

CHAPTER TWO: CORE PRINCIPLES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter articulates the core principles upon which the operation of the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) is built. A summary of the statutory basis for the designation and the overarching mission of the site are provided first. Guiding principles for seamless operation and a five-year vision statement are discussed. The chapter also highlights a programmatic mission, and states the missions for seven substantive elements of the plan.

I. STATUTORY BASIS FOR THE TIJUANA RIVER NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE AND THE TIJUANA SLOUGH NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM

Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) was established in 1980 under provisions of the Endangered Species Act of 1973. The Reserve, which encompasses the Refuge, was established in 1982 under provisions of Section 315 of the federal U.S. Coastal Zone Management Act.

The Reserve operates as one of twenty-one units of the NERR System, and one of two on the California coast. This Reserve is also a unique composite of lands that comprise parts of other public lands systems operated by California State Parks, San Diego County Parks, City of San Diego, the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the Navy. Accordingly, the Reserve's core mission is derived from the NERR and NWR system mission and program goals, and from the goals, policies, missions, and statutory requirements of the landowning agencies.

A. THE NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE SYSTEM PROGRAM GOALS

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) regulations provide five specific goals for the NERR System:

1. Ensure a stable environment for research through long-term protection of National Estuarine Research Reserve resources;
2. Address coastal management issues identified as significant through coordinated estuarine research within the NERR System;
3. Enhance public awareness and understanding of estuarine areas and provide suitable opportunities for public education and interpretation;

4. Promote federal, state, public, and private use of one or more Reserves within the NERR System when such entities conduct estuarine research; and
5. Conduct and coordinate estuarine research within the NERR System, gathering and making available information necessary for improved understanding and management of estuarine areas.

B. NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM GOALS

The goals of the FWS for the National Wildlife Refuge System are:

1. To preserve, restore, and enhance in their natural ecosystems (when practicable) all species of animals and plants that are endangered or threatened with becoming endangered;
2. To perpetuate the migratory bird resource;
3. To preserve a natural diversity and abundance of fauna and flora on Refuge lands;
4. To provide an understanding and appreciation of fish and wildlife ecology and man's role in his environment, and to provide Refuge visitors with high quality, safe, wholesome, and enjoyable recreational experiences oriented toward wildlife to the extent these activities are compatible with the purposes for which the Refuge was established.

II. TIJUANA RIVER NERR MISSION

Mission statements provide critical guidance to managers for the administration of public lands. All management plans and actions, and the obligation of resources, should support accomplishment of the mission.

Because Tijuana River NERR is a composite of lands and waters owned by a variety of local, state, and federal agencies, it is important to discuss and consider the missions of those agencies in the Management Plan/CMP. In the vast majority of cases, the mission statements of the constituent agencies/land systems are complementary and compatible with the NERR System Mission. In rare cases where missions may conflict, missions of the landowning agency have priority.

All constituent agencies have agreed to support the concept of a seamless reserve and the following mission statement for the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve:

"To preserve, protect, and manage the natural and cultural resources of the Research Reserve, enhance scientific understanding and education, ensuring compatible recreation and resource use for the benefit of present and future

generations. This will be accomplished through partnerships with the community, educational institutions, and government entities working in the estuary, its binational watershed, and biogeographic region."

Management of the Reserve should also serve the missions of the NERR and NWR systems and landowning "operating" agencies CDPR and FWS (See Chapter 4). Those mission statements are as follows:

NOAA, National Estuarine Research Reserve System:

"The National Estuarine Research Reserve System is a protected network of federal, state, and community partnerships that serve to promote informed management of the Nation's estuarine and coastal habitats through linked programs of stewardship, public education, and scientific understanding."

California Department of Parks and Recreation, California State Parks:

"The Mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreation is to provide for the health, inspiration, and education of the people of California by helping preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Refuge System:

The Mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, as established by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, is:

"To administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management and, where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans."

III. THE TIJUANA RIVER NERR 5-YEAR VISION STATEMENT

The 1998 Management Plan articulates a new, bold vision for the Reserve that emphasizes its international geographic significance as the southwestern-most corner of the United States. The Reserve is a largely undiscovered, open space bordered on all sides by dense urbanized communities in the U.S. and Mexico. At present, the southern end of the Reserve is not visitor-friendly and contains degraded habitats. This area has been degraded by sewage spills, soil erosion, flooding, and sedimentation. Recent constructive efforts by several agencies to counter these problems have inspired a shared vision of this area as a welcoming open space for visitors and researchers.

The five-year vision statement for the Tijuana River NERR is as follows:

“To develop and implement an improvement plan for the southern end of the Reserve, emphasizing Goat Canyon, that integrates improvements in habitat restoration, stormwater management, resource management, law enforcement, public access, and education.”

These improvements to the southern end of the Reserve will reduce negative impacts currently affecting the Reserve’s most sensitive core area, the Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge.

IV. PROGRAMMATIC MISSIONS

This Management Plan articulates a series of broad missions, goals, objectives, and tasks in the chapters that follow. Missions for each of the substantive management areas addressed in the plan are stated below.

