

**Biological Technical Report
for the
East Valley Parkway and Midway Drive Drainage
Improvement Project**

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**Draft Biological Technical Report for the
East Valley Parkway and Midway Drive Drainage Improvement Project,
City of Escondido, California**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed East Valley Parkway and Midway Drive Drainage Improvement Project would involve increasing the capacity of the storm drain systems in the central portion of the City of Escondido in northern San Diego County. The existing storm drainage systems in the Project area are undersized and unable to collect and convey anticipated flow quantities, resulting in more than 1,600 properties being completely or partially within a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 100-year floodplain. Localized flooding occurs within the Project area, triggering deployment of sandbags and road closures an average of five times per year since 2019.

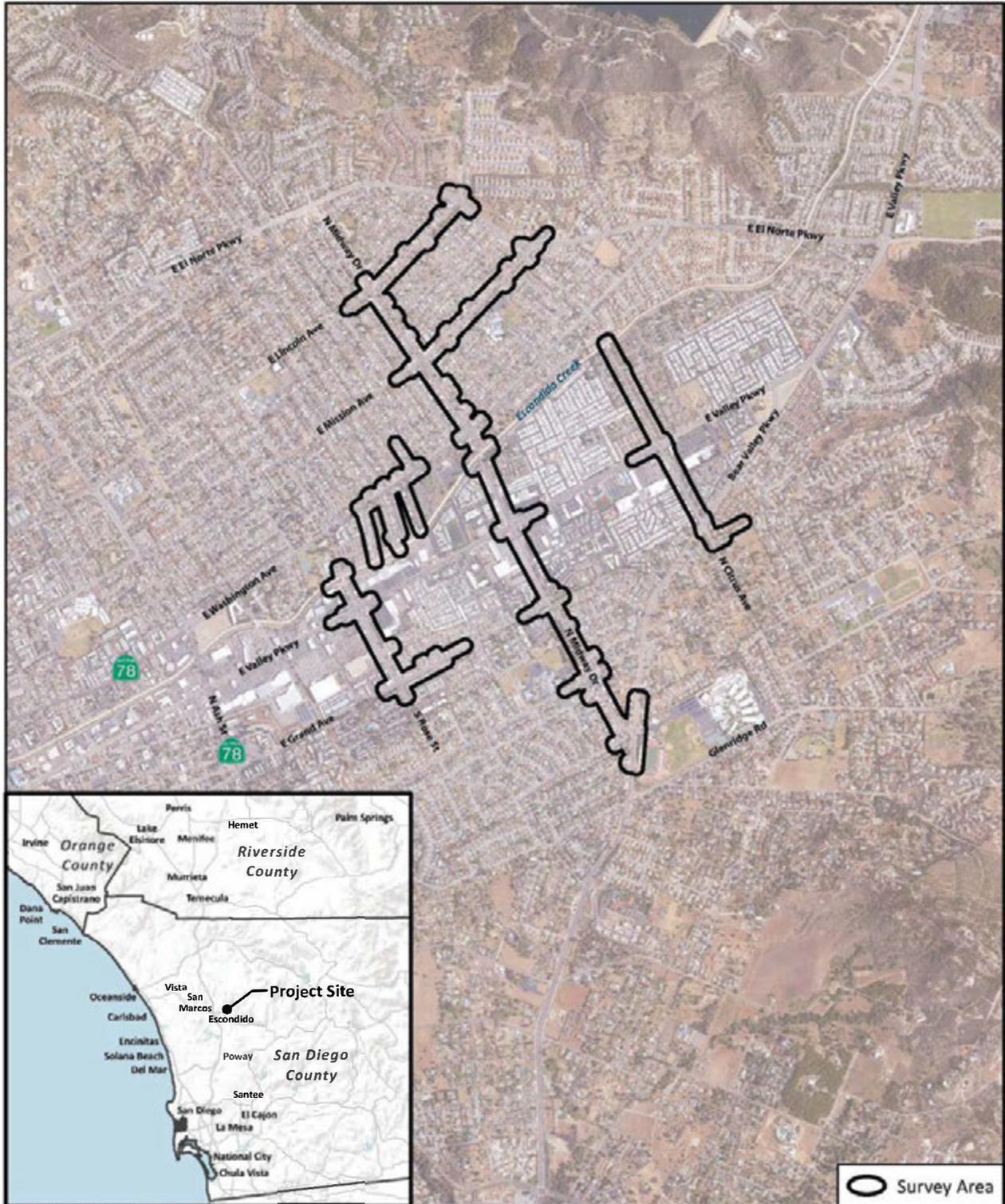
The approximately 203.3-acre study area, which includes 49.6 acres of actual Project impact area and 153.7 acres of 100-foot buffer area around the impact areas, is located in the central portion of the city of Escondido in northern San Diego County (Figure 1). The study area includes segments of North Midway Drive, South Midway Drive, Bear Valley Parkway, East Lincoln Avenue, East Mission Avenue, North Citrus Avenue, North Rose Street, East Grand Avenue, East Washington Avenue, and an unnamed access road immediately south of East Washington Avenue and north of Escondido Creek, between North Rose Street and Begonia Street (Figure 1).

