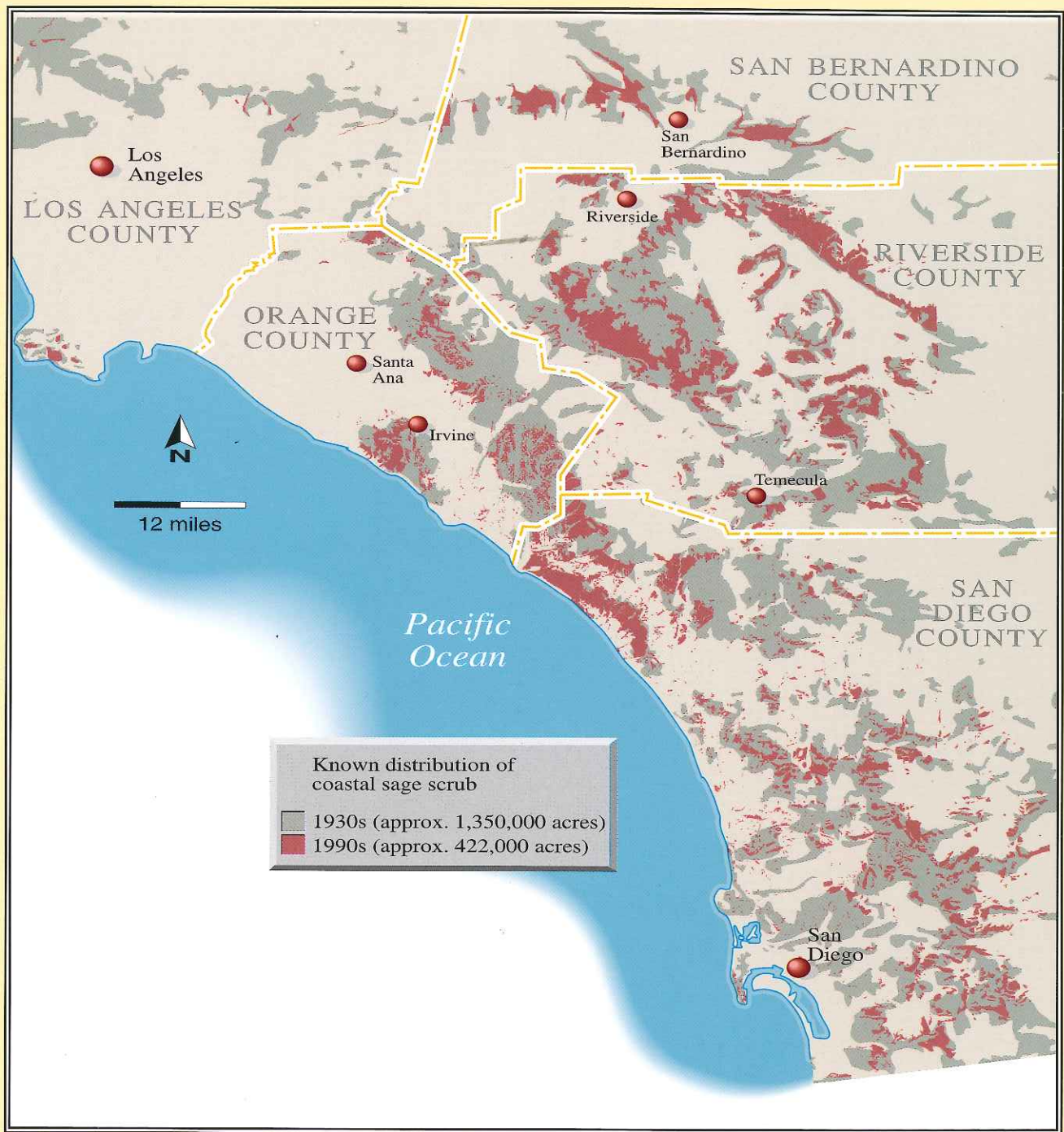


NATURAL
COMMUNITY
CONSERVATION
PLANNING

1991-1998

A PARTNERSHIP FOR CONSERVATION



The information, maps, and photos in this report were provided by NCCP partners including:

- THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME • THE UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
- THE NATURE CONSERVANCY • THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO • THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
- THE TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND • THE COUNTY OF ORANGE
- THE IRVINE COMPANY • THE SAN DIEGO ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS • THE CITY OF RANCHO PALOS VERDES
- THE COACHELLA VALLEY MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY • THE COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE
- THE ENDANGERED HABITATS LEAGUE • THE ALLIANCE FOR HABITAT CONSERVATION
- CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES EVALUATION SYSTEM (CERES) OF THE CALIFORNIA RESOURCES AGENCY



BRUCE BABBITT
Secretary
US Department of Interior

"NCCP is a triumph of communities over conflict. It is a model for the nation of how to plan for and balance the needs of man and nature, and how to do the job right. NCCP opens a new chapter for conservation and open space planning for the 21st century."

"The NCCP/MSCP has not only provided the City of San Diego with a ecosystem-based open space preservation strategy that will benefit all our residents' quality of life but has also expedited the process for development approvals through permits and partnerships with the State and Federal wildlife agencies, all without stealing anybody's land."



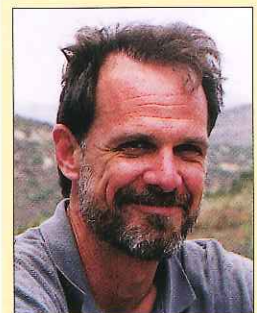
SUSAN GOLDING
Mayor
City of San Diego



MONICA FLORIAN
Sr. Vice President
The Irvine Company

"The NCCP is remarkable because it is a voluntary program that effectively and imaginatively addresses the country's concern about endangered species on private lands, and does it with the cooperation and support of the landowner. Its great appeal is that the NCCP increases the certainty for all of its participants. For landowners, this certainly makes participation a good business practice. Further, I believe the results are significant and promote both environmental and economic health."

"The primary forces that threaten the biodiversity of California are clear: a phenomenal population explosion driving a tidal wave of development, and local land use decisions that have failed to integrate scientifically sound biological conservation into the decision-making process. Without a fundamental change, biological systems will be fragmented and lost. The NCCP has the potential to effect such a change."