A. ADMINISTRATIVE MISSION

- **To provide administrative relationships and staff necessary to fulfill the Reserve’s mission and goals as established in the administrative rules and interagency agreements.**

B. RESOURCE PROTECTION, MANAGEMENT, AND RESTORATION MISSION

- **To preserve the Reserve’s ecosystems and maintain the integrity of those ecosystems through informed action.**

C. RESEARCH AND MONITORING MISSION

- **To contribute to an improved understanding of estuarine processes and dynamics that will benefit the management of the Tijuana River NERR and regional coastal ecosystems, and to improve the ability of resource managers to use monitoring to detect, quantify, and predict both short- and long-term changes in the health and viability of estuarine ecosystems.**

D. EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION MISSION

- **To promote awareness of estuaries and improved stewardship through interactive, hands-on, thematic, bilingual environmental education to local and regional students, the community, and coastal decision-makers, working in partnership with local schools, community groups, and government agencies.**

E. PUBLIC ACCESS, INVOLVEMENT, AND USE MISSION

- **To provide diverse opportunities for public access and use of the Reserve, compatible with resource protection and Refuge purpose, and to create opportunities for the public to participate in Reserve operations.**

F. FACILITIES MISSION

- **To provide and maintain accessible facilities necessary to fulfill the Reserve's mission.**

G. WATERSHED COORDINATION MISSION

- **To advance the mission of the Reserve through the strategic development of working relationships with stakeholders and enhanced communication on scientific, cultural, political, and land-use issues in the Tijuana River watershed and the bioregion.**

V. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SEAMLESS OPERATION

A. COOPERATION AMONG AGENCIES

The cooperative relationship between the missions of the NERR System, NWR System, Tijuana River NERR, and the landowning and regulatory agencies is a core principle of the Reserve. All agencies agree that accomplishment of the Reserve's mission will further the accomplishment of their agency missions, and that their agency goals for their lands within the Reserve are, in fact, the goals of Tijuana River NERR. The Missions of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, the National Wildlife Refuge System, and the California State Park System generally support each other. In rare instances of conflict, it is agreed that careful negotiation will be undertaken and that the fundamental policies of the underlying landowning agency takes precedence. (See Chapter 4, Administrative Framework).

B. MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY AS A CONSORTIUM THAT CREATES JOINT GAINS FOR TRNERR AND AGENCIES

The Tijuana River NERR Management Authority brings together the operating, landowning, resource, and law enforcement agencies, a research institution, and a public interest group in a structure that creates opportunities to advance the mission of the Reserve concurrent with the fulfillment of the missions of the respective agencies and organizations. While the Management Authority cannot set binding policies for the landowning and operating agencies, it provides guidance for the Reserve as a whole and facilitates coordination and cooperation between agencies. It is through this alliance that the complex network of interests at the Reserve can develop lasting, stable agreements on how to best protect the Reserve's resources.

C. RESERVE-WIDE PRIORITIES FOR RESOURCE PROTECTION AND RESTORATION

Protection and restoration of the estuarine environment and resources of the Reserve, consistent with the policies of landowning and land-use regulating agencies, are the highest priority goals of the Reserve. This priority underlies many of the programmatic goals, objectives, and tasks put forward in this Management Plan. The following approaches to implementing this priority are emphasized throughout the plan:

- Promote public awareness of and voluntary compliance with resource protection regulations.
- Coordinate resource protection activities among cooperating agencies.
- Implement the Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration Program and complementary projects to restore the tidal prism and representative populations of native fauna and flora to all degraded habitats, and to sustain high water quality in the Reserve.
- Avoid, minimize, and control on-site disturbances to estuarine resources and other wetland and upland habitats.
- Identify, and where possible, minimize negative impacts to Reserve resources from off-site sources in the watershed.

D. PARTNERSHIPS

Forming partnerships is essential to the accomplishment of the mission and goals of Tijuana River NERR. The formation of partnerships is a core principle for successful communication and outreach, leveraging of resources, and solving internal and external problems related to successful management of any unit of public land. The Reserve exists, in its most basic form, as a partnership among member organizations and agencies of the Management Authority and NOAA. Without a positive spirit of cooperation among the members, the Reserve will fail to achieve its mission. Partnerships are a guiding principle of the National Wildlife Refuge System (E.O. 12996) and are part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's ecosystem approach to management.

This Management Plan recognizes the importance of partnerships in every facet of the Reserve's programs. Besides the internal partnership arrangement of the Management Authority, partnering is encouraged as an integral part of Resource Protection, Research, and Education and all Public Involvement, Access, and Use programs. The Management Authority and operating agencies will strive to partner with neighbors, community organizations, and the private business sector; with

academia and the public sector research community; with other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies; with non-governmental organizations; with agencies not represented formally on the Management Authority; with agencies and organizations in Mexico; and with other entities that can assist in accomplishing the Reserve's mission and goals.

