Los Angeles County
Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead

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References to the SEA Program in the 2012 Draft General Plan

This document was created by the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning on June 7, 2012. It contains excerpts from the **2012 Draft General Plan** pertaining to Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs). This document does not contain the entirety of the 2 2012 Draft General Plan, but rather is intended to assist in identifying language in the 2012 Draft General Plan that outlines Los Angeles County's SEA Program.

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Significant Ecological Areas

A Significant Ecological Area (SEA) designation is given to land that contains irreplaceable biological resources. Individual SEAs include undisturbed or lightly disturbed habitat supporting valuable and threatened species, linkages and corridors to promote species movement, and are sized to support sustainable populations of its component species. The objective of the SEA Program is to preserve the genetic and physical diversity of the County by designing biological resource areas capable of sustaining themselves into the future. However SEAs are not wilderness preserves. Much of the land in SEAs is privately held, used for public recreation or abutting developed areas. The SEA Program is intended to ensure that privately held lands within the SEAs retain the right of reasonable use, while avoiding activities and developments that are incompatible with the long term survival of the SEAs.

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Significant Ecological Areas

A Significant Ecological Area (SEA) designation is given to land in the County that contains irreplaceable biological resources. Cumulatively, the 27 SEAs and two Coastal Resource Areas represent the wide-ranging biodiversity of the County, and contain its most important biological resources. Individual SEAs include undisturbed or lightly disturbed habitat supporting valuable and threatened species, linkages and corridors to promote species movement, and are sized to support sustainable populations of its component species. The SEA Program is described in greater detail in the Conservation and Natural Resources Element.

(page 80: Chapter 3: Land Use Element: Goals and Policies)

Goal LU 3: A development pattern that discourages sprawl and protects and conserves greenfield areas, natural resources, and SEAs.	
Topic	**Policy**

Growth Management	Policy LU 3.1: Protect and conserve greenfield areas, natural resources, and SEAs.
	Policy LU 3.3: Discourage development in areas with environmental resources and/or safety hazards.
	Policy LU 3.4: Discourage development in greenfield areas where infrastructure and public services do not exist.

(Page 83: Chapter 3: Land Use Element: Goals and Policies)

Goal LU 8: Well-designed and healthy places that support a diversity of built environments.	
Topic	**Policy**
Community Design	Policy LU 8.2: Design development adjacent to natural features in a sensitive manner to complement the natural environment.
	Policy LU 8.4: Promote environmentally sensitive and sustainable design.

(Page 84: Chapter 3: Land Use Element: Goals and Policies)

Goal LU 10: Subdivisions that utilize sustainable design techniques.	
Topic	**Policy**
Sustainable Subdivisions	Policy LU 10.4: Encourage the use of density controlled design techniques to conserve natural resource areas—particularly SEAs—and agricultural areas.

(Chapter 4: Mobility Element

III. Issues

page 975: Impacts of Transportation on Natural and Community Resources)

The expansion and operation of transportation systems, which invariably affect biological resources and water quality, can be mitigated to lessen the negative impacts on the County's resources. One key ecological issue is the effect of increased runoff from paved surfaces, which increases sediment movement, destroys aquatic habitat, and redistributes road-source pollutants. A second crucial

ecological issue is potential negative impacts of human transportation systems on biological resources. Human transit is often responsible for transporting non-native species to ecosystems that do not have any natural defenses against the new threats. At the same time, transit infrastructure creates physical barriers across wildlife habitats and corridors that can reduce the mobility of local species and threaten genetic diversity. As discussed in the Public Services and Facilities Element, the majority of stormwater runoff in the County is discharged directly into the Pacific Ocean. The General Plan provides policies that support transportation systems that treat runoff and mitigate its environmental impacts before it reaches the County's water bodies.

(page 104: Chapter 4: Mobility Element Goals and Policies)

Goal M-7: Transportation networks that minimizes negative impacts to the environment and communities.	
Topic	**Policy**
Environmentally Sensitive Transportation Design	Policy M 7.1: Encourage the use of natural systems to treat stormwater and rainwater runoff.
	Policy M 7.2: Minimize roadway runoff through the use of permeable surface materials, such as porous asphalt and concrete materials, wherever feasible.
	Policy M 7.3: Encourage the creation of wildlife underpasses and overpasses, fencing, signage, and other measures to minimize impacts to wildlife at junctures where transit infrastructure passes through sensitive habitats.
	Policy M 7.5: Where the creation of new roadways or other transportation systems is necessary in areas with sensitive habitats, particularly SEAs, use best practice design to encourage species passage and minimize genetic diversity losses when new transportation infrastructure cannot avoid crossing through undisturbed natural areas.

(Chapter 6: Conservation and Natural Resources Element

Page 112: III. Biological Resources)

III. Biological Resources

The physical environment of the County is extremely diverse: elevations range from sea level to 10,000 feet; soils vary due prehistoric volcanic activity, marine sedimentation and river deposition; and climates that are mild and moist near the coast change to severe temperature extremes in the high mountains and desert. The County boasts a treasury of natural features, including coastlines, islands, dunes, marshes, tidal flats, sea cliffs, hills, mountain ranges, freshwater ponds, rivers, streams, wetlands, woodlands, deserts, chaparral, grasslands, valleys, and plains. As a result, the County contains a unique

and varied collection of biological resources, including habitats and species—some of which may not be found anywhere else in the world.

The County has six main types of biological resources: regional habitat linkages; forests; coastal zone; riparian habitats, streambeds and wetlands; woodlands; and Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs). The General Plan is tasked with protecting and enhancing these resources, and ensuring the legacy of the County's biotic diversity is passed on to future generations.

In addition, there are two sites in the unincorporated areas of the County that are controlled by the U.S. Department of Defense and that contain important biological resources. The resources and protections on Edwards Air Force Base in the Antelope Valley are described in detail in the Antelope Valley SEA description in Appendix E. The resources and protections on San Clemente Island are described in detail in the Coastal Zone Resources section in Appendix E.

Background

Regional Habitat Linkages
The County's biological resources and important habitat areas are part of a greater habitat linkage that extends beyond the County boundaries. Figure 6.2 maps the regional habitat linkages that connect biological resource areas in the County with resource areas in adjacent local jurisdictions. The areas depicted are based on national forest boundaries, the County's SEAs, and a series of missing linkage design studies conducted by the South Coast Wildlands Project. For a detailed description of these linkages, please refer to Appendix E. The following linkages are important to ensuring greater regional biodiversity, and species and habitat connectivity:

- The Puente Hills SEA is a linkage connecting the Puente Hills with the Chino Hills in Orange County.
- Linkages in the Santa Monica Mountains, Santa Susana and Simi Hills, Santa Clara River and Santa Felicia Creek SEAs connect to habitats in Ventura County.
- The San Andreas SEA is a linkage to the Santa Clara River Watershed, San Gabriel Mountains, Antelope Valley, and Tehachapi Mountains.
- The Antelope Valley SEA serves as a linkage between the San Gabriel Mountains and the Mojave Desert, and provides wildlife movement opportunities into open areas in Kern County and San Bernardino County.

Figure 6.2: Regional Habitat Linkages

Forests
The two national forests, Los Padres National Forest and Angeles National Forest, contain extensive biological resources. The Angeles National Forest contains the largest area of dedicated open space in the County. A vast number of wildlife species depend on the Angeles National Forest for protection, foraging, and breeding. Two thirds of the Angeles National Forest has slopes steeper than 60 percent, with elevations ranging from 1,200 to 10,000 feet above sea level.

Activities that occur in the national forests have a potential impact on biotic resources, as well as on the quality of local water supplies and the health of major watersheds. There are 240 miles of perennial rivers and streams, as well as 19 lakes and reservoirs. The floor of the national forests allows rainfall and snowmelt to replenish groundwater basins, which provides the County with approximately 13 percent of its annual water supply. Surface water runoff fills streams and rivers, which support riparian habitats. To protect these forest functions, the U.S. Forest Service has identified two thirds of the County's national forests as sensitive watershed areas.

The County is responsible for the land use regulation of the nearly 40,000 acres of privately-owned in-holdings within the national forest boundaries. Much of this land is in remote locations, subject to a high degree of natural hazards, and lacks adequate access to paved roads and water supply. The County does not encourage development in the national forests, and regulation is coordinated closely with the U.S. Forest Service.

Coastal Zone

The biological resource value in the coastal zone, which includes San Clemente Island, Santa Catalina Island, Marina Del Rey, Ballona Wetlands and the Santa Monica Mountains, is significant. The study and management of these resource areas is more rigorous than any other area in the County, and any land disturbance is regulated through coastal land use plans and local coastal programs, in conjunction with the California Coastal Commission.

Biological resources in the coastal zone are identified through Sensitive Environmental Resource Areas (SERAs), which contain terrestrial or marine resources that, because of their characteristics and/or vulnerability, require special protection. SERAs are comprised of the following sub-categories: Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHAs); Significant Woodlands and Savannahs; Significant Watersheds; Malibu Cold Creek Resource Management Area; and Wildlife Migration Corridor. SERAs are not intended to function as isolated preservation areas, but as areas subject to strictly-enforced environmental resource protections and land use regulations.

Biological resource management and regulation on Santa Catalina Island is implemented through the Santa Catalina Island Local Coastal Program (LCP). Island resources, such as Significant Ecological Areas (SEA), are identified in the LCP and are subject to restrictive development regulations. Any changes to the SEA boundaries or associated regulations require an amendment to the LCP and certification by the California Coastal Commission. Biological resource management and regulation on Marina Del Rey is also implemented through an LCP.

Land use regulation and jurisdictional authority in the Santa Monica Mountains Coastal Zone involves many public entities. In the unincorporated areas, biological resource protection is implemented through the Malibu Land Use Plan and the Malibu Coastal Program District, and by both the County and the California Coastal Commission.

Finally, resources within San Clemente Island and the Ballona Wetlands are managed by the U.S. Navy and California Department of Parks and Recreation, respectively.

For more information on the biological resources in the coastal zone, please refer to Appendix E.

Riparian Habitats, Streambeds and Wetlands

Riparian habitats are comprised of vegetation and other physical features that are typically found on stream banks and flood plains associated with streams, lakes, or other bodies of perennial or nearly-perennial surface water. Streambeds are the physical confines that water typically flows through, either perennially or after rain events. Riparian habitats and streambeds are of inherent value to local and regional ecosystems. They serve as important connectors to up- and downstream ecosystems or adjacent habitats; provide critical value to migratory birds; contribute to the quality of habitat linkages and wildlife corridors; and play a crucial role in maintaining surface and subsurface water quality.

Wetlands are areas that are inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater at a frequency and duration that are sufficient to support vegetation, which is typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Examples of wetlands include swamps, marshes, bogs, vernal pools, and playa lake areas. However, wetlands can also remain dry for long periods of time, which makes their identification and management potentially difficult. Wetlands contribute to water quality and the overall health of watersheds in several ways. They slow water flow, decrease erosion, filter water runoff, and provide habitat for many endangered plant and animal species.

The Emergency Wetlands Resources Act establishes a national wetlands conservation program, which requires states to include wetlands in their Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans for management and preservation. California has lost over 90 percent of its original wetland areas, and the County has lost 95 percent. The County is dedicated to preserving its remaining wetlands and supports the wetland reclamation and conservation efforts of numerous non-profit organizations. In addition to County policy and regulation, projects that are subject to CEQA and located in a wetland are forwarded to applicable state and federal agencies for further review and permitting requirements.

Woodlands

The County's oak woodlands are an important resource that provides an abundance of aesthetic, ecological, and economic benefits to County residents. Oak woodland habitats are the most diverse terrestrial ecosystems in California. Similarly, riparian woodlands, California walnut, juniper, and Joshua tree woodlands provide habitat for multiple species within a concentrated area. Various types of woodlands are found in the County, including riparian woodlands; California walnut woodlands in the San Gabriel Valley and Puente Hills; juniper and Joshua tree woodlands in the Antelope Valley; and oak woodlands countywide.

Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs)

A Significant Ecological Area (SEA) designation is given to land in the County that contains irreplaceable biological resources, as detailed in Appendix E. Cumulatively, the 27 SEAs and 2 Coastal Resource Areas represent the wide-ranging biodiversity of the County, and contain its most important biological resources. Each individual SEA is sized to support sustainable populations of its component species, and includes undisturbed or lightly disturbed habitat along with linkages and corridors that promote species movement. Table 6.2 and Figure 6.3 detail the 27 SEAs and 2 Coastal Resources Areas of the County.

Table 6.2: Significant Ecological Areas

Significant Ecological Area

1	Alamitos Bay
2	Altadena Foothills and Arroyos
3	Antelope Valley
4	Ballona Wetlands
5	Cruzan Mesa Vernal Pools
6	East San Gabriel Valley
7	El Segundo Dunes
8	Griffith Park
9	Harbor Lake Regional Park
10	Joshua Tree Woodlands
11	Madrona Marsh Preserve
12	Malibu Coastline
13	Palos Verdes Peninsula and Coastline
14	Point Dume
15	Puente Hills
16	Rio Hondo College Wildlife Sanctuary
17	San Andreas
18	San Dimas Canyon and San Antonio Wash
19	San Gabriel Canyon
20	Santa Clara River
21	Santa Felicia

22a	Santa Monica Mountains
23	Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills
24	Terminal Island (Pier 400)
25	Tujunga Valley and Hansen Dam
26	Valley Oaks Savannah
27	Verdugo Mountains

Table 6.3: Coastal Resource Areas

Coastal Resource Area	
22b	Coastal Zone of the Santa Monica Mountains
28	Santa Catalina Island

Figure 6.3 Significant Ecological Areas and Coastal Resource Areas Policy Map

SEAs are part of the County's Special Management Areas Policy Map (Figure 3.1) in the Land Use Element. The County's SEA Program has a long history going back to the 1970s. The SEA Program, for those SEAs located in unincorporated areas of the County, is administered through the General Plan goals, policies and implementation program and the SEA Ordinance. Some SEAs are located entirely or partially outside of the County's jurisdiction in cities, along the coastline, or within national forest land. Appendix E provides more information about the SEA Program history, guiding principles, criteria for designation and detailed summaries of the biological resources contained within each SEA. Within the SEAs, areas identified as Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs) are those areas where biological resources have been altered or degraded, but still contribute elements to the overall function of the SEA. In many instances, the ETAs contain habitat linkages and wildlife corridors, or provide water resources that contribute to the sustainability of important resources within undisturbed areas of the SEA. ETAs consist of active or recent agricultural uses, low density rural lands or subdivisions where areas of functioning native vegetation and habitat remain interspersed with homes, cleared areas supporting naturalized grassland and/or recovering native plant cover, and golf courses.

The coastal zone of the Santa Monica Mountains and Santa Catalina Island, and are identified on the SEA map as Coastal Resource Areas. The Coastal Resource Area designation is intended to identify the biological resources of each area as equivalent in significance with SEAs, while recognizing that the

protection of these areas is regulated differently from other SEAs, through local coastal programs, instead of through the SEA Ordinance.

The objective of the SEA Program is to conserve the genetic and physical diversity of the County by designing biological resource areas that are capable of sustaining themselves into the future. However, SEAs are not wilderness preserves. Much of the land in SEAs is privately held, used for public recreation, or abuts developed areas. The SEA Program must therefore balance the overall objective of resource preservation against other critical public needs. The General Plan goals and policies are intended to ensure that privately-held lands within the SEAs retain the right of reasonable use, while avoiding activities and developments that are incompatible with the long-term survival of the SEAs.

Certain uses of the SEAs are compatible by definition with the long-term sustainability of biological resources. Some examples of uses that do not conflict with the goals of the SEA Program include: regulated scientific study; passive recreation, including wildlife observation and photography; and limited picnicking, riding, hiking and overnight camping. Many other uses may also be compatible with the SEA Program, or may partially or fully mitigate against potential impacts through careful site design and stewardship. In particular, the following uses may be determined compatible by scientific review or biotic surveys, or through the addition of conditions that are intended to protect against site specific and cumulative impacts to biotic resources in the SEA:

- Low-density or clustered residential uses that are compatible with identified biotic resources present in or affected by the site.
- Low-intensity local or visitor-serving commercial uses.
- Essential public and semi-public uses that are necessary for health, safety and welfare, and that cannot be located to alternative sites.
- Agricultural uses that are compatible with identified biotic resources that are present on or near the site.
- Extractive uses, including oil and gas recovery, and rock, sand and gravel quarrying, which are compatible with identified biotic resources.

More complex or intensive types of developments within SEAs are not precluded from development, but may require additional technical review to ensure that projects properly identify existing resources and potential impacts. The Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning (DRP) assumes a responsibility to assist these types of projects with site design in the early stages of the project to ensure that projects are sensitive to and compatible with the resources of the area. The process of analyzing impacts to existing biological resources and determining SEA compatibility is designed to provide careful evaluation of projects within SEAs, in order to ensure that the ecological function of the SEA is maintained.

Generally complex or intensive types of developments in the SEAs require an SEA Conditional Use Permit (SEA CUP). The SEA Technical Advisory Committee (SEATAC) is an expert advisory committee that assists the DRP and the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission in assessing applications for

SEA CUPs by providing recommendations on the biological analyses conducted for SEA CUPs, and on the project's compatibility with SEA resources.

Issues

1. Preservation of Biotic Diversity

Development continues to be the main cause of species decline in the Southern California region, where approximately 20 percent of the species on the federally-endangered species list are found. Although both federal and state agencies are tasked with protecting their listed species, the County has a role to play in species survival when it decides whether or not to approve development within habitats that contain endangered and threatened species. The SEA Program balances future development and human activities against the preservation of irreplaceable biotic resources. The SEA designation does not protect or identify every individual biotic resource, and SEAs are not preserves or conservation areas; rather, SEAs are areas in which planning decisions are made with extra sensitivity toward biological resources and ecosystem functions. In order to accommodate potential development pressures, the SEAs were designed as large-scale areas connected to regional resources, creating a sufficient habitat and mobility areas for species. However, the resiliency and long-term sustainability of the SEAs is dependent upon careful land use decisions by the County to maintain core habitats and linkages.

2. SEA Monitoring and Status Reporting

SEAs are large and changing areas containing evolving resources, and new science, species, or development practices may create a need for changes to the SEA Program over time. In order to meet the changing needs of the SEA Program, and assess progress in implementation, the County should periodically review the SEA Program. This periodic review may include undertaking new studies, monitoring approved uses, disclosing impacts of development and human activities on the County's biological resources and when necessary, amending the SEA Ordinance, SEA boundaries and technical descriptions to address any changes required to meet the overall objective of the SEA Program.

3. Coordination of Property Rights and Environmental Protection

The SEA Program is a method of balancing private property rights against impacts to irreplaceable biological resources. Preservation of these resources must not compromise the right of privately held lands to be fairly used by their owners, nor burden them with excessive development costs or regulatory procedures. The SEA Program is tasked with serving the needs of property owners in SEA areas by simplifying the development process when possible, providing clear guidelines and expectations about the requirements for development in SEAs, coordinating with other regulatory agencies, and seeking out financing mechanisms that incentivize the preservation of biological resources and the acquisition of conservation areas.

Goals and Policies for Biological Resources

Goal C/NR 3: Permanent, sustainable preservation of the County's genetically and physically diverse biological resources and ecological systems including: habitat linkages, forests, coastal zone, riparian habitats, streambeds, wetlands, woodlands and SEAs.

Topic	**Policy**
Protection of Biological Resources	Policy C/NR 3.1: Conserve and enhance the ecological function of the County's diverse natural habitats and biological resources.
	Policy C/NR 3.2: Create and administer innovative County programs incentivizing the permanent dedication of SEAs and other important biological resources as open space areas.
	Policy C/NR 3.3: Restore significant riparian resources such as degraded streams, rivers, wetlands to maintain ecological function.
	Policy C/NR 3.4: Conserve and sustainably manage the County's forests and woodlands.
	Policy C/NR 3.5: Ensure compatibility of development in the national forests in conjunction with the U.S. Forest Service Land and Resource Management Plan.
	Policy C/NR 3.6: Assist state and federal agencies with the preservation of special status species, their associated habitat and wildlife movement corridors through the administration of the SEAs and other programs.
	Policy C/NR 3.7: Participate in inter-jurisdictional collaborative strategies that protect biological resources.
Site Sensitive Design	Policy C/NR 3.8: Discourage development in areas with identified significant biological resources, such as SEAs.
	Policy C/NR 3.9: Consider the following in the design of a project that is located within an SEA, to the greatest extent feasible: • Preservation of biologically valuable habitats, species, wildlife corridors and linkages; • Protection of sensitive resources on the site within open space; • Protection of water sources from hydromodification to maintain the ecological function of riparian habitats; and • Placement of the development in the least biologically sensitive areas on the site.
	Policy C/NR 3.10: Require that development mitigate 'in-kind' for unavoidable impacts on biologically sensitive areas within the County, and permanently preserve mitigation sites.

	Policy C/NR 3.11: Discourage new development from increasing the urban-wildland interface in undisturbed natural areas through compact design.
	Policy C/NR 3.12: Discourage development to maintain and support the preservation of riparian habitats, streambeds, and wetlands in a natural state, unaltered by grading, fill, or diversion activities.

(Part III: General Plan Implementation

II. General Plan Maintenance

page 228: General Plan Annual Progress Report

Section 65400 of the Government Code requires that the County prepare a general plan annual progress report (annual report) on the status of General Plan implementation. The annual report is prepared by the Department of Regional Planning (DRP), presented to the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, and submitted to the California Office of Planning and Research and the California Department of Housing and Community Development by April 1 of each year.

The annual report is the County's mechanism for comprehensively reporting on the following: 1) program implementation; 2) effectiveness of major policies; 3) updates to datasets; and 4) map maintenance.

1. Program Implementation
The annual report shall outline the County's progress toward implementing the General Plan implementation programs. A description of milestones, accomplishments, as well as any impediments will be included for each program.

2. Effectiveness of Major Policies
The annual report shall include information on the effectiveness of major policies. The table below outlines the monitoring strategy:

Policy Area	**Monitoring Method**
Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs)	Report every two years on the status of the County's SEAs. Include: • A summary of new development within SEAs approved by DRP; • The overall status of biological functions within each SEA, if known; • Any additional scientific studies undertaken on SEAs; • Recommendations for any modifications to the SEA Program,

	including General Plan goals and policies and the SEA Ordinance; • Identification of lands within individual SEAs as priority habitats or areas for protection; • A description of any ongoing partnerships with conservation agencies and other stakeholders; • A current map of SEA lands that are protected in perpetuity through deed-restrictions, conservation easements, etc.; and • The Director's conclusion as to the overall successes and challenges of the SEA Program in implementing General Plan goals and policies.

(Page 231: II. General Plan Programs)

Program No.	**Program Description**	**General Plan Goals & Policies**	**Lead & Partner Agencies**	**Timeframe**
LU-7	**Transfer of Development Rights Program** Explore the feasibility of a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program in order to direct growth and development away from valuable open space areas to identified infill areas. Identify natural resource, rural and agricultural areas, including Agricultural Resource Areas (ARAs), and portions of the Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs) with high priority resources as sending areas. Identify potential receiving areas, such as TODs and vacant and underutilized sites, in urban areas. Consider partnering with other local jurisdictions to expand the scope of the TDR Program. Consider establishing a pilot program with the City of Santa Clarita. Prepare an ordinance that outlines applicability and procedures for the TDR Program. Establish or identify a County entity to	Land Use Element: Goals LU 3, LU 4	Lead: DRP Partners: CEO, DPR, Assessor, DPW	Years 3-5

	coordinate the sales and transactions of TDR.			
C/NR-2	**Mitigation Land Banking Program** Study the feasibility of creating a Mitigation Land Banking Program with appropriate standards and criteria to allow eligible projects to purchase land within SEAs or other biologically sensitive areas as a mitigation measure for development in areas outside of SEAs. Encourage mitigation banking across watershed and jurisdictional boundaries to provide more opportunities for mitigation, and avoid the creation of "orphan mitigation banks."	Conservation and Natural Resources Element: Goal C/NR 3, Policy C/NR 3.2	Lead: DRP Partner: CEO, DPR, DPW, DPH, DBH, Agricultural Commissioner	Years 1-2
C/NR-13	**Open Space Land Acquisition Strategy** Develop an open space land acquisition strategy that incorporates collaborative partners; identifies multi-use sites; explores all means of open space acquisition and preservation; and implements legal protections, such as deed-restrictions and easements. Develop programs to improve education, awareness, and stewardship of County open spaces, natural areas and SEAs.	Conservation and Natural Resources Element: Goals C/NR 1, C/NR 2	Lead: DPR Partner: DRP, DPW	Years 6-10

(page 55: Appendix E: Conservation and Natural Resources Element Resources

page 60: III. Regional Habitat Linkages)

III. Regional Habitat Linkages

Habitat linkages are defined as area within the overall range of a species or suite of species that possess sufficient cover, food, forage, water and other essential elements to serve as a movement pathway, or between two or more larger areas of habitat. Depending on the species, linkages vary in size. For example, a belt of coastal sage scrub traversing a golf course, connecting sage scrub habitat areas on either side, providing a safe passage zone for smaller, slower-moving species (such as lizards and rodents) to maintain population connectivity between the two sides of the golf course is one form of habitat linkage.

Wildlife corridors, which are areas of open space of sufficient width to permit larger, mobile species (such as foxes, bobcats and coyote) to pass between larger areas of open space, or to disperse from one major open space region to another, are another type of habitat linkage. Such areas are generally several hundred feet wide, unobstructed, and usually possess cover, food and water. The upland

margins of a creek channel, open ridgelines, open valleys or the bottoms of drainages often serve as major corridors locally, as do riparian alignments.

The County's biological resources are important in a regional context, serving to connect resources in adjacent local jurisdictions. Critical biological resources are maintained through habitat connectivity, which sustains population genetic diversity, and provides refuge for migrant species. Regional habitat linkages are identified in the Conservation and Natural Resources Element. The Antelope Valley, Puente Hills, San Andreas, Santa Clara River, Santa Felicia, Santa Monica Mountains, and Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills SEAs serve as important regional habitat linkages. More details about linkages between and within each of these SEAs are provided below:

Antelope Valley SEA

The SEA extends from the Angeles National Forest to the playa lakes within Edwards Air Force Base, encompassing the whole of the two largest drainages exiting the northern slope of the San Gabriel Mountains. Its geographical features serve as a major habitat linkage and movement corridor for all wildlife species within its vicinity. Ecologically generalist species (such as bobcat, coyote, mule deer, fox, raccoon, etc.) have the ability to move across such vast areas and through-changing habitat types. For such species, the SEA may serve as an important system for long-term inter-populational genetic exchange. For smaller or less-mobile species, or taxa, which are more narrowly restricted in their habitat needs, the SEA can serve as a broad linkage zone, in which individual movement can take place during seasonal or populational dispersal. This provides essential genetic exchange within and between metapopulations. The two drainages, combined with the upland terrestrial Desert-Montane transect portion of the SEA, ensure linkage values and direct movement zones for all of the wildlife species present within the County portion of the Antelope Valley.

Puente Hills SEA

Evidence of significant wildlife movement throughout the Puente Hills SEA has been documented in a two-year carnivore study commissioned by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy as part of a multi-jurisdictional effort to establish a regionwide wildlife movement linkage. This SEA represents the County portion of a continuous series of natural open space within the Puente Hills and Chino Hills. Overall, this open space extends north and west from State Route-91 in Orange and Riverside counties to the Whittier Narrows reach of the San Gabriel River. The Puente and Chino Hills are a natural, physical link between the Santa Ana Mountains and the San Gabriel River. The San Gabriel River flows from and links to the San Gabriel Mountains. By virtue of these linkages and a complex of interconnected habitat units, the Puente and Chino Hills function as both an important wildlife linkage and resident habitat area for regional wildlife populations.

San Andreas SEA

The San Andreas SEA includes several important linkages for wildlife movement. The Fault Zone connects with the Santa Clara River drainage in the Lake Hughes area, linking with this large, free-flowing watershed that extends to the Pacific Ocean in Ventura County. The foothills and grassland in the westernmost tip of the SEA are part of an important linkage between the San Gabriel Mountains and the Tehachapi Mountains. This linkage to the Tehachapi Mountains is important because it connects the

southernmost extent of the Sierra Nevada Mountains with the San Gabriel Mountains and with the Southern Coast Ranges. The Tehachapi Mountains are the only mountain linkage between the Transverse Ranges and the Southern Coast Ranges to the Sierra Nevada Range. This largely natural area may be an important topographic reference for migrating birds and bats, as well as functioning for essential high elevation foraging grounds along their migration route. The Tehachapi Mountains further provide a valuable link for gene flow between divergent populations of many species, including plants. The SEA includes several large drainages that extend from the San Gabriel Mountains to the western end of the Mojave Desert: the Antelope Valley floor and the Fairmont and Antelope buttes. These washes provide an important linkage for animals traveling between the mountains (all the ranges mentioned above) and the Mojave Desert. In addition, Amargosa Creek facilitates east-west wildlife movement through Liebre Mountain, Portal Ridge, and Ritter Ridge to Barrel Springs in the Antelope Valley near the City of Palmdale. The frequency of valuable riparian communities along this travel route located within an otherwise arid climate, further indicates the importance of this area, which is one of the busiest natural wildlife linkages in the region.

Santa Clara River SEA

Historically (and prehistorically) the riparian corridor along the Santa Clara River has served as the primary east-west linkage between the Pacific coastline, coast ranges, interior ranges, high desert and southern Sierra (via the Tehachapi Range). Animals moving through the Santa Clara River at one time had unobstructed passage along the river and within its tributaries. The present configuration of the tributary drainages has reduced connectivity from the Santa Clarita Valley to the north, but the Santa Clara River remains relatively intact and open. The SEA embraces the river corridor and the linkage zones that are considered essential to ensuring connectivity and resource values within the historic movement zones for all of the wildlife species present within the County portion of the Santa Clara River.

Santa Felicia SEA

Historically, riparian corridors have served as linkages between the Pacific coastline, Coast Ranges, interior ranges, the high desert and southern Sierras (via the Tehachapi Range). The Santa Felicia stream corridor likely serves the functions today. The elevation in this area is lower than that of the Los Padres National Forest, to the north, which facilitates animal movement within the riparian systems between Piru Lake in Ventura County and the San Gabriel Mountain Range in the County. The tributary drainages for Santa Felicia Creek within this SEA remain intact and unobstructed.

Santa Monica Mountains SEA

Although wildlife movement is hampered by rural development in the SEA, animals are still able to move through the Santa Monica Mountains in many areas. Due to its large size and topographic complexity, many linkages are certain to occur within the SEA at various bottlenecks. These linkages allow movement between large open space areas within the SEA, as well as between areas outside the SEA, such as the Simi Hills and the western extent of the Santa Monica Mountains in Ventura County. The genetic flow through these areas is crucial in maintaining the diversity and viability of certain species within the Santa Monica Mountains. Open space linkages between Kanan Road and Calabasas Parkway along State Route-101, as indicated by the National Park Service, are of particular importance for

continued wildlife movement due to the lack of alternative routes and encroachment of development. Although there are significantly large open spaces within the SEA, contiguous habitat linkages between them are critical in reducing bottlenecks and providing for long-term sustainability.

Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills SEA

The Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills SEA includes several important linkages for wildlife movement. The Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills provide a vast open space corridor to foster wildlife movement between the Santa Monica Mountains to the south, San Gabriel Mountains to the east, and the Los Padres National Forest to the north. Dense, natural habitat associated with the majority of the study area provides excellent opportunities for concealment and water sources, while the grasslands provide an abundance of prey.

(page 62: IV. Significant Ecological Areas)

IV. Significant Ecological Areas

History of the SEA Program

Los Angeles County's Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs) Program has schematic roots in an initial General Plan guiding document, the 1970 Environmental Development Guide, which was adopted as a preliminary General Plan for the County. The Open Space Concept Plan and 1990 Open Space Policy Map depict greenbelt areas and rural lands that reasonably correspond to the current SEA map.

The original Significant Ecological Area Report was prepared in 1972 by scientists from the University of California, Los Angeles, the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History and other local academic institutions, at the request of the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning (DRP). The DRP asked the report authors to identify "significant ecological areas," which due to their high biological resource value, should receive special consideration during the formulation of the 1973 General Plan. In the final report, 81 such areas were mapped and brief descriptions of the value of each were given. The 81 areas were then included on the Vegetation and Wildlife Map in the Conservation Element of the 1973 General Plan.

In 1976, following the 1975 court decision requiring the preparation of a revised General Plan, the DRP and the Environmental Systems Research Institute commissioned the Los Angeles County Significant Ecological Area Study (1976 SEA Study), from the environmental consulting firm, England and Nelson. After excluding the Channel Islands and national forest lands from the study area, the 1976 SEA Study reviewed the data and criteria used to establish the original significant ecological area list, analyzed new information, developed of a set of eight criteria to be used to select and prioritize significant ecological areas and concluded with individual maps and descriptions for each. From an initial list of 115 sites, 62 areas met the criteria and were recommended for adoption by the study. In 1980, 61 of these biologically significant areas were adopted as part of the Conservation and Open Space Element of the Los Angeles County General Plan on the Special Management Areas Policy Map and through individual descriptions of the SEAs in Technical Supplement E of the 1980 General Plan.

In 1991, supplemental studies further assessing the biological resources within seven SEAs were conducted. The Phase I Studies, conducted by Michael Brandman Associates, assessed the following SEA areas: Cold Creek Significant Ecological Area No.9, San Fransciquito Canyon Significant Ecological Area No.19, Dudleya Densiflora Population Significant Ecological Area No.45, Kentucky Springs Significant

Ecological Area No.61, Las Virgenes Significant Ecological Area No.6, Tonner Canyon and Chino Hills SEA No. 15, and Tuna Canyon SEA No. 10. The studies looked at current ownership patterns, existing resources, development pressures and made recommendations into the future management of the SEAs. All of the Phase I studies found either that the SEA boundaries were adequate in size or recommended the expansion of the boundaries to better encompass and protect biotic resources.

In 2000, the DRP commissioned the Los Angeles County Significant Ecological Area Update Study (2000 Update Study) prepared by PCR Services Corporation, Frank Hovore & Associates and Forma Systems. The 2000 Update Study included an Executive Summary, Background Report and twelve biological resources assessments for the Proposed Antelope Valley SEA, Proposed Cruzan Mesa Vernal Pools SEA, Proposed East San Gabriel Valley SEA, Proposed Joshua Tree Woodlands SEA, Proposed Puente Hills SEA, Proposed San Andreas SEA, Proposed San Dimas Canyon and San Antonio Wash SEA, Proposed San Gabriel Canyon SEA, Proposed Santa Catalina Island SEA, Proposed Santa Clara River SEA, Proposed Santa Monica Mountains SEA, and the Proposed Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills SEA. These twelve biological resource assessment areas consolidated the 1980 unincorporated area SEAs into larger areas for study and proposed inclusion as SEAs.

The 2000 Update Study also examined the assumptions of the original eight SEA designation criteria from the 1976 SEA Study, modifying one criterion and deleting two. The modification of Class 1 changed the language from “the habitat of rare, endangered, and threatened plant and animal species,” to specify “the habitat of *core populations* of rare, endangered and threatened plant and animal species.” Class 6: “areas important as game species habitat or as fisheries” was removed due to the questionable contribution of these areas towards maintaining biotic diversity. Class 8: “special areas” was deleted due to the vague nature of that designation. The six SEA criteria are contained within this Appendix E, and each SEA description lists which criteria it meets.

From 2001 to 2011, the DRP conducted public outreach, solicited additional recommendations on the SEA boundaries and checked the SEA boundaries with an expert panel of biologists convened in 2010.

SEA Designation Principles

Previously, areas were assigned SEA designations in an attempt to slow or modify the type of development within their boundaries. However, as the County underwent a period of unanticipated growth, many of the SEAs experienced a reduction and/or degradation of their biotic diversity. Appendix E uses the definition of biotic or biological diversity provided by the 1990 U.S. Congressional Biodiversity Act, HR1268, which is defined as a full range of variety and variability within and among living organisms and the ecological complexes in which they occur.

Currently, the design of the SEAs is based on scientifically-grounded concepts regarding size and connectivity. Where feasible, SEAs form linkages between core habitats, which are large blocks of habitat generally conforming to a significant topographical feature, such as a watershed, major river, butte, etc., in order to ensure regional species movement.

Most SEA designations do not focus on a single resource or habitat type and, over time, conservation plans have come to employ a fluid approach to conserving an ever increasing list of sensitive resources (e.g., endangered species, habitats of limited distribution, and "patchy" habitats such as coastal sage scrub). The SEA designations rely on two primary conservation principles: namely that species extinction rates are lower on larger “islands,” or blocks of land, than smaller islands; and that isolated habitat areas have less opportunity to regain species by re-colonization from other areas.

Many wildlife species, particularly carnivores and other wide ranging species, require large areas of suitable habitat for genetically and demographically viable populations. In addition, large islands are more likely to encompass diverse habitat types and are more easily buffered against potential impacts from surrounding developed lands. The SEAs are designed to provide habitat linkages between related habitat types (such as the Antelope Valley buttes, or the San Andreas Rift Zone wetlands), by encompassing areas of sufficient width to function as wildlife movement routes between these open space areas.

The current SEA designations provide local resources (such as sensitive species) and their habitats, as well as the seasonal support habitats for those resources, with connections to essential sustaining resource areas (such as corridor areas and hydrological systems). For example, zones of lower intensity human impacts that exist between essential habitat resources have been included in the current SEA designations, thereby helping to maintain the biotic diversity in the County.

SEA Selection Criteria

All of the County's SEAs must satisfy at least one of the six SEA selection criteria:

A. The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.

Intent of Criterion A: These areas are important in maintaining viable plant and/or animal populations for those species recognized by state and or federal resource agencies as being extremely low in numbers or having a very limited amount of suitable habitat available. The terms "endangered" and "threatened" have precise meanings defined in both state and federal law. The identification of "core population"' will be determined by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). The term "core population" as used here is a general biological term referring to a known and/or a viable population. Other locations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species may also occur in the County, which are not within an SEA. It should also be noted that the concept of core populations is consistent with current thinking of the USFWS and the CDFG.

This criterion is not meant to constitute a recovery program for listed species, but one element of a more comprehensive conservation effort for the long term sustainment of listed species within the County. At the local level, recovery programs of both the CDFG and the USFWS have measures in place that can impose severe penalties for the "take" of listed species or their habitat.

Federally Endangered: "any species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range ..."

Federally Threatened: "any species which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range."

State Endangered: " ...a native species or subspecies of a bird, mammal, fish, amphibian, reptile, or plant which is in serious danger of becoming extinct throughout all, or a significant portion, of its range due to one or more causes, including loss of habitat, change in habitat, overexploitation, predation, competition, or disease."

State Threatened: " ...a native species or subspecies of a bird, mammal, fish, amphibian, reptile, or plant that, although not presently threatened with extinction, is likely to become an endangered species in the foreseeable future in the absence of the special protection and management efforts required by this chapter [California Code of Regulations, Title 1, Sec 670.5]

B. On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.

Intent of Criterion B: The purpose of this criterion is to identify biotic resources that are uncommon on a regional basis. The geographical region considered could be as small as the Southern California coastal plains, the Transverse Mountain Ranges, the Mojave Desert, the Southern California coastline, etc. The geographical region could also be as large as Southern California, the Pacific coast, all of California, the western United States, or even larger. The community, association, or habitat is either unique or restricted in distribution in an area larger than the political boundaries of the County (i.e., coastal sage scrub, native grasslands, or vernal pools). Resources that are limited in distribution in the region being considered, but common elsewhere, are also included under this category.

C. Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.

Intent of Criterion C: The purpose of this criterion is to identify biotic resources that are uncommon within the political boundaries of the County, regardless of their availability elsewhere. The County has a high diversity of biological components. The County and San Diego County are the only counties in the U.S. that possess coastal, montane, and desert subregions within their boundaries. It is a rich heritage that few local governments have an opportunity to preserve.

Many biotic communities that were once common in the County have been severely reduced due to urban and agricultural development. This is especially true south of the San Gabriel Mountains, and among the agricultural fields of the North County. Other biotic features have never been common.

D. Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.

Intent of Criterion D: Species or groups of species, at various points in their life cycles, tend to congregate in certain areas. These areas possess resources that are essential to the maintenance of specific wildlife species. This criterion is intended to identify those areas that are limited in distribution either regionally or in the County, and not the primary habitat of common species or groups of species.

E. Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.

Intent of Criterion E: Oftentimes scientists learn the most about a biological phenomenon by studying it at an extreme in its distribution. This frequently reveals the biological and ecological parameters under which it can survive. In addition, isolated populations and communities often are relicts of what was present in an area at some previous time, and may show genetic traits not found elsewhere in the species. These biological and ecological parameters may be useful in determining taxonomic relationships.

F. Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.

Intent of Criterion F: The intent of this criterion was to identify examples of the primary biotic resources in the County. At least one example (e.g., native grassland, valley oak savannah) of each vegetation type will be selected from the various geographical regions in the County in order to preserve basic biogeographic diversity.

(page 66: SEA Descriptions)

SEA Descriptions

The following are detailed descriptions of each SEA.

Note regarding plant community classifications:

Plant communities within the SEAs were classified using standard methodology and terminology. The communities in this description correspond directly with those listed in Holland's *Preliminary Descriptions of the Terrestrial Natural Communities of California* (1986 and 1992 update). In recent years, ecologists have refined Holland's approach to define communities primarily by their constituent plant assemblages and have now widely adopted the classification system described by Sawyer, Keeler-Wolf and Evens in *A Manual of California Vegetation*, Second Edition 2009 (MCV). This has become the accepted standard recognized by the California Department of Fish and Game, the California Native Plant Society and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The important difference between the two methods is that the earlier system's categories were based on a variety of factors, such as physiographic features, as in the case of vernal pools, or by specific plants, as in the case of coast live oak woodland, or by the use of commonly accepted terms, as in "chaparral." In the MCV, plant communities are defined with more precision as botanical alliances where one, occasionally two, particular plant species are dominant or co-dominant with a host of other possible associated plants. The MCV lists no one plant community called chaparral because in habitats of this type any one of a variety of shrubs can be dominant and influence the character of the vegetation. For example, in a location where chamise is predominant, the alliance is classified as an *Adenostoma fasciculatum* Shrubland Alliance, while close by greenbark ceanothus may emerge as the most common shrub and this is termed a *Ceanothus spinosis* Shrubland Alliance.

The transition to the new MCV format is ongoing. Not all alliances have been fully described, and new ones are still being recognized and extensive research is in progress to define every alliance in the new MCV plant communities' format. The more familiar nomenclatures will continue to be used for the SEA Program when appropriate.

An effort has been made to conform to this new format. Descriptions and general locations of each plant community as described in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium of the Los Angeles County SEAs* appear below. The plant communities correspond to Holland's *Preliminary Descriptions of the Terrestrial Natural Communities of California.* Each was considered baseline information and evaluated for the potential presence of alliances as described in the MCV. Alliances whose profiles matched the given criteria are listed. In many cases only with further investigation can the presence of some alliances be confirmed. In addition, it should be noted that not all alliances are listed within the SEA descriptions, as many alliances have yet to be defined and new alliances are still being discovered. Where species' scientific names have been updated from those used in the MCV, these are given in brackets and follow nomenclature presented in *The Jepson Manual, 2nd Edition* (Baldwin *et al*. 2012).

Status Abbreviations:

- ABC: American Bird Conservancy Green List
- AFS: American Fisheries Society categories of risk: vulnerable, threatened, or endangered;
- AWL: Audubon Watchlist
- BCC: Fish and Wildlife Service Birds of Conservation Concern
- BLMS: Bureau of Land Management Sensitive Species
- CDF: California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Sensitive Species
- FC: Federal Candidate species
- FE: Federally listed as Endangered
- FSS: USDA Forest Service Sensitive Species
- FT: Federally listed as Threatened
- FPD: Federally proposed for delisting
- FPE: Federally proposed for listing as Endangered
- FPT: Federally proposed for listing as Threatened
- LAA: Los Angeles Audubon list of Los Angeles County's Sensitive Bird Species
- RPR: Rare Plant Rank
- SC: National Marine Fisheries Service Species of Concern
- SCD: State candidate for delisting
- SCE: State candidate for listing as Endangered
- SCT: State candidate for listing as Threatened
- SE: State-listed as Endangered
- SSC: CDFG Species of Special Concern;
- ST: State-listed as Threatened
- USBC: United States Bird Conservation Watch List
- WBWG: Western Bat Working Group: High, Medium and Low priority
- Xerces: Xerces Society Red List of Pollinators

1. Alamitos Bay SEA

Location

General

The Alamitos Bay Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located upstream of the Alamitos Bay Marina, off the Los Cerritos Channel of the City of Long Beach. The SEA boundaries encompass the Alamitos Bay salt marsh, which is one of three remaining examples of salt marshes found in the County. The entire SEA area has been identified by the California Audubon as a Globally Important Bird Area (IBA)—part of the Los Cerritos Wetlands and adjacent oil fields section of the Orange Coast Wetlands unit. The entire SEA is located within the United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Los Alamitos Quadrangle.

General Boundary and Resources Description

The SEA boundaries generally follow the Alamitos Bay salt marsh area, which is bordered by an oil field, main artery roads, the Cerritos Channel, and residential development. The SEA is situated to the west of Studebaker Road, north of Westminster Avenue, east of Pacific Coast Highway and south of Loynes Drive and the Cerritos Channel within the City of Long Beach.

The SEA is one of three remaining examples of salt marsh found in the County, and the last remnant of the extensive salt marshes once found in Los Alamitos Bay. The majority of this vegetation type has been lost to urbanization, flood control projects, harbors, and marinas. It is one of the most productive ecological communities and is an important breeding ground for terrestrial and marine organisms, including the majority of commercial fishes. This is due in part to the estuaries and salt marshes interfacing between the terrestrial and marine worlds, and serving as important nutrient cycling centers for marine ecosystems. The Belding's savannah sparrow occurs in Alamitos Bay salt marsh. This species is restricted to salt marsh habitat, and has been placed on the state-endangered species list. The Orange Coast Wetlands IBA is believed to harbor one-eighth of the population of Belding’s savannah sparrows, and there is a significant amount in Alamitos Bay. Least terns and other terns that breed in the area often use Alamitos Bay and the Cerritos arm as a foraging area. This type of habitat is an important wintering ground for migratory birds. It is estimated that in the fall and spring seasons, the Orange Coast Wetlands IBA hosts 15,000-20,000 individuals of migrating birds.

Vegetation

As discussed, the SEA encompasses the last remaining coastal salt marsh in Los Alamitos Bay’s formerly extensive system of salt marshes and is one of only three such examples of this habitat remaining in County. Sensitive plant species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Coastal Salt Marsh: Consists of salt-tolerant plants that are mostly low-growing herbaceous perennials that are found on the borders of marine salt water bodies. The duration and extent of tidal inundation or influence causes a graduation in the prevalence of various species within this community. In the Alamitos Bay wetlands, this includes cordgrass as the dominant species and depending on the conditions, pickleweed, salt grass, alkali heath and spearscale can also be found.

Corresponding MCV communities:

Sarcocornia pacifica (*Salicornia depressa*) ([*Salicornia pacifica*, *Salicornia depressa*] pickleweed mats) Herbaceous Alliance
Bolboschoenus maritimus (salt marsh bulrush marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
Distichlis spicata (salt grass flats) Herbaceous Alliance
Spartina foliosa (California cordgrass marsh) Herbaceous Alliance

Intertidal Flats: Brackish coastal wetlands of low-lying basins of high evaporation and infrequent inputs of freshwater with low-growing salt tolerant plants.

Corresponding MCV Communities:

Ruppia (*cirrhosa, maritima*) (ditch-grass or widgeon-grass mats) Aquatic Herbaceous Alliance

Wildlife

Coastal salt marshes and estuaries are productive habitats, which are used for foraging and breeding grounds, for both resident and migrating wildlife species. Estuaries and coastal salt marshes are the interface between the terrestrial and marine worlds, and are important nutrient recycling centers for marine ecosystems. In the past, this habitat was once extensive in the Los Alamitos Bay area.

Although little documentation regarding the types of animals present has been found, based on the apparent health of the ecosystem, it may be assumed that fishes that are commonly found in the vicinity can also be found in the SEA. These may include species, such as arrow goby, California halibut, cheekspot goby, diamond turbot, queenfish, shadow goby, shiner perch, topsmelt, longjaw mudsucker, Pacific staghorn sculpin, and yellowfin goby.

Without more information, it is not possible to predict whether any reptiles or mammals can be found, but it is likely that amphibians, such as Baja California chorus frogs, are present.

The SEA habitat probably supports a variety of bird species found in the few coastal saltmarshes that remain in coastal Southern California. Belding's savannah sparrow has been observed in the SEA. Shallow water habitat exists and would be expected to attract wading birds and ducks. Foraging habitat that is attractive to raptors appears to be present on the outside perimeter of the marsh.

Wildlife Movement

The SEA provides a variety of saltwater, estuarine, mudflat and freshwater marsh habitats, and is an important stopover for many migratory birds traveling the Pacific Flyway migration route. Its suitability for many fishes and invertebrates allows populations that are capable of supporting further colonization and expansion of range. The area does not fall within any identified terrestrial movement routes for wildlife.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition.

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. The SEA is configured to encompass the regionally significant community of a coastal salt marsh or coastal brackish marsh. This community or closely related designations are considered highest priority communities by the CDFG, indicating that they are declining in acreage throughout their range due to land use changes. The array and composition of these communities have been discussed in the Vegetation section. Changes to the classification system mentioned earlier in some cases divide plant communities into many possible vegetation alliances—not all of which may be considered sensitive. Previously listed communities with at least one sensitive alliance in the new format have been listed.

Sensitive Plant Species

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

Davidson's saltscale (*Atriplex serenana var. davidsonii*) RPR 1B.2
Southern tarplant (*Centromadia parryi ssp. australis*) RPR 1B.1
Salt marsh bird's-beak (*Chloropyron maritimum ssp. maritimum*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.2
Coulter's goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata ssp. coulteri*) RPR 1B.1
Coast woolly-heads (*Nemacaulis denudata var. denudata*) FT, RPR 1B.1
California Orcutt grass (*Orcuttia californica*) FE, SE, RPR 2.1
Estuary seablite (*Suaeda esteroa*) RPR 1B.2
San Bernardino aster (*Symphyotrichum defoliatum*) RPR 1B.2

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or are likely to be present within the SEA based on habitat requirements and known range attributes:

Belding's savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi*) SE
California least tern (*Sternula antillarum browni*) FE, SE, ABC, CDFG Fully Protected

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

There are no ETAs designated within this SEA.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets several SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met is described below.

CRITERIA ANALYSIS OF THE ALAMITOS BAY SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
			Los Alamitos Bay is one of only three remaining salt marshes found in the County, and a remnant of extensive salt marshes

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Met	once found in its area. (The others are the Ballona Wetlands off of Santa Monica Bay and the Malibu Lagoon.) It is the type habitat of Belding's savannah sparrow, which is an endangered species, that is still found in the much reduced habitat of the salt marshes of Southern California.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	Salt marsh is reduced and fragmented from its former coverage in Southern California, so it is important to preserve any of these important estuarine areas.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	Los Alamitos Bay is one of only three remaining salt marshes found in the County, which is a remnant of extensive salt marshes once found in the area.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	The Belding's savannah sparrow lives its entire life in salt marshes and breeds, rests, and feeds in this area. Salt marshes are important nursery grounds for many marine animals, and diminished fisheries for many are attributed to the loss of salt marshes. Salt marshes are important habitat for migrating marine birds, which utilize the abundant forage produced by the marsh in the form of mud animals and insects.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	As one of only three salt marshes in the County, this area is scientifically interesting for the study of island bio-geography in that salt marshes are now islands, whereas they were once almost continuous in the seismically active coastline of Southern California. The three marshes differ from one another in dominant vegetation.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	Los Alamitos Bay is one of only three remaining salt marshes found in the County, which is a remnant of extensive salt marshes once found in its area. The majority of this habitat type has been lost to urbanization, flood control projects, harbors, and marinas. Salt marshes are a very productive vegetative community and an important breeding and nursery area for marine, marsh, and terrestrial animals—an ecotone where multiple habitats meet and combine resident biota. Many commercially valuable fishes start life in salt

Criterion		Status	Justification
			marshes.

In conclusion, the area described in this report is an SEA because it contains: A) the habitat of core populations of endangered and threatened plant and animal species; B-C) biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution in the County and regionally; and D) concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds that are limited in availability in the County; E) biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community; and F) areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.

2. Altadena Foothills and Arroyos SEA

Location

General

The Altadena Foothills and Arroyos Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located in the westernmost portion of the San Gabriel Valley. This SEA includes incorporated and unincorporated areas. The SEA represents the lower elevation/urban interface portions of Millard, Alzada, Chiquita, Las Flores, Rubio, and Eaton canyons from the urban edge, to undeveloped wildland areas of the lower elevations of the Angeles National Forest.

The SEA is located within the Mount Wilson and Pasadena United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Quadrangles.

General Boundary and Resources Description

On the west side of the Altadena Foothills and Arroyos, the western and southwestern boundaries track along the urban-wildland interface in the undeveloped areas of the Arroyo Seco, Fern, and El Prieto canyons, and the boundary pulls back around a small area of development at the northern-eastern edge of La Cañada-Flintridge. A developed area northeast of the junction of Millard Canyon and El Prieto is excluded. The SEA designation includes the undeveloped portions of sub-watersheds of the Arroyo Seco, and also encompasses undeveloped parts of drainages, including Alzada and Chiquita, which flow into the Devils Gate Reservoir of the Arroyo Seco. The Arroyo Seco is within the Los Angeles River watershed. This SEA includes portions of the cities of Pasadena and La Cañada-Flintridge, the unincorporated community of Altadena, and the Angeles National Forest. The eastern side of the southern boundary encompasses undeveloped areas of the sub-watersheds of Las Flores, Rubio and Eaton canyons, which are tributary to the Rio Hondo and historically to the San Gabriel River. Much, but not all, of the Rio Hondo catchment is diverted via flood-control channels to the Los Angeles River. The southern boundary of the SEA is bordered by developed properties. The southern boundary moves east along the urban-wildland interface to include undeveloped parts of watersheds, which closely follow the perimeter of Devil's Gate Reservoir, in the Hahamongna Park in Pasadena. From Hahamongna Park, the SEA boundary continues east along the edge of development into the San Gabriel River watershed. The eastern border of the SEA is the eastern ridge of Eaton Canyon near the canyon mouth. A finger of the SEA extends downstream along Eaton Wash to include the Eaton Debris Basin and Reservoir. The northern boundary is formed along ridgelines within the Angeles National Forest that define the catchment of the local canyons. Within the Angeles National Forest, development is much less dense, in the form of in-holdings and Angeles National Forest leases, and is often naturally landscaped, albeit disturbed.

The chief attribute of this SEA is a high diversity of species, which is due to the SEA's position between the mountain biome and the valley biome, which is very abrupt because the change of slope is formed by the thrust fault complex that borders the San Gabriel Mountains. Furthermore, the SEA has as its

center the dividing ridge between the two principal rivers of the Los Angeles Basin, the Los Angeles River and the San Gabriel River.

The wide range of elevation, topography, aspect, and geology represent a diverse array of physical habitats within this SEA. In general, the topography of the SEA is moderately steep to very steep, which results in a number of very narrow corridors with elevations ranging from a high of approximately 2,400 feet above mean sea level (MSL) to a low of approximately 1,200 feet above MSL. Consequently, a variety of plant communities exist, including riparian and upland shrublands and woodlands. Within these major community types, there are many vegetation series that vary according to plant species dominance.

Of particular note for this SEA is its potential to accommodate lower elevation east-west linkages. This is significant because of the constraints of development at lower elevations, the very steep terrain, and seasonal snow storms above the SEA, beginning at about 3000 feet—all of which limit potential movement for many species. There is also potential for north-south wildlife movement between the Angeles National Forest and the Verdugo Mountains via the Arroyo Seco and the San Rafael Hills. The Arroyo Seco is the eastern limit of this link and creates a potential movement corridor from the Angeles National Forest, over and under the Interstate-210. Across the Interstate-210, the linkage enters the San Rafael Hills, where blocks of habitat remain in the cities. Some are conserved in natural open space, such as the Cherry Canyon Park and Open Space Preserve of the City of La Cañada-Flintridge, just south of the County Descanso Gardens. These open spaces are interspersed with residential development and are not part of the SEA. From the San Rafael Hills, linkage potential may be traced to the west across State Route-2 and Verdugo Wash, past enclaves of residential development to access the Verdugo Mountains.

Vegetation

The variety of topography, soil types, slope aspects and water availability within the SEA creates a range of physical habitats that support numerous communities. Plant species observed or recorded in previous documentation within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium of the Los Angeles County SEAs.* Sensitive plant species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Brief descriptions and general locations of each major plant community present within the SEA are provided below, including oak woodland, white alder riparian woodland, chaparral, and coastal sage chaparral scrub.

Oak Woodland: A plant community dominated by arborescent species of the oak genus (*Quercus*). Within this SEA, oak woodlands are dominated by one of two species: coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia* var. *agrifolia*) and canyon oak (*Q. chrysolepis*). Understory and adjacent vegetation varies from annual grasses and forbs in level areas to shrubs where topography is steeper. Coast live oak woodland often forms a closed canopy and is scattered throughout the SEA, but is most prevalent on north-facing slopes and in drainage bottoms. The canyon oak woodland canopy is typically more open and found on steep, north-facing canyon walls.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance
- *Quercus chrysolepis* (canyon oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

White Alder Riparian Woodland: Found along perennially-flowing streams in bedrock-constrained, steep-sided canyons, which result in a fairly narrow riparian corridor. This community is dominated by white alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*), which may grow 50 to 60 feet high over a shrubby understory.

Corresponding MCV community:

- *Alnus rhombifolia* (white alder groves) Forest Alliance

Chaparral: A shrub community comprised of robust, woody, mostly evergreen species. Within this SEA, a number of chaparral series are found according to their dominant plant species. These include chamise, laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*), ceanothus (*Ceanothus spp.*), San Gabriel scrub oak (*Quercus dumosa* var. *gabrielensis*), and mosaics of these depending on mixtures of species and elevation. These and other shrub species form dense vegetation 5 to 10 feet in height. The development of chaparral is pronounced over the hillside areas throughout the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Adenostoma fasciculatum* (chamise chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Adenostoma fasciculatum-Salvia apiana* (chamise–white sage chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Arctostaphylos glandulosa* (Eastwood's manzanita chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Arctostaphylos glauca* (bigberry manzanita chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus leucodermis* (chaparral whitethorn) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus spinosus* (greenbark ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus oliganthus* (hairy leaf ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Prunus ilicifolia* (holly leaf cherry chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Rhus ovata* (sugarbush chaparral) Shrubland Alliance

Coastal Sage Scrub: A shrubland community exhibiting less robust structure that is found in this SEA. This plant community is dominated by summer-deciduous shrubs, such as California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), California brittle bush (*Encelia californica*), white sage (*Salvia apiana*), black sage (*S. mellifera*), and California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*). It also forms dense stands, which grow three to four feet in height. Within this SEA, it is generally found in scattered patches, which are highly integrated with mixed chaparral. This plant community is generally found on hotter, drier south-facing slopes, lower ridges and small flats, which are primarily located in the lower elevation hillsides of the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica* (California sagebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Salvia mellifera* (California sagebrush-black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Encelia californica* (California brittle bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Dendromecon rigida* (bush poppy scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia apiana* (white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia leucophylla* (purple sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia mellifera* (black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance

- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum-Salvia apiana* (California buckwheat-white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lotus scoparius* [*Acmispon glaber*] (deer weed scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Malacothamnus fasciculatus* (bush mallow scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Wildlife

Wildlife populations within the SEA are diverse due to the area's vegetative diversity and its location within and adjacent to the Angeles National Forest. The analysis of invertebrates is severely limited due to the lack of collection-related data; however, the SEA is likely to support healthy populations of a diverse assortment of invertebrate species based on its undisturbed nature and variety of habitats. Amphibians are present within the aquatic and semi-aquatic habitats along the Arroyo Seco, Millard Canyon, Eaton Canyon, and tributary drainages. Reptile abundance and diversity are characteristic of the habitats present, although areas closer to urban development along the southern boundaries of this SEA are likely to be degraded due to edge effects.

Bird use, diversity, and abundance within the SEA are high for several reasons. In general, this SEA provides habitat for a wide range of shrubland, woodland, and riparian species that occur at varying elevations. In particular, the riparian habitats found in drainages throughout this SEA provide essential habitat for riparian-obligate and riparian-favoring species. In addition, a number of migratory birds use this area to move across the northern portion of the Los Angeles Basin. These include a wide spectrum of birds including song birds, waterfowl and raptors.

Similarly, the mammalian fauna is very diverse and abundant. Many mammalian species, including wide-ranging, large mammals, such as black bear, mountain lion, bobcat, coyote and deer are expected to use the SEA to forage. These animals are likely to den within the more isolated areas within the Angeles National Forest; however they are known to roam the SEA for foraging and dispersal opportunities.

Wildlife Movement

Wildlife movement within the SEA takes on two major forms. First, due to the extremely steep intervening topography, considerable movement of wildlife up and down the drainages, which course through this SEA to connect the forest interior with foothill areas, is expected. Consequently, this type of movement occurs on a seasonal basis, particularly for large mobile mammals with a full range of habitat needs that are typically met over broad areas.

The second major type of movement occurs across the flanks of the foothills in an east-west direction. Particularly for riparian-obligate and riparian-favoring migratory birds, the corridor linking lower elevation riparian habitats in the SEA are of high importance and heavily utilized.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch

lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition.

Sensitive Plant Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. Sensitive communities include hairy leaf ceanothus chaparral, holly leaf cherry chaparral, chamise-white sage chaparral, California brittle bush scrub, white sage scrub, California buckwheat-white sage scrub, and oak riparian woodland. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section.

Sensitive Plant Species

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Sonoran maiden fern (*Thelypteris puberula* var. *sonorensis*) RPR 2.2
- San Gabriel manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glandulosa* ssp. *gabrielensis*) RPR 1B.2
- Braunton's milk-vetch (*Astragalus brauntonii*) RPR 1B.1, FE
- Nevin's barberry (*Berberis nevinii*) RPR 1B.1, SE, FE
- Parry's spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *parryi*) RPR 1B.1
- Coulter's goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata* ssp. *coulteri*) RPR 1B.1
- White rabbit-tobacco (*Pseudognaphalium leucocephalum*) RPR 2.2
- San Gabriel oak (*Quercus dumosa* var. *gabrielensis*) RPR 4.2
- Greata's aster (*Symphyotrichum greatae*) RPR 1B.3
- Slender mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*) RPR 1B.2
- Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) RPR 1B.2
- Mesa horkelia (*Horkelia cuneata* ssp. *puberula*) RPR 1B.1

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or are likely to be present within the SEA based on habitat requirements and known range attributes:

- Coast range newt (*Taricha torosa*) SSC
- Western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*) BLMS, SSC, FSS
- Silvery legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra pulchra*) SSC, FSS
- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) BLMS, SSC, FSS
- Coastal whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Coastal rosy boa (*Lichanura trivirgata roseofusca*) FSS
- San Bernardino mountain kingsnake (*Lampropeltis zonata parvirubra*) SSC, FSS
- Coast patch-nosed snake (*Salvadora hexalepis virgultea*) SSC

- San Bernardino ringneck snake (*Diadophis punctatus modestus*) FSS
- Two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*) BLMS, SSC, FSS
- American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) FD, SD, CDF, CDFG Fully Protected, BCC
- Southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) FE, SE, ABC
- Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) FE, SE, ABC
- Coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) FT, ABC, SSC
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) SSC
- Western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High Priority
- Big free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops macrotis*) SSC, WBWG: Medium-High Priority
- Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) BLMS, SSC, FSS, WBWG: High Priority
- Silver-haired bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*) CDFG Special Animals List, WBWG Medium Priority
- Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*) CDFG Special Animals List, WBWG: Medium Priority
- Western yellow bat (*Lasiurus xanthinus*) SSC, WBWG: High Priority
- San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*) SSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

There are no ETAs designated within this SEA.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets important SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met is described below.

CRITERIA ANALYSIS OF THE ALTADENA FOOTHILLS AND ARROYOS SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Not Met	None within this SEA.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	The SEA is designating one of the principle ecotones of the Southern California coastal areas: the area where the sediment of the coastal alluvial fans from the mountain streams and drainages is exiting the abrupt upthrust rock of the mountains. Here one finds the biotic communities of the mountains meeting the communities of the coastal plain areas, combining with the organisms that are only found at the junction. The natural habitats of this kind of biological area are fast dwindling as urban communities expand to the limits of easily buildable space.
	Within the County, biotic		The SEA is designating one of the principle ecotone areas of the County coastal exposure: the area where

Criterion		Status	Justification
C)	communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	the sediment of the alluvial fans from the mountain streams and drainages is adding to the mile-deep sediments of the Los Angeles Basin, as the watercourses exit the abrupt upthrust rock of the San Gabriel Mountains. It is an area where one can often encounter flora that is characteristic of the Peninsular Ranges to the south and flora of the coastal ranges and Sierra Nevada to the north, among typical flora of the Transverse Ranges. The SEA contains prime examples of coastal sage scrub and other kinds of chaparral, riparian oaks, woodlands of the canyon oak of the mountains, woodlands of the coast live oak, which occurs both in the lower mountains and the valleys, good stands of the San Gabriel endemic oak (*Quercus dumosa* var. *gabrielensis*), diverse and beautiful flora characteristic of the continually changing beds of the mountain streams, both perennial and intermittent, and the wildlife that reside in these various habitats.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	The SEA provides a low-elevation constrained corridor. The SEA serves as the only corridor to provide interacting component habitat areas for species to feed, rest, and migrate from low basin and foothill elevations to the sub-alpine elevations of the high San Gabriel Mountains.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Not met	None within this SEA.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	Areas encompassed within the SEA represent the only remaining stands of low-elevation foothill scrub, chaparral, and canyon woodland communities within the north San Gabriel Valley. These communities once extended throughout what are now the communities of the north San Gabriel Valley, bridging the transition between high chaparral on the southern slope of the San Gabriel Mountains to the alluvial fans extending beneath the mountains to the coastal basin.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains (B-C) a good example of the biotic communities typical of the area where the abrupt upthrust of the mountains meets the alluvial fans of the valleys, a natural habitat that is limited in availability in the County and the coastal Southern California region; (D) it has a constrained connective corridor area near the Devil's Gate Dam where the freeway underpasses provide access between the San Rafael Hills and the San Gabriel Mountains; and (F) it supports intact remant stands of low-elevation chaparral and scrub communities that were once more widespread within the region.

3. Antelope Valley SEA

Location

General

The Antelope Valley Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located in the central portion of the Antelope Valley, primarily east of the cities of Palmdale and Lancaster, within a predominantly unincorporated area of the County. The SEA is focused on the principal watercourses of the area: Little Rock Creek and Big Rock Creek and tributaries, such as Mescal Creek. The California Audubon recognizes the area of Edwards Air Force Base as a Globally Important Bird Area (IBA), which is visited by tens of thousands of migrant birds during the spring and fall migratory seasons, and supports the breeding of rare and endangered birds during the spring and summer months.

The SEA is located, at least partially, in each of the following United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Quadrangles: Rosamond, Rosamond Lake, Redman, Rogers Lake S, Jackrabbit Hill, Lancaster E, Alpine Butte, Hi Vista, Adobe Mountain, Palmdale, Littlerock, Lovejoy Butte, El Mirage, Pacifico Mountain, Juniper Hills, Valyermo, and Mescal Creek.

General Boundary and Resources Description

Watercourses and water features, such as dry lakes and springs, are the focus for desert life and central to connectivity and biodiversity in this region. The SEA was delineated to emphasize the importance of the Little Rock Creek and Big Rock Creek watersheds to the surface and subsurface hydrology of the Antelope Valley and to the dry lakes. The western portion of the SEA extends along the margin of Little Rock Creek Wash and floodplain zone, while the eastern margin follows a tributary of Big Rock Creek, which is Mescal Creek Wash and its tributaries. The origins of the watercourses in the Angeles National Forest are an important aspect of their diversity and connectivity, and the importance of the diverse forest vegetation of this SEA is discussed below. The SEA includes several major buttes and numerous minor ones, which have highly diverse biota along with diverse desert habitats, which range from sand dunes from the wind-blown dust that the buttes collect, to rocky crags, which are home to various raptors. The SEA includes the County's portion of the watershed basin for dry lakes, which are the destination for the watercourses. There are three dry lakes and their adjacent plains (protected as part of Edwards Air Force Base) included in the SEA: Rosamond Dry Lake with the adjacent Piute Ponds, Buckhorn Lake, and Rogers Lake. These lakes and ponds are often flooded during the rainy winter-spring seasons, and are the principal resting areas on the Pacific Flyway. The northeastern portion of the SEA encompasses some agricultural cropland (some of which lie fallow) and dispersed rural residential uses; however, the underlying hydrology of the washes remains intact throughout the entire SEA.

Three main watercourse segments originate in the San Gabriel Mountains and flow through the Antelope Valley to dry lakes near the northern County boundary: 1) Little Rock Creek; 2) Big Rock Creek; and 3) Desert-Montane. Desert-Montane centers on Mescal Creek and includes adjacent drainages. The

flows of all three drainages may be on the surface during rain and snowmelt, and are subsurface for much of the year.

The Little Rock Creek segment (the westernmost segment), goes north from Little Rock-Palmdale Dam as its southern barrier. Upstream from the reservoir is critical habitat for the endangered arroyo toad (*Anaxyrus californicus* FE, SSC). The toad could occur from time to time in the downstream area of the SEA. Heading north to Mount Emma Road, the boundaries follow the flood zone of the Little Rock Creek Wash and also incorporate some of the vegetated slopes that drain to the wash. North from Mount Emma Road, the boundaries follow Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) boundaries except where the braiding is clearly outside of the FEMA boundary, such as near Avenue U, between Avenue S and Avenue T, and north of Avenue Q. In these areas, the line follows the edge of the braiding. North of Avenue M, the lines follow FEMA boundaries to Avenue F. On the west side, just south of Edwards Air Force Base, the SEA boundary heads west to incorporate the conservation area identified by the West Mojave (WEMO) Plan for alkali mariposa lily. North of Avenue F, the eastern boundary follows the FEMA boundary to the Edwards Air Force Base boundary.

All of Edwards Air Force Base that is in the County is included in the SEA because of the restricted entry and use protect the dry lakes and their neighboring areas. Many desert plants and wildlife species once found broadly across the Antelope Valley are now found only or primarily within Edwards Air Force Base. The ponds and dry lakes have distributed habitat of marshy alkali grassland, alkali flats, and cattail and bulrush marsh augmented by wastewater treatment facilities that have additional ponds. Some of the nesting rare and uncommon birds include white-faced ibis (*Plegadis chihi*), tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*), redhead (*Aythya americana*), gadwall (*Anas strepera*), yellow-headed blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*), least bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*), and federally-threatened western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*).

The Big Rock Creek area has western and eastern segments in the SEA. On the western segment, the SEA begins in the Angeles National Forest near its northern boundary and heads north through and out of the Angeles National Forest along Pallett Creek. The SEA includes parts of Cruthers and Holmes creeks near their junctions with Pallett Creek. SEA boundaries follow the braided stream channel toward the confluence with Big Rock Creek. From the aqueduct at Big Rock Creek to Edwards Air Force Base, the western boundary line follows the FEMA boundaries along the western side of Big Rock Creek braids, including Alpine Butte, and joining to the Little Rock Creek segment along Edwards Air Force Base. On the east segment of Big Rock Creek, the SEA boundaries head north from the Angeles National Forest headwaters of Dorr Canyon (a Big Rock Creek tributary) and the headwater area of Big Rock Creek near State Route-2. The boundaries travel through the Angeles National Forest and follow the wash area of the streams toward the confluence with Pallett Creek. The Angeles National Forest floodplain of the widened area of South Fork of Big Rock Creek is included in the SEA.

South Fork of Big Rock Creek is part of the federally-designated critical habitat of the mountain yellow-legged frog (*Rana muscosa*, FE, SE). This frog is known in the County from only a few high-mountain streams in the San Gabriel Mountains. Climate change and other global factors, such as air pollution, are suspected to be responsible for its endangered status.

Another broad area of the San Andreas Fault Zone near the Valyermo Ranch follows the FEMA boundaries and includes a nesting area for gray vireos near Bobs Gap. Between the Angeles National Forest and the aqueduct, the SEA boundaries follow FEMA boundaries. The eastern boundary follows the FEMA boundary along the main course of Big Rock Creek to the vicinity of Avenue Q East, where it diverges to include sections that have the main area of Lovejoy Buttes. At Avenue O, the eastern boundary returns to the FEMA boundary, and continues northeastward along the FEMA boundary to skirt development in Lake Los Angeles. In the vicinity of Avenue M, the eastern boundary goes eastward through areas of natural vegetation (from about 100th Street to 215th Street) to include Rocky, Piute, and Saddleback buttes, and connect with the Desert-Montane transect segment.

The southern side of the Desert-Montane transect branch starts in the Angeles National Forest along the ridge of Table Mountain at the San Bernardino-Los Angeles County line. Table Mountain is known for its very diverse flora, which includes desert and mountain elements, and some unusual limestone-obligate species. The ridgeline SEA southern boundary gradually becomes the western boundary as it skirts the camp developments along the southern base of Table Mountain. The boundary turns north along the western ridge of the Mescal Creek drainage, crossing the California Aqueduct with the State Route-138. The Mescal Creek flora is known to be highly diverse, and the SEA boundaries include much of the Inface Bluff on the west side of Mescal Creek, which adds further diversity to Mescal Creek habitats. From the aqueduct to Avenue R, the western boundary buffers the westernmost desert drainage by 200 feet, which protects the braided area of the watercourse. This part of the SEA includes Black Butte and the Three Sisters (buttes), many smaller unnamed buttes, as well as Mescal and Theodore Payne County wildlife sanctuaries. The east side of the transect is the San Bernardino-Los Angeles County line. At about Avenue U East, the eastern boundary veers off the San Bernardino-Los Angeles County line to the north-northwest, buffering the Puzzle Creek watercourse by about 200 feet, which protects the braiding of the easternmost drainages. Near Avenue R, the boundary trends north, and goes north-northwest near Avenue P to include Moody Butte, lesser unnamed rises, and Blue Rock Butte.

The Desert-Montane segment largely avoids drainages that flow into and out of the Lake Los Angeles community, but the transect includes diffuse watercourses on the south side of Saddleback Butte, Saddleback Butte and the surrounding Saddleback Butte State Park, the Antelope Valley Indian Museum State Park at the base of Piute Butte, and Piute Butte. At about Avenue H and 70th Street East, the boundary turns to the northeast following natural vegetation to the County boundary near Avenue C. Here the boundary turns north along the line to where San Bernardino, Kern and Los Angeles counties meet. This northeastern part of the SEA has WEMO conservation areas for the threatened desert tortoise and state-threatened Mojave ground squirrel. The northeastern area has some BLM land and the County Phacelia Wildlife Sanctuary, which is also County Wildflower Preserve A. The SEA includes large parts of County Wildflower Preserve F.

On Edwards Air Force Base, north to south between Avenues B and E East, and west to east between 140th Street East and the San Bernardino-Los Angeles County line, there is federally-designated critical habitat for the state and federally-threatened desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*). At 190th Street, the critical habitat widens to extend north beyond the County and the SEA into Kern County. At 200th Street, the critical habitat widens to the south to extend to Avenue H and then goes east across the San

Bernardino-Los Angeles County line. The desert tortoise critical habitat area on Edwards Air Force Base is included in the SEA, and much of the SEA area north of Avenue H in the eastern drainages of the SEA is designated critical habitat for the tortoise.

The SEA traverses the Antelope Valley from the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains, to the low elevations of the dry lake basins, and its expanse and considerable topographical relief is reflected in its relatively high floral and faunal diversity. The SEA includes playa lake,alkali marsh, alluvial fan scrub, a mosaic of xeric desert scrubs, Joshua tree woodland, desert riparian woodlands, juniper scrub, pinyon pine, chaparral and mixed conifer, oak, and riparian communities of higher elevations. Transitional zones (ecotones) between these communities often contain unusual species compositions, such as pinyon pine, juniper and Joshua trees together, or Joshua trees adjacent to cottonwood forest.

Edwards Air Force Base has the only good stands of mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*) remaining in the County. It has areas of Mojave spineflower (Chorizanthe spinosa), creosote bush scrub, alkali sink, and the transition vegetation between the two. Rosamond Lake has the best example of the shadscale scrub and alkali sink biotic communities in the County. Shadscale scrub needs heavy soil with underlying hardpan between 3000-6000 feet elevation, which is unusual in the County, and more common in the north Mojave Desert and Owens Valley. In addition, the playa has the southernmost extension of the Great Basin kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys microps*), which is an isolated geographic population of scientific interest.

The southernmost portions of the three “legs” of the SEA lie within the Angeles National Forest, and include the upper tributary watersheds and streams for Little Rock, Big Rock, and Mescal creeks. These areas support the mixed conifer, which are multi-species oak woodlands that are common to the middle-elevation zones on the north face of the San Gabriel Mountains. The creeks are higher energy systems at those elevations, as they collect water from the surrounding terrain, and are typically lined with woodlands of alder, willow, sycamore and cottonwood, with varying densities and with various compositions of species.

As the creeks drop north of the pressure ridges of the San Andreas Fault Zone, they lose gradient and widen, and most of the flow is beneath the surface, except during high energy storms or in the spring (depending upon rainfall totals in the watersheds). The vegetation becomes more sparse and less evenly distributed along the channel margins. Crossing the lowlands of the Antelope Valley, the channels support a variety of desert scrub vegetation within the alluvial plains. Where the alluvial plains are wide and shallow, cottonwood-willow woodland and sycamore woodland vegetation communities often occur within the overall floodplain on stable terraces; around oxbow flow zones in the Antelope Valley; or where the groundwater table is replaced or augmented by agricultural runoff. The surrounding upland habitats are primarily desert scrubs, including creosote and chenopod scrubs, sand sheets (chiefly around the buttes), and Joshua tree woodland. Intact Joshua tree woodland, with native substrates present, supports a relatively high diversity of annual wildflowers, reptiles and mammals. The Joshua trees also provide nest sites for many desert and migratory bird species.

Lovejoy, Alpine, Piute, Black and Saddleback buttes, along with other, smaller unnamed buttes, form most of the topographical relief within the SEA. These areas offer different ecological conditions that are

associated with rock shelter, perching sites, nesting sites, denning areas, wind protection and sand sheet accumulation areas. Local and migratory bat species roost and reproduce in the caves and crevices of the butte formations. The higher buttes provide the only local nesting sites for owls and other birds of prey.

Alpine Butte is the least disturbed butte in the County, with excellent stands of Joshua tree woodland and creosote bush scrub, and impressive wildflower displays when rainfall is appropriate. Lovejoy Butte has Joshua tree woodland and creosote bush scrub, with a central wind-blown sand community for a good mixture of rock and sand habitats. In addition, the close proximity of Lovejoy Butte to Big Rock Creek Wash increases the diversity of habitats in the area. It also suffers most from impact from the Lake Los Angeles community, which borders the butte on three sides. The clustering of buttes in the SEA may be important to the abundant and diverse wildlife that inhabits the various vegetation communities around and in the buttes. Saddleback Butte and Piute Butte together are protected as a state park, but Saddleback Butte is also subject to development for campsites and hiking trails. Piute Butte has a prehistoric site that may protect it from much recreational development. All of the buttes harbor diverse wildlife and flora. Most of them are critical habitat for the state and federally-threatened desert tortoise. Some buttes within the critical habitat are not included in the SEA.

The open agricultural lands, active and fallow, support a diversity of wildlife species, which essentially regard the fields and ditches as irrigated desert. Birds of prey frequently hunt over the open agricultural areas, including fallow fields; wide-ranging predators also find excellent hunting conditions in and around agricultural areas. A spectrum of local and migratory bat species feed over the irrigated fields in the spring and summer, when insect numbers are the highest, and at least one sensitive bat species, the pallid bat, forages in open scrub or ruderal desert habitats.

The northern portion of the SEA contains several unique habitat types, including mesquite bosque (threatened locally by lowering water tables and harvest for firewood), clay pan pools, vernal pools, alkali grasslands, alkali and freshwater marshes, and permanent ponds. Hundreds of bird species have been recorded from the pond and marsh habitats around the dry lakes and ponds, and numerous species nest on the playa margins or in the associated riparian habitats. The open creosote scrub and other xeric habitats on the slopes surrounding the lake playas serve as important wintering areas for many raptor species, as well as large numbers of song birds.

Vegetation

Plant species observed or recorded in previous documentation within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium of the Los Angeles County SEAs.* Sensitive plant species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEAs are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Desert Scrub: A comprehensive term for a number of relatively low-stature, sparse-cover communities of shrubs and sub-shrubs that commonly occur on open, sandy soils where groundwater is inaccessible, except to a few deep-rooted species. Dominants include Great Basin sagebrush, antelope bush, creosote bush, several species of *Atriplex* (saltbush), rabbitbrush, cheesebush, sages, winterfat, and burrobrush, which are often with one or more perennial grasses (needlegrasses, sand drop-seed) interspersed.