MICHAEL BECK
Endangered Habitats
League

"The bottom line is that NCCP returns local control to the permit process and provides property owners opportunities to use their land that did not exist before. The natural land set aside for open space will be a monumental legacy to our children and their children. The NCCP/MSCP is a win for everyone."

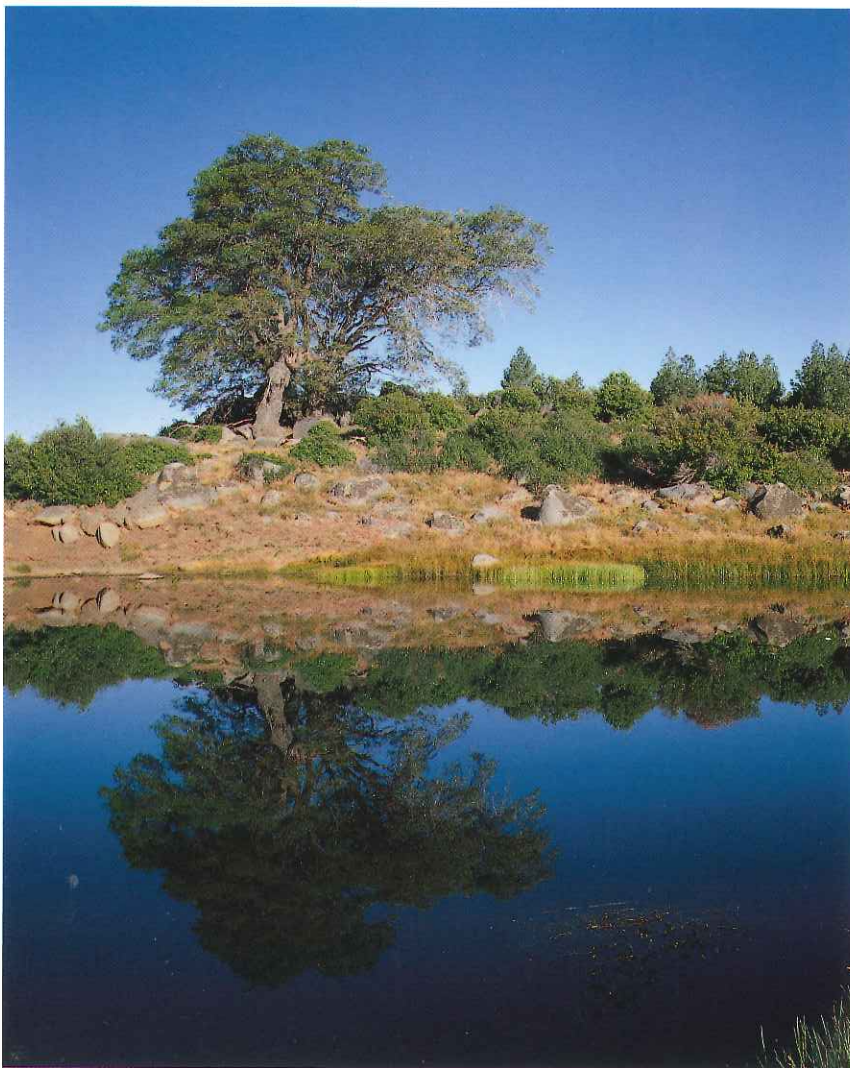


DIANE JACOB
Supervisor, District 2
San Diego County

NATURAL COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PLANNING

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OF CALIFORNIA IS
ONE OF THE PLANET'S MOST MAGNIFICENT TREASURES.

FROM THE HIGH SIERRA TO THE BIG SUR COAST —
FROM THE ANCIENT REDWOODS OF THE NORTHWEST
TO THE DESERTS OF ANZA BORREGO AND MOJAVE —
CALIFORNIA IS BLESSED BY NATURE.



These diverse natural communities shelter a wealth of species unlike any other in the continental United States. California's habitats are home to dozens of rare and unique plants and animals found nowhere else on earth — a natural legacy to be shared with future generations.

The same environment that fills us with wonder is an important part of the quality of life that attracts millions of residents to the state. California is now home to more than 36 million people — one out of every eight people in the United States. Reasonable estimates expect another 18 million citizens to call the state home by the year 2025.

The crush of such a population and its associated housing, transportation, water, food and other needs puts an enormous strain on the state's natural resources. California has already experienced a great decline in its native habitats (*see inset next page*). More species are listed as endangered or threatened than any state except Hawaii — one-fifth of all listed endangered species are found in California. Further loss is almost inevitable. How can we protect the natural values that make California so special while accommodating the needs of a rapidly expanding human population?

The Need for New Tools

Old ways of reconciling the conservation of native species and habitat with growth and development are extremely limited. The state and federal Endangered Species Acts, while clear and strong in their protection of rare species, have not been effective in creating the broad solutions necessary to resolve conflicts between land use and conservation created by California's growing population. Adversarial battles over natural resource protection have historically been fought development project by development project and rare species by rare species. Conservation accomplishments are usually small and fragmented, and the entire system of regulation is generally expensive and inefficient.

In 1991, California decided that a new approach to the problem was needed. The answer was a new habitat conservation initiative based on broad partnerships among conservationists, local governments, landowners and regulatory agencies. The Natural Community Conservation Planning, or NCCP, program would create regional conservation and development plans that protected entire communities of native plants and animals while streamlining the process for compatible economic development in other areas.

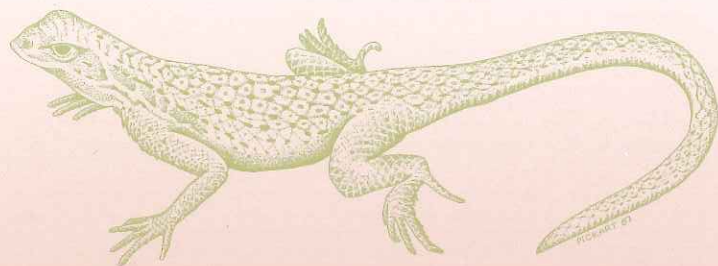
The goal of the program was to bring much-needed certainty both for protection of California's unique natural legacy and for economic growth and use of private property.

Protecting, restoring and managing large blocks of native habitat in this way is more effective biologically than the fragmented protection achieved through implementing regulations project by project. And by streamlining the land use process for development outside these areas, regulatory certainty needed for strong local economies is promoted.

