

# **PARKS, RECREATION, AND PRESERVATION AREAS**

## **Inventory Methods**

First, existing land use data were reviewed, refined, and updated to compile the parks, recreation, and preservation areas inventory. Next, an investigation and interpretation of existing land use maps crossed by or in proximity to the existing project right-of-way and project study corridor were undertaken. The existing mapped information (refer to Figure 5-1 in Section 5.1) was verified by limited ground reconnaissance. In addition, federal, state, and local land resource agencies were contacted to update official information and to solicit further input.

## ***Study Components***

The parks, recreation, and preservation areas are defined as places where the established or proposed land use is primarily for recreational enjoyment or to protect and preserve a valuable environmental resource. Most of these areas are managed by federal, state, or local governmental agencies for public use.

## ***Data Collection***

Agency contacts and published maps, reports, or other public documents provided the bulk of the data utilized in the preparation of the parks, recreation, and preservation areas inventory. A listing of data sources is provided in Chapter 11. Numerous contacts (telephone, e-mail or meetings) were made during the study with federal, state, and local governmental agency representatives and organizations. A limited field investigation of the project area was also conducted via vehicle in April 2002. The field investigation consisted of selected portions of the project area.

## **Inventory Results**

### ***U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service***

#### **National Wildlife Refuge**

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge system is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and, where appropriate, restoration of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats for the ongoing benefit of Americans.

The San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Otay-Sweetwater Unit is located within the project area. This refuge, designated in 1996, supports a rich diversity of native habitats and wildlife. The Otay-Sweetwater Unit provides habitat for the threatened coastal California gnatcatcher, endangered least Bell's vireo, endangered southwestern willow flycatcher, endangered Quino checkerspot butterfly, endangered arroyo southwestern toad, Otay tar plant and listed species found in vernal pools.

## ***California Department of Transportation***

### **California Scenic Highway Program**

California's Scenic Highway Program was created by the Legislature in 1963. Its purpose is to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. The State Scenic Highway System includes highways that are either eligible for designation as scenic highways or have been designated as such. The status of a state scenic highway changes from "eligible" to "officially designated" when the local jurisdiction adopts a scenic corridor protection program, applies to Caltrans for scenic highway approval, and receives from Caltrans the designation. A city or county may propose adding routes with outstanding scenic elements to the list of eligible highways. However, state legislation is required.

No officially designated state or county scenic highways were identified in the project area. However, seven "eligible state scenic highways—not officially designated" were identified within the project area. The names and locations of these routes appear in Table B-1.

**Table B-1: Scenic Highway Jurisdiction and Associated Reference Plan Document**

<b>Route*</b>	<b>State Scenic Highway Program</b>	<b>San Diego County General Plan, Scenic Highway Element</b>	<b>San Diego County Community Plan</b>	<b>Santee General Plan, Scenic Highways Element</b>
Interstate 8	From Sunset Cliffs Boulevard to Route 98 near Coyote Wells	From El Cajon city limits to State Route 79, Second Priority Scenic Road	From El Cajon city limits to State Route 79, Second Priority Scenic Road—Lakeside Community Plan	Not applicable (N/A)
State Route 52	From Interstate 5 east of La Jolla to State Route 67 near Santee (all)	From San Diego city limits to State Route 67, Second Priority Scenic Road	N/A	N/A
State Route 94 (Campo Road)	From State Route 125 near Spring Valley to Interstate 8 west of Jacumba	N/A	State Route 94, First Priority Scenic Road—Valle De Oro and Jamul/Dulzura Community Plans	N/A
State Route 67	N/A	From State Route 52 to Anza Expressway, Third Priority Scenic Road	All areas adjacent to State Route 67, Third Priority Scenic Road—Lakeside Community Plan	N/A

<b>Route*</b>	<b>State Scenic Highway Program</b>	<b>San Diego County General Plan, Scenic Highway Element</b>	<b>San Diego County Community Plan</b>	<b>Santee General Plan, Scenic Highways Element</b>
Willow Road and El Monte Road	N/A	From State Route 67 to the southern end of El Capitan Reservoir, Second Priority Scenic Road	From State Route 67 to the southern end of El Capitan Reservoir, Second Priority Scenic Road—Lakeside Community Plan	N/A
Bonita Road, San Miguel Road, Guajolote Road and Sweetwater River Road	N/A	From Interstate 805 to State Route 94, (excluding portion within Chula Vista), First Priority Scenic Road	Bonita Road, San Miguel Road, Guajolote Road and Sweetwater River Road, First Priority Scenic Road—Sweetwater Community Plan	N/A
Willow Glen Drive	N/A	From southwest of Singing Hills Country Club continuing southwest along Jamacha Boulevard, Priority Scenic Route	Willow Glen Drive, Second Priority Scenic Route—Valle De Oro Community Plan	N/A

