

CITY OF LA MESA

SUBAREA HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN / NATURAL COMMUNITY CONSERVATION PLAN

***ADOPTED BY THE
LA MESA CITY COUNCIL
FEBRUARY, 1998***

CITY OF LA MESA SUBAREA HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN

I. Subarea Description

The City of La Mesa is almost entirely developed with urban uses, and is surrounded by urbanization (i.e., the cities of San Diego, El Cajon, and Lemon Grove, and the unincorporated communities of Spring Valley and Valle De Oro (within the jurisdiction of the County of San Diego). State Routes 94 and 125 form the southern and general eastern boundaries of the City, respectively, and Interstate 8 bisects the City east to west (Figure 1).

La Mesa encompasses a total of 6200 acres of land, and has a population of 56,000 people. The topography of La Mesa is essentially a mesa ranging from 500 to 600 feet above mean sea level (MSL). The mesa is bisected east to west by Alvarado Canyon which contains Interstate 8 and Fletcher Parkway, both major west-east transportation corridors. Along the southern boundary is a northeast-southwest trending ridge that rises in elevation to 750 feet MSL.

The Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) vegetation mapping identifies coastal sage scrub habitat as the only significant natural habitat within the City limits. The MSCP maps indicate that approximately 208 acres of coastal sage scrub habitat exists within the City (Figure 2). These 208 acres constitute 0.2% of the total coastal sage scrub mapped in the MSCP area. The MSCP Habitat Elevation Model ranks the habitat as "High" and "Moderate."

The MSCP vegetation map shows that the coastal sage scrub habitat located in La Mesa is divided into three distinct blocks. The western block contains 11 acres, the central block contains 159 acres, and the eastern block contains 38 acres. In 1992 the construction of a Navy housing complex removed 36 of the 38 acres of coastal sage scrub in the eastern block. Two acres of coastal sage scrub were dedicated as open space for preservation of the California Gnatcatcher.

The remaining 179 acres of coastal sage scrub in the City of La Mesa are surrounded by urban development as shown on Figure 2. As part of the approval of the Eastridge Specific Plan and Tentative Tract Map 90-02, which covers approximately 87% of the habitat area, 50 acres of coastal sage scrub habitat will be preserved as permanent open space and habitat area through the granting of an open space easement to the City. While none of the coastal sage scrub habitat in La Mesa is not included in the MSCP "Multi-Habitat Planning Area" or the "Core Biological Resource Areas and Linkages" (Figures 3 and 4), these 55 acres, or 31% of the City's remaining coastal sage scrub habitat will be preserved.

The remainder of the coastal sage scrub habitat will be removed in association with residential development over a period of time. The Environmental Assessment prepared for this Plan examined alternatives for this taking (Section II) and found that the alternatives were not feasible due to conflicts with the City's General Plan goals and the fact that these habitat areas are not included in the MSCP's Multi-Habitat Planning Area or Core Biological Resource Areas and Linkages, and are not biologically significant to the long-term preservation of coastal sage scrub habitat in the region due to its size and isolated location. However, the taking of this habitat will result in the acquisition of habitat lands located within the Core Resource areas through the mitigation requirements listed in Section VI and will therefore contribute to achieving the regional goals of the MSCP.

II. Covered Species List

The species covered by the La Mesa Subarea Preserve Plan are the same species included in the MSCP. As noted in the MSCP Plan, the Multi-Habitat Planning Area provides adequate conservation for 85 of the 93 target species, including 29 priority species and 28 other target species. The MSCP Covered Species List is contained in Table 3-4 of the proposed MSCP Plan (3/1/95). MSCP covered species known to exist in the City of La Mesa are: *Ferocactus viridescens* (San Diego barrel cactus); *Polioptila californica* (Coastal California gnatcatcher); and *Aimophila ruficeps canescens* (California rufous-crowned sparrow). Other covered species that may be present in La Mesa include: *Phrynosoma cornutum blainvillei* (San Diego horned lizard); *Acanthomintha ilicifolia* (San Diego thornmint); and *Cnemidophorus hyperythrus beldingi* (Orange-throated whiptail). Additional target species that are known to be present in La Mesa include: *Dudleya variegata* (Variegated dudleya); and *Accipiter cooperii* (Cooper's hawk).

III. Preserve Management

The approximately 55 acres of coastal sage scrub habitat to be preserved within the City of La Mesa will be maintained by the private property owner. While this area will be preserved under the Eastridge Specific Plan adopted by the City in 1989, the remainder of the coastal sage scrub habitat within the City will eventually be removed due to development. The loss of this habitat will be mitigated under Section VII of this Plan within the MSCP Multi-Habitat Preserve Area.

