

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

FOR

RARE PLANT SURVEYS

AT

ALTON SOUTH CONSERVATION BANK

The proposed Alton South Conservation Bank supports a mosaic of habitats subject to the jurisdictional authority of the federal (U. S. Army Corps of Engineers) and state (Regional Water Quality Control Board) government distributed across a large, ruderal, annual grassland habitat dotted with abandoned prune trees and scattered ornamental and native trees.

Seasonal wetlands. Approximately 0.63 acre of habitat subject to the jurisdiction of the U.S. Corps of Engineers occurs on the property (Figure 1). The seasonal wetlands occur almost entirely in the swales or in very shallow headwater depressions. They are very shallowly inundated and, as a result, show little range in plant species composition. They were disturbed in the installation and maintenance of the vineyard, but when compared with the swale through the vineyard to the north show considerable recovery in terms of both total cover and species composition. The species present in these seasonal wetlands are typical of the habitat on the Santa Rosa Plain where the gradient is relatively steep. The dominant species are ryegrass, Mediterranean barley, California oatgrass, curly dock, and soft chess. Subdominant species include California buttercup, sheep sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), tall flatsedge (*Cyperus eragrostis*), tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*), slender oats, and other upland species found in the annual grassland on the Santa Rosa Plain.

The narrow swale sections at the southern end of the proposed preserve vary in width from three to six feet. Reaches that are partially covered by the overhanging eucalyptus are undervegetated and littered with bark and fallen leaves. The dominant species include tall flatsedge, tall fescue, curly dock, and penny royal (*Mentha pulegium*). In some locations, the swales pass beneath thickets of Himalaya berry (*Rubus discolor*). At the far southern limit, fluellin (*Kicksia spuria*), epilobium, yellow water cress (*Rorippa curvilisqua*), and rabbitsfoot grass (*Polypogon monspeliensis*) also occur in the swale.

Upland vegetation. The upland vegetation in the northern half and the narrow north-south limb of the proposed Alton South Conservation Bank is a ruderal “annual grassland” habitat that reflects the long-term disturbance associated with vineyard operations. In the southern half of the Preserve, the vegetation is a mosaic of tree- and shrub-dominated types within which are interspersed small patches of annual grassland.

The annual grassland is, in its current condition, typical of the type as it occurs throughout the Santa Rosa Plain. This description of the vegetation is, however based on data collected during the late fall (2005) when subdominant and small species are less readily observable. The dominant species include perennial ryegrass, soft chess, two species of vetch, filarees, rattlesnake grass (*Briza minor*, *Briza maxima*), tarweeds (*Madia elegans*, *Hemizonia congestum*), ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), and, in a few small areas, medusa head (*Taeniatherum asperum*). The subdominant species include slender and wild oats, California oatgrass, fireweed (*Epilobium paniculatum*), hedge bindweed, Mediterranean barley, rough and smooth cat’s ear, cutleaf geranium, and bur clover.

Scattered throughout the grassland in the northern part of the proposed Preserve are the abandoned vines (*Vitis vinifera*), a few coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis consanguinea*), a privet hedgerow, and a stand of eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*). In the narrow limb that connects the northern with the southern parts of the proposed Alton South Conservation Bank, the previous landowner planted a half-dozen cypress (*Cupressus* sp.) and coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), a valley oak (*Quercus lobata*), and a pair of cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster pannosa*). In this limb a few of the abandoned vines also remain in the grassland matrix.