Formations dominated by saltbushes and other related taxa, which may be particularly common on alkaline soils, are sometimes called chenopod scrubs, in reference to the family *Chenopodiaceae*, which includes most of the dominant species. Within the SEA, variations on this community often intergrade with, or form understory within, juniper woodland and Joshua tree woodland. Variations are also found on lower slopes, around the buttes and on the adjacent Antelope Valley floor. These formations also occur extensively within the Desert-Montane transect segment of the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Krascheninnikovia lanata* (winterfat scrubland) Shrubland Alliance
- *Suaeda moquinii* ([*Suaeda nigra*] bush seepweed scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Atriplex spinifera* (spinescale scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Pluchea sericea* (arrow weed thickets) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia tridentata* (big sagebrush) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia tridentata* ssp. *vaseyana* (mountain big sagebrush) Shrubland Alliance
- *Atriplex canescens* (fourwing saltbush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Atriplex confertifolia* (shadscale scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Atriplex hymenelytra* (desert holly scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Atriplex lentiformis* (quailbush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Acacia greggii* (catclaw acacia thorn scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ericameria paniculata* (black-stem rabbitbrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ambrosia salsola* (cheesebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Baccharis salicifolia* (mulefat thickets) Shrubland Alliance
- *Larrea tridentata* (creosote bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Larrea tridentata-Ambrosia dumosa* (creosote bush-white burr sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Atriplex polycarpa* (allscale scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum heermannii* (Heermann's buckwheat patches) Provisional Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum wrightii* (Wright's buckwheat patches) Dwarf Shrubland Alliance
- *Ephedra californica* (California joint fir scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Allenrolfea occidentalis* (iodine bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Sarcobatus vermiculatus* ([*Sarcobatus baileyi*] greasewood scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Yucca brevifolia* (Joshua tree woodland) Woodland Alliance
- *Prosopis glandulosa* (mesquite bosque) Woodland Alliance
- *Ambrosia salsola* (cheesebush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Grayia spinosa* (spiny hop sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Castela emoryi* (crucifixion thorn stands) Shrubland Special Stands
- *Ericameria nauseosa* (rubber rabbitbrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Gutierrezia sarothrae* (broom snake weed scrub) Provisional Shrubland Alliance
- *Ambrosia dumosa* (white bursage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum-Salvia apiana* (California buckwheat-white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lepidospartum squamatum* (scale broom scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Purshia tridentata* (bitter bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californnica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia apiana* (white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Chaparral: Consists of broad-leafed or needle-leafed, sclerophyllous (hard-leafed), medium height to tall shrubs that form a dense cover on steep slopes that are usually below 5,000 feet in Southern California. Dominant species found within this community include scrub oaks (several species), chamise, manzanita, wild lilac, toyon, and western mountain-mahogany. This plant community occupies internal slopes, particularly on north-facing exposures, within the higher elevations of the SEA. Shrubs are frequently interspersed as understory formations within oak and conifer woodlands.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Adenostoma fasciculatum* (chamise chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Adenostoma fasciculatum-Salvia apiana* (chamise-white sage chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Adenostoma fasciculatum-Salvia mellifera* (chamise-black sage chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Arctostaphylos glandulosa* (Eastwood's manzanita chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Arctostaphylos glauca (*bigberry manzanita chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus cuneatus* (wedge leaf ceanothus chaparral, buck brush chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus greggii* (cup leaf ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus crassifolius* (hoary leaf ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lotus scoparius* ([*Acmispon glaber*] deer weed scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Prunus ilicifolia* (holly leaf cherry chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Prunus emarginata* (bitter cherry thicket) Provisional Shrubland Alliance
- *Rhus ovata* (sugarbush chaparral) Shrubland Alliance

Grassland Communities: Consist of low, herbaceous vegetation that is dominated by grasses. This community also harbors native forbs and bulbs, as well as naturalized annual forbs. Only fragmentary representatives of native grasslands exist within the SEA, with mostly sand drop-seed colonies on relatively less-disturbed sandy substrates around the buttes. Non-native grassland consists of dominant invasive annual grasses that are primarily of Mediterranean origin. Dominant species within this "community," which is a ruderal formation and not a true habitat or community, include oats, bromes, foxtail chess and other grasses, wild mustards and other disturbance-favored "weedy" taxa. Non-native grasslands and other ruderal formations occur in small patches throughout the SEA and cover much of the land left fallow from agriculture.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Avena (barbata, fatua)* (wild oats grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Brassica (nigra)* and other mustards (upland mustards) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus (diandrus, hordeaceus)-Brachypodium distachyon* (annual brome grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus rubens-Schismus (arabicus, barbatus)* ([*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*] red brome or Mediterranean grass grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Centaurea (solstitialis, melitensis)* (yellow star-thistle fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Lolium perenne* ([*Festuca perennis*] perennial rye grass fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands

Wildflower Field: An amorphous mix of herbaceous plants noted for conspicuous annual wildflower displays, although noteworthy displays do not occur every year and appear to depend on rainfall patterns. Dominance varies from site to site and from year to year at any one particular site. Species frequently present include California poppy, tidy tips, dove lupine, valley tassels, purple owl's clover,

and broad-leaved gilia. Within the SEA, prominent wildflower fields occur on the south facing slopes of the Tehachapi Mountains and the buttes.

Corresponding MCV communities:

None at this time.

Southern Willow Scrub: A riparian community consisting of dense, broad-leafed, winter-deciduous riparian thickets that occur within and adjacent to seasonal or permanent watercourses. The "scrub" habitat is generally sub-mature, which is a state that is often maintained by frequent heavy over-flooding–and may attain woodland or forest stature if undisturbed for several decades. Dominant species of this community within the SEA are mulefat, sandbar and arroyo willow. Within the SEA this community primarily occurs along portions of the tributary drainages to Little Rock and Big Rock creeks, but elements of it also may occur around the periphery of ponds and marshes.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Salix exigua* (sandbar willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salix lasiolepis* (arroyo willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance

Joshua Tree Woodland: Dominated by Joshua tree, which usually is the only arborescent species, and with numerous smaller shrub species interspersed. Shrub species commonly associated with Joshua tree woodland habitat include creosote bush, Great Basin sagebrush, California buckwheat, saltbush, horsebrush, desert almond, and antelope bush. Joshua tree woodland is present in varying densities and age formations over much of the less-disturbed uplands around the two primary washes, and throughout the Desert-Montane transect.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Yucca brevifolia* (Joshua tree woodland) Woodland Alliance

Juniper Woodland: An open formation dominated by California juniper, often with an understory of desert scrub species, and sometimes mixed with chaparral or Joshua tree woodland at middle elevations. This community is found on lower slopes in the San Andreas Fault Zone.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Juniperus californica* (California juniper wooddland) Woodland Alliance
- *Juniperus grandis* (mountain juniper woodland) Woodland Alliance
- *Juniperus osteosperma* (Utah juniper woodland) Woodland Alliance

Mixed Conifer-Oak Woodland Formations: Typically consist of an overstory of oaks (canyon, interior live) intermixed with bigcone Douglas fir, incense cedar, and yellow pine of varying densities and compositions, depending on slope orientation, substrates, and fire history. Understory vegetation is usually dominated by chaparral species, such as scrub oak, manzanita, and wild lilac. This community occurs only in canyons in the higher elevations of the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Quercus chrysolepis* (canyon live oak forest) Forest Alliance

- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance
- *Quercus wislizenii* (interior live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance
- *Pinus coulteri* (Coulter pine woodland) Woodland Alliance
- *Pseudotsuga macrocarpa-Quercus chrysolepis* (bigcone Douglas-fir forest) Forest Alliance

Southern Cottonwood-Willow Riparian Forest: A broad-leafed winter-deciduous habitat that is dominated by Fremont cottonwood, in places mixed with willow or western sycamore. Southern cottonwood-willow riparian forest (or woodland) occurs within the SEA along segments of Little Rock Creek and Big Rock Creek, and rows of trees line the periphery of irrigated sites, lakes and ponds.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Populus fremontii* (Fremont cottonwood forest) Forest Alliance
- *Populus trichocarpa* (black cottonwood forest) Forest Alliance

Mesquite Bosque: Consists of dense thickets of mesquite trees, usually found where groundwater resources are sufficient in quantity and depth to support the trees. There are remnant patches of this habitat throughout the northern portion of the SEA, but most of the trees have declined or died as water tables have been drawn down and mesquite wood has been harvested. Several large, healthy stands of this habitat persist around the southern perimeter of the dry lakes.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Prosopis glandulosa* (mesquite bosque, mesquite thicket) Woodland Alliance

Freshwater Marsh: Develops in areas of still or slow-moving permanent freshwater. This community is dominated by the perennial, emergent cattail, which may reach heights of seven feet and grow in densities that form a closed canopy. Bulrush may also occur or be dominant within freshwater marsh. This formation occurs in scattered ponds and irrigation ditches throughout most of the SEA, but does form large, natural habitat areas at Piute Ponds and other pond sites around the dry lakes.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Phragmites australis* (common reed marshes) Herbaceous Alliance and Semi-Natural Stands
- *Schoenoplectus americanus* (American bulrush marsh) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Schoenoplectus californicus* (California bulrush marsh) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Typha (angustifolia, domingensis, latifolia)* (cattail marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Lemna (minor)* and relatives (duckweed blooms) Provisional Herbaceous Alliance

Alkali Marsh: Similar to the freshwater marsh described above, but with more salt-tolerant plant species present. Species associated with this community include cattail, saltgrass and common reed. Alkali marsh occurs in small segments along Amargosa Creek, Edwards and Piute ponds, and other wetland areas scattered along the San Andreas Fault Zone.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Sarcobatus vermiculatus* ([*Sarcobatus baileyi*] greasewood scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Schoenoplectus americanus* (American bulrush marsh) Herbaceous Alliance
- Sporobolus airoides (alkali cordgrass marsh) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Allenrolfea occidentalis* (iodine bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- Atriplex lentiformis (quailbush scrub) Shrubland Alliance

- *Suaeda moquinii* ([*Suaeda nigra*] bush seepweed scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Desert Alluvial Wash and Alluvial Fan Scrub: Generally consist of a mixture of shrubs, which colonize and persist within infrequently scoured and flooded terrain such as floodplains, alluvial plains, or along seasonal streams. It is sometimes known as floodplain sage scrub. The dominant shrub in most washes is scalebroom, but Great Basin sagebrush, rabbitbrush, sweetbush, and chaparral yucca also may occur in the habitat type. This vegetation type is common throughout the alluvial plains and washes in the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Lepidospartum squamatum* (scale broom scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Disturbed or Barren Areas: These are areas that either completely lack vegetation or are dominated by ruderal species. Ruderal vegetation typically found within the SEA includes non-native grasses and "weedy" herbaceous species, native and non-native, including doveweed, mustards, telegraph weed, Russian thistle, dock, yellow star thistle, tocalote, Australian saltbush, and cocklebur. Disturbed areas occur throughout the SEA on fallow agricultural sites, around active agriculture and residential developments, along paved roads, fire breaks, dirt access roads, trails, and other similarly disturbed areas.

Corresponding MCV Communities:

None at this time.

Wildlife

Wildlife within the SEA is moderately diverse and abundant, commensurate with the extensive acreage of natural open space and the relative diversity of habitat types. While a few wildlife species are entirely dependent upon a single vegetative community, the entire mosaic of vegetation communities within the SEA and adjoining areas constitutes a continuum of functional ecosystems supporting a wide variety of wildlife species, both within the SEA boundaries and as a part of the regional ecosystem.

Analysis of invertebrates is limited by a lack of specific data; however, the size of the SEA and diversity of habitats present is considered sufficient to encompass healthy populations of a large number of invertebrate species, in excess of 1,000 terrestrial species. The wetlands and aquatic habitats within the SEA support diverse faunas of freshwater and alkaline pool arthropods, including native fairy shrimp, brine flies, and tiger beetles. Insect orders are particularly well-represented taxonomically, with moderate levels of species endemism including *Coleoptera*, *Diptera*, Hymenoptera and nocturnal *Lepidoptera*.

Amphibians generally are not present within desert habitats, except where surface hydrology persists throughout the year or breeding season. A limited number of species may be abundant in desert riparian areas. The more moist woodland areas and canyon bottoms of the montane portions of the SEA support abundant populations of more common amphibians, and in Little Rock Creek, the southwestern arroyo toad. Several species of salamander may also be present within the mesic upper reaches of the creek drainages. Open desert scrub habitats generally support diverse reptile populations, and the overall herpetofauna of the SEA includes numerous lizard and snake species, along with western pond turtle and California desert tortoise.

Bird diversity within the SEA is related to habitat opportunities for year-round residents, seasonal residents, and migrating raptors and song birds. Open xeric scrub hosts a suite of birds typical of such sites over a wide range of deserts, while the transition zones in the southern portion of the SEA attract species with desert and montane habitat preferences. The most productive sites for birds are the riparian corridors and freshwater systems, which attract large numbers of migrants during spring and fall, and provide abundant cover and food resources for songbird breeding use. The desert riparian woodlands and rocky buttes provide nest sites for raptors, many of which forage widely over desert scrub and agricultural lands. The playa lakes and seasonal pools, along with the ponds near the dry lakes, attract large numbers of migrating shorebirds, waders and waterfowl, and provide important winter foraging and sheltering areas for waterfowl and birds of prey.

Wildlife species previously recorded, as well as those expected to occur, within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium of the Los Angeles County SEAs*. Sensitive wildlife species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources.

Wildlife Movement

The SEA extends from the Angeles National Forest to the playa lakes within Edwards Air Force Base, encompassing most of the two largest drainages exiting the northern slope of the San Gabriel Mountain range. The geographical features of the SEA serve as a major habitat linkage and movement corridor for all wildlife species within its vicinity and in an intergenerational sense, many of the plant species. Ecologically generalist species (mountain lion, bobcat, coyote, gray fox, etc.) have the ability to move across such vast areas and through changing habitat types. For such species, the SEA may serve as an important system for long-term and genetic exchange among populations. For smaller or less-mobile species or taxa, which are narrowly restricted in their habitat needs, the SEA can serve as a broad linkage zone, in which individual movement can take place during seasonal population dispersal or over generations. This provides essential genetic exchange within and between metapopulations. The two drainages, combined with the upland terrestrial Desert-Montane transect portion of the SEA, ensure linkage and direct movement areas for all of the wildlife species present within the County portion of the Antelope Valley.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition. When species are federally-listed as endangered or threatened, they often have federally-designated, geographically-specific "critical habitat areas." Critical habitat areas, after extensive study by experts, are judged to be essential to conservation and maintenance of the species. The desert tortoise and mountain yellow-

legged frog have critical habitat in this SEA. The arroyo toad has nearby critical habitat and may be present in the SEA.

Sensitive Plan Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. The sensitive communities include: mesquite bosque, Joshua tree woodland, desert grassland, southern willow scrub, southern cottonwood-willow woodland, fresh-water swamp, alkali meadow, Mojave riparian forest, and desert dry wash woodland. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section.

Sensitive Plant Species

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Mount Gleason Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja gleasoni*) RPR 1B.2
- Desert cymopterus (*Cymopterus deserticola*) RPR 1B.2
- Barstow woolly sunflower (*Eriophyllum mohavense)* RPR 1B.2
- Mason's neststraw (*Stylocline masonii*) RPR 1B.1
- Robinson's pepper grass (*Lepidium virginicum* var. *robinsonii,*[*Lepidium virginicum* ssp. *menziesii*]) RPR 1B.2
- Short-joint beavertail (*Opuntia basilaris* var. *brachyclada*) RPR 1B.2
- Robbins' nemacladus (*Nemacladus secundiflorus* var. *robbinsii),* RPR 2.2
- Sagebrush loeflingia (*Loeflingia squarrosa* var. *artemisiarum*) RPR 1B.2.2
- San Antonio milk-vetch (*Astragalus lentiginosus* var. *Antonius*) RPR 1B.3
- Big Bear Valley woollypod (*Astragalus leucolobus*) RPR 1B.2
- Lancaster milk-vetch (*Astragalus preussii* var*. laxiflorus*) RPR 1B.1
- Peirson's lupine (*Lupinus peirsonii*) RPR 1B.3
- Rock Creek broomrape (*Orobanche valida* ssp. valida) RPR 1B.2
- Red rock poppy (*Eschscholzia minutiflora* ssp. *Twisselmannii*) RPR 1B.2
- San Gabriel linanthus (*Linanthus concinnus*) RPR 1B.2
- Parry's spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *parry*) RPR 1B.
- Mojave spineflower (*Chorizanthe* spinosa) RPR 4.2
- Johnston's buckwheat (*Eriogonum microthecum* var. *johnstonii*) RPR 1B.3
- Alkali mariposa lily (*Calochortus striatus*) RPR 1B.2
- Parish's alkali grass (*Puccinellia parishii)* RPR 1B.1

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or are likely to be present within the SEA based on habitat requirements and known range attributes:

- Arroyo toad (*Anaxyrus californicus*) FE, SSC
- Desert tortoise (G*opherus* agassizii) FT, ST

- Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) ST
- Western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*) FT, ABC, SSC, BCC
- mountain plover (*Charadrius montanus*) FT, CSC
- Willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*) SE
- American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) SE
- Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) FT
- White faced ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) ST
- Bank swallow (*Riparia riparia*) ST
- Mohave ground squirrel (*Xerospermophilus mohavensis)* ST
- Nelson's antelope squirrel (*Ammospermophilus nelsoni*) ST

In addition, several other state-listed species of special concern have the potential to occur:

- Western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*) BLMS, SSC, FSS
- Mojave fringed-toed lizard (*Uma scoparia*) BLMS, SSC
- San Diego horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) BLMS, SSC, FSS
- Chuckwalla (*Sauromalus ater)* (unusual in the County)
- Two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*) BLMS, SSC, FSS
- Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperi*) CDFG Watch List
- Sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus*)
- Tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*) ABC, BLMS, SSC, BCC (nesting colony)
- Southern California (ashy) rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*) CDFG Watch List
- Bell's sage sparrow (*Amphispiza belli belli*) ABC, CDFG Watch List, BCC
- Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos)* CDF, CDFG Fully Protected, CDFG Watch List, BCC
- Short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*) ABC, SSC
- Long-eared owl (*Asio otus*) SSC
- Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) BLMS, SSC, BCC
- Redhead (*Aythya americana*) SSC
- California spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis occidentalis*) ABC, BLMS, SSC, FSS, BCC
- Ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*) CDFG Watch List, BCC
- Vaux's swift *(Chaetura vauxi)* SSC
- Black tern (*Chlidonias niger*) SSC
- Northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) SSC
- California gull (*Larus californicus*) CDFG Watch List
- Yellow warbler (*Dendroica petechia brewsteri*) SSC, BCC
- California horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris actia*) CDFG Watch List
- Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) CDFG Watch List
- Prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*) CDFG Watch List, BCC
- Yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*) SSC
- Least bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*) SSC, BCC
- Loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus)* SSC, BCC
- White-faced ibis (*Plegadis chihi*) CDFG Watch List
- Le Conte's thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*) ABC, SSC, BCC
- Gray vireo (*Vireo vicinior*) ABC, BLMS, SSC, BCC
- Yellow-headed blackbird (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) SSC
- Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) CDF, CDFG Watch List
- American white pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) SSC
- Double-crested cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) CDFG Watch List

- Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) BLMS, SSC, FSS, WBWG High Priority
- Pallid San Diego pocket mouse (*Chaetodipus fallax pallidus*) SSC
- Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus (Plecotus) t. townsendii*) BLMS, SSC, FSS, WBWG: High Priority
- Spotted bat (*Euderma maculatum*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High Priority
- California mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High Priority
- Pocketed free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops femorosaccus*) SSC, WBWG Medium Priority
- Big free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops macrotis)* SSC, WBWG High Priority
- Southern grasshopper mouse (*Onychomys torridus ramona*) SSC
- Tehachapi pocket mouse (*Perognathus alticolus inexpectatus*) SSC, FSS
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) SSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

Many areas designated as ETA characterize this SEA. Most of these ETAs are concentrated north of Avenue L and west of 140th Street where they are represented by large, contiguous agricultural fields with a checkerboard of active and fallow acreage. Similar conditions occur in a few scattered locations in the remainder of the SEA, but are not nearly as prevalent.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets several SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met described below.

CRITERIA ANALYSIS OF THE ANTELOPE VALLEY SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Met	Critical habitat for the only known Antelope Valley population of the federally-endangered arroyo toad is adjacent to Little Rock Reservoir, upstream in Little Rock Creek, and some may still be found downstream of the dam in the SEA. The SEA encompasses much of the County ranges of the federally-threatened California desert tortoise, including much of the County critical habitat for the tortoise. The state-threatened Mohave ground squirrel occurs throughout much of the SEA. The SEA includes some of the critical habitat of mountain yellow-legged frog in the South Fork of Big Rock Creek. It includes habitat designated in the Western Mojave Plan (WEMO) for the alkali mariposa lily, which is a rare lily of the desert floor.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that	Met	The mesquite bosque, sand sheet, rocky butte, desert riparian woodland, and alluvial fan sage scrub habitats are unique and regionally restricted biotic communities encompassed by the SEA. Desert species not, or rarely, found elsewhere in the

Criterion		Status	Justification
	are either unique or are restricted in distribution.		County, such as verdin, black-throated sparrow, Mojave rattlesnake, desert banded gecko, Leech's prionid borer, and mesquite borer, occur within these habitats. Additionally, the ponds and other riparian and wetland systems in the northern portion of the SEA support numerous water birds and raptors not found elsewhere in the County.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	The desert alluvial fan sage scrub, Joshua tree woodland, desert riparian woodland, mesquite bosque, alkali meadow/marsh, desert freshwater marsh, playa lake and seasonal pool habitats are located within, are unique to, or best represented within, the SEA.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	The freshwater habitats within and around Rosamond, Buckhorn and Rogers dry lake basins have large concentrations of migratory and resident waterfowl and birds of prey, providing them with essential seasonal and permanent resources. The rocky desert buttes are unique roosting, sheltering, perching and nesting sites for birds of prey and bats. This SEA is centered on migratory routes for both plants and animals along principal desert washes and buttes that connect the mountains to freshwater playas.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	The mesquite bosque that is located within the SEA is clearly at an extreme of its geographical range, along with its associated biota, such as the mesquite borer. Edge populations usually represent an unusual genetic variation in a population or community, and therefore meet the criterion of scientific interest as well as the criterion of a population at the extreme physical/geographical limit of its range.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	The SEA encompasses some of the most biotically intact acreages of Joshua tree woodland, desert riparian woodland, and desert alluvial fan sage scrub remaining in the County. Mesquite was formerly widely distributed in the Antelope Valley, but due to harvesting, is now limited to a few protected areas, such as the Edwards Air Force Base.

In conclusion, the area described is an SEA because it contains: A) the habitat of core populations of endangered and threatened plant and animal species; B-C) biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution in the County and regionally; D) concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds, which are limited in availability in the County; E) populations of scientific interest at the edge of their range

including the desert tortoise, the mesquite bosque, and the Mojave ground squirrel; and F) areas that provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of original natural biotic communities in the County.

4. Ballona Wetlands SEA

Location

General

The Ballona Wetlands Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located south of Marina Del Rey, north of Playa Del Rey, and west and northwest of Playa Vista. One extending arm reaches north to the State Route-90 overcrossing and another reaches south to include the restored freshwater marsh adjacent to the Playa Del Rey and Playa Vista districts of the City of Los Angeles. The Ballona Wetlands are a remnant of what was the County's largest coastal lagoon. The Ballona watershed covers over 130 square miles, and the lagoon area was so large (about 11-12 square miles) that it included freshwater peripheries. Incorporated in the lagoon complex were 10 kinds of habitat that ranged from coastal saltwater marsh to grassy prairie to oak and willow woodland adjacent to freshwater areas. The lagoon connected via Ballona Creek that sometimes was the Los Angeles River, to La Cienega, a large swampy area (about 13-14 square miles) that was north and east of the Baldwin Hills. The SEA lies at the base of the Ballona Creek watershed and includes part of the Ballona Creek flood control channel that drains the total of 130 square miles, from what is now a highly urbanized area. While the Ballona Wetlands ecosystem has been substantially degraded over the years due to human activity and urban development, it is still a rich ecological system that bridges the gap between aquatic marine and freshwater land environments. It provides crucial habitat for hundreds of plant and animal species.

The SEA is in part of the California Audubon-designated Ballona Wetlands State Important Bird Area (IBA). The IBA is more extensive than the SEA, and includes all of the Marina Del Rey waterways, some of the Strand Beach to the south, Del Rey Lagoon and Ballona Lagoon, and extends up the Bluff Creek (source creek for the restored freshwater marsh) at the base of the south Ballona bluff as far as Centinela Avenue. This area is very important to avian life and has a great diversity of bird types ranging from those associated with salt water marsh to those associated with freshwater marsh to raptors that feed over grasslands.

The SEA is located on unincorporated land in the community of Marina Del Rey north of the Ballona Creek Channel and in the City of Los Angeles south of the Ballona Creek Channel. It is within the United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Venice Quadrangle.

General Boundary and Resources Description

The SEA is surrounded by urban and residential uses. The SEA is bordered by Fiji Way in Marina Del Rey on the northeast, and has an arm that extends northeast to the State Route-90 overcrossing. This arm includes an undeveloped area of mixed native and non-native shrubs and grasses, and is bordered by Culver Boulevard on its south edge. The north boundary crosses the Ballona Creek Channel directly south of the end of Fiji Way, and goes west on the south side of Ballona Creek, which delineates the SEA's western half. The boundary turns southward, then eastward at the development in Playa Del Rey. The boundary goes north to Jefferson Boulevard along a gas line road, and then continues eastward on

the north side of Jefferson Boulevard, as far as the area that has been restored as a freshwater marsh. The boundary turns southward and eastward to enclose the freshwater marsh. At the boundary of the freshwater marsh along Lincoln Boulevard, the boundary follows the west side of Lincoln Boulevard crossing Jefferson Boulevard, Ballona Wetlands, and connecting to the south side of the north arm where it crosses Culver Boulevard. Most of the area is a mixture of native and non-native shrubs and grasses, with a strong influence of brackish conditions. The northern side of the Ballona Creek Channel was a tidal mud flat in the original Ballona Lagoon that received a large amount of the dredge spoil when Marina Del Rey was created. However, there is enough natural forage in the wetlands to sustain a breeding colony of great blue herons and a breeding colony of black-crowned night herons in the trees of nearby Marina Del Rey.

Ballona Wetlands is one of three remaining remnants of salt marsh in the County (the other two are Malibu Lagoon in the Santa Monica Mountains SEA and the Cerritos Channel salt marsh in the Alamitos Bay SEA). This type of habitat is one of the most productive in the world, and is used as a breeding ground by many marine and terrestrial organisms. Belding's savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi*), which is a state-recognized endangered species, resides in the pickleweed flats on the south side of the Ballona Wetlands. The California least tern (*Sternula antillarum browni*) breeds in the sandy areas around Ballona Lagoon and on Venice Beach, and is recognized as an endangered species by the state and federal governments. The terns forage in the waterways that are included in the SEA.

The salt marsh, Ballona Creek Channel, Ballona Lagoon, and Del Rey Lagoon form an important complex of habitats that are heavily used by migratory birds. The area is recognized by ornithologists and bird watchers throughout the area for its rich birdlife during the spring and fall migrations, and during the winter season. This type of heavy use is common in salt marsh habitat, and has been made more intense by the loss of habitat in Marina Del Rey, and throughout most of Southern California. This forces these birds to concentrate in the few remaining areas. Loss of this habitat type has led to reductions in the numbers of these birds present along the coast.

The salt marsh and lagoon at Ballona Creek are heavily used by academic institutions and conservation groups for educational field trips. This area serves as a type specimen of salt marsh habitat, and is the only easily accessible example in the County.

Vegetation

There are two categories of habitat in the SEA: wetland, and upland altered or created by filling and grading. The wetland is characterized by coastal salt marsh and freshwater marsh. The upland is represented by a disturbed coastal sage scrub, non-native annual grassland, and coastal bluff and dune scrub. Sensitive plant species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Descriptions and general locations of the each plant community present within the SEA are given below.

Coastal Salt Marsh: Consists of salt tolerant plants that are mostly low-growing herbaceous perennials found on the borders of marine salt water bodies. The duration and extent of tidal inundation or

influence causes a graduation of various species prevalence within this community. In the Ballona Wetlands this includes the areas where pickleweed (*Salicornia pacifica*) is a dominant species and depending on the conditions other plants such as California cordgrass (*Spartina foliosa*), salt grass (*Distichlis spicata*), alkali heath (*Frankenia salina*) and spearscale (*Atriplex prostrata*) can be found.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Sarcocornia* [*Salicornia*] *pacifica* (*Salicornia depressa*) (pickleweed mats) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Bolboschoenus maritimus* (salt marsh bulrush marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Distichlis spicata* (salt grass flats) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Spartina foliosa* (California cordgrass marsh) Herbaceous Alliance

Intertidal Flat: Brackish coastal wetlands of low-lying basins of high evaporation and infrequent inputs of freshwater with low-growing salt tolerant plants.

Corresponding MCV Communities:

- *Ruppia* (*cirrhosa*, *maritima*) (ditch-grass or widgeon-grass mats) Aquatic Herbaceous Alliance

Freshwater Marsh: Develops in areas of still or slow-moving permanent freshwater. In the SEA, this community may be dominated by perennial, emergent cattails (*Typha* spp.), which reach a height of four to five meters and often form a closed canopy. Bulrushes (*Schoenoplectus* spp.) are dominant below the cattail canopy. Freshwater marsh is relatively uncommon; it occurs in small patches in natural or created sinks with water sources.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Lepidium latifolium* (perennial pepper weed patches) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Schoenoplectus californicus* (California bulrush marsh) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Typha* (*angustifolia*, *domingenis*, *latifolia*) (cattail marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Sarcocornia* [*Salicornia*] *pacifica* (*Salicornia depressa*) (pickleweed mats) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Juncus articus* (var. *balticus, mexicanus*) [*Juncus balticus* ssp. *ater*, *J. mexicanus*] (Baltic and Mexican rush marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Juncus effusus* (soft rush marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Lemna (minor)* and relatives (duckweed blooms) Provisional Herbaceous Alliance

Coastal Sage Scrub: Occurs in Southern California where moisture is available in the upper horizons during the winter-spring growing season. Plants that are adapted to these conditions are a mixture of herbaceous and weakly woody, shrubby and drought deciduous types. This includes species such as California sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*) and laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*).

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica* (California sagebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Salvia mellifera* (California sagebrush-black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Encelia californica* (California brittle bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia mellifera* (black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance

- *Eriogonum cinereum* (ashy buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Hazardia squarrosa* (sawtooth golden bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lotus scoparius* [*Acmispon glaber*] (deer weed scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lupinus albifrons* (silver bush lupine scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Coastal Bluff and Dune Scrub: A remnant of the El Segundo Dune system that occupied coastal areas along much of the Santa Monica Bay. The system consists of fine, sandy soil that dries rapidly. Plants typical of the dune scrub include dune buckwheat (*Eriogonum parvifolium*), rattle pod (*Astragalus trichopodus var. lonchus*), bladderpod (*Peritoma arborea*), deer weed (*Acmispon glaber*), sawtooth goldenbush (*Hazardia squarrosa*), and California sunflower (*Helianthus californicus*)

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Baccharis pilularis* (coyote brush scub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lupinus arboreus* (yellow bush lupine scrub) Shrubland Alliance and Semi-Natural Shrubland Stands
- *Lupinus chamissonis-Ericameria ericoides* (silver dune lupine–mock heather scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Non-native Grassland Communities: Consist of low, herbaceous vegetation that are dominated by invasive grasses that are primarily of Mediterranean origin, but can also harbor native forbs and bulbs, as well as naturalized annual forbs. Species found within this community include wild oat (*Avena fatua*), slender oat (*Avena barbata*), red brome (*Bromus madritensis ssp. rubens*), ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), and herbs such as black mustard (*Brassica nigra*) and wild radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum*). This community can be found throughout the SEA, but are less common in the moist soils found in and close to the salt and fresh water marshes.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Avena* (*barbata*, *fatua*) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Brassica* (*nigra*) and other mustards Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus* (*diandrus*, *hordeaceus*)-*Brachypodium distachyon* Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus rubens-Schismus (arabicus, barbatus)* ([*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*] red brome or Mediterranean grass grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Centaurea (solstitialis, melitensis)* (yellow star-thistle fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Lolium perenne* [*Festuca perennis*] (perennial rye grass fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands

Wildlife

Coastal salt marshes are very productive habitats that are used for foraging and breeding grounds, for both permanent resident and migrating wildlife species. The SEA is an important site due to the rarity of this type of habitat, which was once more extensive in Southern California.

Studies in the last 30 years in the vicinity have identified a total of 44 species of fishes. Types found include arrow goby (*Clevelandia ios*), California halibut (*Paralichthys californicus*), cheekspot goby (*Ilypnus gilberti*), diamond turbot (*Hypsopsetta guttulata*), queenfish (*Seriphus politus*), shadow goby (*Acentrogobius nebulosus*), shiner perch (*Cymatogaster aggregata*), topsmelt (*Atherinops affinis*),

longjaw mudsucker (*Gillichthys mirabilis*), Pacific staghorn sculpin (*Leptocottus armatus*), and yellowfin goby (*Acanthogobius flavimanus*).

Many native species of reptiles and amphibians have been found in the SEA. These include common kingsnake, San Diego gopher snake (*Pituophis catenifer annectens*), western side-blotched lizard (*Uta stansburiana elegans*), San Diego alligator lizard (*Elgaria multicarinata webbii*), Great Basin fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis longipes*), California slender salamander (*Batrachoseps attenuatus*) and California legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra*). Baja California chorus frog (*Pseudacris hypochondriaca*) and California toad (*Anaxyrus halophilus*) are very common in season. No invasive species of amphibians or reptiles have been reported in the SEA.

Native species of mammals found included western harvest mouse (*Reithrodontomys megalotis* (*western harvest mouse*), Botta's pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*), desert cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*), striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), California ground squirrel (*Spermophilus beecheyi*), and the sensitive species south coast marsh vole (*Microtus californicus stephensi*). Invasive species found include house mouse (*Mus musculus*), black rat (*Rattus rattus*), Norway rat (*R. norvegicus*), domestic cat (*Felis domesticus*), Virginia opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*), and domestic dog (*Canis familiaris*). Low populations of small mammals are likely to be due to depredation by introduced red foxes, which are an immediate threat to the continued viability of the Ballona ecosystem.

The Ballona Wetlands provide habitat for a variety of bird species attracted to the few coastal saltmarshes that remain in coastal Southern California. Shallow water habitat for wading birds and ducks occurs in the northwestern portion of the SEA. No deep water is present for diving ducks and other birds that dive from the surface for fish. Foraging habitat for most raptors occurs in the western portion. Many bird species forage in the SEA, and the wetlands are used during migration and nesting. A resident population of Belding's savannah sparrow, which is a state-endangered species, was present in 2006 and the state and federally-endangered California least tern and fully protected American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) have been known to forage in this SEA. In 2010, least Bell's vireos (*least Bell's vireo*) successfully nested at the freshwater marsh, and many migrants have been observed there.

Sensitive wildlife species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Wildlife Movement

The SEA is an important stopover for many migratory birds traveling the Pacific Flyway migration route. For many birds this area, it is important because it provides a variety of salt-water, estuarine, mudflat and freshwater marsh habitats. It offers many fishes and invertebrates an opportunity to establish populations capable of supporting further colonization to expand their range. The area does not fall within any identified terrestrial movement routes for wildlife.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition.

Sensitive Plant Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. The SEA is configured to encompass regionally significant communities, which include pickleweed mats, salt marsh bulrush marshes, California cordgrass marsh, ditch-grass or widgeon-grass mats, California brittle bush scrub, ashy buckwheat scrub, sawtooth golden bush scrub, and silver dune lupine–mock heather scrub. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section.

Changes to the classification system mentioned earlier in some cases divides plant communities into many possible vegetation alliance communities, not all of which may be considered sensitive. For this SEA description, previously listed communities with a least one sensitive alliance in the new format have been listed.

Sensitive Plant Species

The statuses of rare plants are hierarchically categorized by the CNPS using a rank and decimal system. The initial category level of Rare Plant Rank is indicated by the ranks 1A (presumed extinct in California), 1B (rare or endangered in California and elsewhere), 2 (rare or endangered in California but more common elsewhere), 3 (more information needed, a review list), and 4 (limited distribution). In cases where the CNPS has further identified the specific threat to the species, a decimal or Threat Code is added: .1 (seriously endangered in California), .2 (fairly endangered in California), or .3 (not very endangered in California).

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Aphanisma (*Aphanisma blitoides*) RPR 1B.1
- Marsh sandwort (*Arenaria paludicola*) RPR FE, SE, 1B.1
- Ventura marsh milk-vetch (*Astragalus pycnostachyus var. lanosissimus*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- South Coast saltscale (*Atriplex pacifica*) RPR 1B.2
- Parish's brittlescale (*Atriplex parishii*) RPR 1B.1

- Davidson's saltscale (*Atriplex serenana var. davidsonii*) RPR 1B.2
- Southern tarplant (*Centromadia parryi ssp. australis*) RPR 1B.1
- Orcutt's pincushion (*Chaenactis glabriuscula var. orcuttiana*) RPR 1B.1
- Coastal goosefoot (*Chenopodium littoreum*) RPR 1B.2
- Salt marsh bird's-beak (*Chloropyron maritimum ssp. maritimum*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.2
- Beach spectaclepod (*Dithyrea maritima*) ST, RPR 1B.1
- Los Angeles sunflower (*Helianthus nuttallii ssp. parishii*) RPR 1A
- Coulter's goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata ssp. coulteri*) RPR 1B.1
- Mud nama (*Nama stenocarpum*) RPR 2.2
- Gambel's water cress (*Nasturtium gambelii*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Coast woolly-heads (*Nemacaulis denudata var. denudata*) RPR 1B.2
- Ballona cinquefoil (*Potentilla multijuga*) RPR 1A
- Estuary seablite (*Suaeda esteroa*) RPR 1B.2

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or are likely to be present within the SEA based on habitat requirements and known range attributes:

- Mimic tryonia (*Tryonia imitator*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Wandering skipper (*Panoquina errans*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Silvery legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra pulchra*) FSS, SSC
- Coastal whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*) CDFG Special Animals List
- San Bernardino ringneck snake (*Diadophis punctatus modestus*) FSS
- Western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*) BCC, BLMS, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) BCC, BLMS, SSC
- Western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*) FT, BCC, SSC, ABC, AWL, USBC
- California black rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis coturniculus*) BCC, ST, CDFG Fully Protected, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Belding's savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi*) SE
- California least tern (*Sternula antillarum browni*) FE, SE, CDFG Fully Protected, USBC, ABC
- Vireo bellii pusillus (*least Bell's vireo*) FE, SE, ABC
- South coast marsh vole (*Microtus californicus stephensi*) SSC
- Pacific pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris pacificus*) FE, SSC
- Southern California saltmarsh shrew (*Sorex ornatus salicornicus*) SSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

There are no ETAs designated within this SEA.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets several SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met is described below.

Criteria Analysis of the Ballona Wetlands SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Met	Least Bell's vireos are beginning to use the restored freshwater marsh component for breeding. Given time, this could become one of the important breeding areas for them in the coastal area. Belding's savannah sparrow lives in the salt marsh savannah. Least terns breed nearby and forage year round in the shoal water areas of the SEA.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	There are three remaining salt marsh areas in the County: Cerritos Marsh in the Alamitos Bay SEA, Malibu Lagoon, and the SEA. In addition, there is a restored freshwater marsh on the periphery of Ballona Wetlands. The union of these two habitats is very rare in Southern California.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution	Met	There are three remaining salt marsh areas in the County: Malibu Lagoon, the marsh in Alamitos Bay SEA, and SEA. In addition there is a restored freshwater marsh on the periphery of Ballona Wetlands. Salt marsh coupled with freshwater marsh, is very rare in the County. There is no other such representation in the County.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	Endangered least Bell's vireos are using the freshwater marsh for breeding—they do not commonly occur in saltwater marshes, but were probably common on the peripheries in the freshwater portions. This restoration returns some of the former diversity and adds an important area for breeding. Many commercially valuable marine fishes start life in salt and estuarine marsh areas. The Ballona Wetlands are an important stopover point for migrations on the Pacific Flyway.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	The union of the salt marsh and freshwater marsh habitats has no other representation in the County and is therefore of great scientific interest. As the only easily accessible saltwater marsh, the Ballona Wetlands have great educational value. This kind of ecotone is usually in very short supply, and will always be an extreme kind of physical habitat, a meeting

			point for the coastal strand, the brackish area of the marsh, and the freshwater area of the upland.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Not Met	Without implementation of restoration activities, this SEA does not provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: A) habitat that hosts breeding for the endangered least Bell's vireo; B-C) biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are unique and are restricted in distribution in the County and regionally; and D) concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, and migrating grounds, which are limited in availability in the County; and E) biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community

(pg 101: 5. Cruzan Mesa Vernal Pools SEA)

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5. Cruzan Mesa Vernal Pools SEA

Location

General

The Cruzan Mesa Vernal Pools Significant Ecological Area (SEA) lies north of the Santa Clara River southeast of Bouquet Canyon. The SEA boundaries encompass the watershed and drainages of the Cruzan Mesa and Plum Canyon vernal pools, which are considered as a single ecosystem within the SEA. Vernal pools are a rare habitat. They are floored by clay or other substrate that retain water of spring rains for a period of months. The pool dries primarily by evaporation. The fauna and flora are adapted to this regimen, which often forms propagules that can last through years of dessication. The pools are ephemeral, and may not fill every year. The fauna may be specific to an area of pools. Most biota spread from pool to pool is carried in mud, which adhere to the feet of birds and other animals that visit the pools.

The SEA is located within the unincorporated area of the County and lies entirely within the United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Mint Canyon Quadrangle.

General Boundary and Resources Description

The SEA boundaries generally follow sub-watershed boundaries, which extends beyond the sub-watershed boundary into areas to encompass vegetation, such as coastal sage scrub. The vernal pools in the northwest segment of the SEA are bounded in part by a sub-watershed boundary, but are primarily based on land formations that would adversely affect the vernal pools if altered to a great degree. This segment encompasses the vernal pool upland areas that contribute to the biological function of the vernal pool ecosystem. This SEA area includes most of the local federally-designated critical habitat for the threatened vernal pool plant, spreading navarretia (*Navarretia fossalis*, FT).

The SEA includes mesas, canyons and interior slopes, with Plum Canyon Creek running east-west through the southern portion of the SEA. The extent of the SEA encompasses the watershed, which supports both regionally unique vernal pools, including their immediate watersheds and the corridor between them. Plum Canyon forms the major drainage running east-west through the southern portion of the SEA, which drains west toward Bouquet Canyon. Uplands within the SEA are comprised of slopes and canyons, which support coastal sage scrub or scrub-chaparral vegetation. The Cruzan Mesa vernal pool complex lies within an elevated, topographically enclosed basin atop an eroded foothill between Mint and Bouquet canyons. Plum Canyon vernal pool, which is situated in a landslide depression on a hillside terrace, is smaller than the Cruzan Mesa pools, but possesses the same essential vernal pool characteristics as the larger system, and the two areas together form an ecologically functional unit.

The seasonally wet vernal pools and surrounding open coastal sage scrub and chaparral slopes support migrant and resident birds, other native sage scrub vertebrate species, and a number of sensitive taxa, including Riverside fairy shrimp, western spadefoot toad, ashy rufous-crowned sparrow, Bell's sparrow, and possibly coastal California gnatcatcher. The steep cliffs that surround the Cruzan Mesa vernal pools, especially along the southeast and north margins, provide protected sites for perching, roosting and nesting by a variety of birds of prey, including great horned owl, barn owl, red-tailed hawk, prairie falcon, and golden eagle. The Plum Canyon vernal pool is hidden from view from the Plum Canyon roadway, and receives little human attention. Trash dumping, shooting and off-road vehicle activities have occurred within a few meters of the margin of the pool basin, but the pool shows only limited evidence of human intrusion.

Vegetation

The SEA encompasses formations of the following: vernal pool aquatics and emergent species; coastal sage scrub; mainland cherry forest; chaparral; and ruderal non-native grassland. Dirt roads inside the SEA are bordered by non-native grassland and other ruderal plant species. The vernal pool margins support limited densities of native grasses, but these do not form separate communities and are included within the vernal pool floral matrix. Plant species observed or recorded in previous documentation within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium of the Los Angeles County SEAs.* Sensitive plant species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Vernal Pool Sites: Occur in several different areas within the SEA where unique sub-surface conditions of shallow layers of less permeable horizons allow for seasonal accumulations of freshwater. True vernal pools, which are rare in Southern California and extremely rare in the County, form seasonally in shallow, closed basins, usually where a lens of heavy clay soil holds surface water following rainfall events. Agency-listed sensitive plant species occurring within both of the SEA pool systems include California Orcutt grass and spreading navarretia, along with other vernal pool endemics such as hairgrass, woolly-marbles, waterwort, *Mimulus latidens*, and water-starwort.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Alopecurus geniculatus* (water foxtail meadows) Provisional Herbaceous Alliance
- *Eleocharis macrostachya* (pale spike rush marshes) Herbaceous Alliance

- *Juncus arcticus (var. balticus, mexicanus* [*Juncus balticus* ssp. *ater, Juncus mexicanus*]) (Baltic and Mexican rush marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Juncus (oxymeris, xiphioides)* (iris-leaf rush seeps) Provisional Herbaceous Alliance

Coastal Sage Scrub: Occurs throughout the slopes and ridges of most of the SEA, in places intermixed with chaparral elements. To some extent, the mosaic of coastal sage and chaparral reflects the fire history of any given portion of the site, with scrub formations generally occurring on sites that have recently burned. However, some slopes within upper Plum and Mint canyons, where no fires have occurred for over 30 years, still support "pure" coastal sage scrub, which suggests that the formation is a climax community on those sites.

Dominant species on most slopes within the SEA are California sagebrush, woolly blue-curls, chaparral yucca, black sage, Acton encelia, white sage, and chamise. A variety of less dominant associated species is also present, including lance-leaved live-forever, common tarplant, California buckwheat, beavertail cactus, turkish rugging, and Peirson's morning-glory. Disced or cleared areas have regrown with a dense cover of oats and bromes, California poppy, fiddleneck, several species of lupines, popcorn flower, comb-bur and other disturbance-favored native annuals. Less frequently disturbed portions of the upper watershed basin support dense stands of chamise. California scrub oak chaparral with yerba santa is abundant along dirt roads and other disturbed areas. Where ground-water levels permit, giant rye grass, Mexican elderberry, acourtia, redberry, toyon, holly-leaved cherry, Fremont cottonwood, western sycamore, and arroyo willow occur in the lower portions of canyons and along Plum Canyon Creek.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica* (California sagebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Salvia mellifera* (California sagebrush-black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Dendromecon rigida* (bush poppy scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Isocoma menziesii* (Menzie's golden bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia apiana* (white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia mellifera* (black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ericameria linearifolia* (narrowleaf goldenbush scrub) Provisional Shrubland Alliance
- *Lotus scoparius* ([*Acmispon glaber*] deer weed scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lupinus albifrons* (silver bush lupine scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Malacothamnus fasciculatus* (bush mallow scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Non-Native Grassland: Generally consists of invasive annual grasses, which are primarily of Mediterranean origin. It has become the dominant ground cover on disturbed sites throughout the western U.S. Common species within this "community," which is a ruderal formation and not a true habitat or community, include oats, bromes, foxtail chess, and other grasses, along with wild mustards, yellow star thistle, wire lettuce, sow thistle, milk thistle, and other disturbance-favored "weedy" taxa. Non-native ruderal formations occur over most of the Cruzan Mesa around the vernal pools, where coastal sage scrub has been disturbed or removed, in small strips and patches through the SEA—primarily along disturbed dirt road edges and where grading or other substrate disturbances have not regrown to native species.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Avena (barbata, fatua)* (wild oats grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Brassica (nigra) and other mustards* (upland mustards) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus (diandrus, hordeaceus)-Brachypodium distachyon* (annual brome grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus rubens-Schismus (arabicus, barbatus)* ([*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*] red brome or Mediterranean grass grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Centaurea (solstitialis, melitensis)* (yellow star-thistle fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Lolium perenne* ([*Festuca perennis*] perennial rye grass fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands

Mainland Cherry Forest: Is typically composed of tall stands of holly leaf cherry on rocky, dry slopes. Within the SEA, this community is not well-developed and intermingles with chaparral. It can be found in a single narrow patch on a slope in the southwestern portion of the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Prunus ilicifolia* (holly leaf cherry chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Prunus virginiana* (choke cherry thickets) Provisional Shrubland Alliance

Wildlife

Wildlife diversity and abundance within the SEA are moderate, and commensurate with the relative homogeneity of the natural open space habitat types. Wildlife within much of the SEA is comprised of species that typically occur within coastal sage scrub. Birds of prey frequently forage over the pools and open grasslands, which form following the seasonal drying of the surface water. The Cruzan Mesa and Plum Canyon vernal pools provide rare surface water habitat for wildlife in an otherwise semi-arid scrub region, and the ponds attract moderate numbers and diversity of migratory waterfowl. The peripheral areas of coastal sage scrub around the vernal pools provide important shelter, terrestrial refugia, ecotonal and edge habitat for wildlife. A number of local wildlife species are more-or-less dependent upon coastal sage scrub or scrub-chaparral formations, while other species are strictly limited to seasonal pool habitats. The two vernal pool systems in the SEA, along with the coastal sage scrub-chaparral uplands surrounding and connecting them, constitute a single, integrated functional ecosystem for wildlife species within the SEA boundaries, as well as a part of the larger regional scrub-chaparral ecosystem.

While the analysis of invertebrates on any particular site is usually limited by a lack of specific data, containing only two primary natural habitat types within the SEA ensures that there is sufficient acreage to support healthy populations of present invertebrate species, which could be several hundred terrestrial species. The vernal pools, when ponded, form aquatic habitats for a moderately diverse fauna of freshwater arthropods and other invertebrates, including native fairy shrimp, aquatic flies, diving beetles, water scavengers, ostracods, and snails. At present, one ground beetle species (insect order *Coleoptera*), which is endemic to vernal pools, is known from the SEA.

Generally, amphibians are relatively common in coastal sage scrub habitats, with persistent surface hydrology during the breeding season. The SEA supports abundant populations of Pacific chorus frog,

western toad, and western spadefoot toad. At least two species of salamander may also be present within more mesic portions of the surrounding canyons and chaparral.

Reptile populations expected to be within the SEA include numerous lizard species, including San Diego banded gecko, yucca night lizard, side-blotched lizard, western fence lizard, western skink, San Diego alligator lizard, coastal western whiptail, coastal horned lizard, and silvery legless lizard. A robust snake fauna is also expected to be within the SEA, including western blind snake, coachwhip ("red racer"), chaparral whipsnake, coastal patch-nosed snake, California rosy boa, San Diego gopher snake, California kingsnake, California mountain kingsnake, night snake, and Southern Pacific rattlesnake.

Bird diversity within the SEA is related to habitat opportunities for year-round residents, seasonal residents, migrating raptors and song birds. Open coastal sage scrub hosts a suite of birds that are typical of such sites, at lower elevations over most of the coastal slopes of Southern California. The most productive sites for resident coastal sage scrub and chaparral birds are around riparian and freshwater systems, which also attract large numbers of migrants during spring and fall. The vernal pools attract moderate numbers of migrating waders and waterfowl, and provide important winter foraging areas for resident and migratory birds of prey. Coastal sage and chaparral birds—resident or breeding within the SEA—include ashy rufous-crowned sparrow, Bell's sage sparrow, black-chinned sparrow, lark sparrow, California thrasher, spotted towhee, California towhee, phainopepla, northern mockingbird, lazuli bunting, and several species of hummingbird. In addition, species (western meadowlark, California horned lark, and perhaps also savannah and grasshopper sparrows) nest and forage in the grassland and ruderal habitats surrounding the vernal pools. Birds of prey that have been observed around the vernal pools include red-tailed hawk, northern harrier, prairie falcon, and golden eagle. Barn owl, great horned owl, and common raven nest in the cliffs surrounding Cruzan Mesa.

Wildlife species previously recorded, as well as those expected to occur, within the study area are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium* of the *Los Angeles County SEAs*. Sensitive wildlife species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Wildlife Movement

The vernal pools situated within this SEA serve as isolated, high-quality, habitat linkage sites for migratory waterfowl. The vernal pools teem with arthropod and amphibian activity, and provide essential feeding grounds for long-distance migrants, as well as for resident species of reptiles, birds and mammals. The ponds do not lie within any identified terrestrial movement routes for wildlife, but may serve as important seasonal watering sites for species moving through and across the Plum Canyon divide between Mint and Bouquet canyons. The Plum Canyon stream channel undoubtedly serves as a movement pathway for more mobile species of terrestrial mammals, but it no longer links any larger habitat areas directly due to land conversion in Mint and Bouquet canyons.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is

due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition.

The SEA is configured to encompass the regionally significant vernal pools and coastal sage scrub watershed, which supports them. Sensitive Holland plant communities within the SEA include vernal marsh, fresh-water swamp, coastal sage chaparral shrub; and in Plum Canyon, mainland cherry forest. We list here all Holland plant communities with the alliances in the new classification system. The related alliances, even if not sensitive, may be critical to support the sensitive ones.

Sensitive Plant Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. The SEA is configured to encompass regionally significant communities, which include mainland cherry forest in Plum Canyon, vernal marsh, and fresh-water swamp. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section. When species are federally-listed as endangered or threatened, they often have federally-designated, geographically-specific "critical habitat areas." Critical habitat areas, after extensive study by experts, are judged to be essential to the conservation and maintenance of the species. The spreading navarretia has critical habitat areas that are coincident with the SEA.

Sensitive Plant Species

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- California Orcutt grass (*Orcuttia californica*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Spreading navarretia (*Navarretia fossalis)* FT, RPR 1B.1
- Slender-horned spineflower *(Dodecahema leptoceras)* FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Parry's spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var*. parryi)* RPR 1B.1
- Orcutt's broadiaea (*Brodiaea orcuttii*) RPR 1B.1
- Slender mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var*. gracilis*) RPR 1B.2
- Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae)* RPR 1B.2

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or are likely to be present within the SEA based on habitat requirements and known range attributes:

- Vernal pool fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*) FT
- San Diego fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta sandiegonensis*) FE

- Riverside fairy shrimp (*Streptocephalus wootonii*) FE
- Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) ST, ABC, FSS, BCC
- Western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*) FC, FSS, BCC
- American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) FD, SD CDF, CDFG Fully Protected, BCC
- Coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) FT, ABC, SSC

In addition, there are animals recognized as state-listed species of concern that have the potential to occur:

- Western spadefoot (*Spea hammondii*) BLMS, SSC
- Coastal horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) BLMS, SSC, FSS
- Coast patch-nosed snake (*Salvadora hexalepis virgultea*) SSC
- Southern California (ashy) rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*) CDFG Watch List
- Two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*) BLMS, SSC, FSS
- Bell's sage sparrow (*Amphispiza belli belli*) ABC, CDFG Watch List, BCC
- Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos)* CDF, CDFG Fully Protected, CDFG Watch List, BCC
- Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) BLMS, SSC, BCC
- Northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) SSC
- Prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*) CDFG Watch List, BCC
- Loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) SSC, BCC
- San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus bennettii*) SSC
- San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*) SSC
- Southern grasshopper mouse (*Onychomys torridus ramona*) SSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

There are no ETAs designated within this SEA.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets several SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met described below.

CRITERIA ANALYSIS OF THE CRUZAN MESA VERNAL POOLS SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Met	The only known County populations of the federally-endangered Riverside fairy shrimp, and the state and federally-endangered California Orcutt grass, are found in the vernal pools within the SEA. The federally-threatened plant, spreading navarretia, also occurs in these pools, and the pools and much of the SEA are designated critical habitat for this plant.
	On a regional basis, biotic		The Cruzan Mesa and Plum Canyon vernal pools are

Criterion		Status	Justification
B)	communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	regionally unique biotic communities with several plants found only in such habitat types. The pools support the Riverside fairy shrimp, western spadefoot toad, and at least one vernal pool endemic ground beetle.
C)	Within County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	The Cruzan Mesa and Plum Canyon vernal pools are unique biotic communities within the County, with several plants only found in such habitat types. The pools support the Riverside fairy shrimp, western spadefoot toad, and at least one vernal pool endemic ground beetle species.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	The vernal pools serve as concentrated breeding areas for several species of amphibians, including the sensitive western spadefoot toad. They also attract a diversity of waterfowl seasonally—chiefly species migrating through the area—which use the pools for resting and feeding. While other open water systems attract and support waterfowl, the vernal pools are located in remote, upland sites, away from other freshwater features.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Not met	Although the SEA does not contain biotic resources that are clearly an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community (and therefore does not meet this criterion), it is of scientific interest due the extreme rarity of vernal pool communities, especially in the County.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	Protection and sensitive management of the Cruzan Mesa and Plum Canyon vernal pools would preserve one of the few examples of such habitat type in the County.

The SEA meets several designation criteria and supports several regional biological values. These values include: A) sensitive plant species unique to seasonal pools on heavy clay soils—several of which are at the northernmost point in their overall ranges, and seasonal surface water, which provide breeding sites for sensitive amphibians, including western spadefoot and Riverside fairy shrimp; B-C) a concentration of vernal pools, found in few places in the County and rare in the region, and their coastal sage scrub watershed, which serves as a hydrological filter, and seasonal ponds and surrounding mesic vegetation; D) vegetation that provides essential foraging and wintering sites for migrating birds that are otherwise

uncommon on the coastal side of the San Gabriel Mountains, and steep cliffs surrounding the mesa tops with crevices and cavities providing roosting and nesting sites in the otherwise brush-covered hillsides; E-F) Rare habitat in Southern California, and the support of sensitive resources that are unique locally and regionally, and that biologists consider to be among the most sensitive habitat types in Southern California.

6. East San Gabriel Valley SEA

Location

General

The East San Gabriel Valley SEA is located in the eastern end of the San Gabriel Valley. The SEA includes some of the low hills that rim the San Gabriel Valley on the east. The SEA has several natural, interacting components that constitute an area-wide ecological unit. The SEA consists of five units. The location and configuration of this SEA and its parts are primarily defined by the urbanization of the eastern San Gabriel Valley, which has occurred over the more developable valley floor and lower slopes of the San Jose Hills. As a consequence, the SEA resembles an "archipelago" that encompasses portions, or islands, of undeveloped ridgelines, hilltops and drainages between the San Gabriel Mountains to the north and the Puente Hills to the south.

Generally, the topography within this SEA consists of moderate to steep hillsides with north, south, east and west slope aspects. Ridgelines vary in width, from narrow to broad, with well-defined drainages in between. One major drainage, Walnut Creek, and a man-made reservoir, Puddingstone Reservoir, are found within this SEA. Elevations range from a low of approximately 560 feet above Mean Sea Level (MSL) in the Walnut Creek drainage, to a high of approximately 1,375 feet above MSL at Buzzard Peak.

The SEA has several ridgelines and hilltops and the major drainage of Walnut Creek at the northern side of the San Jose Hills. In the last half of the 20th century, these areas have become surrounded by urban development. Units 1-5 include: 1) South Hills Park and the surrounding undeveloped land in the City of Glendora north of Interstate-210; 2) The natural riparian section of Walnut Creek County Park. The SEA includes sections in the City of Covina and City of San Dimas; 3) Frank G. Bonelli Regional County Park (Bonelli Park); 4) Buzzard Peak, which is an extended ridge of undeveloped slopes to the west of Bonelli Park within the City of San Dimas, City of Walnut, and City of West Covina; and 5) Elephant Hill and an adjoining ridgeline in the City of Pomona. Along most of its boundaries, the SEA is bordered by developed properties. Large parts of this SEA are designated critical habitat for the federally-threatened coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*).

In its entirety, the SEA is located within the San Dimas, Glendora and Baldwin Park U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Quadrangles.

General Boundary and Resources Description

Unit 1: The northernmost section of the SEA is the South Hills unit. Much of the SEA is “protected” in the South Hills Park of the City of Glendora. The SEA lies north of the Interstate-210, has its northwestern boundary along Big Dalton Wash (a concrete-lined flood control channel), and northeastern boundary along existing residential development in the floodplain of the wash and adjoining hills. The eastern boundary is also bordered by existing residential development. The southern boundary consists of the Interstate-210 right-of-way, and the western boundary lies along Glendora Avenue. Residential

neighborhoods on the periphery (and not inside) of the South Hills Park are excluded, while external natural habitat is included in the SEA. An area of nursery fields in a central position of the park is included, as it is less than 40 acres in extent. Toward the eastern side of the SEA, there are some estate residences on the hills that are included, as they incorporate much natural habitat; however, denser neighborhoods are excluded from the SEA.

The South Hills are an area of chaparral and grasslands, and a northern stepping stone for wildlife (chiefly aerial) that move along the spine of the San Jose Hills between the San Gabriel Mountains of the Transverse Ranges, and the Puente and Chino Hills of the Peninsular Ranges on the southern side of the San Gabriel Valley. In South Hills Park, there are fine stands of walnut woodland in the upper elevations; northern ravines of oak woodland with walnut woodland in the upper elevations; what remains of the coast live oak woodland that once bordered the Big Dalton Wash; and excellent stands of prickly pear cactus covering some of the slopes. There are also grasslands with a dominant component of introduced mustards and some rocky exposures. Coastal sage scrub with alternating dominant components of California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), sumacs (*Rhus* spp.) and elderberries (*Sambucus* spp.) cover many of the slopes. Big Dalton Wash is channelized, and much development has been inserted into what was formerly Big Dalton's riparian oak woodland. This residential area forms a border for the northeast area of the SEA.

Unit 2: The most westerly portion of Walnut Creek begins where South Reeder Avenue crosses the Walnut Creek drainage on the border of the City of Covina and City of San Dimas. Walnut Creek runs along the northern base of the San Jose Hills and is a riparian interface between the rolling hill habitat and the coastal plain of the San Gabriel Valley. This segment encompasses the undeveloped creek bottom and flood plain, which is a relatively natural area along and adjacent to Walnut Creek, and most of it preserved as Walnut Creek Park. The Creek and lower slopes of the San Jose Hills contain one of the best riparian oak woodlands in the County, with a mixture of ash, walnut, willows, and sycamores. The upper areas of the oak woodland transition into excellent examples of walnut woodlands. Traveling east from this point, the SEA is bordered to the north by residential areas on the plains and to the south by residential areas on the ridgelines above the Creek. Much of the habitat of interest is on the slope of the ridgeline above the Creek.

Unit 3: The Walnut Creek Park unit is connected to the Bonelli Park unit. The SEA continues east to the Interstate-210, where the drainage and the SEA underpass along with San Dimas Avenue. There is a fenced footpath on the south side of the underpass that wildlife and humans use extensively. On the east side of the Interstate-210, the boundaries diverge and follow the freeway right-of-way to the north and to the south. At the edge of natural habitat about a 0.2 mile north, the boundary turns northeast with Walnut Creek. There are two fingers of creek tributaries: one encircles its stream course as far as the Arrow Highway, and the other includes the undeveloped north-facing slope of a low ridge that has residential development along the top. The SEA ends at a Union Pacific rail line. The edges of Walnut Creek have business parks and industrial properties, as well as residential areas.

The SEA boundary returns back west from the two fingers to circle around the west side, and excludes the Raging Waters theme park. From Raging Waters, the SEA boundary follows along the northern boundary of Bonelli Park, which is the largest unit of the SEA. This area of Bonelli Park includes the 250-

acre Puddingstone Reservoir, which is a flood control basin created by damming the main course of Walnut Creek. Puddingstone Reservoir is home to many resident birds, including a large population of American coots (*Fulica americana*). Notably, Puddingstone Reservoir also hosts a great variety and number of migrating waterfowl and other birds during the spring and fall, and provides riparian habitat for birds and other animals that are riparian obligates. Following along Puddingstone Drive to the Puddingstone Channel, the SEA eastern boundary turns south to conform to the eastern boundary of Bonelli Park. The Mountain Meadows Golf Course on the west side of the Park is an ETA, as are the campground area for recreational vehicles, the northern parking area of Puddingstone Reservoir, and the developed south side of Puddingstone Reservoir. On the south side of the park, the boundary borders the Interstate-10 to the junction with State Route-57, and then turns north following the east side of State Route-57, back to the undercrossing of San Dimas Avenue.

Bonelli Park (with the exception of the ETA areas), Puddingstone Reservoir, and Raging Waters is critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher. There are a number of breeding pairs that occur in natural areas of coastal sage scrub in Bonelli Park. Another species of note is the many-stemmed dudleya or live-forever (*Dudleya multicaulis*), which is an uncommon plant found on the picturesque rocky outcrops of the Glendora volcanics formation. This plant is at its northernmost extent in this area of the San Gabriel Valley, and is more common in Orange County.

Unit 4: Across the State Route-57 from Bonelli Park, the San Jose Hills continue southwest, with residential areas dispersed among intervening grassland and chaparral natural areas. This area is considered an extension of the Buzzard Peak ridgeline. The natural area that continues the habitat in Bonelli Park is roughly a central area of a north-facing wooded area and a southern area of a ridgeline with steep slopes along the Interstate-10. The SEA is chiefly on the undeveloped upper ridge areas, and critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher closely follows the SEA in the southern part along the ridgeline and the Interstate-10. The SEA and critical habitat for the gnatcatcher cross the highway with the ridgeline, and extend to Buzzard Peak

Buzzard Peak and its associated lands begin in the east along a ridgeline that is immediately north of the California State Polytechnic University (Cal Poly), Pomona campus. The western section of the SEA is undeveloped, but may be on the brink of growth. This component follows the ridgeline west to where it crosses Grand Avenue and continues in a westerly direction, which encompasses a series of minor ridgelines and drainages with highly dispersed residential areas. Moving east to west, its northern boundary is marked by Interstate-10, developed portions of the Forest Lawn Memorial Park Covina Hills and residential areas. Moving from east to west, its southern boundary is marked by developed and cultivated areas of the Cal Poly campus, Amar Road and residential areas. Along their entire lengths, the northern and southern boundaries follow highly circuitous alignments at the edge of developed landscape. A lobe of the SEA extends into the natural area that separates Cal Poly Pomona from Mt. San Antonio College. Gnatcatcher critical habitat covers most of this segment of the SEA, and extends beyond Grand Avenue as far as State Route-39 (Azusa Avenue), with some islands of critical habitat in nearby hilltops.

Unit 5: A final component of this SEA is located south of the intersection of State Route-71 and State Route-57 in the City of Pomona, at a ridgeline that is bordered chiefly by development that has an

undisturbed remnant of the original habitat: north-facing slopes of oak and walnut woodland. South-facing slopes consist of a mixture of dispersed chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and grasslands. There is a lobe that is north of Mission Boulevard in the City of Pomona on Elephant Hill, and a lobe south of Mission Boulevard. On Elephant Hill, the northern boundary is the Metrolink track. The eastern boundary is industrial development, the southern boundary is Mission Boulevard in the southeast, and the periphery of apartments along Brea Canyon Road, Appian Way, and Ferrara Court in the southwest. The western boundary is State Route-57. The Spadra cemetery with many introduced eucalyptus trees is not included. The ravines of Elephant Hill have fine examples of walnut woodland and the upper slopes have grassland, often dominated by mustards, with some areas of prickly-pear scrub.

Southeast of Mission Boulevard, the SEA is bordered by Mission Boulevard. The north-facing slopes with excellent oak and walnut woodland are bordered by residential areas at the base of the steep slopes. The eastern end is bordered by North Ranch Road, and the southwest is bordered by the dense residential community of Phillips Ranch in the City of Pomona. The crest of the ridge is rolling grasslands that are dominated by introduced mustards, and the slopes have a mix of dispersed grasslands, chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and prickly pear scrub.

The SEA encompasses several different local jurisdictions, including the unincorporated area of the County, City of Covina, City of Glendora, City of La Verne, City of Pomona, City of San Dimas, City of Walnut, and City of West Covina.

Vegetation

The variety of topography, soil types, slope aspects and water availability within this SEA create a range of physical habitats that support numerous plant species. The biological communities found in this SEA vary according to physical habitat conditions (i.e., slope exposure, soil type and depth, and the availability of water) and the area's history of grazing practices. Elevation plays almost no role in defining habitat types. Many slopes support oak and walnut woodland, which often intergrade with prevalent stands of mixed chaparral. Coastal sage scrub is also found on slopes with shallower, drier soils. Drainages are typically vegetated with oak riparian woodlands and forests, with stands of western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) and willow woodland. More moderate slopes and broader ridgelines have been subjected to livestock grazing. In these areas, the dominant vegetation consists of open non-native grassland. Oftentimes, grassland exists as the understory ground cover for wooded areas, which creates oak and walnut savannahs. Small isolated areas of freshwater marsh are also found around Puddingstone Reservoir. Plant species observed or recorded in previous documentation within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium of the Los Angeles County SEAs.* Sensitive plant species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Brief descriptions and general locations of each plant community present within the SEA are provided below, including oak woodland, oak riparian forest, walnut woodland, willow woodland, chaparral, coastal sage scrub, freshwater marsh, and non-native grassland.

Oak Woodland: A plant community dominated by species of the oak genus (*Quercus*). Within this SEA the dominant species is the coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia* var. *agrifolia*), which typically grows to

heights of 20 to 40 feet and forms either closed or open canopies. Understory vegetation varies from grassland in areas that are subject to grazing, to shrubs where the topography is steeper and/or grazing has been relaxed. This vegetation may also intergrade with shrub communities. Within this SEA, oak woodland is scattered throughout all components where it is most prevalent on northfacing slopes and in drainage bottoms.

Oak Riparian Forest: A highly related community to the oak woodland found in the SEA. It is also dominated by coast live oak. The primary difference between oak woodland and oak riparian forest is the greater availability of water in riparian situations, which is expressed in a dense tree canopy cover and tree clusters. A greater number of hydrophytic (moister favoring) plant species are also found in the understory. Typical riparian trees, such as western sycamore and willows (*Salix* spp.), occasionally occur. Oak riparian forest is well developed within Walnut Creek. Riparian trees are also scattered in other drainages throughout the Buzzard Peak component of this SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance
- *Quercus engelmannii* (Engelmann oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

Walnut Woodland: Often intergrading with oak dominated woodlands or developed as a distinct community. This community is dominated by the Southern California black walnut (*Juglans californica*), which grows 10 to 30 feet high. More often than not, the Southern California black walnut grows in open stands; however, closed tree canopies are not uncommon. In similar fashion to oak woodlands, its understory varies from grasses to shrubs. Thus, it forms stands ranging from savannahs to forests throughout the SEA. It is most common within Bonelli Park and Walnut Creek Park, South Hills, and Buzzard Peak components of the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Juglans californica* (Southern California black walnut groves) Woodland Alliance

Southern Willow Scrub: A well-developed southern willow scrub community that is found along Live Oak Creek upstream and at the point where the Creek flows into Puddingstone Reservoir in the Bonelli Park and Walnut Creek Park component of the SEA. Smaller patches of this community are also found scattered along drainages in the Buzzard Peak component. This community is dominated by species of willow, which form nearly monotypic stands due to their dense growth. These stands generally reach 10 to 20 feet in height with little understory vegetation.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Salix exigua* (sandbar willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salix lasiolepis* (arroyo willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance

Mixed Chaparral: A shrub community composed of robust species. Within the SEA, these species include laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*), toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), lemonadeberry (*Rhus integrifolia*) and western blue-elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* var. *caerulea*). Along with other shrub species, chaparral forms dense vegetation covers that grow 5 to 10 feet in height. The development of chaparral is most

pronounced within the South Hills, Bonelli Park and Walnut Creek Park, and Buzzard Peak components of the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Adenostoma fasciculatum* (chamise chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus leucodermis* (chaparral whitethorn) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus oliganthus* (hairy leaf ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Prunus ilicifolia* (holly leaf cherry chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Rhus ovata* (sugarbush chaparral) Shrubalnd Alliance

Coastal Sage Scrub: Communities of coastal sage scrub exhibit less robust structure within this SEA. This plant community is dominated by California sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), California brittle bush (*Encelia californica*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), and California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*). Coastal sage scrub also forms dense stands, which grow three to four feet in height. Within this SEA, it is generally found in scattered patches, which are highly integrated with mixed chaparral. These communities are primarily located in the South Hills, Bonelli Park and Walnut Creek Park, Via Verde, and Buzzard Peak components of the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica* (California sagebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Salvia mellifera* (California sagebrush-black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Encelia californica* (California brittle bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia mellifera* (black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lotus scoparius* [*Acmispon glaber*] (deer weed scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Opuntia littoralis* (coast prickly pear scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Non-Native Grassland: Consists of non-native annual grasses and forbs. These opportunistically growing species include brome grasses, wild oats and mustards. Characteristic of other parts of Southern California, this community became established as a result of livestock grazing. In the process, native vegetation is removed, sometimes by mechanical means, and replaced by more opportunistic species. Non-native grassland is found throughout the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Avena* (*barbata*, *fatua*) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Brassica* (*nigra*) and other mustards Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus* (*diandrus*, *hordeaceus*)-*Brachypodium distachyon* Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus rubens-Schismus* (*arabicus*, *barbatus*) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Centaurea* (*solstitialis*, *melitensis*) (yellow star-thistle fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Lolium perenne* (perennial rye grass fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands

Freshwater Marsh: Small areas that support freshwater marsh and found at scattered locations along the shoreline Puddingstone Reservoir. This community may also exist at other locations, in or adjacent to artificially created impoundments used to water livestock. Freshwater marsh requires perennially

shallow water or saturated soils. Dominant plants are comprised of emergent species, including cattails and bulrushes.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Schoenoplectus californicus* (California bulrush marsh) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Typha* (*angustifolia*, *domingensis*, *latifolia*) (cattail marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Lemna* (*minor*) and relatives (duckweed blooms) Provisional Herbaceous Alliance

Wildlife

Wildlife populations within the SEA are generally expected to reflect lower diversity and abundance of habitat types. This is due to the influences of surrounding development and location of recreational uses over relatively large areas of the SEA. Analysis of invertebrates on any given site is generally limited by a lack of specific data; however, the SEA is considered sufficient to encompass moderately healthy populations of common invertebrate species. Fair numbers of amphibians are expected to be present primarily due to the aquatic and semi-aquatic habitats provided by Puddingstone Reservoir, and riparian habitats along Live Oak Channel and Walnut Creek. Diversity and evenness among these populations, however, is likely to be degraded due to a history of urbanization, which results in only a few species that are able to adapt accordingly.

Similar effects are anticipated for reptiles. Reptilian species that are typically found in suburban and rural areas are expected to occur in relatively high numbers. Less common, and perhaps, locally extinct would be those species that are more secretive in their habitats and/or not as prolific.

A surprisingly high diversity of birds is documented within this SEA, including a large population of coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*), which is a federally-threatened species. For numerous upland, raptorial, and water associated birds, the SEA provides a mosaic of habitats. Between woodland, shrubland, grassland and wetlands, diverse populations of birds are able to meet nesting, foraging, and migratory requirements.

Mammal populations also reflect the urbanized areas imparting this SEA. Small mammals are expected to be uneven in their diversity, with more adaptive, introduced European species in greater numbers compared to other species. Medium-sized mammal populations are expected to exhibit the same characteristics. Large mammals are largely absent on a resident basis.

All wildlife species previously recorded, as well as those expected to occur within this SEA are tabulated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium* of the *Los Angeles County SEAs*. Sensitive wildlife species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Wildlife Movement

The SEA represents the only regional wildlife linkage between the San Gabriel Mountains and the Puente Hills and Chino Hills complex. Unlike the commonly held concept of a corridor, however, this SEA contains a series of discontinuous habitat blocks and patches, rather than an unbroken corridor for

movement. This SEA facilitates movement and exchange between larger habitat areas by permitting terrestrial "island-hopping" between the SEA components.

Using birds as an example, movement may be initiated by an individual or group of birds in either the San Gabriel Mountains or the Puente Hills. Larger species, with the capacity to cover long distances, may make the passage as one segment of its journey. Smaller species, however, that lack the physical or behavioral capacity may not be able to attain this movement under normal circumstances. By utilizing various components of the SEA, the same species can cover this journey in several smaller trips. The same example may also apply to winged insects and wind-borne plant propagules and pollen. Interaction between, not just through the components, can occur as well.

This same function probably does not apply to other taxonomic groups. It is highly doubtful that amphibian, reptile and most mammal populations use this corridor as effectively as birds, if at all. Mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), for example, do not occur within Bonelli Park, but are common in the San Gabriel Mountains and the Puente Hills. However, some mammals that tolerate urban environments, such as Virginia opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), and striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), use the corridor in the manner previously described. Even mountain lion (*Puma concolor*) periodically enter Bonelli Park and Walnut Creek Park from the outside, by way of routes related to SEA components.

The manner in which the SEA allows wildlife populations in different areas to interact is less than ideal. However, exchange in the manner described above is dictated by the widespread urbanization of the region. “Island hopping” is the only remaining connection for regional interaction that can contribute to the maintenance of genetic variability and health of regional wildlife populations.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species’ declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition. When species are federally-listed as endangered or threatened, they often have federally-designated, geographically-specific “critical habitat areas.” Critical habitat areas, after extensive study by experts, are judged to be essential to conservation and maintenance of the species. In this SEA, extensive areas are critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher.

Sensitive Plant Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. Vegetation communities include Engelmann oak

woodland, Southern California black walnut groves, holly leaf cherry chaparral, and California brittle bush scrub, which occur throughout the SEA. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section.

Sensitive Plant Species

The statuses of rare plants are hierarchically categorized by the CNPS using a rank and decimal system. The initial category level of Rare Plant Rank is indicated by the ranks 1A (presumed extinct in California), 1B (rare or endangered in California and elsewhere), 2 (rare or endangered in California but more common elsewhere), 3 (more information needed, a review list), and 4 (limited distribution). In cases where the CNPS has further identified the specific threat to the species, a decimal or Threat Code is added: .1 (seriously endangered in California), .2 (fairly endangered in California), or .3 (not very endangered in California).

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Nevin's barberry (*Berberis nevinii*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Round-leaved filaree (*California macrophylla*) RPR 1B.1
- Southern tarplant (*Centromadia parryi* ssp. *australis*) RPR 1B.1
- Smooth tarplant (*Centromadia pungens* ssp. *laevis*) RPR 1B.1
- Peruvian dodder (*Cuscuta obtusiflora* var. *glandulosa*) RPR 2.2
- San Gabriel Mountains dudleya (*Dudleya densiflora*) RPR 1B.1
- Many-stemmed dudleya (*Dudleya multicaulis*) RPR 1B.2
- Mesa horkelia (*Horkelia cuneata* ssp. *puberula*) RPR 1B.1
- Coulter's goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata* ssp. *coulteri*) RPR 1B.1
- Robinson's pepper-grass (*Lepidium virginicum* var. *robinsonii*) RPR 1B.2
- Brand's star phacelia (*Phacelia stellaris*) FC, RPR 1B.1
- White rabbit-tobacco (*Pseudognaphalium leucocephalum*) RPR 2.2
- Parish's gooseberry (*Ribes divaricatum* var. *parishii*) RPR 1A
- Chaparral ragwort (*Senecio aphanactis*) RPR 2.2
- San Bernardino aster (*Symphyotrichum defoliatum*) RPR 1B.2
- Thread-leaved brodiaea (*Brodiaea filifolia*) FT, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Slender mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*) RPR 1B.2
- Palmer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus palmeri* var. *palmeri*) RPR 1B.2
- Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) RPR 1B.2
- Intermediate mariposa lily (*Calochortus weedii* var. *intermedius*) RPR 1B.2
- Vernal barley (*Hordeum intercedens*) RPR 3.2
- California satintail (*Imperata brevifolia*) RPR 2.1
- California Orcutt grass (*Orcuttia californica*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or are likely to be present within the SEA, based on habitat requirements and known range attributes:

- Silvery legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra pulchra*) FSS, SSC
- coastal whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Rosy boa (*Charina trivirgata*) BLMS, FSS
- Western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- San Bernardino mountain kingsnake (*Lampropeltis zonata parvirubra*) FSS, SSC
- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Coast patch-nosed snake (*Salvadora hexalepis virgultea*) SSC
- Two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) CDFG Watch List
- Tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*) BCC, BLMS, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*) CDFG Watch List
- Grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Long-eared owl (*Asio otus*) SSC, LAA
- Coastal cactus wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus sandiegensis*) BCC, FSS, SSC
- Western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*) FC, BCC, FSS, SE
- Black swift (*Cypseloides niger*) BCC, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- White-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*) CDFG Fully Protected
- Southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) FE, FSS, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*) SSC
- Coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) FT, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Bank swallow (*Riparia riparia*) ST
- Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) FE, BCC, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) FSS, BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Northwestern San Diego pocket mouse (*Chaetodipus fallax fallax*) SSC
- Western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*) WBWG Medium
- Western yellow bat (*Lasiurus xanthinus*) WBWG High
- San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus bennettii*) SSC
- Fringed myotis (*Myotis thysanodes*) BLMS, WBWG High
- Long-legged myotis (*Myotis volans*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG Medium
- Yuma myotis (*Myotis yumaensis*) BLMS, WBWG Low-Medium
- San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*) SSC
- Pocketed free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops femorosaccus*) SSC, WBWG Medium
- Big free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops macrotis*) SSC, WBWG Medium-High
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) SSC

Ecological Transition Area (ETA)

There are no ETAs designated within this SEA.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets several SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met described below.

CRITERIA ANALYSIS OF THE EAST SAN GABRIEL VALLEY SEA

Criterion	Status	Justification

A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Met	This SEA contains various alliances of coastal sage scrub that are found in scattered patches over hillside habitat, which support a core population of the federally-threatened coastal California gnatcatcher. The gnatcatcher population has been slowly increasing, as recently observed in coastal sage scrub at two locations in the area, Bonelli Park and Buzzard Peak. There are an estimated 10 and 15 pairs of gnatcatchers in this population. The SEA also has a population of breeding coastal cactus wren. The rare multi-stemmed dudleya has its northernmost population in Bonelli Park.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	Several plant communities within this SEA are CDFG highest priority communities due to their restricted distribution in the Southern California region. These communities include walnut woodlands, which are scattered throughout the SEA; oak riparian woodland, which is excellent within the Walnut Creek drainage; isolated stands of willow woodland along many of the drainages; freshwater marsh and open water in association with Puddingstone Reservoir; and coastal sage scrub in scattered patches over hillsides. Coastal sage scrub serves as the habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher, which has been slowly increasing in Bonelli Park and Buzzard Peak. These areas also have a population of breeding cactus wren. The rare multi-stemmed dudleya has its northernmost population in Bonelli Park.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution	Met	All of the plant communities and habitats indicated as restricted in distribution on a regional basis, are also restricted in distribution within the County.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	Any relatively large body of water with pockets of natural lakeside vegetation along its shoreline potentially meets this criterion, particularly within the context of an arid to semi-arid environment that is characteristic of the County. Although subjected to boating activities and shoreline recreational use, Puddingstone Reservoir serves as an important habitat for migrating water fowl and water birds, which is evident in the high diversity of birds recorded at the Bonelli Park over the past several years. The natural areas of the

			east San Gabriel Valley serve as a migration and habitat connection between the San Gabriel Mountains and the Puente Hills.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	Bonelli Park contains a population of the rare many-stemmed dudleya, which is at the northern limit of its range. Most of the species is found in the Peninsular Ranges in Orange County. The coastal California gnatcatchers are in the northern extent of their range here, are clearly at an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, and may represent unusual variation in a population or community. The SEA, therefore, meets this criterion.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Not Met	The SEA does not contain areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: A) the habitat of core populations of endangered and threatened plant and animal species; B-C) biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution in the County and regionally; D) concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds, which are limited in availability in the County; and E) biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.