In September 2024, biologists from Balk Biological, Inc. conducted biological reconnaissance surveys to map vegetation, conducted a jurisdictional wetland delineation, surveyed for general wildlife use and potential for sensitive wildlife species to use the site, and conducted a general plant survey and assessment for the potential of sensitive plants to occur onsite.

A total of six vegetation communities or land cover types were identified within the Project study area: coast live oak woodland, freshwater marsh, landscaping/ornamental, concrete-lined channel, bare ground, and developed land.

One special-status wildlife species, white-faced ibis, was detected foraging inside the Project study area during the reconnaissance level wildlife survey; however, no nesting habitat occurs onsite. No other sensitive wildlife species have moderate to high potential to occur onsite. No special-status plant species have more than a low potential to occur onsite. The results of the biological surveys concluded that there are areas within Project impact areas that meet the definition of waters of the United States and/or state, subject to review and regulation by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW).

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Source: USDA NRCS, Aerial Photo: USGS NAIP 2022

Figure 1

Project Location

East Valley Parkway & Midway Drive
Drainage Improvements

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Implementation of the proposed Project would result in temporary and direct impacts to 48.4 acres of developed land, 0.7 acres of concrete-lined channel, and 0.5 acres of landscaping/ornamental land. Impacts to developed and landscaping/ornamental land are not significant and would not require mitigation. Impacts to the concrete-lined channel are considered an impact to non-wetland waters of the United States and/or state and are expected to be covered by a Nationwide permit issued by ACOE; it is anticipated that no mitigation would be required for these impacts.

Construction-related noise indirect impacts may occur to nesting birds if construction occurs from January 1 through August 31. Phasing of construction to avoid the bird nesting season, where feasible, and performing pre-construction nesting bird surveys to minimize potential impacts to other nesting birds if construction is to occur during the bird breeding season, would reduce impacts to nesting birds.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This technical report provides an analysis of potential biological resource impacts associated with the proposed East Valley Parkway and Midway Drive Drainage Improvement Project (Project), which is located in the central portion of the city of Escondido in northern San Diego County (Figure 1). This report provides a brief Project description, summary of the pertinent biological resource regulations, the Project setting, survey methods, existing biological resources, special-status biological resources, Project impacts (direct and indirect), and proposed mitigation. The Project impacts, avoidance, and mitigation measures are discussed in accordance with federal, state, and local regulations, including the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Clean Water Act (CWA), Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), California Fish and Game Code (CFGF), and the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, and with consideration to the Draft Multiple Habitat Conservation Program (MHCP) and Escondido's Subarea Plan (Subarea Plan).

1.1 Project Location

The approximately 203.3-acre study area, which includes 49.6 acres of actual Project impact area and 153.7 acres of 100-foot buffer area around the impact areas, is located in the City of Escondido along segments of North Midway Drive, South Midway Drive, Bear Valley Parkway, East Lincoln Avenue, East Mission Avenue, North Citrus Avenue, North Rose Street, East Grand Avenue, East Washington Avenue, and an unnamed access road immediately south of East Washington Avenue and north of Escondido Creek, between North Rose Street and Begonia Street (Figure 1).

1.2 Project Description

The proposed East Valley Parkway and Midway Drive Drainage Improvement Project (herein referred to as "Project") would involve increasing the capacity of the storm drain systems in the central portion of the city of Escondido in northern San Diego County. The existing storm drainage systems in the Project area are undersized and unable to collect and convey anticipated flow, resulting in more than 1,600 properties being completely or partially within a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 100-year floodplain. Localized flooding occurs within the Project area, triggering deployment of sandbags and road closures, an average of five times per year since 2019.

The proposed Project would involve the construction of approximately 17,000 linear feet of reinforced concrete box culverts and approximately 1,550 linear feet of reinforced concrete pipelines beneath existing roadways and adjacent public rights-of-way (e.g., sidewalks) and five

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new stormwater inlets into Escondido Creek. The culverts would range in size from a single 8-foot by 4-foot (32 square feet in area) to a triple 11-foot by 6-foot (198 square feet in area), and the pipelines would be 54 inches in diameter (about 16 square feet in area). The project would require relocation of some of the existing underground utility lines to accommodate the proposed storm drain culverts. After relocation of existing utilities and installation of the proposed storm drain culverts and pipes, the affected roadways/sidewalks would be resurfaced. Road resurfacing would include the provision of storm drain inlets along both sides of the roads to collect runoff. The project would also include bio-retention areas to provide filtration and treatment of runoff before discharging into Escondido Creek. Figure 1 shows the locations of the proposed culverts/pipelines and Escondido Creek inlets.

Construction of the proposed Project is anticipated to commence in February 2026 and be completed in approximately 24 months. Given the linear nature of the project, the active construction area would continuously move along the project site at a rate of approximately 50 to 80 liner feet per day. Culvert/pipe installation would be completed in trenches. After culvert/pipe installation, the trenches would be backfilled, and the road would be repaved. Excess fill soil would be hauled to Miramar Landfill for disposal.

Once construction of the Project is completed, the new culverts/pipelines and inlets would be maintained in a manner similar to the existing facilities.

