

# State Route 76 Project

## Environmental Mitigation Program Fact Sheet

### Protecting, Preserving, and Restoring Natural Habitat

When voters approved the *TransNet* Extension Ordinance in November 2004, they approved with it a new Environmental Mitigation Program (EMP). This innovative program provides \$850 million to protect, preserve and restore habitats near major transportation resources. These funds support habitat conservation plans adjacent to some of the region's most significant transportation infrastructure, such as State Route 76 (SR-76). Furthermore, SR-76 provides a "net benefit" to species and habitat above and beyond traditional mitigation.

The *TransNet* EMP gives SANDAG the ability to comprehensively mitigate the impacts of major transportation infrastructure improvement projects and programs identified in its Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). Instead of mitigating impacts project-by-project, the EMP allows land to be acquired in advance of projects, in larger parcels and at lower costs so that habitat areas can be protected and restored earlier.

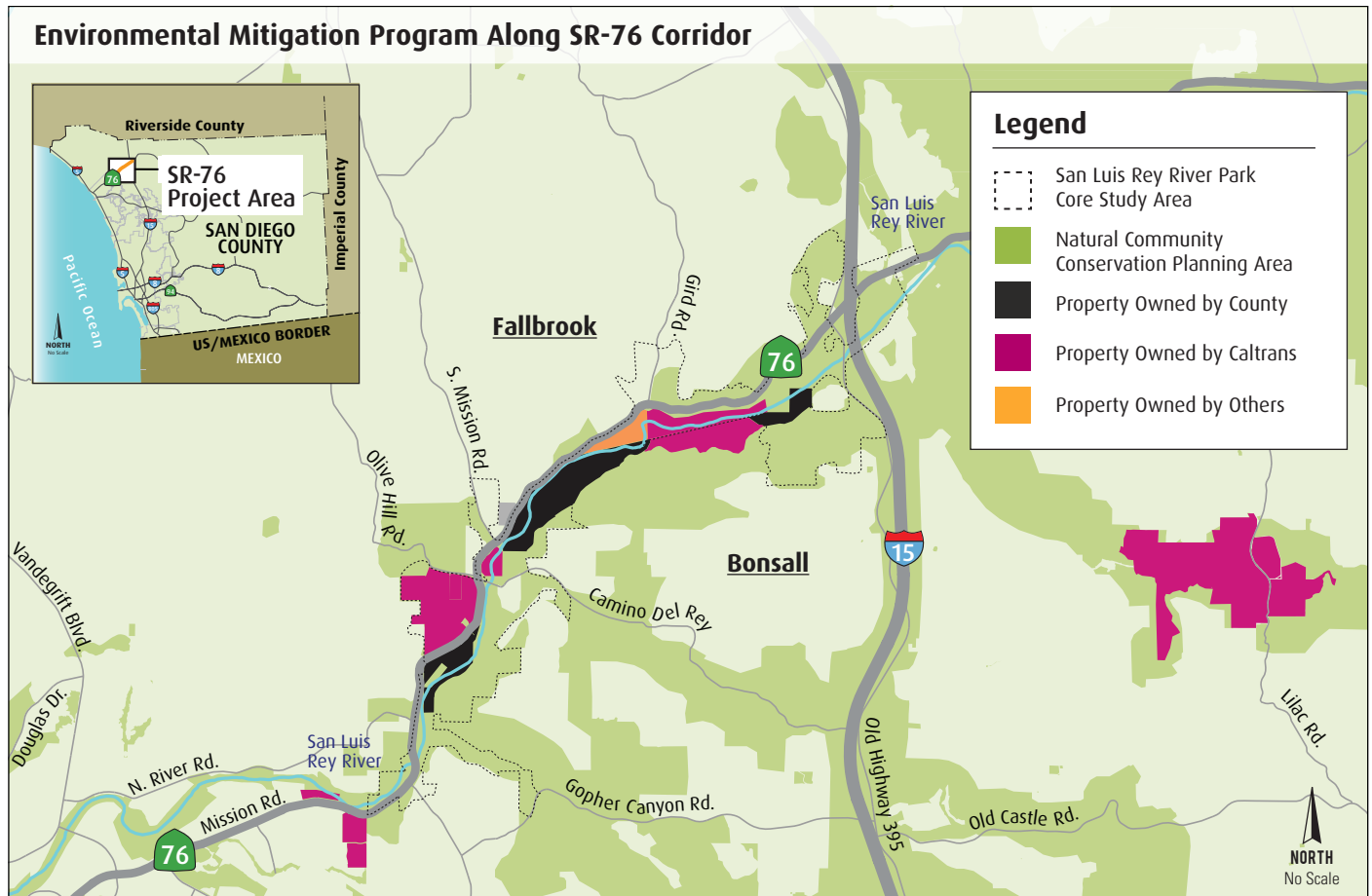
Now a model for other agencies, the *TransNet* EMP exemplifies the region's leadership to improve transportation in an environmentally responsible way.

