RECON

Native Plant Restoration Plan for MHPA Land on the Bella Mar Project San Diego, California

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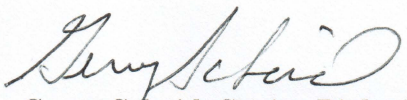

Gerry Scheid, Senior Biologist

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

BLA	Boundary Line Adjustment
MHPA	Multi-Habitat Planning Area
PEP	Plant establishment period
project	Bella Mar Project
USGS	United States Geological Survey

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this native plant restoration plan is to provide the guidelines for the enhancement of the on-site Multi-Habitat Planning Area (MHPA) land through the introduction of native vegetation in order to increase the habitat functions and values of this area for wildlife as well as for a wetland buffer to adjacent off-site wetlands along the Otay River. The Bella Mar Project (project) would have no impacts to sensitive vegetation communities or sensitive plant or wildlife species. No significant impacts to biological resources were identified. The project included a MHPA Boundary Line Adjustment (BLA), the approval of which resulted in the remaining on-site MHPA land (after the BLA) to be preserved in open space.

The restoration of 2.3 acres of currently disturbed land in the preserved on-site MHPA area with native plant species will serve to meet the requirements for the approved MHPA BLA. This restoration plan, prepared in accordance with the City of San Diego's Land Development Code Biology Guidelines (City of San Diego 2018), provides an implementation strategy, performance standards, and a five-year maintenance, monitoring, and reporting program.

1.1 Project Location and Size

The project site consists of a 14.62-acre parcel of undeveloped land located in the southern part of the city of San Diego (Figure 1). The project site occurs in Section 22, Township 18 South, Range 2 West, of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) 1996 7.5-minute topographic map, Imperial Beach quadrangle (Figure 2; USGS 1996). The project site is bounded by Interstate 5 to the west, the Otay River to the north, Hollister Street to the east, and undeveloped land to the south (Figure 3).

The proposed restoration area detailed in this conceptual restoration plan would occur on 2.3 acres of land within the MHPA on the northern edge of the project site (Figure 4). The restoration effort would establish native vegetation where disturbed land currently exists.

1.2 Revegetation Goals and Objectives

The purpose of this native plant restoration project is to restore habitat functions and values to on-site MHPA lands. The objective at the completion of revegetation effort of the on-site MHPA land is the restoration of a functional buffer to an off-site wetland area to the north along the Otay River.