1.3 Regulatory Framework

This section provides a summary of the federal and state environmental regulations that govern the biological resources applicable to the Project. This section also provides a summary of other state and local environmental guidelines or listings that evaluate the rarity of species or the habitats they depend on. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) significance criteria are also included in this section. The descriptions below provide a brief overview of agency regulations that may be applicable to the resources that occur within the Project site, and their respective requirements.

1.3.1 Federal Regulations and Standards

1.3.1.1 Federal Endangered Species Act

The Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) of 1973 (16 United States Code [U.S.C.] §§ 1531 et seq.) directs the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to identify and protect

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endangered and threatened species and their critical habitat, and to provide a means to conserve their ecosystems. Section 9 of the FESA makes it unlawful for a person to take a listed animal without a permit. “Take” is defined by the FESA as “to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect or attempt to engage in any such conduct” (16 U.S.C. 1532(19)). Through regulations, the term “harm” is interpreted to include actions that modify or degrade habitats to a degree that significantly impairs essential behavioral patterns, including breeding, feeding, or sheltering.

Section 7 of the FESA directs USFWS to use its existing authority to conserve threatened and endangered species and, in consultation with federal agencies, ensure that any action authorized, funded, or carried out by such agency does not jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat. Critical habitat is a specific geographic area(s) that is essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species and that may require special management and protection. Critical habitat may include an area that is not currently occupied by the species but that will be needed for its recovery.

Section 7(a)(2) requires federal agencies to consult with USFWS to ensure that they are not undertaking, funding, permitting, or authorizing actions likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species. In consultation for those species with critical habitat, federal actions must also ensure that activities do not adversely modify critical habitat to the point that it will no longer aid in the species’ recovery.

1.3.1.2 Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) (16 U.S.C. §§ 703-712) makes it unlawful to take or possess migratory birds, except as permitted by the USFWS. The MBTA protects all migratory birds, their eggs, their body parts, or their nests. Essentially all avian species native to the U.S. are protected under the provisions of the MBTA; introduced species and non-migratory upland game birds are not protected by the MBTA. “Take” under the MBTA is defined “to pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or attempt to pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect” protected birds (50 Code of Federal Regulations [C.F.R.] 10.12). The current list of species protected by the MBTA includes several hundred species. Nearly all native birds in the San Diego region are considered migratory. Permits for take of nongame migratory birds can be issued only for specific activities, such as scientific collecting, rehabilitation, propagation, education, taxidermy, or protection of human health or safety and personal property.

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1.3.1.3 Clean Water Act

Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) requires project proponents to obtain a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) before performing any activity that involves any discharge of dredged or fill material into “waters of the United States,” including wetlands. Waters of the U.S. include navigable waters of the U.S., interstate waters, all other waters where the use or degradation or destruction of the waters could affect interstate or foreign commerce, tributaries to any of these waters, and wetlands that meet any of these criteria or that are adjacent to any of these waters or their tributaries (33 CFR 328.3(a)). Many surface waters and wetlands in California meet the criteria for waters of the U.S. In accordance with Section 401 of the CWA, projects that apply for a USACE permit for discharge of dredged or fill material must obtain water quality certification from the appropriate Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB), in this case the San Diego RWQCB, indicating that the project will not violate California water quality standards.

1.3.1.4 Rivers and Harbors Act – Sections 9 and 10

Section 9 of the Rivers and Harbors Act states that the construction of any bridge, dam, dike, or causeway over or in navigable waterways of the U.S. requires Congressional approval. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) administers Section 9 and consultation with the USCG may be necessary to determine if a Section 9 permit would be required under the Rivers and Harbors Act.

The USACE administers Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act, and permits are required for all structures, such as rip-rap, and activities such as dredging and filling, in navigable waters of the U.S. Navigable waters are defined as “those subject to the ebb and flow of the tide and/or are presently used, or have been used in the past, or may be susceptible for use to transport interstate or foreign commerce.” The USACE grants or denies permits based on the effects of navigation. Most activities covered under the Rivers and Harbors Act are also covered under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.

1.3.1.5 Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management

Executive Order (EO) 11988 requires federal agencies to avoid, to the extent possible, the long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains, and to avoid direct and indirect support of floodplain development wherever there is a practicable alternative. EO 11988 provides an eight-step process that agencies carry out as part of their decision-making process for projects that have potential impacts to or within a floodplain.

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1.3.1.6 *Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands*

Pursuant to EO 11990, each federal agency is responsible for preparing implementing procedures for carrying out the provisions of the EO. The purpose of this EO is to “minimize the destruction, loss, or degradation of wetlands, and to preserve and enhance the natural and beneficial values of wetlands.” Each agency, to the extent permitted by law, must avoid undertaking or providing assistance for any activity located in wetlands, unless the head of the agency finds that there is no practical alternative to such activity, and the proposed action includes all practical measures to minimize harm to wetlands that may result from such actions. In making this finding, the head of the agency may take into account economic, environmental, and other pertinent factors. Each agency must also provide opportunity for early public review of any plans or proposals for new construction in wetlands.

1.3.2 State Laws and Regulations

1.3.2.1 *California Environmental Quality Act*

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code Section 15000 et seq.) requires identification of significant environmental effects of proposed projects (including impacts on biological resources) and avoidance (where feasible) or mitigation of the significant effects. CEQA applies to “projects” proposed to be undertaken or requiring approval by State and/or local governmental agencies. “Projects” are activities that have the potential to have a physical impact on the environment.