Ultimately, the partnership approach of NCCP is designed to accomplish far more than the adversarial methods of times past.

It allows shared responsibility for funding of land protection, broader public participation in the planning process, and creates a land use and regulatory system that is more efficient, certain, and cost effective than other alternatives.

The NCCP program, by creating comprehensive solutions for entire natural communities on the brink of extinction, protects species as well as healthy ecosystems of plants, animals and the lands and waters they need to survive.



HABITAT LOSS IN CALIFORNIA

California harbors eight of the 21 most endangered ecosystems in the United States. These natural communities have been significantly reduced in area and contain dozens of rare and endangered species. More than half of the state's native ecosystems are rare and are facing a high degree of threat. The following are some of the habitats most at risk in California:

HABITAT TYPE	PERCENTAGE LOST
Native grasslands	99%
Needlegrass Steppe	99.9%
San Joaquin Alkali Scrub	99%
Coastal Sage Scrub	70-90%
Vernal Pools	99%
Wetlands (all types)	91%
Riparian Woodlands	89%
Coastal Redwood Forest	85%

Source: *Endangered Ecosystems*, by R.F. Noss and R.L. Peters. 1995

HISTORY OF THE NCCP PROGRAM

In 1991, Southern California was close to becoming the latest, and possibly the greatest, battle over the Endangered Species Act. The California Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service were considering a proposal to add a small songbird — the California gnatcatcher — to the endangered species list. The habitat of this bird had been reduced by more than 70% from its historic levels. High rates of historical development and resulting habitat loss in the region meant that what habitat remained was fragmented and often degraded.



In places like southern California however, these laws have rarely succeeded in stemming the decline of plants and animals. This is largely the result of their focus on protecting individual species after they are threatened with extinction. By then, if it is not too late, the cost and difficulty of recovering species is prohibitive.

The NCCP Program — A Solution for the Future

The need for new tools to both protect species and habitats and provide for economic activity was a top priority in 1991. Local governments had their land use decisions and flexibility constrained by the endangered species acts. The regulatory system was costly, inefficient, and uncertain for landowners and developers. And wildlife agencies spent their limited resources and personnel evaluating small, individual permit applications rather than helping create conservation on behalf of species and habitats. Antagonism and conflict were commonplace.

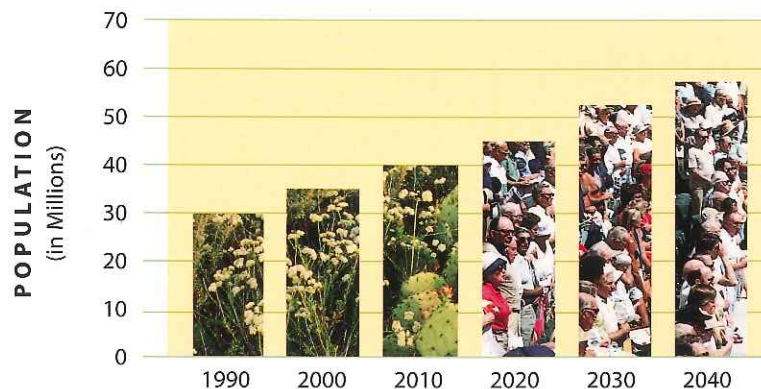
The habitat on which the gnatcatcher relies — coastal sage scrub — is also some of the most valuable unbuilt real estate in the United States. Parcels close to the coast may be valued at \$1 million an acre. Protection of the gnatcatcher could have meant a significant burden to five counties dependent upon economic growth for their prosperity.

But the gnatcatcher was only the tip of the iceberg for the endangered species act in southern California. Nearly two dozen species of plants and animals were already on the protected list. Several dozen more were either proposed for legal protection or declining fast. Clearly, a different solution was needed.

Limitations of the Endangered Species Acts

Both the federal and California endangered species laws were intended to be safety nets for the protection of species on the brink of extinction. These laws have had important successes in slowing the decline of some species and bringing others back from the edge.

PROJECTED POPULATION GROWTH IN CALIFORNIA
1990-2040



Working together, these groups began to outline a new habitat conservation and planning program. The program would be grounded in cooperative partnerships, a biological approach that protected functioning ecosystems of species while providing opportunities for continued, compatible economic growth. This program, called the Natural Community Conservation Planning program, grew out of the collaboration of an uncommon alliance of government, industry and public interest groups held together by the common goal of finding a better way to integrate conservation and land use.

Legal Foundation

Additional legal authority was clearly needed to implement the NCCP program. In late 1991, the California Legislature passed AB2172, which, when signed by Governor Wilson, established the necessary authority and intent to carry out NCCP. The law gave the Department of Fish and Game broad authority to engage in regional habitat management agreements. These agreements would not supercede the Endangered Species Act or its protections; rather, they provided a way to anticipate the consequences of such laws at a regional scale and plan for them. While the Endangered Species Act represents an "emergency room" approach to wildlife protection, NCCP was designed to be preventative care.



THE SCIENTIFIC REVIEW PANEL

An important early objective of the NCCP program was to include independent scientific involvement in its design. To address this issue, in 1991 the California Department of Fish and Game established a Scientific Review Panel of distinguished academic scientists to develop the biological parameters of the Southern California pilot project.

Among the tasks of the Scientific Review Panel were analysis and synthesis of existing field data and other research on the coastal sage scrub natural community and production of a set of regional conservation guidelines to protect and manage it. These guidelines would be used in the development of subregional NCCP plans and would provide the biological framework and context for the entire program. The work of the Scientific Review Panel was completed in 1993. Members of the panel included:

DR. DENNIS MURPHY

(chair) Center for Conservation Biology, Stanford University

DR. PETER BRUSSARD

University of Nevada, Reno

DR. MICHAEL GILPIN

University of California, San Diego

DR. REED NOSS

Oregon State University

DR. JOHN O'LEARY

San Diego State University

THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PILOT PROJECT

Given the intensity of the conflict over the gnatcatcher and its habitat, southern California was the logical place to try out this new alternative approach to conservation and land use. Coastal sage scrub is a biologically rich habitat containing a wide diversity of species. It occurs across parts of five coastal counties: Orange, Riverside, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, and San Diego. (see map, inside front cover).