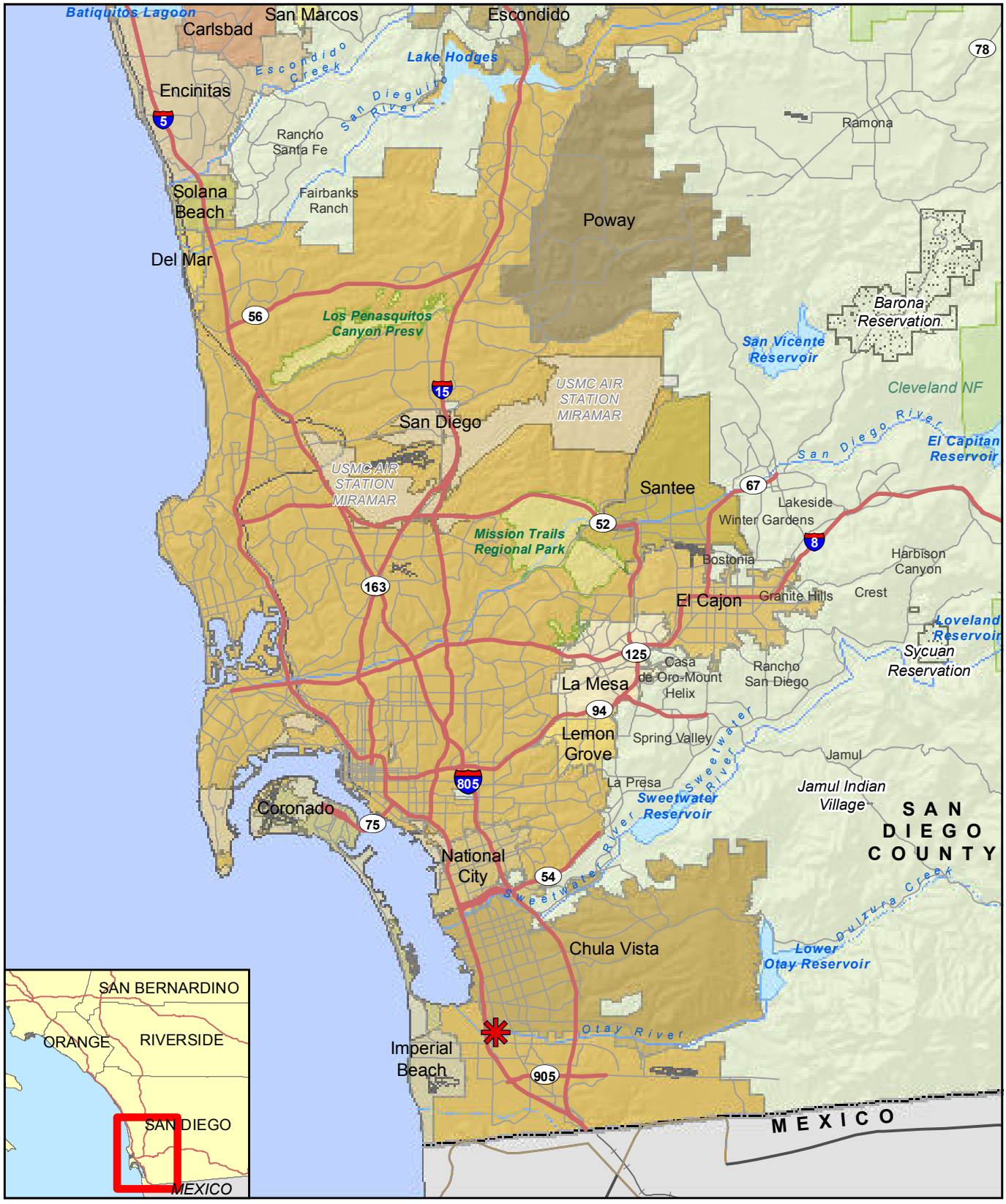

FIGURE 1

Regional Location

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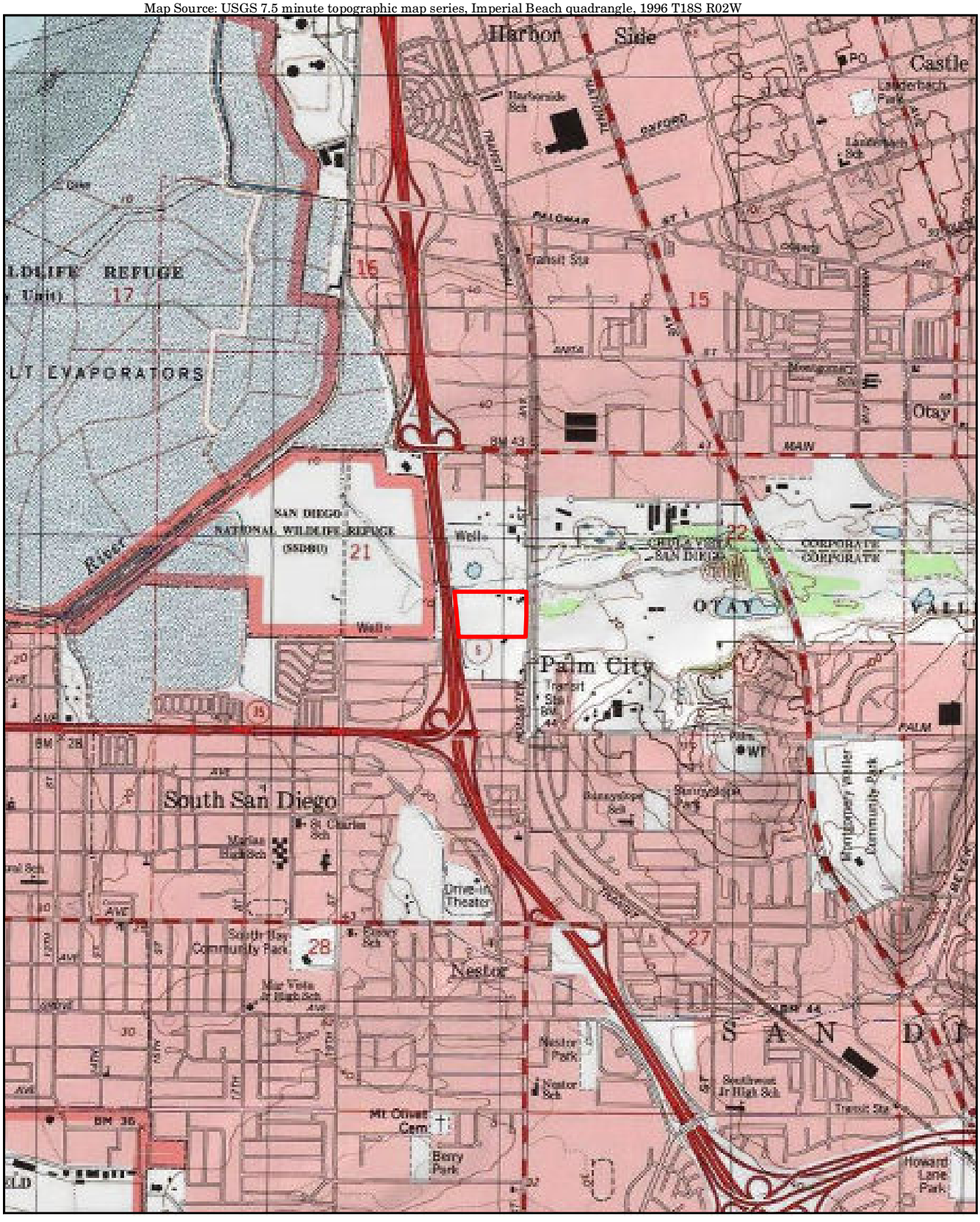
Map Source: USGS 7.5 minute topographic map series, Imperial Beach quadrangle, 1996 T18S R02W