Section 15064.7 of the CEQA Guidelines encourages local agencies to develop and publish the thresholds that the agency uses in determining the significance of environmental effects caused by projects under its review. However, agencies may also rely on the guidance provided by the expanded Initial Study checklist contained in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. Appendix G provides examples of impacts that would typically be considered significant. Based on these guidelines, impacts to biological resources would be considered significant if the project would do any of the following:

- Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special-status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) or the USFWS.

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- Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations, or by CDFW or USFWS.
- Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the CWA through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means.
- Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species, or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites.
- Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP); Natural Community Conservation Plan; or other approved local, regional, or state HCP.

An evaluation of whether an impact on biological resources would be substantial must consider the resource itself and how that resource fits into a regional or local context. Substantial impacts would be those that would diminish, or result in the loss of, an important biological resource, or those that would obviously conflict with local, state, or federal resource conservation plans, goals, or regulations. The evaluation of impacts considers direct impacts, indirect impacts, and cumulative impacts, and whether the impact is permanent or temporary.

1.3.2.2 California Endangered Species Act

The California Endangered Species Act (CESA) (Fish and Game Code Section 2050 et seq.) prohibits the “take” (defined as “to hunt, pursue, catch, capture, or kill”) of State-listed species except as otherwise provided in State law. CESA, administered by CDFW, is similar to FESA, although unlike the Federal law, CESA applies incidental take prohibitions to species currently petitioned for State-listing status (i.e., candidate species). State lead agencies are required to consult with the CDFW to ensure that their authorized actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any State-listed species or result in the degradation of occupied habitat.

Under Section 2081, the CDFW authorizes “take” of State-listed endangered, threatened, or candidate species through incidental take permits or memoranda of understanding if 1) the take is incidental to otherwise lawful activities, 2) impacts of the take are minimized and fully mitigated, 3) the permit is consistent with regulations adopted in accordance with any recovery plan for the species in questions, and 4) the applicant ensures suitable funding to implement the measures required by CDFW.

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1.3.2.3 Fully Protected Species

Prior to the development of FESA and CESA, species were listed as “fully protected” by California. Fully protected species, including fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals, were identified to allow for the protection of those animals that were rare or that were threatened by potential extinction. The majority of fully protected species have since been listed as threatened or endangered under the CESA and/or FESA. Per § 4700 of the CFGC, the possession or taking of fully protected species is only allowed as provided in §2081.7 and §2835 of the CFGC.

1.3.2.4 California Fish and Game Code Section 1602 – Streambed Alteration

All diversions, obstructions, or changes to the natural flow or bed, channel, or bank of any river, stream, or lake in California that supports wildlife resources are subject to regulation by CDFW under Fish and Game Code Section 1602. Under Section 1602, it is unlawful for any person, governmental agency, or public utility to do the following without first notifying CDFW:

- substantially divert or obstruct the natural flow of, or substantially change or use any material from, the bed, channel, or bank of any river, stream, or lake; or
- deposit or dispose of debris, waste, or other material containing crumbled, flaked, or ground pavement where it may pass into any river, stream, or lake.

CDFW defines “stream” as a body of water that flows at least periodically or intermittently through a bed or channel that has banks and supports fish or other aquatic life. This definition includes watercourses with a surface or subsurface flow that supports or has supported riparian vegetation. CDFW’s jurisdiction within altered or artificial waterways is based on the value of those waterways to fish and wildlife. In practice, the CDFW typically extends its jurisdictional limit to the top of a stream, the bank of a lake, or outer edge of the riparian vegetation, whichever is wider. Riparian habitats do not always have identifiable hydric soils or clear evidence of wetland hydrology as defined by the USACE. Therefore, CDFW wetland boundaries often include, but extend beyond, USACE wetland boundaries. Jurisdictional boundaries under CFGC Section 1600-1616 (CDFW’s Lake and Streambed Alteration Program) may encompass an area that is greater than that under the jurisdiction of CWA Section 404. Therefore, jurisdictional waters of the state include jurisdictional waters of the U.S., federal and state jurisdictions do overlap, but would remain distinct for regulatory administration and permitting purposes. A CDFW Streambed Alteration Agreement must be obtained for any project that would result in an impact on a river, stream, or lake.

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1.3.2.5 California Fish and Game Code Section 3503 and 3503.5 – Protection of Birds, Nests, and Raptors

Section 3503 of the CFGC states that it is unlawful to take, possess, or needlessly destroy the nest or eggs of any bird. Section 3503.5 specifically states that it is unlawful to take, possess, or destroy any raptors (i.e., species in the orders Falconiformes and Strigiformes), including their nests or eggs. Typical violations of these codes include destruction of active nests resulting from removal of vegetation in which the nests are located. Violation of Section 3503.5 could also include failure of active raptor nests resulting from disturbance of nesting pairs by nearby project construction. This statute does not provide for the issuance of any type of incidental take permit.

1.3.2.6 California Native Plant Protection Act

The Native Plant Protection Act (NPPA) of 1977 (Fish and Game Code Section 1900-1913) directed the CDFW to carry out the Legislature’s intent to “preserve, protect and enhance rare and endangered plants in this State.” The NPPA gave CDFW the power to designate native plants as “endangered” or “rare” and to protect endangered and rare plants from take.