<b>Route*</b>	<b>State Scenic Highway Program</b>	<b>San Diego County General Plan, Scenic Highway Element</b>	<b>San Diego County Community Plan</b>	<b>Santee General Plan, Scenic Highways Element</b>
State Route 125	N/A	N/A	N/A	The potential alignment of State Route 125 through Sycamore Canyon, from the north Santee City boundary to Mission Gorge Road

\*Note: Entire route length may or may not fall within the visual study area.

### ***San Diego County***

The purpose of the *San Diego County General Plan, Scenic Highway Element*, is to establish a Scenic Highway Program to protect and enhance the county's scenic, historic, and recreational resources within a network of scenic highway corridors. The *Scenic Highway Element* contains a program map and priority list. The map indicates those routes for which scenic highway corridors, official designation, and protection measures are to be established. The priority list describes each route within the Scenic Highway System and designates the route's priority for which scenic corridor planning and implementation are to be initiated. First, Second, and Third Priority Scenic Routes were identified within the project area. Scenic highways are also discussed in the Lakeside, Valle De Oro, Sweetwater, and Jamul/Dulzura Community Plans. The names and locations of these routes appear in Table 1.

The county is in the process of revising the *San Diego County General Plan (General Plan 2020)*. As a result, the Priority Scenic Routes identified on the aforementioned map and priority list are subject to change. Any potential changes are unknown at this time.

County efforts to establish and designate non-motorized recreational trails began in 1976. There have been many activities since related to: developing a trails plan and policy; identifying and adopting trail alignments on Community/Subregional plan maps; obtaining adequate public access; and coordinating with interest groups and governmental agencies. In addition, the county considers pathways that are non-motorized transportation facilities located within public road rights-of-way in their trail planning. Pathways are intended to function as facilities that make trail connections where no other forms of access are available.

The county Department of Public Works (DPW) works closely with the departments of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and Planning and Land Use (DPLU) to coordinate trail efforts within the unincorporated area of the county. DPR administers a system of trails within county parks, and DPW has primary responsibility for trails outside of parks.

One of DPW's primary activities involves the planning and implementation of regional trails intended to connect with trail systems at local levels. This effort requires close coordination with various entities, including: cities; state and federal land managers; community planning groups; trail groups; and professional organizations.

On July 18, 2001, the Board directed the Chief Administrative Officer to prepare draft goals and policies for inclusion in *General Plan 2020* and to initiate preparation of a Community Trails Master Plan, utilizing information from the Trails System Assessment dated July 2, 2001, with a concept of trail development on public and private lands. These goals and policies of the master planning effort consider a baseline level of service, incorporate a Regional Trail Plan and Map within the general plan, and place Community Trail planning outside *General Plan 2020*.

Existing trails/paths were located within the project area. These trails/paths were identified from preliminary community-based trail maps found in the San Diego County Trail System Assessment.

### San Diego County Department of Parks and Recreation

The mission of the DPR is to preserve regionally significant natural and cultural resources and provide opportunities for high-quality parks and recreation experiences.

Two San Diego County parks (Louis A. Stelzer and Lake Jennings) are located within the project area. The 314-acre Louis A. Stelzer County Park was dedicated in 1982 and is the first recreational facility in southern California designed to accommodate both disabled and non-disabled park visitors. The park contains family picnic areas, barbecues, restrooms, playground equipment, easy accessible pathways, hiking trails, a wheelchair exercise par course, an amphitheater, and a youth camping area. Hiking trails within the park consist of two trails (0.7-mile Riparian Trail and 0.6-mile Stelzer Ridge Trail) connected by a loop trail (0.28 mile Wooten Loop Trail). The park is located at 11470 Wildcat Canyon Road, Lakeside, and the existing project right-of-way runs contiguously along its southern boundary.

The 100-acre Lake Jennings County Park is especially suited for recreational vehicle campers. The park also contains an enclosed clubhouse, walk-back tent sites, youth camping area, hot showers, and a holding tank disposal station. A playground, horseshoe pits, and many hiking trails also add to the recreational options. The park is located at 10108 Bass Road, Lakeside, and the existing project right-of-way runs contiguously along the northerly half of its western boundary.