Project Boundary

FIGURE 2

Project Location on USGS Map

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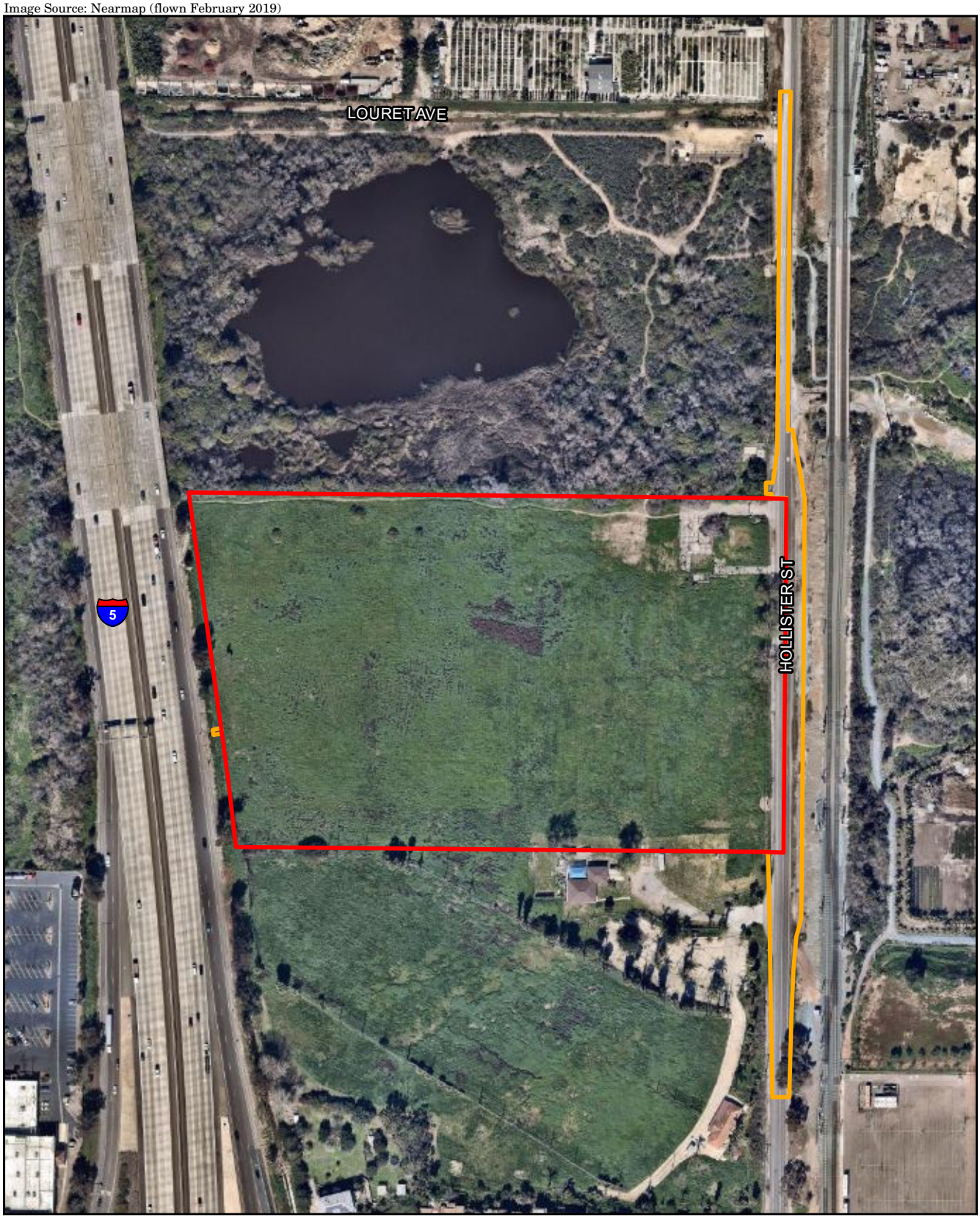
Image Source: Nearmap (flown February 2019)