1.3.2.7 Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act – California Water Code Section 13000 et seq.

Under the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, waters of the state fall under the jurisdiction of the appropriate RWQCB. The RWQCB must prepare and periodically update water quality control plans (basin plans). Each basin plan sets forth water quality standards for surface water and groundwater, as well as actions to control nonpoint and point sources of pollution to achieve and maintain these standards. Projects that affect wetlands or waters of the state may require waste discharge requirements from the RWQCB, which may be issued in addition to a water quality certification or waiver under Section 401 of the CWA.

1.3.2.8 Regional Water Quality Control Board

The RWQCB is the primary agency responsible for protecting water quality in California. The RWQCB regulates discharges to surface waters under the federal CWA and the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act. The RWQCB’s jurisdiction extends to all waters of the state and to all waters of the U.S., including wetlands (isolated and non-isolated conditions).

Through 401 Certification, Section 401 of the CWA allows the RWQCB to regulate any proposed federally permitted activity that may affect water quality. Such activities include the discharge of

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dredged or fill material, as permitted by USACE, pursuant to Section 404 of the CWA. The RWQCB is required to provide “certification that there is reasonable assurance that an activity that may result in the discharge to waters of the United States will not violate water quality standards,” pursuant to Section 401. Water Quality Certification must be based on the finding that proposed discharge will comply with applicable water quality standards.

In addition, pursuant to the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, the RWQCB is authorized to regulate any activity that would result in discharges of waste or fill material into waters of the state, including “isolated” waters and/or wetlands (e.g., vernal pools and seeps), saline waters, and groundwater within the boundaries of the state (California Water Code (CWC) Section 13050[e]). The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act authorizes the State Water Resources Control Board to adopt, review, and revise policies for all waters of the state, and directs the RWQCB to develop and implement regional Basin Plans that recognize and are designed to maintain the unique characteristics of each region with regard to natural water quality, actual and potential beneficial uses, maintaining water quality, and addressing the water quality problems of that region (CWC Section 13050[j]). As such, any person proposing to discharge waste into a water body that could affect its water quality must first file a Report of Waste Discharge if Section 404 does not apply. “Waste” is partially defined as any waste substance associated with human habitation, including fill material discharged into water bodies.

1.3.3 Local Plans and Policies

1.3.3.1 *Multiple Habitat Conservation Program (MHCP) and Escondido’s Subarea Plan (Subarea Plan)*

The Multiple Habitat Conservation Program (MHCP) is a comprehensive, conservation planning program designed to address the needs of an ecosystem preserve in northwestern San Diego County. The MHCP is part of a large, multi-jurisdictional planning effort in San Diego County, and each MHCP represents a subregional plan under California’s Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) Act of 1991. The purpose of the MHCP is to protect viable populations of native plant and animal species and their habitat in perpetuity, while accommodating continued economic development and quality of life for residents of North County (SANDAG 2003).

The MHCP encompasses the cities of Carlsbad, Encinitas, Escondido, Oceanside, San Marcos, Solana Beach, and Vista. These jurisdictions will implement their portions of the MHCP through citywide “subarea” plans, which describe the specific policies each city will institute for the

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MHCP. The *Public Review Draft Escondido Subarea Plan* (Subarea Plan) (Ogden and CBI 2001) is intended to be consistent with the region's MHCP and with the plans prepared by the entities participating in the MHCP.

The goal of Subarea Plan is to contribute to the maintenance of biodiversity and ecosystem health in the regions while maintaining quality of life and economic growth opportunities (Ogden and CBI 2001). The Subarea Plan is not adopted by the City or approved by CDFW or USFWS, though the City uses it as guidance when reviewing impacts to biological resources. The Subarea Plan represents the City's contribution to the MHCP and to regional NCCP conservation goals.

The Project is located within the central portion of the Subarea Plan (Figures 2a and 2b). It is not located within the Biological Core and Linkage Area (BCLA) and is outside of any Focused Planning Areas (FPAs), and no Constrained Lands occur within the Project. The Constrained Lands designation includes lands with steep slopes and wetlands regulated by ACOE federal wetland permitting requirements and the MHCP "no net loss of wetlands" policy (Ogden and CBI 2001).

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2 SURVEY METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

The Project study area is comprised of the entire 203.3-acre site, including each Project impact/work areas and a 100-foot buffer (Figure 1). The 100-foot buffer is appropriate in this case to allow for detection of, or analysis of, potential habitat for any species which may be indirectly impacted by Project activities onsite. Data regarding biological resources present within the study area were obtained through a review of pertinent literature and field reconnaissance, both of which are described in detail as follows. Survey areas were determined based on suitable habitat for the resource for which the survey was conducted.