Nearly 100 plants and animals in coastal sage scrub are either candidates for endangered species protection or recognized as vulnerable. Most remaining scrub occurs on private land and is highly desirable for development with extremely high land values. Moreover, the local context for planning is different in each of the five counties. For example, Orange County is characterized by a few large property ownerships, while San Diego has many thousands of parcels. A great need of the NCCP program was flexibility to apply to very different local situations.

With these important elements in mind, a 6,000 square mile planning region was identified for the development of natural community conservation plans with the goal of safeguarding remaining critical pieces of the coastal sage scrub ecosystem and allowing continued economic activity and development in other, less biologically vital places.

Regional Coordination – Subregional Planning

Instead of planning for the entire region at once, the Scientific Review panel (see inset, previous page) identified “subregional” planning units with recognizable biological and socio-economic boundaries. Eleven subregions were identified in all, including several habitat planning efforts that were already underway in the region, such as San Diego’s Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP). The goal was to create manageable planning units that interrelated, like pieces of a giant jigsaw puzzle, to protect natural resources throughout the region.

The eleven original NCCP subregions were:

Central Orange County
Coastal Orange County
Palos Verdes Peninsula
Southern Orange County
SW San Bernardino County
Western Riverside County
Northern San Diego County
San Diego Gas & Electric
Southwestern San Diego County
Eastern San Diego County
USMC Camp Pendleton

Several of the subregions further identified planning subareas to facilitate the development of conservation plans. These subareas were coordinated through a common set of subregional principles and NCCP regional planning guidelines.

In 1996, the Coachella Valley in eastern Riverside County signed an agreement with state and federal wildlife agencies to develop a regional conservation plan using the principles and guidelines of NCCP. It became the twelfth subregion of the program.



NCCP Conservation and Process Guidelines

Anticipating the need to engage numerous local jurisdictions in planning, in 1993 the California Department of Fish and Game established non-regulatory guidelines for the process of developing NCCP plans in southern California. These guidelines set forth how local jurisdictions and individual landowners can join the planning process and how subregional plans will be developed and ultimately approved.

The need to coordinate multiple subregional plans into a biologically functional whole led the Department of Fish Game, with the assistance of the Scientific Review Panel, to create detailed, non-regulatory conservation guidelines for the entire region. The purpose of the conservation guidelines is to establish regional biological objectives and guide local actions during development of subregional plans.

The conservation guidelines contain biological principles to assist planning. They emphasize a focus on both physical and biological diversity and stress the need to connect protected areas together through corridors. The guidelines also identify an interim and long term research agenda to provide information needed for planning and implementing NCCPs.

The guidelines are intended to:

Avoid foreclosure of conservation planning options — no development permitted in the interim should preclude the design of viable preserves.



Set limits for interim habitat loss — the amount of habitat lost during the interim in each subregion would be limited to 5 percent.

Divert urbanization away from key conservation areas — large blocks of habitat or important connections between them would be protected in the interim.

In 1998, the Department of Fish and Game formally adopted general NCCP process guidelines for application throughout the state.

Interim Regulation

It quickly became evident that regulatory procedures would be necessary during the ten years it was expected to take to create conservation plans for the region. The listing of the California gnatcatcher as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act in 1993 enabled the development of special regulatory guidance during the interim. It was also an important opportunity to forge a partnership allowing the federal government, through the US Fish and Wildlife Service, to play a key role in the program.

Development of NCCP Conservation Plans

Conservation planning began in earnest after the 1993 guidelines and interim regulations were published. Some NCCP subregions, such as southwestern San Diego and western Riverside County, had been planning prior to the creation of the program. For these jurisdictions, the NCCP program gave them a policy structure to support their efforts. Others took advantage of the opportunities for collaboration in NCCP and quickly developed subregional conservation plans. By 1997, four subregional plans were complete — for Central and Coastal Orange County (combined), southwestern San Diego, and San Diego Gas & Electric. Four others were at various stages of development. The remaining three had not yet begun planning.

NCCP BENEFITS CALIFORNIA'S ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY BY



PRESERVING FUNCTIONING NATURAL COMMUNITIES AND ECOSYSTEMS

MAINAINING PRECIOUS QUALITY OF LIFE FOR CALIFORNIANS



PROTECTING A NATURAL LEGACY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

PROVIDING PREDICTABILITY AND
CERTAINTY FOR FUTURE LAND USE

SAFEGUARDING RARE SPECIES
AND HABITATS



PRESERVING LARGE AREAS OF OPEN SPACE
FOR RECREATION AND ENJOYMENT

ALLOWING NEEDED ECONOMIC
GROWTH TO PROCEED

NCCP PLANS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS



natural communities that reside there. The Nature Reserve directors are pursuing an exotic and invasive plant eradication program and a controlled fire regimen that will, over time, improve habitat conditions in the reserve areas.

Orange County has begun working on a similar NCCP plan for the Southern subregion. A team of independent scientific advisors developed conservation and management guidance for the subregion that has been used to create potential alternative conservation and development proposals. Preserve options being evaluated will likely protect more than 41,000 acres.

ORANGE COUNTY

Orange County has made great progress in creating plans under the NCCP program. In July, 1996, the first local government led NCCP was signed for the central and coastal subregions of the county. The plan combines 17,000 acres of public land with 21,000 acres of private land set aside (including nearly 4,000 acres that were not previously identified for conservation) into a 38,000 acre nature reserve that protects nearly 40 rare species and several natural communities in the largest remaining habitat blocks in the county..

The preserve system, known as the Nature Reserve of Orange County, is managed by a private non-profit organization for public use and enjoyment as well as conservation through a permanent endowment fund. This \$11 million fund was built through a partnership of public sources and private mitigation fees.

The Central-Coastal NCCP provides long-term regulatory

certainty to the private sector while adaptively managing the preserve lands to enhance the species and



The Central/Coastal Orange County NCCP protects 38,000 acres in two large blocks

SAN DIEGO

San Diego is a recognized “hot spot” of biological and species diversity as well as of endangered species. Working with groups of citizens, business interests and landowners, local governments have completed the most ambitious planning effort to date. The San Diego subregion was divided into several smaller planning units, and plans are complete for most of them.