### Securing Habitat Along the SR-76 Corridor

The EMP has slated \$80 million to protect, preserve and restore habitat adjacent to the SR-76 corridor between I-5 and I-15. To date, the following types of properties have been purchased:

- ▶ 236 acres of freshwater wetlands, which are low-lying areas that are wet from groundwater or fresh water.
- ▶ 1356 acres of upland, which are areas that are above wetlands and above where water flows.

In total, close to 1,600 acres of property has been purchased to support habitat conservation and the San Luis Rey River Park Plan in this corridor.



### Fulfilling the Larger Vision of Conservation

The EMP supports regional and local plans to preserve and conserve natural habitat and resources specific to the SR-76 corridor.

**San Diego County Conservation Plans:** The EMP efforts for SR-76 contribute to the regional success of the San Diego County Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) area. By acquiring and restoring unique habitat areas along SR-76, key populations of endangered species will be preserved, land adjacent to existing conserved habitat areas will be connected, and wildlife linkages will be created.



San Luis Rey River

**San Luis Rey River Park Plan:** The EMP's property purchases in the SR-76 corridor also support the County of San Diego's San Luis Rey River Park plans by creating a continuous wildlife corridor. Located along an 8.5-mile stretch of the San Luis Rey River between I-15 and the old Bonsall Bridge, the

park plan will balance natural preserve, passive, and active recreational opportunities for the communities of Fallbrook and Bonsall, as well as the park users throughout the larger regional area. This park is rich with river banks, upland habitat and cultural resources, and the purchases will provide opportunities to preserve and steward these unique resources.

### Environmental Benefits of Surrounding Land Purchased

Each property purchased through the EMP is important. The environmental benefits of some of the larger land parcels that were purchased for this corridor include:

**The Rancho Lilac Property:** This 902-acre property is located in the northern part of San Diego County in the unincorporated community of Valley Center, north of the City of Escondido. It is the largest single property acquired under the EMP to date. Rancho Lilac is unique both culturally and biologically. Culturally, it has a distinguished history of hosting notables, such as First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and President Dwight Eisenhower. Biologically, it is the heart of the Keys Creek corridor and a major wildlife linkage in the San Luis Rey watershed. This property is home to rare and endangered species, such as the spadefoot toad, horned lizard, orange-throated whiptail, rufous-crowned sparrow, and the California gnatcatcher. It also supports significant vegetation, such as the southern cottonwood willow riparian forest, fresh water marsh, flat-topped buckwheat scrub, coastal sage scrub, and coast live oak woodland.



Least Bell's Vireo: Photo courtesy of Glenn Jenson

**The Groves Property:** This 268-acre property is located at the southwest corner of SR-76 and Olive Hill Road in Bonsall. The property is predominately coastal sage scrub, with some coast live oak woodland and nonnative grassland. A majority of the area contains critical habitat for the threatened coastal California gnatcatcher. In addition, the property contains burrowing, dispersing and foraging habitat for the arroyo toad.

**The Vessels Property:** This 162-acre property is located along the south side of the San Luis Rey River, south of SR-76 and west of I-15. Though predominantly nonnative grassland, the property also includes habitat on the river banks bordering the San Luis Rey River. This habitat contains native plant species including cottonwood willow scrub, mulefat scrub, and southern willow scrub. The northern edge of the property also supports a population of least Bell's vireo, an endangered songbird native to Southern California.

**The Morrison Property:** This 137-acre property is located southeast of Gird Road and SR-76 in Bonsall. The property includes freshwater marsh, nonnative grassland and forest and scrub along the river banks where the property borders the San Luis Rey River. Both the arroyo toad and the endangered least Bell's vireo have been documented on-site, and the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher may also use the site.

**The Jeffries Ranch Property:** This 80-acre property is restoring and preserving habitat along the south side SR-76 corridor between Melrose Drive and East Vista Way. This property has approximately 2 acres of forest and scrub along the river banks, 37 acres of coastal sage scrub, 0.4 acres of coast live oak woodland, and 41 acres of nonnative grassland.

For more information, log on to:  
[KeepSanDiegoMoving.com](http://KeepSanDiegoMoving.com)

For questions, call:  
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