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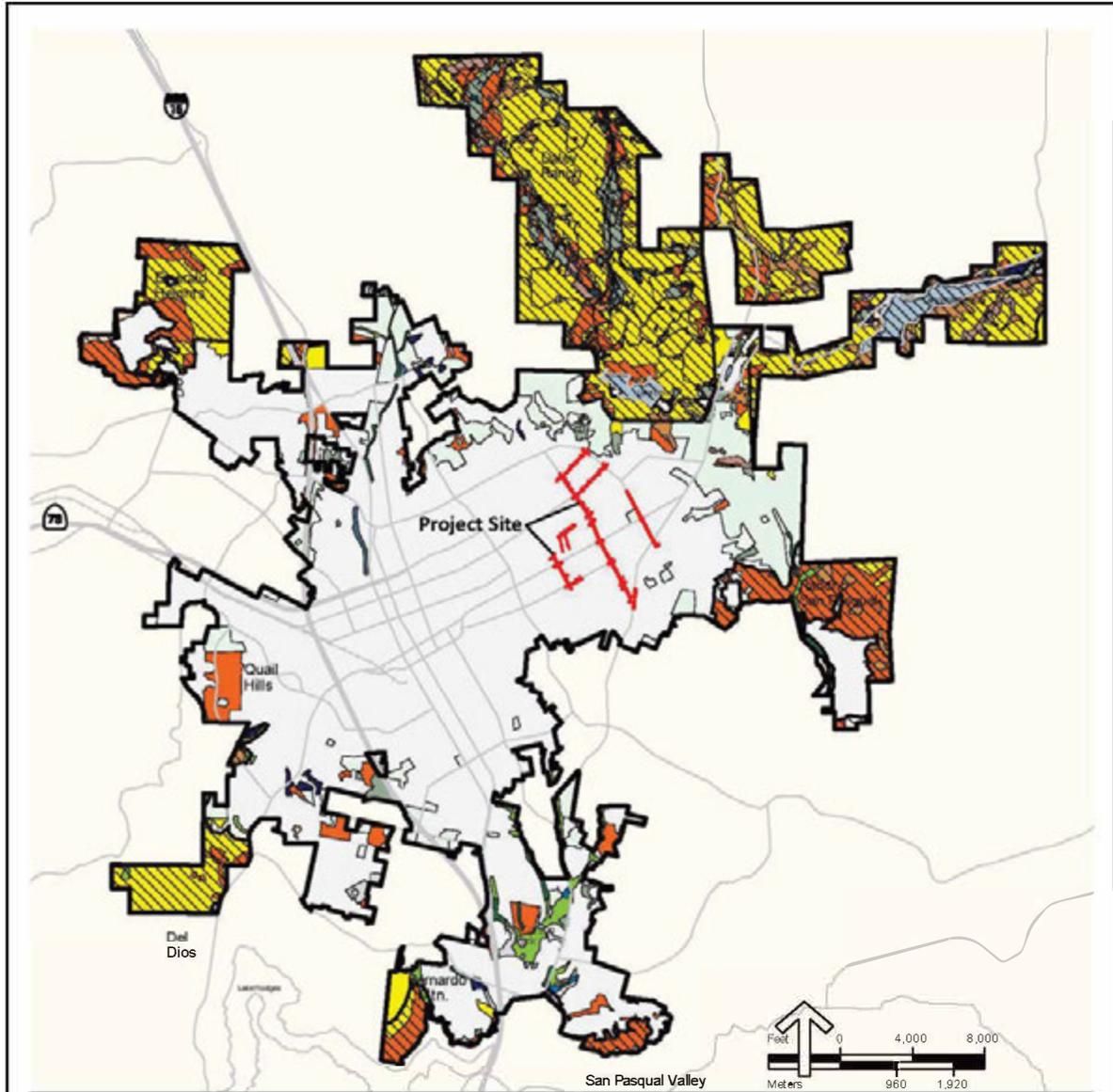


Figure 3-2
City of Escondido Subarea Plan
Vegetation Communities Inside the Biological Core & Linkage Area (BCLA)

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coastal Sage Scrub Chaparral Coastal Sage/Chaparral Mix Grassland | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freshwater Marsh Riparian Forest Riparian Scrub Coast Live Oak Woodland | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engelmann Oak Woodland Eucalyptus Woodland Open Water Disturbed Wetland Disturbed Land Agriculture Urban/Developed Inside the BCLA |
|--|--|--|

Source: SANDAG 2000

Figure 2a

Subarea Plan - Biological Core and Linkage Area

East Valley Parkway & Midway Drive
Drainage Improvements

Draft Biological Technical Report for the East Valley Parkway and Midway Drive Drainage Improvement Project, City of Escondido, California