Project Boundary

Off-site Improvement Area

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FIGURE 3

Project Location on Aerial Photograph

Image Source: Nearmap (flown February 2019)

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Project Boundary
Restoration Area
Development Area
Adjusted MHPA

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FIGURE 4
Location of Restoration Area

2.0 Existing Conditions

The existing conditions of the impact area and restoration area are described below. In addition, the target plant community to be restored is presented.

2.1 Environmental Setting of Impacted and Restoration Areas

The proposed impact areas on the project site are currently comprised of disturbed land that is maintained by annual discing. The disturbed land is vegetated with primarily non-native plants, with Russian thistle (*Salsola tragus*) and Australian saltbush (*Atriplex semibacata*) the most common plant species observed. The non-impacted area on-site to remain and be restored is also comprised of disturbed land.

The project site is currently undeveloped. Thus, it functions as buffer to the off-site wetlands within the Otay River to the north. While the disturbed habitat on-site provides minimal habitat values, the project site currently affords horizontal separation from the Otay River riparian habitats and the development further south of the site.

2.2 Topography and Soils

The project site is located adjacent to the Otay River within the western part of a broad valley. The relatively flat parcel is at an elevation of approximately 20 feet above mean sea level. Residential development exists to the south beyond the adjacent undeveloped parcel, and the Otay Valley Regional Park open space area borders the site to the north, west, and east. Interstate 5 occurs along the western boundary of the parcel and Hollister Street and the trolley tracks occur just east of the parcel.

Three soil types occur on the project site, Visalia gravelly sandy loam, Tujunga sand, and Riverwash (U.S. Department of Agriculture 1973). The restoration area occurs on Visalia gravelly sandy loam soil.

2.3 Target Plant Communities to be Restored

The revegetation area will be replanted with native plant species in the MHPA land to be preserved on the site. These plantings will replace the non-native vegetation currently on the site, resulting in functions and values higher than the pre-construction disturbed land habitat.

The native plants selected for the buffer area include a mixture of native shrubs, perennial bunchgrass, a small tree species, and native forbs that are characteristic of upland transitional habitat associated with riparian areas. These plants will increase the habitat structure of the buffer area over that of the current disturbed land, providing better habitat value for wildlife. The small trees and larger shrubs will provide better screening from the

adjacent development area, enhancing the function of the buffer, while the native forbs will provide plant diversity and better opportunities for pollinators to visit the site.

3.0 Mitigation Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities related to the implementation of this revegetation plan are discussed below.

3.1 Project Proponent

Red Tail Acquisitions LLC is the project proponent and shall be responsible for funding all aspects of the revegetation project including site preparation, seeding and planting, maintenance and monitoring, and any required remedial actions. The project proponent will coordinate the activities of the various contractors with the project biologist. The project proponent is responsible for providing and managing any financial assurances and contingency funds that may be required to ensure success of this mitigation effort.

The project proponent shall manage project activities in the best interest of restoration goals and will be solely responsible for administration of project contracts. Decisions to stop work are the responsibility of the project proponent. The project proponent shall have sole authority in decisions to suspend payment or terminate contracts, including all phases of project installation, long-term maintenance, and biological monitoring. The project proponent may, in its sole discretion at any time, replace any of these parties if necessary.

3.2 Restoration Specialist

The restoration specialist shall be an individual or team with a minimum of five years of experience in native habitat restoration. The restoration specialist shall be required to attend pre-restoration meetings, site preparation, seeding and planting, plant establishment, and project maintenance, and will monitor and report on project activities in accordance with the specifications of this plan. The restoration specialist shall consult with the project proponent on any activities that may be disruptive to the mitigation. The restoration specialist shall direct qualified subcontractors in execution of aspects of this plan, implement required long-term maintenance of the mitigation, and perform the required monitoring and reporting in accordance with the procedures established in this plan.