In 1996 the City of Poway completed and signed its own jurisdictional plan. San Diego Gas & Electric utility also completed a subregional plan for its ongoing operations and maintenance during that year. In 1997 and 1998, the city and county subarea Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) plans were signed and dedicated, marking the end of several years of planning. Combined under the regional framework of NCCP, these plans will result in the conservation and management

CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP: THE SAN DIEGO MSCP

Total Acres in Preserve System: 172,000

Sensitive Species Covered in Conservation Plan: 85

Public Land Dedicated to Conservation Management: 79,000

Private Land to be Dedicated for Reserve System: 66,000

*Acres to be Acquired to Complete Reserve System: 27,000
(acreage shared between local and state/federal governments)*

of 172,000 acres of habitat for 85 rare species and dozens of habitat types.

The San Diego MSCP program adopted a different approach to conservation and development than Orange County. With thousands of private landowners in the area and a decades-long horizon for development planning, the MSCP adopted a 'regional land use plan' approach where many private land dedications to the preserve system would be completed over time.

This contrast in process with the Orange Central Coastal plan emphasizes the importance of integrating local needs with regional planning requirements. Local flexibility managed by a regional framework and guidance is a hallmark of the NCCP program.

San Diego jurisdictions have spent more than \$10 million on planning, matched by federal and state planning funds. Federal and state funding partnerships have been essential, since nearly 27,000 acres of habitat must be acquired from willing sellers to assemble the conservation reserve system. The acres purchased will be shared evenly between local government and state and federal governments. The US Fish and Wildlife Service, the federal Bureau of Land Management, and the state Wildlife Conservation Board have contributed more than \$25 million to acquisitions of several thousand acres in the preserve system. The value of land dedicated by private landowners over time in exchange for development opportunities elsewhere will approach \$500 million.



WESTERN RIVERSIDE

Western Riverside County has compiled a lengthy record of planning and implementation of endangered species conservation plans. The County has protected several thousand acres of critical habitat with local funds, mostly under its Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Habitat Conservation Plan, approved and dedicated in 1996. The NCCP regional framework provides the opportunity for the County to build on its previous efforts, which in turn offer a significant advantage to the county implementing its NCCP — many of the core conservation areas have already been protected.

The NCCP program also offers Riverside County the chance to pursue further regulatory assurances and land use certainty for a wide variety of species and natural communities in the subregion. Riverside County signed a formal planning agreement in 1997 with the intent of developing an NCCP for the western portion of the county. The current planning process incorporates existing conservation reserves and integrates conservation planning with future transportation and general plan needs of the region. This unique local approach will be coordinated through the regional NCCP framework and guidance and is further evidence of the importance of flexibility to meet local planning needs.

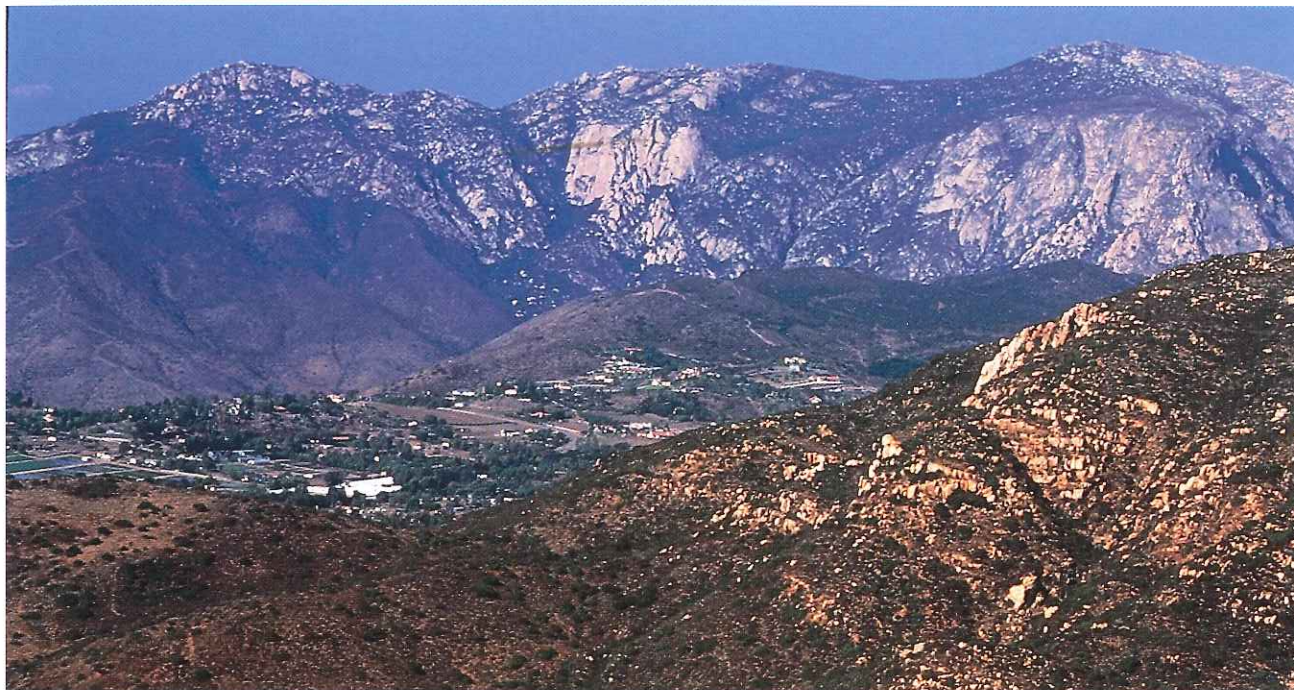
COACHELLA VALLEY

While not originally part of the designated subregions of the NCCP pilot project, the nine cities of the Coachella Valley and Riverside County are preparing a natural community conservation plan using the same principles and regional context. The Coachella Valley planning effort builds on conservation accomplishments of the Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard Habitat Conservation Plan, adopted in 1985, and the activities of the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, the state Wildlife Conservation Board, the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy, the Wildlands Conservancy and Friends of the Desert Mountains.

Just like the western portion of the county, the goal of the Coachella Valley planning process is to pursue further regulatory assurances, and protection for a wide variety of rare species and natural communities using the regional approach of NCCP.

More than \$9 million in local funds have been spent on habitat acquisition, and cities have set aside more than 4,500 acres of natural areas. The funding partnership with the Bureau of Land Management is especially essential to the success of the plan. The Bureau has spent more than \$9 million in the Santa Rosa Mountains National Scenic Area since 1990.





