



County of San Diego

LAND USE AND ENVIRONMENT GROUP
1600 Pacific Highway; San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 541-6256

DAHVIA LYNCH
DIRECTOR
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

BRIAN ALBRIGHT
DIRECTOR
PARKS & RECREATION

September 19, 2023

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Dahvia Lynch, Director, Planning & Development Services
Brian Albright, Director, Parks & Recreation

NORTH COUNTY MULTIPLE SPECIES CONSERVATION PLAN (NORTH COUNTY PLAN): SUMMER 2023 PROGRESS & OUTREACH UPDATE

Overview

On October 28, 2020 (6), the Board of Supervisors (Board) directed Planning & Development (PDS) staff to continue the development of the draft North County Multiple Species Conservation Plan (North County Plan) as a joint Habitat Conservation Plan/Natural Community Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP) based on feedback provided by PDS staff and assessment completed by a consultant in regional conservation planning. The goal is to achieve similar environmental, economic, and community benefits realized through the adopted South County Subarea Plan, October 22, 1997 (1), such as streamlined housing permits and conserved habitat for wildlife. Staff was also directed to “continue working with all the stakeholders, especially the Farm Bureau, and helping to preserve and expand agricultural operations, consistent with the agricultural promotion program, [and] work with property owners”.

This memorandum includes details on how PDS staff has proceeded with this direction through the development of the North County Plan in collaboration with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), collectively referred to as the Wildlife Agencies, general public outreach, and focused stakeholder outreach. Staff meets monthly with the North County Plan Stakeholder Working Group, formed in 2017 which includes a diverse group of stakeholders that represent the environmental, agricultural, recreational, and development communities. These meetings are open to the public and provide communities the opportunity to directly submit verbal comments.

In addition to the stakeholder working group, Staff had focused meetings on the North County Plan with several groups such as the San Diego County Farm Bureau’s Land Use Committee, San Diego Audubon Conservation Committee, Building Industry Association’s North County Legislative Committee, and Parks Advisory Committee.

Additionally, staff attended quarterly Community Planning and Sponsor Group (CPSG) Chairs' meetings to provide progress updates and concurrently met with Tribal Nations in coordination with our County Tribal Liaison.

This update includes a summary of the components that have been developed since receiving Board direction in 2020, as well as an overview of the public workshops that were held in Fall 2021 and Spring 2023 to receive feedback on individual components from stakeholder groups and the public. Feedback is considered and integrated into individual components as the North County Plan is developed.

Update on North County Plan Components and Focused Engagement

Since receiving Board direction in 2020, technical modifications to the Plan Area (i.e., the geographic boundary that defines the extent of the analysis for the development of the North County Plan), Preserve Design (i.e., the area in which mitigation and conservation are anticipated to occur), and Covered Species list (i.e., those species within the Plan Area that will be conserved through the implementation of the North County Plan) were established as outlined in the North County Multiple Species Conservation Plan Status Review and Options Assessment (ICF, December 2019).

Modifications to refine policies and requirements that were part of the options selected by the Board, were also developed through monthly meetings with the Wildlife Agencies and stakeholders. This includes the impact and conservation analysis, which modified the development forecast to account for the revisions to the draft Plan Area and legislation affecting housing forecasts. Tools for assembling the preserve system were researched and presented to the Wildlife Agencies, including a potential in-lieu fee option for private development projects. Sixteen meetings were held with species experts to collect best-available information on species suitable habitat, threats and stressors, and management methods. Drafts of several North County Plan chapters and appendices have also been prepared, such as the Covered Activities (i.e., the private and public land uses, land and public infrastructure development, and conservation activities subject to the County of San Diego's jurisdiction and control that may impact the Covered Species), with subsequent review by the County and Wildlife Agencies.

In advance of public workshops, staff promotes the events through emails to interested subscribers, social media posts, stakeholder meeting presentations, and direct emails to relevant and interested stakeholders. Simultaneous interpretation was made available for attendees whose primary language is Spanish. Registrants could also request the presentation be interpreted in the other threshold languages prior to the workshops. The workshop materials were offered in both English and Spanish on the project website and made available to attendees by providing a link in the chat. Following the workshops, meeting recordings are available on the project website in both English and Spanish. At the virtual public workshops, community members participated in a staff and consultant-led presentation with interactive questions, along with a question and answer (Q&A) session at the end of the workshop. Throughout the workshops, participants are invited to share their perspectives through the interactive questions and Q&A feature. At the end

of the workshops, any remaining questions in the Q&A are answered live and members of the public are provided an opportunity to engage in an open discussion with staff.