7. El Segundo Dunes SEA

Location

General

The El Segundo Dunes Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located between the west end of the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) and the Pacific Ocean. The SEA is the largest remaining coastal dune habitat in Southern California. The federally-endangered El Segundo blue (*Euphilotes battoides allyni*) butterfly lives its entire life in these dunes.

The entire SEA is located in the United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Quadrangle of Venice.

General Boundary and Resources Description

The SEA boundaries are as follows: Sandpiper Street to the north, Pershing Drive to the east, Imperial Highway to the south, and Vista Del Mar Road to the west. This is the largest of four proposed critical habitat areas for the El Segundo blue butterfly. The Vista Del Mar Park on Vista Del Mar Road is excluded from the SEA.

The ecological significance of the El Segundo Dunes is recognized by both federal and state governments, as well as by the City and County of Los Angeles and the California Coastal Commission (CCC). The vegetation found here does not occur anywhere else in the County, and is uncommon throughout Southern California. The vegetation is southern dune scrub, which is adapted to sandy, well-drained soils. The vegetation shows zonation, changing gradually as one moves from the foredunes facing west and the ocean over the dune crest and into coastal sage scrub. Many plants and invertebrates are specifically adapted and restricted to this environment and are not found elsewhere. One of these endemic organisms is the El Segundo blue butterfly, a federally-endangered butterfly species. The distribution of this butterfly is entirely restricted to the El Segundo Dunes and a few specks of dune habitat south to the edge of Malaga Cove (all once part of the El Segundo Dune sysytem). Because of its rarity and highly limited range, the butterfly is officially recognized as an endangered species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This small piece of dune habitat is extremely valuable as the final example of a community that was once more common along the County and Southern California coastline.

Vegetation

Vegetation within the SEA is a remnant of a formerly more widespread distribution in the Los Angeles area of plant communities defined by their proximity to the immediate coast with its unique environmental conditions and sandy soils. The area has a long history of land disturbance and increasing isolation from related habitats. Today, the SEA has three plant communities with relatively few species. Importantly, the dune buckwheat (*Eriogonum parvifolium*), which is the only host plant for the larvae of the rare El Segundo blue butterfly, is found there, and the buckwheat population is isolated from other

populations. Sensitive plant species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Descriptions and general locations of the each plant community present within the SEA are given below.

Coastal Strand Vegetation: A community that occurs in the loose sand just above the high tide line of the beach. This community is characterized by a low species diversity because few plants can tolerate the harsh conditions on this dry, sandy, saline soil with buffeting by high winds, salt spray and high summer temperatures.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Abronia latifolia – Ambrosia chamissonis* (dune mat) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Cakile* (*edentula*, *maritima*) (sea rocket stands) Semi-Natural Provisional Herbaceous Alliance

Coastal Bluff and Dune Scrub: A remnant of the El Segundo Dune system that occupied coastal areas along much of the Santa Monica Bay. In the SEA, the coastal bluff and dune scrub is found in a strip along the immediate coastal sections of the SEA. The system consists of fine, sandy soil that dries rapidly. Plants typical of the dune scrub include dune buckwheat (*Eriogonum parvifolium*), rattle pod (*Astragalus trichopodus* var. *lonchus*), bladderpod (*Peritoma arborea*), deer weed (*Acmispon glaber*), sawtooth goldenbush (*Hazardia squarrosa*), and California sunflower (*Helianthus californicus*).

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Baccharis pilularis* (coyote brush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lupinus arboreus* (yellow bush lupine scrub) Shrubland Alliance and Semi-Natural Shrubland Stands
- *Lupinus chamissonis-Ericameria ericoides* (silver dune lupine–mock heather scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Coastal Sage Chaparral Scrub: Characterized by the summer drought deciduous vegetation found near the Southern California coast of low, mostly soft-woody shrubs with bare ground underneath and between shrubs. This community is dominated by California sagebrush, California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*), and California brittle bush (*Encelia californica*) and intergrades with the coastal bluff and dune scrub near the shore and gradually becomes more evident near the crest of the site

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica* (California sagebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Salvia mellifera* (California sagebrush-black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Encelia californica* (California brittle bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia mellifera* (black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Hazardia squarrosa* (sawtooth golden bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lotus scoparius* [*Acmispon glaber*] (deer weed scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lupinus albifrons* (silver bush lupine scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Wildlife

An assessment of wildlife is made difficult due to the lack of data but the animal populations within the SEA probably reflect a somewhat lower diversity and abundance for the habitat types present for several reasons, including: the small area of the dune habitat, the homogeneity of the topography and habitat, influences of edge effect from developments to the north and south, the ocean to the west and the impact of being under the flight paths of aircraft departing from LAX to the east.

One key occupant of the area is the El Segundo blue butterfly, which is found here and also in a very few other locations to the south in remnants of the former dune complex. The El Segundo blue butterfly co-occurs with the only known plant species that supports its complete lifecycle, the dune buckwheat (*Eriogonum parvifolium*). The adult butterfly uses the flowers as a major source of nectar, and the larvae feed only on the flowers and seeds.

Amphibian populations are generally scarce in beachfront communities and no riparian habitat is available within the SEA. Many essential reptilian habitat characteristics, such as open habitats that allow free movement and high visibility and small mammal burrows for cover and escape from predators and extreme weather, are present within the SEA. The scrubland habitats in the SEA probably provide foraging and cover habitat for year-round resident and seasonal resident song birds. In addition, the SEA provides some raptor foraging habitat, so they can be expected visitors. Mammal populations probably reflect the generally disturbed environs influencing this SEA. Small mammals are expected to be uneven in their diversity, with more adaptive species and introduced European species occurring in higher numbers compared to others. Medium sized mammal populations are expected to exhibit the same characteristics. Resident large mammals are absent. Sensitive wildlife species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Wildlife Movement

The SEA is on the Pacific Flyway migration route used by many birds seasonally. The dune habitat probably does not play an important role as a stopover because of its limited resources, due its small size; however, it will attract some birds because it is one of the few undeveloped places along the coast. The area does not fall within any identified terrestrial movement routes for wildlife.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition. When species are federally-listed as endangered or threatened, they often have federally-designated, geographically-specific "critical habitat areas." Critical habitat areas, after extensive study by experts, are judged to be essential to conservation and maintenance of the species. However, for species listed previous to 1978,

critical habitat areas rarely are designated officially. Sometimes such areas are called “essential habitat,” which would be the case here for the El Segundo blue butterfly.

Sensitive Plant Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. These include dune mat, silver dune lupine–mock heather scrub, California brittle bush scrub, and sawtooth golden bush scrub. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section.

Sensitive Plant Species

The statuses of rare plants are hierarchically categorized by the CNPS using a rank and decimal system. The initial category level of Rare Plant Rank is indicated by the ranks 1A (presumed extinct in California), 1B (rare or endangered in California and elsewhere), 2 (rare or endangered in California but more common elsewhere), 3 (more information needed, a review list), and 4 (limited distribution). In cases where the CNPS has further identified the specific threat to the species, a decimal or Threat Code is added: .1 (seriously endangered in California), .2 (fairly endangered in California), or .3 (not very endangered in California).

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Aphanisma (*Aphanisma blitoides*) RPR 1B.1
- Coastal dunes milk-vetch (*Astragalus tener* var. *titi*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Orcutt's pincushion (*Chaenactis glabriuscula* var. *orcuttiana*) RPR 1B.1
- Beach spectaclepod (*Dithyrea maritima*) ST, RPR 1B.1
- Coulter's goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata* ssp. *coulteri*) RPR 1B.1
- Brand's star phacelia (*Phacelia stellaris*) FC, RPR 1B.1

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or are likely to be present within the SEA based on habitat requirements and known range attributes:

- Belkin's dune tabanid fly (*Brennania belkini*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Busck's gallmoth (*Carolella busckana*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Sandy beach tiger beetle (*Cicindela hirticollis gravida*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Senile tiger beetle (*Cicindela senilis frosti*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Globose dune beetle (*Coelus globosus*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Henne's eucosman moth (*Eucosma hennei*) CDFG Special Animals List
- El Segundo blue butterfly (*Euphilotes battoides allyni*) FE, Xerces: Critical
- Lange's El Segundo Dune weevil (*Onychobaris langei*) CDFG Special Animals List
- El Segundo flower-loving fly (*Rhaphiomidas terminatus terminatus*) CDFG Special Animals List

- Silvery legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra pulchra*) FSS, SSC
- Coastal whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*) CDFG Special Animals List
- San Bernardino ringneck snake (*Diadophis punctatus modestus*) FSS
- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*) FT, BCC, SSC, ABC, AWL, USBC
- California black rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis coturniculus*) BCC, ST, CDFG Fully Protected, USBC, AWL, ABC
- California least tern (*Sternula antillarum browni*) FE, SE, CDFG Fully Protected, USBC, ABC
- Pacific pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris pacificus*) FE, SSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

There are no ETAs in this SEA.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets several SEA designation criteria incorporating regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met is described below.

Criteria Analysis of the El Segundo Dunes SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Met	The El Segundo Dunes is one of four known localities in the world where one can find the endangered El Segundo blue butterfly. All four areas are remnants of a once continuous three-mile system of seacoast dunes in the County. The blue's habitat is the coastal dune buckwheat, on which the butterfly lays its eggs and the larvae feed.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	The southern dune scrub vegetation has become very uncommon in the Southern California region due to the conversion of the habitat to seacoast dwellings, hotels, and other development. The vegetation thrives on sandy, well-drained soils, and grades into coastal sage scrub on the inland side. Many plants and invertebrates are restricted to this environment and are not found elsewhere. This small piece of dune habitat is extremely valuable as the final example of a community that was once more common along the Southern California coast.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of	Met	The southern dune scrub vegetation found here on the three remnant localities of the El

	plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution		Segundo Dunes does not occur anywhere else in the County.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	A number of organisms call the sandy, well-drained soils of the El Segundo Dunes "home," and are restricted to this coastal environment. Like the El Segundo blue butterfly, their entire life cycles are here in the dunes.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	As a result of the uniqueness of this community and of the specializations of the organisms found here, the dunes have been closely scrutinized by biologists of many disciplines.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Not Met	Much of the original three miles of dunes have been removed by development or disturbed. Scattered on the site are radio towers, roads, oil extraction equipment, and a reservoir. The vegetation is much impacted by human use, but can be restored. The designated area is the best remaining part of the original El Segundo Dunes.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: A) core habitat for the federally-endangered El Segundo blue butterfly; B-C) beach dunes, a rare community both regionally and within the County; D) a habitat that is rare and necessary for the life cycle of the El Segundo blue butterfly and other dune insects and fauna; and E) the geographic limit of El Segundo Dunes, a rare habitat much studied by biologists.

8. Griffith Park SEA

Location

General

The Griffith Park Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located within Griffith Park, the central park of the City of Los Angeles, situated on the extreme eastern end of the Santa Monica Mountains. The SEA is an extensive, relatively undisturbed island of natural vegetation in an urbanized, metropolitan area. It supports the coastal sage scrub, chaparral, riparian, and southern oak woodland plant communities that are typical in the interior mountain ranges of Southern California. What makes the SEA important is its geographical location. It has become an island of natural vegetation surrounded by urban and suburban development. The geographic location makes the area important for scientific study, for genetic interchange between otherwise isolated populations, and for recreation of urban residents.

The SEA is located partially in each of the following United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Quadrangles: Burbank and Hollywood.

General Boundary and Resources Description

The SEA encompasses most of Griffith Park, south of the State Route-134, and west of Interstate-5. The SEA boundary generally follows the natural area near the Griffith Park boundaries in most cases. Isolated areas are important for preserving and documenting the geographical variability of vegetation and wildlife that formerly occurred throughout the region. They serve as reservoirs of native species that could be of scientific and economic value in the future. In addition, birds rely on these islands for areas to rest and feed along their north-south and east-west migration routes. In the case of Griffith Park, this function is made even greater than might be expected because it serves as a corridor for any gene flow and species movement that may take place between the Santa Monica and San Gabriel mountains via the Verdugo Mountains.

Beginning in the northwest corner, and proceeding eastward, the SEA follows the natural vegetation on the mountain slopes at the junction with the flood plain of the former Dark Canyon and the Los Angeles River. This area of the SEA includes the recently-acquired (2010) Cahuenga Peak, at 1820 feet, which is now the highest point of Griffith Park. Cahuenga Peak slopes have rocky outcrops, chaparral, and regenerating oak woodland and chaparral on the north-facing slopes. (This area was part of the 800 acres burned in the Griffith Park Fire of 2007.)

The Los Angeles River is channelized, but there is remnant oak riparian woodland in this area. Bordering the apartment complex on the east side of Barham Boulevard, there is a somewhat abrupt change in slope where the previous Dark Canyon Creek flowed. (Barham Boulevard was evidently constructed in this Canyon.) The SEA includes the remnant riparian coast live oak woodland (*Quercus agrifolia)*, which has many jurisdictional oak trees and in many places, the natural understory. Residents and staff at the apartments report frequent sightings of wildlife, particularly mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) and coyotes (*Canis latrans*), in their parking lots, which line the Griffith Park side of the complex. On the

slopes above, the chaparral of this west-facing slope grades upward into an extensive area of coastal sage scrub. The SEA includes these natural areas. From the natural areas on slopes above the junction of Barham Boulevard and Forest Lawn Boulevard, the SEA boundary continues eastward along the border of natural vegetation on the slopes above Forest Lawn Boulevard, including oak woodland in the ravines and mixed chaparral and grassland on the upper slopes. Occasionally, an ash (*Fraxinus velutina*) or Southern California black walnut (*Juglans californica*) are in these ravines, along with oak trees and other chaparral plants.

The boundary follows natural vegetation southward, away from the Los Angeles River, at the boundary of Forest Lawn Memorial Park (Forest Lawn). A slope and ridge top that have been cleared by Forest Lawn have been excluded from the SEA, but the chaparral on the east-facing side of the slope is included. From this ridge, the SEA roughly follows at the edge of the natural areas around the south side of the Forest Lawn and returns northward on the parcel line between the Forest Lawn and Griffith Park.

From the east side of Forest Lawn, the SEA boundary includes a chaparral-covered slope that is south of Travel Town and Zoo Drive. Cooper and Mathewson (2008) describe how coastal sage scrub occurs through a broad section of the northern part of Griffith Park, from end to end with patches of the sensitive valley needlegrass grassland. From the natural area near the Interstate-5 and State Route-134 interchange, the SEA boundary swings around westward, north of the Los Angeles Zoo, and forming a lobe on the chaparral-covered slopes. This area has ravines and a gradually sloping area near Travel Town, with riparian forest that includes sycamores (*Platanus racemosa*), oaks, willows (*Salix* spp.), and mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), which are easily seen along Griffith Park Drive. Travel Town is not in the SEA, but its periphery of native riparian and chaparral is included. The north-facing upper slopes have chaparral, and the south-facing upper slopes have coastal sage scrub or grassland with chaparral plants here and there, especially elderberry (*Sambucus* spp.) Along Zoo Drive, ravines have typical chaparral of north-facing slopes. The SEA boundary continues past the Los Angeles Zoo along a road to a landfill area within Griffith Park, and goes around the landfill, forming a cherry-stem shaped area at the landfill road, and then continuing southeastward on the west side of Griffith Park Drive, excluding the Harding Municipal Golf Course. The Spring Canyon picnic area is excluded, as the understory of the sycamores and oaks is unnatural lawn, and the SEA boundary continues south along natural vegetation along Griffith Park Drive to the southern boundary of Griffith Park, near the Los Feliz offramp from the Interstate-5. A golf course practice area at the corner is excluded from the SEA.

From the southeast corner, the SEA boundary goes west along with the Griffith Park boundary at the edge of development to another golf course, which is excluded due to extensive modification of the slopes. The Greek Theater in Vermont Canyon and Griffith Park Observatory on the slope beyond are included, as the modified vegetation for each covers less than 40 acres. The SEA boundary continues west and then north with the Griffith Park boundary at the edge of development. A small quarry is excluded. The undeveloped upper Brush Canyon in Griffith Park is included. Griffith Park and SEA have oak woodland along the drainages, transitioning uphill into chaparral and then grassland on the upper slopes. Within Griffith Park, north-facing sides of rocky outcrops often have a cliffside vegetation that is characterized by multiple kinds of lichens, mosses, liverworts and other non-vascular plants along with live-forever (*Dudleya* spp.), and other flowering plants. The SEA boundary follows Griffith Park

boundaries around the development in the Blackwood Canyon area. A ridge area in Griffith Park on the south side of Mulholland Drive overlook is excluded. The SEA boundary follows Griffith Park boundaries on the southern edge and then turns north after including the grassland and coastal sage scrub-covered slopes that cover the open area between the two northern arms of the Hollywood Reservoir. On the west side of the SEA, the boundaries lap west outside of Griffith Park boundaries to include the oak woodland and chaparral of the lower elevations of Cahuenga Peak in the neighborhood of Dark Canyon (Barham Boulevard) and Caguenga Pass.

Vegetation

Vegetation within the SEA is comprised of a large variety of community types. The diversity of the communities reflects the topography of the mountainous park and include coastal sage chaparral scrub, riparian and coast live oak woodland, riparian, many kinds of chaparral, grassland, and cliffside vegetation. The maintenance of the diverse vegetation mosaic and the contacts of the different vegetation types (ecotones) has been cited as one of the principal qualities of importance to maintaining biotic diversity in Griffith Park (Cooper & Mathewson, 2008). The southern slopes are affected by more moist marine weather conditions, while the northern slopes are influenced by drier inland weather conditions. In addition, the steepness of many slopes causes sharp differences in vegetation on either side of a ridge. Sensitive plant species and plant communities occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Descriptions and general locations of the each plant community present within the SEA are given below.

Chaparral: A shrub community composed of robust species. Within this SEA, a number of chaparral subcommunities are found, and differentiated by their dominant plant species. These include chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), buck brush (*Ceanothus* spp.), scrub oak (*Quercus berberidifolia*), coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia* var. *agrifolia*) and mosaics of these depending on mixture of species and elevation. These and other shrub species form dense vegetation covers, and grow 5 to 10 feet in height. The development of chaparral is pronounced over large hillside areas throughout the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Adenostoma fasciculatum* (chamise chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Adenostoma fasciculatum-Salvia apiana* (chamise-white sage chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Arctostaphylos glauca* (bigberry manzanita chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus greggii* [*vestitus*] (cup leaf ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus spinosus* (greenbark ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus oliganthus* (hairy leaf ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Prunus ilicifolia* (holly leaf cherry chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Rhus ovata* (sugarbush chaparral) Shrubland Alliance

Coastal Sage Chaparral Scrub: A shrubland community exhibiting less robust structure found in this SEA. This plant community is dominated by California sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), California brittle bush (*Encelia californica*), white sage (*Salvia apiana*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), and California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*). Dense stands may grow three to four feet in height. Within this SEA, it is generally found in scattered patches, which are highly integrated with mixed chaparral. These are located throughout the SEA at middle elevations and on hillsides.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica* (California sagebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Encelia californica* (California brittle bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Dendromecon rigida* (bush poppy scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia leucophylla* (purple sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia mellifera* (black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lotus scoparius* [*Acmispon glaber*] (deer weed scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Opuntia littoralis* (coast prickly pear scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Malacothamnus fasciculatus* (bush mallow scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Coast Live Oak Woodland: A plant community dominated by *Quercus agrifolia.* Within this SEA, this community includes coast live oak, which typically grows to heights of 20 to 40 feet, and forms either closed or open tree canopies. Oak woodland is most commonly found on north-facing slopes and in drainage bottoms and often intergrades with shrub communities. Understory vegetation varies from grassland in level areas to shrubs where topography is steeper.

Corresponding MCV community:

- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

Riparian Forest: Along the major drainages riparian forest is found, which typically grows along streams in bedrock-constrained, steep-sided canyons, which results in a fairly narrow riparian corridor. The specific dominant plants are not known but riparian trees such as California bay (*Umbellularia californica*), white alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*), coast live oak, western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) and willow (*Salix* spp.) occur. There are also a greater number of hydrophytic (moister favoring) plant species in the understory.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Alnus rhombifolia* (white alder groves) Forest Alliance
- *Umbellularia californica* (California bay forest) Forest Alliance
- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance
- *Platanus racemosa* (California sycamore woodlands) Woodland Alliance

Wildlife

Mammals making their home in Griffith Park include mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), common gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), Virginia opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*), striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), California ground squirrel (*Spermophilus beecheyi*), the non-native eastern fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger*), and house mouse (*Mus musculus*). Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) have been observed in the northwest and eastern portions of Griffith Park, and there have been sightings of a mountain lion (*Puma concolor*) that some believe may have incorporated Griffith Park into its range.

The last survey of insects in Griffith Park was in the spring 2003, which was a year with a cool, late spring; it is not clear how that weather impacted the survey results. During that survey, the most frequently observed butterfly was the gulf fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*), which uses ornamental passion vines as a host plant. Bumblebees and honeybees were the most abundant bee species, although carpenter bees were also observed. Sand wasps were observed along some of the hiking trails, where sandy patches are present. Scorpions, tarantulas and other spiders are commonly observed.

Amphibians observed in Griffith Park have included arboreal salamander (*Aneides lugubris*), California slender salamander (*Batrachoseps attenuatus*), Baja California chorus frog (*Pseudacris hypochondriaca*) and California toad (*Anaxyrus halophilus*). Non-native amphibians found in many streams in Griffith Park are the American bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeianus*) and the African clawed frog (*Xenopus laevis*). In addition to stream habitats, the Los Angeles River, on the eastern side of Griffith Park provides abundant habitat for amphibians.

Reptiles identified in Griffith Park include the Great Basin fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis longipes*), western skink (*Plestiodon skiltonianus skiltonianus*), San Diego alligator lizard (*Elgaria multicarinata webbii*), coastal whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*), western side-blotched lizard (*Uta stansburiana elegans*), California legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra*), California striped racer (*Coluber lateralis lateralis*), red racer (*C. flagellum piceus*), California kingsnake (*Lampropeltis getula californiae*), San Bernardino ringneck snake (*Diadophis punctatus modestus*), San Diego gopher snake (*Pituophis catenifer annectens*), and southern Pacific rattlesnake (*Crotalus oreganus helleri*).

Ornithologists have identified about 200 bird species in Griffith Park, and about 150 of those are regularly seen (every year–Cooper and Mathewson 2008). Griffith Park is also an important stopover for migrating birds and provides an abundance of habitat for wintering birds. Resident birds during the 2003 survey included the acorn woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*), American crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), Anna's hummingbird (*Calypte anna*), Bewick's wren (*Thryomanes bewickii*), bushtit (*Psaltriparus minimus*), California towhee (*Melozone crissalis*), California quail (*Callipepla californica*), California thrasher (*Toxostoma redivivum*), common raven (*Corvus corax*), European starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*, non-native), great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*) and the red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*). Migratory birds include the ash-throated flycatcher (*Myiarchus cinerascens*), black-chinned hummingbird (*Archilochus alexandri*), black-headed grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*) and western wood-pewee (*Contopus sordidulus*). Aquatic species, such as herons, egrets, ducks and migrating geese are seen in the Los Angeles River as it flows by Griffith Park. These species are also observed on the golf course water features within Griffith Park.

Sensitive wildlife species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Wildlife Movement

Griffith Park has become increasingly isolated from the rest of the Santa Monica Mountain Range, the Los Angeles River, the Los Angeles Basin, the San Fernando Valley, and the Verdugo Mountains (a little less than two miles to the east) because of the freeways, concrete river projects and urbanization that

surround Griffith Park. Although some species have disappeared, including the ringtail (*Bassariscus astutus*), the gray fox is still seen.

River-bed vegetation is quickly returning in the Los Angeles River as sand deposits on the hard channel bottom, and re-vegetation should be encouraged. Major bird and mammal populations exist on the re-vegetated portions of the Los Angeles River. Although some stretches of the Los Angeles River may not provide suitable primary corridors, it is important to reinstate Griffith Park's connection to the Los Angeles River for the future of wildlife and plant connectivity. In the management draft for Griffith Park wildlife (Cooper and Mathewson 2008), the authors outline some of the important connections to maintain or enhance: bridges and underpasses over and under State Route-101 and culverts that feed into the Los Angeles River Channel.

Griffith Park is viewed as an important connective island for the Santa Monica Mountains to the west of State Route-101 and the Verdugo Mountains and San Gabriel Mountains to the east. Wildlife may also use the natural areas and even concrete channels of the Los Angeles River to connect to the Tujunga Wash and Hansen Dam SEA and to the San Gabriel Mountains.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition.

Sensitive Plant Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. These communities include chamise-white sage chaparral, holly leaf cherry chaparral, California brittle bush scrub, California bay forest, and California sycamore woodlands, which occur throughout the SEA. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section.

Sensitive Plant Species

The statuses of rare plants are hierarchically categorized by the CNPS using a rank and decimal system. The initial category level of Rare Plant Rank is indicated by the ranks 1A (presumed extinct in California), 1B (rare or endangered in California and elsewhere), 2 (rare or endangered in California but more common elsewhere), 3 (more information needed, a review list), and 4 (limited distribution). In cases

where the CNPS has further identified the specific threat to the species, a decimal or Threat Code is added: .1 (seriously endangered in California), .2 (fairly endangered in California), or .3 (not very endangered in California).

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Braunton's milk-vetch (*Astragalus brauntonii*) FE, RPR 1B.1
- Nevin's barberry (*Berberis nevinii*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Round-leaved filaree (*California macrophylla*) RPR 1B.1
- Lewis' evening-primrose (*Camissonia lewisii*) RPR 3
- Southern tarplant (*Centromadia parryi* ssp. *australis*) RPR 1B.1
- San Fernando Valley spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *fernandina*) FC, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Parry's spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *parryi*) RPR 1B.1
- Many-stemmed dudleya (*Dudleya multicaulis*) RPR 1B.2
- Palmer's grapplinghook (*Harpagonella palmeri*) RPR 4.2
- Mesa horkelia (*Horkelia cuneata* ssp. *puberula*) RPR 1B.1
- Coulter's goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata* ssp. *coulteri*) RPR 1B.1
- White rabbit-tobacco (*Pseudognaphalium leucocephalum*) RPR 2.2
- San Bernardino aster (*Symphyotrichum defoliatum*) RPR 1B.2
- Greata's aster (*Symphyotrichum greatae*) RPR 1B.3
- Slender mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*) RPR 1B.2
- Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) RPR 1B.2
- Vernal barley (*Hordeum intercedens*) RPR 3.2
- California Orcutt grass (*Orcuttia californica*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or are likely to be present within the SEA based on habitat requirements and known range attributes:

- Gertsch's socalchemmis spider (*Socalchemmis gertschi*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Western spadefoot (*Spea hammondii*) BLMS, SSC
- Coast range newt (*Taricha torosa*) SSC
- Silvery legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra pulchra*) FSS, SSC
- Coastal whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) FE, FSS, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) FE, BCC, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) FSS, BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Silver-haired bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*) WBWG Medium
- Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*) WBWG Medium
- San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*) SSC
- Pocketed free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops femorosaccus*) SSC, WBWG Medium
- Big free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops macrotis*) SSC, WBWG Medium-High
- Los Angeles pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris brevinasus*) FSS, SSC

- Pacific pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris pacificus*) FE, SSC
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) SSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

There are no ETAs designated within this SEA.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets all SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met is described below.

Criteria Analysis of the Griffith Park SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Not Met	No known core populations occur within this SEA.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Not Met	No known unique or rare plant or animal species occur within this SEA that would be regionally uncommon. No rare plant habitats occur in Griffith Park. Griffith Park has extensive wild areas that are little studied according to Cooper and Mathewson 2008. Such areas could be discovered.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution	Not Met	No known unique or rare plant or animal species occur within this SEA that would be particularly uncommon in the County. No rare plant habitats are known in Griffith Park. Griffith Park has extensive wild areas that are little studied according to Cooper and Mathewson 2008. Such areas could be discovered.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	Griffith Park is the easternmost extent of the Santa Monica Mountains, and a stepping stone to the Verdugo and San Gabriel mountains, which are only two miles distant. It is a very important natural area for animals and plants species that go between the Santa Monica and San Gabriel mountains. Because of its large acreage, Griffith Park maintains sizable populations of biological communities, even top predators, such as bobcats. Griffith Park is teetering between becoming an island of

			natural habitat in a metropolis and maintaining connections to the rest of the Santa Monica Mountains to the west.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	Griffith Park is the easternmost extent of the Santa Monica Mountains, and a stepping stone to the Verdugo and San Gabriel Mountains, which are only two miles distant. It is a very important natural area for animals and plants species that go between the Santa Monica and San Gabriel mountains. Because of its large acreage, Griffith Park maintains sizable populations of biological communities, even top predators, such as bobcats. Griffith Park is teetering between becoming an island of natural habitat in a metropolis and maintaining connections to the rest of the Santa Monica Mountains to the west.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	Griffith Park has extensive areas of coastal chaparral and is an island of refuge for native animals in the Santa Monica Mountains. Its mosaic of habitats includes coastal sage scrub, riparian areas, and southern oak woodland. The mosaic of habitats is especially valuable to preserve. Griffith Park is in the City of Los Angeles and protected in this respect, but no management plan preserves its natural habitat in perpetuity.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: D) concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds, which are limited in availability in the County; E) biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community; and F) areas that provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of original natural biotic communities in the County

9. Harbor Lake Regional Park SEA

Location

General

The Harbor Lake Regional Park Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located [within Kenneth Malloy Harbor Regional Park] in the Harbor City community of the City of Los Angeles, which is approximately 15 miles south of downtown Los Angeles and just west of the Interstate-110. The Lake is named "Machado Lake." The SEA supports one of three remaining wetlands that once covered the southern and western areas of the Los Angeles Basin. The SEA supports significant areas of aquatic and terrestrial plant communities, which provide habitat to a variety of birds and wildlife.

The site is located in the Torrance Quadrangle of the United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5 Minute Map Series (USGS, 1964).

General Boundary and Resources Description

The SEA boundaries encompass the lake areas that contribute to the biological function of the Harbor Lake ecosystem. It is bordered to the north by the Pacific Coast Highway, but includes a small segment of drainage, the Wilmington Drain ("Bixby Slough") north of Pacific Coast Highway. The slough is a secluded marsh that supports wildlife and waterfowl common to marsh areas. Thirty-five species of native birds have been observed breeding in the Wilmington Drain and a large number of interesting vagrants are recorded from this area. Following the Wilmington Drain segment, the boundary travels east along the south side of Pacific Coast Highway and south along the east boundary of Harbor Regional Park to the Harbor Park Municipal Golf Course. The SEA goes east to a parking area for the golf course. The golf course is included as ETA to emphasize the need to keep this area green. Wildlife from the adjacent woodlands use the golf course to transit between natural areas of the park in a less-populated area. The ETA boundary of the SEA includes the greens and excludes parking areas around the periphery of the golf course. The SEA goes west along the boundary of the natural riparian woodland of the park and golf course and then southwest along the boundary of marsh habitats of the park and the golf course. At the south end of the golf course, the SEA boundary goes generally southeast along the periphery of park and developed environment, much of it along the outer southern boundary of Los Angeles Harbor College. The SEA stops at the college southern frontage paved area, then turns west along Anaheim Street with the park boundary, excludes a graded and cleared area of the park in the southwest corner, and then goes with the park boundary north along Vermont Avenue to the Pacific Coast Highway. At the Pacific Coast Highway, the SEA boundary goes with the park boundary to the Wilmington Drain. Machado Lake is chiefly bordered by native marsh vegetation of cattails, rushes, reeds, and mulefat with some invasive giant cane (*Arundo donax*) and upland native riparian forest, which primarily consists of willows. The exception to the natural vegetation is along Vermont Avenue where lawns are maintained between parking areas and the lake for public recreation and picnicking. The bird species list has over 330 species, and the area is used by migrant birds on the Pacific Flyway during the spring and fall migration periods. The SEA lies generally west of the Interstate-110.

The SEA encompasses regionally unique areas, including one of three remaining wetlands that once covered the South Bay area. The freshwater plants and animals found here are completely surrounded by residential and industrial facilities. This type of habitat has been filled, drained, and lost to development throughout most of the County. In some areas, man-made lakes and ponds have created small freshwater marshes along their edges, but this is minimal in comparison to the large expanses of freshwater marsh that were once found in the Los Angeles Basin.

Freshwater marsh habitat supports a great diversity of wildlife. Most of the bird species found here are dependent in some way on the surface moisture and vegetation, and would not be able to survive without it. It is also a habitat that supports several species of amphibians. Frogs and toads can be found here that are becoming extremely difficult to find throughout Southern California. The marsh is also an important area for migratory birds. Because Harbor Lake Regional Park and Madrona Marsh are the only habitat of this type in the southern portion of the County, they serve as small scale wildlife refuges. Waterfowl, shorebirds, marsh birds, and others can be found on the marsh in numbers during the spring and fall migration.

Vegetation

The SEA encompasses southern cottonwood-willow riparian forest, southern willow scrub, mulefat scrub, Venturan coastal sage chaparral scrub, "modified" coastal freshwater marsh, vernal marsh, and non-native grassland. Immediately bordering Machado Lake are emergent wetland species, such as bulrushes, cattails, and non-native water primroses (*Ludwigia peploides*). Also within the SEA are ornamental grasses, mature non-native trees, exotic invasive plant species. The coastal freshwater marsh and vernal marshes margins support limited densities of native grasses, but these do not form separate communities and are included within the vernal pool floral matrix. Plant species observed or recorded in previous documentation within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium of the Los Angeles County SEAs*, in addition to other studies conducted for the specific area. Sensitive plant species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Descriptions and general locations of the each plant community present within the SEA are given below.

Southern Cottonwood-Willow Riparian Forest: An open broad-leafed winter-deciduous riparian forest dominated by Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), black willow (*Salix gooddingii*), and red willow (*S. laevigata*). This community occurs along moister sections of drainages, ponds, and lakes.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Populus fremontii* (Fremont cottonwood woodlands) Forest Alliance
- *Salix gooddingii* (black willow thickets) Woodland Alliance
- *Salix laevigata* (red willow thickets) Woodland Alliance

Southern Willow Scrub: A riparian community consisting of dense, broad-leafed, winter-deciduous riparian thickets occurring within and adjacent to watercourses. The dominant species of this community within the SEA are arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*) with lesser amounts of mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*). This community occurs in along less moist portions of drainages as well as the periphery of ponds and lakes.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Salix exigua* (sandbar willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salix lasiolepis* (arroyo willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance

Mulefat Scrub: A thicket occurring in seasonally and intermittently flooded habitats in riparian corridors or along lake margins.

Corresponding MCV Community:

- *Baccharis salicifolia* (mulefat thicket) Shrubland Alliance

Freshwater Marsh: Develops in areas of still or slow-moving permanent freshwater. This community is dominated by the perennial, emergent monocot cattails, which reach a height of four to five meters and often form a closed canopy. Bulrushes are dominant below the cattail canopy. Freshwater marsh is relatively uncommon; it occurs in small patches in natural or created sinks with water sources.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Lepidium latifolium* (perennial pepper weed patches) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Eleocharis macrostachya* (pale spike rush marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Schoenoplectus californicus* (California bulrush marsh) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Typha* (*angustifolia*, *domingensis*, *latifolia*) (cattail marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Juncus arcticus* (var. *balticus*, *mexicanus*) (Baltic and Mexican rush marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Juncus effusus* (soft rush marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Lemna* (*minor*) *and relatives* (duckweed blooms) Provisional Herbaceous Alliance

Vernal Pool Sites: Occur in several different areas within the SEA where unique sub-surface conditions of shallow layers of less permeable horizons allow for seasonal accumulations of freshwater. True vernal pools, which are rare in Southern California and extremely rare in the County, form seasonally in shallow, closed basins, usually where a lens of heavy clay soil holds surface water following rainfall events.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Eleocharis macrostachya* (pale spike rush marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Juncus arcticus* (var. *balticus*, *mexicanus*) (Baltic and Mexican rush marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Juncus* (*oxymeris*, *xiphioides*) (iris-leaf rush seeps) Provisional Herbaceous Alliance

Non-Native Grassland: Consists of dominant invasive annual grasses that are primarily of Mediterranean origin. Dominant species found within this community include wild oat (*Avena fatua*), slender oat, red brome, ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), and herbs such as black mustard and wild radish.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Avena* (*barbata*, *fatua*) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Brassica* (*nigra*) and other mustards Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus* (*diandrus*, *hordeaceus*)-*Brachypodium distachyon* Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus rubens-Schismus* (*arabicus*, *barbatus*) [*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*] Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Lolium perenne* [*Festuca perennis*] (perennial rye grass fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands

Venturan Coastal Sage Chaparral Scrub: Described as present and is characterized by the summer drought deciduous vegetation found near the Southern California coast south of Ventura County of low, mostly soft-woody shrubs with bare ground underneath and between shrubs. This community is dominated by California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*), and California brittle bush (*Encelia californica*).

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica* (California sagebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Salvia mellifera* (California sagebrush-black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Encelia californica* (California brittle bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia mellifera* (black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lotus scoparius* [*Acmispon glaber*] (deer weed scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Wildlife

Wildlife diversity and abundance within the SEA is moderate, commensurate with the relative homogeneity of the natural open space habitat types. Wildlife within much of the SEA is comprised of species typically occurring within freshwater and vernal pools. Birds of prey frequently forage over the pools and open grasslands, which form following the seasonal drying of the surface water. The Harbor Lake Regional Park vernal pools provide rare surface water habitat for wildlife in an otherwise developed region, and the ponds attract moderate numbers and diversity of migratory waterfowl. A number of local wildlife species are strictly limited to seasonal pool habitats. The vernal pool system in the Harbor Lake and also those in nearby Madrona Marsh Preserve SEA constitute the only local functional ecosystems of this unique type for wildlife species.

Freshwater marsh habitat supports a great diversity of wildlife. Most of the bird species found here are dependent in some way on the surface moisture and vegetation, and would not be able to survive without it. It is also a habitat that supports several species of amphibians. Frogs and toads can be found here that are becoming extremely difficult to find throughout Southern California. The marsh is also an important area for migratory birds. Because Harbor Lake Regional Park and Madrona Marsh are the only habitat of this type in the southern portion of the County, they serve as small-scale wildlife refuges. Waterfowl, shorebirds, marsh birds, and others can be found on the marsh in numbers during the spring and fall migration.

Coastal sage chaparral scrub habitats with persistent surface hydrology during the breeding season supports abundant populations of Baja California chorus frog (*Pseudacris hypochondriaca*), California toad (*Anaxyrus halophillus*), and western spadefoot (*Spea hammondii*). At least two species of salamander may also be present within more mesic portions of the surrounding canyons and chaparral.

Bird diversity within the SEA is related to habitat opportunities for year-round residents, seasonal residents, migrating raptors and song birds. Open coastal sage chaparral scrub hosts a suite of birds that

are typical of such sites at lower elevations over most of the coastal slopes of Southern California. The most productive sites for resident coastal sage chaparral scrub birds are around riparian and freshwater systems, which attract large numbers of migrants during the spring and fall. The vernal pools attract moderate numbers of migrating waders and waterfowl, and provide important winter foraging areas for resident and migratory birds of prey. Birds of prey typically observed around vernal pools include red-tailed hawk and American kestrel.

Wildlife species previously recorded, as well as those expected to occur, within the study area are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium* of the *Los Angeles County SEAs*. Sensitive wildlife species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Wildlife Movement

The vernal pools situated within this SEA serve as isolated, high-quality habitat and linkage resource for migratory waterfowl. The vernal pools teem with arthropod and amphibian activity, and provide essential feeding grounds for long-distance migrants, as well as for resident species of reptiles, birds and mammals. The SEA does not lie within any identified terrestrial movement routes for wildlife.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition.

The SEA is configured to encompass the regionally significant vernal pools and coastal sage chaparral scrub watershed. Changes to the classification system in some cases divides plant communities into many possible vegetation alliances, not all of which may be considered sensitive. For the purposes here previously listed communities with a least one sensitive alliance in the new format have been listed.

Sensitive Plant Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. The SEA is configured to encompass regionally significant communities, which include Fremont cottonwood woodlands, black willow thickets, iris-leaf rush seeps, California brittle bush scrub, and all vernal pool sites. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section.

Sensitive Plant Species

The statuses of rare plants are hierarchically categorized by the CNPS using a rank and decimal system. The initial category level of Rare Plant Rank is indicated by the ranks 1A (presumed extinct in California), 1B (rare or endangered in California and elsewhere), 2 (rare or endangered in California but more common elsewhere), 3 (more information needed, a review list), and 4 (limited distribution). In cases where the CNPS has further identified the specific threat to the species, a decimal or Threat Code is added: .1 (seriously endangered in California), .2 (fairly endangered in California), or .3 (not very endangered in California).

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Aphanisma (*Aphanisma blitoides*) RPR 1B.1
- Ventura marsh milk-vetch (*Astragalus pycnostachyus* var. *lanosissimus*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Coulter's saltbush (*Atriplex coulteri*) RPR 1B.2
- South Coast saltscale (*Atriplex pacifica*) RPR 1B.2
- Parish's brittlescale (*Atriplex parishii*) RPR 1B.1
- Davidson's saltscale (*Atriplex serenana* var. *davidsonii*) RPR 1B.2
- Southern tarplant (*Centromadia parryi* ssp. *australis*) RPR 1B.1
- Salt marsh bird's-beak (*Chloropyron maritimum* ssp. *maritimum*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.2
- Mud nama (*Nama stenocarpum*) RPR 2.2
- Moran’s navarretia (*Navarretia fossalis*) FT, RPR 1B.1
- Prostrate vernal pool navarretia (*Navarretia prostrata*) RPR 1B.1
- Estuary seablite (*Suaeda esteroa*) RPR 1B.2
- San Bernardino aster (*Symphyotrichum defoliatum*) RPR 1B.2
- Vernal barley (*Hordeum intercedens*) RPR 3.2
- California Orcutt grass (*Orcuttia californica*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or are likely to be present within the SEA based on habitat requirements and known range attributes:

- Vernal pool fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta lynchi*) FT
- San Diego fairy shrimp (*Branchinecta sandiegonensis*) FE
- Riverside fairy shrimp (*Streptocephalus woottoni*) FE
- Mimic tryonia (*Tryonia imitator*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Silvery legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra pulchra*) FSS, SSC
- Western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*) BCC, BLMS, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) FE, FSS, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Belding’s savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi*) SE
- Bank swallow (*Riparia riparia*) ST
- Western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Silver-haired bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*) WBWG Medium
- South coast marsh vole (*Microtus californicus stephensi*) SSC
- Pocketed free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops femorosaccus*) SSC, WBWG Medium

- Big free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops macrotis*) SSC, WBWG Medium-High
- Pacific pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris pacificus*) FE, SSC
- Southern California saltmarsh shrew (*Sorex ornatus salicornicus*) SSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

The Harbor Park Municipal Golf Course is an ETA within this SEA.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets several SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met is described below.

CRITERIA ANALYSIS OF THE HARBOR LAKE REGIONAL PARK SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Not Met	This SEA does not contain habitat that supports a core population
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	SEA supports a sizeable lake with a freshwater marsh along its northern, eastern and southern shores and the Bixby Slough, habitats that once covered the South Bay area. This type of habitat has been filled, drained, and lost to development throughout most of Southern California.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution	Met	Harbor Lake Regional Park is one of three remaining wetlands with freshwater marsh in the County. (The others are Madrona Marsh and recreated Ballona Freshwater Marsh, which are also in SEAs.) This type of habitat once covered much of the southern and western Los Angeles Basin area, and supports several species of amphibians including frogs and toads that are becoming rare throughout Southern California.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in County.	Met	Harbor Lake Regional Park and its marshes is an important area for migratory birds. The list of number of bird species seen has over 330 species. Freshwater marshes are important breeding areas for a number of birds and amphibian species.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific	Met	The Harbor Lake freshwater marsh has

	interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.		attracted considerable attention from the academic and scientific communities, and the resources of the area are well documented and continue to be studied.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	The freshwater marsh is a good example of the freshwater marshes that used to occur along the fault lines of the Los Angeles Basin.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: B-C) a sizeable lake with a freshwater marsh along its eastern shore and the Bixby Slough, habitats that once covered the South Bay area. This type of habitat has been filled, drained, and lost to development throughout most of Southern California and the County. Three of these habitats remain in the County; D) the Harbor Lake Regional Park is habitat that serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, and migrating grounds and is limited in availability both regionally and in the County; E) the Harbor Lake freshwater marsh has attracted considerable attention from the academic and scientific communities, and the resources of the area are well documented and continue to be studied; and F) the freshwater marsh is a good example of the freshwater marshes that used to occur along the fault lines of the Los Angeles Basin.

10. Joshua Tree Woodlands SEA

Location

General

The Joshua Tree Woodlands Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located in the western portion of the Antelope Valley west and northwest of the Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve in an unincorporated area of the County. This SEA encompasses many of the remaining old-growth stands of Joshua trees (*Yucca brevifolia*) on the west side of the Antelope Valley. Joshua tree woodland is a complex biological community of the gradual slopes of higher elevation desert areas that once covered much of this part of the Antelope Valley around the Antelope Wash. Joshua trees only occur within the Mojave Desert, and the County population is the western extreme location for the species.

Because Joshua trees live in areas that are easily developed for residences and agriculture, this habitat has become very fragmented in the County. The SEA consists of eight separate units, seven of which are in close proximity to each other between the Kern-Los Angeles County line to the north, and the California Aqueduct and Fairmont Butte to the south. The eighth unit is in an arroyo on the north side of the principal western ridgeline of Liebre Mountain, which is near the furthest western extent of Joshua tree woodland in Southern California. This woodland is located partially within the Angeles National Forest, and east and adjacent to the Interstate-5. The eighth unit is bordered on three sides by the San Andreas SEA.

All of the SEA except unit 8 is designated as the Antelope Valley Globally Important Bird Area (IBA) by the California Audubon. This part of the Antelope Valley is very important as a resource area that supports spring and fall migration of birds, from the small passerines to the larger raptors, such as the state-threatened Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) and turkey vultures (*Cathartes aura*). The Joshua tree woodland is a very important resource to these migrations by supplying perches and food for these animals on their journeys. The SEA is near the San Andreas SEA, the Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve, the Arthur B. Ripley Desert Woodland State Park, and the County George F. Bones Desert Pines Wildlife Reserve; however, many of these areas are not contiguous with one another nor with the SEA. Unit 2 of the SEA includes much of the Arthur B. Ripley Desert Woodland State Park. Unit 8 of the SEA is contiguous with the San Andreas SEA.

Fragmentation is a concern because the Joshua trees depend on a small moth for reproduction. Only two species of moth can successfully pollinate Joshua trees, and in the SEA, there is only the yucca moth (*Tegeticula synthetica*). The moth may have limited dispersal abilities, and the Joshua trees cannot reproduce from seeds without pollination from this particular moth. Cross pollination is regarded as essential to a species' genetic diversity, which is essential to adaptation to environmental change.

The Joshua trees in the seven units have the growth form of the lower elevation woodlands of the flatter areas, and somewhat spaced from one another and less clumped. The Joshua trees in the eighth unit have a growth form that is more common in the hilly areas, where the individuals sprout from

connected rhizomes and are clumped. Many times, these clumps are clones, with individuals all sharing the same genetic identity.

The SEA is located at least partially in each of the following United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Quadrangles: Neenach School, Fairmont Butte, Black Mountain, and Lebec.

General Boundary and Resources Description

The SEA is composed of eight units. The overall boundaries are as follows: The western boundary for units 1-7 terminates at 220th Street West (the border between Ranges 15W and 16W). The eastern boundary is 145th Street West. The northern boundary is on Avenue A at the Kern-Los Angeles County line. The southern boundary straddles the California Aqueduct, touches the Los Angeles Aqueduct, and is approximately on Avenue F. The southernmost area is located close to the foothills of the western San Gabriel Mountains.

Unit 1: The northernmost unit is bounded by Avenue A on the Kern-Los Angeles County line on the north between 200th Street West and approximately on 218th Street West. It extends irregularly to the south along a desert wash contour, about a 0.7 mile at its greatest extent. The current southern boundary is determined by agricultural clearing. This unit has a Joshua tree woodland with many shrub components of the biological community intact, including a floor covered by the wildflower goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata*) in the spring.

Unit 2: Another unit is located between Avenue C to the north and Avenue F to the south (straddling part of State Route-138 on Avenue D and part of Lancaster Road on Avenue E), and east to west from about 200th Street to about 220th Street West. Clearance in various parcel units accounts for this unit's irregular shape. Agricultural clearing on both sides of the Antelope Wash has separated this unit from unit 1 to the north. The intervening area is a broad wash plain with rich alluvial soils. The former agricultural fields may now become fields of photovoltaic panels to generate renewable energy. This unit has a southern square mile that straddles the California Aqueduct and touches the Los Angeles Aqueduct at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains. In the northern area, this unit has old-growth Joshua tree woodlands on a rocky ridge that grades into stands of Joshua trees and woodland that includes California junipers (*Juniperus californica*) in flatter areas toward the south. The southern and eastern parts of this unit overlap with much of the Arthur B. Ripley Desert Woodland State Park. The California Aqueduct is open in this area and is an important resource for bird migration along the desert slopes of the western San Gabriel Mountains, particularly waterfowl. The Los Angeles Aqueduct is generally in concrete pipe for most of its extent, and in this area, is covered by a berm and road. A colony of burrowing owls (*Athene cunicularia*), which is a state species of special concern, was discovered during surveys for an adjacent photovoltaic panel development, and probably other colonies or individuals of the owl live within this unit.

Unit 3: Another unit is located between Avenue D to the north and Avenue E to the south, and between 190th Street and 195th Street West. It is on the broad outwash alluvial area of Kings Canyon and adjacent drainages. This outwash area is somewhat blocked by the aqueducts, but both aqueducts are provided with underpass channels for outflow of the canyons onto the desert floor. The SEA includes a central

cleared area that is regenerating the Joshua tree woodland and a residence with less than 40 acres cleared. The area next to Avenue D that has been cleared of Joshua trees is not included.

Unit 4: The square mile between Avenue C and Avenue D, and between 180th Street and 190th Street West has a good stand of Joshua tree and juniper woodland. This is also in the Kings Canyon alluvial wash area. There is a known area of Joshua tree regeneration to the east that is not included in the SEA.

Unit 5: The quarter square mile between Avenue C-5 and Avenue E, and between 180th Street and 185th Street West, is also on the Kings Canyon alluvial wash area and has a good stand of Joshua tree and juniper woodland.

Units 6: An area of a little over one-eighth square mile is located at the corners of both units 4 and 5. It is between Avenues D and E and between 180th Street and what would be 174th Street West. This is also in the Kings Canyon alluvial wash area and has a good stand of Joshua tree and juniper woodland.

Unit 7: A large irregular unit is located roughly between Avenue B, Avenue C5, 145th Street and 180th Street West. It has an extensive area of Joshua tree-juniper woodland that grades into stands of Joshua trees towards the east. There is a known area of Joshua tree regeneration in former agricultural fields between 160th Street West and 170th Street West that is not included in the SEA. The alluvial wash in the SEA is a combined area of outflow from Kings Canyon, unnamed canyons, and Broad Canyon.

Unit 8: The eighth unit is in an arroyo on the north side of the principal western ridgeline of Liebre Mountain, which is near the furthest western extent of Joshua tree woodland in Southern California. This woodland is located partially within the Angeles National Forest. It is east and adjacent to the Interstate-5. The eighth unit is bordered on three sides by the San Andreas SEA. This woodland has the clonal growth that is typical of Joshua trees in hilly areas.

The SEA is located primarily on the western Antelope Valley floor between the Tehachapi Mountains and the western San Gabriel Mountains. The topography of the SEA is extremely flat with the land sloping less than 200 feet in approximately five miles. The location and orientation of the SEA represents a matrix of remnant stands of Joshua tree woodland among a patchwork of disturbed areas. Nearly all of the land within the SEA is undisturbed and vegetated. Most of the land surrounding the SEA is disturbed by agricultural use, and also has some scattered rural residences. The SEA is entirely withiin the unincorporated area of the County.

Vegetation

Vegetation within the SEA is limited to a few communities with relatively few species. However, the dominant community, the Joshua tree woodland, is in good condition throughout most of the SEA and includes many mature stands. Plant species observed or recorded in previous documentation within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium of the Los Angeles County SEAs.* Sensitive plant species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Descriptions and general locations of the each plant community present within the SEA, including desert scrub, non-native grassland, Joshua tree woodland, juniper woodland, and disturbed are given below.

Desert Scrub: A moderately tall, fairly open shrubland with several species contributing to the canopy. Dominants often include Great Basin sagebrush, antelope bush, saltbush, and/or rabbitbrush, with several perennial grasses dispersed between the shrubs. Within the SEA, this community intergrades with Joshua tree woodlands.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia tridentata* (big sagebrush) Shrubland Alliance
- *Acacia greggii* (catclaw acacia thorn scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ericameria nauseosa* (rubber rabbitbrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ephedra californica* (California joint fir scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Yucca brevifolia* (Joshua tree woodland) Woodland Alliance
- *Grayia spinosa* (spiny hop sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Gutierrezia sarothrae* (broom snake weed scrub) Provisional Shrubland Alliance
- *Purshia tridentata* (bitter bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Grassland Communities: Consist of low, herbaceous vegetation that are dominated by grasses, but generally also harbor native forbs and bulbs, as well as naturalized annual forbs. Grasslands within the SEA consist of non-native grasslands alone. Non-native grassland consists of dominant invasive annual grasses that are primarily of Mediterranean origin. Dominant species found within this community include slender oats, wild oat (*Avena fatua*), ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), red brome (*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*), goldentop (*Lamarckia aurea*), *Schismus*, and wild mustard. Non-native grasslands are located in small patches that interming with Joshua tree woodland throughout the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Avena* (*barbata*, *fatua*) (wild oats grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Brassica* (*nigra*) and other Mustards (upland mustards) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus* (*diandrus*,*hordeaceus*)-*Brachypodium distachyon* (annual brome grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus rubens-Schismus* (*arabicus*, *barbatus*) ([*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*] red brome or Mediterranean grass grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Centaurea* (*solstitialis*, *melitensis*) (yellow star-thistle fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands

Joshua Tree Woodland: An open woodland with Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*), usually as the only arborescent species with numerous smaller shrub species interspersed between. Shrub species include Great Basin sagebrush, antelope bush, saltbush, rabbit brush, and creosote bush. Joshua tree woodland occupies approximately 95 percent of the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Yucca brevifolia* (Joshua tree woodland) Woodland Alliance

Juniper Woodland: An open woodland dominated by California juniper (*Juniperus californicus*), with an understory that is typical of desert scrub. This community is dominant in a few areas within the SEA, but is usually loosely scattered within the Joshua tree woodland.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Juniperus californica* (California juniper woodland) Woodland Alliance

Disturbed or Barren Areas: Areas that either completely lack vegetation or are dominated by ruderal species. Ruderal vegetation typically found within the SEA includes non-native grasses and "weedy" herbaceous species, native and non-native, including doveweed (*Croton setigerus*), mustards, telegraph weed (*Heterotheca grandiflora*), Russian-thistle (*Salsola tragus*), dock (*Rumex* spp.), yellow star-thistle (*Centaurea solstitialis*), Australian saltbush (*Atriplex semibaccata*), and cocklebur (*Xanthium strumarium*). Disturbed areas occur throughout the SEA around active agriculture and residential developments, along paved roads, dirt access roads, and other similarly disturbed areas.

Corresponding MCV communities:

None at this time.

Wildlife

Wildlife populations within the SEA reflect somewhat lower diversity and abundance for the habitat types present due to the small size of the SEA areas, the homogeneity of the topography and habitat, and influences of edge effect from surrounding agricultural land uses. An assessment of invertebrate populations is made difficult due to the lack of data, but the SEA is sure to include more common species in fair numbers. Amphibian populations are generally scarce in desert communities and no riparian habitat is available within the SEA. Many essential reptilian habitat characteristics such as open habitats that allow free movement and high visibility and small mammal burrows for cover and escape from predators and extreme weather are present within the SEA. These characteristics, as well as the availability of fallen and decomposing woody material, are likely to support a wide variety of reptilian species. The viviparous desert night lizard (*Xantusia vigilis*) occurs almost exclusively in association with Joshua tree debris and debris of other desert floor yuccas.

The scrubland, woodland, and grassland habitats in the SEA provide foraging and cover habitat for year-round resident and seasonal resident song birds. In addition, the SEA encompasses abundant raptor foraging, perching, and nesting habitat. The combination of these resources provide for a diversity of bird species.

Mammal populations are suggested to also reflect the generally disturbed environs influencing this SEA. Small mammals are expected to be uneven in their diversity with more adaptive species and introduced European species being in high numbers compared to others. Medium sized mammal populations are expected to exhibit the same characteristics. Large mammals are largely absent on a resident basis.

All wildlife species previously recorded, as well as those expected to occur, within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium* of the *Los Angeles County SEAs*. Sensitive wildlife species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Wildlife Movement

Wildlife movement within the SEA is possibly limited to local movement, but large-scale movement across the Antelope Valley floor is probably much facilitated by the Joshua tree habitat as island-like

stepping stones. Typically in burned-over areas, animal paths tend to orient toward the Joshua tree habitat. Birds, and possibly bats, and other aerial organisms that use the migration corridor along the desert side of the San Gabriel Mountains probably use the woodland in the SEA for resting and feeding. Animals foraging within the SEA are unlikely to occur in concentrated numbers due to the heterogeneity of the topography and habitat of the SEA. However, local movement to and from the different SEA areas, as well as to and from the San Gabriel Mountains and the Tehachapi Mountains may be restricted due to the disturbed nature of the Antelope Valley floor. Wildlife movement is likely to converge in areas where movement is still possible, which produces concentrated movement areas or "bottlenecks."

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition.

Sensitive Plant Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. These include California joint fir scrub, Joshua tree woodland, spiny hop sage scrub, broom snake weed scrub, and bitter bush scrub. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section.

In addition, CDFG is concerned with the status of California juniper woodland within the Antelope Valley, and this community is therefore considered sensitive within the County.

Sensitive Plant Species

The statuses of rare plants are hierarchically categorized by the CNPS using a rank and decimal system. The initial category level of Rare Plant Rank is indicated by the ranks 1A (presumed extinct in California), 1B (rare or endangered in California and elsewhere), 2 (rare or endangered in California but more common elsewhere), 3 (more information needed, a review list), and 4 (limited distribution). In cases where the CNPS has further identified the specific threat to the species, a decimal or Threat Code is added: .1 (seriously endangered in California), .2 (fairly endangered in California), or .3 (not very endangered in California).

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Peirson's morning-glory (*Calystegia peirsonii*) RPR 4.2
- Clokey's cryptantha (*Cryptantha clokeyi*) RPR 1B.2
- Short joint beavertail (*Opuntia basilaris* var. *brachyclada*) RPR 1B.2

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or are likely to be present within the SEA based on habitat requirements and known range attributes:

- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*) BCC, BLMS, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) BCC, BLMS, SSC
- Ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*) BCC, BLMS, CDFG Watch List, AWL, LAA
- Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) BCC, FSS, ST, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Mountain plover (*Charadrius montanus*) BCC, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) CDFG Watch List
- Prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*) BCC, CDFG Watch List, LAA
- American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) BCC, FSS, SE, CDF, CDFG Fully Protected, AWL, ABC
- California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) FE, SE, CDF, CDFG Fully Protected, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) BCC, SSC, LAA
- Le Conte's thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*) BCC, BLMS, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC, LAA
- Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*) WBWG Medium
- Tehachapi pocket mouse (*Perognathus alticolus inexpectatus*) FSS, SSC
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) SSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

There are no ETAs designated within this SEA.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets several SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met described below.

CRITERIA ANALYSIS OF THE JOSHUA TREE WOODLANDS SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Not Met	Although there are several listed species that occur within the SEA, this criterion is not met due to the lack of known core population areas.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	The SEA contains large patches of undisturbed Joshua tree woodland habitat, which has become increasingly rare in the region.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities,	Met	As stated above, Joshua tree woodlands have

	vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution		become rare in the region, and are even more rare in the County.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	The habitat within the SEA has been studied for how it may serve as a concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating ground for any species. Some cross-desert migratory routes depend, in part, on the cover and habitat of the Joshua tree woodland. The units 1-7 of the SEA on the Antelope Valley floor are in a globally IBA, known as a bird migration route. The Joshua tree woodland is an important component of resources that supports this migration.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	Due to the scarcity of Joshua tree woodland, specimens of the quality found in the SEA are important to science and have become living laboratories. The SEA contains the most westerly extent of this habitat type.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	The Joshua tree woodland contained within the SEA is an excellent example of this community type.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: B-C) Joshua tree woodland, a rare community both regionally and within the County; D) habitat important to breeding, feeding, and migration; E) the geographic limit of Joshua tree woodland; and F) an excellent undisturbed example of Joshua tree woodland.

11. Madrona Marsh Preserve SEA

Location

General

The Madrona Marsh Preserve Significant Ecological Area (SEA) lies on the northeast corner of Madrona Avenue and Sepulveda Boulevard, within the City of Torrance. The SEA boundaries encompass the natural part of the Madrona Marsh Preserve, which is a remnant of one of the last natural vernal wetlands in the County. Vernal marshes fill in the rainy season (winter and spring in our area) and dry completely by the end of summer. They are heavily used by migrant birds in the spring, and in the fall if rains are early. They usually have other resident flora and fauna that are specially adapted to the seasonal cycle of wetting and gradual complete dessication.

The SEA is located within the Torrance United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Quadrangle.

General Boundary and Resources Description

The SEA boundaries generally follow the Madrona Marsh Preserve boundary, which is surrounded by urban development. The Madrona Marsh Preserve is a park of the City of Torrance that is situated to the west of Maple Avenue, north of West Sepulveda Boulevard, east of Madrona Avenue and directly south of Plaza Del Amo. The Madrona Marsh Nature Center has offices and visitor activities to the north of Plaza Del Amo. The Nature Center supports an active volunteer and educational program for natural areas in this part of the Los Angeles Basin.

The SEA supports one of three remaining freshwater wetlands that once covered much of the southern and western Los Angeles Basin area. In the lowland are vernal marshes and an alkaline margin, and the upland supports a back dune system and vernal pools.

The freshwater plants and animals found here are completely surrounded by residential development and industrial facilities. This type of habitat has been filled, drained, and lost to development throughout most of the County. In some areas, man-made lakes and ponds have created small freshwater marshes along their edges, but this is minimal in comparison to the large expanses of freshwater marsh that were once found in the Los Angeles Basin.

Freshwater marsh habitat supports a great diversity of wildlife. Most of the bird species are dependent in some way on the surface moisture and vegetation, and would not be able to survive without it. It is also a habitat that supports several species of amphibians. Frogs and toads can be found here that are becoming extremely difficult to find throughout Southern California. The marsh is also an important area for migratory birds. Over 150 bird species have been recorded as using Madrona Marsh. Because the remnant freshwater marshes like Madrona Marsh are the only habitat of this type in southern portion of the County, they serve as miniature wildlife refuges. Kenneth Malloy Harbor Regional Park (Harbor Lake Regional Park SEA) and Ballona Freshwater Marsh (Ballona Wetlands SEA) are the two other freshwater marshes in this area.

Waterfowl, shorebirds, marsh birds, and others can be found on the marsh in numbers during the spring and fall migration.

Vegetation

The SEA encompasses formations of vernal pool aquatics and emergent species, alkaline marsh and coastal bluff and dune scrub. The vernal pool margins support limited densities of native grasses, but these do not form separate communities and are included within the vernal pool floral matrix. Sensitive plant species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Descriptions and general locations of the each plant community present within the SEA are given below.

Vernal Marsh: Develops in areas of still or slow-moving freshwater for 6 to 11 months of the year. This community is dominated by the perennial, emergent cattails (*Typha* spp.), which reach a height of four to five meters and often form a closed canopy. Bulrushes (*Schoenoplectus* spp.) are dominant below the cattail canopy. Vernal marsh is relatively uncommon; it occurs in small patches in natural or created sinks with water sources.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Phragmites australis* (common reed marshes) Herbaceous Alliance and Semi-Natural Stands
- *Lepidium latifolium* (perennial pepper weed patches) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Eleocharis macrostachya* (pale spike rush marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Schoenoplectus californicus* (California bulrush marsh) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Typha* (*angustifolia, domingensis, latifolia*) (cattail marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Sarcocornia* [*Salicornia*] *pacifica* (*Salicornia depressa*) (pickleweed mats) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Juncus articus* (var. *balticus*, *mexicanus*) [*Juncus balticus* ssp. *ater, J. mexicanus*] (Baltic and Mexican rush marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Juncus effusus* (soft rush marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Lemna* (*minor*) and relatives (duckweed blooms) Provisional Herbaceous Alliance

Vernal Pool Sites: Occur in several different areas within the SEA where unique sub-surface conditions of shallow layers of less permeable horizons allow for seasonal accumulations of freshwater. True vernal pools, which are rare in Southern California and extremely rare in the County, form seasonally in shallow, closed basins, usually where a lens of heavy clay soil holds surface water following rainfall events.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Eleocharis macrostachya* (pale spike rush marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Juncus arcticus* (var. *balticus*, *mexicanus*) [*Juncus balticus* ssp. *ater, J. mexicanus*] (Baltic and Mexican rush marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Juncus* (*oxymeris, xiphioides*) (iris-leaf rush seeps) Provisional Herbaceous Alliance

Alkali Marsh: Found on the margins of the vernal pools and is similar to the freshwater marsh, but with more salt-tolerant hydrophytes present. Species associated with this community include saltgrass (*Distichlis spicata*), mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), alkali mallow (*Malvella leprosa*), toadrush (*Juncus*

bufonis), spikeweed (*Centromadia pungens ssp. pungens*), cotton batting (*Gnaphalium stramineum*), and alkali heliotrope (*Heliotropium curassavicum var. oculatum*).

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Distichlis spicata* (salt grass flats) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Spartina foliosa* (California cordgrass marsh) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Arthrocnemum subterminale* (Parish's glasswort patches) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Atriplex lentiformis* (quailbush scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Coastal Bluff and Dune Scrub: Here is a remnant of the El Segundo Dune System that occupied coastal areas along much of the Santa Monica Bay. The system consists of fine, sandy soil that dries rapidly. Plants typical of the dune scrub include dune buckwheat (*Eriogonum parvifolium*), rattle pod (*Astragalus trichopodus var. lonchus*), bladderpod (*Peritoma arborea*), deer weed (*Acmispon glaber*), sawtooth goldenbush (*Hazardia aquarrosa*), and California sunflower (*Helianthus californicus*).

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Baccharis pilularis* (coyote brush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lupinus arboreus* (yellow bush lupine scrub) Shrubland Alliance and Semi-Natural Shrubland Stands
- *Lupinus chamissonis-Ericameria ericoides* (silver dune lupine–mock heather scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Wildlife

Wildlife diversity and abundance within the SEA is moderate, commensurate with the relative homogeneity of the natural open space habitat types. Wildlife within much of the SEA is comprised of species that typically occur within freshwater marsh and vernal pools. Birds of prey frequently forage over the pools and open grasslands, which form following the seasonal drying of the surface water. The Madrona Marsh vernal pools provide rare surface water habitat for wildlife in an otherwise developed region, and the ponds attract moderate numbers and diversity of migratory waterfowl. A number of local wildlife species are strictly limited to seasonal pool habitats. The vernal pool system in the Madrona Marsh and those in nearby Harbor Lake Regional Park SEA and the Ballona Wetlands freshwater marsh constitute the only local functional ecosystems of this unique type for wildlife species. The Madrona Marsh is the only one of these freshwater wetlands that has the yearly cycle of filling in the spring and complete dessication by late summer.

Analysis of invertebrates on any particular site usually is limited by a lack of specific data, but has sufficient acreage to support healthy populations of whatever invertebrate species are present, which is probably several hundred terrestrial species. The vernal pools, when ponded, form aquatic habitats for a moderately diverse fauna of freshwater arthropods and other invertebrates, including native fairy shrimp, aquatic flies, diving beetles, water scavengers, ostracods, and snails. Amphibians generally are relatively common in the pond. Frogs and toads are frequently seen.

Madrona Marsh, nearby Kenneth Malloy Harbor Regional Park, and Ballona freshwater marsh are the only habitats of this type in the southern portion of the County, and they serve as miniature wildlife

refuges for bird species of open fresh water, waterfowl, shorebirds, marsh birds, and others can all be found on the marsh in numbers during the spring and fall migration.

Wildlife Movement

The vernal pools situated within this SEA serve as an isolated, high-quality resource providing habitat linkage for migratory waterfowl. The vernal pools teem with arthropod and amphibian activity, and provide essential feeding grounds for long-distance migrants, as well as for resident species of reptiles, birds and mammals. The ponds do not lie within any identified terrestrial movement routes for wildlife.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition.

Sensitive Plant Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. The SEA is configured to encompass regionally significant communities, which include pickleweed mats, California cordgrass marsh, Parish's glasswort patches, silver dune lupine-mock heather scrub, and all vernal pools. These communities or closely related designations are considered highest priority communities by the CDFG, indicating that they are declining in acreage throughout their range due to land use changes. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section. Changes to the classification system in some cases divides plant communities into many possible vegetation alliances communities, not all of which may be considered sensitive. For the purposes here previously listed communities with a least one sensitive alliance in the new format have been listed.

Sensitive Plant Species

The statuses of rare plants are hierarchically categorized by the CNPS using a rank and decimal system. The initial category level of Rare Plant Rank is indicated by the ranks 1A (presumed extinct in California), 1B (rare or endangered in California and elsewhere), 2 (rare or endangered in California but more common elsewhere), 3 (more information needed, a review list), and 4 (limited distribution). In cases where the CNPS has further identified the specific threat to the species, a decimal or Threat Code is

added: .1 (seriously endangered in California), .2 (fairly endangered in the California), or .3 (not very endangered in the California).

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Aphanisma (*Aphanisma blitoides*) RPR 1B.1
- Ventura marsh milk-vetch (*Astragalus pycnostachyus var. lanosissimus*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Coastal dunes milk-vetch (*Astragalus tener var. titi*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Coulter's saltbush (*Atriplex coulteri*) RPR 1B.2
- South coast saltscale (*Atriplex pacifica*) RPR 1B.2
- Parish's brittlescale (*Atriplex parishii*) RPR 1B.1
- Davidson's saltscale (*Atriplex serenana var. davidsonii*) RPR 1B.2
- Southern tarplant (*Centromadia parryi ssp. australis*) RPR 1B.1
- Orcutt's pincushion (*Chaenactis glabriuscula var. orcuttiana*) RPR 1B.1
- Coastal goosefoot (*Chenopodium littoreum*) RPR 1B.2
- Salt marsh bird's-beak (*Chloropyron maritimum ssp. maritimum*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.2
- Beach spectaclepod (*Dithyrea maritima*) ST, RPR 1B.1
- Coulter's goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata ssp. coulteri*) RPR 1B.1
- Mud nama (*Nama stenocarpum*) RPR 2.2
- Moran’s navarretia (*Navarretia fossalis*) FT, RPR 1B.1
- Prostrate vernal pool navarretia (*Navarretia prostrata*) RPR 1B.1
- Coast woolly-heads (*Nemacaulis denudata var. denudata*) RPR 1B.2
- South coast branching phacelia (*Phacelia ramosissima var. austrolitoralis*) RPR 4.2
- Brand's star phacelia (*Phacelia stellaris*) FC, RPR 1B.1
- Ballona cinquefoil (*Potentilla multijuga*) RPR 1A
- Estuary seablite (*Suaeda esteroa*) RPR 1B.2
- Vernal barley (*Hordeum intercedens*) RPR 3.2
- California Orcutt grass (*Orcuttia californica*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or are likely to be present within the SEA based on habitat requirements and known range attributes:

- Mimic tryonia (*Tryonia imitator*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Belkin's dune tabanid fly (*Brennania belkini*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Busck's gallmoth (*Carolella busckana*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Sandy beach tiger beetle (*Cicindela hirticollis gravida*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Western beach tiger beetle (*Cicindela latesignata latesignata*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Senile tiger beetle (*Cicindela senilis frosti*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Globose dune beetle (*Coelus globosus*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Henne's eucosman moth (*Eucosma hennei*) CDFG Special Animals List
- El Segundo blue butterfly (*Euphilotes battoides allyni*) FE, Xerces: Critical
- Lange's El Segundo Dune weevil (*Onychobaris langei*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Wandering skipper (*Panoquina errans*) CDFG Special Animals List
- El Segundo flower-loving fly (*Rhaphiomidas terminatus terminatus*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Dorothy's El Segundo Dune weevil (*Trigonoscuta dorothea dorothea*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Silvery legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra pulchra*) FSS, SSC

- Western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Tricolored blackbird (*nesting colony*) (*Agelaius tricolor*) BCC, BLMS, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*) FT, BCC, SSC, ABC, AWL, USBC
- California black rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis coturniculus*) BCC, ST, CDFG Fully Protected, USBC, AWL, ABC (*all listings include full species*)
- Belding's savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi*) SE
- California least tern (*Sternula antillarum browni*) FE, SE, CDFG Fully Protected, USBC, ABC (*both listings include full species*)
- South coast marsh vole (*Microtus californicus stephensi*) SSC
- Pacific pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris pacificus*) FE, SSC
- Southern California saltmarsh shrew (*Sorex ornatus salicornicus*) SSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

There are no ETAs designated within this SEA.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets several SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met is described below.

Criteria Analysis of the Madrona Marsh Preserve SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Not Met	Not met, although the Madrona Marsh contains vernal pools, which may harbor threatened and endangered species in a unique location for the County.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	Madrona Marsh is one of three remaining wetlands with freshwater marsh in the County. (The others are Kenneth Malloy Harbor Regional Park and the Ballona Wetlands freshwater marsh.) This type of habitat once covered the South Bay area of the Los Angeles Basin, and supports several species of amphibians and vernal pools that are becoming rare throughout Southern California.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution	Met	Madrona Marsh is one of three remaining wetlands with freshwater marsh in the County. This type of habitat once covered the South Bay area, and supports several species of amphibians including frogs and toads that are becoming rare throughout Southern California. In addition it has some vernal pools, which are

			very rare in the County.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	Any natural wetland like the Madrona Marsh is an important area for amphibians, which need water for their aquatic larvae to complete their life cycle. The Marsh is very important for migratory birds as a waypoint during the spring and fall migration periods.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	Because the Madrona Marsh is one of only three remnants of the formerly extensive habitat, there is much interest in the local community and at academic and scientific institutions in preserving the area and acquiring adjacent habitat currently used for gas and oil extraction that can be restored to marsh habitat.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	The Madrona Marsh is a remnant of the freshwater marsh once prevalent in this area of the County, and it is important to recognize protection of the habitat.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: B-C) biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution in the County and regionally; D) concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, and migrating grounds, which are limited in availability in the County; E) unique habitat that is of scientific and educational value; and F) a very rare habitat of vernal marsh that has retained its unique yearly cycle.

12. Malibu Coastline SEA

Location

General

The Malibu Coastline Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located in the shoreline and offshore coastal area of Malibu, which is adjacent to the Santa Monica Mountains. The SEA supports significant areas of aquatic plant and other subtidal communities, which provide habitat for a variety of fishes, birds, marine mammals, and other wildlife. Rocky outcrops intermixed with sandy spaces are found to a depth of 600 feet, and the nearshore area down to about 100 feet depth is considered the most productive and dynamic of all the marine communities outside the tropics. All of the many offshore rocks within 12 nautical miles of the coast are part of the California Coastal National Monument that is managed by the Bureau of Land Management in the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The site is located in the Triunfo Pass, Point Dume, Malibu and Topanga Quadrangles of the United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5 Minute Map Series (USGS, 1964).

General Boundary and Resources Description

The SEA boundary encompasses parts of the shoreline and about a 0.8 mile offshore from Malibu. The SEA stretches between the Ventura-Los Angeles County line at Leo Carillo State Beach, all the way east to Topanga State Beach. The SEA is generally adjacent to the Santa Monica Mountains and Point Dume SEAs. Parts of the shore are included along many of the state beaches. The sandy beaches along this SEA are the least disturbed beaches of the County, some of them completely natural. This is the remnant of the typical rock and sand shoreline that once occurred all along the coast of Southern California. From Mugu Lagoon to Latigo Point (the County portion starting at the Ventura-Los Angeles County line), is an Area of Special Biological Significance (ASBS), which is a marine area designated by the State Water Resources Control Board as having exceptionally good water quality and natural community features. Populated and disturbed areas along the shore are largely in the City of Malibu and excluded from the SEA.

This area is a relatively undisturbed coastal region where the upwelling of nutrient-rich waters and a variety of habitats support highly productive and extremely diverse marine communities. The area possesses some of the best kelp bed habitat south of Santa Barbara, and supports the only remaining natural kelp beds off the mainland coast of the County. These kelp bed areas may be one hundred times more productive than adjacent sand bottom communities, and they provide refuge, food, and nursery grounds for thousands of species.

Rocky outcrops alternate with sandy stretches along this coastline and subtidally, outcrops are found to a depth of 600 feet. The stability of the substrate and the variety of exposures provide microhabitats for a great number of organisms. Characteristically, rocky shorelines from the lower intertidal zone to about 100 foot depth can be the most biologically active areas in the world. The adjacent Point Dume SEA is one of the few places that rocky intertidal habitat occurs between Palos Verdes Peninsula and Point

Mugu in Ventura County. The rocky tidepools off Point Dume, Big Rock Beach, and the promontory where Topanga Canyon Creek enters the ocean are some of the very best remaining rocky intertidal habitat in the County, and these are within the SEA. The Marine Life Protection Act designated protected area in Malibu to be the Point Dume State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) between El Matador State Beach west of Point Dume to the west side of Point Dume, which is approximately three miles of coastline, with the conservation area extending in due north-south lines from mean high tide to about three nautical miles offshore. In the SMCA, fishing is restricted to certain species. From the west side of Point Dume to Paradise Cove on the east side is designated as the Point Dume State Marine Reserve (SMR), which has no fishing or other take allowed, and extends in due north-south lines (adjacent to the SMCA on the west) from the intertidal to offshore, which is about three nautical miles.

This coastline possesses the only undisturbed sandy beaches that remain in the County. Although very dynamic in physical stability, there is a biological, subtidal, sand-bottom community that has a great diversity of resident organisms and invertebrates ranging from bacteria through jellyfish, mollusks, and echinoderms, such as seastars, to fishes that habitually choose the sand-bottom substrate. An important micro-community of decomposers is present. Sandy beaches with their diverse invertebrate communities of interstitial organisms provide feeding areas for many bird species. In addition, the soft substrate offers a repository for eggs and nursery grounds for many species, including the grunion (*Leuresthes tenuis*) that spawns and deposits its eggs in the highest intertidal areas of the sand. This shoreline remains in essentially a native state as a remnant of what once was typical of rock and sand shoreline in Southern California. Artificial modifications have been limited to small local areas. West of Point Dume, some minor pollution does occur, but the kelp is healthy. East of Point Dume there is minor to moderate pollution, and kelp does not grow below 35 feet.

The SEA has critical habitat for the federally-threatened western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*) along Zuma Beach and the northwest sandy area along Point Dume. This will eventually extend along the entire west side of the headland. The western snowy plover will also have critical habitat on the seaside of the barrier berm of the Malibu Lagoon. The snowy plover has over 300 individuals using the beaches of the County for winter roosts, and there is potential for some to over-summer and breed in the County after a hiatus of many decades (Ryan Ecological Consulting, 2010).

Vegetation

The terrestrial component of this marine oriented SEA is limited to the narrow stretch of beach just above the high tide line. Sensitive plant species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Coastal Strand Vegetation: A community that occurs in the loose sand just above the high tide line of the beach. This community is characterized by a low species diversity because few plants can tolerate the harsh conditions on this dry, sandy, saline soil of high winds, salt spray and high summer temperatures.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Abronia latifolia – Ambrosia* spp. (dune mat) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Cakile (edentula, maritima)* (sea rocket stands) Semi-Natural Provisional Herbaceous Alliance

Marine Resources

The Malibu coastline is a relatively undisturbed coastal region where the upwelling of nutrient-rich waters and a variety of habitats support highly productive and extremely diverse marine communities. The area possesses some of the best kelp bed habitat south of Santa Barbara, and the only remaining natural kelp beds on the mainline coast of the County. Rocky outcrops alternate with sandy stretches along this coastline and are found to a depth of 600 feet. This coastline also possesses the only undisturbed sandy beaches remaining in the County.

Surfgrass and Eelgrass Habitats: Characterized by two flowering plants that resemble grass and form dense beds on different substrates and in different conditions. Both types form highly productive habitats for unique assemblages of marine species. NOAA Fisheries and the CDFG consider surfgrass and eelgrass as valuable habitats that should be protected. Surfgrass occurs from Mean Lower Low Water (MLLW) to about 25 feet depth on rocky substrate. Locations known to support substantial surfgrass beds include rocky points and rocky subtidal areas of canyons all along the northern border of the SEA. Eelgrass grows on soft substrate and typically occurs in bays. A form of eelgrass (thought to be *Zostera pacifica)* is found on open coast sand bottom. Eelgrass is an important habitat that supports a community of diverse species from sessile to mobile invertebrates and certain fishes, such as pipefish. A subtidal eelgrass bed is in the lee of Lechuza Point between about 25 and 45 feet depth, and subtidal eelgrass may still occur off Los Alisos Canyon.

Community dominant plant:

- *Phyllospadix scouleri*, or Scouler's surf grass and *P. torrey* or Torrey's surfgrass
- *Zostera pacifica* (eelgrass)

Intertidal Zone Habitats: Consist of a variety of coastal habitats periodically covered and uncovered by waves and tides. The rocky shores support a rich assortment of plants and animals including green, brown, and red algae. A wide variety of sessile invertebrates compete for space with the plants in this habitat. Mobile invertebrates, such as crabs and snails, can be found in great abundance. Fishes are limited to tidepools, although grunion do spawn and deposit their eggs in the high tide wash areas of sandy beaches. The sandy beaches have a diverse community of interstitial invertebrates. Shorebirds actively forage during low tide in all kinds of shoreline habitats. The federally-endangered black abalone (*Haliotus cracherodii* FE) was once abundant in this habitat all along the rocky coastlines of California. Whether it still persists in the Malibu coastline area is unknown, since its current populations are reduced and much more dispersed than before.

Nearshore Subtidal Habitat: Includes those marine habitats ranging from the lower level of the intertidal zone to 99 feet. This region supports a variety of assemblages of invertebrates and fishes, and in the SEA, this habitat is frequently dominated by giant kelp. Rocky areas have a diverse community of algae (in depths of sufficient light penetration), sessile and mobile invertebrates, and fishes. Subtidal areas are even more diverse than the intertidal areas, and this great variety can be appreciated by the examples of tidepools. There are a variety of subtidal sand-adapted organisms ranging from fishes to seastars, to many kinds of jellyfish, mollusks, and other invertebrates.

Kelp Forest Habitat: Giant kelp beds are located in many places along the SEA to a depth of approximately 99 feet in the ocean. The kelp beds are part of a productive habitat that provide food, attachment sites and shelter for invertebrates and fishes. Giant kelp, the dominant alga of this community, is the fastest lengthening organism known, and it thrives in nutrient-enriched waters of upwelling. It has been "clocked" at two feet per day extension of its stipe and blades. The kelp beds are an important nursery habitat and recruitment area for juvenile fishes and invertebrates. The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries as well as the CDFG consider kelp beds as sensitive, and lush kelp beds such as those from the Ventura-Los Angeles County line to Malibu Point are designated as ESHA (Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas, Malibu Local Coastal Plan, 1986).

Community dominant plant:

- Macrocystis pyrifera (Giant kelp)

Wildlife

The terrestrial and aerial wildlife found in the SEA is dependent on the two basic regimes found there: marine and shoreline terrestrial. The shoreline beaches and rocky intertidal are home to or visited by a wide variety of shorebirds, migrating birds and marine life. The sandy beaches with their shifting sands present an unstable substrate on which organisms can establish themselves, and their resident wildlife is a set of small specialists that live in the sand interstices. An important microcommunity of decomposers exists, which feed on the materials washed up by the waves.

The Malibu Coastline cliffs, bluffs, offshore rocks and beaches offer many undisturbed habitats for roosting, feeding and nesting by numerous kinds of shore– and seabirds. Sandy beaches provide feeding areas for many species. In addition, the soft substrate offers a repository for eggs and nursery grounds for many species.

The marine habitat has the greatest diversity of wildlife, with representatives from nearly all the phyla (major groupings of animals such as jellyfish, mollusks, echinoderms, etc.) and all parts of the food web (trophic levels) for several communities. Many of the marine phyla do not have terrestrial representatives. Some of the vertebrates, such as gray whales, and the plankton use the area as a migratory corridor. The major vegetation communities, each with its own great diversity and all trophic levels, are the benthic algae of rocky substrates, the kelp beds based on giant kelp holding onto rocky subtidal substrate and extending into the water column, and the planktonic, based on photosynthesizers that are all microscopic.

Sensitive wildlife species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section of this document.

Wildlife Movement

The SEA is on the Pacific Flyway migration route used by many birds seasonally, This shoreline plays an important role as a stopover because of its extensive undisturbed marine resources. The offshore major part of the SEA is on the annual migration route of the California gray whale (*Eschrichtius robustus*), a CITES Appendix I animal (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, endangered status,

no trade or harvest except by strictly controlled export and import permits issued in countries that are party to the convention and have legislation of adoption, which includes the U.S.) The gray whale migrates close to shore on its transit during the winter months from the Bering Sea to lagoons of Baja California. This is migration to the Baja lagoons for calving and breeding. The whales generally return north offshore. The area may well be a migration corridor for other marine animals, as this is part of the great Southern California Bight, which has an eddy circling counterclockwise to the north off the southward flow of the California Current. This flow brings marine organisms (fishes, invertebrates, and plants) that may have major population concentrations in the south to this part of their ocean habitat. Most of these organisms have a planktonic stage that is absolutely dependent on the current system to maintain their populations and distribution. Pollution of the ocean waters by development on land will have significant effects that may not be appreciated immediately because of the cryptic nature of subtidal animals and plants.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition. When species are federally-listed as endangered or threatened, they often have federally-designated, geographically-specific "critical habitat areas." Critical habitat areas, after extensive study by experts, are judged to be essential to conservation and maintenance of the species. There are two critical habitat areas for the western snowy plover in this SEA.

Sensitive Plan Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports no terrestrial habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies, but the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) does not list intertidal or subtidal plants in its California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDB), 2011). NOAA Fisheries (National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration) as well as the CDFG do consider kelp beds as sensitive, and lush kelp beds such as those from the Ventura-Los Angeles County line to Malibu Point are designated as ESHAs by the County's Malibu Local Coastal Plan, 1986.

Kelp beds disappeared off of Palos Verdes Peninsula during the height of pollution by the White Point outfall in the mid 20th century. The Palos Verdes Peninsula's kelp beds are subsequently returning after reduction of pollution, some prodigious planting efforts, and incursion of the motile zoospores from areas like the Malibu coastline. The kelp beds are sensitive to effects like pollution and excessive sedimentation from development. They are one of the most productive communities of the world, and should be treated with care. Any development plan that might impact them, even with indirect effects, deserves scrutiny.

Sensitive Plant Species

NOAA Fisheries as well as the CDFG consider kelp beds as sensitive, and lush kelp beds, such as those from the Ventura-Los Angeles County line to Malibu Point, are designated as ESHA by the Malibu Local Coastal Plan, 1986. The principle structural component of Malibu offshore kelp beds is the giant kelp (*Macrocystis pyrifera*). NOAA Fisheries and the CDFG consider surfgrass a valuable habitat that should be protected. The principle structural component of surfgrass beds is Scouler's surf grass (*Phyllospadix scouleri*) and Torrey's surfgrass (*P. torreyi*).

Sensitive Animal Species

The western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus* [FT, CSC]*),* which feeds and resides in the wrack line areas, has designated critical habitat on Zuma Beach from Trancas Canyon to the northwestern side of Point Dume. This is proposed to expand to Point Dume. Critical habitat is also proposed to include Malibu Beach from Malibu Point to an area east of the pier, which is the seaward side of Malibu Lagoon. The Malibu Lagoon is part of the Santa Monica Mountains SEA, and the SEA is contiguous with the Santa Monica Mountains SEA at the barrier berm of the Lagoon.

The southern steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus* [FE, CSC]) lives in the oceanic and coastal waters for most of its life and uses the coastal streams for breeding and the first year of its young fish's lives. After one to two years in fresh water, the young fish change to smolts and make their run to the ocean, where they spend the majority of their lives. The lower Arroyo Sequit and its West Fork is designated critical habitat for the southern steelhead. This area has naturally occurring spawning beds and young fish habitat. The coastal ocean waters are within this SEA, and the linkage paths from the ocean to the coastal streams are within this SEA. The southern steelhead is known to currently use the Arroyo Sequit, Malibu Creek, and Topanga Canyon. Historically the steelhead was known from Solstice and Zuma canyons, and was probable in all the major drainages, which once had perennial water and extended to the shore in the rainy season.

The California gray whale (*Eschrichtius robustus* CITES Appendix I) uses this SEA during its calving-breeding migration cycle. The entire order of cetaceae (whales and beaked dolphins) are considered CITES Appendix I by the Australian rating system, the most stringent adoption.

The black abalone (*Haliotis cracherodii*) is a federally-endangered species and critically endangered species of the International Union for Conservation of Nature-Red List (IUCN). At one time, the black abalone was plentiful in the rocky intertidal and nearshore rocky subtidal areas in the SEA, down to about 20 feet depth. Whether it still exists in the SEA is unknown, because its current occurrences are widely scattered and much reduced by overfishing and wasting disease.

- Black abalone (*Haliotis cracherodii*) FE
- Southern steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus)* FE, CSC
- Tidewater goby (*Eucyclogobius newberryi*) FE, SSC
- Western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus)* FT, CSC
- California gray whale (*Eschrichtius robustus*) CITES Appendix I

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

There are no ETAs designated within this SEA.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets all SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met is described below.

CRITERIA ANALYSIS OF THE MALIBU COASTLINE SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Met	California gray whale, tidewater goby, southern steelhead, western snowy plover, and black abalone, all spend critical periods of their life cycles in this SEA. Other CITES-listed marine mammals also use this SEA.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	This area is a relatively undisturbed coastal region where the upwelling of nutrient-rich waters provides for highly productive and extremely diverse marine communities. The area possesses some of the best kelp bed habitat south of Santa Barbara and is recognized as ESHA by NOAA and CDFG. The Malibu coastline section from the Ventura-Los Angeles County line boundary, southeast to Latigo Point is recognized as one of the principal natural areas in the (coastal) State Water Quality Protection Area Program. It is area ASBS-24 (Area of Special Biological Significance). The SEA has critical habitat for the southern steelhead, tidewater goby, and the western snowy plover.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	This relatively undisturbed coastal region possesses some of the best kelp bed habitat south of Santa Barbara and supports the only remaining natural kelp beds off the mainland coast of the County. The kelp beds are recognized as ESHA by NOAA, CDFG, and the Malibu Local Coastal Program. It has critical habitat for the southern steelhead, tidewater goby, and the western snowy plover
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	This area protects the entry point of two of three of the (endangered) southern steelhead spawning streams in the County and provides connective area for the endangered tidewater goby, which breeds in the brackish-water areas of the streams of the Santa Monica Mountains. Kelpbeds are the macroforest of the ocean, and the habitat and breeding and/or spawning ground for many marine animals. The sandy beaches provide feeding areas for many bird species, and the soft substrate offers a repository for eggs and nursery grounds for many species. The migration of marine species occur in this area for the California gray whale and for

Criterion		Status	Justification
			innumerable marine species whose plankton ride the ocean currents.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	As the main kelp bed of the County, this area is of great interest to marine scientists. It is also an edge kelp forest, separated by the long stretch of beaches of the Santa Monica Bay from the kelp beds of the Palos Verdes Peninsular area.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	This shoreline remains in essentially a native state as a remnant of what once was typical of rock and adjacent sand shoreline in Southern California. The coastline possesses the only complete, undisturbed sandy beaches remaining in the County. An important microcommunity of decomposers is present. Artificial modifications have been limited to small local areas. West of Point Dume, there is minor pollution; east of Point Dume, there is minor to moderate pollution, and kelp does not grow below 35 feet.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: A) the habitat of core populations of endangered and threatened plant and animal species; B-C) biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution in the County, or regionally; D) concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds, which are limited in availability in the County; E) biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community; and F) areas that provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of original natural biotic communities in the County.

13. Palos Verdes Peninsula and Coastline SEA

Location

General

The Palos Verdes Peninsula and Coastline Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is chiefly located offshore around the Palos Verdes Peninsula, but also includes terrestrial habitat in Portuguese Bend and several other disjunct drainages and ridgelines. All of the many offshore rocks within 12 nautical miles of the coast are part of the California Coastal National Monument that managed by the Bureau of Land Management in the U.S. Department of the Interior. Many endangered marine mammals use this habitat. The SEA includes the inshore part of the Point Vicente State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) and the Abalone Cove SMCA. Most of the interior Peninsula canyons and slopes are critical habitat for the federally-threatened coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*). Many of the interior areas are also critical habitat for the federally-endangered Palos Verde blue butterfly (*Glaucopsyche lygdamus palosverdesensis*). The gnatcatcher favors the coastal sage scrub or chaparral vegetation; the butterfly favors flatter areas with grassland plants of the upper marine terraces, such as Ventura milk-vetch (*Astragalus pycnostachyus* var. *lanosissimus*), which is a principal food plant for its larvae. The gnatcatcher critical habitat covers virtually all of the terrestrial part of the SEA and extends well beyond the SEA on the Peninsula. The butterfly's critical habitat is chiefly in flatter areas of the marine terraces, but can include broader areas of the canyons.

The SEA is located at least partially in each of the following United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Quadrangles: Torrance, San Pedro, and Redondo Beach

General Boundary and Resources Description

Most of the SEA is in the nearshore marine habitat and extends from the high tide line of the beach to about one mile offshore. The designated SEA traverses along the coastline of the Palos Verdes Peninsula from Flat Rock Point at the northern end of Bluff Cove to the west end of the breakwater of Los Angeles Outer Harbor. The terrestrial part of the SEA includes several non-contiguous ravines, canyons and streambeds that are adjacent to rural residential areas. The area known as Portuguese Bend is one of the largest inland areas within the SEA.

The SEA has the inshore part of the Point Vicente SMCA, which extends from mean high tide due east-west to three nautical miles offshore. The Point Vicente SMCA is like a reserve in that no take of any kind is permitted. The western line goes due east-west off an unnamed point about a 0.4 mile north of Point Vicente. The eastern line goes due north-south off Long Point. Adjacent is the Abalone Cove SMCA, which extends from mean high tide to 3 nautical miles offshore, also due north-south. The eastern boundary of the Abalone Cove SMCA extends off Portuguese Point.

Disjunct interior parts of the SEA include: 1) Agua Amarga Canyon, which drains to Lunada Bay (critical habitat for both the Palos Verdes blue butterfly and the coastal California gnatcatcher; 2) an area of coastal sage scrub and bluffs north of Point Vicente; 3) the upper bluff area of chaparral and grassland

that is on the northeast side of Pacific Coast Highway at Point Vicente; 4) the beach and cliff area south of Pacific Coast Highway at Abalone Cove, Portuguese Point, Inspiration Point and Portuguese Bend; (5) the unbuildable areas of the Portuguese Bend Landslide, which include grassland, chaparral, and canyons and surround the community of Portuguese Bend on the north side of Pacific Coast Highway, and border the southern side of the community of Rolling Hills; 6) cliffs and headland areas with coastal bluff, coastal chaparral, and grassland extending from the east side of Portuguese Bend to the City of Los Angeles border at the west end of Royal Palms Beach Park; 7) a lobe bordering the switchbacks of Palos Verdes Drive East that connects to the coast and covers the natural cliff, bluff, and chaparral vegetation up to about one mile inland; and 8) the intertidal area on the west side of Point Fermin.

The other disjunct interior parts of the SEA are within the community of Rolling Hills, with numerous natural parts of the canyons and ridges have been too steep to develop. These are designated as part of the SEA because the native vegetation is essential for the native birds and the migrants, which include those that use the Palos Verdes Peninsula as a rest stop and those that overwinter. They include the following canyons, which are on the north side of the Palos Verdes Range crest, and drain to the Los Angeles Basin: 9) Agua Negra Canyon on the west side of Crenshaw Avenue; 10) Agua Magna Canyon; 11) Sepulveda Canyon; 12) Blackwater Canyon, including two upland forks; and 13) George F. Canyon with all three upland forks.

Finally, the remaining disjunct interior parts of the SEA are in the Miraleste district of Rancho Palos Verdes, on the east side of Palos Verdes Drive East, naturally-vegetated canyons trend eastward to the flat area of San Pedro: 14) north of Rockinghorse Road; 15) north of Colt Road; 16) north of Coral Ridge Road; 17) Miraleste Canyon (north of Miraleste Road); and 18) two branches of San Pedro Canyon (south of Via Siena and north of Via Colinta).

The SEA is formed by the Palos Verdes Range, and is characterized by marine terraces atop rough terrain that is created by the erosion of the upland areas into many canyons. The flatter areas on the marine terraces are the areas that have been developed. Unparalleled headlands, rocky shoreline, and the land-sea interface provide for a tremendous variety of biotic resources in this area. It is one of the most biologically diverse and productive regions in the County, and contains several biotic communities, including rocky intertidal, kelp bed, coastal strand, and coastal sage scrub. One small sandy beach is periodically present on an ephemeral basis at Portuguese Bend. This 10 mile stretch of coastline, between Point Fermin and Bluff Cove, is the only sizeable rocky intertidal area in the County.

The Peninsula was once an island before sediments filled the Los Angeles Basin, and it has many biological associations today that originated during the time it was insular. A number of the uncommon plants, for example, are also only known from offshore islands, and some of the bird subspecies on the Peninsula are also only known elsewhere on the offshore islands. They are not found on the mainland except on the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

Rocky shores support a great number of species. This is primarily due to the interface of the ocean and the land, the highly diverse natural communities that both contain, and the oxygen and food-rich environment offered by this habitat. The natural features include a variety of substrates, both stable and unstable, the

aeration of water and humidification of the air through wave splash, and the upwelling of nutrient-rich waters along the Southern California coast.

Subtidally, one can find representatives of every phylum of animals (major groupings, such as mollusks, echinoderms, jellyfish, etc.), many of which are not represented on land. Rocky substrates are as diverse as the intertidal areas. Sandy subtidal areas also support a great variety of species, but most are cryptic and submerge into the depths of the sand because of the high energy and unstable nature of their environment.

Kelp beds dominated by giant kelp (*Macrocystis pyrifera*) are an extremely productive habitat that provides food, attachment sites, and shelter for a diverse community of invertebrates, fishes, and sea mammals. They are an important nursery habitat for juvenile fishes. Kelp beds were originally common off the Southern California coast wherever rocks were present at shallow depths. However, due to man-made and natural phenomena, this habitat has been severely diminished in the region, and is now rare in the County. A kelp bed habitat restoration program was begun in the area in the 1960s, and appears to have been successful. Kelp has been reestablished west of Point Fermin, along Abalone Cove, and offshore of Halfway Point. Smaller colonies are now reestablishing at other locations offshore of the southern coast of the Peninsula.

The coastal cliffs found in the area range in elevation from 100 to 300 feet and support coastal sage scrub and coastal strand bluff scrub. These and offshore rocks offer ideal roosting and feeding sites for numerous shorebirds, gulls, and other seabirds, including the fully-protected California brown pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis californicus*). The area is an important stop for migrating birds as they fly along the coast or across the Santa Monica Bay. In addition, the bluff tops that are now abandoned agricultural fields are utilized by many species as wintering feeding grounds. One fully-protected species, the American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*), and one very uncommon species of conservation concern, the prairie falcon (*F. mexicanus*), have been known to winter here in recent years.

The bluff tops and cliffs have been disturbed by pedestrian use, residential development, and agriculture. Only very small, isolated ravines remain in a natural state. The shoreline has suffered major biological impairment, commonly blamed on over-collection by humans and intense pollution. The health of the marine environment has been relatively poor due to human influences, such as outfalls with toxic contents, but appears to be slowly recovering.

Vegetation

Vegetation within the SEA is comprised of several terrestrial plant community types whose makeup is strongly influenced by the marine weather conditions. Coastal sage chaparral scrub occurs on the slopes, and southern willow scrub areas occur in the drainages of several isolated ravines distributed over the top of the peninsula. The immediate coast and cliffs support coastal dune and bluff scrub and coastal sage chaparral scrub. The abandoned agricultural fields and other disturbed areas that have become non-native grasslands provide raptor foraging areas with their populations of native reptiles and mammals.

Agua Amarga Canyon is the last remaining relatively undisturbed drainage on the coastal side of the Palos Verdes Peninsula. The SEA area is protected as a part of the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land

Conservancy Preserves. Because of irrigation runoff, Agua Amarga has nearly perennial water. The canyon of Agua Amarga at Lunada Bay is quite spectacular, but not included in the SEA due to development on the coastal bluff adjacent to the descent to the beach. The main canyon has a complex of coastal sage scrub, chaparral, and riparian communities. Three forms of birds resident on the Peninsula that reside in Agua Amarga are insular forms of common birds: the dusky orange-crowned warbler (Vermivora celata ssp. sordida), the Channel Islands flycatcher (*Empidonax difficilis insulicola*, race of the western flycatcher), and Allen's hummingbird (*Selasphorus sasin sedentarius*). The dusky orange-crowned warbler is quite remarkable in that unlike other subspecies of the orange-crowned warbler, it is not a long-distance migrant. The federally-threatened coastal California gnatcatcher is also a resident in this canyon, and has critical habitat extending to the edge of the marine terrace bluff at the coast. Additionally, the canyon is critical habitat for the Palos Verdes blue butterfly. Vegetation also has insular forms. For example, the Catalina Island cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia* ssp. *lyonii*) and the southern island mallow (*Lavatera assurgentiflora* ssp. *glabra*) occur in the canyon. These animals and plants probably occur in all or many of the other terrestrial parts of the SEA as well.

Plant species observed or recorded in previous documentation within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium of the Los Angeles County SEAs.* Sensitive plant species and plant communities occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Descriptions and general locations of the each plant community present within the SEA are given below.

Coastal Bluff and Dune Scrub: Found close to the ocean where the substrate consists of fine, sandy soil that dries rapidly. In the SEA, it is limited to small sections of coastal strand and bluffs. Plants typical of the dune scrub include dune buckwheat (*Eriogonum parvifolium*), rattle pod (*Astragalus trichopodus* var. *lonchus*), bladderpod (*Peritoma arborea*), deer weed (*Acmispon glaber*), sawtooth goldenbush (*Hazardia aquarrosa*), and California sunflower (*Helianthus californicus*).

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Baccharis pilularis* (coyote brush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lupinus arboreus* (yellow bush lupine scrub) Shrubland Alliance and Semi-Natural Shrubland Stands
- *Lupinus chamissonis-Ericameria ericoides* (silver dune lupine–mock heather scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Coastal Sage Chaparral Scrub: Consists of drought-deciduous, low, soft-leafed shrubs and herbs on gentle to steep slopes below 1,500 feet in elevation. This community is dominated by California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*), and California brittle bush (*Encelia californica*). Coastal sage scrub is distributed throughout the SEA on the slopes of the isolated areas inland from the coast and on the coastal cliffs.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica* (California sagebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub)

Shrubland Alliance

- *Encelia californica* (California brittle bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Diplacus* [*Mimulus*] *aurantiacus* (bush monkeyflower scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia leucophylla* (purple sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia mellifera* (black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum cinereum* (ashy buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Hazardia squarrosa* (sawtooth golden bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Isocoma menziesii* (Menzie's golden bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lotus scoparius* [*Acmispon glaber*] (deer weed scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lupinus albifrons* (silver bush lupine scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Southern Willow Scrub: A riparian community consisting of dense, broad-leafed, winter-deciduous riparian thickets occurring within and adjacent to watercourses. The dominant species of this community within the SEA are willows (*Salix* spp.), with lesser amounts of mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*). This community occurs in segments along portions of the drainages and streambeds of isolated sites inland from the shoreline.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Salix exigua* (sandbar willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salix gooddingii* (black willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salix lasiolepis* (arroyo willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance

Non-Native Grassland: Consists of dominant invasive annual grasses that are primarily of Mediterranean origin. Dominant species found within this community include wild oat (*Avena fatua*), slender oat (*Avena barbata*), red brome (*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*), ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), and herbs, such as black mustard (*Brassica nigra*) and wild radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum*). Non-native grasslands are located in small to large patches throughout the SEA in previously disturbed areas, former agricultural and cattle pastures.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Avena* (*barbata*, *fatua*) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Brassica* (*nigra*) and other mustards Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus* (*diandrus*, *hordeaceus*)-*Brachypodium distachyon* Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus rubens-Schismus* (*arabicus, barbatus*) ([*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*] red brome or Mediterranean grass grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Lolium perenne* [*Festuca perennis*] (perennial rye grass fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands

Disturbed or Barren Areas: Areas that either completely lack vegetation or are dominated by ruderal species. Ruderal vegetation typically found within the SEA includes non-native grasses and a high proportion of weedy species, including black mustard and thistle species. Several disturbed areas are scattered throughout the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

No corresponding MCV communities at this time

Intertidal and Subtidal Algal Habitats: Common in tidepools and on rocky subtidal substrate down to the macro-alga photosynthetic depth, which varies with water turbidity that is characteristic of the region. This habitat has representatives from all the phyla of algae, and it has not been characterized in the MCV manner. A common large brown alga observed at the tidepools of Point Fermin is feather-boa kelp (*Egregia menziesii*).

Community dominant plant:

- Feather-boa kelp (*Egregia menziesii*)

Surfgrass and Eelgrass Habitats: Characterized by two flowering plants that resemble grass and form dense beds on different substrates and in different conditions. Both types form highly productive habitats for unique assemblages of marine species. NOAA Fisheries and the CDFG consider surfgrass and eelgrass as valuable habitats that should be protected. Surfgrass occurs from Mean Lower Low Water (MLLW) to about 25 foot depth on rocky substrate. Locations known to support substantial surfgrass beds include rocky points and rocky subtidal areas of canyons all along the northern border of the SEA. Eelgrass grows on soft substrate and typically occurs in bays. A form of eelgrass (thought to be *Zostera pacifica)* is found on open coast sand bottom. Eelgrass is an important habitat that supports a community of diverse species from sessile to mobile invertebrates and certain fishes, such as pipefish.

Community dominant plant:

- *Phyllospadix scouleri*, or Scouler's surf grass and *P. torrey* or Torrey's surfgrass
- *Zostera pacifica* (eelgrass)

Kelp Forest Habitat Giant Kelp Beds: Can form to a depth of approximately 99 feet in the ocean. The kelp beds are part of a productive habitat that provide food, attachment sites and shelter for invertebrates and fishes. Giant kelp, the dominant alga of this community, is the fastest lengthening organism known, and it really thrives in nutrient-enriched waters of upwelling. It has been "clocked" at two feet per day extension of its stipe and blades. The kelp beds are an important nursery habitat and recruitment area for juvenile fishes and invertebrates. The Fisheries National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries, as well as the CDFG consider kelp beds as sensitive.

Community dominant plant:

- *Macrocystis pyrifera* (giant kelp)

Marine Resources

The Palos Verdes coastline is a region where the upwelling of nutrient-rich waters offers a variety of habitats that supports highly productive and extremely diverse marine and coastal communities. Man-made disturbances have seriously diminished the quality and extent of unaffected marine habitats. Today, the SEA possesses limited areas of kelp bed habitats. A kelp bed restoration program begun in the 1960s has apparently succeeded in these areas, and kelp has been reestablished off Point Fermin, in Abalone Cove and offshore of Halfway Point.

Intertidal Zone Habitats: Consist of a variety of coastal habitats periodically covered and uncovered by waves and tides. The rocky shores support a rich assortment of plants and animals including green, brown and red algae. A wide variety of invertebrates compete for space with the plants in this habitat. Mobile invertebrates, such as crabs and snails can be found in great abundance. Fishes are limited to tidepools during high tide, while shorebirds actively forage during low tide. The black abalone (*Haliotis cracherodii*) is a federally-endangered species and critically endangered species of the International Union for Conservation of Nature–Red List (IUCN). At one time, the black abalone was plentiful in the rocky intertidal and nearshore rocky subtidal areas in the SEA down to about 20 feet depth. Whether it still exists in the SEA is unknown, because its current occurrences are widely scattered and much reduced by overfishing and wasting disease.

Nearshore Subtidal Habitat: Includes those marine habitats ranging from the lower level of the intertidal zone to 99 feet. This region supports a variety of assemblages of invertebrates and fishes, and along the coastline of the SEA this habitat is dominated by giant kelp.

Kelp Forest Habitat: Kelp beds dominated by giant kelp are found in some locations in the area. These have tremendous value to the biota of nearshore areas. Where they occur, they may locally account for 90% of the biomass, providing structure and structural complexity for their community from the rocky base through the water column to the surface. Giant kelp is the fastest lengthening organism known, and it thrives in nutrient-enriched waters of upwelling. The giant kelp provides food and habitat for hundreds of species and all the phyla. The kelp beds are an important nursery habitat and recruitment area for juvenile fishes and invertebrates. Many of the species that this habitat supports are the basic components of the food chains of nearshore fishes. Kelp beds are also important because they reduce wave shock to shorelines. This protection helps maintain the abundance and complexity of the marine life found there.

Marine Habitat: Has the greatest diversity of wildlife, with representatives from nearly all the phyla (major groupings of animals, such as jellyfish, mollusks, echinoderms, etc.) and all parts of the food web (trophic levels) for several communities. Many of the marine phyla do not have terrestrial representatives. Some of the vertebrates, such as gray whales, and the plankton use the area as a migratory corridor. The major vegetation communities, each with its own great diversity and all trophic levels, are the benthic algae of rocky substrates, the kelp beds based on giant kelp holding onto rocky subtidal substrate and extending into the water column, and the planktonic, which are based on photosynthesizers that are microscopic and are throughout the water column in photosynthetic depths.

Wildlife

The wildlife found in the SEA is dependent upon the two basic regimes: marine and terrestrial. The shoreline and bluffs that overlook the coastal sections are homes and migratory rest areas for a wide variety of birds and marine life. The interior grasslands and ravines have a very different assemblage than the coast. Some of the SEA areas are separate and isolated from one another and probably suffer from the effects of the fragmentation of a larger, more contiguous ecosystem, and exhibiting a reduced number of species from what might be expected.

The mountainous Palos Verdes Peninsula juts out into the Pacific Ocean, relative to developed coastline to the north and south and offers many undisturbed habitats for marine and shorebirds. These and

offshore rocks offer ideal roosting and feeding sites for numerous birds that affiliated with the coastline. The area is an important stop for migrating birds as they fly along the coast or across the Santa Monica Bay. In addition, the bluff tops and marine terraces, which are now either residences or abandoned agricultural fields, are utilized by many species in winter as feeding grounds. One fully protected species, the American peregrine falcon, and one uncommon species of conservation concern, the prairie falcon, have been known to winter here in recent years.

All wildlife species previously recorded, as well as those expected to occur, within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium* of the *Los Angeles County SEAs*. Sensitive wildlife species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Wildlife Movement

The SEA is on the Pacific Flyway migration route, which is used by many birds seasonally and plays an important role as a stopover because of its extensive undisturbed marine resources. It does not fall within any identified terrestrial movement routes for wildlife because it is isolated by the ocean on one side, and enclosed by miles of developed land on the remaining terrestrial sides.

The offshore major part of the SEA is on the annual migration route of the California gray whale (*Eschrichtius robustus*), which is a Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) Appendix I animal. This means that they have endangered status, and no trade or harvest is permitted, except by strictly controlled export and import permits that are issued in countries that are party to the convention and have legislation of adoption, which includes the U.S. The gray whale migrates close to shore on its transit during the winter months, from the Bering Sea to lagoons of Baja California for calving and breeding. A whale count station is manned by volunteers at the Point Vicente Park and Interpretive Center that has yearly records, starting in 1979. The whales generally return north offshore. The area may be a migration corridor for other marine animals, as this is part of the great Southern California Bight, which has an eddy circling counterclockwise to the north off the southward flow of the California Current. This flow brings marine organisms (fishes, invertebrates, and plants) that may have major population concentrations in the south to this part of the ocean habitat. Most of these organisms have a planktonic stage that is dependent on the current system to maintain their populations and distribution. Pollution of the ocean waters by development on land will have significant effects that may not be appreciated immediately because of the cryptic nature of subtidal animals and plants.

Other Cites Appendix I mammals have been recorded as using the SEA in the Point Vicente records including: sperm whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*), minke whales (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*), humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), blue whales (*Balaenoptera musculus*), fin whales (*Balaenoptera physalus*), and southern sea otters (*Enhydra lutris nereis*).

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch

lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition. When species are federally-listed as endangered or threatened, they often have federally-designated, geographically-specific "critical habitat areas." Critical habitat areas, after extensive study by experts, are judged to be essential to conservation and maintenance of the species. The terrestrial parts of this SEA are virtually all critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher. Many of the broader canyons and marine terrace bluff areas are also critical habitat for the Palos Verdes blue butterfly.

Sensitive Plant Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. These communities include silver dune lupine–mock heather scrub, California brittle bush scrub, bush monkeyflower scrub, ashy buckwheat scrub, Menzie's golden bush scrub, and black willow thickets, which occur in the SEA. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section. Changes to the classification system mentioned earlier, in some cases divide plant communities into many possible vegetation alliances, not all of which may be considered sensitive. For the purposes here previously listed communities with at least one sensitive alliance in the new format have been listed.

Sensitive Plant Species

The statuses of rare plants are hierarchically categorized by the CNPS using a rank and decimal system. The initial category level of Rare Plant Rank is indicated by the ranks 1A (presumed extinct in California), 1B (rare or endangered in California and elsewhere), 2 (rare or endangered in California but more common elsewhere), 3 (more information needed, a review list), and 4 (limited distribution). In cases where the CNPS has further identified the specific threat to the species, a decimal or Threat Code is added: .1 (seriously endangered in California), .2 (fairly endangered in California), or .3 (not very endangered in California).

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Aphanisma (*Aphanisma blitoides*) RPR 1B.1
- Ventura marsh milk-vetch (*Astragalus pycnostachyus* var. *lanosissimus*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Coastal dunes milk-vetch (*Astragalus tener* var. *titi*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Coulter's saltbush (*Atriplex coulteri*) RPR 1B.2
- South Coast saltscale (*Atriplex pacifica*) RPR 1B.2
- Parish's brittlescale (*Atriplex parishii*) RPR 1B.1
- Davidson's saltscale (*Atriplex serenana* var. *davidsonii*) RPR 1B.2

- Southern tarplant (*Centromadia parryi* ssp. *australis*) RPR 1B.1
- Orcutt's pincushion (*Chaenactis glabriuscula* var. *orcuttiana*) RPR 1B.1
- Coastal goosefoot (*Chenopodium littoreum*) RPR 1B.2
- Catalina crossosoma (*Crossosoma californicum*) RPR 1B.2
- Beach spectaclepod (*Dithyrea maritima*) ST, RPR 1B.1
- Many-stemmed dudleya (*Dudleya multicaulis*) RPR 1B.2
- Island green dudleya (*Dudleya virens* ssp. *insularis*) RPR 1B.2
- Southern island mallow (*Lavatera assurgentiflora* ssp. *glabra*) RPR 1B.1
- Coulter's goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata* ssp. *coulteri*) RPR 1B.1
- Santa Catalina Island desert-thorn (*Lycium brevipes* var. *hassei*) RPR 1B.1
- Coast woolly-heads (*Nemacaulis denudata* var. *denudata*) RPR 1B.2
- South coast branching phacelia (*Phacelia ramosissima* var. *austrolitoralis*) RPR 4.2
- Brand's star phacelia (*Phacelia stellaris*) FC, RPR 1B.1

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or are likely to be present within the SEA based on habitat requirements and known range attributes:

- Belkin's dune tabanid fly (*Brennania belkini*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Busck's gallmoth (*Carolella busckana*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Sandy beach tiger beetle (*Cicindela hirticollis gravida*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Western beach tiger beetle (*Cicindela latesignata latesignata*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Senile tiger beetle (*Cicindela senilis frosti*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Globose dune beetle (*Coelus globosus*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Henne's eucosman moth (*Eucosma hennei*) CDFG Special Animals List
- El Segundo blue butterfly (*Euphilotes battoides allyni*) FE, Xerces: Critical
- Palos Verdes blue butterfly (*Glaucopsyche lygdamus palosverdesensis*) FE, Xerces: Critical
- Lange's El Segundo Dune weevil (*Onychobaris langei*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Wandering skipper (*Panoquina errans*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Dorothy's El Segundo Dune weevil (*Trigonoscuta dorothea dorothea*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Black abalone (*Haliotis cracherodii*) FE
- Silvery legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra pulchra*) FSS, SSC
- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*) FT, BCC, SSC, ABC, AWL, USBC
- Southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) FE, FSS, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- California black rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis coturniculus*) BCC, ST, CDFG Fully Protected, USBC, AWL, ABC
- California brown pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis californicus*) FE, SE
- Coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) FT, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- California least tern (*Sternula antillarum browni*) FE, SE, CDFG Fully Protected, USBC, ABC
- Western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Silver-haired bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*) WBWG Medium
- San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*) SSC
- Pocketed free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops femorosaccus*) SSC, WBWG Medium
- Big free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops macrotis*) SSC, WBWG Medium-High
- Pacific pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris pacificus*) FE, SSC
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) SSC

- Minke whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) CITES Appendix I, IUCN least concern
- Blue whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*) CITES Appendix I, IUCN endangered
- Fin whale (*Balaenoptera physalus*) CITES Appendix I, IUCN endangered
- Southern sea otter (*Enhydra lutris nereis*) CITES Appendix I, IUCN endangered
- California gray whale (*Eschrichtius robustus*) CITES Appendix I, FE, IUCN critically endangered
- Humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) CITES Appendix I, IUCN least concern
- Northern elephant seal (*Mirounga angustirostris*) CDFG Fully protected
- Sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) CITES Appendix I, IUCN vulnerable

The Palos Verdes blue butterfly is found in only within the County. The El Segundo blue butterfly is listed as federally-endangered and is currently known from a few areas on the Peninsula. Additional suitable habitat is found in the SEA, and the hope is that the one population can expand. The federally-threatened coastal California gnatcatcher occurs in the coastal sage scrub of the Peninsula, both in and outside of the SEA. The California least tern feeds in the near offshore areas, may visit the beaches, and may rest on the cliff and headland areas in the SEA. In addition, the silvery legless lizard and coast horned lizard, both state species of special concern, have the potential to occur in the SEA.

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

There are no ETAs designated within this SEA.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets all SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met is described below.

CRITERIA ANALYSIS OF THE PALOS VERDES PENINSULA AND COASTLINE SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Met	The Palos Verdes Peninsula is the western-most area of breeding for the threatened coastal California gnatcatcher. The headlands and rocky shoreline provide wintering habitat for two important birds: the fully protected California brown pelican and the state-fully protected American peregrine falcon. The canyons of the SEA support three races of birds that are residents only on the Peninsula and the Channel Islands: insular forms of the orange-crowned warbler, western flycatcher, and Allen's hummingbird. Rare plants, such as southern island mallow t, make this area a very special mainland population for species that otherwise occur only on the offshore islands. Island green dudleya, a rare bluff plant known only from Palos Verdes Peninsula, Santa Catalina Island, and San Nicolas Island, occurs in the Portuguese

			Bend Landslide.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	Unparalleled headlands, rocky shoreline, and the land-sea interface provide for a tremendous variety of biotic resources in the coastline area. Rocky shores support a great number of species, and the upwelling of deep waters provides nutrient-rich waters for the area's kelp beds, which are dominated by giant kelp. Kelp beds were formerly common off the Southern California coast wherever rocks were present at shallow depths. However, due to man-made and natural phenomena, this habitat has been severely diminished in the region. The mainland SEA areas contain mainland populations of species that occur chiefly on the offshore Channel Islands. Any population characteristic of an island is of extremely restricted regional distribution.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution	Met	Kelp beds are now rare in the County. These algal communities can account for 90% of the biomass where they occur, and provide food and habitat for hundreds of species. Like terrestrial forests, they moderate the microclimate, reduce wave shock to shorelines and provide shade and shelter to their myriad denizens. The coastal cliffs support coastal sage and coastal strand vegetation, which are rare in Los Angeles because of the scarcity of rocky headlands. The Peninsula's former island status and current maintenance of mainland populations of species that occur chiefly on the offshore Channel Islands are very special. Any population characteristic of an island is of extremely restricted distribution in the County.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	The coastal cliffs provide ideal roosting and feeding sites for numerous shorebirds, gulls, and other seabirds, including the fully-protected California brown pelican. This headland is a principal rest-stop for migrating terrestrial and marine birds on the Pacific Flyway and a wintering area for some migrants. Bluff tops and marine terraces of abandoned agricultural fields are utilized by many species as winter feeding grounds. The Palos Verde Peninsula is the western-most area of breeding

			for the federally-threatened coastal California gnatcatcher. It has numerous plant and animal species that only occur here and otherwise on the offshore islands, so this is a special area for all phases of their life cycles. The marine area is an important migration area for all of the sealife and marine mammals.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	Much scientific and educational work has been done on this part of the coastline. State and county agencies have generated a great deal of information about the area. The Peninsula was once an island and has biotic characteristics more like the offshore Channel Islands than the rest of the County. It is an anomaly of an island now attached to the mainland, and thus interesting for biogeographic studies. The Peninsula canyons are the western-most area of breeding coastal California gnatcatchers. Because of the resident birds and plants that occur only on the Palos Verdes Peninsula and the Channel Islands, this area is of scientific interest for study of island biogeography and evolutionary ecology.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	As the only extensive (10 miles long) rocky intertidal shoreline in the County, the coastline is an important area for preserving its intense biodiversity. It has headlands, rocky shoreline cliffs, rocky intertidal areas, boulder field intertidal areas, kelp beds, coastal strand, ephemeral coastal strand, and coastal sage scrub. The bluffs have a special array of plants found nowhere else on the County mainland. The Peninsula has diverse communities typical of the offshore Channel Islands including coastal sage scrub (which is used by the mainland threatened bird, coastal California gnatcatcher), chaparral, and riparian habitats. The SEA canyons are the least disturbed coastal drainages of the County.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: A) the habitat of core populations of endangered and threatened plant and animal species; B-C) biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution in the County and regionally; D) concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, and migrating grounds, which are limited in availability in the County; E) biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or

community; and F) areas that provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of original natural biotic communities in the County.

14. Point Dume SEA

Location

General

The Point Dume Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located on the Malibu coastline and forms the northern end of Santa Monica Bay. Zuma Beach lies to the immediate northwest. Paradise Cove is just east. The SEA is important as a headland on the Pacific Flyway, for its nearby marine and its terrestrial habitats, and for critical habitat of the western snowy plover.

The SEA is located in the Point Dume United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Quadrangle.

General Boundary and Resources Description

This headland extends into Santa Monica Bay more than a mile beyond the rest of the Malibu coast, and it is located within the Pacific Flyway. The SEA consists of the rocky coastal headland edge and six fingers extending into the interior canyons on the headland. Point Dume is a significant headland used during migration times on the Pacific Flyway. Point Dume is the southernmost habitat for coastal cliff flora such as the giant coreopsis (*Leptosyne gigantea*) and sea-lettuce (*Dudleya caespitosa)*. The SEA is contiguous with the Malibu Coastline SEA, which has notable tidepools with rich marine habitat on the eastern side of Point Dume. Southern California is known for its extensive sandy beaches, so Point Dume, which is one of very few places with rocky intertidal habitat between Palos Verdes Peninsula and the middle coastline of Ventura County, is a rare habitat in the County. The limited public access, the coastal strand vegetation, and the canyon slopes covered by Venturan coastal sage scrub, protect the resource values of this headland, both terrestrial and marine. The terrestrial and marine habitats combined make Point Dume an exceptional and unique SEA. The Marine Life Protection Act designated protected area in Malibu to be the Point Dume State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) between El Matador State Beach west of Point Dume to the west side of Point Dume (east end of Zuma Beach), approximately a three-mile coastline. In the Conservation area, take is limited to certain designated fish and squid species for a distance of three nautical miles proceeding due north-south out from the shore. Adjacent, from the west side of Point Dume to the east side of Point Dume at Paradise Cove is designated as the Point Dume State Marine Reserve (SMR), with no take extending to three nautical miles offshore. This includes very fine tidepools on the east side.

Point Dume is one of two remaining areas in the County where a diverse and healthy mixture of terrestrial and marine habitats can be found in close association. Point Dume incorporates the terrestrial habitats: the interior canyons, the unprotected rocky shore with numerous small caves, and the sandy beach pockets; and the Malibu Coastline SEA has the marine habitats that are adjacent: outlying reefs, rocks, kelp beds, and tide pools. The tide pools off of Point Dume are some of the very best remaining in the County. Due to strong upwelling along the coast bringing in nutrient-rich waters, the nearby marine habitat is characterized by highly diverse and productive marine communities. This relative healthiness

of both the terrestrial and marine habitats is largely due to limited public access, which has protected the fragile marine and shoreline ecosystems.

Coastal strand vegetation is found on sandy beaches below bluffs that rise 100 to 200 feet above the coast. Giant coreopsis (*Leptosyne gigantea)* and sea-lettuce (*Dudleya caespitosa*) are found in these communities at the southern limit of their range. Several small drainages cut through the bluffs and extend over a mile inland. The slopes are covered by Venturan coastal sage scrub. The value of these communities is increased by the unique geographic position of Point Dume. The area is an important resting and jumping-off point for migratory birds. Without the remaining terrestrial habitats, this refuge would be lost.

The SEA will have critical habitat for the federally-threatened western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*). Currently this critical habitat goes eastward from Trancas Beach, along Zuma Beach, and extends to the northwest sandy area along Point Dume. The plovers use the west sandy habitat of the Point Dume headland, and the critical habitat will eventually extend along the entire west side of the headland into the SEA. (The western snowy plover will also have critical habitat on the seaside of the barrier berm of the Malibu Lagoon.) The snowy plover has over 300 individuals using the beaches of the County for winter roosts, and there is potential for some to over-summer and breed in the County after a hiatus of many decades (Ryan Ecological Consulting, 2010).

Vegetation

Vegetation within the SEA is comprised of several community types. Coastal strand vegetation occurs along the immediate shore and on the cliffs and bluffs, overlooking the ocean coastal dune, and bluff scrub also can be found. In the ravines and upper slopes examples of Venturan coastal sage scrub intergrade with maritime succulent scrub. This is a type of coastal sage scrub, defined by the unusual giant coreopsis, which is found in some of the less disturbed areas of the SEA. Sensitive plant species and plant communities occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Coastal Strand Vegetation: A community that occurs in the loose sand just above the high-tide line of the coast. This community is characterized by low species diversity because few plants can tolerate the harsh conditions on this dry, sandy, saline soil of high winds, salt spray and high summer temperatures.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Abronia latifolia – Ambrosia* spp. (dune mat) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Cakile (edentula, maritima)* (sea rocket stands) Semi-Natural Provisional Herbaceous Alliance

Coastal Bluff and Dune Scrub: Found on the cliffs and bluffs overlooking the ocean. This community formerly was found in many places along the coast, but is now restricted to a few locations. The system consists of fine, sandy soil that dries rapidly. Plants typical of the dune scrub include dune buckwheat, rattle-pod, bladderpod, deer weed, sawtooth goldenbush, and California sunflower.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Baccharis pilularis* (coyote brush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lupinus arboreus* (yellow bush lupine scrub) Shrubland Alliance and Semi-Natural Shrubland Stands
- *Lupinus chamissonis-Ericameria ericoides* (silver dune lupine–mock heather scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Venturan Coastal Sage Scrub: Characterized by the summer drought-deciduous vegetation found near the Southern California coast south of Ventura. It has low, mostly soft-woody shrubs with bare ground underneath and between shrubs. This community is dominated by California sagebrush, California buckwheat, black sage, purple sage, and California encelia.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica* (California sagebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Salvia mellifera* (California sagebrush-black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Encelia californica* (California brittle bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia apiana* (white sage scrub)Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia leucophylla* (purple sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia mellifera* (black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Hazardia squarrosa* (sawtooth golden bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lotus scoparius* ([*Acmispon glaber*] deer weed scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lupinus albifrons* (silver-bush lupine scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Malacothamnus fasciculatus* (bush mallow scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Maritime Succulent Scrub: A form of coastal sage scrub with many members of that community, as well as one or more endemic succulent evergreen species. Examples of this can be found throughout the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Leptosyne gigantea* (giant coreopsis scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Opuntia littoralis* (coast prickly-pear scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lycium californicum* (desert thorn scrub) Provisional Shrubland Alliance

Marine Resources

The Malibu coastline is a relatively undisturbed coastal region where upwelling of nutrient-rich waters and a variety of habitats support highly productive and extremely diverse marine communities. The terrestrial habitat (here the Point Dume headland) and the marine habitats are integrally tied to one another. Disruption in one will impact the other. The marine habitats feed the seabirds that use the headland, and marine organisms, such as the grunion (fish, *Leuresthes tenuis)* use the sandy shore for spawning. The headland protects the nearshore habitats and controls and filters runoff so that the offshore habitats remain clean and have the terrestrial input of nutrients for which they are adapted. The nearby areas in the Malibu Coastline SEA possesses some of the best kelp bed habitat south of Santa Barbara, and the only remaining natural kelp beds on the mainland coast of the County. Rocky outcrops alternate with sandy stretches along this coastline and are found to a depth of 600 feet. The

Point Dume headland typifies the alternating sand and rock on several scales. The Malibu coastline possesses the only complete, undisturbed sandy beaches remaining in the County. The west side of the headland has critical habitat for the snowy plover.

Intertidal Zone Habitats: Consist of a variety of coastal habitats that are periodically covered and uncovered by waves and tides. The rocky shores support a rich assortment of plants and animals including green, brown, and red algae. A wide variety of sessile invertebrates compete for space with the plants in this habitat. Mobile invertebrates, such as crabs and snails, can be found in great abundance. Fishes are chiefly limited to tidepools during high tide. (Grunion spawn on the high-tide areas of the sandy beach.) There is a community of small and microscopic organisms adapted to the interstices of the sand grains of the beach. Shorebirds actively forage in both rocky and sand areas during low tide. The rocky tidepools adjacent to the SEA on its east side are some of the finest remaining in the County. They are in the Malibu Coastline SEA and the Point Dume State Marine Reserve—no take of any kind is permitted.

Nearshore Subtidal Habitat: The Malibu Coastline SEA has many interactions with the biota of the SEA. Marine habitats include the rocky substrate of the lower level of the intertidal zone on the east side of Point Dume, to subtidal rocky areas that support a great diversity of invertebrates and fishes. Near the SEA this habitat is frequently dominated by giant kelp. The sandy offshore habitat on the west side of Point Dume has a wonderful variety of sand-adapted organisms, ranging from fishes to seastars, to many kinds of jellyfish, mollusks, and other invertebrates.

Kelp Forest Habitat: Giant kelp beds are located down to a depth of approximately 99 feet in the ocean surrounding Point Dume in the Malibu Coastline SEA. The kelp beds are part of one of the temperate zone's most productive habitats, by providing food, attachment sites and shelter for invertebrates and fishes. It is a supremely important nursery and recruitment habitat for juvenile fishes and invertebrates, and an important feeding area for seabirds that use Point Dume for roosting.

Wildlife

The wildlife found in the SEA is dependent upon the two basic regimes found there: marine and terrestrial. The shoreline and bluffs overlooking the coastal sections are home to or visited by a wide variety of shorebirds, migrating birds and marine life. The interior grasslands and ravines have a very different assemblage than other nearby coastal areas. The SEA ravines are separate and isolated from one another. They exhibit a reduced number of animal species than otherwise might be expected and probably suffer from the effects of fragmentation of a larger, more contiguous ecosystem.

Point Dume is a peninsula that projects its rocky cliff sides out into the Pacific Ocean relative to low bluffs and beaches to the east and west that are heavily impacted by human activity. Point Dume offers a variety of undisturbed habitats for marine and shorebirds. These cliffs and offshore rocks offer ideal roosting and feeding sites for numerous shorebirds, gulls, and other seabirds.

All wildlife species previously recorded, as well as those expected to occur, within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium* of the *Los Angeles County SEA Update Study 2000*

Background Report. Sensitive wildlife species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Wildlife Movement

The SEA is on the Pacific Flyway migration route used by many birds seasonally. It plays an important role as a stopover because of its extensive undisturbed marine resources. Point Dume does not fall within any identified terrestrial movement routes for wildlife because it is isolated by the ocean on one side, and miles of developed land on the remaining sides.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition. When species are federally-listed as endangered or threatened, they often have federally-designated, geographically-specific "critical habitat areas." Critical habitat areas, after extensive study by experts, are judged to be essential to conservation and maintenance of the species. The SEA has proposed critical habitat for the federally-threatened western snowy plover.

Sensitive Plan Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. These communities include coastal sage chaparral scrub and maritime succulent scrub, which occur throughout the SEA. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section.

Sensitive Plant Species

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Malibu baccharis (*Baccharis malibuensis*) RPR 1B.2
- Coulter's saltbush (*Atriplex coulteri*) RPR 1B.2
- Slender mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var*. gracilis*) RPR 1B.1
- Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) RPR 1B.2
- Parry's spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var*. parryi*) RPR 1B.1
- Blochman's dudleya (*Dudleya blochmaniae* ssp. *blochmaniae*) RPR 1B.1

- Agoura Hills dudleya (*Dudleya cymosa* ssp*. agourensis*) FT, CSC, RPR 1B.2
- Marcescent dudleya (*Dudleya cymosa* ssp*. marcescens*) FT, SR, RPR 1B.2
- Lyon's pentachaeta (*Pentachaeta lyonii*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Sonoran maiden fern (*Thelypteris puberula* var*. sonorensis*) RPR 2.2

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or are likely to be present within the SEA based on habitat requirements and known range attributes:

- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) CSC
- Two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*) CSC
- Western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*) FT, CSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

There are no ETAs designated within this SEA.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets all SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met is described below.

CRITERIA ANALYSIS OF THE POINT DUME SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Met	This SEA includes habitat that is used by the western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus).* The west side of the headland includes federally-designated critical habitat that will expand into the SEA.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	The SEA has coastal bluff vegetation on 100-200 feet cliffs, and on the sandy beaches below, is good coastal strand vegetation and habitat. The southern limit of the range for two plants characteristic of the bluffs to the north, giant coreopsis and sea-lettuce is on Point Dume. On the east side of Point Dume, the Malibu Coastline SEA has an excellent rocky intertidal area, which is a habitat that is no longer common in Southern California.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	Point Dume is one of the two remaining areas in the County where a diverse and healthy mixture of terrestrial Venturan coastal sage scrub and coastal strand vegetation are in close association with marine habitats. Its marine habitats consist of an unprotected rocky shore, with sandy beach pockets, and numerous small caves. The contiguous Malibu Coastline SEA has outlying reefs, rocks, and kelp beds. Due to strong

Criterion		Status	Justification
			upwelling along the coast, the waters are nutrient–rich and foster highly diverse and productive marine communities, which are protected somewhat by limited public access on the Point Dume headland.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	The headland of Point Dume extends into Santa Monica Bay more than a mile beyond the rest of the Malibu coast, and it is located within the Pacific Flyway. As a result, the area is an important jumping off point for migratory birds. Without the remaining terrestrial habitats, this refuge would be lost.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	The close association of native terrestrial vegetation and diverse marine habitats enriched by the nutrient upwelling make the Point Dume area scientifically important for the County. The southern-most point for giant coreopsis and sea lettuce are extreme points for vegetation that are more common to the north.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	Relative to other coastal areas, the terrestrial vegetation communities at Point Dume are in good condition, in spite of some degradation from increased runoff and human usage. The marine flora and fauna are in excellent condition, and the association is important to conservation of the County's biodiversity.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: A) core habitat of the western snowy plover, a federally-threatened species, B-C) biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are restricted in distribution in the County and also regionally restricted; D) concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds, which are limited in availability in the County; E) biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community; and F) areas that provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of original natural biotic communities in the County.

15. Puente Hills SEA

Location

General

The Puente Hills Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located in the Puente Hills in the southeastern portion of the County. The Puente Hills are an inland topographical feature that separates the San Gabriel Valley to the north and the coastal plain to the south. The hills are oriented east-west and stretch from the San Gabriel River on the west approximately to the San Bernardino-Los Angeles County line to the east, where they transition into the Chino Hills. The SEA includes portions of the Whittier Narrows Dam Recreation Area and Flood Control Basin, and much of the undeveloped land throughout the Puente Hills. Nearly the entire SEA is designated as the Puente-Chino Hills State Important Bird Area (IBA) by California Audubon. The main area hosts migrating and resident birds that use the extensive mosaic of lowland terrestrial habitats, and notable extensive areas of grassland and oak and walnut woodlands. This IBA extends well beyond the SEA into Orange and San Bernardino counties, and in general, goes beyond the SEA boundaries in most places. The northwestern disjunct area of the SEA is part of the Los Angeles Flood Control Basin IBA, which hosts many resident and migrating birds that use the wetlands. This IBA extends beyond the SEA on both the Rio Hondo and a long distance upstream along the San Gabriel River.

The SEA encompasses portions of the El Monte, Baldwin Park, Whittier, La Habra and Yorba Linda United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Quadrangles. The majority of this SEA lies within unincorporated area of the County.

General Boundary and Resources Description

In the westernmost part of the SEA, boundaries encompass the undeveloped portions of the Montebello Hills. The oil field and transmission lines that occupy this area have protectively-fenced and left most of the coastal sage scrub, which is inhabited by the largest population of the federally-threatened coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) in the County. This area is part of critical habitat for the gnatcatcher. Boundaries of critical habitat extend to Montebello Boulevard on the north side and to the west side of San Gabriel Boulevard, while the SEA boundary stops at the transmission lines' southern edge. Some of the canyons in the oil field have oak woodland.

The SEA has a finger that extends from the Montebello Hills section over San Gabriel Boulevard to the oak woodland (among oil field structures) that borders the Rio Hondo Channel. The SEA finger continues upstream along the natural riparian course of the Rio Hondo to a point where the Rio Hondo is encased as a concrete flood control channel. This area of the Rio Hondo usually has water and is on the migration route for migrating and wintering waterfowl. The riparian area of the Rio Hondo immediately north of San Gabriel Boulevard has long been recognized as important to birds and has been called "Bosque Del Rio Hondo" since Spanish occupation of this area. Abundance of birdlife is frequently mentioned, but the area also has amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and probably fishes.

It is intended that the SEA encompass only natural areas of the basin and portions of the San Gabriel River and Rio Hondo, and the SEA in this area is disjunct from the rest of the Puente Hills. A golf course that is part of the Whittier Narrows Dam County Recreation Area is on the west side of Rio Hondo, and the golf course is not included in the SEA. Likewise, the manicured areas of the County Recreation Area on the east side of Rio Hondo are not included.

Moving east, the southern boundary of the SEA follows the upstream edge of the Whittier Narrows Dam, while the northern boundary goes east along the south side of Durfee Avenue from the east bank of the Rio Hondo. This captures the Flood Control Basin at the confluence of the San Gabriel River and Rio Hondo. The pool at the base of the Whittier Narrows Dam, which often has migrant waterfowl, is included in the SEA. In the Flood Control Basin the connective channel between the Rio Hondo and the San Gabriel River has native riparian vegetation and usually has water. The connective channel is included in both the SEA and the critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher. The northern SEA boundary follows the south side of Durfee Avenue eastward to near the junction with Peck Road. Here the northern SEA boundary follows the northern side of the grounds of the Whittier Narrows Nature Center to the San Gabriel River, which is naturally vegetated with a soft bottom. The southern SEA boundary has outlined the natural vegetation of the flood control basin and connective channel, with a finger extending south downstream along natural riparian vegetation in the San Gabriel River, to the crossing of San Gabriel Boulevard. Across from the Whittier Narrows Nature Center, the southern boundary is along the southeast side of the San Gabriel River. A finger of the SEA extends upstream along the area of the San Gabriel River, which has soft-bottom and native riparian vegetation upstream about one mile (three-quarters of a mile beyond the crossing of State Route-60, which is a short distance upstream from the Whittier Narrows Nature Center area). This includes the confluence with San Jose Creek that drains the south side of the San Jose Hills, and the north side of the Puente Hills. Currently, the Whittier Narrows area of the SEA outlined above is not physically connected to the remainder of the SEA due to urban development on both sides of Interstate -605.

Much of San Jose Creek is channelized, and the City of Industry is located in the flood plain. Because of this, most wildlife movement cannot use the main watercourse route, which makes Puente Hills the wildlife corridor through the area. A plan for the Whittier Narrows area, sometimes called “the Emerald Necklace,” proposes to eventually have a string of parks along the San Gabriel River and Rio Hondo, stretching from the Whittier Narrows Dam County Recreation Area along the rivers to the Santa Fe Dam area, into the City of Irwindale. This would better connect wildlife from the Puente Hills, Chino Hills, Santa Ana Mountains and the other Peninsular Ranges of Southern California with the San Gabriel Mountains, and the Transverse Ranges across the northern side of the San Gabriel Valley.

Moving east across Interstate-605, the SEA begins at the end of Sycamore Canyon Road and the mouth of Sycamore Canyon (off Workman Mill Road on the south side of the west section of Rose Hills Memorial Park). The northern boundary essentially follows the edge of developed portions of the Rose Hills Memorial Park, the Puente Hills Landfill, and rural residential and suburban developments of the Hacienda Heights area, eastward to Schabarum Regional County Park. The southern boundary in this area tracks the edge of urban development along the southern slopes of the Puente Hills bordering the City of Whittier and the community of La Habra Heights. The SEA in this southern slope area includes

some areas impacted by oil production that are otherwise connective by virtue of largely natural habitat of chaparral and grasslands. Much of this area of the SEA is critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher. The critical habitat of the gnatcatcher extends into areas with appropriate habitat for the gnatcatcher among some development, for example, Rose Hills Memorial Park and the Puente Hills Landfill. These areas were not included in the SEA because they did not meet the SEA mapping criteria.

Much of the summit area in the Puente Hills is conserved and under restoration by the Puente Hills Landfill Native Habitat Preservation Authority (PHLNHA), which has sponsored important studies on habitat and wildlife movement, restoration, and the wildlife movement tunnel under Harbor Boulevard at the eastern side of the SEA. The SEA in this western end of the Puente Hills includes important natural drainages on the west side of the Puente Hills, which drain to the San Gabriel River: much of Sycamore Canyon, with a fine riparian oak woodland; and Turnbull Canyon with a mixed riparian forest of ash, sycamore, and oak woodland. The ridges around Turnbull Canyon are mixed grassland and chaparral, with coastal sage scrub and a scattered population of the federally-threatened coastal California gnatcatcher. Mixed chaparral and cactus scrub on the Turnbull Canyon slopes has a local population of the sensitive coastal cactus wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus sandiegensis*). Other areas of the southwest slope drainages include Worsham Creek, Verde Creek, Arroyo Pescadero, and San Miguel Creek. Underpasses of Colima Road, which could otherwise block the east-west wildlife movement along the Puente Hills, are used by wildlife as shown by studies sponsored by the PHLNHPA. (SWCA Environmental Consultants, 2012)

A lobe of the SEA goes over the ridge to natural habitat along north-facing slopes. These tributaries of Joe Hill Wash have a mix of oak and walnut woodland habitats along multiple drainages that end in San Jose Creek. Other areas of north slope drainage to San Jose Creek are included in the SEA on the southeast side of Workman Mill and along the transmission line corridor in the Workman Mill area. The north-slope boundary skirts the developed areas of the community of Hacienda Heights. An area of planned development in the oak woodland just west of Schabarum Regional County Park has been excluded from the SEA.

Continuing east, the northern SEA boundary crosses the Schabarum Park accessory corridor and includes the undeveloped portions, as well as those of neighboring Trailview County Park in the SEA. Here the northern boundary is trending southeast, skirting along the edge of residential development within unincorporated Rowland Heights. The southern SEA boundary in this area skirts development in the community of La Habra Heights and includes the southern slope of Powder Canyon, which has a variety of natural habitats including riparian and north-slope oak woodland, rocky hillsides, chaparral, and some grassland. Powder Canyon is part of the watershed of San Jose Creek. Here the SEA crosses Fullerton Road in a broad swath about a 0.4 mile wide that includes the Powder Canyon undercrossing and Pathfinder Park on the east side. Pathfinder Park has riparian and chaparral habitat. There is an area around the ridgeline development along Vantage Pointe Drive that has been excluded from the SEA.

The northern SEA boundary continues along the edge of development at the southern edge of the communities of Rowland Heights to include walnut woodland, oak woodland, grassland, and chaparral vegetation on the north-facing slopes and central ridge of the Puente Hills. This area includes tributaries in the Puente Hills for the Brea Canyon watershed. The boundary crosses Brea Canyon (Santa Ana River

watershed) and State Route-57 at the edge of development in the Ciyt of Diamond Bar, and continues along the boundary of natural vegetation to the San Bernardino-Los Angeles County line. East of State Route-57, this urban-wildland interface is more or less the boundary between development in the eastern San Gabriel Valley and the natural areas of the Firestone Boy Scout Reservation, with its focal area on Tonner Canyon (also in the Santa Ana River watershed).

From the crossing of Fullerton Road, the southern SEA boundary encompasses the naturally-vegetated central ridgeline of the Puente Hills, and extends south along the west side of Harbor Boulevard to include natural area around a wildlife passage tunnel under Harbor Boulevard. This tunnel was constructed by the Puente Hills Landfill Natural Habitat Preservation Authority, and its mud floor has many track prints that attest to frequent use by deer and other animals. The tunnel has the ridgeline area on its west side (with scattered residences), and on the east side are a deep canyon with fine riparian oak woodland, hills with scattered oil wells, walnut woodland, and grasslands. The southern boundary includes the canyon, but excludes the hills and grasslands of the oil field that are on the ridgeline and south of the canyon. On the northern slope of the included canyon is the Vantage Pointe development, which is excluded from the SEA. On the east side of the oil field, the southern SEA boundary trends southeast along natural vegetation boundaries to the Orange-Los Angeles County line. At the Orange-Los Angeles County line, the SEA borders the development in the City of Brea in Orange County for a short distance, and continues through grassland and chaparral to cross the State Route-57 into walnut woodlands, southern oak woodland, chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and riparian woodlands of Tonner Canyon on the Firestone Boy Scout Reservation. Tonner Canyon is in the Santa Ana River watershed, and the ridge separating Brea and Tonner canyons is generally considered the divide between the Puente Hills and the Chino Hills. From here the southern SEA boundary continues eastward on the Orange-Los Angeles County line to the three-way junction with the San Bernardino-Los Angeles County line. For its eastern border in the Chino Hills, the SEA boundary turns north and follows along the San Bernardino-Los Angeles County line to contact with the northern boundary. In Orange County, south of the Orange-Los Angeles County line, is the Chino Hills State Park, with grasslands, chaparral, and riparian oak woodlands that extend across into the Firestone Boy Scout Reservation.

Critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher is generally coincident with the SEA in the western part of the SEA, but has lobes and fingers that extend into development areas where the preferred natural habitat of the gnatcatcher, coastal sage scrub, coexists with less dense residential areas. East of Fullerton Road, the gnatcatcher critical habitat differs from the SEA. Gnatcatcher critical habitat narrowly includes the Harbor Boulevard wildlife passage tunnel, goes on the south side of the Vantage Point exclusion area, and trends into Orange County on the eastern side of the oilfield that borders the Vantage Point development. There is a small area of gnatcatcher critical habitat in the Firestone Boy Scout Reservation in the County that connects to the large area of critical habitat in Orange County and the Chino Hills.

The majority of the SEA lies within unincorporated County jurisdiction. Other local jurisdictions have also been included within the SEA in order to delineate the boundaries of functioning habitat units. These include the City of Diamond Bar, the City of Industry, the City of La Habra Heights, the City of Montebello, the City of Pico Rivera, the City of South El Monte, and the City of Whittier.

Vegetation

The SEA encompasses the remaining relatively undisturbed habitat areas in the County portion of the Puente Hills. These include portions of the Montebello Hills, Whittier Narrows, Rio Hondo, Sycamore Canyon and Turnbull Canyon to the west; Powder Canyon; and Brea Canyon and Tonner Canyon to the east. Each of these areas contains relatively undisturbed examples of woodland, shrubland, grassland and wetland communities that once existed throughout the inland hills complex of the Los Angeles Basin. Included among these habitats are excellent examples of oak woodland, oak riparian forest, southern willow scrub and walnut woodland. Intermixed with these are stands of mixed chaparral, coastal sage scrub and grasslands, which taken as a whole, form a valuable wildlife habitat unit of regional importance. It should be noted that the SEA includes areas disturbed and developed for rural residential and oil extraction. Generally, these conditions are found in the Montebello Hills, Brea Canyon, La Habra Heights, and the hills above the Whittier area.

Interconnecting corridors for wildlife have a mixture of disturbed habitat areas, native vegetation, naturalized vegetation, and sparsely developed land. While such areas do not represent key regional habitats, they have been recommended for inclusion in the SEA in order to recognize the importance of the wildlife corridor function of the SEA to exchange genetic material between plant and animal populations throughout the Puente Hills, the Chino Hills, the Santa Ana Mountains, and the natural areas of other Peninsular Ranges of Southern and Baja California.

Good examples of the variety of riparian habitat are found near the Whittier Narrows Nature Center, including lowland riparian and freshwater marsh habitat, rich soils deposited from flood waters, and impressive streamside vegetation of willows, sycamores, cottonwoods, and mulefat. The Whittier Narrows Nature Center has records for the County Recreation Area, which document a very rich and diverse vertebrate fauna with 24 species of mammals, over 300 species of birds, 8 reptiles, 4 amphibians, and several fishes. The birds include 65 sensitive species and 50 year-round resident species. Most of these are related in some way to the riparian habitats.

Plant communities identified in the *Significant Ecological Area Description* in 2006 used the standard methodology and terminology of the time. Eight major plant communities found within the Puente Hills SEA were listed in 2006: oak woodland, oak riparian forest, walnut woodland, southern willow scrub, chaparral, coastal sage scrub, freshwater marsh, and non-native grassland. The variety of topography, soil types, slope aspects and water availability within this SEA creates a range of physical habitats, which support numerous plant species.

Plant species observed or recorded in previous documentation within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium of the Los Angeles County SEAs.* Sensitive plant species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Descriptions and general locations of the each plant community present within the SEA are given below.

Oak Woodland: A plant community dominated by species of the oak genus (*Quercus*). Within this SEA this species is the coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia* var. *agrifolia*), which typically grows to heights of 20

to 40 feet and forms either closed or open tree canopies. Understory vegetation varies from grassland in areas subject to grazing to shrubs where topography is steeper and/or grazing has been relaxed. It may also intergrade with shrub communities. Within this SEA, oak woodland is scattered throughout many hillsides, drainages and broad valleys, it is most prevalent on northfacing slopes and in drainage bottoms. Particularly large complexes of oak woodland are found in Powder Canyon, Brea Canyon, and Tonner Canyon.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

Oak Riparian Forest: A highly related community to oak woodland found in this SEA. This community is also dominated by coast live oak. The primary difference between oak woodland and oak riparian forest is the greater availability of water in riparian situations, which is expressed in a denser tree canopy and higher density of trees. There is also a greater number of hydrophytic (moister favoring) plant species in the understory. Typical riparian trees, such as western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) and willow (*Salix* spp.), commonly occur as well. Oak riparian forest is best developed within the Sycamore Canyon, Turnbull Canyon, Powder Canyon, Brea Canyon, and Tonner Canyon drainages. It is also scattered in other drainages throughout the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak forest) Forest Alliance
- *Platanus racemosa* (California sycamore woodlands) Woodland Alliance

Walnut Woodland: Often intergrades with oak dominated woodlands or develops as a distinct community. This community is dominated by the Southern California black walnut (*Juglans californica*), which grows 10 to 30 feet high. More often than not, the Southern California black walnut grows in open stands; however, closed tree canopies are not uncommon. In similar fashion to oak woodlands its understory varies from grasses to shrubs. Thus, it forms stands ranging from savannahs to forests throughout the SEA. It is most common on the hillsides of Brea Canyon and Tonner Canyon, where it forms some of the best developed examples south of Ventura County in Southern California.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Juglans californica* (Southern California black walnut groves) Woodland Alliance

Southern Willow Scrub: Well developed southern willow scrub communities are found along several major canyon bottoms in this SEA, particularly Brea Canyon and Tonner Canyon. Smaller patches of this community are also found scattered along smaller drainage and tributaries, as well as at seeps and around artificially created impoundments used for livestock watering. This community is dominated by species of *Salix*, which form nearly monotypic stands, due to their dense growth. These stands generally reach 10 to 20 feet in height with little understory vegetation.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Salix exigua* (sandbar willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salix lasiolepis* (arroyo willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance

Mixed Chaparral: A shrub community composed of robust species. Within this SEA, these species include laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*), toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), lemonadeberry (*Rhus integrifolia*), and western blue-elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* var. *caerulea*). These and other shrub species form dense vegetation covers that grow 5 to 10 feet in height. The development of chaparral is most pronounced and extensive within Sycamore Canyon, Turnbull Canyon, Brea Canyon and Tonner Canyon.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Adenostoma fasciculatum* (chamise chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Adenostoma fasciculatum-Salvia apiana* (chamise-white sage chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Arctostaphylos glandulosa* (chamise chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus leucodermis* (chaparral whitethorn) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus spinosus* (greenbark ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus oliganthus* (hairy leaf ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Prunus ilicifolia* (holly leaf cherry chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Rhus ovata* (sugarbush chaparral) Shrubland Alliance

Coastal Sage Scrub: A shrubland community that exhibits less robust structure. This plant community is dominated by California sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), California brittle bush (*Encelia californica*), white sage (*Salvia apiana*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), and California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*). Coastal sage scrub also forms dense stands, which grow three to four feet in height. Within this SEA, it is generally found in scattered patches, which are highly integrated with mixed chaparral, including areas used for oil extraction where coastal sage scrub persists.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica* (California sagebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Salvia mellifera* (California sagebrush-black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatuma* (California sagebrush-California scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Encelia californica* (California brittle bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Dendromecon rigida* (bush poppy scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Keckiella antirrhinoides* (bush penstemon scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia apiana* (white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia leucophylla* (purple sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia mellifera* (black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum cinereum* (ashy buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum wrightii Dwarf* (Wright's buckwheat patches) Shrubland Alliance
- *Hazardia squarrosa* (sawtooth golden bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lotus scoparius* [*Acmispon glaber*] (deer weed scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lupinus albifrons* (silver bush lupine scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Malacothamnus fasciculatus* (bush mallow scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Non-Native Grassland: Dominated by non-native annual grasses and forbs. These opportunistically growing species include brome grasses, wild oats and mustards. This community became established as a result of livestock grazing, whereby native vegetation is removed (sometimes by mechanical means) and replaced by more opportunistic species. Non-native grassland is found throughout all areas of this SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Avena* (*barbata*, *fatua*) (wild oats grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Brassica* (*nigra*) and other mustards (upland mustards) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus* (*diandrus*, *hordeaceus*)-*Brachypodium distachyon* (annual brome grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus rubens-Schismus* (*arabicus*, *barbatus*) ([*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*] red brome or Mediterranean grass grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Centaurea* (*solstitialis*, *melitensis*) (yellow star-thistle fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Lolium perenne* ([*Festuca perennis*] perennial rye grass fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands

Freshwater Marsh: Small areas supporting freshwater marsh are found at scattered locations in the broader valleys along major drainages. This community may also exist at other locations in and around artificially created impoundments that are used to water livestock. Freshwater marsh requires perennially shallow water or saturated soils. Dominant plants are emergent species, including cattails and bulrushes.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Phragmites australis* (common reed marshes) Herbaceous Alliance and Semi-Natural Stands
- *Schoenoplectus californicus* (California bulrush marsh) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Typha* (*angustifolia*, *domingensis*, *latifolia*) (cattail marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Sarcocornia pacifica* (*Salicornia depressa*) ([*Salicornia pacifica*] pickleweed mats) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Lemna* (*minor*) and relatives (duckweed blooms) Provisional Herbaceous Alliance

Wildlife

Wildlife within the SEA has been frequently documented to be very diverse and abundant due to the large acreage of natural open space, the diversity of habitat types, and regional connectivity. While a few wildlife species are entirely dependent on a single vegetative community, the entire mosaic of all the vegetation communities within the SEA and connected areas constitutes a functional ecosystem for a wide variety of wildlife species. This includes areas within the SEA as well as the regional ecosystem.

Analysis of invertebrates on any given site generally is limited by a lack of specific data; however, the size of the SEA and diversity of habitats present is considered sufficient to encompass healthy populations of a large number of invertebrate species. Amphibian populations are generally restricted in semi-arid and arid habitats, but may be particularly abundant where riparian areas occur. The SEA is likely to support a variety of amphibians in abundance within wetland areas along the major canyon bottoms and the moister oak woodland areas. Many essential reptilian habitat characteristics are present within the SEA. These include open habitats that allow free movement and high visibility and small mammal burrows for cover and escape from predators and extreme weather. These characteristics, as well as the variety of habitat types present, are likely to support a wide variety of reptilian species.

The scrubland, woodland, riparian, and grassland habitats in the SEA provide foraging and cover habitat for year-round residents, seasonal residents, and migrating song birds. In addition, the SEA encompasses many year-round water sources, abundant raptor foraging, perching, and nesting habitat. The

combination of these resources as well as the mosaic of many community types provides for a high diversity of bird species. Several of these species may use this SEA as their only consistent occurrence in the southeastern portion of the County.

Not unlike other taxonomic groups, mammal populations within the SEA are diverse and reflective of the unique combination of several habitat types. Unlike many other inland hills within the Los Angeles Basin, this SEA is large enough to support relatively stable large mammal populations despite the urban surroundings.

All wildlife species previously recorded, as well as those expected to occur, within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium* of the *Los Angeles County SEAs*. Sensitive wildlife species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Wildlife Movement

Evidence of significant wildlife movement throughout the Puente Hills SEA has recently been documented in a two year carnivore study commissioned by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy as part of a multi-jurisdictional effort to establish a region wide wildlife movement linkage. This SEA represents the County portion of a continuous series of natural open space within the Puente Hills and Chino Hills. Overall, this open space extends north and west from State Route 91 (SR-91) in Orange and Riverside Counties to the Whittier Narrows reach of the San Gabriel River. The open space physically links the Puente/Chino Hills with the Santa Ana Mountains and the San Gabriel Mountains, respectively. By virtue of these linkages and a complex of interconnected habitat units throughout the hills, the Puente/Chino Hills function as both an important wildlife linkage and resident habitat area for regional wildlife populations.

Within the SEA itself several habitat units, well defined by major canyons, exist. These include Sycamore Canyon, Turnbull Canyon, Powder Canyon, Brea Canyon and Tonner Canyon. Each of these, in and of themselves, is capable of supporting a diversity and abundance of wildlife. More importantly, however, these habitat units are connected by a series of open space corridors, which allows population exchange to occur. Maintenance of biological diversity and population viability is accorded throughout the SEA and the chance of local species extinctions due to isolation is minimized. This function is acutely important for wide-ranging species that meet their breeding and/or habitat requirements over broad areas.

Although several major arterial roads and highways cross the hills, continued use of undercrossings and surface crossings by wildlife has been documented. This movement is largely east-west trending between large habitat blocks located in the western, central and eastern portions of the SEA. Species documented as moving through the area include bobcat, coyote (*Canis latrans*), gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), and mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*).

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition. When species are federally-listed as endangered or threatened, they often have federally-designated, geographically-specific "critical habitat areas." Critical habitat areas, after extensive study by experts, are judged to be essential to conservation and maintenance of the species. The SEA has large coincident areas with the designated critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher.

Sensitive Plan Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. These communities include Engelmann oak woodland, Southern California black walnut groves, chamise-white sage chaparral, holly leaf cherry chaparral, California brittle bush scrub, bush penstemon scrub, white sage scrub, Wright's buckwheat patches, sawtooth golden bush scrub, and pickleweed mats, which occur throughout the SEA. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section.

Sensitive Plant Species

The statuses of rare plants are hierarchically categorized by the CNPS using a rank and decimal system. The initial category level of Rare Plant Rank is indicated by the ranks 1A (presumed extinct in California), 1B (rare or endangered in California and elsewhere), 2 (rare or endangered in California but more common elsewhere), 3 (more information needed, a review list), and 4 (limited distribution). In cases where the CNPS has further identified the specific threat to the species, a decimal or Threat Code is added: .1 (seriously endangered in California), .2 (fairly endangered in California), or .3 (not very endangered in California).

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Nevin's barberry (*Berberis nevinii*) RPR 1B.1, SE, FE
- Round-leaved filaree (*California macrophylla*) RPR 1B.1
- Southern tarplant (*Centromadia parryi* ssp. *australis*) RPR 1B.1
- Peruvian dodder (*Cuscuta obtusiflora* var. *glandulosa*) RPR 2.2
- Many-stemmed dudleya (*Dudleya multicaulis*) RPR 1B.2
- Mesa horkelia (*Horkelia cuneata* ssp. *puberula*) RPR 1B.1

- Coulter's goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata* ssp. *coulteri*) RPR 1B.1
- Chaparral ragwort (*Senecio aphanactis*) RPR 2.2
- San Bernardino aster (*Symphyotrichum defoliatum*) RPR 1B.2
- Prostrate vernal pool navarretia (*Navarretia prostrata*) RPR 1B.1
- Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) RPR 1B.2
- Intermediate mariposa lily (*Calochortus weedii* var. *intermedius*) RPR 1B.2
- Vernal barley (*Hordeum intercedens*) RPR 3.2
- California Orcutt grass (*Orcuttia californica*) RPR 1B.1, SE, FE

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or are likely to be present within the SEA based on habitat requirements and known range attributes:

- Western spadefoot (*Spea hammondii*) BLMS, SSC
- Coastal whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Rosy boa (*Charina trivirgata*) BLMS, FSS
- Western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Coast patch-nosed snake (*Salvadora hexalepis virgultea*) SSC
- Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) CDFG Watch List
- Tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*) BCC, BLMS, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*) CDFG Watch List
- Long-eared owl (*Asio otus*) SSC, LAA
- Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) BCC, BLMS, SSC
- Ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*) BCC, BLMS, CDFG Watch List, AWL, LAA
- Coastal cactus wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus sandiegensis*) BCC, FSS, SSC
- Western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*) FC, BCC, FSS, SE
- White-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*) CDFG Fully Protected
- Southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) FE, FSS, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) CDFG Watch List
- Yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*) SSC
- Belding's savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi*) SE
- Coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) FT, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Bank swallow (*Riparia riparia*) ST
- Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) FE, BCC, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) FSS, BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Mexican long-tongued bat (*Choeronycteris mexicana*) SSC, WBWG High
- Western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Silver-haired bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*) WBWG Medium
- Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*) WBWG Medium
- Western yellow bat (*Lasiurus xanthinus*) WBWG High
- San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus bennettii*) SSC
- Yuma myotis (*Myotis yumaensis*) BLMS, WBWG Low-Medium
- Pocketed free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops femorosaccus*) SSC, WBWG Medium
- Big free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops macrotis*) SSC, WBWG Medium-High
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) SSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

There is one ETA designated within this SEA. It is an area of scattered residential development interspersed among native habitat along the spine of the Puente Hills.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets several SEA designation criteria that consider regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met is described below.

CRITERIA ANALYSIS OF THE PUENTE HILLS SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Met	The population of the California gnatcatcher at the Montebello Hills is probably one of the largest single populations in the U.S. Pairs occur throughout the County portion of the Puente Hills, especially in Sycamore Canyon and Arroyo San Miguel. The coastal cactus wren has significant populations in the Puente Hills, occurring in the Montebello Hills, Sycamore Canyon, Rose Hills, Hellman Park in Whittier, and through Hacienda Heights into Rowland Heights. Several CNPS-Rare plants occur in the Puente Hills, including both Plummer's and Weed's mariposa-lilies.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	Several plant communities within this SEA are CDFG highest priority communities due to their restricted distribution in the Southern California region. These communities include walnut woodland, which is scattered throughout this SEA: oak riparian woodland, which is best developed in the major drainages of Sycamore Canyon, Turnbull Canyon, Powder Canyon, Brea Canyon, and Tonner Canyon, but is found elsewhere; stands of southern willow scrub along many of the drainages; scattered freshwater marsh; and coastal sage scrub, which is found in scattered patches over hillsides throughout.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	All of the plant communities and habitats mentioned above as being restricted in distribution on a regional basis are also restricted in distribution within the County.
	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species		This SEA represents the only large complex of multiple, relatively undisturbed habitats in southeastern portion of the

Criterion		Status	Justification
D)	or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	County. It is regionally important to many resident species, as well as migrating species, which would otherwise not be able to meet their habitat requirements. In particular, large mammal and overwintering birds of prey and song birds make use of this area. The Puente Hills are a well known migration corridor for migratory songbirds during spring migration (April and May). On foggy May mornings, the hilltops can support hundreds of individual migrant song birds, which forage actively in all available habitats.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	The Puente Hills represent the clear northern edge of the Peninsular Ranges. For this reason, taxa such as red diamond rattlesnake, occur here at the edge of their range, where they co-occur with the more widespread Pacific rattlesnake. Several bird species extend west through the Puente Hills into the Los Angeles Basin and the Whittier Hills (Oak Titmouse, Grasshopper Sparrow). These species are absent from the floor of the Los Angeles Basin. The Whittier Narrows Nature Center provides the public with extensive information and opportunities for field study of the Whittier Narrows natural environment.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	Both the oak woodlands and walnut woodlands within this SEA represent excellent relatively undisturbed examples. The walnut woodlands in this area are reported to be the best remaining stands south of Ventura County.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: A) habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant species; B-C) biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are restricted in distribution in the County and regionally; D) concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds, which are limited in availability in the County; E) populations of scientific interest because they are at range extremes and intermix with species from other areas with known examples of reptiles and birds; and F) areas that provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of original natural biotic communities in the County.

16. Rio Hondo College Wildlife Santuary SEA

Location

General

The Rio Hondo College Wildlife Sanctuary Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located on the western edge of the Puente Hills near the San Gabriel River, within the City of Whittier, and south of the Interstate-605. The SEA is the designated a Wildlife Sanctuary of the Rio Hondo College in the northern and eastern part of the campus, and is currently used as a study area by the students and faculty of Rio Hondo College. The SEA includes natural areas bordering two ridgelines—one impacted by transmission line installation and the maintenance roads, and the other with substantially natural areas. Between the two ridgelines is an intermittent drainage with riparian elements. The area includes good examples of riparian woodland, chaparral, oak woodland, coastal sage scrub, and chaparral communities. The entire unpaved campus area is designated critical habitat for the federally-threatened coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica).*

The SEA is located within the El Monte United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Quadrangle.

General Boundary and Resources Description

The SEA boundaries have a roughly triangular shape. The northern boundary begins in an arroyo with walnut woodland toward the west end of the North Entry Road, and goes southeastward along the border of natural habitat, passing the justice buildings near the bottom of the transmission line ridge. The boundary continues along the base of the ridge to the border with the Rose Hills Memorial Park. On the east side, the boundary tracks the edge of the Rose Hills Memorial Park peripheral road towards the southeast, including a slope of probable restored white-sage scrub. Where the peripheral road meets the crest of the southern ridge, the boundary turns northwest and goes along the southern ridge top, countinues down off the ridge northwestward around the Rio Hondo College campus parking lots and buildings to connect with the small walnut woodland.

The northern ridge primarily contains non-native grassland, with a strong component of introduced mustards, but also a strong component of scattered native chaparral shrubs, such as elderberry (*Sambucus* spp.), sumacs (*Rhus* spp.); and in the ravines, dense growths of large chaparral shrubs, including coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*). Some of the slopes on the north ridge have prickly-pear shrub. The watercourse between the ridges is riparian with plants, such as mulefat (*Senecio douglasii*) and coyote bush (*Baccharis* spp.). The ravines on the north face of the southern ridge that border the watercourse have fine oak woodland, cherry woodland, and walnut woodland at the upper ends. The SEA provides examples of many of the common and cherished natural habitats of the County for study. Sign of coyote (*Canis latrans*), fox (probably *Urocyon cinereoargenteus*) and bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) can be noted while walking the transmission line northern ridge. The biotic communities within the SEA contain a variety of plant life and an abundant fauna.

Due to location near the extreme northwestern end of the Peninsular Ranges, the SEA is an excellent place to observe the geographical range variability of a number of species that are characteristic of the mountains to the south, and have their northernmost occurrences in the Puente Hills, such as the red diamond rattlesnake (co-occurring with the Pacific rattlesnake).

Vegetation

There are three native plant communities in the SEA: coastal sage chaparral scrub, chaparral and oak woodland. The remainder of the SEA has areas classified as ornamental landscaping, developed and disturbed. Plant communities identified in the *Significant Ecological Area Update Study* by PCR in 2000 used the standard methodology and terminology of the time. Eight major plant communities found within the SEA were listed in 2000, including oak woodland, oak riparian forest, walnut woodland, southern willow scrub, chaparral, coastal sage chaparral scrub, freshwater marsh, and non-native grassland. The variety of topography, soil types, slope aspects and water availability within this SEA create a range of physical habitats that support numerous plant species.

Plant species observed or recorded in previous documentation within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium of the Los Angeles County SEAs.* Sensitive plant species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Descriptions and general locations of the each plant community present within the SEA are given below.

Oak Woodland: A plant community dominated by species of the oak genus (*Quercus*). Within this SEA this species is the coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia* var. *agrifolia*), which typically grows to heights of 20 to 40 feet and forms either closed or open tree canopies. Understory vegetation varies from grassland in areas subject to grazing to shrubs where topography is steeper and/or grazing has been relaxed. It may also intergrade with shrub communities, in this case coastal sage chaparral scrub. Within this SEA oak woodland occur along the northern boundary.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

Walnut Woodland: Often intergrades with oak dominated woodlands or develops as a distinct community. This community is dominated by the Southern California black walnut (*Juglans californica*), which grows 10 to 30 feet high. More often than not, the Southern California black walnut grows in open stands; however, closed tree canopies are not uncommon. In similar fashion to oak woodlands, its understory varies from grasses to shrubs. It forms stands ranging from savannahs to forests throughout the nearby Puente Hills SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Juglans californica* (Southern California black walnut groves) Woodland Alliance

Coastal Sage Scrub: A shrubland community found in this SEA is coastal sage chaparral scrub, which has a high percentage of non-native species. This plant community is dominated by California sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), California brittle bush (*Encelia californica*), white sage (*Salvia apiana*), black sage

(*Salvia mellifera*), and California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*). Coastal sage chaparral scrub also forms dense stands, which grow three to four feet in height. Where the coastal sage chaparral scrub community is now found had been cleared and disturbed by past disturbances, such as grading and transition line construction.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica* (California sagebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Salvia mellifera* (California sagebrush-black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Encelia californica* (California brittle bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia leucophylla* (purple sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia mellifera* (black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lotus scoparius* [*Acmispon glaber*] (deer weed scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Opuntia littoralis* (coast prickly pear scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Chaparral: A shrub community composed of robust, woody species. Within this SEA these species include laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*), toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), lemonadeberry (*Rhus integrifolia*) and prickly-pear cactus. These and other shrub species form dense vegetation covers growing 5 to 10 feet in height. The development of chaparral is most pronounced on north facing slopes within the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Adenostoma fasciculatum* (chamise chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus oliganthus* (hairy leaf ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Rhus ovata* (sugarbush chaparral) Shrubland Alliance

Developed and ornamental landscaping areas include agricultural use areas, ornamental landscaping, and structures, and occupy the majority of the project area. All perimeter areas, sections adjacent to roads, and space not occupied by parking lots or buildings have been landscaped. Some mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*) and sage species have been used for landscaping purposes. Species in this vegetation type included pine, acacia, ash, cotoneaster, eucalyptus and California privet. These species have grown large, with extensive canopies, and have developed an understory in some areas.

Disturbed or Barren Areas: Areas that either completely lack vegetation or are dominated by ruderal species. Ruderal vegetation found within the SEA includes a high proportion of weedy species, including black mustard, fennel, tree tobacco, and castor bean. The disturbed areas are a result of previous use for staging maintenance activities or easements.

Corresponding MCV communities:

No corresponding communities at this time

Wildlife

Wildlife within any ecosystem is largely determined by the available plant communities and in the SEA, the relatively small area only allows for limited local foraging and wildlife habitat.

Analysis of the presence of invertebrates is limited by a lack of specific data; however, the size of the SEA and diversity of habitats present is considered sufficient to encompass healthy populations of a large number of invertebrate species.

The potential presence of amphibians varies greatly between habitats within the project site. Terrestrial species may or may not require standing water for reproduction. Terrestrial species avoid desiccation by burrowing underground; within crevices in trees, rocks, and logs; and under stones and surface litter during the day and dry seasons. Due to their secretive nature, terrestrial amphibians are rarely observed, but may be quite abundant if conditions are favorable. Aquatic amphibians are dependent on standing or flowing water for reproduction. Such habitats include fresh water marshes and open water (reservoirs, permanent and temporary pools and ponds, and perennial streams).

Reptilian diversity and abundance varies with habitat type and character. Although some species prefer only one or two plant communities, most will forage in a variety of communities. A number of reptile species prefer open habitats that allow free movement and high visibility. The only reptiles recorded are the western side-blotched lizard (*Uta stansburiana elegans*) and the Great Basin fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis longipes*).

For birds, some of the reestablishing vegetation in the disturbed areas and some areas of the ornamental landscaping provide limited foraging and cover habitat for year-round residents, seasonal residents, and migrating song birds. In addition, there is seasonally available water onsite within the drainage channels. The overall condition of the plant communities is mainly ornamental landscape. For raptors, some of the habitat within the project site could have the potential to provide foraging opportunities and breeding areas for raptors. Trees found along the perimeter of the project site and throughout the campus have the potential to provide suitable perches for foraging over the open areas and scrub communities. These areas provide habitat for small birds and mammals, which results in a potentially large prey population on the project site. There is remnant coastal sage scrub in the SEA, and this may form a stepping stone for the coastal California gnatcatcher. Both the Puente Hills SEA and the critical habitat of the gnatcatcher are disjunct across Interstate-605. To have connectivity between the gnatcatcher's large population in the Montebello Hills, the SEA extends as a welcoming arm on the east side of Interstate-605. This would be equally important for other aerial fauna and windblown seeds of plants on the west side of Interstate-605.

For mammals, the reestablishing vegetation in the disturbed areas and the landscaped areas on the project site have the potential to support a limited number of mammal species. During field surveys, mammal species were either directly observed or their presence was deduced by diagnostic signs (tracks, scat, burrows, etc.).

All wildlife species previously recorded, as well as those expected to occur, within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium* of the *Los Angeles County SEA Update Study 2000*

Background Report. Sensitive wildlife species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section of this document.

Wildlife Movement

The SEA is located in an area of potentially low to moderate value with regards to regional and local terrestrial wildlife movement. The Interstate-605 and industrial development that borders the freeway serves as a barrier for wildlife movement. The SEA is a gateway area for connectivity between the Peninsular Ranges of Southern California and the Transverse Ranges to the north. Naturally, they are connected by use of wildlife, particularly birds, insects, and plant propagules that are found along the San Gabriel River and Rio Hondo, which are only a 0.5 mile to the west of the Rio Hondo College. The San Gabriel River is designated by California Audubon as a State Important Bird Area (IBA), and extended arms of Semi-Natural habitat are important to connectivity for wildlife of the area and the region. Wildlife species could potentially use the SEA and possibly the ornamentally landscaped areas to facilitate movement and provide access to natural resources located in the Puente Hills. A wide variety of wildlife use linkages throughout the SEA from the extreme southeast up to the Rio Hondo College Wildlife Sanctuary, including mountain lion (*Puma concolor*) and a number of medium-sized mammals.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition. When species are federally-listed as endangered or threatened, they often have federally-designated, geographically-specific "critical habitat areas." Critical habitat areas, after extensive study by experts, are judged to be essential to conservation and maintenance of the species. The Rio Hondo College Wildlife Sanctuary is critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher.

Sensitive Plan Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports one habitat type considered sensitive by resource agencies. This is inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. This community is coastal sage chaparral scrub and it occupies a part of the SEA. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section.

Sensitive Plant Species

The statuses of rare plants are hierarchically categorized by the CNPS using a rank and decimal system. The initial category level of Rare Plant Rank is indicated by the ranks 1A (presumed extinct in California), 1B (rare or endangered in California and elsewhere), 2 (rare or endangered in California but more common elsewhere), 3 (more information needed, a review list), and 4 (limited distribution). In cases where the CNPS has further identified the specific threat to the species, a decimal or Threat Code is added: .1 (seriously endangered in California), .2 (fairly endangered in California), or .3 (not very endangered in California).

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Southern tarplant (*Centromadia parryi* ssp. *australis*) RPR 1B.1
- Slender mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*) RPR 1B.2
- Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) RPR 1B.2
- Intermediate mariposa lily (*Calochortus weedii* var. *intermedius*) RPR 1B.2
- Southern California black walnut (*Juglans californica*) RPR 4.2

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or are likely to be present within the SEA based on habitat requirements and known range attributes:

- Coastal whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Rosy boa (*Charina trivirgata*) BLMS, FSS
- Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) CDFG Watch List
- Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) BCC, BLMS, SSC
- Coastal cactus wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus sandiegensis*) BCC, FSS, SSC
- Yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*) SSC
- Coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) FT, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) FSS, BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Silver-haired bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*) WBWG Medium
- Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*) WBWG Medium
- Pocketed free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops femorosaccus*) SSC, WBWG Medium
- Big free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops macrotis*) SSC, WBWG Medium-High
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) SSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

There are no ETAs designated within this SEA.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets several SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met described below.

CRITERIA ANALYSIS OF THE RIO HONDO WILDLIFE SANCTUARY SEA

Criterion	Status	Justification

A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Met	The SEA is critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Not Met	The SEA does not contain unique habitat restricted in distribution in the region of Southern California.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution	Not Met	The SEA does not contain unique habitat for the region of the County.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	This SEA is located on the eastern upland area of the San Gabriel River and is considered critical habitat for connectivity of the coastal California gnatcatcher. The largest population of the gnatcatcher in the County is on the west side of the San Gabriel River and the Interstate-605. Critical habitat in the SEA is on the east side of the San Gabriel River and the Interstate-605. The SEA is an arm extending to the rest of the gnatcatcher critical habitat and connecting to the rest of the Puente Hills SEA. The SEA is an important connecting and migration area for plants and wildlife of the Puente-Chino Hills of the Peninsular Ranges.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	The SEA is part of the education network of the public community colleges of the Los Angeles area. The area is used by the college for scientific study and research on native wildlife and plants. The college maintains field records on the biotic resources of the area. The SEA is relatively undisturbed. As a “choke point” for the wildlife corridor, it is an important area of research and study of connectivity.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Not Met	The SEA has little disturbed areas, as well as recovering natural habitat.

In conclusion, the area described is an SEA because it contains: A) core habitat for a threatened species; D) is an important choke point in a significant migration and connective corridor of the County and the region of Southern California; and E) is an important resource to the education community of the County because of its connective status and its natural and recovering habitats

17. San Andreas SEA

Location

General

The San Andreas Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located in the western portion of the Antelope Valley in an unincorporated area of the County. The SEA is the second largest SEA and includes many diverse habitats. This is in large part due to the northwestern area being a meeting place for several diverse biomes and wildlife corridors. There are five ecoregions that meet in this area and have biological species that extend along the SEA and San Andreas Fault in the County. These ecoregions include: California Coastal Mountains; California Central Valley; Tehachapi Mountains, which extend to the southern Sierra Nevada; San Gabriel Mountains, which extend to other ranges in the Transverse Ranges; and the Antelope Valley, which is the northwestern end of the Mojave Desert. Wildlife corridors extend along the courses of the mountain ranges, as well as along the San Andreas Fault and Garlock Fault, which provide a great variety of habitats and frequent emergent water that is important for wildlife and plant movement and connectivity. The location and orientation of the SEA coincides with a segment of the San Andreas Fault Zone. The SEA includes a small portion of the western south-facing Tehachapi foothills, which are known for wildflower field displays in years of good rainfall. The SEA goes east and south across grasslands at the western tip of the Antelope Valley, includes Quail Lake, a former sag pond enhanced to receive water from the West Branch of the California Aqueduct. From Quail Lake, the SEA extends up the northern foothills of Liebre Mountain and Sawmill Mountain, and includes: Portal Ridge; large portions of Leona Valley; Ritter Ridge, Fairmont and Antelope buttes; and portions of Anaverde Valley. It also includes a disjunct area that encompasses water bodies along the fault, Lake Palmdale, and Una Lake, with a terminus at Barrel Springs.

The Antelope Valley and adjacent desert slopes of the SEA are recognized by California Audubon as the Antelope Valley (Lancaster) Globally Important Bird Area (IBA). Near Lake Palmdale in the disjunct eastern section of the SEA is part of the Antelope Valley (Lancaster) IBA and near Barrel Springs is part of the Santa Clara River IBA.

The SEA is located at least partially in each of the following United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Quadrangles: Lebec, La Liebre Ranch, Neenach School, Fairmont Butte, Little Buttes, Liebre Mountain, Burnt Peak, Lake Hughes, Del Sur, Lancaster West, Sleepy Valley, Ritter Ridge, and Palmdale.

General Boundary and Resources Description

The northwestern tip of the SEA encompasses south-facing foothills at the western end of the Tehachapi Mountains, in the northwest corner of the County, on the eastern side of Tejon Pass. The largest extent of native perennial grassland and diverse wildflower fields occurs in this area of the County.

From the Tehachapi Foothills, the southern boundary goes south-southeast along Interstate-5, including much of Peace Valley in the Gorman area, which is the broad faulted area that includes Gorman Creek. The SEA boundary crosses the Western Branch of the California Aqueduct, which is south of the junction

of Interstate-5 and State Route-138. The boundary continues south along Interstate-5 until the point where the Liebre Mountain ridgeline dips to the highway, and the SEA boundary turns eastward and follows the ridgeline along the northern side of Liebre Mountain.

Along this section of Interstate-5 are several large underpasses for stream courses that are extremely important for wildlife connectivity across Interstate-5. The Angeles National Forest boundary is just east of the highway, and south of the aqueduct. Just north of the Liebre Mountain ridgeline, the San Andreas borders the north, east, and south sides of the eight unit of the Joshua Tree Woodlands SEA. This woodland is an unnamed arroyo, and it has the clumped growth form that Joshua trees (*Yucca brevifolia*) exhibit in hilly areas. The woodland is near the westernmost Joshua tree of the species. The woodland is a range extreme end. The SEA includes the northern slope are of the Angeles National Forest with its diversity of chaparral, grasslands, and oak and conifer forests.

After turning east from Interstate-5 and climbing uphill on the northern slope of Liebre Mountain, the SEA boundary crosses the ridgeline to the south to incorporate natural pristine areas of headwaters for all the branches of Liebre Gulch, which are part of the headwaters for Piru Creek, which is the largest tributary of the Santa Clara River in Ventura County. The SEA boundary returns to the north face of Liebre Gulch at about the location of Sandberg. The boundary tracks the Sawmill Mountain-Maxwell Road, which is generally on the broad ridgeline of the mountains and generally trends in a southeasterly direction. This ridgeline is the headwaters of Castaic Creek, which is the largest tributary of the Santa Clara River in the County. Castaic Creek is above the Castaic Reservoir, which extends into Cienega Canyon and Fish Creek, which is federally-designated critical habitat for the endangered arroyo toad (*Anaxyrus californicus*). In addition, maintenance of pure water in the source areas is critical for the species.

The boundary turns northeast where it meets Lake Hughes Road. This is an extremely important area of connectivity as the canyon along the Lake Hughes Road (Elizabeth Lake Canyon) drains to Castaic Creek and the Santa Clara River, whereas the Amargosa Creek that goes east and west from the Lake Hughes Road in the Fault valley drains to the Antelope Valley in both directions. The junction is topographically broad and well-vegetated though residential, which is excellent for wildlife connectivity in spite of a few houses. This is one of the major connective areas for the Pacific Ocean, the mountains, and the Mojave Desert. Castaic Creek is a principle tributary of the Santa Clara River, which runs to the seacoast in Ventura County. The San Gabriel Mountains are the home of Castaic Creek. The Antelope Valley receives most of the drainages from the San Andreas Fault valley.

The SEA boundary goes north at the junction with Lake Hughes Road and then skirts the Lake Hughes community's extension into Pine Canyon along the San Andreas Fault. In Pine Canyon, the boundary turns north and returns to its southeasterly direction, skirting the Lake Hughes development along the southern edge of Portal Ridge. Portal Ridge is entirely included in the SEA. A side extension of the southern boundary includes Lake Hughes, which is important for migrating waterfowl, with its sheltered position in the Fault valley. The boundary extends along the southern edge of Lake Hughes, Munz Lake, and Elizabeth Lake, and then trends southeast to go along the Leona Divide, including a large portion of Leona Valley.

The entire area along the San Andreas Fault is rich in wetlands and bogs, but Leona Valley has these in abundance, even in many yards. All of the wetlands in the San Andreas Fault valley and Portal Ridge are home to the greatest concentration of the tricolored blackbird in Southern California, many of which are year-round residents. This bird species has experienced great population declines in recent years and is proposed for listing at both state and federal levels. In the community of Leona Valley, the southern SEA boundary goes along Lost Valley Creek and then along Leona Road to exclude some of the denser residential area in this section. The included area in Leona Valley has many of the bogs that line the Fault and the less populated farm areas along Portal Ridge north of Leona Road.

Around the area of the northward drainage of Bouquet Canyon, the southern SEA boundary dips south around an expansive area of drainages and bogs used by the tricolor blackbird on the old Ritter Ranch. From Ritter Canyon to the east, the boundary follows the old Ritter Ranch high road along the Sierra Pelona, crosses from 40th Street to the California Aqueduct along vegetation in the Anaverde Valley (where the boundary transitions from the Amargosa Creek drainage to the Anaverde Creek drainage), and then follows the aqueduct to the area where Anaverde Creek exits from the Fault valley. At the Lancaster Landfill boundary, the SEA boundary goes north and becomes the north SEA boundary at Verde Point.

The northern boundary of the SEA begins at Tejon Pass next to Interstate-5 and follows the Kern-Los Angeles County line eastward to the intersection of the western branch of the California Aqueduct in the western Tehachapi Foothills. This area along the Kern-Los Angeles County line is a contact boundary with the designated critical habitat for the federally-endangered California condor (*Gymnogyps californicus*), which is a bird that nearly went extinct and was saved by prodigious efforts in captive breeding. The boundary turns southeast to contour along the toe of slopes of low-lying hills where some of the few remaining examples of native perennial bunchgrass communities in California are found. The boundary crosses State Route-138, just east of where Tentrock Canyon also crosses State Route-138 and turns eastward into the Antelope Valley. Here the northern SEA boundary turns east to contour along the foothill area of the northern slope of Liebre Mountain. The boundary continues southeast following the edge of agricultural fields, which are important for raptor foraging. These fields often go along the Los Angeles Aqueduct, which is a little south of the California Aqueduct in this area, or along the California Aqueduct itself.

The boundary eventually tracks along the northeast edge of Fairmont Reservoir (another breeding site for the tricolored blackbird), and turns northeast to include a patchwork of farmed areas between the Fairmont and Antelope buttes, which are known to have tricolored blackbird feeding grounds. The boundary makes an inclusive path to encompass the Broad Canyon Wash, the Fairmont and Antelope buttes, and the Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve State Park. These desert buttes are concentrated wintering grounds for birds of prey, and provide roosting sites that are surrounded by cultivated fields that support a plentiful food supply of rodents, rabbits, and hares. They are the most westerly buttes in the Mojave Desert, and with their proximity to the San Gabriel Mountains, have unique ecological relationships of scientific interest. Near the southern area of the buttes, the boundary follows agricultural fields along 130th Street West and then 135th Street West south to Munz Ranch Road (Willow Springs Road on some maps). Along 135th Street West, the boundary crosses Myrick Canyon

where it spreads out onto the plain of the desert floor. The upstream areas of Myrick Canyon are included in the SEA.

The boundary tracks along the northwest side of Munz Ranch Road and then crosses to include Willow Springs Canyon, where Willow Springs Canyon is most natural. Where Willow Springs Canyon crosses the California Aqueduct, the northern SEA boundary turns east along the California Aqueduct as it passes along the northern base of Portal Ridge. Following the southern edge of the California Aqueduct, the boundary continues in a southeasterly direction to the east side of Ritter Ridge to Leona Siphon. A development along Joshua Tree Ranch Road near the summit of Ritter Ridge is an area exclude from the SEA. The SEA northern boundary turns east for roughly one quarter mile along the southern edge of a tributary to Amargosa Creek. Where the Amargosa Creek terminates Ritter Ridge, the SEA boundary crosses the creek and ascends along the ridgeline of an unnamed ridge to where it meets the southern boundary at Verde Point.

East across the State Route-14 is a disjunct part of the SEA that incorporates Lake Palmdale and Una Lake and extends along the Fault to 37th Street East, including the ridgelines north and south of Barrel Springs Road, which includes the sag ponds or Barrel Springs. The Palmdale Ditch is included in this part of the SEA. Many migrant birds using the desert water features can be observed at these artificial lakes and the natural springs of this area during the spring and fall migration.

The gap between the two portions of the SEA includes the Antelope Valley Landfill, disturbed lots, and State Route-14.

The majority of land within the SEA lies within unincorporated area of the County. Other jurisdictions include the Angeles National Forest, the City of Palmdale, and the City of Lancaster.

Vegetation

Due to the unique location along a large fault valley that is bordered by pressure ridges, the large variation in elevation and topography, and because it includes a meeting point of large “eco-regions,” vegetation within the SEA is the most diverse of any of the County’s SEAs. The SEA includes arid desert communities, foothill woodland communities; high elevation piñon pine; chaparral communities; sag pond wetlands; native perennial grasslands; desert and montane riparian; and deciduous, oak, and conifer forest communities. In addition, the transition zones between these communities produce unusual species compositions. At its northwest end, the SEA encompasses a portion of the south-facing foothills of the Tehachapi Mountains, which have wildflower displays in years of good rainfall. Characteristic species include buttercup, poppy, owl’s clover, lupines, and many species of sunflowers and daisies. Moving southeast, the SEA contains the north-facing slopes of Liebre and Sawmill mountains. The upper slopes of these mountains are densely vegetated with chaparral and scattered mixed woodlands. The lower slopes are more sparsely vegetated with scrub species, mixed scrub and grassland. The grassland and some ephemeral wildflower fields extend onto the plain of the valley floor. Most of the mountainous portion of the SEA is undisturbed open space, with a few scattered residential developments. The peak of Liebre Mountain represents the highest point in the SEA at 5,701 feet above mean sea level (MSL).

Moving further southeast, Portal Ridge is included in the SEA. This ridge has a series of peaks on the north side of the Fault. Upper slopes are vegetated with dense chaparral, juniper woodland, and Joshua tree woodland, while lower slopes are vegetated with scrub species and grassland. A series of small lakes (originally sag ponds along the Fault) occur along the base of the south-facing slopes including Lake Hughes, Munz Lake, Elizabeth Lake, and other smaller unnamed ponds. Further southeast, the SEA surrounds Amargosa Creek and a large portion of its watershed located in the Leona Valley. All along the north-facing slopes, a number of named and unnamed natural washes, often with flora that is sensitive and prefers watercourses, drain onto the valley floor from the mountains and the Fault. Named canyons are Tentrock; Horse Camp; Cow Spring; Pine; Spencer; Burnside; Adams; Rivera; Baldwin Grade; North Long; South Long; Kings; Bleich; Broad Wash; Price; Myrick; Willow Springs; many unnamed drainages off Portal Ridge and some off Ritter Ridge; Johnson Road Wash; and Railroad. Also included are Godde Pass Wash, Amargosa Creek, and Anaverde Creek. The vegetation transitions to grasslands and wildflower fields, where the SEA stretches north across the valley floor and encircles the Antelope and Fairmont buttes of the Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve. Numerous large "bald" areas in the higher elevations have grasslands bordered by shrublands or forests.

The mountainous part of the SEA has an extremely diverse flora, which arises because of its topographic diversity and because of its connectivity to the western end of the SEA. This area is a meeting place for five diverse ecoregions and two or more wildlife corridors. Because of the great vegetation diversity, the area provides an opportunity for educational use, nature study, and scientific research. Foothill woodland extends from the western end of the SEA, all the way to Ritter Ridge, which is an uncommon plant community that contains oak savannahs of blue oak (*Quercus douglasii*) and valley oak (*Quercus lobata*), and gray pine woodland (*Pinus sabiniana*). This community is more common in northern and central California, where it occurs along foothill and valley borders in the inner coastal ranges and western foothills of the Sierra Nevada. This is the only place it occurs in the County. Several component species, such as blue oak, gray pine, and California buckeye (*Aesculus californica*) reach their southern limits here. Slopes and ridge-tops are covered with chaparral and yellow-pine forest, which becomes pinyon-juniper woodland under desert influences on the lower northern slopes. Joshua tree woodland and sagebrush scrub cover the lower desert hillsides.

On the lower slopes and in the valleys south of the main ridgeline, one can find southern oak woodland, valley grassland, riparian woodland, sagebrush scrub, and even coastal sage scrub. All of these are relatively common in the County with the exception of sagebrush scrub. This community, which is dominated by Great Basin sage (*Artemisia tridentata*), is not common south of the Owens Valley in California. Populations in Southern California are probably relics from a prehistoric time when the community extended much further south than it does today.

Ritter Ridge comprises the most easterly portion of the San Gabriel Mountains in the SEA. Slopes on the north side of this ridgeline are vegetated with one of the best Joshua tree and California juniper mixed woodlands in the County. The combination of desert chaparral and foothill woodlands creates habitat for a rich faunal list, with 25 mammals, 53 birds and 19 reptiles recorded. South-facing slopes contain a mixture of scrub and chaparral communities. This section of the SEA includes Amargosa Creek and a portion of its watershed, which is located at the base of the south-facing slopes, and a segment of

Anaverde Creek and watershed located in Anaverde Valley. All these creeks and washes support a variety of riparian communities.

The disjunct part of the SEA that includes Palmdale Lake, Una Lake, and Barrel Springs has upland portions vegetated with a desert scrub community with scattered Joshua trees. The lower areas consist of open water ponds, cattail ponds, riparian woodlands, and other wetland communities.

Plant species observed or recorded in previous documentation within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium of the Los Angeles County SEAs.* Sensitive plant species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Descriptions and general locations of the each plant community present within the SEA are presented below. These include desert scrub, chaparral, native grassland, non-native grassland, southern willow scrub, foothill woodland, Joshua tree woodland, juniper woodland, valley oak woodland, bigcone Douglas fir-canyon oak woodland, southern cottonwood-willow riparian forest, freshwater marsh, alkali marsh, alluvial wash, and disturbed.

Desert Scrub: A moderately tall, fairly open shrubland with several species that contribute to the canopy. Dominants often include Great Basin sagebrush, antelope bush, saltbush, and/or rabbitbrush with several perennial grasses dispersed between the shrubs. Within the SEA, this community often intergrades with juniper woodlands and Joshua tree woodlands. Desert scrub is also found on lower slopes within the Fault, on north-facing slopes that transition onto the valley floor. They are also found on the buttes and adjacent valley floor, interspersed with grasslands.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Krascheninnikovia lanata* (winterfat scrubland) Shrubland Alliance
- *Suaeda moquinii* ([*Suaeda nigra*] bush seepweed scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Atriplex spinifera* (spinescale scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Pluchea sericea* (arrow weed thickets) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia tridentata* (big sagebrush) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia tridentata* ssp. *vaseyana* (mountain big sagebrush) Shrubland Alliance
- *Atriplex canescens* (fourwing saltbush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Atriplex confertifolia* (shadscale scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Atriplex hymenelytra* (desert holly scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Atriplex lentiformis* (quailbush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Acacia greggii* (catclaw acacia thorn scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ericameria paniculata* (black-stem rabbitbrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ambrosia salsola* (cheesebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Baccharis salicifolia* (mulefat thickets) Shrubland Alliance
- *Larrea tridentata* (creosote bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Larrea tridentata-Ambrosia dumosa* (creosote bush-white burr sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Atriplex polycarpa* (allscale scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Atriplex spinifera* (spinescale scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum heermannii* (Heermann's buckwheat patches) Provisional Shrubland Alliance

- *Eriogonum wrightii* (Wright's buckwheat patches) Dwarf Shrubland Alliance
- *Ephedra californica* (California joint fir scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Allenrolfea occidentalis* (iodine bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Sarcobatus vermiculatus* (greasewood scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Yucca brevifolia* (Joshua tree woodland) Woodland Alliance
- *Prosopis glandulosa* (mesquite bosque) Woodland Alliance
- *Ambrosia salsola* (cheesebush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Grayia spinosa* (spiny hop sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Castela emoryi* (crucifixion thorn stands) Shrubland Special Stands
- *Ericameria nauseosa* (rubber rabbitbrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Gutierrezia sarothrae* (broom snake weed scrub) Provisional Shrubland Alliance
- *Ambrosia dumosa* (white bursage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum-Salvia apiana* (California buckwheat-white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lepidospartum squamatum* (scale broom scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Purshia tridentata* (bitter bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia apiana* (white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Chaparral: Consists of broad-leafed or needle-leafed, sclerophyllous (hard-leafed), medium height to tall shrubs. These shrubs form a dense cover on steep slopes below 5,000 feet in Southern California. Dominant species found within this community include chamise, manzanita, California lilac, laurel sumac, toyon, western mountain-mahogany, and desert mountain-mahogany. This plant community occupies most of the higher elevations within the SEA and is frequently interspersed with scrub and woodlands.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Adenostoma fasciculatum* (chamise chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Adenostoma fasciculatum-Salvia apiana* (chamise-white sage chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Arctostaphylos glandulosa* (Eastwood's manzanita chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Arctostaphylos glauca (*bigberry manzanita chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus spinosus* (greenbark ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus oliganthus* (hairy leaf ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Prunus ilicifolia* (holly leaf cherry chaparral) Shrubland Alliance

Grassland: Consist of low, herbaceous vegetation that is dominated by grasses, but also harbors native forbs and bulbs, as well as naturalized annual forbs. Grasslands within the SEA include both non-native and native grasslands.

Native grassland consists of at least 10 percent relative cover of native herbaceous plants (grasses and forb species), with the remaining coverage similar to non-native grasslands. North of Quail Lake there are areas where native perennial bunchgrasses and wildflowers dominate. In addition, introduced annual grasses are conspicuously limited. Small patches of native grassland can also be found scattered throughout the SEA. This occurs mostly in openings in coastal sage scrub and mixed with non-native grasslands in significant acreage on and surrounding the buttes, as well as throughout the Tehachapi foothills at the western end of the SEA. The Tehachapi foothills are part of an expansive perennial

grassland. Many areas of native grassland, such as those surrounding the buttes, support dense displays of wildflowers, which have carpeted the area in some years and are referred to as "wildflower fields."

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Leymus condensatus* (giant wild rye grassland) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Nassella cernua* ([*Stipa cernua*] nodding needle grass grassland) Provisional Herbaceous Alliance
- *Nassella lepida* ([*Stipa lepida*] foothill needle grass grassland) Provisional Herbaceous Alliance
- *Nassella pulchra* ([*Stipa pulchra*] purple needle grass grassland) Herbaceous Alliance

Non-native grassland consists of dominant invasive annual grasses that are primarily of Mediterranean origin. Dominant species found within this community include slender oats, wild oats, ripgut brome, foxtail chess, wild mustard, red-stemmed filaree, Mediterranean schismus, and golden tops. Non-native grasslands are located in small patches throughout the SEA, within more significant acreage on and adjacent to the buttes, and on south-facing slopes of the Tehachapi Mountains.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Avena (barbata, fatua)* (wild oats grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Brassica (nigra)* and other mustards (upland mustards) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus (diandrus, hordeaceus)-Brachypodium distachyon* (annual brome grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus rubens-Schismus (arabicus, barbatus)* ([*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*] Red brome or Mediterranean grass grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Lolium perenne* ([*Festuca perennis*] perennial rye grass fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands

Wildflower Field: An amorphous mix of herbaceous plants noted for conspicuous annual wildflower displays, although noteworthy displays do not occur every year and appear to depend on rainfall patterns. Dominance varies from site to site and from year to year at any one particular site. Species frequently present include California poppy, tidy tips, dove lupine, valley tassels, purple owl's clover, and broad-leaved gilia. Within the SEA, prominent wildflower fields occur on the south facing slopes of the Tehachapi Mountains and buttes.

Corresponding MCV communities:

None at this time.

Southern Willow Scrub: A riparian community consisting of dense, broad-leafed, winter-deciduous riparian thickets that occur within and adjacent to watercourses. The dominant species of this community within the SEA are arroyo willow, red willow, and black willow. This community occurs in segments along portions of many of the drainages, as well as the periphery of many of the ponds and lakes throughout the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Salix lasiolepis* (arroyo willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salix exigua* (sandbar willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salix gooddingii* (black willow thickets) Woodland Alliance

Foothill Woodland: A broad community designation encompassing the tree-dominated plant communities occurring transitionally between grasslands and montane chaparral or bigcone Douglas fir-canyon oak woodland. Dominant tree species include interior live oak, blue oak, valley oak, California buckeye, and foothill pine. Foothill woodland occupies much of the western slopes of the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Pinus jeffreyi* (Jeffrey pine forest) Forest Alliance
- *Pinus ponderosa* (Ponderosa pine forest) Forest Alliance
- *Quercus lobata* (valley oak woodland) Woodland Alliance
- *Abies concolor-Pinus lambertiana* (white fir-sugar pine forest) Forest Alliance
- *Abies concolor* (white fir forest) Forest Alliance
- *Pseudotsuga macrocarpa* (bigcone Douglas-fir forest) Forest Alliance
- *Quercus douglasii* (blue oak woodland) Woodland Alliance
- *Umbellularia californica* (California bay forest) Forest Alliance
- *Quercus kelloggii* (California black oak forest) Forest Alliance
- *Aesculus californica* (California buckeye groves) Woodland Alliance
- *Quercus chrysolepis* (canyon live oak forest) Forest Alliance
- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance
- *Pinus coulteri* (Coulter pine woodland) Woodland Alliance
- *Pinus sabiniana* (ghost pine woodland) Woodland Alliance
- *Quercus wislizenii* (interior live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

Joshua Tree Woodland: An open woodland with Joshua trees, usually as the only arborescent species, and numerous smaller shrub species interspersed between. Shrub species include a great variety with dominants of Great Basin sagebrush, rabbitbrush, creosote bush, and cheese bush. Joshua tree woodland is present on the lower slopes around the Fault in the eastern half of the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Yucca brevifolia* (Joshua tree woodland) Woodland Alliance

Juniper Woodland: An extremely open woodland dominated by California juniper, with understory that is typical of desert scrub. The majority of this community is found on lower slopes in the eastern half of the SEA, and often intermingles with Joshua tree woodland and chaparral communities.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Juniperus californica* (California juniper woodland) Woodland Alliance

Valley Oak Woodland: An open woodland community dominated by valley oak. The understory is a grassy savannah that is composed mostly of non-native grasses. Valley oak woodland occurs on the north-facing slope of Liebre Mountain in the western area of the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Quercus lobata* (valley oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

Bigcone Douglas Fir-Canyon Oak Woodland: A dense woodland with a mix of dominant tree species. Canyon oak forms a broken canopy with scattered bigcone Douglas fir, California black oak, and foothill pine. Areas not underneath the canopy are usually dominated by chaparral species, such as scrub oak,

manzanita, and California lilac. This community occupies most of the higher elevation slopes within the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Pseudotsuga macrocarpa* (bigcone Douglas-fir forest) Forest Alliance
- *Quercus chrysolepis* (canyon live oak forest) Forest Alliance

Southern Cottonwood-Willow Riparian Forest: An open broad-leafed winter-deciduous riparian forest dominated by Fremont cottonwood, black cottonwood, black willow, and red willow. The southern cottonwood-willow riparian forest within the SEA occupies short segments of Amargosa Creek, as well as the periphery of several lakes and ponds.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Populus fremontii* (Fremont cottonwood forest) Forest Alliance
- *Populus trichocarpa* (black cottonwood forest) Forest Alliance

Freshwater Marsh: Develops in areas of still or slow-moving permanent freshwater. This community is dominated by the perennial, emergent monocot cattails, which reach a height of two to three meters and often form a closed canopy. Bulrushes are dominant below the cattail canopy. Freshwater marsh occurs in small patches along Amargosa Creek and other wetland areas scattered along the Fault.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Phragmites australis* (common reed marshes) Herbaceous Alliance and Semi-Natural Stands
- *Schoenoplectus californicus* (California bulrush marsh) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Typha (angustifolia, domingensis, latifolia)* (cattail marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Sarcocornia* [*Salicornia*] *pacifica* (*Salicornia depressa*) (pickleweed mats) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Lemna (minor) and relatives* (duckweed blooms) Provisional Herbaceous Alliance

Alkali Marsh: Similar to the freshwater marsh, but with more salt-tolerant hydrophytes present. Species associated with this community include cattails, *Carex* spp., *Juncus cooperi*, saltgrass, *Nitrophila occidentalis*, *Scirpus nevadensis*, and common reed. Alkali marsh occurs in small segments along Amargosa Creek and other wetland areas scattered along the Fault.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Sarcobatus vermiculatus* (greasewood scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Schoenoplectus americanus* (American bulrush marsh) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Sporobolus airoides* (alkali sacaton grassland) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Allenrolfea occidentalis* (iodine bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Atriplex lentiformis* (quailbush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Suaeda moquinii* ([*Suaeda nigra*] bush seepweed scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Alluvial Wash: Also known as floodplain sage scrub, alluvial wash comprises phreatophytic (a plant type that obtains water from the watertable via a long taproot) and upland shrubs that occur in infrequently flooded and scoured habitats such as flood plains, or seasonal streams. The dominant shrub is scalebroom with Great Basin sagebrush, rabbitbrush, sweetbush, and chaparral yucca. Alluvial wash is distributed in larger drainages such as upper Amargosa Creek, Myrick Canyon Wash, Willow Springs Wash and others located throughout the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Baccharis salicifolia* (mulefat thickets) Shrubland Alliance
- *Forestiera pubescens* (desert olive patches) Shrubland Alliance
- *Rosa californica* (California rose briar patches) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salix exigua* (sandbar willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salix lasiolepis* (arroyo willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance
- *Acacia greggii* (catclaw acacia thorn scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ephedra californica* (California joint fir scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ericameria paniculata* (black-stem rabbitbrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lepidospartum squamatum* (scale broom scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ericameria nauseosa* (rubber rabbitbrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ericameria nauseosa-Ericameria teretifolia* (needleleaf rabbitbrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Gutierrezia sarothrae* (broom snake weed scrub) Provisional Shrubland Alliance

Disturbed or Barren Areas: Areas that either completely lack vegetation or are dominated by ruderal species. Ruderal vegetation typically found within the SEA includes non-native grasses and "weedy" herbaceous species, native and non-native, including mustards, telegraph weed, Russian thistle, dock, yellow star thistle, Australian saltbush, and cocklebur. Several disturbed areas occur scattered throughout the SEA and take the form of residential developments, paved roads, fire breaks, dirt access roads, trails, and other similarly disturbed areas.

Wildlife

Wildlife within the SEA is diverse and abundant due to the large acreage of natural open space and the diversity of habitat types. While a few wildlife species are entirely dependent on a single vegetative community, the entire mosaic of all the vegetation communities within the SEA and adjoining areas constitutes a functional ecosystem. This ecosystem contains a variety of wildlife species, both within the SEA and as part of the regional ecosystem.

Analysis of invertebrates on any given site is generally limited by a lack of specific data; however, the size of the SEA and diversity of habitats present is considered sufficient to encompass healthy populations of a large number of invertebrate species. The wetlands and aquatic habitats within the SEA support diverse faunas of freshwater and alkaline pool arthropods, including native fairy shrimp, brine flies, and tiger beetles. Vernal pools, which are a sensitive habitat, are being discovered and would be expected in a heavily faulted area with many depressions created by faulting. These would not have typical through-flow of erosional features. Vernal pools often have sensitive fauna and flora. Insect orders are particularly well-represented taxonomically, with moderate levels of species endemism including coleoptera, diptera, hymenoptera and diurnal and nocturnal lepidoptera.

Amphibian populations are generally scarce in desert habitats, but may be particularly abundant where desert riparian areas occur or in the mountains. The SEA is likely to support a variety of amphibians within wetland areas along the Fault and the moister woodland areas and canyon bottoms of the mountains. Many essential reptilian habitat characteristics are present within the SEA. These include open habitats that allow free movement and high visibility, and small mammal burrows for cover and escape from predators and extreme weather. These characteristics, as well as a diversity of habitat types are likely to support a wide variety of reptilian species.

The scrubland, woodland, riparian, and grassland habitats in the SEA provide foraging and cover habitat for year-round residents, seasonal residents, and migrating song birds. In addition, the SEA encompasses many year-round water sources, abundant raptor foraging, perching, and nesting habitat. The combination of these resources, as well as the confluence of many community types support an unusually high diversity of bird species. Small and large mammal populations within the SEA are diverse and reflective of the unique convergence of several habitat types.

All wildlife species previously recorded, as well as those expected to occur, within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium* of the *Los Angeles County SEAs*. Sensitive wildlife species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources.

Wildlife Movement

The SEA includes several important linkages for wildlife movement. The foothills in the western-most part of the SEA are an important linkage between the San Gabriel Mountains, the Tehachapi Mountains, and the Coastal Ranges. This linkage to the Tehachapi Mountains is important because they connect to the southern-most extent of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The Tehachapi Mountains represent the only mountain linkage from the Transverse Ranges and the Coast Ranges to the Sierra Nevada Range. This feature may be an important topographic reference for migrating birds, as well as providing high elevation foraging grounds along the migratory route. The several ranges that meet at the western end of the SEA, and provide a valuable link for gene flow between divergent populations of many species. The SEA includes numerous drainages that extend onto the Antelope Valley floor towards resources, such as the Fairmont and Antelope buttes. These washes provide an important linkage for animals traveling between the Valley floor, the buttes and the western part of the San Gabriel Mountains. In addition, Anaverde Creek, Amargosa Creek, and Pine Canyon facilitate east-west wildlife movement through the mountains, Portal Ridge, and Ritter Ridge. Tributary drainages from the Santa Clara River, such as Elizabeth Lake Canyon and San Francisquito Canyon connect the ocean and coastal zones to the Fault. The frequency of valuable riparian communities along this travel route, which are located within an otherwise arid climate, further contributes to the SEA's importance for wildlife and habitat linkages in the region.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition. When species are federally-listed as endangered or threatened, they often have federally-designated, geographically-specific "critical habitat areas." Critical habitat areas, after extensive study by experts, are judged to be essential to conservation and maintenance of the species.

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. The communities include Joshua tree woodland, valley oak woodland, native grassland, wildflower field, southern cottonwood-willow riparian forest, fresh-water swamp, alkali meadow, and southern willow scrub, and all these occur throughout the SEA. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section.

Sensitive Plant Species

The statuses of rare plants are hierarchically categorized by the CNPS using a rank and decimal system. The initial category level of Rare Plant Rank is indicated by the ranks 1A (presumed extinct in California), 1B (rare or endangered in California and elsewhere), 2 (rare or endangered in California but more common elsewhere), 3 (more information needed, a review list), and 4 (limited distribution). In cases where the CNPS has further identified the specific threat to the species, a decimal or Threat Code is added: .1 (seriously endangered in California), .2 (fairly endangered in California), or .3 (not very endangered in California).

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Nevin's barberry (*Berberis nevinii*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- San Fernando Valley spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var*. fernandina*) FC, SE, RPR 1B.1

In addition, the following species considered by CNPS to be rare, threatened or endangered have the potential to occur:

- Lancaster milk-vetch (*Astragalus preussii* var*. laxiflorus*) RPR 2.3
- Slender mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var*. gracilis*) RPR 1B.2
- Alkali mariposa lily (*Calochortus striatus*) RPR 1B.2
- Pierson's morning glory (*Calystegia peirsonii*) RPR 4.2
- Parry's spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var*. parryi*) RPR 1B.1
- San Gabriel bedstraw (*Galium grande*) RPR 1B.2
- Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) RPR 1B.2
- Robbins' nemacladus (*Nemacladus secundiflorus* var*. robbinsii*) RPR 1B.2
- Short-joint beavertail (*Opuntia basilaris* var*. brachyclada*) RPR 1B.2
- San Bernardino aster (*Symphyotrichum defoliatum*) RPR 1B.2

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or are likely to be present within the SEA based on habitat requirements and known range attributes:

- Arroyo toad (*Anaxyrus californicus*) FE, SSC
- California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) FT, SSC

- Western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*) BLMS, SSC, FSS
- San Diego coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) BLMS, SSC, FSS
- Coast patch-nosed snake (*Salvadora hexalepis virgultea*) SSC
- Western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus* ssp. *occidentalis*) FC, FSS, BCC
- Willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*) SE
- Southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) FE, SE, ABC
- California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) FE, SE, ABC, CDF
- American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) FD, SD CDF, CDFG Fully Protected, BCC
- Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) FE, SE, ABC
- Mohave ground squirrel (*Xerospermophilus mohavensis*) ST

In addition, other state-listed species of concern have the potential to occur:

- Western spadefoot (*Spea hammondii*) BLMS, SSC
- Tehachapi slender salamander (*Batrachoseps stebbinsi*) ST, BLMS, FSS
- Silvery legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra pulchra*) SSC, FSS
- Two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*)
- Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii)* CDFG Watch List
- Sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus*) CDFG Watch List
- Tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*) ABC, BLMS, SSC, BCC
- Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*) CDFG Watch List
- Long-eared owl (*Asio otus*) SSC
- Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) BLMS, SSC, BCC
- California spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis occidentalis*),
- Ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*) CDFG Watch List, BCC
- Mountain plover (*Charadrius montanus*) FPT, ABC, BLMS, SSC, BCC
- Northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) SSC
- Yellow warbler (*Dendroica petechia* ssp. *brewsteri*) SSC, BCC
- White-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*) CDFG Fully Protected
- Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) CDFG Watch List
- Prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*) CDFG Watch List, BCC
- Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) FD, SE, CDF, CDFG Fully Protected, FSS, BCC
- Yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*) SSC
- Western least bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis hesperis*) SSC, BCC
- Loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) SSC, BCC
- Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos)* CDF, CDFG Fully Protected, CDFG Watch List, BCC
- Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) CDF, CDFG Watch List
- Le Conte's thrasher (*Toxostoma lecontei*) ABC, SSC, BCC
- Gray vireo (*Vireo vicinior*) ABC, BLMS, SSC, BCC
- Virginia's warbler (*Oreothlypis virginiae*) ABC, CDFG Watch List, BCC
- Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) BLMS, SSC, FSS, WBWG High Priority
- Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus Plecotus) t. townsendii*) BLMS, SSC, FSS, WBWG High Priority
- Pale big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus Plecotus) t. townsendii pallescens*) BLMS, SSC, FSS, WBWG High Priority
- Spotted bat (*Euderma maculatum*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High Priority
- Western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High Priority
- California leaf-nosed bat (*Macrotus californicus*) BLMS, SSC, FSS, WBWG High Priority
- Yuma myotis (*Myotis yumanensis*) BLMS, WBWG Low-Medium Priority

- Southern grasshopper mouse (*Onychomys torridus ramona*) SSC
- Tehachapi pocket mouse, (*Perognathus alticolus inexpectatus*) SSC, FSS
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) SSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

ETAs in the SEA include small areas of residential development, orchards, agricultural fields, and "ranchettes."

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets several SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met described below.

CRITERIA ANALYSIS OF THE SAN ANDREAS SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Not met Met in Future?	Although there are several listed species that occur within the SEA, this criterion is not met due to the lack of known core population areas. The far northwestern border with Kern County is the edge of critical habitat for the California condor. The tricolored blackbird may soon be listed and has its largest population in Southern California within the SEA.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	The SEA encompasses a series of marshes and sinks concentrated along the San Andreas Fault Zone, which are both unique and restricted in distribution. The Fairmont and Antelope buttes represent a unique habitat due to their location, as the most westerly buttes of the Mojave Desert and their close proximity to several geographic regions. As the confluence of a number of major geographical areas, the Mojave Desert, the San Gabriel Mountains of the Transverse Ranges, the Coastal Ranges, and the Tehachapi Mountains produces a unique and regionally rare flora that represents a transition between desert, foothill, and several montane environments.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	The confluence of five major geographical areas–the Mojave Desert, the San Gabriel Mountains, the Coastal Ranges, the Tehachapi Mountains, and the Central Valley–has produced the most unique and diverse flora found in the County, and represents a transition between desert, foothill, and montane environments.

Criterion		Status	Justification
			The SEA also includes the southern limit of the foothill woodland community, blue oak, gray or foothill pine, and California buckeye, rare relic stands of Great Basin sagebrush scrub, and rare wildflower fields.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	The Fairmont and Antelope buttes provide vital habitat to many wide ranging species, which forage in outlying habitat, but use the buttes for nesting, roosting, denning, and refuge. The buttes also serve as concentrated wintering grounds for birds of prey, which are rare in the County, and which forage on grassland and agricultural fields in the vicinity. Lakes and other wetland areas along the Fault and throughout the SEA provide breeding habitat for amphibians and feeding habitat for migrating birds that traverse the slopes adjacent to the Mojave Desert. The Fault is one of the principle wildlife corridors and connective areas for in the County. Major drainages (Santa Clara River, San Francisquito Canyon, and Lake Elizabeth Canyon) run from the coast through the San Gabriel Mountains and end at the Fault, which also has extensive riparian habitat that facilitates migration. The Fault provides the final westernmost linkage to the Mojave Desert (Antelope Valley). The tricolored blackbird is a year-round resident of the SEA.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	The transition of several habitat types including: creosote bush scrub, Joshua tree/California juniper mixed woodland, and desert chaparral, makes the SEA valuable for educational and scientific reasons. The close proximity of the Fairmont and Antelope buttes to the San Gabriel Mountains renders them unique in their species composition and ecological relationships and, therefore, of interest to scientists. The concentrated diversity of vegetation types, particularly in the western half of the SEA, creates an outstanding opportunity for educational use. This area also harbors the southern limit of the foothill woodland community, blue oak, gray or foothill pine, and California buckeye, as well as rare relic stands of great basin sagebrush scrub.
	Areas that would provide for the		The slopes of Ritter Ridge support one of the most

Criterion		Status	Justification
F)	preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	pristine mixed stands of Joshua tree and California juniper. The location of the SEA at the confluence of five major geographical areas, the Mojave Desert, the Central Valley, the San Gabriel Mountains of the Transverse Ranges, the Coastal Ranges, and the Tehachapi Mountains has produced a community-rich area with desert, foothill, and montane environments. The SEA encompasses large, mostly undisturbed examples of all of these communities.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: B-C) biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are restricted in distribution in the County and regionally; D) concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, and migrating grounds, which are limited in availability in the County; E) biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community; and F) areas that provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of original natural biotic communities in the County.

18. San Dimas Canyon and San Antonio Wash SEA

Location

General

The San Dimas Canyon and San Antonio Wash Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located along the cismontane foothills of the eastern San Gabriel Mountains. Generally, the SEA is centered on the mouths of four major canyons, which flow from the mountains and interconnecting terrain. From east to west, these canyons include San Antonio Canyon above the City of Claremont as one component; and Live Oak, Marshall, and San Dimas canyons above the cities of La Verne and San Dimas as a second component. The SEA incorporates areas with diverse natural habitat ranging from high elevations to the foothill alluvial areas of two of the major drainages of the San Gabriel Mountains. San Dimas Canyon is a tributary of the San Gabriel River. San Antonio Wash is a tributary of the Santa Ana River.

The SEA is found within the Mount Baldy and Ontario U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Quadrangles.

General Boundary and Resources Description

Over most of its boundaries, particularly to the north, east, and west of both the San Dimas Canyon and San Antonio Wash components, the SEA is bordered by open space within the Angeles National Forest. Generally to the south, however, the borders are mostly defined by the edge of urban development within the San Gabriel Valley. The San Dimas Canyon component covers approximately 5,500 acres and includes portions of Live Oak, Marshall, and San Dimas canyons. The smaller component, San Antonio Canyon, covers approximately 1,200 acres of the San Antonio Canyon alluvial outwash. In total, this SEA encompasses 6,727 acres.

In general, the topography of the SEA is severe, consisting of steep-walled canyons and narrow ridgelines. Elevations range from a high of approximately 3,000 feet above mean sea level (MSL) along the ridges of San Dimas Canyon, to a low of approximately 451 feet above MSL in San Antonio Wash. Several major drainages and numerous tributaries exit the San Gabriel Mountains through this SEA.

The wide range of elevation, topography, slope aspect, and geology represent a wide array of physical habitats within this SEA. Consequently, a number of plant communities exist, including grasslands, riparian, shrublands, woodlands, and forests. Within these major community types, there are many sub-communities, which vary according to plant species dominance. This area contains the last remaining relatively well-developed lower montane riparian habitat in the eastern County. Dammed drainages have created significant reservoirs or flood control basins in the SEA. The SEA is within several jurisdictions including: the Angeles National Forest, the unincorporated area of the County, the City of Claremont, the City of Glendora, the City of La Verne, and the City of San Dimas.

The more westerly component of this SEA generally includes portions of the lower watersheds of San Dimas, Marshall, and Live Oak canyons, which is part of the San Dimas Canyon component. The San

Dimas Canyon watershed is part of the Experimental Forest section of the Angeles National Forest. Experiments were conducted and data was collected here during the latter half of the 20th century to determine the relationships among rainfall, topography, vegetation, and runoff. Much of the work and results influenced flood control in the Los Angeles Basin and even other areas of the U.S. The area was carefully protected through very limited and monitored access. The terrain chiefly includes undisturbed natural habitats of rocky canyon walls and canyon forest, riparian areas of many vegetation types, coniferous and oak forest, chaparral, and grassland. A few slopes were altered with vegetation removal in order to experiment on the effect of vegetation, and some of these are still grassland.

This SEA area on the border of the granitic San Gabriel Mountains has unusual rock strata, such as the Glendora Volcanics. Much of the grassland is natural and has unusual vegetation, such as wildflowers that prefer clay substrates. Not too distant from this area are critical habitat areas for the endangered thread-leaved brodiaea (*Brodiaea filifolia*). Some of these brodiaea and other rare wildflowers could occur in appropriate habitat of the SEA in undiscovered populations.

Beginning at Johnstone Peak in the west, the western boundary follows the ridgeline separating Big Dalton Canyon and San Dimas Canyon. Just before this ridgeline is intersected by Big Dalton Canyon Road, the SEA boundary turns east. From the area of Big Dalton Canyon Road, the northern boundary follows and crosses over a series of ridgelines to include the upper portions of several tributary canyons. It continues in this fashion in a southeasterly direction eventually meeting and following the Sunset Ridge Fire Road (Sunset Peak Motorway), which separates Wolfskill and Marshall canyons. The tributaries San Dimas Canyon include Lodi, West Fork of San Dimas, and San Dimas from near the junction with Wolfskill Canyon. The lower section of Wolfskill Canyon with and below the Wolfskill Falls is included in the SEA. The upper section of Wolfskill is not included in the SEA, but much of Marshall Canyon watershed is included, along with watersheds of Live Oak and Webb canyons in the City of Claremont.

A large lobe of the SEA extends from the Sunset Ridge Fire Road on the dividing ridgeline, to include lush canyon forests and chaparral of the slopes above the City of La Verne and City of Claremont. Most of this lobe is in municipal or private ownership. The Angeles National Forest boundary is about a 0.1 mile south of the Sunset Ridge Fire Road. The eastern boundary leaves the fire road and travels south along a ridgeline, including Live Oak Canyon in the SEA, but separating out the more developed watersheds of Palmer, Cobal, Burbank, and Gail canyons in the City of Claremont. A finger of the SEA includes the lush riparian oak forest of Webb Canyon to the edge of a development. The lobe of the SEA excludes an area around the residences and equestrian areas that surround Live Oak Reservoir. Live Oak Canyon Reservoir and its riparian oak woodland is included as far south as Base Line Road. The ridges and dissected canyons that border Live Oak Reservoir are included as far south as Base Line Road. However, the flat area of the ridge around Live Oak Reservoir and development in the periphery are excluded. The northwestern edge of the lobe includes the riparian area and slopes of Marshall Creek, but excludes developed areas, such as the Marshall Canyon Regional Park and Golf Course. The lobe boundary returns north into the Angeles National Forest at the Sunset Ridge Fire Road along the edge of Marshall Creek and the western ridge of Marshall Canyon.

From Sunset Ridge Fire Road, the southern boundary of the SEA is within the Angeles National Forest and follows the ridgeline that includes the watershed of San Dimas Canyon. The San Dimas Reservoir, with good habitat for waterfowl, is included in the SEA. The SEA extends a finger out of the Angeles National Forest along San Dimas Canyon road to include the riparian habitat along the watercourse, which is a rare example of the lowland riparian community. From the Angeles National Forest boundary and rocky cliffs above the west side of San Dimas Canyon, the SEA boundary follows the ridge of Lodi Canyon (tributary of San Dimas Canyon) to Johnstone Peak.

The eastern, disjunct segment of the SEA (San Antonio Wash) follows the San Bernardino-Los Angeles County line as its eastern boundary from about a 0.5 mile upstream of the San Antonio Dam through the San Antonio debris basin, past the San Antonio Dam, to the natural extent of alluvial fan vegetation south of the Interstate-210. This is at an area about a 0.1 mile north of Base Line Road. Downstream of the San Antonio Dam has the best example of arroyo or wash vegetation that remains in the County, and it extends onto the adjacent alluvial fan. The vegetation is a dry form of coastal sage scrub, with included desert plants that are adapted to coarse substrate. The vegetation is much more dense and stable than the alluvial fan in the arroyos behind Santa Fe Dam (San Gabriel Canyon SEA) and Hansen Dam (Tujunga Valley-Hansen Dam SEA). From its southern point, the SEA turns north to include the natural alluvial fan vegetation and border on the existing residential development on the alluvial fan. At the intersection of the San Antonio Wash with Mount Baldy Road, the SEA boundary follows the southeast side of Mount Baldy Road to the watershed of Chicken Canyon, which is a tributary of San Antonio Wash. The boundary crosses the road and includes the undeveloped part of Chicken Canyon. The boundary follows the minor ridgeline up to Potato Mountain, and goes along the south ridge of Evey Canyon back to cross Mount Baldy Road and return to the San Bernardino-Los Angeles County line in the San Antonio Debris Basin. Evey Canyon is outside the SEA, but is a preserve of the Claremont Colleges, and has excellent riparian canyon habitat. The SEA designation acknowledges the need to protext the Evey Canyon watershed. Small tributary watersheds of San Antonio Canyon with chaparral vegetation are included with the Chicken Canyon area.

Vegetation

The variety of topography, soil types, slope aspects and water availability within the San Dimas Canyon-San Antonio Wash SEA creates a range of physical habitats, which support numerous plant species. Plant species observed or recorded in previous documentation within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium of the Los Angeles County SEAs.* Sensitive plant species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Brief descriptions and general locations of each major plant community present within the SEA are provided below, including bigcone Douglas-fir-canyon oak forest, white alder riparian forest, alluvial fan scrub, oak woodland, oak riparian forest, walnut woodland, southern willow scrub, chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and non-native grassland.

Bigcone Douglas-Fir–Canyon Oak Forest: An open to dense forest dominated by bigcone Douglas-fir that is 50 to 80 feet tall over a dense canopy of canyon live oak. It is found scattered throughout the San

Dimas Canyon component of this SEA on canyon sides at elevations generally above 2,500 feet, where it occupies rocky substrates. It commonly occurs in small enclaves within chaparral.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Pseudotsuga macrocarpa* (bigcone Douglas-fir forest) Forest Alliance
- *Quercus chrysolepis* (canyon live oak forest) Forest Alliance

White Alder Riparian Forest: Found along the lower reaches of San Dimas Canyon. This community is dominated by white alder, which grow 30 to 40 feet high over a shrub understory. It typically grows along streams in bedrock-constrained, steep-sided canyons, which results in a fairly narrow riparian corridor.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Alnus rhombifolia* (white alder groves) Forest Alliance

Alluvial Fan Scrub: A shrub community characterized by harsh substrates and subject to episodic flooding and scouring. It is generally restricted to broad canyon outwashes, or alluvial washes. It is found in this SEA at the San Antonio Canyon mouth, where it forms an open shrub vegetation within areas of bare, scoured ground in between.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum-Salvia apiana* (California buckwheat-white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lepidospartum squamatum* (scale broom scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Malosma laurina* (laurel sumac scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Oak Woodland: A plant community dominated by species of the oak genus (*Quercus*). This community includes coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia* var. *agrifolia*), which typically grows to heights of 20 to 40 feet and the somewhat smaller coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia* var. *agrifolia*) and canyon oak, and forms either closed or open tree canopies. Understory vegetation varies from grassland in level areas to shrubs, where topography is steeper. It may also intergrade with shrub communities. This community is scattered throughout the SEA and most prevalent on north-facing slopes and in drainage bottoms.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance
- *Quercus chrysolepis* (canyon live oak forest) Forest Alliance
- *Quercus engelmannii* (Engelmann oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

Oak Riparian Forest: A closely related community to oak woodland found in the SEA. This community is also dominated by coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia* var. *agrifolia*) (canyon oaks at higher elevations). The primary difference between oak woodland and oak riparian forest is the greater availability of water in riparian situations, which is expressed in a denser tree canopy cover and higher density of trees. There are also a greater number of hydrophytic (moisture-favoring) plant species in the understory. Typical riparian trees, such as western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) and willow occasionally occur. Oak riparian forest is best developed within the broader, more level gradient drainages of this SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance
- *Quercus chrysolepis* (canyon live oak forest) Forest Alliance
- *Quercus engelmannii* (Engelmann oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

Walnut Woodland: Often intergrades with oak dominated woodlands or develops as a distinct community. This community is dominated by the Southern California black walnut (*Juglans californica*), which grows 10 to 30 feet high. More often than not, walnut woodland in this SEA is highly intermixed with oak woodland and chaparral, and large monotypic stands are uncommon.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Juglans californica* (Southern California black walnut groves) Woodland Alliance

Southern Willow Scrub: Found along widely scattered reaches of several drainages throughout this SEA. This community is dominated by species of willow, which form nearly monotypic stands due to their dense growth, with an occasional cottonwood. These stands generally reach 10 to 20 feet in height with little understory vegetation.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Salix exigua* (sandbar willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salix lasiolepis* (arroyo willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance

Chaparral: A shrub community composed of robust species. Within this SEA, a number of chaparral subcommunities are found, which are differentiated by their dominant plant species. These include chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), buck brush (*Ceanothus* spp.), scrub oak (*Quercus berberidifolia*), coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia* var. *agrifolia*), and mosaics of these depending on mixtures of species and elevation. These and other shrub species form dense vegetation covers, which grow 5 to 10 feet in height. The development of chaparral is pronounced over large hillside areas throughout both components of the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Adenostoma fasciculatum* (chamise chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Adenostoma fasciculatum-Salvia apiana* (chamise-white sage chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Arctostaphylos glandulosa* (Eastwood's manzanita chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Arctostaphylos glauca* (bigberry manzanita chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus greggii* (cup leaf ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus leucodermis* (chaparral whitethorn) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus oliganthus* (hairy leaf ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Prunus ilicifolia* (holly leaf cherry chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Rhus ovata* (sugarbush chaparral) Shrubland Alliance

Coastal Sage Scrub: A shrubland community that exhibits less robust structure found within this SEA. This plant community is dominated by California sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), California brittle bush (*Encelia californica*), white sage (*Salvia apiana*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), and California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*). It also forms dense stands, which grow three to four feet in height. Within this SEA, it is generally found in scattered patches, which are highly integrated with mixed chaparral. These are primarily located in the lower elevation hillsides of both SEA components.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica* (California sagebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Salvia mellifera* (California sagebrush-black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Encelia californica* (California brittle bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Dendromecon rigida* (bush poppy scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia apiana* (white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia leucophylla* (purple sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia mellifera* (black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum-Salvia apiana* (California buckwheat-white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ericameria linearifolia* (narrowleaf goldenbush scrub) Provisional Shrubland Alliance
- *Lotus scoparius* [*Acmispon glaber*] (deer weed scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Malacothamnus fasciculatus* (bush mallow scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Non-Native Grassland: Dominated by non-native annual grasses and forbs. These opportunistically growing species include brome grasses, wild oats and mustards. This community became established as a result of livestock grazing and agriculture, as native vegetation is removed, sometimes by mechanical means, and replaced by more opportunistic species. Non-native grassland is found throughout the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Avena* (*barbata, fatua*) (wild oats grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Brassica* (*nigra*) and other mustards (upland mustards) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus* (*diandrus*, *hordeaceus*)-*Brachypodium distachyon* (annual brome grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus rubens-Schismus* (*arabicus, barbatus*) ([*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*] red brome or Mediterranean grass grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Centaurea* (*solstitialis, melitensis*) (yellow star-thistle fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Lolium perenne* [*Festuca perennis*] (perennial rye grass fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands

Wildlife

Wildlife populations within the SEA are diverse and abundant due to the region's physiographic diversity, its relative isolation, and its location within and adjacent to the Angeles National Forest. Analysis of invertebrates on any given site is generally limited by a lack of specific data; however, the size of the SEA and diversity of habitats present is considered sufficient to encompass healthy populations of a large number of invertebrate species. Fair numbers of amphibians are expected to be present primarily due to the aquatic and semi-aquatic habitats provided within the numerous drainages and several reservoirs. Reptile abundance and diversity are expected to be characteristic for the habitats present, although areas closer to urban development along the southern boundaries of this SEA are likely to be suppressed due to the edge effect.

Bird use, diversity, and abundance within the SEA are expected to be high for several reasons. In general, this SEA provides habitat for a wide range of shrubland, woodland, forest, and riparian species

that occur at varying elevations. In particular, the riparian habitats found in drainages throughout this SEA provide essential habitat for riparian-obligate and riparian-favoring species. In addition, a number of migratory birds use this area to move across the northern portion of the Los Angeles Basin. These include a wide spectrum of birds including song birds, waterfowl, and raptorial species.

Similarly, the mammalian fauna is expected to be very diverse and abundant. Virtually all mammalian species found in the forest (with the exception of Nelson's bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*)) are expected to be found in this SEA. Frequent observations of American black bear (*Ursus americanus*) and mountain lion (*Puma concolor*) in foothill communities attest to the range of species expected.

Wildlife Movement

Wildlife movement within the SEA takes on two major forms. First, due to the extreme intervening topography, it is logical to expect considerable movement of wildlife up and down the many sizeable drainages, which course through this SEA and connect the forest interior with foothill areas. The larger the watershed of the drainages, the greater the volume of movement. Consequently, this type of movement occurs on a seasonal and more frequent basis, particularly for large mobile mammals, such as American black bear, mountain lion, coyote (*Canis latrans*), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) and mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), whose full range of habitat needs are typically met over broad areas.

The second major type of movement occurs across the flanks of the foothills and lower mountains, in an east-west direction. Particularly for riparian-favoring migratory birds, a corridor linking lower elevational riparian habitats in the SEA is expected to be of high use and importance. In addition to providing essential habitat for resident riparian birds, this SEA contains some of the best developed riparian habitat for birds, which are seasonal visitors to the cismontane region of the County.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition.

Sensitive Plan Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. The communities include walnut woodland, southern coast live oak riparian forest, southern willow scrub, coastal sage chaparral scrub, and Riversidean alluvial fan sage scrub, which occur throughout the SEA. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are

experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section.

Sensitive Plant Species

The statuses of rare plants are hierarchically categorized by the CNPS using a rank and decimal system. The initial category level of Rare Plant Rank is indicated by the ranks 1A (presumed extinct in California), 1B (rare or endangered in California and elsewhere), 2 (rare or endangered in California but more common elsewhere), 3 (more information needed, a review list), and 4 (limited distribution). In cases where the CNPS has further identified the specific threat to the species, a decimal or Threat Code is added: .1 (seriously endangered in California), .2 (fairly endangered in California), or .3 (not very endangered in California).

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Sonoran maiden fern (*Thelypteris puberula* var. *sonorensis*) RPR 2.2
- Coulter's saltbush (*Atriplex coulteri*) RPR 1B.2
- Davidson's saltscale (*Atriplex serenana* var. *davidsonii*) RPR 1B.2
- Nevin's barberry (*Berberis nevinii*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Round-leaved filaree (*California macrophylla*) RPR 1B.1
- Smooth tarplant (*Centromadia pungens* ssp. *laevis*) RPR 1B.1
- Parry's spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *parryi*) RPR 1B.1
- White-bracted spineflower (*Chorizanthe xanti* var. *leucotheca*) RPR 1B.2
- Slender-horned spineflower (*Dodecahema leptoceras*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- San Gabriel Mountains dudleya (*Dudleya densiflora*) RPR 1B.1
- Many-stemmed dudleya (*Dudleya multicaulis*) RPR 1B.2
- Los Angeles sunflower (*Helianthus nuttallii* ssp. *parishii*) RPR 1A
- Mesa horkelia (*Horkelia cuneata* ssp. *puberula*) RPR 1B.1
- Jokerst's monardella (*Monardella australis* ssp. *jokerstii*) RPR 1B.1
- Rock monardella *(Monardella viridis* ssp*. saxicola)* RPR 4.2
- Prostrate vernal pool navarretia (*Navarretia prostrata*) RPR 1B.1
- White rabbit-tobacco (*Pseudognaphalium leucocephalum*) RPR 2.2
- Chaparral ragwort (*Senecio aphanactis*) RPR 2.2
- Salt spring checkerbloom (*Sidalcea neomexicana*) RPR 2.2
- San Bernardino aster (*Symphyotrichum defoliatum*) RPR 1B.2
- Rigid fringepod (*Thysanocarpus rigidus*) RPR 1B.2
- Thread-leaved brodiaea (*Brodiaea filifolia*) RPR FT, SE, 1B.1
- Slender mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*) RPR 1B.2
- Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) RPR 1B.2
- California sawgrass (*Cladium californicum*) RPR 2.2
- California muhly (*Muhlenbergia californica*) RPR 4.3

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or are likely to be present within the SEA based on habitat requirements and known range attributes:

- California diplectronan caddisfly (*Diplectrona californica*) CDFG Special Animals List

- Santa Ana sucker (*Catostomus santaanae*) FT, FSS, SSC
- San Gabriel Mountains slender salamander (*Batrachoseps gabrieli*) FSS
- Large-blotched salamander (*Ensatina klauberi*) FSS, SSC
- Northern leopard frog (*Lithobates pipiens*) FSS, SSC
- Sierra Madre yellow-legged frog (*Rana muscosa*) FE, FSS, SSC
- Coast range newt (*Taricha torosa*) SSC
- Silvery legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra pulchra*) FSS, SSC
- Coastal whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*) CDFG Special Animals List
- San Diego banded gecko (*Coleonyx variegatus abbotti*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- San Bernardino mountain kingsnake (*Lampropeltis zonata parvirubra*) FSS, SSC
- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Coast patch-nosed snake (*Salvadora hexalepis virgultea*) SSC
- Two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*) CDFG Watch List
- Grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Bell's sage sparrow (*Amphispiza belli belli*) BCC, CDFG Watch List
- Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) BCC, BLMS, SSC
- Coastal cactus wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus sandiegensis*) BCC, FSS, SSC
- Yellow warbler (*Dendroica petechia brewsteri*) SSC
- White-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*) CDFG Fully Protected
- Southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) FE, FSS, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) CDFG Watch List
- Yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*) SSC
- Coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) FT, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) FE, BCC, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) FSS, BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Northwestern San Diego pocket mouse (*Chaetodipus fallax fallax*) SSC
- San Bernardino kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys merriami parvus*) FE, SSC
- Western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*) WBWG Medium
- Western yellow bat (*Lasiurus xanthinus*) WBWG High
- San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus bennettii*) SSC
- Yuma myotis (*Myotis yumaensis*) BLMS, WBWG Low-Medium
- San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*) SSC
- Pocketed free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops femorosaccus*) SSC, WBWG Medium
- Big free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops macrotis*) SSC, WBWG Medium-High
- Los Angeles pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris brevinasus*) FSS, SSC
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) SSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

There are no ETAs designated within this SEA.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets several SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met described below.

Criteria Analysis of the San Dimas Canyon and San Antonio Wash SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Not Met	Although the SEA contains rare plant populations, it does not contain a core population of a listed species and therefore does not meet this criterion. The lower slopes in and around San Dimas Canyon support one of the largest populations of the coastal cactus wren in the County, which is a subspecies that is very threatened throughout its range, although not officially recognized by listing.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	The SEA contains habitat of the rare rock monardella. In addition, several plant communities within this SEA are CDFG highest priority communities due to their restricted distribution in the Southern California region, including: walnut woodland, oak riparian woodland, southern willow scrub, coastal sage scrub, and alluvial fan scrub.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution	Met	All of the plant communities and habitats mentioned as being restricted in distribution on a regional basis, are also restricted in distribution within the County.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	The major canyons within this SEA support well-developed and diverse riparian woodlands, as well as a source of perennial water. These represent important stopover and overwintering areas for a wide variety of migratory birds, as well as essential habitat for resident species of fauna and flora. These canyons also support seasonal and more frequent movement for wide-ranging mammals, which must move over large areas to fulfill their habitat requirements. The federally-threatened California gnatcatcher has been sighted (2010) in the Glendora foothills, and probably maintains a small population along the lowest slopes of the San Gabriel Mountains.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual	Not Met	The SEA does not contain biotic resources that are clearly an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community, and therefore does not

	variation in a population or community.		meet this criterion. However, the extreme localization of several species of plants in the SEA may indicate geographical processes that are not well understood at this time that merit scientific inquiry.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	Virtually all of the native biotic communities within this SEA are relatively undisturbed over most of their extent. Because urbanization throughout much of the County's foothill regions has removed large expanses of these communities, those in the SEA are particularly important to the County's natural heritage.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: B-C) biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution in the County and regionally; D) concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds, which are limited in availability in the County; and F) areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.

19. San Gabriel Canyon SEA

Location

General

The San Gabriel Canyon Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located along the cismontane foothills of the eastern section of these mountains. Generally, the SEA is centered on the mouths of three major canyons, which flow from the mountains and interconnecting terrain. From west to east these include, Santa Anita, Monrovia and Sawpit, and San Gabriel canyons, which are located above the cities of Sierra Madre, Arcadia, Monrovia, Duarte, Bradbury, Irwindale, and Azusa. A substantial part of the eastern and southern part of the SEA along the San Gabriel River is in the California Audubon-designated State Important Bird Area (IBA) of the Los Angeles Flood Control Basin IBA. The San Gabriel River has largely been dammed and channelized, but with infrequent clearing of the detention basins and wash areas, substantial parts of the San Gabriel River have reverted to riparian habitat or the even more rare alluvial fan habitat, and this attracts many resident birds, as well as numerous spring and winter migrants.

The SEA is found within the, Mount Wilson, Azusa, San Dimas, and Glendora U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Quadrangles.

General Boundary and Resources Description

Over most of its boundaries (north, east, and west), the SEA is bordered by open space within the Angeles National Forest. However, generally to the south, the borders are defined by the edge of urban development within the San Gabriel Valley. The SEA begins in the west at the peak of Mount Wilson within the Angeles National Forest. Traveling east, the northerly boundary follows a major east-west trending ridgeline to Pine Mountain. This ridgeline defines the separation between the watershed of the San Gabriel River West Fork to the north, and the Santa Anita, Sawpit, and lower San Gabriel canyons to the south. These front-range canyons are tributaries of the San Gabriel River.

At Pine Mountain, the boundary turns south to follow the ridgeline that is the western border of the San Gabriel River, and turns east onto a secondary ridge, and descends towards the San Gabriel River near the Morris Reservoir Dam. This easterly boundary crosses the San Gabriel Canyon at Morris Dam and climbs the adjacent ridgeline to Glendora Ridge and the Glendora Ridge Motorway. The southerly boundary follows the motorway to the west, to the point near the mouth of the San Gabriel Canyon where the motorway leaves the ridgeline. The SEA boundary turns north towards the San Gabriel River, and descends to the opening of the San Gabriel Canyon into the Los Angeles Basin. This is between the Glendora Ridge and the mountains near Fish Canyon. The boundary turns along the southeast side of the San Gabriel River floodplain and follows the east side of the San Gabriel River flood control channel. A development near the mouth of Roberts Canyon that is just north of the river mouth has been excluded from the SEA.

In the mouth of the San Gabriel Canyon is a population of the San Gabriel Mountains live-forever (*Dudleya densiflora*), which is unusual in that it has multiple dense flower clusters, whereas other live-

forevers have one or several flower stalks with spaced blooms. This live-forever is extremely limited in range and occurs only on the slopes of granitic rubble and canyon walls in the nearby south face of the San Gabriel Mountains. Another population is on private land about one mile upstream of the canyon mouth, on the north-side slope of the Glendora Ridge. Another live-forever population is upstream in nearby Fish Canyon, which is a little downstream of the Fish Canyon Falls. Collections have been made from Mystic Canyon to the east, and Van Tassel Canyon to the west.

The mouth of San Gabriel Canyon and nearby canyons are the principle area for the San Gabriel bedstraw (*Galium grande*), which is another local endemic. The only known populations of the bedstraw and the San Gabriel Mountains live-forever on the planet occur in the County in this small area of the San Gabriel Mountains.

The Los Angeles Flood Control Basin IBA covers all of the SEA in the San Gabriel River and downstream at the Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area. Furthermore, the IBA extends upstream beyond the SEA to the confluence area of the West, North, and East forks of the San Gabriel River in the Angeles National Forest, and it extends downstream beyond Santa Fe Dam to the Whittier Narrows Dam.

A finger of the SEA extends along the San Gabriel River, south of its confluence area with Fish and Van Tassel canyons to pass under the Interstate-210. The finger boundary enlarges around the Santa Fe Flood Control Basin and Recreation Area to include one of the last remaining natural alluvial fan habitats in the County. The Santa Fe Flood Control Basin is one of the most unusual vegetation habitats in the County, and has special sensitive species, as described below in the Vegetation section.

The main SEA boundary continues just west of the Van Tassel Canyon confluence along the north side of the Encanto Equestrian Center, along the northern extent of development in the City of Duarte. A lobe of the SEA encloses the natural habitat of the steep watershed areas of Spinks and Maddox canyons, extending to the edge of development in the City of Bradbury. The ridge bordering the southeast side of Bliss Canyon is the western edge of the lobe, and the boundary crosses Bliss Canyon at its upper end near the Van Tassel Truck Trail. At this point the boundary of the SEA has reentered the Angeles National Forest. After crossing Bliss Canyon, the boundary follows the southern ridgeline of Spanish Canyon westward to cross out of the Angeles National Forest, tracking around the northern arm of the City of Monrovia. The Sawpit Debris Basin is included in the SEA as is the undeveloped part of Monrovia Canyon Park. To the west of Monrovia Canyon, a lobe of the SEA extends along the undeveloped ridges of the San Gabriel Mountains bordered by the urban edges of the City of Monrovia and City of Arcadia. These communities extend into the mountains where the cities have municipal water rights. The southern boundary skirts the edge of development in Santa Anita Canyon, but includes the Santa Anita Debris Basin, Arcadia Natural Park, Big Santa Anita Dam and Reservoir, and the Santa Anita Canyon stream course above the Dam, which has numerous lease-hold cabins north of the 1600 feet elevation contour. The boundary reenters the Angeles National Forest just north of Arcadia Natural Park.

The southern ridge of Sawpit Canyon, from its dam to about a 0.5 mile upstream has a population of the endangered San Gabriel bedstraw (*Galium grande)*, which is an endemic species of highly restricted distribution. It occurs only on the south slopes of the western section of the San Gabriel Mountains.

Within the SEA, just to the south of Arcadia Natural Park is a Santa Anita Canyon tributary, Clamshell Canyon. On the south banks and ridge of Clamshell Canyon is critical habitat for the federally-endangered Braunton's milk-vetch (*Astragalus brauntonii*), which is a locoweed that prefers interbedded sandstone and carbonate substrate, probably deposited near the coastline of former oceans. Very limited areas of this substrate occur at the boundary of the San Gabriel Mountains in this area. Most of the rocks of the San Gabriel Mountains are igneous granites and metamorphic rocks.

Santa Anita Canyon has some stands of Pacific madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*), which is a plant known elsewhere from the Pacific coast north of Santa Barbara to British Columbia. The Santa Anita stands are isolated occurrences, which is one of the few places madrone is found between Santa Barbara and Baja California.

Near the confluence with Winter Creek in the vicinity of Chantry Flats, the southern boundary of the SEA turns west and climbs the southern ridgeline of Winter Creek, including Winter Creek watershed in the SEA and excluding San Olene Canyon on the south. The boundary follows the ridgeline, marking the southern limits of the Winter Creek watershed to Mount Harvard, and then travels along the Harvard ridgeline to Mount Wilson.

The SEA is comprised of three major canyons: San Gabriel, Sawpit, and Santa Anita. In general, the topography of the SEA is severe, consisting of steep-walled canyons and narrow ridgelines. Elevations range from a high of approximately 5,710 feet above mean sea level (MSL) at Mount Wilson, to a low of approximately 660 feet above MSL in San Gabriel Canyon. Numerous drainages and tributaries of the main canyons are included in the SEA and exit the San Gabriel Mountains into the Los Angeles Basin through this SEA.

The wide range of elevation, topography, slope aspect, and geology represent a wide array of physical habitats within this SEA. Consequently, a number of plant communities exist, including grasslands, riparian, shrublands, woodlands, and forests. Within these major community types, there are many sub-communities, which vary according to plant species dominance. Of particular note, this SEA contains the last remaining relatively well-developed lower montane riparian habitats in the eastern County and dammed drainages that have created significant reservoirs or flood control basins in Sawpit and Santa Anita canyons. Enclaves of sensitive plant species and vegetation habitats are found here. Other jurisdictions within the SEA include the unincorporated area of the County, the City of Arcadia, City of Monrovia, City of Bradbury, City of Irwindale, City of Duarte, City of Azusa, and the City of Glendora.

Vegetation

There are numerous special vegetation habitats in this SEA. By virtue of elevation, rugged topography of ridges and canyons, variation in aspect due to faulting, and contiguous high elevation areas in the San Gabriel Mountains, this SEA has numerous habitats that are not represented in many or sometimes any of the other SEAs. The coniferous forests, oak tree forests, canyon floras, and various kinds of chaparral contribute to a multitude of habitat types. Some of the very special areas mentioned briefly here are the Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area, which is on an alluvial fan, the canyons that debouche onto the alluvial fans of the Los Angeles Basin, and populations of rare and uncommon species that occur throughout the SEA area.

The floodplain of the San Gabriel River behind Santa Fe Dam supports one of the last examples of alluvial fan, which was once found all along the San Gabriel Mountains where the numerous canyon outwash areas cross the thrust faults that create the mountains, and deposit their sediment loads onto the floor of the Los Angeles Basin. The alluvial fan vegetation supports a community of organisms that is disappearing from the County. It has plant species that are now unusual on the coastal side of the San Gabriel Mountains and uncommon in the Los Angeles Basin, such as California juniper (*Juniperus californica*), white alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*), and the stands of native cactus *Opuntia littoralis* (prickly pear) and *O. parryi* (cholla). It also has many native plants from the alluvial fan community that are still common along the mountain front. This habitat has been largely displaced by urbanization and flood control projects. The bajada, or connected fans, once enabled wildlife movement all along the face of the San Gabriel Mountains and connected the canyon communities with one another. The soft-bottomed channel of the San Gabriel River connects the Santa Fe Recreation area with the San Gabriel Mountains, and the willow- and mulefat-dominated riparian scrub provides the natural base for the community along the river and around the Santa Fe Dam Reservoir. The avian fauna here is very sensitive and directly related to the vegetation that occurs. One of the County's biggest populations of the state and federally-endangered least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) occurs and nests at the Santa Fe Dam Recreation area, as well as in other debris basins that have naturally-regenerated growth of willows and other riparian shrubs, where basins that are not scoured by too often. A species of special concern, the yellow-breasted chats (*Icteria virens*) prefer the elderberry and mulefat thickets. Fully-protected white-tailed kites (*Elanus leucurus*) hunt over the low-profile, expansive fan vegetation. The very sensitive coastal cactus wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus sandiegensis*), extirpated in most of the County, can breed in the cholla and prickly-pear cactus thickets of the alluvial fan area. Uncommon riparian species, such as rock wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*), yellow warbler (*Dendroica petechia brewsteri*), and willow goldfinch (*Spinus tristis salicamans*) are frequently encountered in the riparian areas of the Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area.

Special sensitive plants that are extremely localized are found in this SEA. These include the San Gabriel bedstraw and the San Gabriel live-forever. The critical habitat of the endangered Braunton's milk-vetch along Clamshell Canyon is noted. The Pacific madrone in Santa Anita Canyon is an example of what is probably a lone occurrence in the County. There may be other plants like the madrone in botanically-unexplored areas of the rugged front-range of the San Gabriel Mountains in this SEA.

The variety of topography, soil types, slope aspects and water availability within the SEA creates a range of physical habitats, which support numerous plant species. Plant species observed or recorded in previous documentation within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium of the Los Angeles County SEAs.* Sensitive plant species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Brief descriptions and general locations of each major plant community present within the SEA are provided below, including bigcone Douglas fir-canyon oak forest, white alder riparian forest, alluvial fan scrub, oak woodland, oak riparian forest, walnut woodland, southern willow scrub, chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and non-native grassland.

Bigcone Douglas Fir–Canyon Oak Forest: An open to dense forest dominated by bigcone Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga macrocarpa*) 50 to 80 feet tall over a dense canopy of canyon live oak (*Quercus chrysolepis*). It is found scattered throughout the SEA on canyon sides at elevations generally above 2,500 feet where it occupies rocky substrates. It commonly occurs in fairly small enclaves within chaparral.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Pseudotsuga macrocarpa* (bigcone Douglas-fir forest) Forest Alliance
- *Quercus chrysolepis* (canyon live oak forest) Forest Alliance

White Alder Riparian Forest: Along the upper reaches of many drainages in the SEA, white alder riparian forest is found. This community is dominated by white alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*), which grow 30 to 40 feet high over a shrub understory. It typically grows along streams in bedrock-constrained, steep-sided canyons, resulting in a fairly narrow riparian corridor.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Alnus rhombifolia* (white alder groves) Forest Alliance

Alluvial Fan Scrub: A shrub community characterized by harsh substrates subject to episodic flooding and scouring. It is generally restricted to broad canyon outwashes, or alluvial washes. It is found in this SEA at the San Gabriel Canyon mouth where it forms an open, shrub-dominated vegetation within areas of bare, scoured ground in between.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum-Salvia apiana* (California buckwheat-white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lepidospartum squamatum* (scale broom scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Malosma laurina* (laurel sumac scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Oak Woodland: A plant community dominated by species of the oak genus (*Quercus*). Within this SEA, this community includes coast live oak (*Q. agrifolia* var. *agrifolia*), which typically grows to heights of 20 to 40 feet and the somewhat smaller interior live oak (*Q. wislizenii*) and canyon oak, and forms either closed or open tree canopies. Understory vegetation varies from grassland in level areas to shrubs where topography is steeper. It may also intergrade with shrub communities. Within this SEA oak woodland is scattered throughout and most prevalent on north-facing slopes and in drainage bottoms.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance
- *Quercus engelmannii* (Engelmann oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

Oak Riparian Forest: A highly related community to oak woodlands found in the SEA. This community is also dominated by coast live oak (or canyon oak at higher elevations). The primary difference between oak woodland and oak riparian forest is the greater availability of water in riparian situations, which is expressed in a denser tree canopy and higher density of trees. There are also a greater number of hydrophytic (moister favoring) plant species in the understory. Typical riparian trees, such as western

sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) and willow (*Salix spp.*) occasionally occur. Oak riparian forest is best developed within broader, more level gradient drainages of this SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Quercus chrysolepis* (canyon live oak forest) Forest Alliance

Walnut Woodland: Often intergrades with oak dominated woodlands or develops as a distinct community. This community is dominated by Southern California black walnut (*Juglans californica*), which grows 10 to 30 feet high. More often than not, walnut woodland in this SEA is highly intermixed with oak woodland and chaparral, and large monotypic stands are uncommon.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Juglans californica* (Southern California black walnut groves) Woodland Alliance

Southern Willow Scrubs: Found along widely scattered reaches of several drainages throughout this SEA. This community is dominated by species of willow, which form nearly monotypic stands due to their dense growth with an occasional cottonwood. These stands generally reach 10 to 20 feet in height with little understory vegetation.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Salix exigua* (sandbar willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salix lasiolepis* (arroyo willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance

Chaparral: A shrub community composed of robust species. Within this SEA, a number of chaparral subcommunities are found, which are differentiated by their dominant plant species. These include chamise, buck brush (*Ceanothus* spp.), scrub oak (*Quercus durata* var. *gabrielensis*), interior shrub live oak (*Quercus wislizeni* var. *frutescens*), and mosaics of these depending on mixtures of species and elevation. These and other shrub species form dense vegetation covers growing 5 to 10 feet in height. The development of chaparral is pronounced over large hillside areas throughout the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Adenostoma fasciculatum* (chamise chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Adenostoma fasciculatum-Salvia apiana* (chamise-white sage chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Arctostaphylos glandulosa* (chamise chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Arctostaphylos glauca* (bigberry manzanita chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus greggii* [*Ceanothus vestitus*] (cup leaf chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus leucodermis* (chaparral whitethorn) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus spinosus* (greenbark ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus oliganthus* (hairy leaf ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Prunus ilicifolia* (holly leaf cherry chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Rhus ovata* (sugarbush chaparral) Shrubland Alliance

Coastal Sage Scrub: A shrubland community exhibiting less robust structure found in this SEA. This plant community is dominated by California sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), California brittle bush (*Encelia californica*), white sage (*Salvia apiana*), black sage (*S. mellifera*), and California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*). It also forms dense stands, which grow three to four feet in height. Within this SEA, it is

generally found in scattered patches, which are highly integrated with mixed chaparral. These are primarily located in the lower elevation hillsides of the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica* (California sagebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Salvia mellifera* (California sagebrush-black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Encelia californica* (California brittle bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Dendromecon rigida* (bush poppy scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia apiana* (white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia leucophylla* (purple sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia mellifera* (black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum cinereum* (ashy buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum-Salvia apiana* (California buckwheat-white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum wrightii* (Wright's buckwheat patches) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ericameria linearifolia* (narrowleaf goldenbush scrub) Provisional Shrubland Alliance
- *Hazardia squarrosa* (sawtooth golden bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lotus scoparius* [*Acmispon glaber*] (deer weed scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lupinus albifrons* (silver bush lupine scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Malacothamnus fasciculatus* (bush mallow scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Non-Native Grassland: Dominated by non-native annual grasses and forbs. These opportunistically growing species include brome grasses, wild oats and mustards. Characteristic of other parts of Southern California, this community became established as a result of livestock grazing and agriculture, as native vegetation is removed, sometimes by mechanical means, and replaced by more opportunistic species. Non-native grassland is found throughout the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Avena* (*barbata*, *fatua*) (wild oats grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands

Wildlife

Wildlife populations within the SEA are diverse and abundant due to the region's physiographic diversity, its relative isolation, and its location within and adjacent to the Angeles National Forest. The analysis of invertebrates is severely limited due to the lack of specific data, however, the SEA is likely to support healthy populations of a diverse assortment of invertebrate species based on the its undisturbed nature and variety of habitats. Fair numbers of amphibians are expected to be present primarily due to the aquatic and semi-aquatic habitats provided within the numerous drainages and several reservoirs. Reptile abundance and diversity are expected to be characteristic for the habitats present, although areas closer to urban development along the southern boundaries of this SEA are likely to be suppressed due to edge effect.

Bird use, diversity, and abundance within the SEA are expected to be high for several reasons. In general, this SEA provides habitat for a wide range of shrubland, woodland, forest, and riparian species that occur at varying elevations. In particular, the riparian habitats found in drainages throughout this SEA provide essential habitat for riparian-obligate and riparian-favoring species. In addition, a number of migratory birds use this area to move across the northern portion of the Los Angeles Basin. These include a wide spectrum of birds including song bird, waterfowl, and raptorial species.

Similarly, the mammalian fauna is expected to be very diverse and abundant. The vast open space of the Angeles National Forest and its diversity of habitats exerts much influence on the great variety of taxa in this SEA. Virtually all mammalian species found in the forest (with the exception of Nelson's bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*)) are expected to be found in this SEA. Frequent observations of American black bear (*Ursus americanus*) and mountain lion (*Puma concolor*) in foothill communities attest to the range of species expected.

Wildlife Movement

Wildlife movement within the SEA takes on two major forms. First, due to the extreme intervening topography, it is logical to expect considerable movement of wildlife up and down the sizeable drainages, which course through this SEA to connect the forest interior with foothill areas. Consequently, this type of movement occurs on a seasonal and more frequent basis, particularly for large mobile mammals whose full range of habitat needs are typically met over broad areas, including American black bear, mountain lion, coyote (*Canis latrans*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*) and other medium-sized mammals.

The second major type of movement occurs across the flanks of the foothills and lower mountains, in an east-west direction. Particularly for riparian-favoring migratory birds, a corridor linking lower elevation riparian habitats in the SEA is of high use and importance. In addition to providing essential habitat for resident riparian birds, this SEA contains some of the best developed riparian habitat for birds, which are seasonal visitors to the cismontane region of the County.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition. When species are federally-listed as endangered or threatened, they often have federally-designated, geographically-specific "critical habitat areas." Critical habitat areas, after extensive study by experts, are judged to be essential to conservation and maintenance of the species. The Braunton's milk-vetch has critical habitat in this SEA.

Sensitive Plan Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. These communities include bigcone Douglas-fir forest, California buckwheat-white sage scrub, scale broom scrub, Engelmann oak woodland, Southern California black walnut groves, chamise-white sage chaparral, cup leaf ceanothus chaparral, hairy leaf ceanothus chaparral, holly leaf cherry chaparral, California brittle bush scrub, white sage scrub, ashy buckwheat scrub, Wright's buckwheat patches, narrowleaf goldenbush scrub, and sawtooth golden bush scrub. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section.

Sensitive Plant Species

The statuses of rare plants are hierarchically categorized by the CNPS using a rank and decimal system. The initial category level of Rare Plant Rank is indicated by the ranks 1A (presumed extinct in California), 1B (rare or endangered in California and elsewhere), 2 (rare or endangered in California but more common elsewhere), 3 (more information needed, a review list), and 4 (limited distribution). In cases where the CNPS has further identified the specific threat to the species, a decimal or Threat Code is added: .1 (seriously endangered in California), .2 (fairly endangered in California), or .3 (not very endangered in California).

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Slender silver moss (*Anomobryum julaceum*) RPR 2.2
- Scalloped moonwort (*Botrychium crenulatum*) RPR 2.2
- Sonoran maiden fern (*Thelypteris puberula* var. *sonorensis*) RPR 2.2
- San Gabriel manzanita (*Arctostaphylos glandulosa* ssp. *gabrielensis*) RPR 1B.2
- Braunton's milk-vetch (*Astragalus brauntonii*) FE, RPR 1B.1
- Nevin's barberry (*Berberis nevinii*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Round-leaved filaree (*California macrophylla*) RPR 1B.1
- Southern tarplant (*Centromadia parryi* ssp. *australis*) RPR 1B.1
- Parry's spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *parryi*) RPR 1B.1
- Peruvian dodder (*Cuscuta obtusiflora* var. *glandulosa*) RPR 2.2
- Slender-horned spineflower (*Dodecahema leptoceras*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- San Gabriel River dudleya (*Dudleya cymosa* ssp. *crebrifolia*) RPR 1B.2
- San Gabriel Mountains dudleya (*Dudleya densiflora*) RPR 1B.1
- Many-stemmed dudleya (*Dudleya multicaulis*) RPR 1B.2
- Mesa horkelia (*Horkelia cuneata* ssp. *puberula*) RPR 1B.1
- Coulter's goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata* ssp. *coulteri*) RPR 1B.1
- Robinson's pepper-grass (*Lepidium virginicum* var. *robinsonii*) RPR 1B.2
- White rabbit-tobacco (*Pseudognaphalium leucocephalum*) RPR 2.2
- Parish's gooseberry (*Ribes divaricatum* var. *parishii*) RPR 1A
- Chaparral ragwort (*Senecio aphanactis*) RPR 2.2
- San Bernardino aster (*Symphyotrichum defoliatum*) RPR 1B.2

- Greata's aster (*Symphyotrichum greatae*) RPR 1B.3
- Thread-leaved brodiaea (*Brodiaea filifolia*) FT, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Slender mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*) RPR 1B.2
- Palmer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus palmeri* var. *palmeri*) RPR 1B.2
- Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) RPR 1B.2
- Intermediate mariposa lily (*Calochortus weedii* var. *intermedius*) RPR 1B.2
- Western sedge (*Carex occidentalis*) RPR 2.3
- California sawgrass (*Cladium californicum*) RPR 2.2
- Vernal barley (*Hordeum intercedens*) RPR 3.2
- California satintail (*Imperata brevifolia*) RPR 2.1

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or are likely to be present within the SEA based on habitat requirements and known range attributes:

- Santa Ana sucker (*Catostomus santaanae*) FT, SSC
- Arroyo chub (*Gila orcuttii*) SSC
- Santa Ana speckled dace (*Rhinichthys osculus* ssp. 3) SSC
- Arroyo toad (*Anaxyrus californicus*) FE, SSC
- San Gabriel Mountains slender salamander (*Batrachoseps gabrieli*) FSS
- Large-blotched salamander (*Ensatina klauberi*) FSS, SSC
- Sierra Madre yellow-legged frog (*Rana muscosa*) FE, FSS, SSC
- Coast range newt (*Taricha torosa*) SSC
- Coastal whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Rosy boa (*Charina trivirgata*) BLMS, FSS
- Western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) CDFG Watch List
- Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*) CDFG Watch List
- Coastal cactus wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus sandiegensis*) SSC, FSS, BCC
- Western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*) FC, BCC, FSS, SE
- Black swift (*Cypseloides niger*) BCC, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Yellow warbler (*Dendroica petechia brewsteri*) SSC, BCC
- Southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) FE, FSS, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) CDFG Watch List
- Yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*) SSC
- Coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) FT, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Bank swallow (*Riparia riparia*) ST
- Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) FE, BCC, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) FSS, BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*) WBWG Medium
- Western yellow bat (*Lasiurus xanthinus*) WBWG High
- San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus bennettii*) SSC
- Fringed myotis (*Myotis thysanodes*) BLMS, WBWG High
- Long-legged myotis (*Myotis volans*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG Medium
- Yuma myotis (*Myotis yumaensis*) BLMS, WBWG Low-Medium

- Pocketed free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops femorosaccus*) SSC, WBWG Medium
- Big free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops macrotis*) SSC, WBWG Medium-High
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) SSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

There is one ETA in this SEA in an aggregate quarry at the mouth of Fish Canyon.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets several SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met described below.

CRITERIA ANALYSIS OF THE SAN GABRIEL CANYON SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Met	The SEA contains a core habitat area for the endangered plant Braunton's milkvetch. The upper San Gabriel River is a core habitat of several native fishes, one of the last areas where three of five original natives occur together: federally-threatened Santa Ana sucker, and the arroyo chub and Santa Ana speckled dace,which is of state concern. All three live in the San Gabriel River in the SEA area. A local population of the speckled dace is known from the mouth of Fish Canyon. The very rare San Gabriel bedstraw and San Gabriel Mountains live-forever only occur in this area of the world.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	The SEA contains habitat of extremely rare plants: San Gabriel bedstraw and the San Gabriel Mountains dudleya. In addition, several plant communities within this SEA are CDFG highest priority communities due to their restricted distribution in the Southern California region. These communities include walnut woodland, oak riparian woodland, southern willow scrub, coastal sage scrub, and alluvial fan scrub. The federally-endangered California gnatcatcher has been recently sighted in the Glendora foothills, and probably maintains a small population along the lowest slopes of the San Gabriel Mountains.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted	Met	All of the plant communities and habitats mentioned as being restricted in distribution on a regional basis, are also restricted in distribution within the County.

	Criterion	Status	Justification
	in distribution.		
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	The three major canyons within this SEA support well-developed and diverse riparian woodlands, as well as year-round water sources. These represent important stopover and overwintering areas for a wide variety of migratory birds, as well as essential habitat for resident species. These canyons also support seasonal and more frequent movement for wide-ranging mammals, which must move over large areas to fulfill their habitat requirements.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	The SEA contains biotic resources that are of scientific interest for their very restricted distributions: the San Gabriel bedstraw, the San Gabriel Mountains live-forever, and a local isolated population of the Pacific madrone. The population of Santa Ana speckled dace in Fish Canyon may be the remaining extreme western extent of its population.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	Virtually all of the native biotic communities within this SEA are relatively undisturbed over most of their extent. Because urbanization throughout much of the County's foothill regions has removed large expanses of these communities, those in the SEA are particularly important to the County's natural heritage.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: A) the habitat of core populations of endangered and threatened plant and animal species; B-C) biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution in the County and regionally; D) concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, and migrating grounds, which are limited in availability in the County; E) populations of scientific interest because of very restricted distributions and isolated populations; and F) areas that provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of original natural biotic communities in the County.

20. Santa Clara River SEA

Location

General

The Santa Clara River Significant Ecological Area (SEA) extends along the entire County reach of the Santa Clara River, primarily within unincorporated areas of the County. The SEA encompasses a wide variety of topographic features and habitat types, as well as major tributaries—all of which contribute to this diversity. It is a major biotic corridor for the County (and Ventura County). The orientation and extent of the SEA depends upon the surface and subsurface hydrology of the Santa Clara River, from its headwaters, tributaries, and watershed basin, to the point at which it exits the County's jurisdiction. Nearly all of the SEA is designated by California Audubon as a Globally Important Bird Area (IBA). The Santa Clara River IBA extends beyond the SEA in both upstream and downstream directions (across Soledad Pass to the Barrel Springs area in the Antelope Valley and through Ventura County to the mouth of the River at the Pacific Ocean).

The SEA is located at least partially in each of the following United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Quadrangles: Pacifico Mountain, Acton, Agua Dulce, Sunland, San Fernando, Mint Canyon, Oat Mountain, Newhall, and Val Verde.

General Boundary and Resources Description

The SEA covers a wide variety of topographic features and habitat types, including parts of the watershed tributaries. The biological and ecological functionality of the SEA is integrally linked to the Santa Clara River basin for its entire length. The bio-geographic limits of the SEA would extend downstream through Ventura-Los Angeles County line to its mouth at the Pacific Ocean, and encompass significant tributary drainages of Ventura County (Piru Creek, Sespe Creek, Santa Paula Creek, Wheeler Creek, etc.).

The eastern portion of the SEA follows natural contours at the headwaters of the watershed to incorporate much of upper watershed of Soledad Canyon (which becomes the Santa Clara River), the Kentucky Springs and the Aliso Canyon basins, and the downstream unnamed tributaries of the Santa Clara River to Arrastre Creek. This includes the watershed southern headwater areas within the Angeles National Forest. The headwaters of both Kentucky Springs and Aliso Canyon are in the Angeles National Forest, in semi-arid chaparral and desert scrub habitat; however, the drainages themselves support vegetation of desert and interior riparian habitat, which ranges from Great Basin sagebrush in Kentucky Springs Wash to dense, mature, willow-cottonwood-sycamore woodlands along permanent streams in Aliso Canyon. The surrounding uplands in the basins support pinyon-juniper woodlands, chamise, mountain mahogany, and manzanita-dominated chaparral, buckwheat scrub, and ruderal lands. The alluvial plain formed along the southern margin of the Santa Clara River basin below these canyons supports intact, high diversity xeric alluvial fan sage scrub. Alluvial terraces within both drainages have been extensively cultivated for orchard crops and dryland agriculture, and in more recent years, rural

and urban-type residential developments have encroached on the watersheds. The Kentucky Springs basin has a large population of Parish's Great Basin sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* ssp. *parishii*), which is considered rare and sensitive in the County. A population of the federally-threatened red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii* FT, SC) is known to inhabit and breed in the Aliso Canyon watershed. Blum Ranch and another area on Aliso Canyon Road are ETAs, with farming development, but important to continuity of the SEA. The Santa Clara River IBA extends in a branch upstream to include Blum Ranch.

The boundary follows the Santa Clara River channel downstream through the Acton basin, paralleling Soledad Canyon Road on the north side, following the toe of the slope of the San Gabriel Mountains to the south. Boundaries continue along the channel margins to the southwest from Acton to Arrastre Creek, where the southern boundary follows watershed contours to take in four upper tributary channels (Arrastre, Moody, and Bootleggers). Downstream from Acton, there are developed areas along the Santa Clara River that are ETAs. From a little upstream of the Arrastre Creek confluence to a little downstream in the vicinity of the railroad stop of Lang (about 13 miles of river), the floodplain of the Santa Clara River is designated critical habitat for the federally-endangered arroyo toad (*Anaxyrus californicus*). Some of the confluence area of Mill Canyon is also critical habitat for the arroyo toad. Part of the area of critical habitat for the toad was also proposed as critical habitat for the state and federally-endangered unarmored threespine stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus williamsoni*), which is a small three-inch fish that essentially only occurs in the County. It once was widespread throughout the Los Angeles Basin and beyond, but is now restricted to the upper Santa Clara River. The proposal for critical habitat was never approved, and this is now referred to as "essential habitat" for the fish. The type area for the fish is the Arrastre Creek, where it was first collected and described with a museum specimen.

The habitat along the Santa Clara River supports the largest community of riparian-obligate birds between Santa Ynez River in Santa Barbara County and the Prado Basin in Riverside County. In the Soledad Canyon stretch are breeding summer tanager (*Piranga rubra*) and other desert species, along with some instances of least Bell's vireos (*Vireo bellii pusillus*), coastal cactus wrens (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus sandiegensis*), and southwestern willow flycatchers (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) from the coastal influence areas. The area is notable for having a combination of species that are characteristic of the desert and characteristic of coastal-influence.

Just west of the confluence with Arrastre Creek the northern boundary loops up to the slopes of Parker Mountain and the eastern watershed of Hughes Canyon around the basal contours of significant rock outcroppings above the river basin, and on the south side, around the Mill Canyon tributary basin. The rocky buttes on the north side of the river, while only a minor part of the watershed of the river, provide important nesting, roosting, and sheltering habitat values for bats, birds of prey, and other sensitive species foraging along the river corridor. The boundaries stay at the river margins west to the watersheds of two northern tributaries, Nellus and Bobcat canyons. These drainages were identified by the South Coast Wildlands Project as important to connectivity across the Santa Clara River between the western and eastern highland areas of the San Gabriel Mountains.

At the Agua Dulce Canyon drainage, the northern boundary loops around the watershed, including the Vasquez Rocks County Natural Area. Agua Dulce Canyon has a permanent stream and supports high

quality riparian habitat from the confluence with the river to the intersection with State Route-14. The Santa Clara River IBA extends upstream to include about one mile of the Agua Dulce Canyon.

The Agua Dulce underpass of State Route-14 is an important crossing of the highway barrier for wildlife. From that point, north riparian areas exist where the creeks (Agua Dulce and Escondido) pass through Vasquez Rocks County Natural Area. The Agua Dulce Canyon extension was included in the SEA for its value as a wildlife corridor to provide connectivity across the Santa Clara River between the western and eastern highland areas of the San Gabriel Mountains. The extension includes the watershed of Bee Canyon, which is a downstream tributary of the Santa Clara River. Bee Canyon has an important population of the federally-endangered slender-horned spineflower (*Dodecahema leptoceras*) in its broad, floodplain area. In the Bee Canyon slopes of coastal sage chaparral, the federally-threatened coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) is sometimes resident. The Bee Canyon area has some underpasses of the State Route-14 that could be used by smaller wildlife if maintained unclogged. The extension includes upper watersheds of Spring and Tick canyons to enhance the connective area. Beyond upper areas of Tick Canyon, the SEA boundaries cross Mint Canyon into the Angeles National Forest and the watershed of Rowher Canyon. The SEA continues to the upper reaches of Rowher Canyon onto the main ridgeline of the Sierra Pelona. At the Mint Canyon crossing, just southwest of the community of Sleepy Valley, a lobe of the SEA extends along Mint Canyon to capture riparian woodlands of coast live oak, with a number of heritage trees (diameters greater than 36 inches). Residences are scattered and the natural communities of chaparral are intact on the canyon slopes.

The southern boundary of the SEA opposite the confluence with Agua Dulce Canyon includes the flood plain. The SEA dips southward into the lower portion of Bear Canyon (tributary of Santa Clara River) and includes undeveloped alluvial terrace slopes of the river downstream of Bear Canyon. The flood plain is a narrowed part of the SEA in the vicinity of Lang, which is a railroad stop on the transcontinental railroad line that runs the length of the Soledad Canyon. Downstream from Lang, the SEA expands to the southern slopes between Lang and Oak Spring Canyon, adjacent to the river channel. Downstream of Oak Canyon, the SEA narrows to the flood plain, passes Sand Canyon, and reaches the west ridge of Sand Canyon. A broad finger of the SEA goes south along the ridgeline of the Sand Canyon watershed, where the finger expands when it reaches the watershed of Placerita Canyon.

The alluvial fans of Oak Springs Canyon and Sand Canyon are important recharge grounds for the river aquifer. Surface flows from both canyons enter the Santa Clara River basin through natural, unconfined channels. Recognizing the importance of the Sand Canyon drainage, the SEA boundaries are drawn to encompass the entire upper Sand Canyon watershed, which is largely natural with scattered residences, as well as the Sand Canyon tributary, Bear Canyon. Most of the upper Sand Canyon and its Bear Canyon tributary are within the Angeles National Forest, and Sand Canyon originates on the peak of Magic Mountain. These canyons form a natural movement zone for wildlife traversing among the western end of the San Gabriel Mountains, the eastern end of the Santa Susana Mountains, and the Santa Clara River basin. Together, they encompass a spectrum of significant and unique habitat, vegetation and wildlife resources. The major habitat linkage zones and watersheds between the river basin and the Angeles National Forest, and the protected areas of the County (Placerita Canyon Natural Area), have also been included within the SEA boundary. Near the peak of Magic Mountain, the boundary contours to the

southwest, and then proceeds west along the Santa Clara Divide to its intersection with the junction of Interstate-5 and State Route-14. Natural areas of the Sand Canyon watershed, along with the major topography of ridgelines, earthquake escarpments, grasslands, and canyon habitat features and watersheds of Bear, Placerita, Whitney, and Elsmere canyons are the important features of the wildlife linkage. Existing rural residential developments are excluded from the SEA, but the remaining natural highland areas of the western banks of the Sand Canyon watershed are included. These are integral parts of the river basin recharge system and functional ecosystem.

Parts of this area have coastal sage scrub and are critical habitat for the threatened coastal California gnatcatcher. The watershed of Placerita Canyon southeast of the State Route-14 is generally critical habitat for the federally-threatened coastal California gnatcatcher. An area of development surrounding the Placerita Creek near State Route-14 is excluded from the critical habitat. The critical habitat area for the gnatcatcher extends along the east side of State Route-14 beyond Placerita Creek and envelops watersheds into the Angeles National Forest along Whitney Canyon, Elsmere Canyon, and southward over the main ridge of the San Gabriel Mountains, into Grapevine Canyon in its upper natural watershed. Upper areas of these canyons with oaks and big-cone Douglas fir are habitat for the California spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis*)

The eastern half of the Los Piñetos undercrossing of State Route-14 on old oil development roads is included, and focuses on a major wildlife conduit connecting the Santa Susana Mountains to the San Gabriel Mountains, and to the Santa Clara River. The adjacent part of the Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills SEA includes the west half of the Los Piñetos undercrossing of State Route-14, connecting through the natural oak woodlands and drainages adjacent to the San Fernando Pass. This area, once called “San Francisco” or “Newhall Wedge,” is north and west of the junction of Interstate-5 and State Route-14 with The Old Road running through it. The Newhall Wedge area is nearly all critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher. This critical habitat of the Newhall Wedge is adjacent to the gnatcatcher critical habitat across State Route-14 in the SEA, but is in the Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills SEA.

The SEA boundary borders State Route-14 from the north ridge of Grapevine Canyon and heads northeast from the Los Piñetos undercrossing, on the natural side of existing development east of State Route-14. The area around development along Running Horse Road off Placerita Canyon has been excluded from the SEA. The movie-shoot ranch at the junction of State Route-14 and Placerita Canyon has much area with development or staging excluded, but there is a connected finger of the SEA in Placerita Canyon that leads to the Placerita Canyon watercourse underpass. Much of the watercourse underpass is used by wildlife to transition between the natural areas of Placerita Canyon and the oil field area on the west side of State Route-14. The SEA narrows to the western hills of Sand Canyon beyond the movie-shoot ranch, to avoid developed areas, and continues back to the river margin at Humphreys railway stop, about a 0.4 mile west of its previous point of departure from the river channel. The boundary was drawn to avoid existing major development, but connect the uplands to the river basin. The narrow aperture for the linkage at the Santa Clara River reflects the remnant nature of the last unobstructed terrestrial passageway between the upland areas and the river.

From Sand Canyon westward through the residential neighborhoods of Santa Clarita, the SEA boundary continues on the margins of the flood plain to the confluence with San Francisquito Canyon. The segment of the Santa Clara River passing through the City of Santa Clarita is a dry channel, except during seasonal runoff flows. Some irregular extensions go north into tributaries that have remnant riparian habitat and probable outflows from irrigation runoff that flows into neighborhood storm drains. Regardless of the intermittent nature of water, the river bed elevated areas among braided channels support relatively intact stands of alluvial sage scrub, riparian woodland, and southern riparian scrub. The dry zones are essential to the continued genetic isolation and integrity of the unarmored three-spine stickleback population in the upper reaches of the Santa Clara River.

The boundary extends northward upstream into the reaches of San Francisquito Creek (formerly a separate SEA, but now included with the SEA), following the approved development setback limits, north into the Angeles National Forest (Santa Clara/Mojave Rivers District). The SEA continues nearly the length of the San Francisquito Creek to beyond the junction with South Portal Creek in the vicinity of the community of Green Valley. The Santa Clara River IBA extends in a branch upstream in close proximity to the crossing of Copper Hill Drive.

As the channel enters the Angeles National Forest, flows become less seasonal, and riparian resources expand and diversify. San Francisquito Creek supports dense and mature southern riparian scrub and riparian woodland formations, along with small areas of freshwater marsh, which provide essential wintering areas and resident habitat for waterfowl, wading birds, marshland birds, and a variety of other vertebrate species. The headwaters of San Francisquito Creek are on a low ridge that bounds the San Andreas Fault Zone, and this is an important connective element of the SEA, in that it completes the path from the Pacific Ocean through the mountains to the Mojave Desert. The sub-watershed and flood plain of the San Francisquito Creek perennial flow in the Angeles National Forest jurisdiction is designated critical habitat for the federally-threatened red-legged frog, which extends from about the Angeles National Forest southern boundary to about one mile south of the junction with Bee Canyon. Much of the San Francisquito Creek is considered essential habitat (one of three areas) for the endangered unarmored threespine stickleback, although the fish has not been found in the San Francisquito Canyon in recent years.

The boundaries west of the confluence with San Francisquito Creek follow the river margins under the Interstate-5 to the Castaic Creek confluence, at which point the northern setback line has been drawn around the lower portion of Castaic Creek, which embraces the riparian habitat areas around and above the confluence. Castaic Creek is the tributary with the largest watershed for the Santa Clara River in the County. The SEA boundaries go upstream about four miles along the watercourse of Castaic Creek to the crossing of Lake Hughes Road, which is just downstream of Castaic Lagoon. The Santa Clara River IBA extends in a branch upstream into Castaic Creek for approximately one mile.

Relatively extensive areas of willow-cottonwood forest and southern riparian scrub occur west of San Francisquito Creek and within the junction zone of Castaic Creek and the Santa Clara River. These river forests support numerous sensitive species and provide multi-layered riparian habitat for a wide diversity of wildlife species, particularly birds of prey and riparian-obligate song birds, such as the

federally-endangered least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) and the southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*).

Federally-designated critical habitat for the endangered arroyo toad extends from the east side of Interstate-5, from the junction of the Santa Clara River with San Francisquito Creek, under the Interstate-5, about 5.8 miles to the confluence, with an unnamed drainage just upstream of the confluence of the river with San Martinez Chiquito. The critical habitat area for the toad also includes the flood plain of Castaic Creek as far upstream as the Interstate-5 undercrossing (about 2.5 miles), and for about one mile upstream into the natural area of Hasley Canyon, a tributary of Castaic. Coincident with the critical habitat for the toad is critical habitat for the endangered least Bell's vireo (FE, SE). Critical habitat for the vireo extends along the floodplain from the Rye Canyon undercrossing of the river (west side of Interstate-5), over the Ventura-Los Angeles County line, to about a mile short of the confluence of the Santa Clara River with Piru Creek in Ventura County (about 9 miles). The river area from near Interstate-5 towards the Ventura-Los Angeles County line is "essential habitat" for the threespine stickleback. A disjunct SEA area is on a ridge south of the river bend at Castaic Junction (interchange of Interstate-5 and State Route-126). This area supports a population of the federal candidate and state-endangered San Fernando Valley Spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *fernandina*, FC, SE), which is a diminuitive, once-common flower of slopes within the San Fernando Valley and adjacent passes and mountain ranges. The plant became so rare that it was believed to be extinct until it was rediscovered during required surveys for development.

Beyond the confluence with Castaic Creek, the boundaries of the SEA follow the margins of the Santa Clara River channel to the Ventura-Los Angeles County line. The Santa Clara River IBA has a lobelike expansion opposite the confluence with San Martin Chiquito, extending south to cover diverse topography from river cliffs to confluence flood plains in the area around Potrero Canyon.

The Santa Clara River channel and its alluvial terraces and tributary creeks together form the single most important and natural wildlife movement zone through the County. Mobile species can enter the river basin anywhere along its length (outside of developed areas) and proceed in either direction without having to pass through narrow culverts or blind channels, with continuous vegetative cover and only short stretches of dry substrates. The overall drainage course provides a continuum of aquatic and terrestrial movement opportunities, shelter, forage, and resident habitat from the mouth of the river at Ventura County and the Pacific Ocean, to the Antelope Valley. The drainage course connects to both districts of the Angeles National Forest, and links together three large public resource preserves (Vasquez Rocks and Placerita County Natural Areas and the Angeles National Forest).

Vegetation

Plant communities within the SEA include bigcone Douglas fir-canyon oak forest, coast live oak woodland, coast live oak riparian forest, chaparral, coastal sage scrub, coastal sage scrub-chaparral mixed scrub, non-native and native grasslands, alluvial fan sage scrub, southern cottonwood-willow riparian woodland and forest, southern sycamore-alder woodland, southern willow scrub, vernal pool, pinyon-juniper woodland, juniper woodland, freshwater marsh, and disturbed. Transitional zones (ecotones) between these communities often contain unusual species compositions. Plant species

observed or recorded in previous documentation within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium* of the *Los Angeles County SEA Update Study 2000 Background Report*. Sensitive plant species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Bigcone Douglas Fir-Canyon Oak Forest: Typically occurs in higher elevation draws on north-facing slopes, and may have incense cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*), big-leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), California bay (*Umbellularia californica*), and other shade-loving species intermixed, depending upon slope orientation, substrates, and fire history. Understory vegetation is usually dominated by chaparral species, such as scrub oak (*Quercus berberidifolia*), poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*), wild grape (*Vitis californica*), and manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* spp.). This community occurs on watershed slopes in the eastern portion of the SEA, and in a few of the narrower, more mesic canyons along the southern side of Soledad Canyon.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Pseudotsuga macrocarpa* (bigcone Douglas-fir forest) Forest Alliance
- *Quercus chrysolepis* (canyon live oak forest) Forest Alliance

Coast Live Oak Woodland: Consists of moderate-density overstory formations of coast live oak trees (*Quercus agrifolia* var. *agrifolia*), usually on erosional plains or landslides along the margins of canyon bottoms and on lower slopes in chaparral and coastal sage scrub understory habitats. Western blue elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* var. *caerulea*), chaparral currant (*Ribes malvaceum*), skunk bush (*Rhus aromatica*), and California peony (*Paeonia californica*) are frequent in the understory. Extensive stands of this formation occur in Sand, Placerita, Bear, Whitney, Elsmere, and Soledad canyons, and in unnamed tributary canyons to these drainages.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest: A variation of coast live oak woodland wherein the canopy is more closely grown, and the trees occur in narrower formations along watercourses. Willow (*Salix* spp.), California bay, mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), and other riparian species often occur in the understory.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

Juniper Woodland: An open formation dominated by California juniper (*Juniperus californica*), often with an understory of foothill yucca (*Yucca whipplei*), California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), and other scrub species. This community is found on lower slopes within the eastern portion of the SEA and is mixed with a few Joshua trees and chaparral species in several places.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Juniperus californica* (California juniper woodland) Woodland Alliance

Pinyon-Juniper Woodland: In the SEA, pinyon-juniper woodland typically consists of a mixture of singleleaf pinyon pine (*Pinus monophylla*) and California juniper, with mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus betuloides*), California buckwheat, skunk bush, foothill yucca, penstemons (*Penstemon* spp.), and native grasses (*Stipa*, *Poa*, *Elymus*, etc.). This formation occurs on middle elevation north-facing slopes in the Kentucky Springs watershed, and sporadically along the same orientations south of Acton.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Pinus monophylla* (singleleaf pinyon woodlands) Woodland Alliance
- *Juniperus californica* (California juniper woodland) Woodland Alliance

Southern Cottonwood-Willow Riparian Woodland and Forest: A broad-leafed winter-deciduous habitat dominated by Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), various species of willow, and occasional alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*) and western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*). Southern cottonwood-willow riparian woodland (or forest) occurs in numerous reaches of the SEA, forming mature overstory habitat on the Santa Clara River, its main tributaries, oxbow ponds, and alluvial plains. Some of the most extensive formations occur just west of Acton, in upper Aliso Canyon, in lower San Francisquito Canyon, and from Santa Clarita to the Ventura-Los Angeles County line. Large tracts of cottonwood-willow habitat occur in Ventura County as well.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Populus fremontii* (Fremont cottonwood forest) Forest Alliance
- *Salix laevigata* (red willow thickets) Woodland Alliance
- *Salix gooddingii* (black willow thickets) Woodland Alliance

Southern Sycamore-Alder Woodland: A formation that most often occurs on broad plains with heavy alluvial substrates, as well as along narrow creeks and streams with high-energy, permanent flows within the SEA. Alders typically occur along the watercourse, while sycamores usually grow a bit further from the active flowing channel. This community is rare within the SEA, as it occurs in only the upper reaches of the watershed and in portions of Bear, Sand, and Placerita canyons and to a lesser extent in Aliso Canyon.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Platanus racemosa* (California sycamore woodlands) Woodland Alliance
- *Alnus rhombifolia* (white alder groves) Forest Alliance

Southern Willow Scrub: is a riparian community consisting of dense, broad-leafed, winter-deciduous riparian thickets that occur within and adjacent to seasonal or permanent watercourses. The “scrub” generally is sub-mature, which is a state that often is maintained by frequent heavy over-flooding. The trees attain woodland or forest stature if undisturbed for several decades. Dominant species of this community within the SEA are mulefat, sandbar willow (*Salix exigua*), and arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*). Within the SEA, this community occurs throughout the tributary and primary drainages, wherever the habitat structure is maintained or repeatedly altered by frequent high water flows.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Salix exigua* (sandbar willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance

- *Salix lasiolepis* (arroyo willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance

Freshwater Marsh: Develops in areas of still or slow-moving permanent freshwater. This community is dominated by the perennial, emergent cattail (*Typha* spp.) or bulrush (*Schoenoplectus* spp.), which can reach heights of seven feet and grow dense enough to form a closed canopy. This vegetation occurs in scattered ponds and slow-flowing portions of the river and tributaries within the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Phragmites australis* (common reed marshes) Herbaceous Alliance and Semi-Natural Stands
- *Schoenoplectus californicus* (California bulrush marsh) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Typha* (*angustifolia*, *domingensis*, *latifolia*) (cattail marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Lemna* (*minor*) *and relatives* (duckweed blooms) Provisional Herbaceous Alliance

Vernal Pool Systems: Extremely rare in the County. There are only two verified vernal pools currently recognized within the Santa Clara River watershed area: Cruzan Mesa and Plum Canyon. The SEA has been designated for these vernal pools. There are probably unrecognized ephemeral pools all along the river course where soil types are appropriate. For example, there is at least one small documented seasonal pond with typical vernal pool characteristics within the Golden Valley Ranch portion of the upper Placerita-Sand Canyon watershed. This small pool is surrounded by coastal sage scrub, with a band of native needlegrass and melic grass on its fringes. The Golden Valley pool supports Riverside fairy shrimp and western spadefoot toad. It is considered a vernal pool by virtue of its habitat values and species that are unique to this type of seasonal formation.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Deinandra fasciculata* (clustered tarweed fields) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Eleocharis macrostachya* (pale spike rush marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Lasthenia californica-Plantago erecta-Vulpia microstachys* (California goldfields-dwarf plantain - six-weeks fescue flower fields) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Juncus arcticus* (var. *balticus*, *mexicanus*) ([*Juncus balticus* ssp. *ater*, *Juncus mexicanus*] Baltic and Mexican rush marshes) Herbaceous Alliance

Chaparral: Consists of sclerophyllous (hard-leaved, evergreen), medium height to tall shrubs that form a dense cover on steep slopes, usually below 5,000 feet in Southern California. Dominant species found within this community include scrub oaks (*Quercus*, several species), chamise, manzanita, wild lilac (*Ceanothus* spp.), toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), and western mountain-mahogany on north-facing exposures; buckwheat, foothill yucca, chamise, hoary-leaf lilac (*Ceanothus cuneatus*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), and goldenbush (*Ericameria linearifolia*) on south-facing slopes. This plant community occupies most of the basin slopes along the Santa Clara River and on interior ridges and slopes within the watersheds and drainages west of Acton. Chaparral also occurs on some of the higher elevations of the eastern watershed portions of the SEA, where the shrubs frequently are interspersed as understory formations within oak and conifer woodlands.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Adenostoma fasciculatum* (chamise chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Adenostoma fasciculatum-Salvia apiana* (chamise- white sage chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Arctostaphylos glandulosa* (Eastwood's manzanita chaparral) Shrubland Alliance

- *Arctostaphylos glauca* (bigberry manzanita chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus cuneatus* (hoary leaf ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus greggii* [*vestitus*] (cup leaf ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus leucodermis* (chaparral whitethorn) Shrubland Alliance
- *Prunus ilicifolia* (holly leaf cherry chaparral) Shrubland Alliance

Coastal Sage Scrub and Coastal Sage Scrub-Chaparral Mixed Scrub: Formations that typically occur on south or west-facing slopes within the western portion of the SEA. Some sites may be artifacts of fire frequency or occurrence, while other areas appear to be stable scrub communities. Dominant species are typically California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*), black sage, white sage (*S. apiana*), goldenbush, buckwheat, foothill yucca, California brittle bush (*Encelia californica*), golden yarrow (*Eriophyllum confertiflorum*), chamise, hoary-leaf lilac, and a variety of annuals and bulbs. Excellent examples of coastal sage scrub occur in upper Placerita Canyon watershed and on the ridgeline to the north, along the Santa Clara River just east of Sand Canyon, and in San Francisquito Canyon.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica* (California sagebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Salvia mellifera* (California sagebrush-black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Encelia californica* (California brittle bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Dendromecon rigida* (bush poppy scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia apiana* (white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia leucophylla* (purple sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia mellifera* (black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum-Salvia apiana* (California buckwheat-white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ericameria linearifolia* (narrowleaf goldenbush scrub) Provisional Shrubland Alliance
- *Lotus scoparius* ([*Acmispon glaber*] deer weed scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Malacothamnus fasciculatus* (bush mallow scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Alluvial Fan Sage Scrub: Sometimes also known as floodplain sage scrub, generally consists of a mixture of shrubs, which colonize and persist within infrequently scoured and flooded terrain, such as floodplains, alluvial plains, or along seasonal streams. The dominant shrub in most washes is scalebroom (*Lepidospartum squamatum*), but thick leaf yerba santa (*Eriodictyon crassifolium*), Great Basin sagebrush, rabbitbrush (*Ericameria nauseosa*), skunk bush, holly leaf cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*), and foothill yucca also usually occur in the habitat type, and may be dominant, depending upon substrates and subsurface hydrology. This vegetation type is common throughout the alluvial plains and washes in the SEA, and form particularly high diversity stands along the southern margin of the river at Acton, on uplands east of the Sand Canyon confluence, along the dry reaches of the river in Santa Clarita, and in lower San Francisquito Canyon. Extensive stands of Parish's Great Basin sagebrush-dominated alluvial scrub occur around Acton and in the Kentucky Springs portion of the SEA. Lower reaches of tributary drainages to the Santa Clara River often support unusual vegetation types (not addressed in the MCV) with dominance by holly leaf cherry. In addition, the Santa Clara River floodplain provides an avenue of westward range extension for a small number of species more typically associated with the Mojave

Desert flora and otherwise not expected within the cismontane region of Southern California. These include sandpaper plant (*Petalonyx thurberi*) and arrow weed (*Pluchea sericea*).

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia tridentata* (big sagebrush) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriodictyon crassifolium* (thick leaf yerba santa scrub) Provisional Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum-Salvia apiana* (California buckwheat-white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lepidospartum squamatum* (scale broom scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Malosma laurina* (laurel sumac scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Native and Non-Native Grassland Communities: Consist of low, herbaceous vegetation dominated by grasses, with native formations generally mixed with native bulbs and other herbaceous species, and often intermixed with naturalized annual taxa. There are representatives of native grasslands scattered within the SEA, most notably patches of different needlegrass (*Stipa*) species and melic (*Melica*) grasses on clay soils in Placerita Canyon, on slope wetlands and around oak woodlands on the ridge north of Placerita Canyon, and on less-disturbed xeric slopes in the eastern portion of the SEA. Seeps in chaparral often support homogeneous stands of giant wildrye (*Leymus condensatus*). Other native grasses occur sporadically within most natural habitats along the Santa Clara basin.

Non-native grassland consists of invasive annual grasses that are primarily of Mediterranean origin. Dominant species within this community include wild oats (*Avena* spp.), bromes (*Bromus* spp.), and other grasses, along with wild mustards (*Brassica*, *Hirschfeldia*, and *Sisymbrium* spp.) and other disturbance-facilitated "weedy" taxa. Non-native grasslands and other ruderal formations are the dominant understory on most disturbed substrates, particularly grazed areas.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Leymus condensatus* (giant wild rye grassland) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Nassella* [*Stipa*] *cernua* (nodding needle grass grassland) Provisional Herbaceous Alliance
- *Nassella* [*Stipa*] *lepida* (foothill needle grass grassland) Provisional Herbaceous Alliance
- *Nassella* [*Stipa*] *pulchra* (purple needle grass grassland) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Avena* (*barbata*, *fatua*) (wild oats grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Brassica* (*nigra*) *and Other Mustards* (upland mustards) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus* (*diandrus,hordeaceus*)-*Brachypodium distachyon* (annual brome grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus rubens-Schismus* (*arabicus*, *barbatus*) ([*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*] red brome or Mediterranean grass grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Centaurea* (*solstitialis*, *melitensis*) (yellow star-thistle fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Lolium perenne* [*Festuca perennis*] (perennial rye grass fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands

Disturbed or Barren Areas: These areas either completely lack vegetation or are dominated by ruderal species. Ruderal vegetation typically found within the SEA includes non-native and native grasses and "weedy" herbaceous species, including doveweed, mustards, wire lettuce, sow thistle, telegraph weed, Russian thistle, dock, yellow star thistle, Australian saltbush, and cocklebur. Disturbed areas occur throughout the SEA on fallow agricultural sites, disked fields, abandoned pastures, residential

development, paved road margins, fire breaks, dirt access roads, trails, and other similarly disturbed areas.

Corresponding MCV communities:

None at this time.

In a 2006 report submitted to PCR by South Coast Wildlands, in cooperation with the Upper Santa Clara Biodiversity Work Group, entitled *Wildlands of the Santa Clara River Watershed: Restoring and Maintaining the Integrity and Health of the River and its Watershed*, indicate several plant communities not previously identified as being present in the area. Desert scrub and Joshua tree woodland were described as being present in the eastern part of the watershed. Mainland holly leaved cherry woodland was also identified as a sensitive plant community that is common in the area and is included above as a subset of chaparral, *Prunus ilicifolia* (holly leaf cherry chaparral) Shrubland Alliance.

Wildlife

Wildlife within the SEA is extremely diverse and abundant, commensurate with extensive acreages of natural open space and the great diversity of habitat types within the Santa Clara River channels and on the surrounding uplands. While a few wildlife species may be entirely dependent upon or obligate within a single vegetative community, the mosaic of vegetation communities within the SEA and adjoining uplands constitutes a continuum of functional ecosystems. These ecosystems support a wide variety of wildlife species, within the SEA boundaries and as a part of the regional ecosystem.

Analysis of invertebrates on any given site generally is limited by a lack of specific data, but the size of the SEA and diversity of habitats present are considered sufficient to support healthy populations of a very large number of invertebrate species, probably in excess of 2,500 species. The riparian formations, wetlands, and aquatic habitats within the SEA support diverse faunas of arthropods, including native fairy shrimp, craneflies, blackflies and other aquatic dipterans, stoneflies, caddisflies, and dobsonflies, water boatmen, giant water bugs, ground beetles, diving beetles, and tiger beetles. Terrestrial insects occur around riparian corridors and in scrub habitats, and are particularly abundant in oak-dominated habitats. Insect orders are very well-represented taxonomically, and with some habitat specialization within the SEA include orthoptera, neuroptera, coleoptera, diptera, hymenoptera and lepidoptera.

Amphibians are abundant and relatively diverse within moister woodland areas, along montane canyon bottoms, in riparian areas, and within surface water features of the SEA. The overall riparian systems of the Santa Clara River basin support abundant populations of California and Baja California chorus frogs (*Pseudacris cadaverina*, *P. hypochondriaca*), California toad (*Anaxyrus boreas halophilus*), western spadefoot toad (*Spea hammondii*), American bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeianus*), and African clawed frog (*Xenopus laevis*)—of which the latter two species are non-native. San Francisquito Canyon also supports populations of California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) and arroyo toad (*Anaxyrus californicus*). Arboreal salamander (*Aneides lugubris*), garden slender salamander (*Batrachoseps major*), and painted ensatina (*Ensatina eschscholtzii picta*) are also present within mesic habitats in the SEA.

Open scrub, chaparral and alluvial fan habitats support diverse reptile populations, and the overall herpetofauna of the SEA includes numerous lizard species, along with southwestern pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*) in Agua Dulce and Bear canyons, as well as some parts of the main river channel. Yucca night lizard (*Xantusia vigilis*), western side-blotched lizard (*Uta stansburiana elegans*), Great Basin fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis longipes*), Skilton's skink (*Plestiodon skiltonianus skiltonianus*), San Diego alligator lizard (*Elgaria multicarinata webbii*), coastal whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*), coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*), California legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra*), and San Diego banded gecko (*Coleonlyx variegatus abbotti*) would be expected within the SEA.

The SEA also supports a robust snake fauna, including desert threadsnake (*Rena humilis cahuilae*), red racer (*Coluber flagellum piceus*), California striped racer (*Coluber lateralis lateralis*), coast patch-nosed snake (*Salvadora hexalepis virgultea*), northern three-lined boa (*Lichanura orcutti*), San Diego gopher snake (*Pituophis catenifer annectens*), California glossy snake (*Arizona elegans occidentalis*), California kingsnake (*Lampropeltis getula californiae*), California mountain kingsnake (*Lampropeltis zonata*), long-nosed snake (*Rhinocheilus lecontei*), San Diego nightsnake (*Hypsiglena ochrorhyncha klauberi*), Baja California lyresnake (*Trimorphodon biscutatus lyrophanes*), western black-headed snake (*Tantilla planiceps*), two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*), San Bernardino ring-necked snake (*Diadophis punctatus modestus*), and southern Pacific rattlesnake (*Crotalus oreganus helleri*).

Bird diversity within the SEA is related to habitat opportunities for year-round residents, seasonal residents, migrating raptors, and song birds. Coastal sage scrub and chaparral host a suite of birds that are typical of such sites at lower elevations over most of the coastal slopes of Southern California. The most productive sites for resident coastal sage scrub and chaparral birds are around riparian and freshwater systems, which also attract large numbers of migrants during the spring and fall. Coastal sage and chaparral birds resident or breeding within the SEA include California quail (*Callipepla californica*), greater roadrunner (*Geococcyx californianus*), black-chinned hummingbird (*Archilochus alexandri*), Anna's hummingbird (*Calypte anna*), Costa's hummingbird (*C. costae*), coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*), northern mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*), California thrasher (*Toxostoma redivivum*), phainopepla (*Phainopepla nitens*), spotted towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*), Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*), California towhee (*Melozone crissalis*), black-chinned sparrow (*Spizella atrogularis*), lark sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*), Bell's sage sparrow (*Amphispiza belli belli*), and lazuli bunting (*Passerina amoena*). Oak woodlands and riparian areas support many more species. Notable species include band-tailed pigeon (*Patagioenas fasciata*), western wood-pewee (*Contopus sordidulus*), summer tanager (*Piranga rubra*), black-headed grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*), Bullock's oriole (*Icterus bullockii*), several swallow species, western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*), southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*), and least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus. Species associated with ruderal sites and grasslands include California horned lark* (*Eremophila alpestris actia*), savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*), and grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*). Birds of prey (*including common migrants*) observed within the SEA include white-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*), northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus*), Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), red-shouldered hawk (*Buteo lineatus*), Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*), red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), merlin (*Falco columbarius*), and prairie

falcon (*Falco mexicanus*). Resident owl species within the SEA boundaries include barn owl (*Tyto alba*), great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*), long eared owl (*Asio otus*), and California spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis occidentalis*).

Native mammal diversity within the SEA is considerable. These include bats (at least seven species), rodents (at least four species of deer mice, two species of woodrat, Beechey ground squirrel, western gray squirrel, and more), two types of rabbits and one hare, mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), common gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), cougar (*Puma concolor*), striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), western spotted skunk (*Spilogale gracilis*), long-tailed weasel (*Mustela frenata*), American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), northern raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), and broad-footed mole (*Scapanus latimanus*). Black bear (*Ursus americanus*) also occur within the SEA boundaries, at least occasionally, but the San Gabriel Mountains population was introduced for game use, and this species is not native within the SEA.

Wildlife species previously recorded, as well as those expected to occur, within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium* of the *Los Angeles County SEA Update Study 2000 Background Report*. Sensitive wildlife species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Wildlife Movement

Historically (and prehistorically) the riparian corridor along the Santa Clara River has served as the primary east-west linkage between the Pacific coastline, coast ranges, interior ranges, high desert and southern Sierra (via the Tehachapi Range). Animals moving through the Santa Clara drainage had unobstructed passage along the river and within the riparian systems between the coastal lowlands of Ventura County and the Mojave Desert. The tributary routes extend south into the Santa Susana Mountains, south and north into the San Gabriel Mountains, northward via Castaic, Bouquet and San Francisquito tributaries (over the coastal ranges and San Gabriel Mountains of the Transverse Ranges and into the San Joaquin Valley), west into the central coast ranges, or east through the Tehachapi Mountains, and into the southern Sierra Nevada. The present configuration of the tributary drainages has impinged upon connectivity from the Santa Clarita Valley to the north, but the Santa Clara River remains relatively intact and open. The SEA embraces the river corridor and the linkage zones that are considered essential to ensuring connectivity and resource values within the historic movement zones for all of the wildlife species present within the County portion of the Santa Clara River, including mountain lion, coyote, bobcat, and several medium-sized mammals, as well as birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fishes.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present,

or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition. When species are federally-listed as endangered or threatened, they often have federally-designated, geographically-specific "critical habitat areas." Critical habitat areas, after extensive study by experts, are judged to be essential to conservation and maintenance of the species. Species with critical habitat in the SEA include the red-legged frog, arroyo toad, least Bell's vireo, and coastal California gnatcatcher. A species with essential habitat (critical habitat was proposed but not designated for species listed before 1978) is the unarmored threespine stickleback (fish).

Sensitive Plan Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. These communities include bigcone Douglas-fir forest, Fremont cottonwood forest, black willow thickets, California sycamore woodlands, clustered tarweed fields, chamise-white sage chaparral, holly leaf cherry chaparral, California brittle bush scrub, white sage scrub, California buckwheat-white sage scrub, narrowleaf goldenbush scrub, thick leaf yerba santa scrub, scale broom scrub, giant wild rye grassland, nodding needle grass grassland, foothill needle grass grassland, and purple needle grass grassland. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section.

Sensitive Plant Species

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Nevin's barberry (*Berberis nevinii*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Round-leaved filaree (*California macrophylla*) RPR 1B.1
- Peirson's morning-glory (*Calystegia peirsonii*) RPR 4.2
- Southern tarplant (*Centromadia parryi* ssp. *australis*) RPR 1B.1
- San Fernando Valley spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *fernandina*) FC, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Slender-horned spineflower (*Dodecahema leptoceras*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Palmer's grapplinghook (*Harpagonella palmeri*) RPR 4.2
- Newhall sunflower (*Helianthus inexpectatus*) RPR 1B.1
- Los Angeles sunflower (*Helianthus nuttallii* ssp. *parishii*) RPR 1A
- Coulter's goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata* ssp. *coulteri*) RPR 1B.1
- Davidson's bushmallow (*Malacothamnus davidsonii*) RPR 1B.2
- Moran's navarretia (*Navarretia fossalis*) FT, RPR 1B.1
- White rabbit-tobacco (*Pseudognaphalium leucocephalum*) RPR 2.2
- Chaparral ragwort (*Senecio aphanactis*) RPR 2.2
- Mason's neststraw (*Stylocline masonii*) RPR 1B.1
- Greata's aster (*Symphyotrichum greatae*) RPR 1B.3
- Slender mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*) RPR 1B.2
- Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) RPR 1B.2

- California Orcutt grass (*Orcuttia californica*) RPR FE, SE, 1B.1

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or are likely to be present within the SEA based on habitat requirements and known range attributes:

- Riverside fairy shrimp (*Streptocephalus woottoni*) FE
- Santa Ana sucker (*Catostomus santaanae*) FT, FSS, SSC
- Unarmored threespine stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus williamsoni*) FE, FSS, SE, CDFG Fully Protected
- Arroyo chub (*Gila orcuttii*) FSS, SSC
- Arroyo toad (*Anaxyrus californicus*) FE, SSC
- California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) FT, SSC
- Western spadefoot (*Spea hammondii*) BLMS, SSC
- Silvery legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra pulchra*) FSS, SSC
- Coastal whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Rosy boa (*Charina trivirgata*) BLMS, FSS
- Western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Coast patch-nosed snake (*Salvadora hexalepis virgultea*) SSC
- Two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) CDFG Watch List
- Tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*) BCC, BLMS, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*) CDFG Watch List
- Grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Bell's sage sparrow (*Amphispiza belli belli*) BCC, CDFG Watch List
- Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) BCC, BLMS, CDFG Watch List, CDFG Fully Protected, CDF
- Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) BCC, BLMS, SSC
- Ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*) BCC, BLMS, CDFG Watch List, AWL, LAA
- Western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*) FC, BCC, FSS, SE
- Yellow warbler (*Dendroica petechia brewsteri*) SSC
- White-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*) CDFG Fully Protected
- Southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) FE, FSS, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- California horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris actia*) CDFG Watch List, LAA
- Prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*) BCC, CDFG Watch List, LAA
- American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) BCC, FSS, SE, CDF, CDFG Fully Protected, AWL, ABC
- California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) FE, SE, CDF, CDFG Fully Protected, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*) SSC
- Loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) BCC, SSC, LAA
- Coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) FT, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Bank swallow (*Riparia riparia*) ST
- Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) FE, BCC, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) FSS, BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Pallid San Diego pocket mouse (*Chaetodipus fallax pallidus*) SSC
- Spotted bat (*Euderma maculatum*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Silver-haired bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*) WBWG Medium

- Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*) WBWG Medium
- Western yellow bat (*Lasiurus xanthinus*) WBWG High
- San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus bennettii*) SSC
- California leaf-nosed bat (*Macrotus californicus*) FSS, SSC, WBWG High
- Fringed myotis (*Myotis thysanodes*) BLMS, WBWG High
- Long-legged myotis (*Myotis volans*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG Medium
- Yuma myotis (*Myotis yumaensis*) BLMS, WBWG Low-Medium
- San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*) SSC
- Big free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops macrotis*) SSC, WBWG Medium-High
- Southern grasshopper mouse (*Onychomys torridus ramona*) SSC
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) SSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

ETAs within this SEA are often scattered residential and camping development along the Santa Clara River, but also include development, such as ranches, a sewage treatment plant, and an aggregate mine. Disturbed stream or riverbed or potential for disturbance is the chief reason for ETAs in this SEA.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets several SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met described below.

CRITERIA ANALYSIS OF THE SANTA CLARA RIVER SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Met	The only existing natural population of the federally-endangered unarmored three-spine stickleback is within the Santa Clara River and its tributaries, and all of its essential habitat is in this SEA. The federally-threatened Santa Ana sucker occurs in the river, as does the state species of concern, the arroyo chub. The population of state and federally-endangered slender-horned spineflower in Bee Canyon is one of fewer than seven known occurrences for this species, one of only two known occurrences in the County, and one of its largest populations. San Francisquito Creek has a breeding area for the endangered red-legged frog. The San Fernando Valley spineflower (at Newhall Ranch in Interstate-5 vicinity) is found in only a few nearby places. Some of the critical habitat for the threatened California coastal gnatcatcher is included in this SEA. Western spadefoot, which is a species of concern, is extremely rare and local in the County away from this SEA. One of the largest, if not largest populations of least Bell's vireo in the County occurs along the river in

Criterion		Status	Justification
			the vicinity of the crossing of Interstate-5 near Newhall Ranch. Many RPR-listed rare plants occur within the SEA. Critical habitat occurs in the SEA for the listed arroyo toad, the red-legged frog, the coastal California gnatcatcher, and the least Bell's vireo.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	The low-elevation bigcone Douglas fir-canyon oak forests above Placerita Canyon, the vernal pool in the Placerita Canyon-Sand Canyon divide, the native grassland on the Golden Valley Ranch (upper Placerita Canyon), and the alluvial fans with sage scrub in lower San Francisquito Canyon, Kentucky Springs and Acton are unique and regionally restricted biotic communities. Additionally, the riparian forests and woodlands along the Santa Clara River are among the most extensive, diverse and intact vegetative stands of this type in Southern California. Rare aquatic species, such as the unarmored three-spined stickleback, Santa Ana sucker, red-legged frog, least Bell's vireo, summer tanager, spineflower, and many others represented within the SEA are found nowhere else in the region.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	The cottonwood-willow forests and woodlands, alluvial fan sage scrub, and coast live oak riparian forest are best represented in the County within the SEA. The lower elevation examples of bigcone Douglas fir-canyon oak forest communities where they mix with low-elevation biota are restricted to the edges of mountain habitat communities, which are regionally rare and also designated in this SEA.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	The Santa Clara River is simultaneously an oasis running through a dry landscape and an extension of coastal conditions into the dry interior. For this reason, it supports unique populations of aquatic and amphibious species, as well as arid lands species extending towards the coast and coastal species' extension inland. It is a principle migratory route for the County plants and animals and a center of diversity for the County. The Santa Clara River and its tributaries provide breeding opportunities for numerous species otherwise not known to breed within the County, including California red-legged frog, summer tanager, southwestern willow flycatcher, and the unarmored three-spined stickleback . The extensive riparian areas shelter

Criterion		Status	Justification
			dozens of migrant songbird species during winter, including high concentrations of white-crowned and golden-crowned sparrows, fox sparrow, yellow-rumped warbler, dark-eyed junco, and sharp-shinned hawk. The SEA embraces the river corridor and the linkage zones that are considered essential to ensuring connectivity and resource values for many of the wildlife species that are present within the County portion of the Santa Clara River.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	The Santa Clara River represents a unique example of a drainage that stretches from the desert to the coast through the mountains. Its resources are, by definition, present at their geographic extremes. Plants such as western juniper, snake cholla, basin sagebrush, and birds, such as summer tanager are at the southwestern edges of their ranges along the river. Coastal taxa extend to the headwaters in the Acton area. High elevation species, such as bigcone Douglas fir, spotted owl, and Steller's jay occur at fairly low elevations at the edges of Santa Clara River valley, on north facing slopes that remain cool all summer.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	The SEA encompasses some of the highest quality, least disturbed and biotically intact acreage of bigcone Douglas-fir-canyon oak forest, riparian forest and woodland, coastal sage scrub, and alluvial fan sage scrub that remains in the County, and one of the three known vernal pools along the river. Vernal pools are rare everywhere in California.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: A) the habitat of core populations of endangered and threatened plant and animal species; B-C) biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution in the County and regionally; D) concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds, which are limited in availability in the County; E) numerous examples of species at their habitat extremes as the coastal and desert influences meet; and F) areas that provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of original natural biotic communities in the County.

21. Santa Felicia SEA

Location

General

The Santa Felicia Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located northwest of the City of Santa Clarita within unincorporated area of the County. Some of the SEA extends into the Angeles National Forest. The area is west of the Interstate-5, north of State Route-126 and encompasses almost the entire County portion of the Santa Felicia watershed that drains into Lake Piru and Piru Creek. Piru Creek has the largest watershed of any tributary of the Santa Clara River. The SEA is largely composed of natural coastal slopes of the western San Gabriel Mountains, with south-facing slopes of coastal sage scrub and grasslands, north-facing slopes of oak woodland and chaparral, and canyons of riparian oak forest and other riparian habitats. This habitat has been diminished by development, and the SEA is one place in the County where the natural habitat remains.

The SEA is located at least partially in each of the following United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Quadrangles: Whitaker Peak and Val Verde.

General Boundary and Resources Description

Starting at the north end of the SEA boundary on the Ventura-Los Angeles County line, the northern SEA boundary is about one-quarter to one-half mile north of the boundary of Angeles National Forest, with private property as it follows along the northern ridgeline of Devil Canyon. Most of the SEA captures the natural, coastal sage scrub-covered south-facing slopes, oak-forests and mixed chaparral of the north-facing slopes, and deep ravines with riparian oak forest in the canyons. Devil Canyon is a major tributary of Piru Creek (at Lake Piru) in Ventura County. Where the Devil Canyon watershed contacts the southern ridgeline off Townsend Peak, the SEA boundary turns south along a ridge that separates Santa Felicia Canyon and its tributaries on the west side, from Palomas Canyon on the east side. The boundary goes south out of the Angeles National Forest into private lands about a 0.75 mile south of Townsend Peak. To capture the watershed tributaries, the eastern boundary follows the dominant ridgeline between Palomas Canyon and Santa Felicia Canyon, and then between Santa Felicia Canyon and Violin Canyon after Palomas Canyon joins Violin Canyon. There is a triple divide for the watersheds of Violin Canyon (which joins Castaic Creek), the watershed of Romero Canyon, which joins Hasley Canyon before it joins Castaic Canyon, and Santa Felicia Canyon, which is a tributary of Piru Creek. At the triple divide, the SEA boundary turns west to follow the ridge of the Santa Felicia watershed. The boundary crosses Loma Verde (peak), where it separates Santa Felicia Canyon from Romero Canyon, and the unnamed headwater creeks of Hasley Canyon, excluding the rapidly developing areas. About a mile southwest of Loma Verde Canyon, the SEA boundary turns south and west to encompass the watershed of Oak Canyon, with coast live oaks and riparian forest. The SEA boundary goes north along the Ventura-Los Angeles County line, crossing riparian forest of Santa Felicia Canyon and Devil Canyon into the Angeles National Forest, where it joins the north ridge of Devil Canyon. Most of the SEA is included in the wildlife

movement linkage Sierra Madre-Castaic Connection that was outlined by the South Coast Wildlands study of linkages (Penrod, *et al*. 2005).

The SEA includes a wide variety of topographic features and habitat types. The orientation and extent of the SEA encompasses the surface and subsurface hydrology of the Santa Felicia watershed, from its headwater, tributaries, and basin to the point at which it exits the County jurisdiction.

The SEA encompasses most of the County portion of the Santa Felicia watershed that drains into Lake Piru. This watershed is largely undeveloped and contains vast stands of coastal sage scrub and chaparral communities on south- and north-facing slopes. In addition to the undisturbed upland habitats, the watershed includes examples of mixed riparian (sycamore-willow), oak riparian and coast live oak forests and alluvial scrub in the bottomlands. Grasslands occur in areas where grazing may have taken place; however, there is little invasion of these ruderal taxa into the native communities. A brief summary of the plant communities present, or likely to occur, within the SEA is provided in the Vegetation section.

Vegetation

The plant communities within the SEA are composed of numerous plant species. These plant species are adapted to a Mediterranean climate with a cool, wet season followed by a hot, dry season. Due to the topographic complexity and coastal and desert influences, the SEA supports a wide diversity of plant species.

Plant communities within the SEA include: coast live oak woodland, coast live oak riparian forest, chaparral, coastal sage chaparral scrub, non-native and native grasslands, alluvial fan sage scrub, and sycamore-willow riparian woodland.

Plant species observed or recorded in previous documentation within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium of the Los Angeles County SEAs.* Sensitive plant species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Descriptions and general locations of the each plant community present within the SEA are given below.

Coastal Sage Chaparral Scrub Communities: Consist of drought-deciduous, low, soft-leaved shrubs and herbs on gentle to steep slopes below 5,000 feet in elevation. Several dominant species may occur within scrub communities, with some areas overwhelmingly dominated by one or two species. Dominant species include California sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), California brittle bush (*Encelia californica*), purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*), and deerweed (*Acmispon glaber*). Coastal sage chaparral scrub is found at the lower elevations within the SEA on drier south-facing slopes, but can also be found on the north-facing slopes and canyons.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica* (California sagebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Salvia mellifera* (California sagebrush-black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance

- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Encelia californica* (California brittle bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Dendromecon rigida* (bush poppy scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia leucophylla* (purple sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia mellifera* (black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ericameria linearifolia* (narrowleaf goldenbush scrub) Provisional Shrubland Alliance
- *Lotus scoparius* [*Acmispon glaber*] (deer weed scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Malacothamnus fasciculatus* (bush mallow scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Alluvial Fan Scrub: Consists of a mixture of shrubs that colonize sandy-gravelly flood deposited soils within intermittent creeks, arroyos, and drier terraces in large washes. Dominant species include California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), scalebroom (*Lepidospartum squamatum*), quail bush (*Atriplex lentiformis*), and white sage (*Salvia apiana*).

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lepidospartum squamatum* (scale broom scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Malosma laurina* (laurel sumac scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia apiana* (white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Coast Live Oak Woodlands: Commonly occur along drainages that experience at least a seasonal flow or in other areas under mesic conditions. Soil structure and soil moisture are the most important factors for the survival of oak woodlands; soils must be deep, uncompacted, fertile, well-aerated, and well-drained. This community is dominated by coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia* var. *agrifolia*). If sufficient groundwater is present, western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), which is usually associated with riparian habitats, may also occur in the oak woodland. Oak woodlands occupy areas within the canyons and drainages of the SEA.

Corresponding MCV community:

- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest: A variation of coast live oak woodland, where the canopy is more closely grown, and the trees occur in narrower formations along watercourses. Willow, California bay (*Umbellularia californica*), mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), and other riparian species often occur in the understory.

Corresponding MCV community:

- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

Sycamore-Willow Riparian Woodland: May include the following: western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), black willow (*Salix gooddingii*), arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*), skunkbush (*Rhus aromatica*), and California blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*).

Corresponding MCV Community:

- *Platanus racemosa* (California sycamore woodland) Woodland Alliance

Grassland Communities: Consist of low, herbaceous vegetation that is dominated by grasses, but generally also harbors native forbs and bulbs, as well as naturalized annual forbs. Topographic factors that contribute to grassland presence include gradual slopes or flat areas with deep, well-developed soils in areas below 3,000 feet. The species richness of grassland communities is dependent upon a number of land use factors, including intensity and duration of natural or anthropogenic disturbances, such as grazing.

Native grassland is often associated with coastal sage chaparral scrub and is found in pockets in close proximity to coastal sage chaparral scrub and non-native grassland. This community consists of at least 10 percent relative cover of native herbaceous plants (grasses and forbs). The remaining vegetative cover is made up of non-native grasses found in annual grassland and a variety of annual, showy flowers such as golden stars (*Bloomeria crocea*) and blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*). Native grassland may be found scattered throughout the SEA, mostly in openings in coastal sage chaparral scrub and mixed with non-native grasslands.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Leymus condensatus* (giant wild rye grassland) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Nassella* [*Stipa*] *cernua* (nodding needle grass grassland) Provisional Herbaceous Alliance
- *Nassella* [*Stipa*] *lepida* (foothill needle grass grassland) Provisional Herbaceous Alliance
- *Nassella* [*Stipa*] *pulchra* (purple needle grass grassland) Herbaceous Alliance

Non-native grassland consists of dominant invasive annual grasses that are primarily of Mediterranean origin. Dominant species found within this community include slender wild oat (*Avena barbata*), wild oat (*Avena fatua*) ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), and red brome (*Bromus madritensis* ssp*. rubens*).

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Avena* (*barbata*, *fatua*) (wild oats grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Brassica* (*nigra*) and other mustards (upland mustards) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus* (*diandrus*, *hordeaceus*)-*Brachypodium distachyon* (annual brome grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus rubens-Schismus* (*arabicus*, *barbatus*) ([*Bromus madritensis* ssp*. rubens*] red brome or Mediterranean grass grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Centaurea* (*solstitialis*, *melitensis*) (yellow star-thistle fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Lolium perenne* [*Festuca perennis*] (perennial rye grass fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands

Wildlife

The SEA provides for extremely diverse and abundant wildlife, commensurate with extensive acreages of natural open space and great diversity of habitat types, within the stream channels and on the surrounding uplands. While a few wildlife species may be entirely dependent upon or obligate within a single vegetative community, the mosaic of vegetation communities within the area and adjoining uplands constitutes a continuum of functional ecosystems. These ecosystems support a wide variety of wildlife species, within the SEA boundaries and as a part of the regional ecosystem.

Analysis of invertebrates on any given site generally is limited by a lack of specific data, but the size of the SEA and diversity of habitats present are considered sufficient to support healthy populations of a very large number of invertebrate species. The riparian formations and aquatic habitats within the SEA support diverse faunas of arthropods, which may include native fairy shrimp, craneflies, blackflies and other aquatic dipterans, stoneflies, caddisflies, and dobsonflies, water boatmen, giant water bugs, ground beetles, diving beetles, and tiger beetles. Terrestrial insects are abundant around riparian corridors and in scrub habitats, particularly in oak-dominated habitats.

Amphibians are abundant and relatively diverse within moister woodland areas, along montane canyon bottoms, in riparian areas, and within surface water features. The overall riparian systems of the SEA provide habitat for a number of frog and toad populations, which may include populations of Baja California chorus frog (*Pseudacris hypochondriaca*) and California chorus frog (*P. cadaverina*), California toad (*Anaxyrus halophilus*), and western spadefoot (*Spea hammondii*), as well as the federally-endangered arroyo toad (*Anaxyrus californicus*). The federally-threatened California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) has a known population and critical habitat in Michael Creek to the north. This frog could occur in Lake Piru and during times of very high water in the SEA. Open scrub, chaparral and alluvial fan habitats support diverse reptile populations, and the overall herpetofauna of the SEA would encompass numerous lizard species as well as a robust snake fauna.

Bird diversity within the SEA is related to habitat opportunities for year-round residents, seasonal residents, migrating raptors, and song birds. Coastal sage chaparral scrub and chaparral host a suite of birds typical of such sites at lower elevations over most of the coastal slopes of Southern California. The most productive sites for resident coastal sage chaparral scrub and chaparral birds are around riparian and freshwater systems, which also attract large numbers of migrants during the spring and fall. Oak woodlands and riparian areas generally support many more species. Notable species include the summer tanager (*Piranga rubra*), Bullock's oriole (*Icterus bullockii*), black-headed grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*), band-tailed pigeon (*Patagioenas fasciata*), western wood-pewee (*Contopus sordidulus*), several swallow species, western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*), willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*), least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*), and the California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*).

Native mammal diversity within the SEA is considerable. These likely include bats, rodents, squirrels, rabbits, moles, weasels, American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), skunks, raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), mountain lion (*Puma concolor*), and mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*).

Wildlife Movement

The SEA provides riparian corridors, which serve as linkages between the Pacific coastline, coast ranges, interior ranges, the high desert and southern Sierras (via the Tehachapi Range). Animals move through the Santa Felicia watershed along and within the riparian systems between Piru Lake in Ventura County and the San Gabriel Mountain range and beyond. The tributary drainages in this SEA appear fully intact and open and support regional movement by many wildlife species. Most of the SEA was designated as

an important wildlife movement linkage—Sierra Madre-Castaic Connection—which was outlined by the South Coast Wildlands study of linkages (Penrod, *et al*. 2005).