NORTHWEST SAN DIEGO COUNTY

The San Diego Multiple Habitat Conservation Plan (MHCP) is the conservation planning effort in the northwestern part of San Diego County. The San Diego Association of Governments is the lead agency for planning. This plan, which has completed biological analysis and is evaluating alternative conservation reserve systems, covers more than 23 different habitat types and dozens of rare species. The MHCP subregion includes some of the best remaining examples of several coastal habitats in the county, including coastal sage scrub, southern maritime chaparral and vernal pools. As in most subregions, a public funding source is particularly important to purchase lands from willing sellers. These acquisitions will complement habitats protected by private landowners in exchange for development elsewhere.

PALOS VERDES PENINSULA Los Angeles County

Most of the remaining coastal sage scrub habitat in Los Angeles County is concentrated on the Palos Verdes Peninsula. This area is unique in that it contains several rare and declining species not found anywhere else in the NCCP region. The Peninsula contains 1,250 remaining acres of high quality natural open space and six unique populations of protected species. Most of this is private land, which has among the highest land values of any place in Southern California.

The City of Rancho Palos Verdes has led the NCCP effort on the Peninsula. The city council entered into a formal planning agreement with state and federal wildlife agencies in 1996, and the city has contributed more than \$100,000 to planning. Matching funds through the US Fish and Wildlife Service have also supported the planning effort. In December, 1996, the city purchased its most important habitat preserve, 160 acres in Klondike Canyon, in a partnership among the Los Angeles County Park and Open Space District, the state Wildlife Conservation Board, and the state Coastal Conservancy. This cornerstone acquisition contains the highest quality habitat on the Peninsula, and will form the foundation of the conservation reserve system.

PARTNERSHIP EXAMPLE: THE NCCP 5-COUNTY FUNDING GROUP

The Natural Community Conservation Planning Program was intended to be a model process for consensus building and collaboration to solve environmental conflicts. A distinctive part of the NCCP process is that it is a locally-driven effort that requires cooperation and action from a wide variety of interest groups. These include the private sector, non-profit organizations, local government and state and federal wildlife agencies.

The most important test of the success of the NCCP program is obtaining local, state and federal public funding for developing and implementing conservation plans. As the planning process has moved forward and gained momentum, consensus around funding has taken the shape of the NCCP 5-County Funding Group, a close-knit but informal alliance of interest groups with the common goal of funding the NCCP program.

The NCCP 5-County Funding Group is a broad coalition of business, development, landowning and conservation interests and local government officials who convene regularly to discuss funding issues. The group gathers its individual funding needs together and works to ensure that each planning subregion receives funds to satisfy those needs. Participants support the funding priorities and requests of the others, and in turn all participants champion the requests of every planning subregion.

This unprecedented alliance collectively pursues funding for all priorities knowing that working together will bring greater success than competing separately.

The NCCP 5-County Funding Group and its strategy are strongly supported by the local building industry, public utilities, alliances of major landowners, public interest and environmental groups and representatives from each NCCP planning subregion in all five southern California counties of the NCCP program. The group also works together with representatives from local, state and federal agencies to make sure that the funding goals it pursues are among the highest priorities for the NCCP region.

During its three years of cooperation, the NCCP 5-County Funding Group has helped bring more than \$60 million in critical state and federal funding to the southern California NCCP region for land acquisition, planning, and land management. The highest goal of the 5-County Funding Group is to develop long-term, dependable sources of funding at the local, state and federal levels to carry out the implementation of conservation plans.

A PARTIAL LIST OF NCCP 5-COUNTY FUNDING GROUP PARTICIPANTS

ALLIANCE FOR HABITAT CONSERVATION

BUILDING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF SAN DIEGO

BUILDING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

COACHELLA VALLEY MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

COACHELLA VALLEY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS AND MEMBER JURISDICTIONS

CITY OF SAN DIEGO

CITY OF RANCHO PALOS VERDES

COUNTY OF ORANGE

COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE HABITAT CONSERVATION AGENCY

COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE

COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

ENDANGERED HABITATS LEAGUE

GENSTAR LAND COMPANY SOUTHWEST

THE IRVINE COMPANY

PARDEE CONSTRUCTION/WEYERHAUSER

SAN DIEGO ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS AND MEMBER JURISDICTIONS

SAN DIEGO GAS AND ELECTRIC (A Sempra Company)

TERRABROOK

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND

RANCHO MISSION VIEJO COMPANY

ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF SAN DIEGO

PLACES PROTECTED THROUGH NCCP

The NCCP program has conserved many sites that might not otherwise have been protected. More than 150,000 acres of habitat have been preserved or placed in long-term conservation management under the program so far. These lands will be open for public use and enjoyment for activities such as hiking, horseback riding and nature study. Completed NCCP plans have identified a total of 250,000 acres that will eventually receive protection.

The following are a few of these special places:

LIMESTONE CANYON
Orange County

EMERALD CANYON
Orange County

EL TORO HABITAT PRESERVE
Orange County

LAKE SKINNER/SHIPLEY RESERVE
Riverside County

LAKE MATTHEWS
Riverside County

KLONDIKE CANYON
Los Angeles County

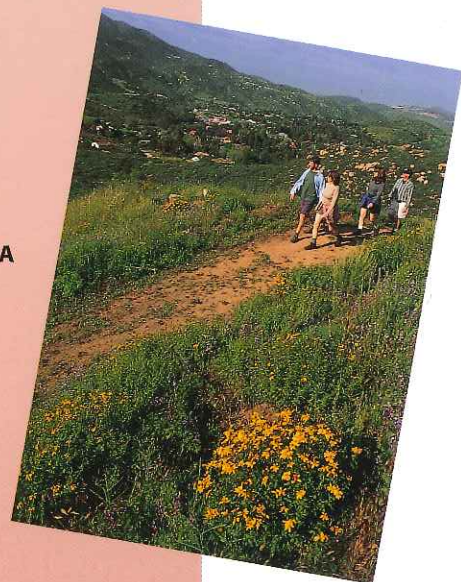
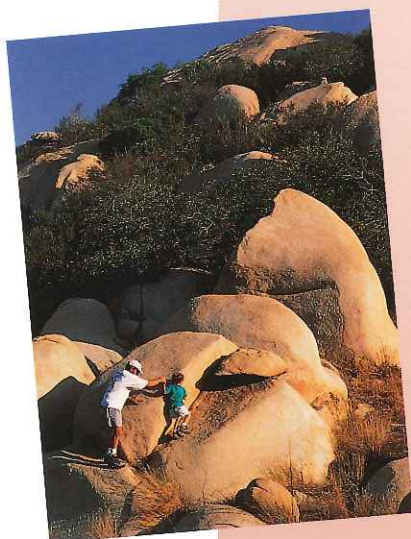
RANCHO SAN DIEGO
San Diego County