Fall 2021

Staff and the consultant team hosted a North County Plan Stakeholder Working Group meeting on October 25, 2021 and two public workshops on November 30 and December 6, 2021 to receive feedback on those technical modifications to the revised Plan Area, Preserve Design, and Covered Species list. Staff met regularly with the San Diego County Farm Bureau, Building Industry Association, recreational and environmental stakeholders during standing stakeholder meetings. Staff attended the quarterly CPSG Chairs meeting on December 4, 2021 to notify all groups of outreach efforts, including the second virtual public workshop.

Considerable feedback was received in Fall 2021 on the Covered Species list, specifically to include additional species called “indicator species” that are not listed or likely to be listed but could serve as an indicator to monitor how well the preserve system is functioning. For the North County Plan, “indicator species” is defined as a species whose presence indicates elements of habitat structure and ecological function. Staff spent much of 2022 working with the Wildlife Agencies and stakeholder groups to develop a scientific methodology to include indicator species, in addition to progressing other key North County Plan components. The revised Covered Species list is included in Appendix A.

Winter 2022/2023

Staff attended a series of community and stakeholder meetings in late 2022 and early 2023 to provide an update on the progress of the North County Plan and the engagement forecasted for 2023. Staff also attended the quarterly CPSG Chairs meeting on December 3, 2022 to provide the progress update. A summary of the work accomplished to date, milestone schedule, and outreach materials are available on the [project website](#).

Spring 2023

Staff and the consultant team hosted a North County Plan Stakeholder Working Group meeting on April 14, 2023 and two public workshops on April 18 and 26, 2023, to receive feedback on the revisions to the Covered Species list to include indicator species based on previous input and the Covered Activities. Covered Activities are those private and public land uses, such as land and public infrastructure development, and conservation activities subject to the County of San Diego’s jurisdiction and control that may result in direct or indirect impacts to Covered Species that may require an Incidental Take Permit from the Wildlife Agencies during the term of the North County Plan. Staff continued to meet regularly with the San Diego County Farm Bureau, Building Industry Association, recreational and environmental stakeholders during standing stakeholder meetings. Staff attended the quarterly CPSG Chairs meeting on March 11, 2023 to notify all groups of outreach efforts, including the second virtual public workshop.

Overall, the information was well received by the Stakeholder Working Group with minor suggestions to ensure all activities that should be covered under the North County Plan are captured. At the virtual public workshops, 21 participants attended representing

environmental, economic, recreation, equity, and community organizations, as well as individual property owners with no declared affiliation.

Major themes that arose from the input received from participants are listed below. Theme order does not reflect importance or frequency.

- Preservation of the natural environment
- Ensuring that the public has reasonable and well-managed access to open spaces and educational activities
- Agriculture and land management practices
- Impacts of wildfire preparedness and mitigation activities

A summary document of the meeting objectives and format, how input was solicited, and what was learned from the participants is posted on the project website.

Next Steps

Since the Spring 2023 workshops, County staff, consultants, and Wildlife Agencies have been developing the Effects Analysis and Conservation Strategy and have reviewed these preliminary draft chapters. The Effects Analysis outlines the anticipated amount of impact to occur from the Covered Activities, including the modified development forecast. The Conservation Strategy outlines the preserve assembly tools and methods, including landscape-level, natural community, and species-specific conservation actions. The collective team, including staff from PDS, Parks & Recreation, and Public Works, is currently outlining the implementation strategy, which includes a criteria-based mitigation approach and in-lieu fee option for private development projects.

Staff continues to engage with the community and stakeholder groups and is identifying options for increasing outreach efforts to individual property owners. The next series of public workshops are anticipated for Fall 2023 to discuss the Effects Analysis and Conservation Strategy. Shortly thereafter, staff and the consultant team will publish the Notice of Preparation for the Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) and hold public scoping meetings to begin developing the environmental documents. Staff anticipates releasing the Public Draft North County Plan and EIR/EIS in late 2024, with the Final Draft North County Plan going to the Board for consideration in Fiscal Year 2025-26.

If you have questions, please contact Dahvia Lynch at Dahvia.Lynch@sdcounty.ca.gov or (619) 415-9598 or Brian Albright at Brian.Albright@sdcounty.ca.gov or (858) 694-1301.