Property owners within the City of La Mesa may mitigate the loss of habitat by acquiring, and dedicating in perpetuity, property within the City of Poway's preserve areas in conformance with Section 6, Land Use and Management, of the Poway Subarea Habitat Conservation Plan. As an alternative to the actual acquisition of land, property owners may also participate in the City of Poway's in-lieu fee program. This program requires a fee of \$12,000 per acre. Funding of the management and maintenance of these preserve areas is established in Section 7.6, Acquisition/Mitigation, of the Poway Subarea Plan as a one-time fee of \$1,200 per acre to be paid by La Mesa property owners.

Property owners within the City of La Mesa may also mitigate the loss of habitat elsewhere within the boundaries of the MSCP in conformance with this Plan and/or any applicable approved subarea plan. In these cases, property owners will be required to submit a project mitigation plan outlining the required mitigation, including the management of all mitigation preserve areas and their required funding. Such project plans will be subject to review and approval by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

All impacts to habitat areas within the City of La Mesa will comply with the Reporting, Biological Monitoring, and Preserve Management provisions listed in Section 14 of the Implementing Agreement.

IV. Interim/Long-term Protection of the Multi-Habitat Planning Area and Funding

The MSCP Multi-Habitat Planning Area (MHPA) identifies sixteen core biological resource areas and associated habitat linkages. The MHPA does not include any of the habitat located in the City of La Mesa. Thus, the habitat in La Mesa is not part of the identified core biological resource areas or associated habitat linkages. However, the City of La Mesa existing development review and building and grading permit review processes provide protection to native vegetation habitats within the City's jurisdiction. These measures will ensure that no habitat is lost in the City before mitigation for that habitat is assured. Project level biological surveys will be required for all future development proposals that could result in the loss of native habitat or the "take" of a covered species.

V. Interim Protection Measures

La Mesa development policies prohibit grading prior to the issuance of approved grading and building permits. City policies also prohibit the clearing and grubbing of habitat within the City prior to the completion of environmental review as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Wetland impacts would be mitigated through the adherence to Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

VI. Mitigation Goals and Criteria

The City of La Mesa will review development proposals that could affect habitat lands in accordance with its land use regulations and environmental review process. Project level biological surveys will be conducted which will include directed searches for habitats and species covered under this HCP and the MSCP. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the State of California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) will be afforded an opportunity to review individual projects within the City of La Mesa whenever such projects might result in the loss of a covered species or its habitat. The purpose of this review by USFWS and CDFG is to insure consistency with the MSCP and the La Mesa Subarea HCP. Written comments would be provided to the City of La Mesa if inconsistencies were found.

Development activities that would result in the loss of any native vegetation associations (e.g., coastal sage scrub, wetlands, etc.), or impact covered species are required to fully mitigate impacts associated with the development. The goal is to insure that any loss of habitat or sensitive species is compensated for by either on-site or off-site preservation of habitat. Mitigation for all impacts to identified natural upland habitats, including coastal sage scrub, will be mitigated off-site because the habitats in La Mesa are not included in the MSCP Multi-Habitat Preserve Area. Any southern maritime chaparral, mafic southern mixed chaparral, mafic chamise chaparral, native grassland, or oak woodlands that would be impacted will be mitigated in-kind at a 2:1 ratio, although these habitat types have not been identified within the City. Impacts to any other upland habitat types will be mitigated off-site at a 1:1 ratio. Off-site mitigation will be accomplished within the MSCP Multi-Habitat Preserve Area, either within the City of Poway's Subarea HCP or at other locations approved by the USFWS and the CDFG. Mitigation for wetlands will be at a location and ratio as required by the approval of a Section 404 permit from the Army Corps of Engineers. On-site mitigation for any habitat type would occur only if it is considered appropriate for wetland impacts in the context of the Section 404 permitting process or on-site preservation is deemed necessary by the wildlife agencies for the survival of a rare species.

VII. Funding for MHPA Acquisition

As a participating agency in the Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP) the City of La Mesa is committed to cooperating with the development and implementation of regional funding mechanisms for the acquisition and maintenance of habitat within the MSCP Multi-Habitat Preserve Area.

VIII. Consistency with Biological Preserve Design Criteria

The City of La Mesa will utilize the Biological Preserve Design Checklist contained in section 3.2.5 of the MSCP Plan to insure that public and private developments in this jurisdiction are consistent with the MSCP Plan. Qualified biologists will assist in the preparation of plans, formulation of mitigation measure, implementation activities, preserve maintenance, and monitoring of preserves.