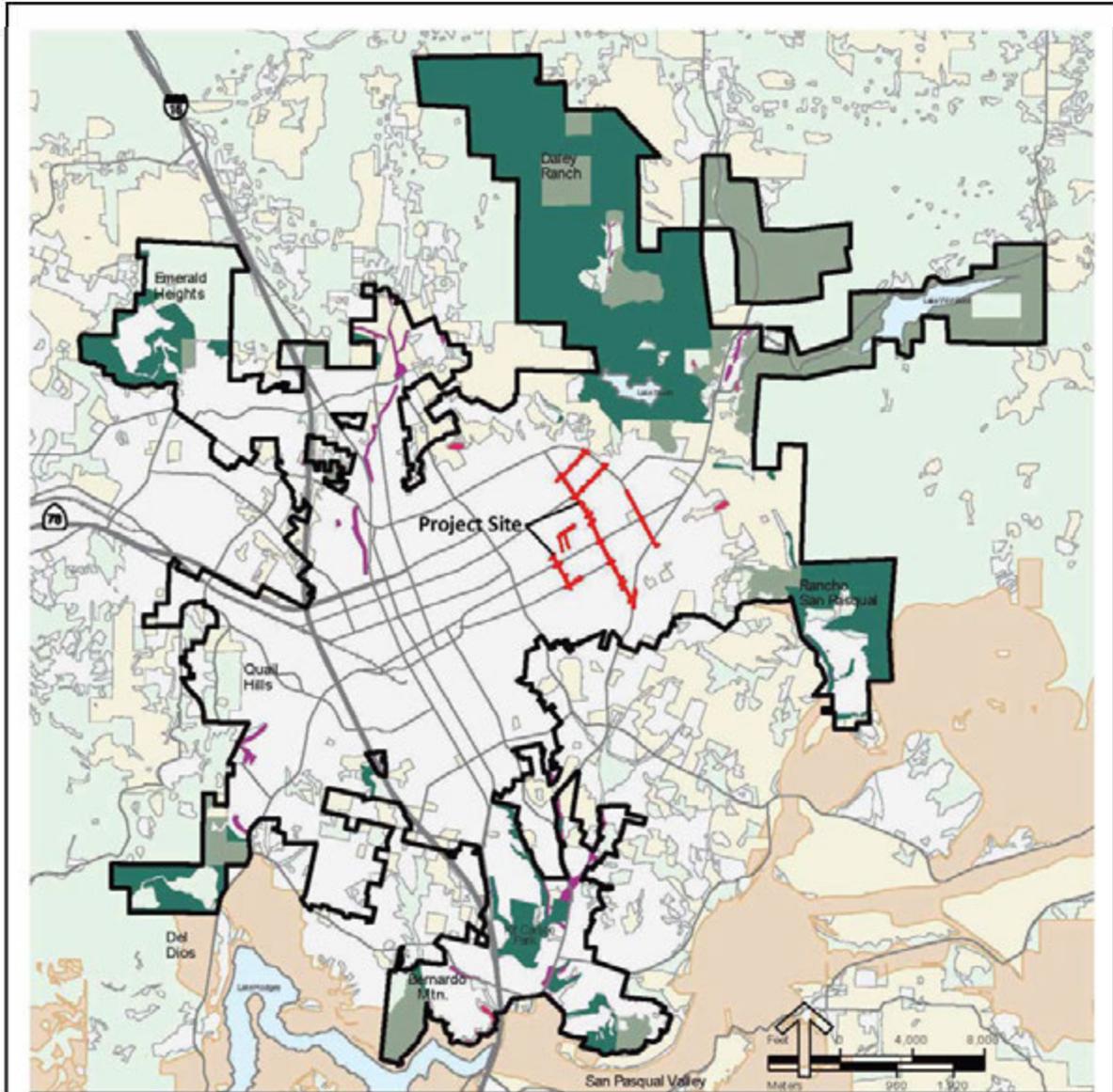


Figure 4-1
City of Escondido Subarea Plan
Focused Planning Area (FPA) and Constrained Lands Outside the FPA

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural Habitats Agricultural Land Developed and Disturbed Land | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hardline Focused Planning Area (90% and greater Conservation) Softline Focused Planning Area (Less than 90% Conservation) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constrained Lands (Wetlands) Outside the FPA Constrained Land (Slopes > 35%) Outside the FPA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MSCP Habitat Preserve Planning Area |
|--|--|--|--|

Source: SANDAG 2000

Figure 2b

Subarea Plan - Focused Planning Area

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2.1 Literature Review

The following data sources were reviewed to assist with the biological resources analysis:

- U.S. Department of Agriculture Web Soil Survey (USDA 2024)
- CDFW California Natural Diversity Database – Special Animals List (CDFW 2024a)
- CDFW California Natural Diversity Database – RareFind, Version 5 (CDFW 2024b)
- The Calflora Database (Calflora 2024)
- California Native Plant Society Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants (CNPS 2024)
- Final MHCP Plan (SANDAG 2003)
- City of Escondido Subarea Plan (Ogden and CBI 2001)
- USFWS Species Occurrence Data (USFWS 2024)
- San Diego Natural History Museum (SDNHM 2024)
- Aerial maps from the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG 2024), Bing (Microsoft 2024), and Google Earth (2002-2024)
- Topographic maps (Google Earth 2024)

Additional resources reviewed prior to field investigations include: Special Vascular Plants, Bryophytes, and Lichens (CDFW 2024c); Fully Protected Animals (CDFW 2024d); State and Federally Listed Endangered, Threatened, and Rare Plants of California (CDFW 2024e); and State and Federally Listed Endangered and Threatened Animals of California (CDFW 2024f). A review of proposed or final USFWS Critical Habitat for federally threatened or endangered species (USFWS 2024) and MHCP Focused Planning Areas, Biological Core Linkage Areas, and Constrained Lands (Ogden and CBI 2001) were also completed prior to field investigations.