Respectfully,



DAHVIA LYNCH, Director
Planning & Development Services

BRIAN ALBRIGHT, Director
Department of Parks and Recreation

Board of Supervisors – North County Multiple Species Conservation Plan (North County Plan):
Summer 2023 Progress & Outreach Update
September 19, 2023
Page 5

cc: Sarah E. Aghassi, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Land Use and Environment Group
Andrew Potter, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

Appendix A – North County Plan Draft Covered Species List

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status	
		Federal	State
Plants			
Del Mar manzanita	<i>Arctostaphylos glandulosa</i> ssp. <i>crassifolia</i>	FE	-
Encinitas baccharis	<i>Baccharis vanessae</i>	FT	SE
Engelmann oak	<i>Quercus engelmannii</i>	-	-
Mojave tarplant	<i>Deinandra mohavensis</i>	-	SE
San Diego ambrosia	<i>Ambrosia pumila</i>	FE	-
San Diego button-celery	<i>Eryngium aristulatum</i> var. <i>parishii</i>	FE	SE
San Diego thornmint	<i>Acanthomintha ilicifolia</i>	FT	SE
Spreading navarretia	<i>Navarretia fossalis</i>	FT	-
Thread-leaved brodiaea	<i>Brodiaea filifolia</i>	FT	SE
Invertebrates			
Crotch's bumblebee	<i>Bombus crotchii</i>	-	SPE
Riverside fairy shrimp	<i>Streptocephalus wootoni</i>	FE	-
San Diego fairy shrimp	<i>Branchinecta sandiegonensis</i>	FE	-
Fish			
Arroyo chub*	<i>Gila orcuttii</i>	-	SSC
Amphibians			
Arroyo toad	<i>Anaxyrus californicus</i> (<i>Bufo californicus</i>)	FE	SSC
California red-legged frog	<i>Rana draytonii</i>	FT	SSC
Western spadefoot toad	<i>Spea</i> (<i>Scaphiopus</i>) <i>hammondii</i>	-	SSC
Reptiles			
San Diego coast horned lizard	<i>Phrynosoma blainvillii</i>	-	SSC
Southwestern pond turtle	<i>Clemmys marmorata pallida</i>	-	SSC
Two-striped garter snake*	<i>Thamnophis hammondii</i>	-	SSC
Birds			
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	USFWS:BCC	SE
Bell's (sage) sparrow*	<i>Artemisiospiza belli</i>	USFWS:BCC	-
California spotted owl	<i>Strix occidentalis occidentalis</i>	FPE	SSC
Coastal cactus wren	<i>Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus sandiegensis</i>	-	SSC
Coastal California gnatcatcher	<i>Polioptila californica</i>	FT	SSC
Golden eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos canadensis</i>	-	SSC/FP
Grasshopper sparrow*	<i>Ammodramus savannarum perpalladus</i>	-	SSC
Least Bell's vireo	<i>Vireo bellii pusillus</i>	FE	SE
Loggerhead shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	-	SSC
Northern harrier*	<i>Circus (cyaneus) hudsonius</i>	-	SSC
Southwestern willow flycatcher	<i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>	FE	SE

Appendix A – North County Plan Draft Covered Species List

Common Name	Scientific Name	Status	
		Federal	State
Tricolored blackbird	<i>Agelaius tricolor</i>	-	ST
Western Burrowing owl	<i>Athene cunicularia hypugaea</i>	-	SSC
Western yellow-billed cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus americanus occidentalis</i>	FE	SE
Mammals			
Mountain lion	<i>Puma concolor</i>	-	SP/SPE
Pallid bat	<i>Antrozous pallidus</i>	-	SSC
San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit*	<i>Lepus californicus bennettii</i>	-	SSC
Southern mule deer*	<i>Odocoileus hemionus fuliginatus</i>	-	-
Southern California ringtail	<i>Bassariscus astutus octavus</i>	-	FP
Stephens' kangaroo rat	<i>Dipodomys stephensi</i>	FE	ST
Townsend's big-eared bat	<i>Corynorhinus townsendii pallescens</i>	-	SSC

***Added as indicator species**

Federal Status

FE = Federally Listed as Endangered
 FT = Federally Listed as Threatened
 FPE = Federal Proposed Endangered
 USFWS:BCC = Birds of Conservation Concern

State Status

SE = State Listed as Endangered
 ST = State Listed as Threatened
 FP = State Fully Protected
 SSC = California Species of Special Concern
 SPE = State Proposed Endangered