OTAY MOUNTAIN/KUCHAMAA WILDLIFE AREA
San Diego County

CARMEL MOUNTAIN
City of San Diego

CRESTRIDGE NATURE RESERVE
San Diego County

RANCHO JAMUL ECOLOGICAL RESERVE
San Diego County



CHALLENGES AHEAD

The NCCP program holds great promise as an approach to successfully resolving some of California's most complicated and difficult natural resource conservation issues. Each of the partners that has participated in NCCP has done so because they believe that the outcome afforded them is better than might have been possible under any other alternative.

Implementation of the program has created benefits for both conservation and the interests of private landowners and local governments. It has also resulted in a more efficient regulatory system that makes wiser and more effective use of agency funds and skills.

Yet several great challenges remain to long-term success. For NCCP to truly be successful, commitments made by all participants must be fulfilled and permanent conservation achieved alongside wisely considered and predictable land and resource use.

Some of the most critical ongoing challenges include:

Funding

Success depends on a dedicated public funding partnership of local, state and federal sources. The private sector will contribute much of the preserved land in several subregions, but critical elements of the conservation system require public funding to meet the conservation goals. Local, state and federal governments have pledged their funding support and are gradually fulfilling that commitment. Local governments are acquiring acres for the preserve system, and also shouldering much

of the land management cost and responsibility. More than \$60 million has been appropriated from the California Legislature and the U.S. Congress toward land protection and management, but much more is needed to fulfill their existing commitments.

Implementation Capacity

The long term nature of the NCCP program requires that institutions and individuals be in place to carry out the many requirements of the program. Each partner organization and agency faces the need to build capacity to effectively play its critical long-term role in the program. NCCP is a great change in the status quo, and all are challenged to put in place their best and brightest individuals and effective systems to implement, monitor, participate, and collaborate into the future. Maintaining effective coordination among these participating partners is a significant and continuing challenge.

Building the Conservation Reserve System

More than 150,000 acres of critical habitat for dozens of rare species have been protected. Many more acres throughout the region remain to be purchased from willing sellers and managed effectively and adaptively for long-term conservation. State and federal wildlife agencies have dedicated themselves to fulfilling their commitment by acquiring key habitats. Many non-profit partners are also playing important roles in assembling the conservation reserves by purchasing parcels. Local governments are working to acquire important habitats within their jurisdictions. As land values

escalate and the need for long-term management grows, the urgency of building the conservation reserve system increases.

Land Management and Monitoring

Acquisition or dedication of threatened lands is the first step in conserving the rare species and natural communities that depend on them. The real long-term test of NCCP is the ability to manage and biologically monitor hundreds of thousands of acres of land to promote and enhance the conservation, open space and recreation values they provide. NCCP promises an adaptive approach to management — learning by doing — to achieve its conservation goals over the long term. This challenge will require funding, collaboration and effort at least equal to the partnership that has carried the NCCP program thus far.

Building on Lessons Learned

The NCCP pilot program has been a test of the potential to reconcile meaningful regional habitat conservation with economic growth and development. Many lessons have been learned in the process of developing and implementing conservation plans. It is clear that state and federal conservation policies do not easily facilitate the type of advance planning that characterizes NCCP. Using the experiences of the pilot program, the challenge remains to incorporate lessons learned about the process of planning, assurances to landowners, streamlining of regulation, the integration of science and providing incentives for conservation into wise state and federal natural resource policies.

NCCP VS. INDIVIDUAL PERMITS A COMPARISON OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Natural Community Conservation Planning program is an attempt to move beyond a species-by-species, project-by-project approach to conservation. Its goal is to safeguard functioning natural communities of plants and animals, both rare and common, into a regional protection system that is sustainable over the long term.

The NCCP approach contrasts sharply with much of the conservation planning that has occurred historically under the individual "take" permits of Sections 2081 and 10(a) of the California and federal Endangered Species Acts.

The table at right presents a generalized comparison of the NCCP approach to conservation with the process and outcomes of individual permits.

	HCP PERMITS (Section 2081 & 10a)	NCCP PLANS (Section 2835)
Planning Scope	Project by Project	Ecologically Defined Regions and Jurisdictional Boundaries
Biological Scope	Generally Single Species	Habitats, Ecosystems & Multiple Species
Focus of Conservation	Highly Imperiled Species	Listed and Unlisted Species through Natural Communities
Scientific Input	Consultants and Agencies	Independent Scientists, Agencies and Consultants
Institutional Involvement	Applicants and Agencies	Local Governments, the Public, Stakeholders and Agencies
Public Participation	Limited to Legal Comment Period	Working Groups, Workshops, Planning Meetings
Use of Agency Resources	Hundreds of Small Permits	Managing Large Scale Programs
Driving Force	Proposed Individual Project Impacts to Species	Long-term Certainty for Habitat Protection and Land Use

NCCP VS. INDIVIDUAL PERMITS A COMPARISON OF OUTCOMES

	HCP PERMITS (Section 2081 & 10a)	NCCP PLANS (Section 2835)
Habitat Protection	Fragmented Set-Asides	Large, Connected Preserves
Species Addressed	Listed Species	Listed, Unlisted and Sensitive Species
Duration of Outcome	Short-term	Long-term or Perpetual
Resource Management	Minimal; Reliant on Permittee	Comprehensive, Long-term and Adaptive for Habitats and Species
Monitoring and Oversight	Passive by Agencies, Relies on Permittee	Active Participation in Oversight by Public and Stakeholders
Management Funding	Uncertain or from Permittee	Required in Implementation Agreement
Regulatory Assurances to Permittees	Narrow, Unpredictable, Except for Permitted Project	Broad in Return for Broad Conservation Commitments
Assurance of Implementation	Relies on Agency follow up	Contracted in Implementing Agreement
Conservation Outcome	Mitigation for the "take" of species	Maintenance and Restoration of Species and Habitat Viability