The results of the data query were then refined through site visits involving habitat assessments for these special-status species. For the purposes of this report, species are considered to have special-status if they meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Covered under the federal or state Endangered Species Act (CDFW 2024a; USFWS 1996, 2004)
- CDFW Species of Special Concern (CDFW 2024a; Remsen 1978; Williams 1986)
- CDFW Fully Protected Species (CDFW 2024a)
- Listed as having a California Rare Plant Rank (CRPR) (formerly CNPS List) as List 1A (presumed extinct in California), 1B (rare, threatened, and endangered in California and elsewhere), or 2 (rare, threatened, or endangered in California, but more common elsewhere). CRPR List 1A, 1B, and 2 species are considered special-status plant species if

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they fall within any of these categories as defined in the NPPA, CFGC Section 1901 or the state ESA, CFGC Sections 2050 through 2098 CRPR List 3 (plants for which more information is needed [a review list]) or List 4 (plants of limited distribution [watch list]) (CNPS 2024)

- MHCP Species Occurring or Potentially Occurring in the City of Escondido Subarea Plan (Ogden and CBI 2001)

2.2 Field Reconnaissance

Biological surveys conducted within the Project study area were conducted on September 16 and September 18, 2024, and included vegetation mapping, general floral and wildlife surveys, and an aquatic resources delineation. Table 1 provides additional details regarding the conditions during the surveys. Photos of the area can be found in Appendix E, *Photo Document*.

TABLE 1
SCHEDULE OF SURVEYS

Date	Time	Personnel	Survey Type	Conditions
9/16/2024	1145-1530	Brynne Mulrooney	General biological reconnaissance, vegetation, wildlife, and plants	74 degrees F, wind 10-15 mph, 50% cloud cover
9/18/2024	0800-1330	Brian Lohstroh, Mark Wolford	Aquatic resources delineation	63-75 degrees F, wind 3-8 mph, 100-0% cloud cover

2.2.1 Resource Mapping

Vegetation communities and land uses within the study area were mapped in the field directly onto a 100-foot-scale (1 inch = 100 feet), aerial photograph-based field map with proposed disturbance areas for the Project. Following completion of the fieldwork, vegetation polygons were transferred to a digital map and digitized using ArcGIS, and a geographic information system (GIS) coverage was created. Once in ArcGIS, the acreage of each vegetation community and land cover present within the study area was determined. The vegetation community/land cover mapping follows the Preliminary Descriptions of the Terrestrial Natural Communities of California (Holland 1986) as modified by the County and noted in Draft Vegetation Communities of San Diego County (Oberbauer *et al.* 2008).

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2.2.2 Flora and Fauna

The plant species encountered during the field surveys were identified and recorded directly into a field notebook. Species that could not be identified in the field were brought into the laboratory for further investigation. A compiled list of plant species observed in the Project study area is presented in Appendix A, *Plant Species Observed within the Project Study Area*. Latin names follow the Jepson Interchange List of Currently Accepted Names of Native and Naturalized Plants of California (Jepson Flora Project 2024), and common names follow the List of Vegetation Alliances and Associations (CDFG 2010) or the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service Plants Database (USDA 2024b).

Wildlife species detected during the field survey by sight, calls, tracks, scat, or other signs were recorded directly onto a field notebook. Binoculars (8x42) were used to aid in the identification of wildlife. The suitability of habitats for special-status wildlife species within the Project study area was evaluated during the vegetation mapping and general wildlife surveys.

Latin and common names of animals detected American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) (2024) for birds, and North American Butterfly Association (NABA) (2016) or SDNHM (2002) for butterflies. In addition to species detected during the surveys, potential wildlife use of the site was determined by known habitat preferences of species and knowledge of their relative distributions in the area. A list of wildlife species observed in the study area is presented in Appendix B, *Wildlife Species Observed within the Project Study Area*.

2.2.3 Aquatic Resources Delineation

An aquatic resources delineation was performed onsite to determine areas under the jurisdiction of the ACOE pursuant to Section 404 of the federal CWA, CDFW pursuant to Sections 1600–1603 of the CFGC, and RWQCB pursuant to CWA Section 401 and the Porter–Cologne Water Quality Control Act. For more specific details regarding the aquatic resources onsite, refer to the Aquatic Resources Delineation Report associated with the Project (Balk 2024).

2.3 Surveys for Sensitive Biological Resources

Sensitive biological resources are defined as follows: (1) species that have been given special recognition by federal, state, or local agencies and organizations due to limited, declining, or threatened population sizes; (2) habitat types recognized by local and regional agencies as sensitive; (3) habitat areas or plant communities that are unique, are of relatively limited distribution, or are of particular value to wildlife; and (4) wildlife corridors and habitat linkages.

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A summary of the dates and site conditions for the field efforts performed as part of this biological report is presented above in Section 2.2, Table 1. The following sections provide specific details regarding each survey.

2.4 Survey Limitations

Site visits to the Project study area were conducted during daylight hours. No focused wildlife surveys or special-status plant surveys were conducted. Wildlife species were recorded during site visits in the early fall season when many breeding species would not be present. Plant surveys were conducted during the early fall; timing and seasonal conditions were not adequate to determine presence/absence of all potentially occurring special-status plants. Complete inventories of biological resources present on a site often require numerous focused surveys at different times of day during different seasons. Some species such as annual plants are detectable only in spring or summer, and nocturnal animals are difficult to detect during the day. Other species may be present in such low numbers that they could be missed. Due to such timing and seasonal variations, survey results are not an absolute list of all species that the Project study area may support.