IX. Consistency With Proposed MSCP Multi-Habitat Planning Area

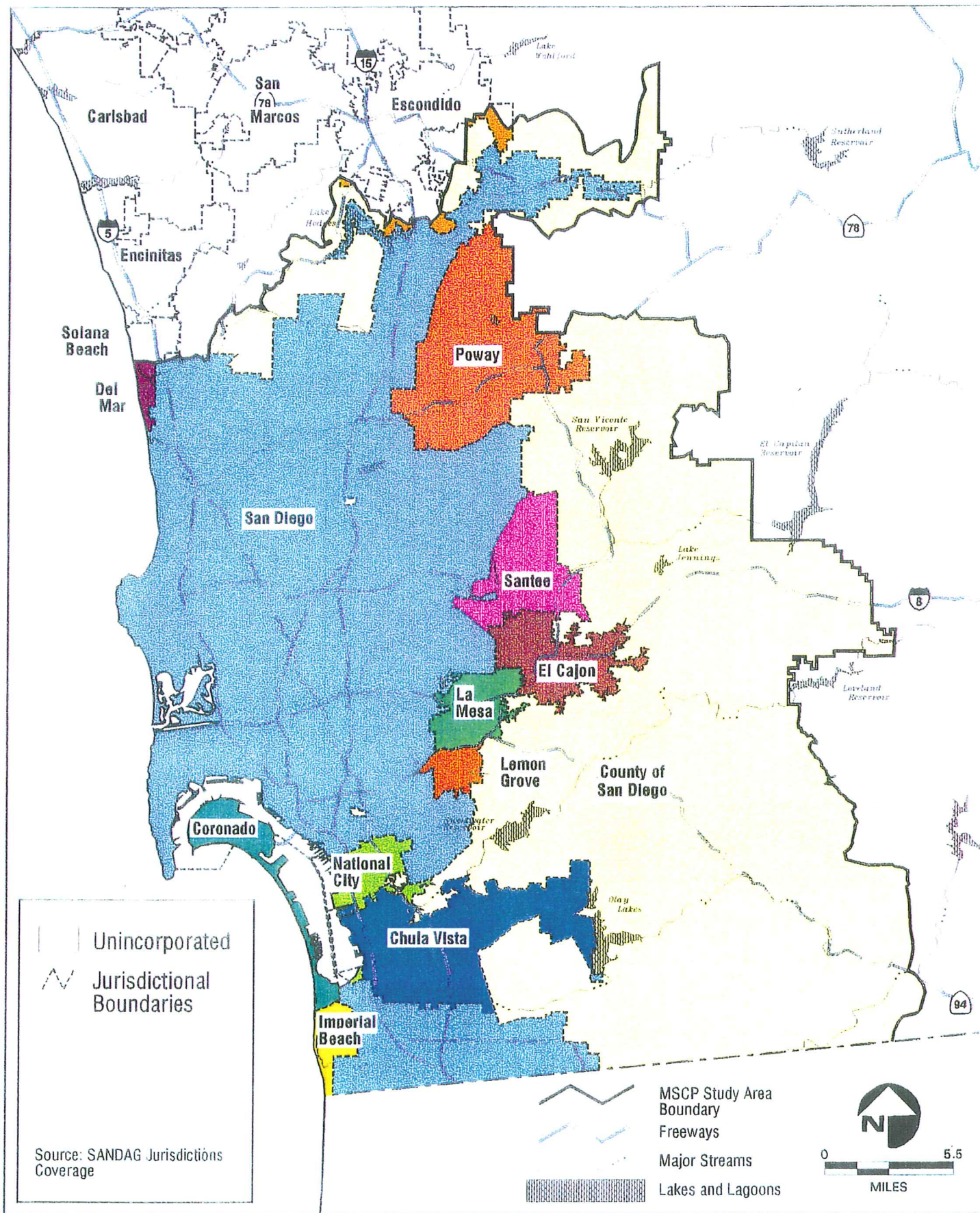
The La Mesa Subarea Preserve Plan is consistent with the MSCP Multi-Habitat Planning Area because off-site mitigation for impacts within the City of La Mesa would be accomplished within the Poway Subarea HCP, or at other locations consistent with the MSCP Subregional Plan and approved by the USFWS and CDFG. Impacts to habitat within La Mesa would not adversely affect the MSCP Multi-Habitat Planning Area.

X. Amendment Process

Subarea Preserve Plan amendments will be considered by the City of La Mesa should new scientific data on habitats and species within the city become available, or to add or delete species from the Covered species List. Amendments to the subarea plan would be processed in a manner consistent with Section 3.4.7 in the proposed MSCP Plan. Amendments of the subarea preserve plan would require concurrence by the USFWS, CDFG, and potentially by the City of Poway if the amendment would affect the Poway HCP.