The restoration specialist shall be responsible for monitoring during site preparation, exotic and ornamental species removal, seeding and planting, and the maintenance period. The restoration specialist shall also conduct quantitative monitoring during each year of the long-term maintenance and monitoring period, according to the specifications of this plan. The restoration specialist shall prepare an as-built letter report and annual reports during the maintenance period.

Other responsibilities discussed below may be performed by the restoration specialist or by qualified subcontractors.

3.3 Irrigation Contractor

The irrigation contractor shall work under the direction of the restoration specialist. The irrigation contractor should be experienced in providing water to remote locations and working within and around sensitive habitat. The irrigation contractor shall water plants in a way that minimizes erosion and runoff from the site while providing the plants with adequate water.

3.4 Seed Supplier

The seed supplier must have at least two years of experience collecting seeds of native upland plants for restoration projects. Additionally, the seed supplier must be able to document the region of the seed collected to assure that it meets the specifications of this plan.

3.5 Plant Supplier

The native plant supplies shall originate from a qualified native plant nursery. The plant supplier must have at least three years of experience propagating native plants and be able to produce properly aged plants in containers ready for out-planting. All container plants will be grown in native soil containing mycorrhizal fungi.

3.6 Maintenance Crew

The maintenance crew shall represent a qualified company with at least five years of experience in implementing native plant restoration projects in upland environments. The maintenance crew shall be responsible for completion of site preparation activities under the direction of the restoration specialist. The maintenance crew shall include a state-licensed qualified applicator that will direct herbicide applications. All crew members applying herbicide should receive pesticide safety training before applying herbicides.

4.0 Site Preparation

Implementation of this restoration plan includes four phases: site preparation, seeding, planting, and irrigation. All implementation work shall be conducted under the direction of the restoration specialist.

4.1 Site Preparation

Site preparation shall include the removal of the existing non-native vegetation. A temporary barrier fence shall be installed along the southern border of the area in the interim until such time as the permanent barrier fence can be installed.

4.1.1 Weed Eradication and Clearing of Existing Vegetation

The restoration site occurs within an area that currently supports a variety of non-native plant species. Initially, the site shall be weed whipped to remove unwanted non-native vegetation matter, raked, and the cut vegetation removed and properly disposed. Herbicide applications may be necessary to ensure that problem weeds or unwanted vegetation are effectively treated prior to the installation of the native plant materials. The application of a pre-emergent treatment is recommended to limit the establishment of any residual weed seed bank remaining in the soils. The timing of project implementation and specific weeds present at that time will determine the best method for weed control/removal. This determination shall be made by the restoration specialist.

4.1.2 Site Protection

Temporary silt or barrier fencing shall be installed around the restoration site to protect the native plants materials being installed while project grading is occurring to the south. Permanent site protection in the form of a barrier fence shall be installed as the project is being constructed after initial site grading has occurred.

4.2 Container Stock Planting

The species recommended for container stock to be planted in the MHPA land are given in Table 1. All container plants shall be comprised of 1-gallon sized plants. The planting density recommended is approximately 500 plants per acre (totaling approximately 1,150 plants).

Table 1
Recommended Container Size and Planting Densities

Common Name	Scientific Name	Number Per Acre	Container Size
California buckwheat	*Eriogonum fasciculatum*	150	1-gallon
Coast goldenbush	*Isocoma menziesii*	150	1-gallon
Laurel sumac	*Malosma laurina*	50	1-gallon
Blue elderberry	*Sambucus nigra*	50	1-gallon
Purple needle grass	*Stipa pulchra*	100	1-gallon
TOTAL		500	

The final plantings will depend on the availability of appropriately aged plants; the plant supplier should be provided with at least six months advance notice to grow the plants listed. Additional plants may be installed during the second growing season, if adequate supplies are not available at the time of initial planting.

The general planting layout shall create a mosaic of native plants. The restoration specialist shall oversee the container plant layout in the field prior to planting. The restoration specialist shall use best professional judgment to determine appropriate spacing, neighboring

species, and topographic location. Planting holes will be dug approximately 50 percent larger than the container when installed.

4.3 Seeding

The restoration site shall be seeded in the winter of the third year after installation with the species shown in Table 2. The seed mix will be most beneficial in providing supplements to the planted perennial species (shrubs) and contribute to overall plant diversity in the restoration site.

Native seed should be applied at the beginning of the growing season (November or December), but can be applied during spring months provided that supplemental irrigation is provided. Seeds will be applied by hand seeding.