PHOTOGRAPHY, MAP AND ILLUSTRATION CREDITS:

FRONT COVER:

Coastal Sage Scrub by Bruce Farnsworth

INSIDE FRONT COVER:

Distribution of Coast Sage Scrub Map,
San Diego Union-Tribune/Paul Horn Illustration

PAGE 2:

Reflections— Little Laguna Lake by Roy Murphy

PAGE 3:

Fringe-toed Lizard by Andrea Pickart

PAGE 4:

Male California Gnatcatcher Atop Sagebrush by Bruce Farnsworth

PAGE 5:

San Diego Thornmint by Loren May

PAGE 6:

Orange-throated Whiptail by Bruce Farnsworth

PAGE 7:

Cactus Wren, Otay-Sweetwater by B. "Moose" Peterson

PAGES 8-9:

Large photo: *Oak Grove in Limestone Canyon—Irvine Open Space Reserve* by Harold E. Malde

Small inset photos, clockwise from top left:

Rancho Jamul Ecological Reserve/Trust for Public Land

Wildflowers, San Diego County by Sean Arbabi

Least Bell's Vireo by B. "Moose" Peterson

Group Hiking near Chula Vista by Sean Arbabi

San Diego Horned Lizard and Friend by Bruce Farnsworth

PAGE 10:

View Toward Laguna Beach—Irvine Open Space Reserve by Harold Malde

Map of Nature Reserve of Orange County by Robert Bein, William Frost & Associates

PAGE 11:

Daley Ranch by Roger B. Daines

PAGE 12:

Coachella Valley by George Service

PAGE 13:

Crestridge, San Diego County by Stephen Francis

PAGE 15: Inset Photos, clockwise from top left:

Hikers at Daley Ranch, Escondido by Phil Schermeister

Hikers at Volcan Mountain Preserve by Phil Schermeister

Couples Hiking beside Blooming Wildflowers by Sean Arbabi

Limestone Canyon, Irvine Open Space Reserve by Stephen Francis

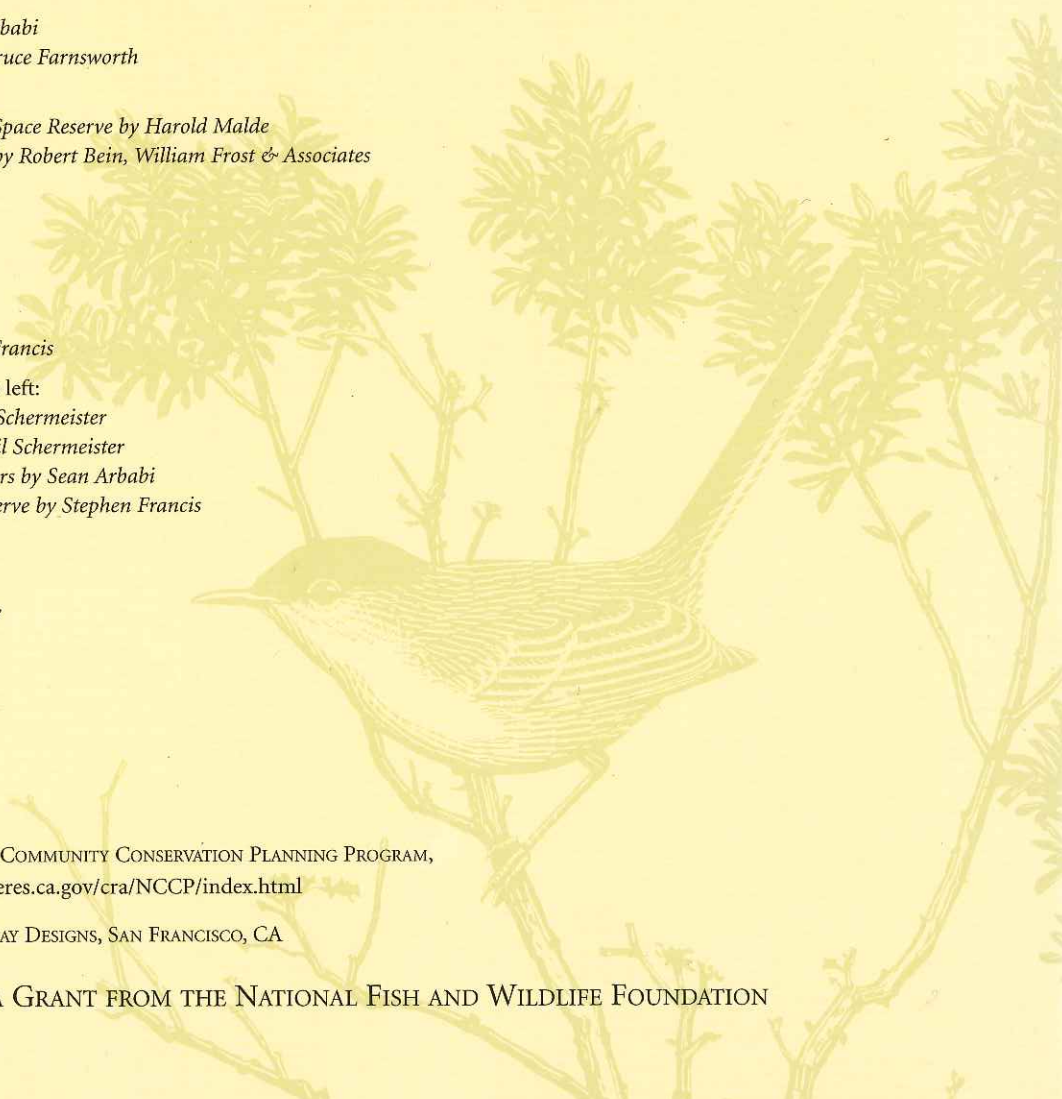
BACK COVER :

California Gnatcatcher by Dana Gardner

Flowering Cactus/The Nature Conservancy

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE NATURAL COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PLANNING PROGRAM,
VISIT THE NCCP HOME PAGE AT : <http://ceres.ca.gov/cra/NCCP/index.html>

DESIGN AND PRODUCTION BY CHARLOTTE KAY DESIGNS, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

THIS REPORT WAS FUNDED BY A GRANT FROM THE NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION