



TransNet

Environmental Mitigation Program

2013 Status Report

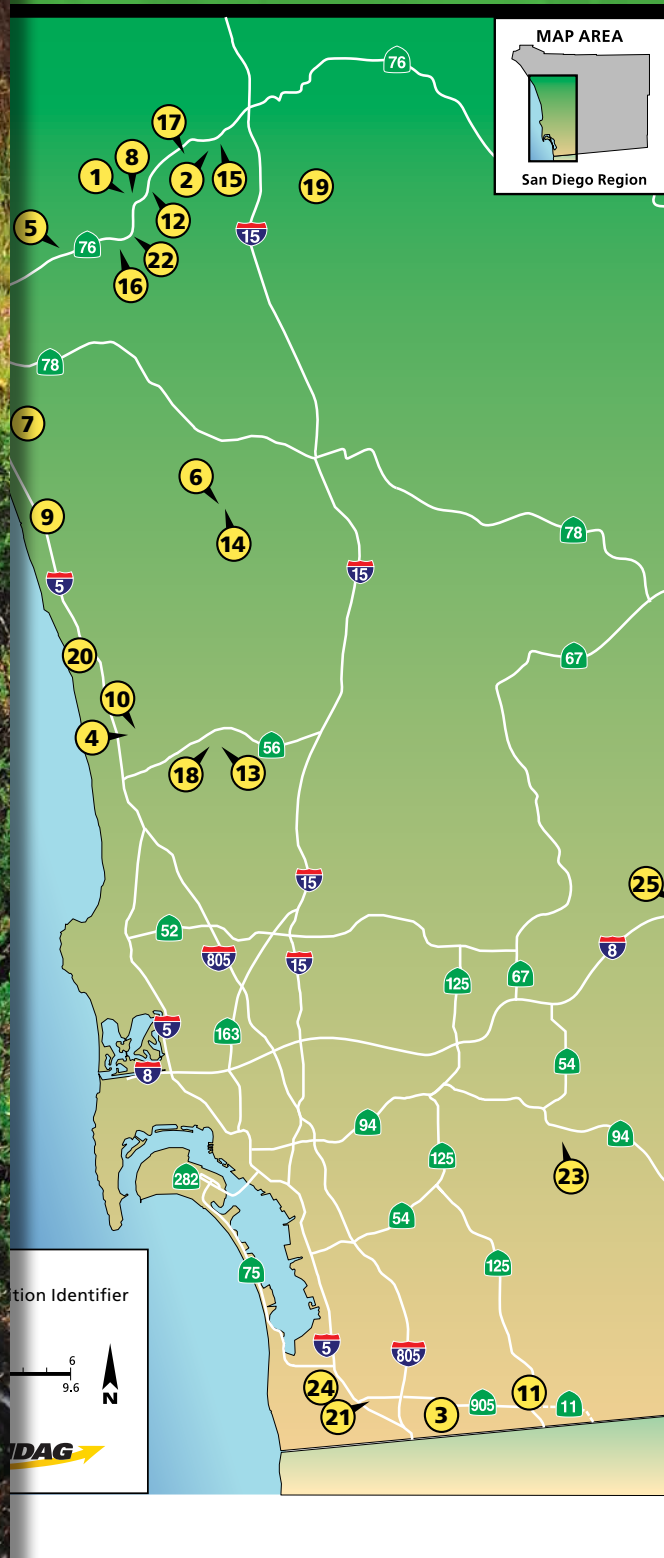
Conservation. Research. Stewardship.

SANDAG 

Research. Stewardship.

fund the EMP. The *TransNet* Independent Taxpayer Oversight Committee closely monitors program expenditures to ensure public accountability.

The EMP has completed its sixth year of successful land acquisition, management, and monitoring. To date, the program has conserved 3,334 acres of sensitive habitat, fulfilling mitigation requirements for all the high-priority projects included in the *TransNet* Early Action Program.



Restoring native habitat in North County

Nearly 70 acres of fallow agricultural land adjacent to the San Luis Rey River Valley were acquired in March 2012. The fields will be restored to coastal sage scrub and riparian habitat. This property is just to the east of the 80.3-acre Jeffries Ranch property already conserved by SANDAG.



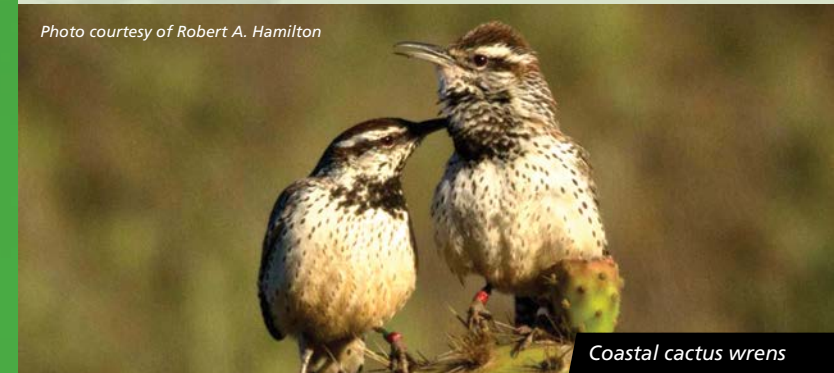
Mountain lion captured on remote camera

Scientific Research

Tracking mountain lion movement

Little is known about the movement of mountain lions in the area between the coast and the eastern foothills of San Diego County, but that's changing thanks to research funded by the EMP. UC Davis researchers expanded their studies in 2012 from the Cuyamaca and Laguna Mountain forests westward to evaluate how these top predators use open space protected by regional habitat conservation plans. They have installed about 50 remote cameras and outfitted several lions with GPS collars to track the animals' whereabouts. Some of the cameras have captured stunning images of the predators roaming in their habitat.

Photo courtesy of Robert A. Hamilton



Coastal cactus wrens

Helping the coastal cactus wren recover

The 2003 and 2007 wildfires in San Diego County are thought to have caused the decline of this region's coastal cactus wrens by as much as 80 percent. U.S. Geological Survey researchers, funded in part by the EMP, have collaborated across five Southern California counties to evaluate links between cactus wren populations. Their field observations and genetic testing have identified barriers to movement, and locations where habitat restoration could improve genetic connectivity. This research will support the species' recovery throughout Southern California.

Overview

Meeting the region's transportation needs in an environmentally responsible manner is a top priority for the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), the region's primary public planning, transportation, and research agency.

Through its award-winning *TransNet* Environmental Mitigation Program (EMP), SANDAG purchases, conserves, and restores native habitat as offsets to disturbance caused by transportation projects. *TransNet*, a regional half-cent sales tax for transportation approved by San Diego County voters, sets aside \$850 million

to fund the EMP. The *TransNet* Independent Taxpayer Oversight Committee closely monitors program expenditures to ensure public accountability.

The EMP has completed its sixth year of successful land acquisition, management, and monitoring. To date, the program has conserved 3,334 acres of sensitive habitat, fulfilling mitigation requirements for all the high-priority projects included in the *TransNet* Early Action Program.



Coastal restoration at Agua Hedionda Lagoon

Habitat Conservation

In its early years, the EMP focused on acquisition of uplands and was able to save taxpayer money due to favorable market conditions. Now focus is shifting to the acquisition and restoration of wetlands, including coastal lagoons. The I-5 North Coast Corridor Program, which is expected to go before the California Coastal Commission for approval in summer 2014, will acquire and restore 160 acres of coastal wetlands and enhance an additional 500 acres in conjunction with highway, transit, and pedestrian improvements.



Tijuana River Valley restoration

Conservation Highlights

Tijuana River Valley restoration in South County

In February 2013, work began to restore degraded land to willow riparian habitat in the Tijuana River Valley. The restoration encompasses 60 acres of land in the Tijuana River Valley Regional Park owned by the County of San Diego. Less than one year later, native plantings are flourishing.

Deer Canyon in Central San Diego County

Historically used for agriculture, the Deer Canyon property was once a barren landscape. Now a vibrant riparian habitat is emerging. Restoration of the 31.4-acre site began in spring 2011 and is expected to last through 2016. The restored land will become part of the regional open space preserve system. This project not only demonstrates the EMP's success in carrying out habitat restoration, it exemplifies how the program fulfills mitigation requirements for multiple projects on a single, large site.

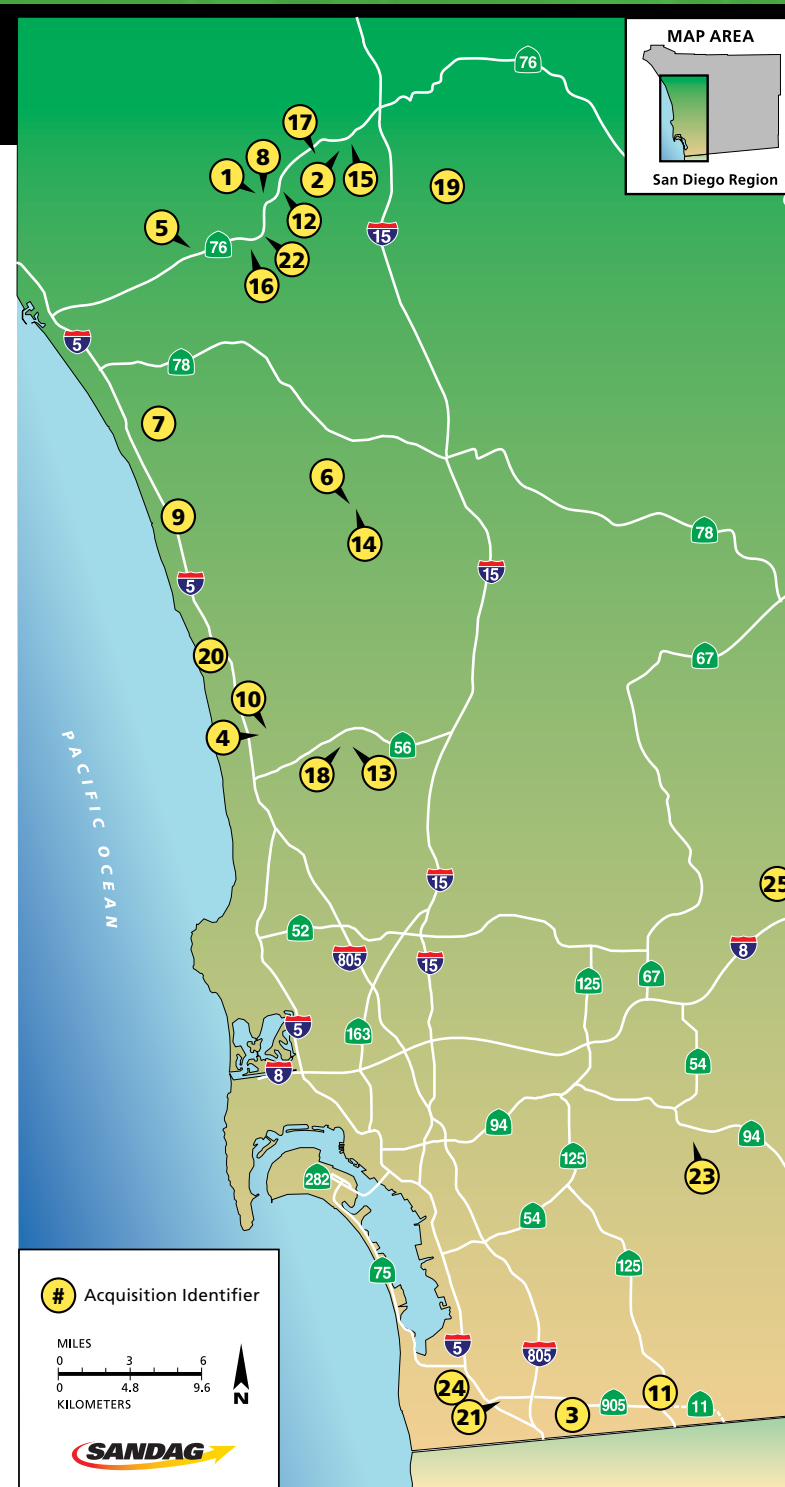
Palmer property in East County

Located in the heart of the Crestridge Ecological Reserve between El Cajon and Alpine, the 2.68-acre Palmer property was acquired in August 2013. The land expands the Peutz Valley regional wildlife corridor under Interstate 8, offsetting the impact of local roads.

TransNet Environmental Mitigation Program Land Acquisitions

As of January 2014

- 1 **Groves** 268 acres acquired in 2008
- 2 **Morrison** 136.7 acres acquired in 2008
- 3 **Anderprizes** 43.5 acres acquired in 2008
- 4 **Dean Family Trust** 23.1 acres acquired in 2008
- 5 **Zwesteria** 19.4 acres acquired in 2009
- 6 **Sage Hill** 170.8 acres acquired in 2009
- 7 **Hallmark** 19.3 acres acquired in 2009
- 8 **Leung/Lowe** 21.8 acres acquired in 2009
- 9 **Ayoub** 21.7 acres acquired in 2009
- 10 **San Dieguito Lagoon** 107 acres acquired in 2009
- 11 **Lonestar Ranch** 175.3 acres acquired in 2009
- 12 **Tabata** 23.7 acres acquired in 2010
- 13 **Zamudio** 32.5 acres acquired in 2010
- 14 **Mendocino** 19.7 acres acquired in 2010
- 15 **Vessels** 162 acres acquired in 2010
- 16 **Jeffries Ranch** 80.3 acres acquired in 2011
- 17 **Rincon** 37.3 acres acquired in 2011
- 18 **Deer Canyon** 31.4 acres acquired in 2011
- 19 **Rancho Lilac** 902 acres acquired in 2011
- 20 **Laser** 5.8 acres acquired in 2012
- 21 **Otay Mesa Parcel A** 6.7 acres acquired in 2012
- 22 **Time Out Holdings/Stacco** 68.2 acres acquired in 2012
- 23 **Hidden Valley** 953 acres acquired in 2012
- 24 **Tijuana Wetlands** 1.75 acres acquired in 2013
- 25 **Palmer** 2.68 acres acquired in 2013



Restoring native habitat in North County

Nearly 70 acres of fallow agricultural land adjacent to the San Luis Rey River Valley were acquired in March 2012. The fields will be restored to coastal sage scrub and riparian habitat. This property is just to the east of the 80.3-acre Jeffries Ranch property already conserved by SANDAG.



Mountain lion captured on remote camera

Scientific Research

Tracking mountain lion movement

Little is known about the movement of mountain lions in the area between the coast and the eastern foothills of San Diego County, but that's changing thanks to research funded by the EMP. UC Davis researchers expanded their studies in 2012 from the Cuyamaca and Laguna Mountain forests westward to evaluate how these top predators use open space protected by regional habitat conservation plans. They have installed about 50 remote cameras and outfitted several lions with GPS collars to track the animals' whereabouts. Some of the cameras have captured stunning images of the predators roaming in their habitat.

Photo courtesy of Robert A. Hamilton



Coastal cactus wrens

Helping the coastal cactus wren recover

The 2003 and 2007 wildfires in San Diego County are thought to have caused the decline of this region's coastal cactus wrens by as much as 80 percent. U.S. Geological Survey researchers, funded in part by the EMP, have collaborated across five Southern California counties to evaluate links between cactus wren populations. Their field observations and genetic testing have identified barriers to movement, and locations where habitat restoration could improve genetic connectivity. This research will support the species' recovery throughout Southern California.



Photo courtesy of Frontier Environmental Solutions



Nesting platform for golden eagles

Environmental Stewardship

Reversing the decline of golden eagles

To reverse the rapid decline of the golden eagle population in San Diego County, SANDAG awarded U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) an EMP grant to build two platforms to promote the nesting of golden eagles. During summer 2013, one platform was installed on San Miguel Mountain to replace a historic golden eagle nest site that was destroyed in the 2007 Harris Fire, and another platform was installed on Jamul Mountain, also considered a suitable habitat for golden eagles. USFWS will monitor whether breeding eagles will use the platforms during nesting season in the spring.



Proctor Valley fencing

Protecting sensitive habitat in Proctor Valley

About seven miles of steel barrier fencing now protect several sensitive plant and animal species in Proctor Valley from illegal off-road vehicles and trash dumping. Sections of fencing were installed by the City of San Diego Public Utilities Department and California Wildlife Foundation using an EMP grant. More recently, the Chaparral Lands Conservancy used another EMP grant to fill a missing link between the previously installed fencing. Matching funds also were provided by the grantees, as well as the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and The Nature Conservancy.

Regional Coordination

In 2003 and 2007, the region experienced some of the largest wildfires in its recorded history. SANDAG funded the U.S. Geological Survey to facilitate a workshop in March 2013 that brought together firefighters, fire researchers, and land managers to discuss what to do before, during, and after a major wildfire to preserve habitat and wildlife. The results of this workshop are being developed into a series of best-practice recommendations. View a video recording of the workshop at tinyurl.com/usgsfire.

Another new tool has become available to land managers. With EMP funding, the San Diego Management and Monitoring Program completed a strategic plan for species and habitat management in 2013. This document will help maximize the efficient use of *TransNet* revenue, serving as a road map for setting priorities and achieving key milestones for land management efforts in the region. View the plan at sdmmp.com/strategicplan.



Planning for wildfires

Accomplishments

- 25 properties acquired, totaling 3,334 acres
- 157 acres of habitat restoration underway
- \$29,850 paid as average price per acre, roughly half the estimated cost
- \$17.4 million in leveraged funding from acquisition partners
- 70 grants, totaling \$11.5 million, distributed to regional land managers
- \$5.9 million in leveraged matching funds from EMP grants
- \$20 million program featuring competitive land acquisition grants

To Learn More

Visit KeepSanDiegoMoving.com/emp.



Scan with smartphone:



Conservation. Research. Stewardship.



Environmental Mitigation Program

2013 Status Report