XI. Extraordinary Circumstances

The Implementing Agreement includes provisions in Section 9.6 for Extraordinary Circumstances which may affect the implementation of this Subarea HCP as outlined herein.

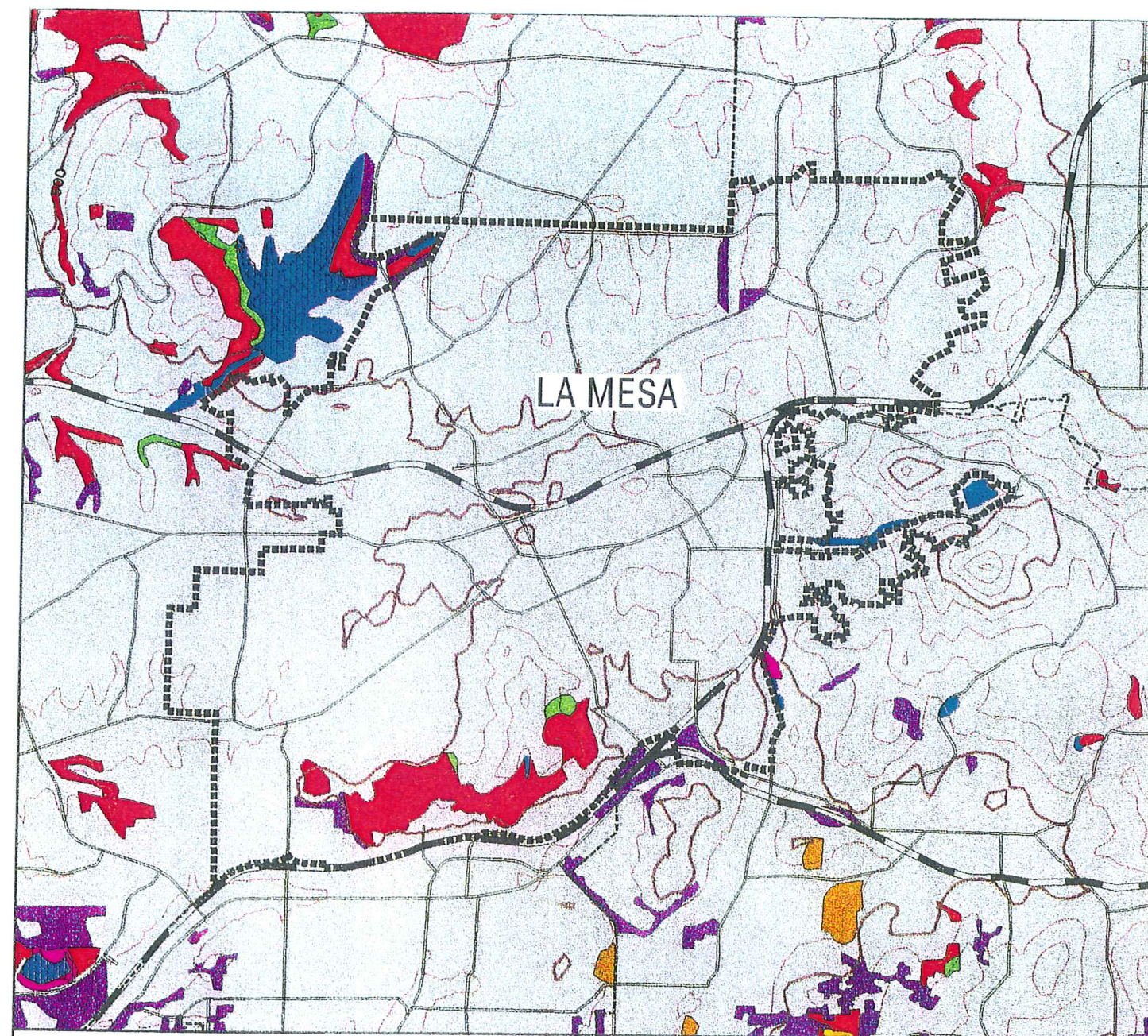


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Jurisdictions Within MSCP Study Area

FIGURE





1

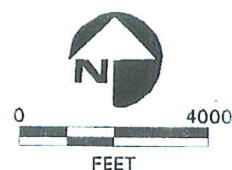


Vegetation Communities

	Coastal Sage Scrub		Beach/Foredunes
	Chaparral		Eucalyptus Woodland
	Coastal Sage Scrub/Chaparral		Disturbed Habitat
	Grassland		Shallow Bay
	Riparian/Wetlands		Developed
	Oak Woodland		Agriculture
	Coniferous Forest		

Base Map Features

	City Boundary
	Freeways
	Major Streams
	Lakes and Lagoons



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Vegetation Communities for MSCP Study Area

FIGURE

2