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, or otherwise rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition. When species are federally-listed as endangered or threatened, they often have federally-designated, geographically-specific "critical habitat areas." Critical habitat areas, after extensive study by experts, are judged to be essential to conservation and maintenance of the species.

Sensitive Plan Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. These communities include chamise-white sage chaparral, holly leaf cherry chaparral, California brittle bush scrub, narrowleaf goldenbush scrub, scale broom scrub, white sage scrub, California sycamore woodland, giant wild rye grassland, nodding needle grass grassland, foothill needle grass grassland, and purple needle grass grassland, which occur throughout the SEA.

Sensitive Plant Species

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Braunton's milk-vetch (*Astragalus brauntonii*) FE, RPR 1B.1
- Nevin's barberry (*Berberis nevinii*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Round-leaved filaree (*California macrophylla*) RPR 1B.1
- Peirson's morning-glory (*Calystegia peirsonii*) RPR 4.2
- San Fernando Valley spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *fernandina*) FC, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Slender-horned spineflower (*Dodecahema leptoceras*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Palmer's grapplinghook (*Harpagonella palmeri*) RPR 4.2
- Newhall sunflower (*Helianthus inexpectatus*) RPR 1B.1
- Los Angeles sunflower (*Helianthus nuttallii* ssp. *parishii*) RPR 1A
- Davidson's bushmallow (*Malacothamnus davidsonii*) RPR 1B.2
- Ojai navarretia (*Navarretia ojaiensis*) RPR 1B.1
- White rabbit-tobacco (*Pseudognaphalium leucocephalum*) RPR 2.2
- Chaparral ragwort (*Senecio aphanactis*) RPR 2.2
- Greata's aster (*Symphyotrichum greatae*) RPR 1B.3
- Slender mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*) RPR 1B.2

- Late-flowered mariposa lily (*Calochortus fimbriatus*) RPR 1B.2
- Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) RPR 1B.2
- California Orcutt grass (*Orcuttia californica*) RPR FE, SE, 1B.1

Sensitive Animal Species

The following vertebrate species are state and/or federally-listed as endangered or threatened, and are known to have occurred within the SEA or have potential to occur in the SEA:

- Riverside fairy shrimp (*Streptocephalus woottoni*) FE
- Cuckoo wasp [no common name] (*Ceratochrysis longimala*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Arroyo toad (*Anaxyrus californicus*) FE, SSC
- California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) FT, SSC
- Western spadefoot (*Spea hammondii*) BLMS, SSC
- Coastal whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Coast patch-nosed snake (*Salvadora hexalepis virgultea*) SSC
- Two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) CDFG Watch List
- Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*) CDFG Watch List
- Grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Bell's sage sparrow (*Amphispiza belli belli*) BCC, CDFG Watch List
- Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) BCC, BLMS, SSC
- Western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*) FC, BCC, FSS, SE
- Yellow warbler (*Dendroica petechia brewsteri*) SSC
- White-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*) CDFG Fully Protected
- California horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris actia*) CDFG Watch List, LAA
- Prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*) BCC, CDFG Watch List, LAA
- California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) FE, SE, CDF, CDFG Fully Protected, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*) SSC
- Loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) BCC, SSC, LAA
- Coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) FT, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) FE, BCC, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) FSS, BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Spotted bat (*Euderma maculatum*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus bennettii*) SSC
- California leaf-nosed bat (*Macrotus californicus*) FSS, SSC, WBWG High
- San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*) SSC
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) SSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

There are no ETAs designated within this SEA.

The SEA meets several SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met described below.

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Not Met	The SEA does not include known core habitat.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	The natural mountainous terrain and vegetation habitats of the SEA, which is a coastal drainage, have been diminished elsewhere within Southern California through development. The SEA encompasses a fine example of vegetation that has not been impacted very much by development.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	This is a somewhat remote area where natural flora and natural bottoms remain in the canyons, invasive predators are nonexistent, and human intrusion is minimal, which is a rare habitat in the County.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	The SEA encompasses important tributaries (Santa Felicia Canyon and Devil Canyon) of Piru Creek. Piru Creek is the major tributary of the Santa Clara River. Nearly all of the drainages within the SEA are natural with sensitive habitats of all kinds of riparian forest. These drainages are all migratory corridors for both plants and animals that connect the San Gabriel Mountains with the Santa Clara River and the coast, the Sierra Madre-Castaic Connection.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Not Met	The Santa Felicia watershed is not known as a physical/geographical extreme habitat.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	The Santa Felicia watershed is an excellent example of the inland watercourses and their vegetation on the coastal side of the Transverse Ranges. It is largely undisturbed, and a number of the drainages are still perennial.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: B-C) biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are restricted in distribution in the County and regionally; D) concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, and migrating grounds, which are limited in availability in the

County; and F) areas that provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of original natural biotic communities in the County.

22. Santa Monica Mountains SEA

Location

General

The Santa Monica Mountains Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located within the Santa Monica Mountains in a mostly unincorporated area of the County. Much of the area is in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, but is privately owned. Many of the federal lands under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service (NPS) are included in the SEA designation. Many of the state parklands, notably Malibu Creek State Park and Topanga State Park, are also included in the SEA. The SEA includes nearly all of the canyons and ridges from the Ventura-Los Angeles County line, and east to Sullivan Canyon, which is near the communities of Pacific Palisades Brentwood to the south, and Encino to the north. From south to north, the SEA extends from the Pacific Ocean shoreline or urban-wildland interface of Malibu, through the unincorporated area of the Santa Monica Mountains proper, to the northern edge of the SEA extending along the undeveloped southern edge of the San Fernando Valley or irregularly along the Ventura-Los Angeles County line. It should be stated that this SEA recognizes the rare habitat of a small regional mountain range with a high diversity of topography and moisture regimes, and with vegetation adapted to a Mediterranean climate, which is globally rare, existing elsewhere only along western portions of continents at 30-40° latitude[1]. Although the habitats may seem common within the Santa Monica Mountains, in terms of limited indigenous global ranges of the constituent species, their special adaptations to climate, the relatively intact character of the habitats, and the plant assemblage of the Santa Monica Mountains are unique. Development within the SEA that extends the nearby expansive urban development of the Los Angeles Basin and San Fernando Valley needs to be carefully considered to preserve these special resources.

The SEA is located at least partially in each of the following United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Quadrangles: Thousand Oaks, Calabasas, Canoga Park, Triunfo Pass, Point Dume, Malibu, and Topanga.

General Boundary and Resources Description

Within the SEA boundary, there are a number of areas that are not a part of the SEA due to dense development. For example, La Sierra, Malibu Lake, and most of the City of Malibu have been excluded.

[1] Six regions on Earth have a coastal climate where ocean currents mediate an equable climate yet cause most precipitation to occur outside the summer period of most intense sunlight and most vegetative growth for many plants. These are California, the Mediterranean Basin, portions of South Australia, South Africa, and Chile

The majority of the SEA lies within the unincorporated area of the County. Other jurisdictions include the City of Malibu, the City of Los Angeles, City of Calabasas, the City of Agoura Hills, the City of Hidden Hills, and the City of Westlake Village.

From the Ventura-Los Angeles County line to the vicinity of Topanga Beach, the southern boundary of the SEA irregularly contacts the boundary of the Malibu Coastline SEA, which extends offshore about a 0.8 mile to capture the kelp beds and rich natural marine communities of and off the coastline of the Santa Monica Mountains. The sandy beaches along this SEA are the least disturbed beaches of the County, some of them completely natural. This is a remnant of the typical rock and sand shoreline that once occurred along the coast of Southern California. From Mugu Lagoon to Latigo Point (the County portion starting at the Ventura-Los Angeles County line and Leo Carillo State Beach), this is an ASBS (Area of Special Biological Significance), which is a marine area designated by the State Water Resources Control Board as having exceptionally good water quality and natural community features. Populated and disturbed areas along the shore are not included in the SEA.

Beginning at the intersection of the Ventura-Los Angeles County line and State Route-1, the southern area of the SEA includes all the terrestrial area of Leo Carrillo State Beach (a state park that has much beautiful upland acreage of grasslands, coastal chaparral, and an excellent riparian area of sycamore-oak forest along the Arroyo Sequit). The Arroyo Sequit from the coast to the junction of West and East forks and about a 0.5 mile of the West Fork are federally-designated critical habitat for the southern steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss irideus*), which is a salmon that runs upstream for breeding, but spends most of its life in the ocean. The young fish, however, spend the first year of life in fresh water.

At the eastern boundary of Leo Carillo State Beach, an unnamed canyon is excluded from the SEA, but San Nicolas Canyon with its riparian woodland is included all the way to the shore. Urban areas to the east of San Nicolas Canyon are also excluded. The Los Alisos and Lechuza Canyon immediate drainages are included up to the highway. From Lechuza Canyon, the excluded area extends north to the southern border of Charmlee Natural Area (a County park supporting grasslands and chaparral). Much of the Encinal Canyon drainage is included in the SEA north of State Route-1, and the Steep Hill Canyon drainage is included north of State Route-1. Trancas Canyon is densely settled in the area near the coastline; only the steeper, natural section is included in the SEA. To the east, a large excluded area encompasses the dense habitation of the Malibu Riviera.

The SEA includes the riparian forest of Zuma Canyon as it exits onto the coastal plain, with a small sub-watershed designated critical habitat for the federally-endangered Braunton's milkvetch (*Astragalus brauntonii*). This rare plant is narrowly endemic to four mountain ranges of Southern California that have a particular marine-originated rock stratum of interbedded carbonates and sandstones. The SEA also includes portions of the riparian forest of Ramirez Canyon, where it has not been impacted by development in the Malibu Riviera. The natural area of Escondido Canyon and its 150 feet waterfall is included. Latigo Canyon is included north of State Route-1, where chaparral intergrades with walnut and oak woodlands along the drainages and north-facing slopes. East of Latigo Canyon, the boundary of the excluded area follows the ridges immediately north of State Route-1 to join the highway west of Solstice Canyon. Solstice Canyon and its County Park are included in the SEA. These support grasslands,

chaparral, and a fine riparian area of sycamore-oak forest along Solstice Canyon. Puerco and Marie Canyon drainages are included north of State Route-1.

In the vicinity of Winter Canyon, the boundary follows Malibu Canyon Road to exclude the central community area of Malibu in another large island. A finger of the SEA extends through central Malibu along Malibu Creek in the area of Malibu Creek State Park and Malibu Lagoon State Beach to include the Creek and Malibu Lagoon south of Pacific Coast Highway. This is one of the points of contact between the Santa Monica Mountains SEA and the Malibu Coastline SEA. Malibu Creek from the shore to its major bend to the west in Malibu Canyon is federally-designated critical habitat for the southern steelhead. Coincident with the steelhead critical habitat along Malibu Creek and all brackish portions of the Malibu Lagoon are designated critical habitat for the endangered tidewater goby (*Eucyclogobius newberryi*). This little two-inch fish was once common in brackish water of coastal lagoons of streams the length of the State of California. This pristine habitat is disappearing (the fish is apparently gone from San Francisco Bay), and any location where the tidewater goby is still found is a unique place.

The Malibu Lagoon is the only remaining intact coastal lagoon in the County[2], and still has its perennial stream to maintain the brackish conditions that are essential to the diverse and unique group of species of coastal lagoons. The federally-endangered southern steelhead passes through this lagoon on its upstream and downstream spawning runs, and its young fish (smolts) may spend some time in the lagoon before entering their oceanic habitat. The passage is critical habitat for the steelhead, as well as for the endangered tidewater goby (*Eucyclogobius newberryi*). This lagoon has one of the County's three[3] remaining saltmarshes, with dominant species of pickleweeds (*Arthrocnemum subterminale* and *Salicornia pacifica*). The Malibu Lagoon supports a good representation of coastal strand community (now groomed off many of the recreational beaches), is a resting stop on the Pacific Flyway (over 200 species of birds reported), and has many resident avian species. From fall to spring, it supports a flock of the federally-threatened western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*), and there are recent indications that some may over-summer to breed (after a hiatus in breeding of many decades, Ryan Ecological Consulting, 2010). The pickleweed is valuable non-breeding habitat for the state-endangered Belding's savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi*).

East of central Malibu, the excluded area borders primarily follow the less-inhabited ridges that border Carbon and Las Flores canyons and about a 0.5 mile north of State Route-1. East of Las Flores Canyon, the border of the excluded area follows a transmission line to skirt an old oil field. At the western ridge of Piedra Gorda, the SEA boundary follows the ridgeline southeast to State Route-1. From Piedra Gorda, the SEA boundary closely tracks State Route-1 along the substantial sea cliffs, avoiding two small developed areas north of the highway near the mouths of Pena and Tuna canyons. The SEA includes all of the meandering Topanga Canyon Creek at Topanga Beach. Upstream nearly to the community of Fernwood, Topanga Canyon is federally-designated critical habitat for the southern steelhead. Near the shore in Topanga Canyon Creek is critical habitat for the tidewater goby. This is the eastern point of

[2] Ballona Creek lagoon is also in Los Angeles County, but exists in a disturbed condition.

[3] The three areas with salt marsh in Los Angeles County are Alamitos Bay, Ballona Lagoon, and Malibu Lagoon.

contact between the Malibu Coastline SEA and SEA. It is also at this point where the shoreline where there are no more excluded areas.

The SEA includes Parker Mesa, north of State Route-1, and is coterminous with the boundary for the City of Los Angeles towards the north. About one mile north of the coast, the boundary extends to the east, contouring around the ridgelines that border the populated areas of Santa Ynez, Pulga, and Temescal canyons, with some residential areas on the ridges excluded from the SEA. These three canyons contain riparian oak and sycamore forests, which are a good variety of canyon habitats that include rocky outcrops and small waterfalls, are preserved in their upper reaches by inclusion in the Topanga State Park. The upstream areas of Santa Ynez, Pulga, and Temescal canyons that are uphill from the community of Palisades Highlands include much of federally-designated critical habitat for the Braunton's milkvetch. The boundary skirts Will Rogers State Park, but includes much of the unpopulated part of Rustic Canyon.

At Rustic Canyon, the boundary follows the eastern ridge to the north. Tracing the edge of development along the eastern slope of the canyon, the boundary continues north and eventually crosses over the ridgeline and into the undeveloped part of Sullivan Canyon. The boundary then follows the eastern slope of Sullivan Canyon and continues north along the ridgeline between Sullivan Canyon and Mandeville Canyon. After crossing the main ridge of the coastal zone and Mulholland Drive near San Vicente Mountain, the SEA boundary reaches and includes the sub-watershed of Encino Reservoir.

On the west side of Encino Reservoir, the SEA boundary turns west and follows the edge of development on the northern slopes of the Santa Monica Mountains that form the southern border of the San Fernando Valley. Some development is excluded on the east side of Topanga Canyon and the Calabasas Highlands area. The upper reaches of Topanga Canyon are included, and the SEA crosses the ridge to include the upper slopes of a natural drainage that is opposite to Topanga Canyon on the San Fernando Valley side.

West of Calabasas Park, the SEA boundary extends northeast and contours along the upper slopes of McCoy Canyon to include a finger of SEA on the north ridge of McCoy Canyon, which is part of state park land. On the west side of Calabasas Park and Hidden Hills, the boundary crosses State Route-101 along the western edge of development in Hidden Hills north to the County line. The undeveloped portion of Gates Canyon within the Simi Hills and its watershed is included north to the Ventura-Los Angeles County line, excluding a ridgetop island and developed portions of the City of Calabasas. A narrow finger of connection joins the portion of the SEA east of the City of Calabasas to the area west of the City, north of State Route-101 along a tributary of Las Virgenes Creek. Las Virgenes is an important tributary of Malibu Creek, and although this area is not in the coastal zone, it represents a portion of the upper coastal watershed. Further to the west, the boundary extends north again to encompass the open space from Las Virgenes Road along the Ventura-Los Angeles County line to the edge of development within the City of Agoura Hills. Within this portion of the SEA, Cheseboro Canyon contains fine natural, undeveloped sections of canyon just east of the City of Agoura Hills that are administered by both the NPS and the State Park system. The SEA includes all of undeveloped Cheseboro Canyon and the undeveloped western ridge of Cheseboro's important tributary, Palo Comado Canyon. This is the western terminus of the SEA that lies north of State Route-101.

An important feature of this area is a small tributary of Las Virgenes Creek (and ultimately Malibu Creek) named Liberty Canyon. The underpass of State Route-101 at Liberty Canyon Road along the drainage conveys relatively less vehicular traffic than other freeway crossings within several miles, and is one of the few active wildlife passage areas along the entire extent of State Route-101 through the Santa Monica Mountains. All other watercourse and street crossings of State Route-101 are very constrained or else entirely impassible for wildlife. There are widely documented concerns for the consequences of genetic isolation for the small band of mountain lions (*Puma concolor*) of the Santa Monica Mountains. Mountain lions that are known to use this area of the SEA to transit back and forth between the Santa Monica Mountains and the greater lion populations of the Simi Hills and north. The area north of the Liberty Canyon underpass is natural chaparral, watercourses, and grassland administered by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. South of State Route-101, development is present with a very narrow corridor of natural habitat that includes valley oak (*Quercus lobata*) along the creek of Liberty Canyon.

A small island of developed area south of State Route-101 and along Liberty Canyon is excluded from the SEA. From the Liberty Canyon underpass south of State Route-101 the SEA boundary follows the north-facing side of an unnamed ridge at the southern end of the City of Agoura Hills towards the northern slopes of Ladyface Mountain. This is a chaparral-dominated area with numerous canyons and ridges supporting federally-threatened Agoura Hills dudleya (*Dudleya cymosa* ssp. *agourensis*), and one of the nine critical habitat areas in the County of Los Angeles and in the SEA for the state- and federally-endangered Lyon's pentachaeta (*Pentachaeta lyonii*), as well as other uncommon and rare plants, such as Fish's milkwort (*Polygala cornuta* var. *fishiae*), Sonoran maiden fern (*Thelypteris puberula* var. *sonorensis*), and the southern-most known occurrence of the California juniper (*Juniperus californica*) within the County. The SEA northern boundary crosses Kanan Dume Road in the area where Lindero Canyon formerly joined Medea Creek and continues its contour along the north-facing ridge of Ladyface Mountain, which also supports Agoura Hills dudleya, Lyon's pentachaeta, Ojai navarretia (*Navarretia ojaiensis*), and other rare and sensitive plants on its chaparral-covered slopes. A small area with development and fill along the south side of Kanan Dume Road has been excluded from the SEA.

The SEA boundary veers to the southwest to avoid the developed areas of Westlake Village, but includes Las Virgenes Reservoir in the SEA and three more of the critical habitat areas for the Lyon's pentachaeta. A finger includes an undeveloped section of Triunfo Canyon. A short distance southwest of Las Virgenes Reservoir, the boundary crosses Decker Canyon road and extends west to the Ventura-Los Angeles County line, which is another area of critical habitat for the Lyon's pentachaeta. Most of the critical habitat areas for Lyon's pentachaeta in the County are covered by the North Area Plan regulations for the Santa Monica Mountains, but some critical habitat areas also occur in the coastal zone. The boundary then follows the Ventura-Los Angeles County line to the southwest all the way to the coast and State Route-1 where the northern and the southern boundary join at Leo Carillo State Beach.

Vegetation

The SEA includes most of the Santa Monica Mountains range. This east-west trending range is geologically complex, and because of its unique geological history and rugged topography with many microhabitats, it has a flora that is unlike any other place in the County. There are about 900 species of vascular plants—an exceptionally diverse flora for an area of its size. (Raven et al., 1986) The County

portion of the Santa Monica Mountains are characterized by steep, rugged terrain of mountain slopes and canyons, with elevations ranging from sea level to over 2,800 feet above mean sea level (MSL) at Castro Peak. The Santa Monica Mountains are bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the south, the Oxnard Plain to the west, the Los Angeles Basin to the east, and the San Fernando Valley and Simi Hills on the north. The SEA includes numerous minor and major canyons. Named canyons include Trancas Canyon, Zuma Canyon, Ramirez Canyon, Escondido Canyon, Solstice Canyon, Corral Canyon, Malibu Canyon, Carbon Canyon, Los Flores Canyon, Tuna Canyon, Topanga Canyon, Santa Ynez Canyon, Temescal Canyon, Sullivan Canyon, Lobo Canyon, Triunfo Canyon, Las Virgenes Canyon, Liberty Canyon, Palo Comado Canyon, and Stokes Canyon. Major drainages within the SEA include the Arroyo Sequit, Zuma Canyon Creek, Malibu Creek, Los Flores Canyon Creek, Topanga Canyon Creek, Triunfo Creek, Las Virgenes Creek, and Medea Creek.

These drainages all support well-developed riparian communities, which are a type of sensitive and rare community that is essential to the biodiversity of the County. Natural watercourses provide water, food and cover for a variety of animal species and provide an ecological link between the upland and marine environments. Additionally, they contribute to regional and continental connectivity by providing shelter and forage for many migratory bird species, which maintains biodiversity over several spatial scales. Many riparian corridors within the SEA contain perennial sections that are among the last remaining major drainages in the Santa Monica Mountains in an undeveloped condition. In the canyon bottoms are riparian forests, which are sensitive habitats because of their rarity and loss to channelization and development. Most riparian forests in the Santa Monica Mountains are of western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) and coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia* var. *agrifolia*), Fremont and black cottonwood (*Populus fremontii* ssp. *fremontii* and *P. trichocarpa*) and leatherleaf ash (*Fraxinus velutina*). The upstream and upper canyon ridges are dry and support coastal sage scrub, which blends with the more mesic chaparral of the lower slopes. The rich riparian community of plants supports abundant wildlife populations that include amphibians and birds dependent on surface moisture, and mule deer and mountain lion, the latter of which is an indicator of large-scale ecosystem health.

The endangered Lyon's pentachaeta (*Pentachaeta lyonii*) prefers compact, undisturbed soil on the upper coastal slope areas of many of these streams. Because such areas are often flat and may be cleared of other plants, this puts the plant in the path of development. This "daisy" is a narrow endemic of Los Angeles and Ventura counties, and has recently lost about half of its known population. Most of the critical habitat for Lyon's pentachaeta occurs in the northern area of the SEA. At the south end of the artificial Malibu Lake on Triunfo Creek, in the rolling slope area of Medea Creek that is south of the City of Agoura Hills, near the confluences of Lobo and Triunfo creeks and La Sierra Canyon and Triunfo Creek, on the east and west ridgelines of Las Virgenes Reservoir extending to the drainage junction with Triunfo Creek along Decker Road to the ridgeline area of Mulholland Highway, and in the area of Saddle Rock on the Mulholland Highway. These are about half of the areas of critical habitat named for the plant. The remainder are in nearby Ventura County extending between the Santa Susana Mountains in the north, and the Santa Monica Mountains in this area.

Because of the undisturbed conditions, with riparian forests filtering and cooling the waters, Arroyo Sequit, Malibu Creek, and Topanga Canyon still support extremely rare spawning runs of the federally-endangered southern steelhead. Historically, steelhead was known from Solstice and Zuma canyons as

well, and it is likely that all the major drainages, which once had perennial water and extended to the shore in the rainy season supported this species.

The majority of the SEA consists of undisturbed open space with scattered rural residential communities and a few high-density residential developments. Open space within the SEA is mostly vegetated with dense stands of chaparral. Other types of vegetation, such as woodlands and grasslands, occur in smaller portions scattered throughout the SEA on moist or north facing slopes and canyon bottoms. Lesser amounts of coastal sage scrub are also present, primarily on low-elevation, dry south-facing slopes, ridgelines, or as early successional communities in previously disturbed areas.

Topanga Canyon State Park and Malibu Creek State Park have pristine areas of all the characteristic habitats of the Santa Monica Mountains: chaparral, oak woodland, grasslands, and coastal sage scrub. Some of the principally-named canyons of Malibu Creek State Park with diverse riparian habitat on north-facing slopes include Fern, Mendenhall, and Lost Cabin canyons. The headwaters of the major drainages of the Santa Monica Mountains often lie outside park jurisdictions, but most retain intact natural communities that contribute to a clean water source. Many of these with scattered development are included in the SEA.

The perennial stream of Cold Creek lies in the center of a relatively undisturbed natural sandstone basin that has a diversity of flora reflecting the extreme range in physical conditions of the watershed, from cool wet streambed to hot dry rocky ridges, making the area a remarkable concentration of native vegetative diversity. Pristine stands of chaparral, southern oak woodland, coastal sage scrub, and riparian woodland all support the unusual species found in the streamside areas such as stream orchid (*Epipactis gigantea*), scarlet monkeyflower (*Mimulus cardinalis*), ocellated Humboldt lily (*Lilium humboldtii* var. *ocellatum*), big-leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), and redshank (*Adenostoma sparsifolium*). Redshank has a widely disjunct distribution, with scattered populations from San Diego to Santa Barbara County. Redshank is common in the southern portion of the Cold Creek watershed, but this population and another within Decker and Encinal canyons represent two of the few localities of this species within the County. Flowering ash (*Fraxinus dipetala*), usually a diminutive tree of 15-20 feet, can grow to 40 feet here. This diversity supports good populations of stream animals: turtles, lizards, snakes, and amphibians. There are a number of private reserves and study facilities in the watershed, including a university field station. Pierce College has a collection of the plants in its herbarium and also an insect collection for the Cold Creek area.

Where drainage conditions result in moist sandstone and micro-slumping of developing soil, this creates a variety of habitats in close proximity to one another. There can be very unusual associations of species—xerophytic chaparral yucca (*Yucca whipplei*) and lance-leaf live-forever next to a diverse array of moisture-dependent ferns, mosses, liverworts, and hornworts. A north-east draining tributary of Las Flores called “Hepatic Gulch,” with a cirrhotic sandstone rock formation, has an unusual assemblage of uncommon plants and a good diversity of wildflowers. Adjacent to seasonally mesic moss-dominated areas supporting California saxifrage (*Micranthes californica*) are silver birds-foot trefoil (*Acmispon argophyllus* var. *argophyllus*), Wright’s buckwheat (*Eriogonum wrightii* var. *membranaceum*), wooly paintbrush (*Castilleja foliolosa*), redskin onion (*Allium haematochiton*), and mariposa lilies (*Calochortus* spp).

Tuna and Pena canyons are the last coast drainages of the central Santa Monica Mountains that have not had development in the watershed or between the canyon mouth and the coast. Tuna Canyon has a perennial stream. Due to the coastal exposure, the riparian woodlands in the canyon bottoms are in excellent health and support healthy wildlife populations. The extensive coast live oak woodland in the riparian area is known to support over 300 species of various plants and animals. Animals utilize the stream as a water source and forage in the chaparral and coastal sage scrub on adjacent hillsides. These areas are important to migratory song bird and waterfowl species.

Temescal, Rustic, and Sullivan canyons are excellent representatives of the dry chaparral and coastal sage scrub plant communities found in the interior canyons of the Santa Monica Mountains. The canyons are less steep than others and their open form favors vegetation with less understory growth, which provides great examples of lush intermittent stream courses. They each have hiking trails and a drier canyon flora, even within stream beds. To the east is the dense urban habitat of the City of Los Angeles. Wildlife use these canyons as linkage and movement corridors, which connect the coastal populations and those of the interior valleys.

Encino Reservoir has the best undisturbed stand of inland chaparral, coastal sage scrub and streamside vegetation remaining on the inland slope of the Santa Monica Mountains. Inland chaparral develops where the moist coastal air rarely intrudes, and its characteristic species composition is different from similar communities on the coastal side of the mountains. In addition, the freshwater habitat is present along the shores of the Reservoir, so that the overlap of habitats provides a greater number of resources than each habitat would have alone.

The sections of Las Virgenes Canyon and Medea Creek within the SEA support exceptionally diverse wildflower populations, and if rainfall patterns are propitious, wildflower fields may cover large sections of the Canyon slopes. The surrounding canyon slopes support lush growth of coastal sage scrub and other chaparral. The Canyon itself has some floral elements that are characteristic of interior or even desert conditions: the California juniper (*Juniperus californica*) is found only in the Santa Monica Mountains, and narrowleaf goldenbush (*Ericameria linearifolia*) is another interior plant that is common in this canyon and rare elsewhere in the SEA. A variety of live-forever (*Dudleya* spp.), species are present on the canyon walls and rock outcrops, including chalk lettuce (*D. farinosa*), lance-leaf live-forever (*D. lanceolata*), and federally-threatened Agoura Hills dudleya (*D. cymosa* ssp. *agourensis*). One of the critical habitat areas for Lyon's pentachaeta is in this section of the SEA.

South of Liberty Canyon is La Sierra Canyon, which is an important tributary of Triunfo Creek, with exceptional floral biodiversity. La Sierra Canyon has a flora that includes elements found in only a few known places in the Santa Monica Mountains. Some of these are the rare state and federally-endangered Santa Monica Mountains live-forever (*Dudleya cymosa* ssp. *marcescens*); the creek dogwood (*Cornus glabrata,* known only from one other site in the Santa Monicas); the giant chain fern (*Woodwardia fimbriata*, which is exceptionally large in this locality); ocellated Humboldt lily (*Lilium humboldtii* ssp. *ocellatum*, which is also very tall in this locality), and dense stands of big-leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*, which is one of the uncommon, large-leaved, deciduous trees of Southern California that is an obligate of moist stream habitat); dense stands of coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*

var. *agrifolia*, protected by County ordinance and an oak woodland management plan); and very rare anywhere in the County, dense streamside stands of California bay (*Umbellularia californica*).

Palo Comado Canyon is one of the remaining areas with the emblematic California habitat of mixed southern oak woodland and savannah on rolling grassy hills. This type of habitat was one of the first to disappear with of the arrival of European settlers and the use of water diversions for the irrigation of crops. Agriculture made way for dense urban development, and very little of the oak savannah that was typical of Southern California ranchos remain. What was left was heavily impacted by cattle grazing. Along with facilitating non-native grasses that have displaced the native fields of wildflowers, cattle often consume the oak seedlings that would otherwise have replaced oaks that succumb to old age, which converts the woodlands into grasslands. Trees in Palo Comado Canyon support abundant populations of raptors, woodpeckers, western gray squirrels, quail and other savannah species. The ridgelines around the canyons support coastal sage scrub and other kinds of chaparral. The savannah, canyons, and ridgetop chaparral combine to support the connectivity that wildlife and plant populations need to sustain themselves, and this area has been named in a number of studies as very important to the continued genetic exchange and population replenishment of the County and other parts of Southern California.

Vegetation within the SEA is comprised of a large variety of community types. The diversity of the communities reflects the topography of the Santa Monica Mountains. The southern slopes are strongly affected by moist marine weather, while the northern slopes are influenced by drier inland weather conditions. In addition, the steepness of many slopes causes sharp differences in vegetation on either side of the ridges. All plant species observed or recorded in previous documentation within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium* of the *Los Angeles County SEAs*. Sensitive plant species and plant communities occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Descriptions and general locations of the each plant community present within the SEA, including chaparral, redshank chaparral, coastal sage scrub, non-native grassland, native grassland, walnut woodland, valley oak woodland, coast live oak woodland, southern willow scrub, cottonwood-willow riparian forest, oak riparian forest, salt marsh, sycamore-alder woodland, freshwater marsh, and disturbed communities are presented below.

Chaparral: Consists of broad-leafed or needle-leafed, sclerophyllous (hard-leafed), medium height to tall shrubs that form a dense cover on steep slopes below 5,000 feet in Southern California. Dominant species found within this community include ceanothus, toyon, scrub oak, sugar bush, holly-leaved cherry, holly leaf redberry, chamise, laurel sumac, and manzanita. This plant community occurs throughout the SEA and occupies most of the higher elevations and steep slopes.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Adenostoma fasciculatum* (chamise chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Adenostoma fasciculatum-Salvia apiana* (chamise-white sage chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Arctostaphylos glandulosa* (Eastwood's manzanita chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Arctostaphylos glauca* (bigberry manzanita chaparral) Shrubland Alliance

- *Ceanothus megacarpus* (big pod ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus spinosus* (greenbark ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus oliganthus* (hairy leaf ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Prunus ilicifolia* (holly leaf cherry chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Rhus ovata* (sugarbush chaparral) Shrubland Alliance

Redshank Chaparral: A very similar community to the chaparral described above, with the exception that red shank is the dominant species with lesser amounts of other chaparral species. This community is less common. It occurs in small patches, on steep slopes throughout the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Adenostoma sparsifolium* (redshank chaparral) Shrubland Alliance

Coastal Sage Scrub: Consists of drought-deciduous, low, soft-leafed shrubs and herbs on gentle to steep slopes under 1,500 feet in elevation. This community is dominated by California sagebrush, California buckwheat, black sage, purple sage, and California encelia. Coastal sage scrub is distributed throughout the SEA along dry ridgelines, slopes, and other areas previously disturbed by fire.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica* (California sagebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Salvia mellifera* (California sagebrush-black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Encelia californica* (California brittle bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Dendromecon rigida* (bush poppy scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Diplacus aurantiacus* (bush monkeyflower scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia apiana* (white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia leucophylla* (purple sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia mellifera* (black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum cinereum* (ashy buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Hazardia squarrosa* (sawtooth golden bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Isocoma menziesii* (Menzie's golden bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lotus scoparius LotusAcmispon scoparius* ([*Acmispon glaber*] deer weed scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lupinus albifrons* (silver bush lupine scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Malacothamnus fasciculatus* (bush mallow scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Native Grassland: Consists of at least 10 percent cover of native herbaceous plants (grasses and forbs) with the remaining coverage similar to non-native grasslands. Small patches of native grassland can be found scattered throughout the SEA, mostly in openings in coastal sage scrub and mixed with non-native grasslands.

Grassland communities consist of low, herbaceous vegetation that is dominated by grasses. Grasslands also harbor native forbs and bulbs, as well as naturalized annual forbs. Grasslands within the SEA include both non-native grasslands and native grasslands. Non-native grassland consists of dominant invasive annual grasses that are primarily of Mediterranean origin. Dominant species found within this community include wild oat, slender oat, red brome, ripgut brome, and herbs, such as black mustard

and wild radish. Non-native grasslands are located in small to large patches throughout the SEA in previously disturbed areas, cattle pastures, valley bottoms, and along road sides.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Avena* (*barbata, fatua*) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Brassica* (*nigra*) and other mustards Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus* (*diandrus, hordeaceus*)-*Brachypodium distachyon* Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus rubens-Schismus* (*arabicus, barbatus* [*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*]) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Lolium perenne* ([*Festuca perennis*] perennial rye grass fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands

Coast Live Oak Woodland: Is dominated by coast live oak and has a poorly developed shrub layer, which may include toyon, currant, gooseberry, laurel sumac, elderberry, and mulefat. Some coast live oak woodlands in the area include scattered California walnut or valley oaks. This community occurs throughout the SEA, often along canyon bottoms and more mesic, north-facing slopes.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

Valley Oak Woodland: An open woodland community dominated by valley oak. The understory is a grassy savannah composed mostly of non-native grasses. Valley oak woodland occurs mostly on the north slope of the Santa Monica Mountains in shaded ravines and on north-facing slopes.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Quercus lobata* (valley oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

Walnut Woodland: An open woodland dominated by Southern California black walnut. Occurring on moist, fine-textured soils, the open tree canopy usually has a grassy understory. Other characteristic species include coast live oak, sugar bush, and skunk bush. This community occurs mostly on the north slope of the Santa Monica Mountains in shaded ravines and on north-facing slopes.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Juglans californica* (California walnut groves) Woodland Alliance

Southern Willow Scrub: A riparian community consisting of dense, broad-leafed, winter-deciduous riparian thickets occurring within and adjacent to watercourses. The dominant species of this community within the SEA are arroyo willow with lesser amounts of mulefat. This community occurs in segments along portions of several of the drainages as well as along the periphery of many of the ponds and lakes throughout the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Salix exigua* (sandbar willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salix lasiolepis* (arroyo willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance

Cottonwood-Willow Riparian Forest: An open broad-leafed winter-deciduous riparian forest dominated by Fremont cottonwood, black cottonwood, black willow, and red willow. This community occurs in segments along of many of the drainages, ponds, and lakes throughout the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Populus fremontii* (California sycamore woodlands) Forest Alliance
- *Salix gooddingii* (black willow thickets) Woodland Alliance
- *Salix laevigata* (red willow thickets) Woodland Alliance
- *Populus trichocarpa* (black cottonwood forest) Forest Alliance

Sycamore-Alder Riparian Woodland: A tall, open, broad-leafed, winter-deciduous streamside woodland dominated by western sycamore and alder. These stands often form a closed canopy forest and even may appear as trees scattered in a shrubby thicket of sclerophyllous and deciduous species. This community is found infrequently within the SEA along the lower reaches of several major creeks.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Platanus racemosa* (California sycamore woodlands) Woodland Alliance
- *Alnus rhombifolia* (white alder groves) Forest Alliance

Oak Riparian Forest: An open woodland of dense evergreen sclerophyllous riparian woodland dominated by coast live oak. This type appears to be richer in herbs and poorer in understory shrubs than other riparian communities. This community occurs along many streams and canyon bottoms scattered throughout the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

Freshwater Marsh: Develops in areas of still or slow-moving permanent freshwater. This community is dominated by the perennial, emergent monocot cattails, which reach a height of four to five meters and often form a closed canopy. Bulrushes are dominant below the cattail canopy. Freshwater marsh is relatively uncommon. It occurs in small patches in natural or created sinks with water sources.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Phragmites australis* (common reed marshes) Herbaceous Alliance and Semi-Natural Stands
- *Lepidium latifolium* (perennial pepper weed patches) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Eleocharis macrostachya* (pale spike rush marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Schoenoplectus californicus* (California bulrush marsh) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Typha* (*angustifolia, domingensis, latifolia*) (cattail marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Sarcocornia pacifica* (*Salicornia depressa*) (pickleweed mats) Herbaceous Alliance

- *Juncus arcticus* (var. *balticus, mexicanus*) (Baltic and Mexican rush marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Juncus effusus* (soft rush marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Lemna* (*minor*) *and Relatives* (duckweed blooms) Provisional Herbaceous Alliance

Salt Marsh: Similar to the freshwater marsh described above, but with more salt-tolerant hydrophytes present. Species associated with this community include cattails, pickleweed, and saltgrass. Salt marsh is rare. Within the SEA it is known only from Malibu Lagoon and in the County, and only two other places.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Distichlis spicata* (salt grass flats) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Spartina foliosa* (California cordgrass marsh) Herbaceous Alliance

- *Arthrocnemum subterminale* (Parish's glasswort patches) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Atriplex lentiformis* (quailbush scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Rock Outcrop: A sparsely vegetated community occurring on cliffs and rock outcroppings of sedimentary, metamorphic, and volcanic rocks along the ridges and peaks of the hills and mountains. Between the rocks and in the crevices, the few plants found are usually representative of a chaparral species composition. Other plants often found on the rock faces in protected areas include *Dudleya*, *Selaginella*, and various lichens.

Corresponding MCV communities:

No corresponding communities at this time

Disturbed or Barren Areas: Areas that either completely lack vegetation or are dominated by ruderal species. Ruderal vegetation typically found within the SEA includes non-native grasses and a high proportion of weedy species, including black mustard and thistle species. Several disturbed areas are scattered throughout the SEA and take the form of residential developments, paved roads, fire breaks, dirt access roads, trails, and other similarly disturbed areas.

Corresponding MCV communities:

No corresponding communities at this time

Wildlife

Wildlife within the SEA is generally diverse and abundant due to large acreages of natural open space and diversity of habitat types. While a few wildlife species are entirely dependent on a single vegetative community, the entire mosaic of all the vegetation communities within the SEA and adjoining areas constitute a functional ecosystem for a variety of wildlife species, both within the SEA and as part of the regional ecosystem.

The analysis of invertebrates is severely limited due to the lack of data; the SEA, however, undoubtedly supports healthy populations of a diverse assortment of invertebrate species. Amphibian populations are plentiful in the SEA due to the high moisture content provided by coastal conditions as well as the large number of drainages and year-round water supplies. The SEA is also likely to support a variety of amphibians within the moister woodland areas and canyon bottoms. Many habitat characteristics essential to reptiles are present within the SEA. These include rock outcroppings that allow for high visibility and small mammal burrows for cover and escape from predators and extreme weather. These characteristics, as well as the variety of habitat types present, are likely to support a wide variety of reptilian species.

The scrubland, woodland, riparian, and grassland habitats in the SEA provide foraging and cover habitat for year-round residents, seasonal residents, and migrating song birds. In addition, the SEA encompasses many year-round water sources located throughout the SEA and abundant raptor foraging, perching, and nesting habitat along the northern slopes of the Santa Monica Mountains. The southern edge of the SEA, along the coast, is part of the Pacific Flyway. The combination of these resources, as well as the confluence of many community types provides an unusually high diversity of bird species. Mammal

populations within the SEA are diverse and reflect the large size of the SEA and great variation in topography and community types.

All wildlife species previously recorded, as well as those expected to occur, within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium* of the *Los Angeles County SEAs*. Sensitive wildlife species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Wildlife Movement

The SEA contains major features that are important to wildlife movement. For the mammals and other large terrestrial wildlife, it is important to recognize the crossing area of State Route-101 freeway at Liberty Canyon, and this has been detailed in the General Boundary and Resources Description section. Future highway modifications in this far western area of the County may take the need for wildlife connectivity into account. On the eastern end of the mountains (separated from the SEA by the communities of Brentwood and Encino in the City of Los Angeles) the California Department of Transportation, or Caltrans, has undertaken widening conversion of one of the bridges to incorporate a vegetated area on the bridge that will encourage wildlife transit between the mountain sections west and east of Interstate-405. This is the first such endeavor in County.

The many natural drainages and ridgelines of the Santa Monica Mountains connect populations in a netlike web, and development should always take account of the importance of these natural areas to wildlife connectivity.

The major coastal drainages with natural habitat shading and cooling the waters support a very unique and rare wildlife movement, which is the spawning runs of the federally-endangered southern steelhead. Spawning run areas and young fish habitat are in critical habitat areas of Arroyo Sequit, Malibu, and Topanga Canyons. Historically, steelhead were known from Solstice and Zuma canyons as well, and it is likely that all the major drainages that once had perennial water and extended to the shore in the rainy season supported this species.

Although wildlife movement is hampered by rural development in the SEA, animals are still able to move through the Santa Monica Mountains in many areas. Due to its large size and topographic complexity, linkages in many directions occur within the SEA. However, there are also various bottlenecks. Edelman (1990) identifies Malibu Creek State Park as the central core habitat area in the Santa Monica Mountains, serving as a connective hub between the Simi Hills to the north and the open space preserves of Topanga State Park to the east, and Mugu State Park to the west (which is near the Ventura-Los Angeles County line, but within Ventura County). These linkages allow movement among large open space areas within the SEA as well as between areas outside the SEA, such as the Simi Hills and the western extent of the Santa Monica Mountains in Ventura County. The genetic flow through these areas is crucial in maintaining the diversity and viability of the species within the Santa Monica Mountains. Open space linkages between Kanan Road and Calabasas Parkway along State Route-101, as indicated by the National Park Service, are of particular importance for continued connectivity of wildlife populations, due to a lack of alternative routes and encroachment of development (Nelson, 2000). Although there are significantly large open spaces within the SEA, maintaining habitat linkages between

them is critical in providing for long-term sustainability. A wide variety of wildlife use linkages throughout the SEA, including mountain lion, coyote, mule deer, bobcat, and a number of medium-sized mammals.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition. When species are federally-listed as endangered or threatened, they often have federally-designated, geographically-specific "critical habitat areas." Critical habitat areas, after extensive study by experts, are judged to be essential to conservation and maintenance of the species. The SEA has a number of these for a number of species, as discussed in the General Boundary and Resources Description section. The Santa Monica Mountains SEA has critical habitat for the southern steelhead (fish), the tidewater goby, Braunton's milkvetch, and Lyon's pentachaeta. There is proposed critical habitat for the western snowy plover in the SEA.

Sensitive Plan Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. These communities include coastal sage chaparral scrub, native grassland, valley oak woodland, walnut woodland, southern willow scrub, southern cottonwood-willow riparian forest, sycamore-alder woodland, southern coastal live oak riparian forest, fresh-water swamp, and alkali swamp, all of which occur throughout the SEA. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section.

Sensitive Plant Species

The statuses of rare plants are hierarchically categorized by the CNPS using a rank and decimal system. The initial category level of Rare Plant Rank is indicated by the ranks 1A (presumed extinct in California), 1B (rare or endangered in California and elsewhere), 2 (rare or endangered in California but more common elsewhere), 3 (more information needed, a review list), and 4 (limited distribution). In cases where the CNPS has further identified the specific threat to the species, a decimal or Threat Code is added: .1 (seriously endangered in California), .2 (fairly endangered in California), or .3 (not very endangered in California).

The following species occur, or are known to have occurred, or have the potential to occur in the SEA area:

- Santa Susana tarplant (*Deinandra minthornii*) CDFG Rare, RPR 1B.2
- Lyon's pentachaeta (*Pentachaeta lyonii*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Beach spectaclepod, (*Dithyrea maritima*) ST, RPR 1B.1
- Blochman's dudleya (*Dudleya blochmaniae* ssp*. blochmaniae*) FT, RPR 1B.2
- Marcescent dudleya (*Dudleya cymosa* ssp. *marcescens*) FT, RPR, 1B.2]
- Santa Monica dudleya (*Dudleya cymosa* ssp. *ovatifolia*) FT, RPR 1B.2
- Braunton's milk-vetch (*Astragalus brauntonii*) FE, RPR 1B.1
- Salt marsh bird's beak (*Chloropyron maritimum* ssp. *maritimum*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.2

In addition, the following species considered by CNPS to be rare, threatened or endangered have the potential to occur:

- Sonoran maiden fern (*Thelypteris puberula* var. *sonorensis*) RPR 2.2
- Southern tarweed (*Centromadia parryi* ssp*. australis*) RPR 1B.1
- Coulter's goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata* var*. coulteri*) RPR 1B.1
- Coulter's saltbrush (*Atriplex coulteri*) RPR 1B.2
- Parish's brittlescale (*Atriplex parishii*) RPR 1B.1
- Mud nama (*Nama stenocarpum*) RPR 2.2
- Salt spring checkerbloom (*Sidalcea neomexicana*) RPR 2.2
- Ojai navarretia (*Navarretia ojaiensis*) RPR 1B.1
- Parry's spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var*. parryi*) RPR 1B.1
- Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) RPR 1B.2

Sensitive Animal Species

The following vertebrate species are state and/or federally-listed endangered or threatened, and are known to occur or have the potential to occur in the SEA:

- Tidewater goby (*Eucyclogobius newberryi*) FE, SSC
- Steelhead – Southern California ESU (*Onchorynchus mykiss irideus*) FE, SSC
- Western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*) FT, ABC, SSC, BCC
- Western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*) FC, FSS, BCC
- Southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) FE, SE, ABC
- American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) FD, SD CDF, CDFG Fully Protected, BCC
- Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) FD, SE, CDF, CDFG Fully Protected, FSS, BCC
- Bank swallow (*Riparia riparia*) ST
- California least tern (*Sternula antillarum browni*) FE, SE, ABC, CDFG Fully Protected
- Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) FE, SE, ABC

The western snowy plover*,* which feeds and resides in the wrack line areas, has designated critical habitat on Zuma Beach from Trancas Canyon to the northeastern side of Point Dume (within the Point Dume SEA). This is proposed to expand on Point Dume, but also to expand to include Malibu Beach, from the pier to Malibu Point, and the area around the seaward side of the Malibu Lagoon, which is included in this SEA (where it contacts the Malibu Coastline SEA).

The southern steelhead lives in the coastal and oceanic marine waters for most of its life. It uses the coastal streams for spawning runs to breed. Some fish may die on these runs, but many of this particular species return to the ocean and may spawn again. The creeks become the habitat for the first year of

the young fish's lives. Here they mature to smolts and make their run to the ocean. In the ocean, they mature and spend most of their lives. The Arroyo Sequit has the lower section and much of its west fork designated as critical habitat, with known, naturally occurring spawning beds and habitat for young fish. The lower areas of Malibu Creek and Topanga Creek are also designated critical habitat.

In addition, following CDFG-listed Special Animals have the potential to utilize habitats within the SEA:

- Callippe silverspot butterfly (*Speyeria callippe callippe*) FE
- Arroyo chub (*Gila orcutti*) FSS, SSC
- California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) FT, SSC
- Western spadefoot (*Spea hammondii*) BLMS, SSC
- Coast range newt (*Taricha torosa*) SSC
- Silvery legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra pulchra*) SSC, FSS
- Southwestern pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*) BLMS, SSC, FSS
- San Diego mountain kingsnake (*Lampropeltis zonata pulchra*) FSS, SSC
- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) BLMS, SSC, FSS
- Coast patch-nosed snake (*Salvadora hexalepis virgultea*) SSC
- Two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*) BLMS, SSC, FSS
- Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) CDFG Watch List
- Sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus*) CDFG Watch List
- Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*) CDFG Watch List
- Bell's sage sparrow (*Amphispiza belli belli*) ABC, CDFG Watch List, BCC
- Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) CDF, CDFG Fully Protected, CDFG Watch List, BCC
- Short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*) ABC, SSC
- Long-eared owl (*Asio otus*) SSC
- Coastal cactus wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus sandiegensis*) SSC, FSS, BCC
- California horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris actia*) CDFG Watch List
- Northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) SSC
- Black swift (*Cypseloides niger*) ABC, SSC, BCC
- Yellow warbler (*Dendroica petechia brewsteri*) SSC, BCC
- White-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*) CDFG Fully Protected
- Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) CDFG Watch List
- Prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*) CDFG Watch List, BCC
- Yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*) SSC
- Least bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*) SSC, BCC
- Loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) SSC, BCC
- California brown pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis californicus*) FD, SD, CDFG Fully Protected
- Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) BLMS, SSC, FSS, WBWG: High Priority
- Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii townsendii*) BLMS, SSC, FSS, WBWG High Priority
- Spotted bat (*Euderma maculatum*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High Priority
- Western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High Priority
- San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus bennettii*) SSC
- South coast marsh vole (*Microtus californicus stephensi*) SSC
- Occult little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus occultus*) CDFG Special Animals List, WBWG Medium Priority
- San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*) SSC
- Los Angeles pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris brevinasus*) SSC, FSS

- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) SSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

There are six designated ETAs within the north area of the SEA, but none in the coastal zone of the SEA. These ETAs are semi-natural areas next to developed areas that did not meet all mapping criteria for SEA designation. The ETAs are either farmed or residential areas considered important to SEA continuity and maintenance of upland parts of the coastal watershed. Extended urban areas are excluded, but small urban areas are included in the SEA because of coastal restrictions that apply to environmental review of proposed development.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets all SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met is described below.

CRITERIA ANALYSIS OF THE SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Met	The SEA provides habitat for the following listed species: Lyon's pentachaeta (FE, SE); beach spectaclepod (ST); Blochman's dudleya (FT); marcescent dudleya (FT); Santa Monica dudleya (FT); Braunton's milk-vetch (FE); salt marsh bird's beak (FE, SE); tidewater goby (FE); steelhead – Southern California ESU (FE); western snowy plover (FT); western yellow-billed cuckoo (SE); southwestern willow flycatcher (FE, SE); American peregrine falcon (SE); bald eagle (FT); bank swallow (ST); California least tern (FE, SE); least Bell's vireo (FE, SE). The SEA contains designated critical habitat for Lyon's pentachaeta, Braunton's milk-vetch, tidewater goby, steelhead, and western snowy plover.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	Upper La Sierra Canyon contains an unusually rich and diverse stand of canyon flora, including marcescent dudleya, creek dogwood, and many unusually large specimens of other rare plant species; Malibu Lagoon is the only intact natural lagoon between Point Mugu in Ventura County and Anaheim Bay in Orange County; Malibu Canyon contains a unique mix of floral species that are uncommon in the region, such as black cottonwood and leather leaf ash, as well as a regionally unique mixture of inland and coastal species; regionally rare volcanic rock formations create unique communities where they occur.

Criterion		Status	Justification
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	Malibu Lagoon is the only natural lagoon in the County; upper La Sierra Canyon contains an unusually rich and diverse stand of canyon flora, including marcescent dudleya, creek dogwood, and many unusually large specimens of other rare plant species; and Malibu Canyon contains a regionally unique mix of floral species htat are uncommon in the County, such as black cottonwood and leather leaf ash, as well as a unique mix of inland and coastal species.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	The Malibu Lagoon and the upstream riparian woodland in Malibu Creek is an important migrating bird refuge, with over 200 species recorded. Tuna and Pena canyons are an important area to migratory birds due to their combined qualities of healthy vegetation, riparian woodland, surface moisture, undeveloped land, and an unobstructed opening to the coast. The SEA also contains habitat linkages between large open space areas within the SEA and areas outside the SEA, such as the Simi Hills and the western extent of the Santa Monica Mountains in Ventura County. Such linkages are crucial in maintaining regional plant and animal population health and viability.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	The SEA includes a myriad of unique and pristine natural areas that are important for nature study and scientific research; the range of extremes of many species, such as the California juniper, linear-leaved goldenbush, splendid mariposa lily (*Calochortus venustus*), and valley oak; and disjunct and unique populations of redshank, island mountain-mahogany, lyre snake, mountain quail, hirsute rain-beetle, and the Jerusalem cricket.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	Zuma Canyon is one of the last major drainages in the Santa Monica Mountains with a year-round stream that supports a rich riparian community and remains in an undeveloped state; Cold Creek includes an excellent example of an undisturbed natural sandstone basin with springs and a perennial stream; Tuna and Pena canyons are the last drainages in the central and eastern Santa Monica Mountains that have no development between the canyon mouth at the coast and upper areas of the watershed; Palo Comado and Cheseboro canyons support one of the last examples of an oak woodland savannah of any significant size in the County; Temescal, Rustic, and Sullivan canyons represent contiguous, self-contained watersheds that are large enough to support

Criterion	Status	Justification
		representative samples of native flora and fauna; the area surrounding Encino Reservoir supports the best undisturbed stand of an inland chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and streamside vegetation remaining on the inland slope of the Santa Monica Mountains.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: A) the habitat of core populations of endangered and threatened plant and animal species; B-C) biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution in the County and regionally; D) concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds, which are limited in availability in the County; E) biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community; and F) areas that provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of original natural biotic communities in the County

23. Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills SEA

Location

General

The Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located northwest of the San Fernando Valley within unincorporated areas of the County and the City of Los Angeles, west of Chatsworth. The area is south of State Route-126 and the Santa Clara River, west of the Interstate-5, and includes much of the Santa Susana Mountains to the north, the Santa Susana Pass, Chatsworth Reservoir, and the eastern portion of the Simi Hills to the south. This SEA encompasses much of the natural area of the Santa Susana Mountains in the County. The north face of the Santa Susana Mountains is the southwestern watershed of the Santa Clara River in the County, and on the south face, the Santa Susana Mountains are part of the direct coastal watershed as well as part of the watershed of the Los Angeles River. The Simi Hills are part of the direct coastl drainage in their southern area. The variations in vegetation communities are extensive. The area in the Santa Susana Mountains covered by the SEA is considered an important connective wildlife corridor among the San Gabriel Mountains, the Santa Clara River, and the Santa Monica Mountains.

The SEA is located at least partially in each of the following United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Quadrangles: Calabasas, Canoga Park, Oat Mountain, Santa Susana, Val Verde, and Newhall.

General Boundary and Resources Description

The entire western boundary of the SEA follows the Ventura-Los Angeles County line from El Escorpion Park, west of the intersection of Valley Circle Boulevard and Vanowen Street in the West Hills community of the San Fernando Valley, and north to an area just south of the Santa Clara River near Salt Canyon Road. El Escorpion Park is adjacent to state park land just across the Ventura-Los Angeles County line. The small ridgeline where the SEA begins just south of El Escorpion Park separates the coastal drainage of Las Virgenes (tributary of Malibu Creek) from drainages that flow into the San Fernando Valley and the Los Angeles River. El Escorpion Park is at the southern end of Bell Canyon Park, which is also on Ventura-Los Angeles County line. The watercourse of Bell Canyon flows through the park. The SEA continues north, including the natural watershed of Dayton Canyon. Here on the southern side of Dayton Canyon is designated critical habitat for the Braunton's milk vetch (*Astragalus brauntonii*), which is a locoweed that prefers a substrate of intermixed sandstone and carbonate beds, which is probably deposited at the margins of a former seacoast. The SEA circles around the community of Lakeside Park , which is excluded from the SEA, and then encircles and includes the Chatsworth Reservoir along boundaries of private property. The western boundary of the SEA follows the Ventura-Los Angeles County line, but bends to exclude development in upper Woolsey Canyon and Chatsworth Lake Manor.

From Chatsworth Reservoir, the SEA continues north with the west side along the Ventura-Los Angeles County line and the east side tracing natural habitat at the edge of the Simi Hills and the San Fernando Valley. The SEA extends eastward to include all of the Santa Susana Pass area, much of which is

preserved in the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. Just across the Ventura-Los Angeles County line near State Route-118 in Ventura County are Corriganville Park, a former and current natural movie production area, and Rocky Peak Park. Corriganville is a regional park of the City of Simi Hills; Rocky Peak Park is administered by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. Rocky Peak Park is the former Runkle Ranch and stretches from State Route-118 five miles northward to Las Llajas Canyon. The Park is a vital wildlife habitat linkage between the Simi Hills and the Santa Susana Mountains. Spectacular sandstone boulders, outcroppings, oak savannahs, and perennial water sources provide diverse habitat for vertebrates and a number of rare plants. The Ventura-Los Angeles County line and the SEA boundary cross directly over Rocky Peak here.

A very important wildlife passage between the Santa Susana Mountains and the Simi Hills is just west of the Ventura-Los Angeles County line connecting Corriganville Park and the Runkle Ranch. It is a broad tunnel under the freeway, which enabled the connection of the property that was divided by constructing State Route-118. This tunnel connects dirt roads and trails on either side, and is regularly used by mountain lions and other wildlife.

Most of the SEA from State Route-118 northward is designated critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*), which is a diminutive bird that is becoming rare due to loss of its preferred habitat, which is coastal sage scrub. The critical habitat for this bird extends across the Ventura-Los Angeles County line along the extent of the Santa Susana Mountains into Ventura County.

North of State Route-118, the SEA excludes development in the area of Hialeah Springs (but includes the springs), and circles round the development to include the more sparse settlement in the Deer Lake Highlands area. The SEA boundary goes north along the watercourse of Browns Canyon to the confluence with Mormon Canyon. Here the SEA boundary climbs the ridgeline that separate Browns Canyon and Mormon Canyon to include Browns Canyon and the Michael D. Antonovich Regional Park at Joughin Ranch, and exclude the Mormon Canyon. Continuing up the ridge to its origin on the crest of Oat Mountain, the SEA boundary turns eastward along the ridgeline, excluding the oil fields in the upper reaches of Mormon Canyon and including the extensive natural areas of the north slope of the Santa Susana Mountains.

Along the Ventura-Los Angeles County line north of Rocky Peak, the SEA boundary crosses Blind Canyon (draining to San Fernando Valley), then Llajas Canyon (draining to Simi Valley and ultimately Mugu Lagoon), then El Toro and Chivo canyons (also draining to Mugu Lagoon). Northwest of Chivo, the crest of the Santa Susana Mountains is crossed, and drainages are tributaries of Salt Canyon and the Santa Clara River. The north edge of the critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher is crossed near the crest, where the south-facing slopes that favor coastal sage scrub give way to the ridgeline and north-facing slopes that promote denser chaparral and oak woodlands. At the northern boundary of the SEA, the Santa Clara River SEA is contiguous as is the critical habitat for the state and federally-endangered least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus)*, which is a small bird that usually nests next to perennial water.

From the northwesterly corner, the boundary travels east along the north side of Salt Canyon, and then along the northern side of the Salt Canyon East Fork. Where the East Fork turns south, the SEA boundary continues east to encompass the steeper southern areas along Potrero Canyon and all of the Pico Canyon drainage south of Potrero. The SEA boundary is truncated at the Stevenson Ranch development, including the Wickham Canyon tributary of Pico in the SEA, but excluding most of Dewitt Canyon. This boundary of the SEA is essentially following the northern edge of the Salt Creek open space that was approved with the Newhall Ranch Specific Plan. In the vicinity of Pico Canyon, the boundary continues eastward to encompass the Lyon Canyon watershed and an unnamed watershed just north of Lyon up to the west side of Interstate-5. Along Interstate-5, the SEA boundary continues along the line of natural vegetation (west and southwest side of Gavin Canyon) including the watersheds of tributaries Towsley, Wiley, Leaming, Rice, and East canyons. The boundary continues east along the western edge of Interstate-5 to an area just west of the Angeles City line, near the interchange with State Route-14. Here the boundary excludes the drainage of Sunshine Canyon, which is involved in the Sunshine Canyon Landfill used by both the City of Los Angeles and the County. Critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher is the watersheds of Towsley, Wiley, Rice, and East canyons south of the Interstate-5 below about the 2400 feet elevation contour.

North across the Interstate-5 is the Newhall Wedge. The Newhall Wedge is a very rugged part of the Santa Susana Mountains, with substantial natural vegetation of oak woodlands, chaparral, and coastal sage scrub. The Newhall Wedge is truncated by the flood plains of tributaries of the South Fork of the Santa Clara River to the north, east and west, and these flood plains have had extensive development as the City of Santa Clarita. (Gavin Canyon is one of these tributaries.) Important connective areas are the road crossings of the Interstate-5 and State Route-14. The connection to the Santa Clara River SEA is the Los Pinetos Road underpass of the State Route-14. Consistent wildlife movement has been recorded with motion-activated cameras there. The Weldon Canyon Road overpass of the Interstate-5 is another connection for the Newhall Wedge with the main part of the SEA. The Old Road underpass of the Interstate-5 is a broad connection. The Calgrove underpass is another broad connection, but busy with traffic. Natural areas are adjacent to all these under- and overpasses. The South Fork of the Santa Clara River is formed by the junction of Towsley, Wiley and East canyons in the northeast corner of Michael D. Antonovich Open Space. Its underpass of Interstate-5 has a natural bottom that is used frequently by wildlife, but on the east side of Interstate-5 there is a series of 15 feet drops and channeled sides, which is unlikely that terrestrially-tied wildlife would continue into the populated parts of the City of Santa Clarita along the South Fork. Critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher is in most of the Newhall Wedge part of the SEA between the Interstate-5 and the Sierra Highway that is just west of State Route-14.

On the west side of Sunshine Canyon, a broad lobe of the SEA extends along the ridgeline, which separates Sunshine and Bee Canyon to include Bee Canyon Park and Mission Point of O'Melveny Park. This is an area with walnut woodlands, oak woodlands, grasslands, and chaparral including coastal sage scrub, which is the diverse and green vegetation typical of the Santa Susana Mountains. Critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher covers O'Melveny Park, except for the ridgeline of Mission Point, which is above the 2400 feet contour. The SEA boundary travels west from Mission Point along the ridgeline above the Aliso Canyon Oil Field and turns south at the western edge of the Aliso Canyon Oil

Field, along the ridgeline between Mormon and Browns canyons. Critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher extends below about the 2400 feet contour (including Mormon and Browns canyons) and roughly is within the SEA north of State Route-118.

The SEA includes a variety of topographic features; the northern portion of the SEA encompasses Oat Mountain and much of the Santa Susana Mountains from the Ventura-Los Angeles County line east to Interstate-5. Portions of many of the canyons associated with the Santa Susana Mountains and Oat Mountain are also included, such as Salt Canyon, Potrero Canyon, Pico Canyon, Towsley Canyon, El Toro Canyon, Sulphur Canyon, Devil Canyon, Ybarra Canyon, Browns Canyon, Bee Canyon, and Mormon Canyon. Several perennial stream areas occur within these canyons, and there are many natural springs. The north slopes of the Santa Susana Mountains are within the Santa Clara River watershed, which drains the Los Padres National Forest to the north, the Angeles National Forest to the northeast and east, and the Santa Susana Mountains to the south and southeast. The remainder of the SEA is within the Los Angeles River watershed. The majority of the land in the SEA is natural open space with very sparse disturbances in the form of ranches, oil wells, and unimproved access roads. The SEA consists of east-west and northwest trending primary ridges and north-south trending secondary ridges.

The peak of Oat Mountain represents the highest point in the SEA at 3,747 feet above mean sea level (MSL). From Oat Mountain, one can appreciate the diverse influences that create extremely diverse habitat within this SEA. One can see downstream along the Santa Clara River to the mouth of the Pacific Ocean and to the northern Channel Islands. Across the San Fernando Valley are the Santa Monica Mountains, and the Simi Hills enclose the west end of the Valley. To the east are the ascending ridges of the San Gabriel Mountains, and to the northeast the Santa Clara River continues upstream towards the Antelope Valley and the Mojave Desert. Coastal, valley, montane, and desert influences all meet within this small mountain range.

Open space within the SEA supports this great variety of communities, but is dominated by chaparral, oak woodlands, coastal sage scrub, bigcone Douglas-fir-canyon oak woodland, and grasslands; however, there are numerous examples of special vegetation. Not uncommon are cherry woodlands, which are dominated by holly leaf cherry (Prunus ilicifolia). These mountains are a meeting area of the (regular) Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and the bigcone Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga macrocarpa*). There are a number of special endemic plants, such as the Santa Susana tarweed (*Deinandra minthornii*), which is a tarplant like few others since it is perennial. Its distribution spreads through the Simi Hills and into the Santa Monica Mountains, but it is primarily at home among the sandstone boulders and terraces, which prevail in the Santa Susana Mountains. The Santa Susana Mountains are the only known place in the County with members of the uncommon Palmer's oak (*Quercus palmeri).* This desert oak can be very long-lived. A clone found in Riverside County was judged to have started from an acorn in the last Ice Age, over 10,000 years ago. Other oaks with groves in the Santa Susanas include coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), valley oak (*Q. lobata*), canyon live oak (*Q. chrysolepis*), scrub oak (*Quercus berberidifolia*), and interior live oak (*Q. wislezenii*). The numerous creeks and canyons support riparian scrub and woodland communities with oaks, sycamores, and willows. There are walnut woodlands of the California black walnut (*Juglans californica*) mixed with flowering ash (*Fraxinus dipetala*) and Mexican elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*) and coast live oak. Flowering ash may be a tree up to 60 feet tall in the Santa

Susana Mountains, whereas it usually is a low tree or even spindly shrub. The woodlands dominated by walnuts and flowering ash appear to be unique to the Santa Susana Mountains. The bigcone Douglas-fir-canyon live oak forest at higher elevations represents one of the northwesternmost examples of this community. At its southern end, the SEA includes the eastern portion of the Simi Hills, including the east-facing slopes descending from Chatsworth Peak. Chatsworth Reservoir forms a portion of the south boundary and is currently dry, except for a small detention basin north of the reservoir.

Chatsworth Reservoir is now dry and is a superfund clean-up site due to the dumping of chemicals from a rocket facility that used to be in the Simi Hills. However, it has a variety of very interesting habitat with several protected avian communities of songbirds and geese, which makes it valuable for bird study by students, researchers, and naturalists. There is a perennial pond at the north end that supports freshwater marsh, which is an extremely scarce habitat in the County and Southern California. This pond is on the Pacific Flyway, and supports numerous kinds of waterfowl during the spring and fall migration periods, especially because of the adjacent grasslands. The periphery of the reservoir is savannah, with a mixture of valley and coast live oaks (*Quercus lobata* and *Q. agrifolia*), some in small stands.

The majority of the SEA is within the unincorporated area of the County.

Vegetation

The plant communities within the SEA are composed of numerous plant species. These plant species are adapted to a Mediterranean climate with a cool, wet season followed by a hot, dry season. Due to the topographic complexity and coastal and desert influences, the SEA supports a wide diversity of plant species.

Plant species observed or recorded in previous documentation within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium of the Los Angeles County SEAs.* Sensitive plant species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Descriptions and general locations of each plant community present within the SEA are given below. These include chaparral, coastal sage scrub, alluvial scrub, coast live oak woodlands, valley oak woodland, mainland cherry forest, non-native grassland, native grassland, southern willow scrub, southern cottonwood-willow riparian forest, and disturbed communities.

Chaparral: Consists of a broad mix of evergreen species and generally occurs below 5,000 feet in Southern California. Dominant species consist of broad-leaved or needle-leafed sclerophyllous (hard-leafed) shrubs, forming a dense, impenetrable cover with little or no understory growth. The understory typically consists of considerable accumulation of leaf litter. In areas of less dense shrub cover, the understory consists of non-native grasses and other annual forbs. Dominant species include chamise, laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*), hoary-leaf ceanothus (*Ceanothus crassifolius*), chapparal whitethorn (*Ceanothus leucodermis*), and toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*). Chaparral is the dominant plant community within the SEA and covers many of the steep slopes and hillsides in the upper elevations.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Adenostoma fasciculatum* (chamise chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Adenostoma fasciculatum-Salvia apiana* (chamise-white sage chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Arctostaphylos glauca* (bigberry manzanita chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus crassifolius* (hoary leaf ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus leucodermis* (chaparral whitethorn) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus megacarpus* (big pod ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus spinosus* (greenbark ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus oliganthus* (hairy leaf ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Prunus ilicifolia* (holly leaf cherry chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Rhus ovata* (sugarbush chaparral) Shrubland Alliance

Coastal Sage Scrub Communities: Consist of drought-deciduous, low, soft-leaved shrubs and herbs on gentle to steep slopes below 3,000 feet in elevation. Several dominant species may occur within scrub communities, with some areas overwhelmingly dominated by one or two species. California sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), California brittle bush (*Encelia californica*), purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*), and deerweed (*Acmispon glaber*). Coastal sage scrub is found at the lower elevations within the SEA on drier south-facing slopes, but can also be found on the north-facing slopes and canyon of the Santa Susana Mountains.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica* (California sagebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Salvia mellifera* (California sagebrush-black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Encelia californica* (California brittle bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Dendromecon rigida* (bush poppy scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Isocoma menziesii* (Menzie's golden bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia apiana* (white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia leucophylla* (purple sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia mellifera* (black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum cinereum* (ashy buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ericameria linearifolia* (narrowleaf goldenbush scrub) Provisional Shrubland Alliance
- *Hazardia squarrosa* (sawtooth golden bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lotus scoparius* ([*Acmispon glaber*] deer weed scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lupinus albifrons* (silver bush lupine scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Malacothamnus fasciculatus* (bush mallow scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Alluvial Scrub: Consists of a mixture of shrubs that colonize sandy-gravelly flood deposited soils within intermittent creeks, arroyos, and drier terraces in large washes. This community intergrades with sage scrub communities and riparian communities and, therefore, occurs adjacent to these communities. Great basin sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), scalebroom (*Lepidospartum squamatum*), quail bush (*Atriplex lentiformis*), and skunk bush (*Rhus aromatica*). Alluvial scrub is predominantly found at the northern end of the SEA in Salt Canyon.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub)

Shrubland Alliance

- *Lepidospartum squamatum* (scalebroom scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Malosma laurina* (laurel sumac scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Coast Live Oak Woodlands: Commonly occur along drainages that experience at least a seasonal flow or in other areas under mesic conditions. Soil structure and soil moisture are the most important limiting factors for the survival of oak woodlands; soils must be deep, uncompacted, fertile, well-aerated, and well-drained. This community is dominated by coast live oak. If sufficient groundwater is present, western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), which is usually associated with riparian habitats, may also occur in the oak woodland. Oak woodlands occupy areas within the canyons and drainages of the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

Valley Oak Woodland: An open-canopy woodland found on deep, well-drained alluvial soils below 2,000 feet. This community is almost exclusively dominated by valley oak (*Quercus* lobata) with a grassy understory to form a savannah-like community. This community is located in small pockets in the eastern portion of the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Quercus lobata* (valley oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

Mainland Cherry Forest: Not well described, but is typically composed of tall stands of holly leaf cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*) on rocky, dry, north-facing slopes. Within the SEA, coast live oak is co-dominant within this community and can be found in canyons in the northern portion of the SEA. This community can also be found in association with alluvial scrub in the northwestern portion of the SEA as it approaches the Santa Clara River.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Prunus ilicifolia* (Holly leaf cherry chaparral) Shrubland Alliance

Grassland Communities: Consist of low, herbaceous vegetation that are dominated by grasses but generally also harbor native forbs and bulbs, as well as naturalized annual forbs. Topographic factors that contribute to grassland presence include gradual slopes or flat areas with deep, well-developed soils in areas below 3,000 above MSL. The species richness of grassland communities is dependent upon a number of land use factors, including intensity and duration of natural or anthropogenic disturbances, such as grazing. Heavily grazed grasslands have a lower species richness.

Native grassland is often associated with coastal sage scrub and is found in pockets in close proximity to coastal sage scrub and non-native grassland. This community consists of at least 10 percent relative cover of native herbaceous plants (grasses and forbs). The remaining vegetative cover is made up of non-native grasses found in annual grassland and a variety of annual, showy flowers, such as golden stars (*Bloomeria crocea*) and blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*). Small patches of native grassland can be found scattered throughout the SEA mostly in openings in coastal sage scrub and mixed with non-native grasslands.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Leymus condensatus* (giant wild rye grassland) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Nassella cernua* ([*Stipa cernua*] nodding needle grass grassland) Provisional Herbaceous Alliance
- *Nassella lepida* ([*Stipa lepida*] foothill needle grass grassland) Provisional Herbaceous Alliance
- *Nassella pulchra* ([*Stipa pulchra*] purple needle grass grassland) Herbaceous Alliance

Non-native grassland consists of dominant invasive annual grasses that are primarily of Mediterranean origin. Dominant species found within this community include slender wild oat (*Avena barbata*), wild oat (*A. fatua*), ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), and red brome (*B. madritensis* ssp. *rubens*).

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Avena (barbata, fatua)* (Wild oats grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Brassica (nigra) and other mustards* (Upland mustards) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus (diandrus,hordeaceus)-Brachypodium distachyon* (Annual brome grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus rubens-Schismus (arabicus, barbatus)* ([*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*] Red brome or Mediterranean grass grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Centaurea (solstitialis, melitensis)* (Yellow star-thistle fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Lolium perenne* ([*Festuca perennis*] perennial rye grass fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands

Southern Willow Scrub: A riparian community occurring within and adjacent to watercourses. The vegetation within this community is adapted to seasonal flooding. Southern willow scrub is characterized by dense, broad leafed, winter-deciduous riparian thickets dominated by one or more willow species (*Salix* spp.) Most stands are too dense to allow understory development. The dominant species of this community within the SEA are arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*), and red willow (*S. laevigata*), with less common associates such as mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*). This community occurs in segments along portions of the intermittent drainages within the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Salix exigua* (Sandbar willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salix lasiolepis* (Arroyo willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance

Southern Cottonwood-Willow Riparian Forest: Consists of an open, broad-leaved, winter-deciduous riparian forest dominated by Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), black cottonwood (*P. trichocarpa*), and several willow species, including arroyo willow and red willow. This community occupies much of the Santa Clara River adjacent to the northern boundary of the SEA, and also occurs within the larger, intermittent and perennial drainages within the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Populus fremontii* (fremont cottonwood forest) Forest Alliance
- *Populus trichocarpa* (black cottonwood forest) Forest Alliance

Disturbed or Barren Areas: Areas that either completely lack vegetation or are dominated by ruderal species. Ruderal vegetation typically found onsite include non-native grasses and a high proportion of weedy species, including tocalote, telegraph weed, tree tobacco, doveweed, black mustard, and thistle species. Several disturbed areas occur scattered throughout the SEA and take the form of residential developments, highways, fire breaks, dirt access roads, trails, transmission poles, and other similarly disturbed areas.

Corresponding MCV communities:

No corresponding communities at this time

Wildlife

Wildlife within the SEA is generally diverse and abundant due to the large acreage of natural open space and the diversity of habitat types. While a few wildlife species are entirely dependent on a single vegetative community, the entire mosaic of all the vegetation communities within the SEA and adjoining areas constitutes a functional ecosystem for a variety of wildlife species; this applies to the SEA and the regional ecosystem.

The analysis of invertebrates in this study is difficult due to the lack of data, although limited studies have been conducted. The SEA is believed to support healthy populations of a diverse assortment of countless invertebrate species. Amphibian populations are generally restricted in semi-arid and arid habitats but may be particularly abundant where riparian areas occur. The SEA is likely to support a variety of amphibians in abundance within wetland areas along the major canyon bottoms and the moister oak woodland areas. Many essential reptilian habitat characteristics, such as open habitats that allow free movement and high visibility, and small mammal burrows for cover and escape from predators and extreme weather, are present within the SEA. These characteristics, as well as the variety of habitat types present, are likely to support a wide variety of reptilian species.

The scrubland, woodland, riparian, and grassland habitats in the SEA provide foraging and cover habitat for year-round residents, seasonal residents, and migrating song birds. In addition, the SEA encompasses many year-round water sources, abundant raptor foraging, perching, and nesting habitat. The combination of these resources, as well as the mosaic of many community types, provide for an unusually high diversity of bird species. Several of these species may use this SEA as their only consistent occurrence in the southeastern portion of the County.

Mammal populations within the SEA are diverse and reflective of the diversity of habitat types. Unlike many other inland hills within the Los Angeles Basin, this SEA is large enough to support relatively stable and large mammal populations despite the urban surroundings; even the large carnivores, including the black bear and mountain lion, are known from the SEA. This indicates the presence of intact food chains and complete communities that have a complex, resilient food web.

All wildlife species previously recorded, as well as those expected to occur, within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium* of the *Los Angeles County SEAs*. Sensitive wildlife species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Wildlife Movement

The SEA includes several important linkages for wildlife movement. The Simi Hills and Santa Susana Mountains provide a vast open space corridor to foster wildlife movement between the Santa Monica Mountains to the south, San Gabriel Mountains to the east, and Los Padres National Forest to the north in the western San Gabriel Mountains of the Transverse Ranges. Dense, natural habitat associated with

the majority of the SEA provides excellent opportunities for concealment and water sources, while the grasslands provide an abundance of prey. Examples of wildlife that use these linkages include mountain lion (*Puma concolor*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), and a number of medium-sized animals.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition. When species are federally-listed as endangered or threatened, they often have federally-designated, geographically-specific "critical habitat areas." Critical habitat areas, after extensive study by experts, are judged to be essential to conservation and maintenance of the species. Critical habitats for the Braunton's milkvetch and coastal California gnatcatcher are described in the General Boundary and Resources Description section.

Sensitive Plan Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. These communities include chamise-white sage chaparral, holly leaf cherry chaparral, California brittle bush scrub, white sage scrub, narrowleaf goldenbush scrub, sawtooth golden bush scrub, scalebroom scrub, valley oak woodland, holly leaf cherry chaparral, giant wild rye grassland, nodding needle grass grassland, foothill needle grass grassland, purple needle grass grassland, Fremont cottonwood forest, and black cottonwood forest, which occur throughout the SEA. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section.

Sensitive Plant Species

The statuses of rare plants are hierarchically categorized by the CNPS using a rank and decimal system. The initial category level of Rare Plant Rank is indicated by the ranks 1A (presumed extinct in California), 1B (rare or endangered in California and elsewhere), 2 (rare or endangered in California but more common elsewhere), 3 (more information needed, a review list), and 4 (limited distribution). In cases where the CNPS has further identified the specific threat to the species, a decimal or Threat Code is added: .1 (seriously endangered in California), .2 (fairly endangered in California), or .3 (not very endangered in California).

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Norris' beard moss (*Didymodon norrisii*) RPR 2.2
- Sonoran maiden fern (*Thelypteris puberula* var. *sonorensis*) RPR 2.2
- Braunton's milk-vetch (*Astragalus brauntonii*) FE, RPR 1B.1
- Nevin's barberry (*Berberis nevinii*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Round-leaved filaree (*California macrophylla*) RPR 1B.1
- Peirson's morning-glory (*Calystegia peirsonii*) RPR 4.2
- Southern tarplant (*Centromadia parryi* ssp. *australis*) RPR 1B.1
- San Fernando Valley spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *fernandina*) FC, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Santa Susana tarplant (*Deinandra minthornii*) Rare, RPR 1B.2
- San Gabriel bedstraw (*Galium grande*) RPR 1B.2
- Palmer's grapplinghook (*Harpagonella palmeri*) RPR 4.2
- Newhall sunflower (*Helianthus inexpectatus*) RPR 1B.1
- Los Angeles sunflower (*Helianthus nuttallii* ssp. *parishii*) RPR 1A
- Mesa horkelia (*Horkelia cuneata* ssp. *puberula*) RPR 1B.1
- Coulter's goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata* ssp. *coulteri*) RPR 1B.1
- Davidson's bushmallow (*Malacothamnus davidsonii*) RPR 1B.2
- Mud nama (*Nama stenocarpum*) RPR 2.2
- Moran's navarretia (*Navarretia fossalis*) FT, RPR 1B.1
- Ojai navarretia (*Navarretia ojaiensis*) RPR 1B.1
- White rabbit-tobacco (*Pseudognaphalium leucocephalum*) RPR 2.2
- Chaparral ragwort (*Senecio aphanactis*) RPR 2.2
- Greata's aster (*Symphyotrichum greatae*) RPR 1B.3
- Slender mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*) RPR 1B.2
- Late-flowered mariposa lily (*Calochortus fimbriatus*) RPR 1B.2
- Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) RPR 1B.2
- Chaparral nolina (*Nolina cismontana*) RPR 1B.2
- California Orcutt grass (*Orcuttia californica*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1

Sensitive Animal Species

The following vertebrate species are state and/or federally-listed as endangered or threatened, and have the potential to occur in the SEA:

- Riverside fairy shrimp (*Streptocephalus woottoni*) FE
- Unarmored threespine stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus williamsoni*) FE, FSS, SE, CDFG Fully Protected
- Arroyo toad (*Anaxyrus californicus*) FE, SSC
- California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) FT, SSC
- Sierra Madre yellow-legged frog (*Rana muscosa*) FE, FSS, SSC
- Western spadefoot (*Spea hammondii*) BLMS, SSC
- Silvery legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra pulchra*) FSS, SSC
- Coastal whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Rosy boa (*Charina trivirgata*) BLMS, FSS
- San Bernardino ringneck snake (*Diadophis punctatus modestus*) FSS
- Western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- San Diego mountain kingsnake (*Lampropeltis zonata pulchra*) FSS, SSC

- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Coast patch-nosed snake (*Salvadora hexalepis virgultea*) SSC
- Two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Cooper's hawk (nesting) (*Accipiter cooperii*) CDFG Watch List
- Tricolored blackbird (nesting colony) (*Agelaius tricolor*) BCC, BLMS, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*) CDFG Watch List
- Grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Bell's sage sparrow (*Amphispiza belli belli*) BCC, CDFG Watch List
- Golden eagle (nesting and wintering) (*Aquila chrysaetos*) BCC, BLMS, CDFG Watch List, CDFG Fully Protected, CDF
- Burrowing owl (burrow sites) (*Athene cunicularia*) BCC, BLMS, SSC
- Western yellow-billed cuckoo (*nesting*) (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*) FC, BCC, FSS, SE
- Yellow warbler (nesting) (*Dendroica petechia brewsteri*) SSC
- White-tailed kite (nesting) (*Elanus leucurus*) CDFG Fully Protected
- California horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris actia*) CDFG Watch List, LAA (full species, coastal slope)
- California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*) FE, SE, CDF, CDFG Fully Protected, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Yellow-breasted chat (nesting) (*Icteria virens*) SSC
- Loggerhead shrike (nesting) (*Lanius ludovicianus*) BCC, SSC, LAA (coastal slope wintering)
- Coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) FT, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Bank swallow (nesting) (*Riparia riparia*) ST
- Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) FE, BCC, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) FSS, BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Spotted bat (*Euderma maculatum*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Silver-haired bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*) WBWG Medium
- Western red bat (*Lasiurus blossevilli*) FSS, WBWG High
- Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*) WBWG Medium
- San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus bennettii*) SSC
- California leaf-nosed bat (*Macrotus californicus*) FSS, SSC, WBWG High
- South coast marsh vole (*Microtus californicus stephensi*) SSC
- Western small-footed myotis (*Myotis ciliolabrum*) BLMS, WBWG Medium
- Yuma myotis (*Myotis yumaensis*) BLMS, WBWG Low–Medium
- San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*) SSC
- Southern grasshopper mouse (*Onychomys torridus ramona*) SSC
- Los Angeles pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris brevinasus*) FSS, SSC
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) SSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

There are no ETAs designated within this SEA.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets several SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met described below .