Table 2
Recommended Seed Mix

Common Name	Scientific Name	Hand Seeding Application Rates Per Acre
California buckwheat	*Eriogonum fasciculatum*	0.5 lb.
California encelia	*Encelia californica*	0.5 lb.
Sun cup	*Camissonia bistorta*	0.5 lb.
Goldfields	*Lasthenia californica*	0.5 lb.
Miniature lupine	*Lupinus bicolor*	0.5 lb.
NOTE: These recommendations are guidelines that may be changed at the direction of the restoration specialist.		

4.4 Planting and Seeding Specifications

Planting specifications include the collection and application of native seed mixes and the production and planting of nursery-grown container plants.

4.4.1 Native Seed Collection

If feasible, native seed shall be collected in and around the restoration site, as directed by the restoration specialist. Seed collection areas should be limited to the same watershed as the restoration site or to a 10-mile radius around the site. If time constraints do not allow for source-identified seed collection and propagation, the plant selection shall be as local as possible, as directed by the project restoration specialist.

4.4.2 Seed Application Methods

The restoration site shall be seeded with locally collected native species to the maximum extent possible. Due to limited access and relatively small restoration site, seed will be applied by hand.

4.4.3 Plant Production

Container plants shall be acquired from a nursery that must specialize in producing high-quality native plant species for habitat restoration projects. Plant production will begin as seed becomes available. Native soil shall be used in the plant containers. The native soil provides mycorrhizae (fungi) and other microorganisms that enhance native plant growth.

4.4.4 Timing

Planting of native plant materials should be done during November through March. This time period is optimal for establishing native plants as daytime temperatures are relatively cool and it coincides with the natural rainy season.

5.0 Irrigation

Supplemental irrigation shall be provided by a temporary irrigation system. Supplemental irrigation shall be provided at the direction of the restoration specialist, based on an evaluation of predicted seasonal rainfall patterns. All watering shall be carefully applied to minimize runoff and erosion within the site. Irrigation is intended to provide supplemental water during the plant establishment period (PEP) and for up to two years following planting. The restoration specialist shall discontinue irrigation once the plants have become established. A watering schedule shall be provided by the restoration specialist and updated when necessary as weather conditions change.

The irrigation system shall be controlled by its own valves so that the restoration site may be watered independently and according to its own watering schedule. The irrigation system will be temporary and shall be dismantled and removed from the restoration area once the plants have become established. Prior to removing the irrigation system, the watering schedule shall be tapered off to harden plants to normal weather conditions.

6.0 Maintenance Program

Maintenance is needed to maintain conditions favorable to establishment and growth of native plants. The maintenance program ensures that plant establishment, weed control, replanting, reseeding, and erosion control are performed adequately. Maintenance measures shall be conducted throughout the restoration area and shall be coordinated by the restoration specialist.

6.1 Plant Establishment Period

A 120-day PEP shall commence upon planting of the native plant materials. During this period, relatively intensive maintenance activities shall be conducted to aid in the establishment of planted container stock under the direction of and on a schedule determined by the restoration specialist. The maintenance crew shall control emerging weed seedlings,

replace dead plants, repair erosion, and remove any trash from the restoration site. The maintenance contractor shall also be responsible for maintaining any perimeter fencing.

If excessive damage from browsing of wildlife or domestic animals is detected, individual plants may be protected by temporary installation of a chicken wire fence around each plant. However, since browsing is a natural process, fencing will only be installed if browsing is expected to result in significant plant mortality.

6.2 Five-Year Maintenance

Five years of maintenance is required in order to achieve the final success criteria. Weed control shall be the primary ongoing activity, with reseeding, replanting, and erosion control performed as needed under the direction of the restoration specialist. The recommended schedule for the five years of maintenance is shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Approximate Maintenance Schedule

Type/Task	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Fence maintenance	Monthly	Quarterly	Quarterly	Quarterly	Quarterly
Weed control	As needed	As needed	Quarterly	Quarterly	Semi-annually
Replanting/seeding	Winter	Winter	As needed	As needed	As needed
Irrigation	As needed	As needed	Remove	-	-
Irrigation Maintenance	As needed	As needed	-	-	-

6.2.1 Weed Control

Weed control will be an integral part of the maintenance program. Weeds shall be controlled through manual or chemical means. A glyphosate-based herbicide shall be applied in most cases, but selective herbicides may also be applied to control specific types of weeds. Weeding shall be performed by maintenance workers trained to distinguish weeds from native species to keep weed species from producing seeds and to control weed competition during establishment of the restoration plantings.

Weed control will be timed to prevent seed set by non-native species. During the first two years after the PEP, weeding shall be performed a minimum of six times, then quarterly during years three and four, and finally twice a year in year five. If during any particular year additional weed control is required above what it presented in the Table 3 schedule, the restoration specialist shall alert the project proponent to obtain authorization to conduct such weed control.