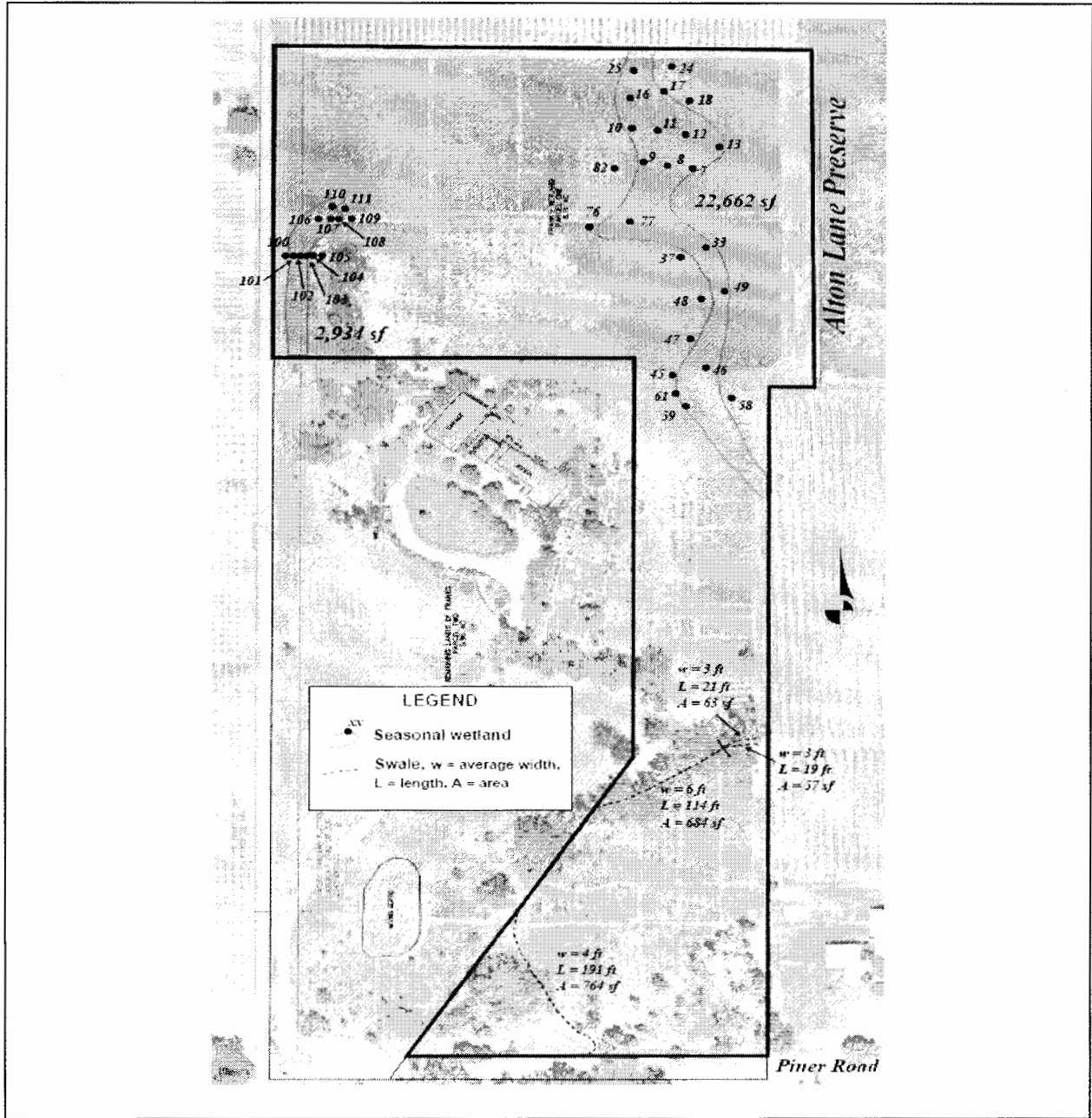


Figure 1. Distribution of Waters of the State and United States on the Alton South Conservation Bank.

In the southern part of the proposed Alton South Conservation Bank, many more of the vines remain and the habitat appears to be dominated by these vines, shrubs, and planted ornamental and native trees. The trees include eucalyptus, valley, coast, and blue (*Quercus douglasii*) oak. The eucalyptus and valley oak are 20 - 40 feet tall and the coast and blue oaks are 12- 20 feet tall, growing occasionally in the eucalyptus understory with eucalyptus saplings. Some blackwood acacia (*Acacia melanoxylon*) and fruit trees (*Prunus* spp.) line Piner Road. Poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversiloba*), coyote brush, and Himalaya berry (*Rubus discolor*) are also scattered through the southern part of the proposed Alton South Conservation Bank.

Special-status Plant Species. Special-status plant species surveys were conducted according to the FWS survey protocols on April 19, April 28, and May 13, 2006, and on March 3, April 16, and May 3, 2007. The adjacent Alton Lane Mitigation Site, Jacobson Parcel and Kerry Ranch 2 & 3 parcels served as the primary reference sites. Target special-status species will be those listed in the Santa Rosa Plain Vernal Pool Ecosystem Preservation Plan (CH2M Hill 1996) and which, by virtue of their known occurrence in the vicinity, their habitat requirements, and the types of habitat on the ASCB site, were considered to have the potential to occur on the ASCB site, and are listed below along with notes on the suitability of habitat at the ASCB for each species:

- Sonoma alopecurus (*Alopecurus aequalis* var. *sonomensis*) – no suitable habitat occurs on the ASCB.
- Bent-flowered fiddleneck (*Amsinkia lunaris*) – the upland habitat may provide suitable habitat but it has been disturbed annually.
- Sonoma sunshine (*Blennosperma bakeri*) – good-quality habitat is absent on the proposed ASCB site, but the species is present in the existing adjacent Alton Lane Preserve. Marginal habitat occurs in the main swale in the north part of the ASCB.
- Bogg's Lake dodder (*Cuscuta howelliana*) – parasitic species on many vernal pool species, particularly *Eryngium*, which is not present on the ASCB.
- Dwarf downingia (*Downingia humilis*) – no suitable habitat is present on the ASCB site.
- Burke's goldfields (*Lasthenia burkei*) - good-quality habitat is absent on the ASCB site but the species is present in the existing adjacent Alton Lane Preserve. Marginal habitat occurs in the main swale in the north part of the ASCB.
- Sebastopol meadowfoam (*Limnanthes vinculans*) – no suitable habitat is present on the ASCB site. No vernal pools are present, and the period of inundation in the existing wetlands is insufficient.
- Many-flowered navarretia (*Navarretia pleiantha*) – no suitable habitat is present in the ASCB site.
- Gairdner's yampah (*Perideridia gairdneri* ssp. *gairdneri*) – suitable soils are not present in the ASCB site.
- Small-flowered mesamint (*Pogogyne douglasii* ssp. *parviflora*) - no suitable habitat is present on the ASCB site. No vernal pools are present, and the period of inundation in the existing wetlands is insufficient.
- Lobb's aquatic buttercup (*Ranunculus lobbii*) - no suitable habitat is present on the proposed

ASCB site. No vernal pools are present and the period of inundation in the existing wetlands is insufficient.

- Showy Indian clover (*Trifolium amoenum*) – the upland habitat on the ASCB site provides marginally suitable habitat, but the species was not observed during wetland surveys.

No special-status species of plants were observed during the special-status plant surveys.