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Met	Most of the SEA has critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher. A population of the Braunton's milkvetch has critical habitat in the Simi Hills part of the SEA. The SEA has robust populations of rare plants, such as the Plummer's mariposa lily and the Santa Susana tarweed.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	The SEA contains habitat of the extremely rare Santa Susana tarplant. In addition, several plant communities within the SEA are CDFG highest inventory priority communities due to their restricted distribution in the Southern California region. These communities include: coastal sage scrub, alluvial scrub, valley oak woodland, valley oak savannah, mainland cherry woodland, native grassland, southern willow scrub, and cottonwood-willow riparian forest.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	All of the plant communities and habitats mentioned above as being restricted in distribution on a regional basis are further restricted in distribution within the County.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	The open space of the SEA allows for connectivity between the Santa Monica Mountains and the San Gabriel Mountains (both the eastern and western sections). Due to the development within the San Fernando Valley and the valley of the Santa Clara River, this is an important corridor for gene flow and species movement.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	The SEA contains several populations that are unusual or at the extreme ends of their distributions: Douglas-fir, both big cone and the Douglas-fir common to the north, and coastal California gnatcatcher at its western extent. Several unusual vegetation alliances are in the Mountains, for example groves of walnuts and flowering ash. Flowering ash are uncommonly tall. The Santa Susana Mountains contain some representatives of the desert Palmer's oak, which is unusual in the County.

Criterion		Status	Justification
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	The relatively undisturbed nature and large size of the plant communities within the Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills provides many undisturbed examples of native, natural communities within the County.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: A) core habitats of listed species; B-C) biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are restricted in distribution in the County and regionally; D) a very essential migration corridor, which is limited in availability in the County; E) unusual populations at the extreme ends of their distributions that are of scientific interest; and F) areas that provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of original natural biotic communities in the County.

24. Terminal Island (Pier 400) SEA

Location

General

The Terminal Island (Pier 400) Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located in the southernmost part of the County within the Port of Los Angeles. Terminal Island (Pier 400) supports one of the few remaining areas for breeding utilized by the endangered least terns. The SEA is an artificial dredge spoil island located generally in San Pedro Bay within the Port of Los Angeles. Pier 400 is in the outer harbor area, and the least tern nesting area is on the southern end. It is protected from future development per inter-agency agreement among the Port of Los Angeles, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The area was specifically designed for least tern nesting and is maintained with buffer from the surrounding Port development, close range to foraging areas, and clearing of the flat sandy area to have little vegetation. During the nesting season (April-August) the site is designated as a no-trespassing area. When least terns nest outside the designated boundaries, a buffer is established for the nest(s) until the chicks are fledged. At other times, the Port may use the site for temporary purposes as long as it is restored prior to the following nesting season. The SEA corresponds directly to the California Audubon-designated Globally Important Bird Area (IBA), Pier 400 Tern Colony IBA.

The site is located in the Long Beach and San Pedro Quadrangles of the United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5 Minute Map Series (USGS, 1964).

General Boundary and Resources Description

The SEA is not on a natural island. It is an approximately 15-acre fenced area on the south end of Pier 400, part of Terminal Island, in the Los Angeles Harbor. The area is maintained, prepared, and monitored annually by the Port of Los Angeles for the least tern. The nesting site was created, along with the entire Pier 400 peninsula, of material dredged from the Los Angeles Harbor from 1995-2003. The substrate consists of sand with small rocks and many shell pieces. Non-native flora colonize the area every year. Every year before the breeding period, the Port of Los Angeles has the plants surveyed and then cleared to prepare the terrain for what least terns prefer—a flat sandy area that is virtually free of vegetation that the terns can scrape to provide a shallow depression for their eggs. The northern part of Pier 400 is now a shipping container terminal. There is an undeveloped area, covered with low, volunteer vegetation, west of the SEA that may someday be used by the Port. The SEA site has been used by the least tern for nesting since it was created in 1997. The SEA and the adjacent field on the west are separated and protected from Port activity by a chainlink fence with locked gate. In addition, the SEA has a peripheral chick fence to keep the chicks from wandering off the SEA area.

Vegetation

The vegetation in this SEA was removed in 2003 and 2004 to allow additional nesting area for the least tern. The common species seen include sea rocket (*Cakile maritima*), tree tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*), Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*), puncture vine (*Tribulus terrestris*), and sow thistle (*Sonchus*

oleraceus). This removal was judged a success, and clearing has been continued in recent years. Sensitive plant communities have not been found on the site.

Wildlife

Wildlife diversity and abundance within the SEA is limited by its remote location, only accessible by terrestrial animals after traversing long distances through industrial facilities and the narrow, paved causeway of access. Feral cats, rats and mice, and birds associated with development in the region, such as gulls, crows, rock doves, house finches, house sparrows and mockingbirds have been recorded in the area. Native herons that could prey upon the least tern chicks have been observed in the area. The site was also used for breeding in 2011 by two other species that prefer bare, scraped areas: black skimmers (*Rynchops niger*) and Caspian terns (*Hydroprogne caspia*). Many types of shore birds are found nearby.

Wildlife Movement

The site is a low quality habitat for terrestrial animal foraging, and it does not lie within any identified terrestrial movement routes for wildlife. However, it is well located as a linkage site for migratory waterfowl and some birds, specifically the least tern. Surrounding bay waters on three sides provide suitable area for the least tern foraging. The principle prey items they seek are small, schooling fish that frequent the surface area of bay and estuarine waters.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition.

The site of this SEA is entirely artificial, but it provides the least terns the ideal kind of substrate they prefer: a flat sandy area, devoid of vegetation, that they can scrape for a nesting depression. Artificially created sites (inadvertently created by development) are frequently chosen for breeding by least terns. The site has been used by the least tern for nesting since it was created in 1997 and has been continually managed for this use.

Sensitive Plan Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports no habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies, namely the CDFG California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDB) [2011].

Sensitive Plant Species

No sensitive plants are expected to occur within this SEA.

Sensitive Animal Species

The California least tern (*Sternula antillarum browni*) is both state and federally-endangered. It nests in the SEA and forages in shallow water near the nest site. The western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrus nivosus*) is listed as a federally-threatened species and California species of concern, and migrants have been seen but have not nested. Black skimmers ([F-BCC, CA-SSC]) used the site for nesting in the 2011 season.

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

There are no ETAs designated within this SEA.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets several SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met is described below.

CRITERIA ANALYSIS OF THE TERMINAL ISLAND (PIER 400) SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Met	This area was set aside because endangered least terns use it for breeding in the summer. Their breeding depends on availability of forage fish, and they may not use the area consistently. In addition there may be some breeding by the black skimmer (bird of concern for the State and USFWS).
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	This area was set aside because endangered least terns use it for breeding in the summer. Their breeding depends on availability of forage fish, and they may not use the area consistently. In addition there may be some breeding by the black skimmer (bird of concern for the State and USFWS).
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	The least tern typically breeds in flat sandy areas that are created by disturbance, but are free of disturbance and vegetation during the breeding period. The area needs to be close to a source of the terns' prey, which are small, estuarine or surface-schooling marine fishes. The choice breeding areas require no disturbance because the terns make an unsheltered scoop for a nest, and eggs and nestlings would be crushed by constant traffic of vehicles or pedestrians. This kind of habitat was once common along the beaches of Southern California, but has nearly disappeared as estuaries have been filled and channelized, and sandy beaches have become a favorite Southern California recreation area.

Criterion		Status	Justification
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	Los Angeles has many fine beaches that are potential nesting sites, but nearly all have become recreation areas. The terns have continued to use the areas with protection from disturbance, which are a small number compared to the previously available undisturbed sites.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	The Terminal Island site is named as an SEA for the summer bird breeding that occurs.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Not Met	Due to the artificial construct of the area, the SEA does not serve as a relatively undisturbed example of the original natural biotic communities in the County.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: A) the habitat of core populations of endangered and threatened plant and animal species; B-C) biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution in the County and regionally; D) concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds, which are limited in availability in the County; and E) biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.

25. Tujunga Valley and Hansen Dam SEA

Location

General

The Tujunga Valley and Hansen Dam Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located on the northern edge of the San Fernando Valley. The SEA consists of the Tujunga Valley and Wash, starting in the riparian areas of the Big Tujunga, which is the main tributary of the Los Angeles River, within the Angeles National Forest and stretching to include Hansen Dam, Hansen Dam Flood Control Basin, Hansen Dam Park, Hansen Dam Golf Course, Tujunga Wash, and industrial areas downstream of the Hansen Dam. The SEA is entirely in the City of Los Angeles. Most of the part of the SEA upstream, including the Hansen Dam, is a California Audubon-designated State Important Bird Area (IBA), which is part of the Los Angeles Flood Control Basin IBA. The Big Tujunga area is recognized for its great importance to migrating birds on the Pacific Flyway as well as the very rare habitat of alluvial fan scrub, which has uncommon resident birds. The Tujunga Wash above Hansen Dam and into the Angeles National Forest beyond the SEA is designated critical habitat for the federally-threatened Santa Ana sucker (*Catastomus santaanae*). Two other fishes of the original native four for the Los Angeles River also occur in the Wash and upstream in the Big Tujunga: arroyo chub (*Gila orcuttii*) and an unnamed subspecies of the speckled dace group (*Rhinichthys osculus* ssp. 3).

The SEA is located within portions of the United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Quadrangles: San Fernando, Sunland and Van Nuys.

General Boundary and Resources Description

The SEA boundary encompasses the Tujunga Valley Wash and the Hansen Dam Recreation area. The SEA begins in the Angeles National Forest downstream of the confluence of Pipe Canyon with the Big Tujunga, and generally includes the Wash area for much of its extent. The Wash most of the time has water, and from downstream at Hansen Lake (in the Hansen Dam Park) to beyond the upstream area of the SEA, is critical habitat for the federally-threatened Santa Ana sucker (*Catostomus santaanae*). This critical habitat extends beyond the SEA and beyond the Big Tujunga Dam to near the headwaters in both Mill Creek and the Upper Big Tujunga Canyon. The state fish species of concern, speckled dace (*Rhinichthys osculus* ssp. 3) and arroyo chub (*Gila orcuttii*) also occur here. A finger extends off the Wash, up a ridge with native chaparral habitat towards Mount Lukens. The boundary travels east to west, and the Wash receives multiple tributaries from the north and south as it flows west. The northeastern end of the Los Angeles Flood Basins IBA begins at about the crossing of Oro Vista Avenue over the Big Tujunga Wash. The clubhouse part of the Angeles National Golf Club next to Foothill Boulevard is excluded from the SEA, but most of the golf course, which has the natural braids of the wash running among its greens, is included in the SEA. East and adjacent to the golf course is a state reserve area for the state and federally-endangered slender-horned spineflower (*Dodecahema leptoceras*). This diminutive wash plant is known locally from Santa Clarita to the east end of the San Bernardino Mountains, and south to the Santa Ana Mountains. It is endangered due to all kinds of

development that alters wash flood plains. The golf course area once had and may still have some plants.

The Wash, golf course, and the reserve area have an unusual remnant vegetation of alluvial fan scrub, with California junipers (*Juniperus californica*), cactus patches of prickly-pear (*Opuntia littoralis*) and cholla (*O. parryi*), in conjunction with the usual riparian and scrub plants. The very sensitive coastal cactus wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus sandiegensis*) is in residence in this area. The natural area of riparian vegetation is on the banks of the Wash, golf course, and reserve next to the Wash, as well as with a remnant native forest in the stream course of Haines Canyon Creek, which joins the Wash at the golf course. This kind of habitat, which once covered the bajada of coalescing coastal alluvial fans next to the mountains of the County has been nearly extirpated by development and flood control. It is only represented in a few places in the County. The San Gabriel Canyon SEA has another example at the Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area. Migratory waterfowl often use the ponds of the golf course that are filled by Haines Canyon Creek and the Big Tujunga. The alluvial fan habitat mixed with riparian forest continues across the Interstate-210 as the Big Tujunga Wash approaches and flows into Hansen Dam Park.

The SEA has a broad undercrossing of the Interstate-210, which includes a braid of its tributary Haines Canyon Creek crossing under Foothill Boulevard next to Wentworth Street. The Wentworth Street undercrossing is important to wildlife, as it connects to somewhat dispersed horse ranchettes in the Shadow Hills and from there to the natural areas of the Verdugo Mountains and the Verdugo Mountains SEA. Mountain lions may live in the Verdugo Mountains, which would be an important connection for that population as well as for other animals and plants of the Verdugo Mountains.

The Hansen Dam Park is a meeting area for migratory birds with its perennial water and riparian forest that includes some giant sycamores (*Platanus racemosa*) and cottonwoods (*Populus fremontii*). It is a favorite of bird watchers, and the species list has about 260 species. Unusual species have been observed here, such as the federally-endangered coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*). Downstream of the Dam, the Hansen Dam Golf Course is included as an ETA, since the pools and mix of native riparian vegetation along with the ornamentals is attractive to wildlife. The downstream side of the earthen Hansen Dam has been planted with coastal sage scrub, and may be attractive to the gnatcatcher. The quarry and recharge areas have many spots of willow scrub and occasional other native vegetation. The quarry and the recharge pool areas are included in the SEA as ETAs up to the undercrossing of San Fernando Boulevard.

The area southwest of the Dam is used as a spreading ground. This has created several freshwater marsh areas that are used by marsh birds, migratory waterfowl, and shore birds. The area is also valuable as a wildlife corridor. The vegetation in the Tujunga Valley runs nearly uninterrupted from the foot of the Verdugo Mountains well up into the San Gabriel Mountains. The area has been recognized for its importance, and is used by the Audubon Society and local universities and colleges as a sample of a rapidly disappearing habitat type. As a result, the resources of the area are well known.

Vegetation

The SEA possesses several important features. The floodplain behind Hansen Dam supports one of the last examples of open coastal sage scrub vegetation that was once found in the numerous arroyos of the Los Angeles Basin. Portions of the river bottom have surface moisture, and support small pockets of fresh water marsh, which is another limited resource in the County. The remainder of the arroyo and surrounding hillsides are dry, and support several species of plants that are otherwise found only on the desert slopes of the San Gabriel Mountains. Populations of Nevin's barberry (*Berberis nevinii*) and slender-horned spineflower have been found in the Tujunga Valley Wash. Both species are extremely limited in distribution and have been placed on the federal endangered species list.

Vegetation within the SEA is comprised of a variety of community types. The diversity of the communities reflects the topography of the area. All plant species observed or recorded in previous documentation within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium* of the *Los Angeles County SEA Update Study 2000 Background Report*. Sensitive plant species and plant communities occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Descriptions and general locations of the each plant community present within the SEA are given below.

Chaparral: A shrub community composed of robust species. Within this SEA, a number of chaparral sub-communities are found, which are differentiated by their dominant plant species. These include chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), buck brush (*Ceanothus* spp.), scrub oak (*Quercus berberidifolia*), interior live oak (*Quercus wislizenii*) and mosaics of these depending on mixes of species and elevation. These and other shrub species form dense vegetation covers growing 5 to 10 feet in height. The development of chaparral is pronounced over large hillside areas throughout the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Adenostoma fasciculatum* (chamise chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Adenostoma fasciculatum-Salvia apiana* (chamise-white sage chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus greggii* [*vestitus*] (cup leaf ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus oliganthus* (hairy leaf ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Prunus ilicifolia* (holly leaf cherry chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Rhus ovata* (sugarbush chaparral) Shrubland Alliance

Coastal Sage Scrub: Consists of drought-deciduous, low, soft-leafed shrubs and herbs on gentle to steep slopes under 1,500 feet in elevation. This community is dominated by California sagebrush, California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*), and California brittle bush (*Encelia californica*). Coastal sage scrub is distributed throughout the SEA along dry ridgelines, slopes, and other areas previously disturbed by fire.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica* (California sagebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Salvia mellifera* (California sagebrush-black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub)

Shrubland Alliance

- *Encelia californica* (California brittle bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Dendromecon rigida* (bush poppy scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Diplacus* [*Mimulus*] *aurantiacus* (bush monkeyflower scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia apiana* (white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia leucophylla* (purple sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia mellifera* (black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lotus scoparius* [*Acmispon glaber*] (deer weed scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Non-Native Grassland: Consists of dominant invasive annual grasses that are primarily of Mediterranean origin. Dominant species found within this community include wild oat (*Avena fatua*), slender oat, red brome, ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), and herbs such as black mustard and wild radish. Non-native grasslands are located in small to large patches throughout the SEA in previously disturbed areas, cattle pastures, valley bottoms, and along road sides.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Avena* (*barbata*, *fatua*) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Brassica* (*nigra*) and other mustards Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus* (*diandrus*, *hordeaceus*)-*Brachypodium distachyon* Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus rubens-Schismus* (*arabicus*, *barbatus*) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Lolium perenne* ([*Festuca perennis*] perennial rye grass fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands

Coast Live Oak Woodland: Dominated by coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia* var. *agrifolia*) with a poorly developed shrub layer, which may include toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), golden currant (*Ribes aureum*), laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*), western blue elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* var. *caerulea*), and mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*). Some coast live oak woodlands in the area include scattered Southern California black walnut (*Juglans californica*) or valley oak (*Quercus lobata*). This community occurs throughout the SEA and generally along canyon bottoms and more mesic north-facing slopes.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

Cottonwood-Willow Riparian Forest: An open broad-leafed winter-deciduous riparian forest dominated by Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), arroyo willow (*Salix lasiolepis*), and red willow (*Salix laevigata*). This community occurs in segments along of many of the drainages, ponds, and lakes throughout the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Populus fremontii* (Fremont cottonwood woodlands) Forest Alliance
- *Salix lasiolepis* (arroyo willow thickets) Woodland Alliance
- *Salix laevigata* (red willow thickets) Woodland Alliance

Freshwater Marsh: Small areas supporting freshwater marsh are found at scattered locations. Freshwater marsh requires perennially shallow water or saturated soils. Dominant plants are emergent species including cattails and bulrushes.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Phragmites australis* (common reed marshes) Herbaceous Alliance and Semi-Natural Stands
- *Schoenoplectus californicus* (California bulrush marsh) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Typha* (*angustifolia*, *domingenis*, *latifolia*) (cattail marshes) Herbaceous Alliance
- *Lemna* (*minor*) and relatives Provisional (duckweed blooms) Herbaceous Alliance

Disturbed or Barren Areas: Areas that either completely lack vegetation or are dominated by ruderal species. Ruderal vegetation typically found within the SEA include non-native grasses and a high proportion of weedy species, including black mustard and thistle species. Several disturbed areas are scattered throughout the SEA and take the form of residential developments, paved roads, fire breaks, dirt access roads, trails, and other similarly disturbed areas.

Corresponding MCV communities:

No corresponding communities at this time

Wildlife

Wildlife within the SEA is generally diverse and abundant due to large acreages of natural open space and diversity of habitat types. While a few wildlife species are entirely dependent on a single vegetative community, the entire mosaic of all the vegetation communities within the SEA and adjoining areas constitutes a functional ecosystem for a variety of wildlife species, both within the SEA and as part of the regional ecosystem.

The analysis of invertebrates in this study is severely limited due to the lack of data; the SEA, however, undoubtedly supports healthy populations of a diverse assortment of invertebrate species. The native fish populations have been augmented with many additions of non-native fishes from other places, particularly those that are often fished. Amphibian populations are plentiful in the SEA due to the high moisture content provided by freshwater marshes present, as well as the large number of drainages and flood control basin.

The SEA is also likely to support a variety of amphibians within the moister woodland areas and canyon bottoms. Common amphibians to the area are salamanders, Baja California chorus frog (*Pseudacris hypochondriaca*), and California toad (*Anaxyrus halophilus*). Many essential reptilian habitat characteristics are present within the SEA. These include rock outcroppings that allow for high visibility and small mammal burrows for cover and escape from predators and extreme weather. These characteristics, as well as the variety of habitat types present, are likely to support a wide variety of reptilian species. Common reptiles to the area are lizards and snakes. The area southwest of the Dam is used as a spreading ground. This has created several fresh water marsh areas that are used by marsh birds, migratory waterfowl, and shore birds. The many year-round water sources located throughout the SEA provide for abundant raptor foraging, perching, and nesting habitat along the slopes of the San Gabriel and Verdugo Mountain Ranges.

The scrubland, woodland, riparian, and grassland habitats in the SEA provide foraging and cover habitat for year-round residents and seasonal residents. Within the Hansen Dam Recreation Area, the mammals that are expected to be found are typical of those that would “occur regularly in disturbed areas and the urban edge.” These include California ground squirrel (*Spermophilus beecheyi*), Botta’s pocket gopher

(*Thomomys bottae*), Virginia opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*), desert cottontail (*Sylvilagus audubonii*), striped and spotted skunks (*Mephitis mephitis and Spilogale gracilis*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), etc. The combination of these resources, as well as the confluence of many community types provides a high diversity of animal species.

Wildlife Movement

Although wildlife movement is hampered by development surrounding the SEA to the south, animals are still able to move through the adjacent hills and valleys, and through the Verdugo Mountains, well up into the San Gabriel Mountains. Due to its large size and topographic complexity, many linkages are certain to occur within the SEA at various bottlenecks. These linkages allow movement between large open space areas within the SEA. Although there are significantly large open spaces within the SEA, contiguous habitat linkages between them are critical in reducing bottlenecks and providing for long-term sustainability. A wide variety of wildlife use linkages throughout the SEA, including mountain lion (*Puma concolor*), coyote, mule deer, bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), and a number of medium-sized mammals. The Wentworth Street underpass of Interstate-210 is a conduit for wildlife through the dispersed residential neighborhoods of the Shadow Hills. The Shadow Hills are the westernmost extent of the Verdugo Mountains, which provide a large area of natural habitat for wildlife.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition. When species are federally-listed as endangered or threatened, they often have federally-designated, geographically-specific "critical habitat areas." Critical habitat areas, after extensive study by experts, are judged to be essential to conservation and maintenance of the species. Most of the stream course of this SEA is critical habitat for the federally-threatened Santa Ana sucker, and also provides habitat for two co-occurring native fish of state concern, the speckled dace and the arroyo chub.

Sensitive Plan Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed earlier in this section (see Section 2, Vegetation, above). These communities include chamise-white sage chaparral, holly leaf cherry chaparral, California brittle bush scrub, bush monkeyflower scrub, white sage scrub, and Fremont cottonwood woodlands, which occur throughout the SEA. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities

by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section.

Sensitive Plant Species

The statuses of rare plants are hierarchically categorized by the CNPS using a rank and decimal system. The initial category level of Rare Plant Rank is indicated by the ranks 1A (presumed extinct in California), 1B (rare or endangered in California and elsewhere), 2 (rare or endangered in California but more common elsewhere), 3 (more information needed, a review list), and 4 (limited distribution). In cases where the CNPS has further identified the specific threat to the species, a decimal or Threat Code is added: .1 (seriously endangered in California), .2 (fairly endangered in California), or .3 (not very endangered in California).

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Braunton's milk-vetch (*Astragalus brauntonii*) FE, RPR 1B.1
- Nevin's barberry (*Berberis nevinii*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Lewis' evening-primrose (*Camissonia lewisii*) RPR 3
- Southern tarplant (*Centromadia parryi* ssp. *australis*) RPR 1B.1
- San Fernando Valley spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *fernandina*) FC, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Parry's spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *parryi*) RPR 1B.1
- Slender-horned spineflower (*Dodecahema leptoceras*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Mesa horkelia (*Horkelia cuneata* ssp. *puberula*) RPR 1B.1
- Coulter's goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata* ssp. *coulteri*) RPR 1B.1
- Davidson's bushmallow (*Malacothamnus davidsonii*) RPR 1B.2
- White rabbit-tobacco (*Pseudognaphalium leucocephalum*) RPR 2.2
- Chaparral ragwort (*Senecio aphanactis*) RPR 2.2
- Greata's aster (*Symphyotrichum greatae*) RPR 1B.3
- Slender mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*) RPR 1B.2
- Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) RPR 1B.2
- California satintail (*Imperata brevifolia*) RPR 2.1

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and known range attributes:

- California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) FT, SSC
- Western spadefoot (*Spea hammondii*) BLMS, SSC
- Coast Range newt (*Taricha torosa*) SSC
- Silvery legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra pulchra*) FSS, SSC
- Coastal whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Western pond turtle (*Emys marmorata*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) CDFG Watch List
- Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*) CDFG Watch List
- Bell's sage sparrow (*Amphispiza belli belli*) BCC, CDFG Watch List

- Western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*) FC, BCC, FSS, SE
- White-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*) CDFG Fully Protected
- Southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) FE, FSS, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- California horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris actia*) CDFG Watch List, LAA
- Prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*) BCC, CDFG Watch List, LAA
- American peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus anatum*) BCC, FSS, SE, CDF, CDFG Fully Protected, AWL, ABC
- Coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) FT, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) FE, BCC, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) FSS, BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Spotted bat (*Euderma maculatum*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Silver-haired bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*) WBWG Medium
- Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*) WBWG Medium
- Western yellow bat (*Lasiurus xanthinus*) WBWG High
- San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus bennettii*) SSC
- California leaf-nosed bat (*Macrotus californicus*) FSS, SSC, WBWG High
- San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*) SSC
- Big free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops macrotis*) SSC, WBWG Medium-High
- Southern grasshopper mouse (*Onychomys torridus ramona*) SSC
- Los Angeles pocket mouse (*Perognathus longimembris brevinasus*) FSS, SSC
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) SSC
- Santa Ana sucker (*Catostomus santaanae*) FT, SSC
- Arroyo chub (*Gila orcuttii*) SSC
- Santa Ana speckled dace (*Rhinichthys osculus* ssp. 3) SSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

ETAs in this SEA are chiefly on the south side of Hansen Dam and include the dam restoration of coastal sage scrub, the golf course with intermixed native and ornamental plants, a quarry, and the spreading grounds along the course of the Tujunga Creek. These areas are very attractive to birds, both residents and migrants, and connect the values of the SEA resource area to areas both upstream and downstream from the SEA.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets all SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met is described below.

CRITERIA ANALYSIS OF THE TUJUNGA VALLEY AND HANSEN DAM SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Met	The Tujunga Valley Wash supports populations of the federally-endangered plants Nevin's barberry and slender-horned spineflower. Most of the SEA is critical habitat for the federally-threatened Santa Ana sucker. Two other

			sensitive native fishes, speckled dace and arroyo chub, co-occur with the sucker. Coastal California gnatcatcher may be a resident of the area. The coastal cactus wren nests in the alluvial fan vegetation of the SEA.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	The stream is naturally perennial, but largely controlled by the upstream Big Tujunga Dam. Similar wash and floodplain habitat of these plants and fishes is under considerable pressure from development and from flood-control hard channelization throughout Southern California. The rarity of the vegetation extends to other biota that use these areas, and these plants are indicators for a widespread loss of this kind of habitat. Several birds considered species of special concern occur in the SEA. They typically occupy alluvial scrub areas ,such as the outwash fans formerly found where mountain canyons exit onto the plain of the Los Angeles Basin, and are in this habitat in the SEA.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution	Met	The wash and floodplain habitat of these plants, fishes, and birds is under considerable pressure from development and for flood-control hard channelization throughout Los Angeles and is much diminished from the continuous habitat it once was.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	This SEA is located on one of the main tributaries of the Los Angeles River, Tujunga Canyon and connects with the Hansen Dam flood and recharge area. In spite of the channelization of the Los Angeles River, this area is still an important connecting and migration area for plants and wildlife between the San Gabriel Mountains, the Verdugo Mountains, and the San Fernando Valley. It is an important rest area for aerial fauna traveling between the Santa Monica Mountains and the San Gabriel Mountains.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	The scarcity of natural alluvial wash and fan habitats in Los Angeles ensures that the remaining ones are good areas for scientific study of birds and other organisms that were once more common in the Los Angeles area.

F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	The Tujunga Valley Wash is a relatively undisturbed example of the alluvial washes and fans that once lined the mountains of Los Angeles. It is near a fresh water marsh area used as a spreading ground that is southwest of the dam. A fresh water marsh near the stream exit from the mountains would have been typical of the former configuration with faults along the mountain base, creating uneven ground that would contain marsh pockets. Now most of this type of area has been developed for residences, and most of the washes have been altered as flood control projects. The Wash, therefore, is important to preserve.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: A) the habitat of core populations of endangered and threatened plant and animal species; B-C), biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are restricted in distribution on a regional basis and limited in availability in the County; D) habitat for breeding, feeding, resting, and migrating that is limited both in the County and regionally; E) biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community; and F) areas that provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of original natural biotic communities in the County.

26. Valley Oaks Savannah SEA

Location

General

The Valley Oaks Savannah Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located north of the Santa Susana Mountains, approximately one mile south of the Santa Clara River and one mile north of Pico Canyon. The SEA is bordered on the east by Interstate-5 and is situated between Valencia Boulevard and Stevenson Ranch Parkway. To the west, the SEA is bordered by the foothills of the Santa Susana Mountains. The habitat within the SEA was once the emblem of Spanish California, with rolling hills, grasslands and spaced giant valley oaks. This was a chief habitat in the San Fernando Valley when it was filled with wildlife, such as herds of pronghorn. Under the influence of European settlers, these areas were at first cattle range, and then gradually developed into residential neighborhoods.

The SEA is located in the Newhall United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Quadrangle.

General Boundary and Resources Description

The SEA is bordered to the east by Interstate-5 and is situated between Valencia Boulevard on the north and Stevenson Ranch Parkway on the south of the SEA. To the west, the SEA is bordered by the West Ridge residential area of Valencia to the north, and the foothills of the Santa Susana Mountains to the south. The SEA boundary outlines an irregular area of undisturbed grassland savannah with hundreds of valley oaks (*Quercus lobata*). In the north, the SEA includes a small part of the TPC of Valencia (a private golf club) that has retained a number of its valley oaks on the ridges between sections of the golf course. The topography is rolling ridges that trend northeast-southwest along the edge of development. The West Ridge development is on graded areas of those rolling ridges.

The SEA is almost completely undisturbed, except for a few dirt roads. This area contains one of the last remaining stands of valley oak (*Quercus lobata*) in the Santa Clarita Valley. The site consists of specimen trees scattered over the SEA. The adjoining natural hills to the southwest of the SEA have a mixture of plants from the coastal sage chaparral scrub and chaparral communities, which are typical of those found in the Santa Clarita Valley. Other vegetation on the SEA in the southwest area includes coastal sage chaparral scrub and non-native grasses.

The majority of the SEA consists of undisturbed open space bordered by a few high density residential developments. Open space that adjoins the SEA to the southwest is mostly vegetated with dense stands of chaparral. Other types of vegetation, such as woodlands and grasslands, occur in smaller portions that are scattered throughout the adjacent land on moist or north-facing slopes and canyon bottoms. Lesser amounts of coastal sage chaparral scrub are also present, chiefly as an early successional community in areas that have been previously disturbed.

Vegetation

All plant species observed or recorded in previous documentation within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium* of the *Los Angeles County SEA Update Study 2000 Background Report*. More recent survey findings have also been reviewed here in order to reflect the current status of the area. Findings from the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan, Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning, 2010 have been reviewed and included. Sensitive plant species and plant communities occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Descriptions and general locations of the each plant community present within the SEA are given below.

Valley Oak Savannah: An open-canopy woodland found on deep, well-drained alluvial soils below 2,000 feet. This community is almost exclusively dominated by valley oak with scattered coast live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia* var. *agrifolia*) in some areas and a grassy understory of California buckwheat, forming a savannah-like community throughout much of the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Quercus lobata* (valley oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

Coastal Sage Chaparral Scrub Communities: Consist of drought-deciduous, low, soft-leaved shrubs and herbs on gentle to steep slopes under 3,000 feet in elevation. Several dominant species may occur within scrub communities, with some areas overwhelmingly dominated by one or two species. Dominant species include California sagebrush, California buckwheat, California brittle bush (*Encelia californica*), purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*), bush mallow (*Malacothamnus fasciculatus*), Menxie's goldenbush (*Isocoma menziesii*), and deer weed (*Acmispon glaber*).

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica* (California sagebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Salvia mellifera* (California sagebrush-black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Encelia californica* (California brittle bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Dendromecon rigida* (bush poppy scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Isocoma menziesii* (Menzie's golden bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia apiana* (white sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia leucophylla* (purple sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia mellifera* (black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ericameria linearifolia* (narrowleaf goldenbush scrub) Provisional Shrubland Alliance
- *Lotus scoparius* [*Acmispon glaber*] (deer weed scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Malacothamnus fasciculatus* (bush mallow scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Grassland Communities: Consist of low, herbaceous vegetation dominated by grasses, but generally also harbor native forbs and bulbs, as well as naturalized annual forbs. Non-native grassland consists of dominant invasive annual grasses that are primarily of Mediterranean origin. Dominant species found within this community include wild oat, slender wild oat, foxtail chess, ripgut brome, along with

scattered coastal sage chaparral scrub species. Non-native grasslands occur along the western portion of the north boundary of the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Avena* (*barbata*, *fatua*) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Brassica* (*nigra*) and Other Mustards Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus* (*diandrus*,*hordeaceus*)-*Brachypodium distachyon* Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Bromus rubens-Schismus* (*arabicus*, *barbatus*) [*Bromus madritensis* ssp. *rubens*] Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
- *Lolium perenne* [*Festuca perennis*] (perennial rye grass fields) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands

Disturbed or Barren Areas: Areas that either completely lack vegetation or are dominated by ruderal species. Ruderal vegetation typically found within the SEA include non-native grasses and a high proportion of weedy species, including black mustard and thistle species. The primary disturbed areas within the SEA are dirt roadways.

Corresponding MCV communities:

None at this time.

Wildlife

Wildlife populations within the SEA are limited in diversity due to the area's physiographic size and its nearly complete surrounding by development. While a few wildlife species are entirely dependent on a single vegetative community, the entire mosaic of all the vegetation communities within the SEA and adjoining areas constitutes a functional ecosystem for a variety of wildlife species, both within the SEA and as part of the regional ecosystem.

The analysis of invertebrates is severely limited due to the lack of specific data; however, the SEA is likely to support small healthy populations of invertebrate species based on its undisturbed nature and type of habitat. Acorns within the Valley Oak Savannah provide a valuable food source for a variety of wildlife. Also, the mature trees are an important source of nesting and roosting habitat for birds and other arboreal vertebrates. The scrubland, woodland, and grassland habitats in and adjacent to the SEA provide foraging and cover habitat for year-round residents, seasonal residents, and migrating song birds. In addition, the SEA contains abundant raptor foraging, perching, and nesting habitat. Mammal populations within the SEA respond favorably to these habitats. Although mammal populations within the SEA are expected to be limited due to the size of the SEA, they are still likely to utilize the area based on the habitats present. Amphibians may not be abundant due to the lack of water in the SEA; however, shaded areas within the woodland may be moist enough to allow for a few species to occupy the site. Reptilian diversity within the SEA is highest within patches of coastal sage chaparral scrub and may be abundant due the presence of alluvial wash habitat on adjacent property.

Wildlife Movement

Wildlife movement within the SEA is limited to local movement of foraging animals. Although the SEA does not support regional corridors itself, adjacent lands to the west and northwest may be important

linkages for wildlife movement to and from the Santa Susana Mountains and the Santa Clara River. The location of the SEA, therefore, may be important as a corridor buffer and/or adjacent foraging grounds.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition.

Sensitive Plan Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports four plant community types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. These communities include valley oak woodland, California brittle bush scrub, white sage scrub, and narrowleaf goldenbush scrub. The valley oak woodland occupies the majority of the SEA, and the remaining alliances occur in the southwestern part of the SEA. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section.

Sensitive Plant Species

The statuses of rare plants are hierarchically categorized by the CNPS using a rank and decimal system. The initial category level of Rare Plant Rank is indicated by the ranks 1A (presumed extinct in California), 1B (rare or endangered in California and elsewhere), 2 (rare or endangered in California but more common elsewhere), 3 (more information needed, a review list), and 4 (limited distribution). In cases where the CNPS has further identified the specific threat to the species, a decimal or Threat Code is added: .1 (seriously endangered in California), .2 (fairly endangered in California), or .3 (not very endangered in California).

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Peirson's morning-glory (*Calystegia peirsonii*) RPR 4.2
- San Fernando Valley spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *fernandina*) RPR 1B.1, SE, federal candidate (FC)
- Short-joint beavertail (*Opuntia basilaris* var. *brachyclada*) RPR 1B.2
- White rabbit-tobacco (*Pseudognaphalium leucocephalum*) RPR 2.2
- Slender mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*) RPR 1B.2
- Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) RPR 1B.2

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and known range attributes:

- Western spadefoot (*Spea hammondii*) BLMS, SSC
- Silvery legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra pulchra*) FSS, SSC
- Coastal whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Rosy boa (*Charina trivirgata*) BLMS, FSS
- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*) CDFG Watch List
- Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*) CDFG Watch List
- Grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Bell's sage sparrow (*Amphispiza belli belli*) BCC, CDFG Watch List
- Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) BCC, BLMS, SSC
- White-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*) CDFG Fully Protected
- California horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris actia*) CDFG Watch List, LAA
- Loggerhead shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*) BCC, SSC, LAA
- Coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) FT, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) FSS, BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Spotted bat (*Euderma maculatum*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*) WBWG Medium
- San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus bennettii*) SSC
- California leaf-nosed bat (*Macrotus californicus*) FSS, SSC, WBWG High
- San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*) SSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

There are no ETAs designated within this SEA.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets all SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met is described below.

CRITERIA ANALYSIS OF THE VALLEY OAKS SAVANNAH SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Met	The County considers oaks as indicators of the presence of important biological communities for preservation, and the uncommon valley oaks of the western areas of the County are especially valued.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of	Met	The County has the southern boundary of occurrence for the valley oak, which has its core population in the California Central Valley. This makes the valley oak areas important for

Criterion		Status	Justification
	plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.		Southern California—they are very uncommon for the region as a whole.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	The valley oak is uncommon in the County, and the western areas with this species are scattered.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	Oaks are the basic structure for complex communities of organisms. They form shelter and provide many ecosystem functions that facilitate breeding, feeding, resting, and migration. As the basis of the community, it is important to conserve this habitat.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	The valley oaks of the County are on the southern edge of the species' range. This makes them important as the extreme in physical and geographical limits for the scientific study of the species.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	Although the SEA area is small, this savannah is natural and representative of a natural biotic community that has chiefly been lost in the County.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: A) the habitat of core populations of endangered and threatened plant and animal species; B-C) biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution in the County and regionally; D) concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds, which are limited in availability in the County; E) biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community; and F) a natural savannah of valley oaks, once a common habitat on the west side of the County.

27. Verdugo Mountains SEA

Location

General

The Verdugo Mountains Significant Ecological Area (SEA) is located within the Verdugo Mountains. This SEA encompasses the Verdugo Mountains south of Interstate-210 and east of the Interstate-5, as well as a portion of these mountains north of Interstate-210.

The Verdugo Mountains are a wilderness island in the middle of the urbanized metropolitan area of the County, surrounded by the cities of Los Angeles, Burbank and Glendale. This area is cherished by the local communities, much of which are designated agricultural with many equestrian properties. The Verdugo Mountains have retained a rural atmosphere despite their proximity to urban Los Angeles. The Verdugo Mountains currently encompass wilderness area, which ranges through various chaparral, coastal sage chaparral scrub, southern willow scrub, coast live oak woodland and forest ecosystems, and many riparian areas with seasonal waterfalls. It is one of the few remaining natural regions in the Los Angeles area that supports abundant native wildlife and habitats, and also contains several rare and sensitive plant and animal species. The geographic location of the Verdugo Mountains makes them important for scientific study, genetic interchange between otherwise isolated populations, and recreation for urban residents.

The SEA is located at least partially in each of the following United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5' California Quadrangles: Burbank, Sunland, and Pasadena.

General Boundary and Resources Description

The SEA is an island refuge, providing what remains of a link between plant and animal populations found in the Santa Monica and San Gabriel mountains. Genetic interchange, by way of this linkage is important in perpetuating the genetic variability in isolated populations, and the maintenance of healthy ecosystems. Chaparral and coastal sage chaparral scrub cover the hillsides of the mountains, with lush riparian vegetation, including California bay (*Umbellularia californica*), western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia* var. *agrifolia*), ferns, and ocellated Humboldt lily (*Lilium humboldtii* ssp. *ocellatum*), which are found in most of the stream drainages. These plant communities provide habitat that is essential to the diverse and abundant fauna that are found in the area. The mountains are also home to the northernmost population of mission manzanita (*Xylococcus bicolor*).

The proximity of the mountains to urban areas provides an excellent opportunity to study the interaction between wild animal populations and humans. The area has already been used for studies concerned with public health. The Interstate-210 crosses the northern edge and there is some intrusion of development along La Tuna Canyon Road. Residential development is beginning to trim the area and has been excluded from the SEA. However, present human use of the natural, native area has been low and has not significantly affected the natural resources found in the Verdugo Mountains.

The northernmost point of the SEA is in the Shadow Hills district of the City of Los Angeles at the west side of the undercrossing of Sunland/Foothill Boulevard beneath the Interstate-210. The freeway frontage is native vegetation and connective to the north with the Wentworth Street undercrossing of Interstate-210. The connection is through native vegetation along the freeway frontage and among dispersed equestrian ranchettes in the Shadow Hills. Wentworth Street ends a short distance east of Interstate-210 at the Angeles National Golf Club, which has its greens interspersed among braided stream courses of the Big Tujunga Canyon alluvial fan. The golf course is part of the SEA. The native vegetation along the freeway, at the restored County Public Works area on the north side of Wentworth, and the native vegetation among the residences of Shadow Hills is all considered an important conduit for wildlife traversing among the San Gabriel Mountains, the SEA, and the Verdugo Mountains.

The SEA boundary follows southward along the southwest side of the Interstate-210 for about a half mile and then crosses to the northeast side of Interstate-210, along a ridge that connects to slopes with natural, native habitat that continues east, along the southern border of the communities of Sunland and Tujunga. In the vicinity of Pasko Peak, the SEA border is drawn around development in the southern edge of the community of Tujunga. The SEA border recrosses the Interstate-210 and then La Tuna Canyon Road. The crossing boundary goes along the east side of a northern tributary of La Tuna Canyon.

A paved road goes along the stream course in La Tuna Canyon, and the SEA includes about two miles of native, natural vegetation bordered on the eastern, undeveloped section of the road. The developed western end of La Tuna Canyon Road is excluded from the SEA in a “cherry stem” configuration.

After crossing Interstate-210 and La Tuna Canyon Road, the SEA tracks the southern side of natural habitat along the Interstate-210 for about a mile. The boundary trends irregularly southeast excluding development in the flatter areas that border the Verdugo Wash in the Verdugo City District of Glendale. The SEA includes the incised canyons of Sheep Corral, Cunningham, Henderson, Engleheard, and unnamed others, which are all tributaries of the channelized Verdugo Wash.

In the relatively narrowed area around the State Route-2 (Verdugo Canyon) between the San Rafael Hills on the west and the Verdugo Mountains on the East, the SEA continues irregularly south along the natural, native vegetation of the steep hillsides of the Verdugo Mountains that border Glendale. The SEA includes many unnamed canyons and also Ayars Canyon and Deer Creek at the end of Beaudry Boulevard. The unnamed canyon north of Dead Horse Canyon has a possible wildlands connection with the San Rafael Hills. Its northeast-facing slope along Sunshine Drive has chiefly native vegetation and ends in the Verdugo Park on Verdugo Boulevard. Across Verdugo Boulevard is Glendale Community College. The College’s eastern border is a natural ridge that connects with the Mountain Avenue overpass of State Route-2 and native vegetation of the San Rafael Hills. Verdugo Boulevard and its development is a substantial block to terrestrial wildlife movement, but aerial fauna and plant seeds can connect fairly easily along this path. In the vicinity of Dead Horse Canyon, the SEA boundary turns generally westward and proceeds irregularly around development in Glendale, including natural parts of Toll, Hillcrest, Sherer, Idelwood, Pomeroy, Brand, and Childs canyons.

The lobe of the Verdugo Mountains between Hillcrest and Brand canyons is the area with the shortest possible traverse, which is a little less than two miles, to the Santa Monica Mountains in Griffith Park. Aerial fauna and plant seeds can easily make the journey, and the Los Angeles River channel at the base of the Santa Monica Mountains has developed a natural bottom and riparian habitat that must be inviting to migrants. A city park and a cemetery are on the route. The Verdugo Mountains are often viewed as one of the principle connections between the Santa Monica Mountains and the San Gabriel Mountains. However, it must be noted that this corridor is highly fragmented and probably impassable for most terrestrial wildlife.

Curving to the northwest in Burbank, the SEA boundary includes the natural, native vegetation of Elmwood, Story, Deer, and Sunset canyons. Sunset Canyon excludes a cherry-stem shaped area around a development. The Wildwood Canyon Park is included in the SEA with its many stately sycamore and coast live oak trees along the narrow stream course. In Stough Canyon the DeBell Municipal Golf course is excluded, as is the paved section of Stough Canyon Road and the buildings of the Stough Canyon Nature Center; however, the hillsides around Stough Canyon Road are included with a lobe of the SEA including the west ridge of Stough. On the west side of this ridge are the excluded Starlight Bowl and a nearby landfill. Continuing northwest, the SEA includes the natural, undeveloped uppermost elevations of McClure, Brace, Cabrini canyons in Burbank, and Fisher, Jeffries, and Chandler canyons of Sun Valley.

North of Chandler is the developed south side of La Tuna Canyon Road, where the SEA boundary turns west along natural vegetation, using lot lines in part, which delineate the extent of fuel modification in this area of high fire hazard. The SEA boundary includes the north-facing south side of La Tuna Canyon for a distance of about three miles. The boundary crosses the road at the point where development stops and natural vegetation is on both sides of the road. From this point, the boundary continues the cherry-stem exclusion westward along the border of natural vegetation on the south-facing slope of La Tuna Canyon. Near the northwestern end of the Verdugo Mountains and La Tuna Canyon, the La Tuna stream joins the West Burbank Flood Control Channel. The SEA boundary includes the McDonald Creek drainage (tributary of La Tuna) and loops around the north ridge of McDonald Creek, changing direction to the northeast. The SEA boundary includes the natural area along the northern edge of the Verdugo Mountains by again following the edge of development in the Shadow Hills district of the City of Los Angeles. The boundary joins the northernmost point of the SEA near the undercrossing of Interstate-210 for Sunland/Foothill Boulevard.

The SEA is wholly within incorporated boundaries (cities of Los Angeles, Glendale, and Burbank), but much is preserved in conservation easements under the guidance of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.

Vegetation

Vegetation within the SEA is comprised of a large variety of community types. The diversity of the communities reflects the topography of the Verdugo Mountains. The southern slopes are affected by moist marine weather conditions, while the northern slopes are influenced by drier inland weather conditions. In addition, the steepness of many slopes causes sharp differences in vegetation on either side of a ridge. All plant species observed or recorded in previous documentation within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium* of the *Los Angeles County SEA Update*

Study 2000 Background Report and other analyses conducted for this area. Sensitive plant species and plant communities occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Descriptions and general locations of the each plant community present within the SEA are given below.

Chaparral: A shrub community composed of robust species. Within this SEA, a number of chaparral subcommunities are found, and differentiated by their dominant plant species. These include chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), buck brush (*Ceanothus* spp.), scrub oak (*Quercus berberidifolia*), coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia* var. *agrifolia*) and mosaics of these, depending on mixes of species and elevation. These and other shrub species form dense vegetation covers growing 5 to 10 feet in height. The development of chaparral is pronounced over large hillside areas throughout the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Adenostoma fasciculatum* (chamise chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Adenostoma fasciculatum-Salvia apiana* (chamise-white sage chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Arctostaphylos glauca* (bigberry manzanita chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus greggii* [*vestitus*] (cup leaf ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus leucodermis* (chaparral whitethorn) Shrubland Alliance
- *Ceanothus oliganthus* (hairy leaf ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
- *Prunus ilicifolia* (olly leaf cherry chaparral) Shrubland Alliance

Coastal Sage Chaparral Scrub: A shrubland community exhibiting less robust structure found in this SEA is coastal sage chaparral scrub. This plant community is dominated by California sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), California brittle bush (*Encelia californica*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), and California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*). It also forms dense stands, which grow three to four feet in height. Within this SEA, it is generally found in scattered patches, which are highly integrated with mixed chaparral. These are primarily located in the lower elevation hillsides of the SEA.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Artemisia californica* (California sagebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Artemisia californica-Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California sagebrush-California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Encelia californica* (California brittle bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia leucophylla* (purple sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Salvia mellifera* (black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Eriogonum fasciculatum* (California buckwheat scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Lotus scoparius* [*Acmispon glaber*] (deer weed scrub) Shrubland Alliance
- *Malacothamnus fasciculatus* (bush mallow scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Coast Live Oak Woodland: A plant community dominated by *Quercus agrifolia.* Within the SEA, this community includes coast live oak, which typically grows to heights of 20 to 40 feet, and forms either closed or open tree canopies. Oak woodland is most commonly found on north-facing slopes and in drainage bottoms and often intergrades with shrub communities. Understory vegetation varies from grassland in level areas to shrubs where topography is steeper.

Corresponding MCV community:

- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance

Southern Willow Scrub: Found along widely scattered reaches of several drainages throughout this SEA. This community is dominated by species of willow (*Salix* spp.), which form nearly monotypic stands due to their dense growth, with an occasional cottonwood. These stands generally reach 10 to 20 feet in height with little understory vegetation.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Salix lasiolepis* (arroyo willow thickets) Shrubland Alliance

Riparian Forest: Along the major drainages, riparian forest is found. Typically, riparian forest grows along streams in bedrock-constrained, steep-sided canyons, resulting in a fairly narrow riparian corridor. The specific dominant plants are not known, but riparian trees such as California bay (*Umbellularia californica*), white alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*), coast live oak, western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) and willow occur. There are also a greater number of hydrophytic (moister favoring) plant species in the understory.

Corresponding MCV communities:

- *Alnus rhombifolia* (white alder groves) Forest Alliance
- *Umbellularia californica* (California bay forest) Forest Alliance
- *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak woodland) Woodland Alliance
- *Platanus racemosa* (California sycamore woodlands) Woodland Alliance

Wildlife

Wildlife within the SEA is generally diverse and abundant due to large acreages of natural open space and diversity of habitat types. While a few wildlife species are entirely dependent on a single vegetative community, the entire mosaic of all the vegetation communities within the SEA and adjoining areas constitutes a functional ecosystem for a variety of wildlife species, both within the SEA and as part of the regional ecosystem.

The analysis of invertebrates is severely limited due to the lack of data; the SEA, however, undoubtedly supports healthy populations of a diverse assortment of invertebrate species. Amphibian populations are plentiful in the SEA due to the high moisture content provided by coastal conditions, as well as the large number of drainages and year-round water supplies. The SEA is also likely to support a variety of amphibians within the moister woodland areas and canyon bottoms. Many essential reptilian habitat characteristics are present within the SEA. These include rock outcroppings that allow for high visibility and small mammal burrows for cover and escape from predators and extreme weather. These characteristics, as well as the variety of habitat types present, are likely to support a wide variety of reptilian species.

The scrubland, woodland, riparian, and grassland habitats in the SEA provide foraging and cover habitat for year-round residents, seasonal residents, and migrating song birds. In addition, the SEA encompasses many year-round water sources that are located throughout the SEA and abundant raptor foraging, perching, and nesting habitat along the northern slopes of the Verdugo Mountains. The combination of these resources, as well as the confluence of many community types provides an unusually high

diversity of bird species. Mammal populations within the SEA are diverse and reflective of the large size and variation of topography and community types.

All wildlife species previously recorded, as well as those expected to occur, within the SEA are indicated in the *Comprehensive Floral & Faunal Compendium* of the *Los Angeles County SEA Update Study 2000 Background Report*. Sensitive wildlife species occurring or potentially occurring within the SEA are discussed in the Sensitive Biological Resources section.

Wildlife Movement

Although wildlife movement is hampered by adjacent rural development in proximity to the SEA, animals are still able to move through the Verdugo Mountains in many areas. Due to its large size and topographic complexity, many linkages occur within the SEA at various bottlenecks. These linkages allow movement between large open space areas within the SEA, as well as between areas outside the SEA toward the Angeles National Forest. The genetic flow through these areas is crucial in maintaining the diversity and viability of the species within the Verdugo Mountains. Some areas of probable, possible, and perhaps future connection have been indicated in the General Boundary and Resources section. Although there are significantly large open spaces within the SEA, contiguous habitat linkages between them is critical in reducing bottlenecks and providing for long-term sustainability. A wide variety of wildlife use linkages throughout the SEA, including mountain lion (*Puma concolor*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), as well as a number of medium-sized mammals.

Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are habitats or individual species that have special recognition by federal, state, or local conservation agencies and organizations as endangered, threatened, and/or rare. This is due to the species' declining or limited population sizes, which usually results from habitat loss. Watch lists of such resources are maintained by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and special groups, such as the California Native Plant Society (CNPS). The following sections indicate the habitats as well as plant and animal species present, or potentially present within the SEA, which have been accorded special recognition.

Sensitive Plan Communities and Habitats

The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) [2011]. The CNDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. These communities include chamise-white sage chaparral, holly leaf cherry chaparral, California brittle bush scrub, California bay forest, and California sycamore woodlands, which occur throughout the SEA. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section.

Sensitive Plant Species

The statuses of rare plants are hierarchically categorized by the CNPS using a rank and decimal system. The initial category level of Rare Plant Rank is indicated by the ranks 1A (presumed extinct in California), 1B (rare or endangered in California and elsewhere), 2 (rare or endangered in California but more common elsewhere), 3 (more information needed, a review list), and 4 (limited distribution). In cases where the CNPS has further identified the specific threat to the species, a decimal or Threat Code is added: .1 (seriously endangered in California), .2 (fairly endangered in California), or .3 (not very endangered in California).

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

- Sonoran maiden fern (*Thelypteris puberula* var. *sonorensis*) RPR 2.2
- Nevin's barberry (*Berberis nevinii*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Lewis' evening-primrose (*Camissonia lewisii*) RPR 3
- San Fernando Valley spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *fernandina*) FC, SE, RPR 1B.1
- Parry's spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *parryi*) RPR 1B.1
- Peruvian dodder (*Cuscuta obtusiflora* var. *glandulosa*) RPR 2.2
- Palmer's grapplinghook (*Harpagonella palmeri*) RPR 4.2
- Davidson's bushmallow (*Malacothamnus davidsonii*) RPR 1B.2
- White rabbit-tobacco (*Pseudognaphalium leucocephalum*) RPR 2.2
- Greata's aster (*Symphyotrichum greatae*) RPR 1B.3
- Slender mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*) RPR 1B.2
- Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) RPR 1B.2
- California sawgrass (*Cladium californicum*) RPR 2.2
- California satintail (*Imperata brevifolia*) RPR 2.1
- Ocellated Humboldt lily (*Lilium humboldtii* ssp. *ocellatum*) RPR 4.2

Sensitive Animal Species

The following special-status animal species are reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and known range attributes:

- Silvery legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra pulchra*) FSS, SSC
- Coastal whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Rosy boa (*Charina trivirgata*) BLMS, FSS
- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*) CDFG Watch List
- Bell's sage sparrow (*Amphispiza belli belli*) BCC, CDFG Watch List
- Southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) FE, FSS, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Least Bell's vireo (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) FE, BCC, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) FSS, BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Silver-haired bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*) WBWG Medium
- Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*) WBWG Medium
- Western yellow bat (*Lasiurus xanthinus*) WBWG High
- Big free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops macrotis*) SSC, WBWG Medium-High
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) SSC

Ecological Transition Areas (ETAs)

There are no ETAs designated within this SEA.

Regional Biological Value

The SEA meets all SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. Each criterion and how it is met is described below.

CRITERIA ANALYSIS OF THE VERDUGO MOUNTAINS SEA

Criterion		Status	Justification
A)	The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.	Not Met	No critical habitats are designated within this SEA.
B)	On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.	Met	The Verdugo Mountains combined is an extensive, relatively undisturbed island of natural vegetation in an urbanized area, which is very rare in Southern California.
C)	Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution	Met	The Verdugo Mountains combined is an extensive, relatively undisturbed island of natural chaparral and canyon vegetation. It is an important island refuge for migration among the mountain ranges of the northern portion of the County. Aerial animals and plant seeds can easily traverse the distances between the Verdugo Mountains and Santa Monica, Santa Susana, and the San Gabriel mountains. The Verdugo Mountains serve as the centerpiece of these connections. The hillsides are covered by chaparral and coastal sage chaparral scrub. The canyons' riparian vegetation includes California bay, sycamores, ferns and tiger lilies. These plant communities provide habitat that is essential to the diverse and abundant fauna found in the area.
D)	Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.	Met	The Verdugo Mountains serve as an arm of the San Gabriel Mountains, extending towards the eastern end of the Santa Monica Mountains in Griffith Park—only two miles distant. Aerial animals and plant seeds easily cross the gap. The Verdugo Mountains are exceedingly important for connections among the Santa Monica, Santa Susana, and the San Gabriel

			mountains. Genetic interchange, by way of this linkage, is important in perpetuating the genetic variability in isolated populations, which maintains healthy ecosystems and resilience to climate change.
E)	Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.	Met	The geographic location of the Verdugo Mountains makes them important for scientific study, genetic interchange between otherwise isolated populations, and recreation for urban residents. The area has already been used for studies concerned with public health.
F)	Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.	Met	The Verdugo Mountains have been impacted by dirt roads, one paved road in Tuna Canyon, fuel breaks, transmission lines and isolated buildings for houses, radio towers, and water tanks. Because of their extent, however, the Verdugo Mountains are still considered largely natural and little impacted—a prime example of the chaparral and coastal sage chaparral scrub once prevalent in the County coastal areas.

In conclusion, the area is an SEA because it contains: B-C) biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution in the County and regionally; D) concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds, which are limited in availability in the County; E) biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community; and F) areas that provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of original natural biotic communities in the County.

(page 314: SEA Description Sources)

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Santa Catalina Island

Santa Catalina Island, part of the Channel Islands chain, is approximately 21 miles long and 8 miles wide. The Island consists of two parts connected by a low-lying isthmus at Two Harbors. The larger (southeastern) portion can be generally characterized by rolling hills with a gradual decent into the sea. The smaller (northwestern) portion is extremely steep and rugged with steep shoreline palisades. Level terrain on the Island is limited to the floors of a few large coastal canyons and areas, such as Avalon, Pebbly Beach, White's Landing, Middle Ranch, Two Harbors, and Emerald Bay. Mount Orizaba, which is located in the central portion of the Island, represents the highest peak at 2,069 feet above mean sea level (MSL).

The climate of the Island is similar to the mainland with wet mild winters and long dry periods. The majority of the Island is relatively undisturbed, consisting of grasslands, coastal sage scrub, woodlands, and chaparral. Disturbed areas include minor camping areas, paved roads, dirt roads, radio tower pads, reservoirs and a landfill.

Because of habitation, proximity to Los Angeles, the work of the Catalina Island Conservancy, and the Wrigley Marine Science Center, the Island has been studied more than any of the other California offshore islands, with national, state, and County recognition in many ways. Nationally, all of the many offshore rocks and islets within 12 nautical miles of the coast are part of the California Coastal National Monument, which is managed by the Bureau of Land Management in the U.S. Department of the Interior. Of the 64 State-recognized sensitive plants, 3 are federally endangered and 1 is federally threatened. Two vertebrates have federal status: the federal candidate marine bird Xantus' murrelet (*Synthliboramphus hypoleucus*) and the federally-endangered Santa Catalina Island fox (*Urocyon littoralis catalinae*). The fox has recently recovered from an epidemic of distemper by a combination of the luck, in that the northwestern population was so isolated and hardly suffered, and by managed captive breeding.

The State Water Resources Control Board has named a number of areas as ASBS (Area of Special Biological Significance) for the water quality and the coincident diversity of the marine resources. These are the Northwest Santa Catalina Island ASBS #25 (20.9 miles of coastline from Isthmus Cove to Catalina Head), the Southeast Santa Catalina Island ASBS #28 (2.9 miles centered on Seal Rocks), the Western Santa Catalina ASBS #26 (4 miles of coastline from Little Harbor south to Ben Weston Beach), and the Farnsworth Bank ASBS #27 (37 acres on a submerged pinnacle, about 60 feet deep at the top, and covered with many kinds of encrusting organisms, such as the purple hydrocoral *Allopora californica*).

The State has also designated a number of State Marine Conservation Areas (SMCA) and three *de facto* State Marine Reserves (SMR) around the Island. In these conservation areas, the take method and what may be fished is limited very specifically and differs for each area. (1) Centered on Farnsworth Bank is the Farnsworth Offshore SMCA that extends from 1 to 3 nautical miles offshore and (2) the Farnsworth Onshore SMCA that extends from the coastline to meet the Farnsworth Offshore SMCA about 1 nautical mile. (3) All of Cat Harbor on the south side of the Isthmus is in Cat Harbor SMCA with take restricted to recreational fishing for marine aquatic plants and finfish. (4) Arrow Point to Lion Head Point SMCA extends from mean high tide out to 1000 feet offshore. (5) Bird Rock SMCA is centered on Bird Rock off the northwest coast and extends from the offshore boundary of Blue Cavern SMCA to 3 nautical miles offshore, with boundaries drawn due N-S off the end points of Blue Cavern SMCA. (6) Blue Cavern SMCA

is really a reserve, with no take allowed even of sport fish. (7) Long Point SMR has no take allowed, which is usual for reserves. (8) Casino Point SMCA on the north end of Avalon Bay is really a reserve, with no take allowed. (9) Lover's Cove SMCA on the south side of Avalon Bay has common provisions, but includes the unusual one of the allowance of fish feeding (for the viewers on the glass-bottomed boats).

The California Department of Fish and Game maintains a list of sensitive species (all rare and uncommon), which includes those designated federally. There are 64 plants, 5 snails, and 5 vertebrates listed for the Island.

California Audubon has designated the Island and its surrounding waters to about 0.8 miles offshore as part of the Northern Channel Islands Globally Important Bird Area (IBA).

The County requires special biological review of development on the Island if the project involves a parcel that has a designated Significant Ecological Area (SEA). These areas were all specified on the basis of significant island vegetation, and in a few cases, included marine algae. There are 37 designated SEAs on the Island: Arrow Point; Avalon Canyon; Toyon Canyon; Ben Weston Beach-Mills Landing-Sentinel Rock; Bird Rock; Black Point, Black Jack Mountain and Echo Lake; Blue Cavern Point-Fishermans Cove; Buffalo Springs Reservoirs; Bulrush Canyon; Cactus Peak; Cape Canyon; Cherry Valley; Cottonwood Canyon; Descanso Canyon; Fourth of July Cove; Gallagher Canyon; Geiger Coves; Haypress Area-Hamilton Canyon; Indian Rock; Isthmus; Isthmus Canyon; Johnsons Landing; Little Harbor-Shark Harbor-Indian Head Point; Middle Ranch Canyon; Mount Orizaba; Parsons Landing; Pebbly Beach Canyon; Renton Mine Road; Silver Peak; Skull Canyon; Sweetwater Canyon; White Cove; and Wild Boar Gully.

Vegetation

Vegetation on the Island is composed of a large variety of plant community types. The rugged topography, steep and rocky shoreline, and generally undisturbed condition of the Island has produced a unique diversity of vegetative communities. Historically, the Island was mostly brushland dominated by chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*) and island ceanothus (*Ceanothus megacarpus* var. *insularis*) on the northern slopes, and California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*) and Santa Catalina Island buckwheat (*Eriogonum giganteum* var. *giganteum*) on the south-facing slopes. Following the introduction of feral herbivores (goats, pigs, deer, and bison), this brushland was replaced in most areas by island scrub oak (*Quercus pacifica*), laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*), toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), lemonadeberry (*Rhus integrifolia*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), and white sage (*S. apiana*), which dominate today. The lack of a significant fire history and minimal differences in vegetation along elevation gradients (due to an abundance of moisture) has resulted in slope orientation as a major determinant for species presence/absence.

Plant communities on the Island were classified using standard methodology and terminology. Most of the communities discussed correspond directly with those listed in Holland's Preliminary Descriptions of the Terrestrial Natural Communities of California (1986 and 1992 update). Other communities are named based on dominant species within them and/or commonly used terminology. Descriptions and general locations of each plant community on the Island, including maritime succulent scrub, southern coastal bluff scrub, island chaparral, island oak woodland, ironwood woodland, island cherry woodland, non-native grassland, native grassland, and disturbed are given below.

In recent years, ecologists have refined previous vegetation classification approaches to define communities primarily by their constituent plant assemblages, and have now widely adopted the

classification system described by Sawyer, Keeler-Wolf and Evens in A Manual of California Vegetation, Second Edition 2009 (MCV). This has become the accepted standard recognized by the California Department of Fish and Game, the California Native Plant Society and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

The important difference between current and earlier methods is that earlier classifications were based on a variety of factors, such as physiographic features, as in the case of vernal pools; or by specific plants, as in the case of coast live oak woodland; or by the use of commonly accepted terms, as in chaparral. In the MCV, plant communities are defined with more precision as botanical alliances where one, or occasionally two, plant species are dominant or co-dominant with a host of other possible associated plants. The MCV lists no one plant community called chaparral because in habitats of this type any one of a variety of shrubs can be dominant and influence the character of the vegetation. For example, in a location where chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*) is predominant it is classified as an *Adenostoma fasciculatum* Shrubland Alliance, while close by greenbark ceanothus (*Ceanothus spinosus*) may emerge as the most common shrub and this is termed a *Ceanothus spinosus* Shrubland Alliance.

The transition to the new MCV format is ongoing. Not all alliances have been fully described and new ones are still being recognized. As such, a significant amount of field work and site surveying for accuracy would be needed to verify all existing alliances on the Island, as well as extensive research to define every alliance in the new MCV plant communities' format. The more familiar nomenclatures will continue to be used for the Island when appropriate.

An effort has been made to conform to this new format. Descriptions and general locations of each plant community as described in the California Channel Islands Species Recovery Plan (USFWS, 1984) appear below. The plant communities correspond to classifications used in that document. Each was considered baseline information and evaluated for the potential presence of alliances as described in the MCV. Alliances with matching profiles of given criteria are listed. In many cases only with further investigation can the presence of some alliances be confirmed. In addition, it should be noted that not all alliances are listed within this description, as many alliances have yet to be defined and new alliances are still being discovered. Descriptions and general locations of the each plant community present on the Island are given below.

Maritime Succulent Scrub: A low, open scrub of soft-leaved shrubs and herbs with a rich admixture of stem and leaf succulents occurring on steep coastal slopes. This community is dominated by California sagebrush and coastal prickly-pear (*Opuntia littoralis*), which is located mainly on the exposed, dry south-facing slopes typically with well-drained soils. Other species associated with this community include Catalina crossosoma (*Crossosoma californica*), California brittle-bush (*Encelia californica*), Santa Catalina Island buckwheat, bedstraw (*Galium* spp.), island broom (*Acmispon dendroideus* var. *dendroideus*), laurel sumac, lemonadeberry, and black sage.

Corresponding MCV communities:

Artemisia californica (California sagebrush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
Opuntia littoralis (coast prickly pear scrub) Shrubland Alliance
Encelia californica (California brittle bush scrub) Shrubland Alliance
Deinandra clementina-Eriogonum giganteum (island buckwheat-island tar plant scrub) Provisional Shrubland Alliance
Malosma laurina (laurel sumac scrub) Shrubland Alliance
Rhus integrifolia (lemonade berry scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Salvia mellifera (black sage scrub) Shrubland Alliance

Southern Coastal Bluff Scrub**:** A low scrub community adapted to exposed areas with nearly constant winds and high salt content. It consists of the largest reservoir of sensitive species and island endemics due to its location within inaccessible areas. This community is dominated by giant coreopsis (*Leptosyne gigantea*), Catalina crossosoma, *Dudleya* spp., Santa Catalina Island buckwheat, and island tarplant (*Deinandra clementina*) (David Carroll and Associates (DCA), 1994). Southern coastal bluff scrub, which occurs on the precipitous cliff, faces typically near the mouths of canyons and adjacent to some of the Island's disturbed areas on the steep seaward (east-facing) slopes and bluffs.

Corresponding MCV communities:

Leptosyne gigantea (giant coreopsis scrub) Shrubland Alliance
Deinandra clementina-Eriogonum giganteum (island buckwheat-island tar plant scrub) Provisional Shrubland Alliance

Island Chaparral**:** Consists of tall broad-leafed shrubs that form a dense cover on steep slopes. Dominant species found within this community include island and MacDonald's scrub oaks (*Quercus pacifica* and *Q. macdonaldii*), feltleaf ceanothus (*Ceanothus arboreus*), chamise, island red berry, and Santa Catalina Island manzanita (*Arctostaphylos catalinae*). Island chaparral occupies canyon bottoms, most of the higher elevations, and steep, north-facing slopes.

Corresponding MCV communities:

Quercus pacifica (island scrub oak chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
Ceanothus megacarpus (big pod ceanothus chaparral) Shrubland Alliance
Adenostoma fasciculatum (chamise chaparral) Shrubland Alliance

Island Oak Woodland: Dominated by canyon oak (*Quercus chrysolepis*) with a poorly developed shrub layer, which includes wild blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*), poison oak, heart-leaved penstemon (*Keckiella cordifolia*), and southern chaparral honeysuckle (*Lonicera subspicata* var. *denudata*). Some island oak woodlands along riparian habitat include scattered arroyo willows (*Salix lasiolepis*). This community occurs in relatively moist, protected canyon bottoms with rich alluvial soils.

Corresponding MCV communities:

Quercus chrysolepis (canyon live oak forest) Forest Alliance

Island Ironwood Forest: An upland community characterized by a dominance of Catalina ironwood (*Lyonothamnus floribundus* ssp. *floribundus*). The Island endemic is a broad-leaved tree and occurs in groves of 50-100 trees located along the north- and east-facing slopes (DCA 1994). Other species occasionally associated with the ironwood forest include island scrub oak and Santa Catalina Island manzanita. The understory is sparse, supporting a number of herbaceous annuals and ferns. This community is typically found in protected canyons with rich alluvial soils in the northern portion of the Island.

Corresponding MCV communities:

Lyonothamnus floribundus (Catalina ironwood groves) Woodland Special Stands

Island Cherry Woodland: An open, dense woodland dominated by Catalina cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia* ssp. *lyonii*) with an understory consisting of Santa Catalina figwort (*Scrophularia villosa*), cudweed (*Gnaphalium* spp.), common chickweed (*Cerastium glomeratum*), wild cucumber (*Marah macrocarpa*), Santa Catalina Island bushmallow (*Malacothamnus fasciculatus* var. *catalinensis*), island morning-glory (*Calystegia macrostegia* ssp. *amplissima*), and many of weedy forb and grass species. This community occurs mostly along riparian habitats and in valley/canyon bottoms in the northern portion of the Island.

Corresponding MCV communities:

Prunus ilicifolia (Holly leaf cherry chaparral) Shrubland Alliance

Grassland: Consist of low, herbaceous vegetation that are dominated by grasses, but generally also harbor native forbs and bulbs as well as naturalized annual forbs. Non-native grassland consists of dominant invasive annual grasses that are primarily of Mediterranean origin. Dominant species found within this community include slender oats (*Avena barbata*), wild oats (*A. fatua*), ripgut brome (*Bromus diandrus*), red brome (*B. madritensis* ssp. *rubens*), and wild mustards (*Brassica*, *Hirschfeldia*, and *Sisymbrium* spp.). Non-native grasslands are located in small patches throughout the Island; along many of the ridges and gentle slopes with shallow clay or clay loam substrates; and in more significant acreage, on rolling hills in the southeastern portion of the Island. Native grassland consists of at least 10 percent cover of native grass species with the remaining coverage similar to non-native grasslands. Small patches of native grassland can be found on the Island mostly mixed with non-native grasslands.

Corresponding MCV communities:

Avena (*barbata*, *fatua*) (Wild oats grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
Bromus (*diandrus*, *hordeaceus*)-*Brachypodium distachyon* (Annual brome grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
Bromus rubens-Schismus (*arabicus*, *barbatus*) (Red brome or Mediterranean grass grasslands) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands
Brassica nigra and other mustards (Upland mustards) Semi-Natural Herbaceous Stands

Disturbed Areas: Areas that either completely lack vegetation or are dominated by ruderal species within developed areas. Vegetation typically include horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*) and tree tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*). Several disturbed areas occur throughout the Island and take the form of residential developments, paved roads, fire breaks, dirt access roads, trails, and other similarly disturbed areas.

Corresponding MCV communities: None at this time.

Wildlife

Wildlife on the Island is diverse and abundant due to the large acreage of natural open space and the diversity of habitat types. While a few wildlife species are entirely dependent on a single vegetative community, the vegetation communities within the area and adjoining areas constitute a functional ecosystem for a variety of wildlife species.

The analysis of invertebrates is severely limited due to the lack of data. The Island, however, supports healthy populations of a diverse assortment of countless invertebrate species. Amphibian populations are generally abundant and diverse due to the high moisture content provided under the shade of woodlands and the abundance of drainages. Many essential reptilian habitat characteristics are present. These include open habitats that allow free movement and high visibility and small mammal burrows for

cover and escape from predators and extreme weather. These characteristics as well as the variety of habitat types present are likely to support a wide variety of reptilian species.

The scrubland, woodland, riparian, and grassland habitats provide foraging and cover habitat for year-round residents, seasonal residents, and migrating song birds. In addition, several year-round water sources and abundant raptor foraging, perching, and nesting habitat are located throughout the area. The combination of these resources as well as the confluence of many community types provides for a high diversity of bird species. Unlike other taxonomic groups, mammal populations are diverse and reflective of the unique island habitat types.

Wildlife Movement

Wildlife movement occurs throughout the Island. Concentrated movement corridors or bottlenecks are uncommon on the Island due to the abundance of uninterrupted open space and the lack of disturbed areas. In general, movement takes place in large drainages, along ridgelines, and along dirt roads. However, the small isthmus at Two Harbors represents a significant reduction in the ability for animals to move freely between the two parts of the Island. Movement across the isthmus has been further restricted by human encroachment of the Two Harbors community and Island visitors. Although a lack of movement across the isthmus may isolate some animal populations and reduce the genetic diversity on either side, this division has provided a unique opportunity for restoration by isolating and removing feral animals from the Island.

Sensitive Biological Resources

The statuses of rare plants are hierarchically categorized by the CNPS using a rank and decimal system. The initial category level of Rare Plant Rank is indicated by ranks 1A (presumed extinct in California), 1B (rare or endangered in California and elsewhere), 2 (rare or endangered in California but more common elsewhere), 3 (more information needed, a review list), and 4 (limited distribution). In cases where the CNPS has further identified the specific threat to the species, a decimal or Threat Code is added: .1 (seriously endangered in California), .2 (fairly endangered in California) or .3 (not very endangered in California).

The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur on Santa Catalina Island, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:

Baja rock lichen (*Graphis saxorum*) CDFG Special Plants List
Red sand-verbena (*Abronia maritima*) RPR 4.2
Island broom (*Acmispon dendroideus* var. *dendroideus*) RPR 4.2
Aphanisma (*Aphanisma blitoides*) RPR 1B.1
Santa Catalina Island manzanita (*Arctostaphylos catalinae*) RPR 1B.2
Coulter's saltbush (*Atriplex coulteri*) RPR 1B.2
South Coast saltscale (*Atriplex pacifica*) RPR 1B.2
Davidson's saltscale (*Atriplex serenana* var. *davidsonii*) RPR 1B.2
Golden-spined cereus (*Bergerocactus emoryi*) RPR 2.2
Round-leaved filaree (*California macrophylla*) RPR 1B.1
Island ceanothus (*Ceanothus megacarpus* var. *insularis*) RPR 4.3
Southern tarplant (*Centromadia parryi* ssp. *australis*) RPR 1B.1
Island mountain-mahogany (*Cercocarpus betuloides* var. *blancheae*) RPR 4.3
Catalina Island mountain-mahogany (*Cercocarpus traskiae*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1

Seaside cistanthe (*Cistanthe maritima*) RPR 4.2
Nevin's woolly sunflower (*Constancea nevinii*) RPR 1B.3
Small-flowered morning-glory (*Convolvulus simulans*) RPR 4.2
Catalina crossosoma (*Crossosoma californicum*) RPR 1B.2
Island tarplant (*Deinandra clementina*) RPR 4.3
South island bush-poppy (*Dendromecon harfordii* var. *rhamnoides*) RPR 1B.1
Western dichondra (*Dichondra occidentalis*) RPR 4.2
Beach spectaclepod (*Dithyrea maritima*) ST, 1B.1
Greene's dudleya (*Dudleya greenei*) RPR 4.2
Catalina Island dudleya (*Dudleya virens* ssp. *hassei*) RPR 1B.2
Island green dudleya (*Dudleya virens* ssp. *insularis*) RPR 1B.2
Bright green dudleya (*Dudleya virens* ssp. *virens*) RPR 1B.2
Santa Catalina Island buckwheat (*Eriogonum giganteum* var. *giganteum*) RPR 4.3
Island buckwheat (*Eriogonum grande* var. *grande*) RPR 4.2
Island poppy (*Eschscholzia ramosa*) RPR 4.3
Cliff spurge (*Euphorbia misera*) RPR 2.2
Santa Catalina Island bedstraw (*Galium catalinense* ssp. *catalinense*) RPR 1B.2
Nuttall's island bedstraw (*Galium nuttallii* ssp. *insulare*) RPR 4.3
Showy island snapdragon (*Gambelia speciosa*) RPR 1B.2
Nevin's gilia (*Gilia nevinii*) RPR 4.3
Palmer's grapplinghook (*Harpagonella palmeri*) RPR 4.2
Island rush-rose (*Helianthemum greenei*) FT, RPR 1B.2
Decumbent goldenbush (*Isocoma menziesii* var. *decumbens*) RPR 1B.2
Island jepsonia (*Jepsonia malvifolia*) RPR 4.2
Southern island mallow (*Lavatera assurgentiflora* ssp. *glabra*) RPR 1B.1
Fragrant pitcher sage (*Lepechinia fragrans*) RPR 4.2
Santa Barbara honeysuckle (*Lonicera subspicata* var. *subspicata*) RPR 1B.2
Santa Catalina Island desert-thorn (*Lycium brevipes* var. *hassei*) RPR 1B.1
California box-thorn (*Lycium californicum*) RPR 4.2
Santa Catalina Island ironwood (*Lyonothamnus floribundus* ssp. *floribundus*) RPR 1B.2
Small-flowered microseris (*Microseris douglasii* ssp. *platycarpha*) RPR 4.2
Santa Catalina Island monkeyflower (*Mimulus traskiae*) RPR 1A
Coast woolly-heads (*Nemacaulis denudata* var. *denudata*) RPR 1B.2
Short-lobed broomrape (*Orobanche parishii* ssp. *brachyloba*) RPR 4.2
Lyon's pentachaeta (*Pentachaeta lyonii*) FE, SE, RPR 1B.1
Engelmann oak (*Quercus engelmannii*) RPR 4.2
Island scrub oak (*Quercus pacifica*) RPR 4.2
Island oak (*Quercus tomentella*) RPR 4.2
Island redberry (*Rhamnus pirifolia*) RPR 4.2
Santa Catalina Island currant (*Ribes viburnifolium*) RPR 1B.2
Santa Catalina figwort (*Scrophularia villosa*) RPR 1B.2
Chaparral ragwort (*Senecio aphanactis*) RPR 2.2
Santa Cruz Island rock cress (*Sibara filifolia*) FE, RPR 1B.1
Wallace's nightshade (*Solanum wallacei*) RPR 1B.1
Woolly seablite (*Suaeda taxifolia*) RPR 4.2
Southern island clover (*Trifolium palmeri*) RPR 4.2
Catalina mariposa lily (*Calochortus catalinae*) RPR 4.2
California dissanthelium (*Dissanthelium californicum*) RPR 1B.2

Vernal barley (*Hordeum intercedens*) RPR 3.2
Chaparral rein orchid (*Piperia cooperi*) RPR 4.2

The following special-status animal species are reported or are likely to be present on Santa Catalina Island based on habitat requirements and known range attributes:

Santa Catalina lancetooth (*Haplotrema catalinense*) CDFG Special Animals List
Shepard's snail (*Pristiloma shepardae*) CDFG Special Animals List
Catalina mountainsnail (*Radiocentrum avalonense*) CDFG Special Animals List
San Clemente Island blunt-top snail (*Sterkia clementina*) CDFG Special Animals List
Sandy beach tiger beetle (*Cicindela hirticollis gravida*) CDFG Special Animals List
Santa Catalina garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondii* ssp.) CDFG Special Animals List
Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) SE, CDF, CDFG Fully Protected
Xantus' murrelet (*Synthliboramphus hypoleucus*) FC, BCC, ST, ABC
Santa Catalina Island shrew (*Sorex ornatus willetti*) SSC
Santa Catalina Island fox (*Urocyon littoralis catalinae*) FE, ST