurring costs of MSCP East County program; present value of contributions to endowment (\$77 million) is included in the cost of endowment above.

**NOT INCLUDED: Cost of continuation of current jurisdictions annual contributions to NCCP/HCP implementation of approximately \$13 million FY 2007-2008. Not Included due to equity issues among jurisdictions and not required to continue after regional funding source per signed Implementing Agreements.**

[More North County news](#)

## Conservationists, Pentagon do deal

By **Mike Lee**  
UNION-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

August 18, 2007

CAMP PENDLETON – With help from the military, conservationists are planting a figurative flag atop Santa Margarita Peak by finalizing a long-delayed land purchase.

The deal marks the latest success story for an unusual nationwide alliance between environmentalists and the Pentagon. It gives Camp Pendleton a buffer against suburban sprawl and allows “green” groups to maintain an open-space corridor for animals that travel to and from the base.

The Trust for Public Land in San Francisco is using \$3.1 million from the state and federal governments to buy a 1,206-acre parcel that includes the peak. Once the transaction is completed, which could be as early as Monday, the group will turn the property over to the Fallbrook Land Conservancy to own and manage.

The Navy, acting on behalf of the Marine Corps, will hold an easement on the land that precludes development.

In the months ahead, the Fallbrook conservancy will install barriers to keep out off-road vehicles and limit the number of invasive species. The land will be open to the public for hiking, bird watching and other forms of “passive” recreation.

A first order of business is to catalog plants and animals on the site, said Mike Peters, who will manage the preserve for the Fallbrook group.

“I need to do a lot of exploring,” Peters said.

Santa Margarita Peak crowns the chaparral-covered parcel, which is about 3,200 feet above sea level. From it, the ocean glimmers to the west, Camp Pendleton spreads out to the south and the Cleveland National Forest runs to the north and east.

“This is perfect,” said Lupe Armas, environmental security manager for Marine Corps Installations West, which consists of Camp Pendleton and six other bases. “I wish Congress could see this (land) because this is exactly what it intended. We have compatible land use adjacent to our military operations.”

### An encroaching issue

Deals to limit development are common in California, but the Santa Margarita Peak pact is distinct because of the location and parties involved. Conservationists and military officials hope it will spur a string of related transactions to protect the largely undeveloped Camp Pendleton from further encroachment by homes, farms and businesses.

In coming weeks, leaders of the Trust for Public Land hope to announce a 47-acre purchase close to downtown Fallbrook. Two other deals also are ready to be finalized when the money comes in.

Although those land purchases are important locally, they're also significant as part of a national issue. Military installations across the country are under pressure from urbanization, with more and more civilian developments being built right up to the bases' borders.



CRISSY PASCUAL / Union-Tribune

The Trust for Public Land is using \$3.1 million from the state and federal governments to buy a 1,206-acre parcel next to Camp Pendleton. The purchase has two purposes: to give the military base a buffer from encroaching development and to maintain an open space for local wildlife.

“When they were originally established, these bases were out in the middle of nowhere by design,” said Alex Beehler, a senior environmental official for the Pentagon.

That's not the case anymore, particularly as the civilian population swells in the West and South.

“No question, the problem . . . is increasing,” Beehler said.

New neighbors often complain about the military's noise and nighttime exercises.

Local government officials commonly seek permission from the military to use land on bases for building highways, airports, landfills and other infrastructure projects. Military commanders also said off-base development funnels animals onto their properties, forcing them to deal with more environmental rules designed to protect certain species.

In response, the Pentagon has been pushing a “buffer zone” program to support what it considers compatible uses of properties next to military installations. Congress authorized the initiative in 2003 and has allocated \$82.5 million for it.

One popular tool is the creation of conservation areas adjacent to bases. The Pentagon and environmental groups are jointly buying properties and creating legal safeguards to ensure that they can't be developed. It's an unconventional alliance given that environmentalists often are at odds with the Department of Defense over how to protect species.

The partnership appears to be working, according to a July report commissioned by the Pentagon and written by the RAND Corp., a nonprofit research group.

“As a whole, the Defense Department's attempts to remedy this problem have proved beneficial to the military, the environment and the overall quality of life of these communities,” said Beth Lachman, a RAND analyst and the lead author of the report.

“More can and should be done in terms of funding and planning . . . before the opportunity to buffer these surrounding lands is lost,” Lachman said.

### **The 'first success'**

About three years ago, conservation leaders in California and military officials started talking with people willing to sell their land near Camp Pendleton. The main goal was to retain undeveloped properties that connect Camp Pendleton to the backcountry east of Interstate 15.

Ecology experts call it “connectivity” and say it will give some of the base's 17 threatened and endangered species a route off of military land. Roughly 14,000 acres in the corridor have been identified as high-priority conservation land.

In 2005, environmentalists and Camp Pendleton officials said a purchase of the Santa Margarita Peak parcel was imminent. But their announcement proved to be premature.

The Trust for Public Land expects to receive the final component of the deal, a check for nearly \$1.6 million from the California Wildlife Conservation Board, any day now.

“After years of percolating, this program finally has its first success,” said Steven Gordon, who manages the Camp Pendleton buffer program at the Trust for Public Land.

“It takes this long to work though all the funding procedures when you are working with public agencies to protect land,” Gordon said.

Gordon said the Santa Margarita Peak agreement is particularly difficult because it's the first in the Camp Pendleton area.

It also took some time to reconcile differing estimates of the parcel's worth between the military and the property owner, Tupelo Auto Museum Inc. of Mississippi, said Armas of Marine Corps Installations West.

The lengthy acquisition process for Santa Margarita Peak didn't diminish the enthusiasm of military and land-trust officials when they visited the site recently.

To get there, they drove through the rural communities of De Luz and Tenaja, where ranchettes surrounded by long white fences have carved up large tracts of land. That kind of sprawl is generally considered an environmental problem because it tends to slow the movement of wildlife and introduce exotic plants that don't provide the best habitat for native birds and animals.

As if to emphasize the need for maintaining open spaces, the visitors saw a large home being built next to the property line of the Cleveland National Forest.

“That tells the story right there,” Gordon said. “It may look and feel remote today, but imagine 10 years from now.”

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