### ***City of San Diego***

According to the *City of San Diego Progress Guide and General Plan*, the San Diego River is the prominent open space element in the San Diego River corridor area and is considered a significant aesthetic and economic asset to the community. It provides “visual and physical relief from the intensifying urbanization in the Valley” and is attributed with unifying the community. *The Mission Valley Community Plan* addresses several visual resource protection policies to maintain the aesthetic value of the San Diego River corridor.

- Enhance and maintain the aesthetic and recreational qualities of the river corridor as part of an open space system.
- Provide visual access to the San Diego River and the hillsides in order to preserve a sense of openness in the valley.
- Grading required to accommodate any new development should disturb only minimally the natural terrain.

### City of San Diego Park and Recreation Department

The mission of the City of San Diego Park and Recreation Department is to acquire, develop, operate, and maintain a park and recreation system that enriches the quality of life for residents and visitors alike, and preserves it for future generations.

Mission Trails Regional Park was identified within the project area. Established in 1974, Mission Trails Regional Park encompasses nearly 5,800 acres of both natural and developed recreational acres. The park includes two lakes; a scenic stretch of the San Diego River and Old Mission

Dam; a 46-site campground; Cowles Mountain, and over 40 miles of trails that accommodate hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians. Various interpretive walks, campfire talks, and special programs provide visitors with outdoor educational and recreational opportunities. The park, with its state-of-the-art Visitor and Interpretive Center, is operated and maintained by the City of San Diego in close partnership with the Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation. The park is located approximately 8 miles northeast of downtown San Diego.

An area known as East Elliot (north of the park and across from State Route 52) is in the process of being added to the park.

### ***City of Santee***

According to the *City of Santee General Plan, Community Design Element*:

The numerous topographic features of Santee and the surrounding vicinity provide distinctive views and vistas from within the developed portions of the City. This provides residents with scenic backdrops and visual relief from intensively developed portions of the City. The major ridgeline and hillside systems provided by the undeveloped areas of the northern portion of the Planning Area (including Fanita Ranch) present a large portion of these views and vistas. The Rattlesnake Mountain and the Mission Trails Regional Park areas also provide for significant views from within Santee.

It also states:

Views to the surrounding hillsides from within Santee provide scenic backdrops and visual relief for residents. Views also provide a significant portion of the rural character that the City maintains today. The breadth and quality of views is dependent on the maintenance of topographic features and visual access to those features from within developed portions of the City. As the City transitions to a more urbanized community, maintenance of high quality views will depend on the siting and design features of hillside projects and strategic location of open space. Further, development within the urban area must frame and enhance view opportunities and not block or place negative impacts on existing viewsheds.

The following are policies to achieve the objective of “maintain and enhance existing scenic views”:

- The City shall require re-vegetation of graded slopes with indigenous plant materials, where feasible, to maintain scenic views and assist in slope stabilization.
- The City should ensure the strategic location of open space areas in hillside developments.
- The City should provide for the maintenance of view opportunities to surrounding hillsides by ensuring proposed structures do not block or significantly impact existing viewsheds.

In addition, the *City of Santee General Plan, Scenic Highways Element* identified major transportation corridors within the city exhibiting the qualities and/or characteristics that merit

their designation as local scenic highways or roads. One transportation corridors was identified within the project area, as detailed in Table 1.

#### Padre Dam Municipal Water District

Santee Lakes Regional Park and Campground is located within the project area, and the existing project right-of-way crosses its northerly portion. The 190-acre park surrounds a chain of seven scenic lakes. Facilities include overnight camping, fishing, playgrounds, and picnic areas. Since it opened to the public in 1961, the park has been continually owned and operated by the Padre Dam Municipal Water District. The park is world-renowned as a unique and innovative water-recycling project. The Santee Lakes also provides a unique habitat for a wide variety of birds.

A bike/pedestrian/equestrian trail is planned on both sides of the park. The park entrance is located at 9040 Carlton Oaks Drive, Santee.

#### ***Golf Courses***

The public-fee Cottonwood at Rancho San Diego Golf Club and the federally owned Admiral Baker Golf Course are both located within the project area. The Cottonwood at Rancho San Diego Golf Club consists of the Ivanhoe and Monte Vista courses and is located at 3121 Willow Glen Drive, El Cajon. The Admiral Baker Golf Course contains a north and south course and is located at Friars and Admiral Baker Roads, San Diego, California. The existing project right-of-way crosses the Cottonwood at Rancho San Diego Golf Club and runs along the northerly boundary of the Admiral Baker Golf Course.