6.2.2 Remedial Planting

If the interim or final performance standards discussed in Section 7.6 below are not achieved for the respective monitoring year, replanting or additional seed application will be conducted when soil moisture is optimal as determined by the restoration specialist.

6.2.3 Erosion Control

Erosion control and site repair shall be part of the continued routine maintenance of the restoration project. Common erosion problems anticipated include formation of gullies and rills, and sheet erosion of bare soil areas. Repair typically includes redirection and dissipation of the water source, and re-contouring of the soil. Repaired areas shall be hand seeded. Maintenance or replacement of surrounding silt shall take place when needed. These tasks can be handled by the maintenance crew.

6.2.4 Trash and Debris Removal

Trash and debris will be removed from the site as needed. Trash consists of all man-made materials, equipment, or debris left within the restoration areas that do not serve a function related to habitat restoration.

6.2.5 Irrigation Maintenance

The temporary irrigation system shall be maintained in proper working order during the PEP and first three years of the maintenance period. At a minimum, monthly irrigation system checks shall be made to check that the system is functioning properly. If, at the end of the growing season of year three, the native plants have become well established, the temporary irrigation system can be removed from the site.

7.0 Biological Monitoring

Monitoring is needed to identify and correct problems that may arise during the restoration project and to document project success. Monitoring for this project shall consist of four phases: site preparation, implementation, plant establishment, and five years of monitoring. Monitoring reports that discuss the progress of the restoration effort shall be provided to the client and appropriate agencies.

7.1 Site Preparation Monitoring

During the site preparation phase, the restoration specialist or qualified monitor shall be present (not necessarily continuously). The monitor need not be present on-site during weed control but shall evaluate the effectiveness of the weed control efforts approximately one week after completion of each control effort. The monitor shall determine whether and how many repeat control efforts are needed to eradicate noxious weeds from the site.

The monitor shall record dates of all site preparation activities, problems encountered, alternative approaches used, and other information necessary to provide a complete and accurate account of this phase of the project.

7.2 Implementation Monitoring

The monitor shall oversee the container plant layout prior to planting to ensure that container plants are arranged in a natural manner. The monitor shall be available on-site during restoration implementation to assist in making necessary plan modifications. The monitor shall be present during seeding activities conducted in the second year after planting to verify that the seed mix is what was specified in this plan.

The monitor shall record seeding and planting dates, problems encountered, alternative approaches used, and other information necessary to provide a complete and accurate account of this phase of the project.

7.3 Plant Establishment Monitoring

The monitor shall visit the site every two weeks during the 120-day PEP. During these qualitative monitoring visits, the monitor shall note container plant survival and growth, weeds present, erosion features, and other conditions affecting the ability of the planted species to become established on the site.

The monitor shall record these observations and communicate them to the maintenance crew and shall direct the crew to take appropriate actions to optimize site conditions. The monitor shall observe and record the effectiveness of these actions.

At the end of the 120-day PEP, the monitor shall make preliminary recommendations for any replanting needed on the site and communicate these recommendations to the plant suppliers.

The monitor shall submit a written report describing site preparation, project implementation, and the 120-day PEP to the City of San Diego and the project proponent within 45 days of the completion of the 120-day PEP. The as-built report will include site preparation dates, the species and quantities of container plants installed, survival of container plants after 120 days, photodocumentation of site conditions after 120 days, discussions of other aspects of site preparation, project implementation, plant establishment, and recommendations for remedial actions, if needed.

7.4 Monitoring Methods

7.4.1 Qualitative Monitoring

Evaluation of plant health and identifying and correcting problems as they arise are necessary for ensuring successful vegetation establishment. At a minimum, qualitative monitoring shall be conducted once monthly for the first year, once quarterly in Years 2 and 3, and semi-annually in Years 4 and 5. Qualitative monitoring shall involve the restoration specialist reviewing the restoration areas to examine transplant vigor, native annual and grass germination, and exotic plant encroachment and control.

7.4.2 Quantitative Monitoring

At the end of the 120-day PEP and the first year after plant installation, a direct count of the number of native plants by species occurring in the restoration area shall be conducted. These counts will determine the initial survivorship of the native plant container stock installed and if any supplemental planting is required.

Quantitative monitoring will be performed to measure development of vegetation at the restoration site and to document that the area achieves the success criteria as defined by the performance standards presented below. Quantitative monitoring will begin the second spring following implementation of restoration activities in order to allow time for the new vegetation within the restoration areas to become established. Annual quantitative monitoring shall be conducted in late spring in Years 2 through 5.

Quantitative sampling shall be carried out during the late spring or early summer to ensure the best representation of species diversity. Quantitative monitoring should follow an established methodology for the measurement of vegetation cover. Permanent photo-points shall also be established to document year-to-year changes on-site.

7.5 Monitoring Reports

The restoration monitor shall review the project area to assess germination, survival, and growth of planted material, levels of weed competition, and erosion. The monitor shall also make visual assessments of percent cover by weeds and by native plants during the 120-day PEP and first year of the five-year monitoring period. The monitor shall measure vegetation cover quantitatively during the second through fifth year of the monitoring period.

The monitor shall record and report findings and make recommendations for remedial actions, if needed, to the maintenance crew after each monitoring event. If site conditions are such that additional remedial actions are required beyond those envisioned in this plan, the monitor shall communicate recommendations for remediation to the project proponent.

General site conditions shall be photo documented during the spring monitoring visit each year. This photodocumentation will provide an overview of the site and will assist in documenting the development of the restoration area throughout the course of the maintenance and monitoring period.

The monitor shall prepare annual reports describing qualitative and quantitative monitoring results for Years 1 through 5. These reports shall summarize maintenance activities, discuss general site conditions and trends, include photodocumentation of site conditions, compare quantitative measures with success performance criteria, and make recommendations for remedial actions, if needed. The annual reports shall be submitted to the City of San Diego, appropriate resource agencies, and the project proponent.

7.6 Performance Standards

The restoration of the MHPA land/buffer shall be considered successful when the final performance standards have been met, which may occur before the fifth year of maintenance and monitoring. Interim and final performance standards for achieving percent native cover and percent non-native cover are shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Performance Standards

Year	Container Plant Survival*	Total Native Plant Cover	Non-native Cover (annual species)**
1	80%	-	-
2	80%	35	5%
3	80%	50	5%
4	80%	60	5%
5	80%	70	5%

*Survival based on initial planting quantities
**Percent cover of perennial non-native species shall be zero.

8.0 Schedule of Activities

The monitoring period shall begin with implementation of the restoration work and will last for 5 years after the 120-day PEP, or until the restored vegetation has met the final performance standards, whichever happens first. A monitoring schedule is presented in Table 5. The monitoring program shall be conducted by the restoration specialist, as outlined below.

Table 5
Monitoring Schedule

Type Task	PEP (3 Months)	Year 1	Years 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Qualitative						
Monitoring	Semi-weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Quarterly	Semi-annually	Semi-annually
Quantitative						
Spring	--	–	Annually	Annually	Annually	Annually
Reports	As-built	Annually	Annually	Annually	Annually	Annually
PEP = plant establishment period						

9.0 Remediation Measures

If the restoration site does not meet interim performance standards, the monitor shall propose remedial measures in the annual report. Minor remedial measures, such as replanting, reseeding, increased weeding frequency, or minor modifications to the sampling protocol, shall be implemented unless the project proponent or the City of San Diego object within 30 days of receipt of the annual report.

If unforeseen circumstances require more extensive or costly measures to achieve project success, the restoration specialist shall consult with the project proponent and the City of San Diego to develop contingency measures. Contingency measures shall be funded by the project proponent and would require approval by the City of San Diego. After contingency measures have been implemented, maintenance and monitoring shall continue according to the steps in this plan, until the restoration site meets the performance standards.

10.0 Completion of Mitigation Notification

When the restoration specialist determines that the performance standards have been met, the restoration specialist shall submit a final report summarizing the restoration project and providing documentation of success. The report shall be submitted and reviewed by the City of San Diego and appropriate resource agencies. The restoration specialist shall organize a site visit with the City of San Diego and appropriate resource agencies. Following the site visit, the City of San Diego will provide a written determination of project success to the restoration specialist and the project proponent. If the project is determined to be unsuccessful, contingency measures shall be implemented and any financial assurances provided by the project proponent shall not be released until the project is deemed successful.

10.1 Confirmation

A site review shall be scheduled for all parties to review the restored area within two months of the notification. The City of San Diego will provide written confirmation of acceptance that the site has met the performance standards within one month following the site visit. The project proponent is responsible for the maintenance and management of the restoration area in perpetuity. A Covenant of Easement would be recorded over the area to ensure that the biological integrity of the restored MHPA site is maintained. The Covenant of Easement may designate a resource manager and provide for funding mechanism for the long-term maintenance and monitoring of the MHPA site.

11.0 References Cited

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