



**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

# San Diego National Wildlife Refuge

## *Planning Update 4 - June 2014*

### Update from the Refuge Manager

#### Greetings!

This is the fourth in a series of *Planning Updates* for the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). We provide these *Planning Updates* to keep you informed of our progress on the CCP and to solicit your input at various points throughout the planning process.

The purpose of this update is to announce the availability of the draft CCP and environmental assessment (EA) for public review and comment. We will hold a public meeting on Tuesday, July 15, 2014 to review with you the various proposals addressed in the draft CCP/EA. Details about where you can review the draft CCP/EA, how and when to provide your comments, and when and where we will hold the public meeting can be found on pages 6 and 7.

It's been a long time in development so we're pleased at last to bring the long-term management plan known as a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) to you for formal public comment. We know there is great public interest in the Refuge and the native habitats and species, as well as the outdoor experiences, it supports.

The draft CCP outlines the goals, strategies, and specific projects through a no action alternative and three action alternatives (summarized on page 3 of this planning update). A preferred alternative is presented, but it will be finalized only after consideration of the comments that you and others provide.

The 60-day public comment period is the time to share your thoughts. We hope you'll attend our public meeting and provide your comments via the methods described on page 6 of this planning update. To receive full consideration, comments should be provided on or before August 18, 2014.

Your input will help shape the Refuge's next 15 years, so thank you for your interest!

Sincerely,

Jill Terp, Refuge Manager  
San Diego NWR

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Bobcat Tracks  
(John Martin/USFWS)



Hermes Copper Butterfly  
(John Martin/USFWS)



Red-tailed Hawks  
(Tim Anderson)

### YOU ARE INVITED TO A PUBLIC MEETING

**Tuesday, July 15, 2014 - 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm**  
**Steele Canyon High School**

Public involvement is an essential part of the CCP process and public review of the draft CCP/EA is another opportunity for you to get involved. We will hold a public meeting to review the proposals and analysis included in the draft CCP/EA. We will also provide time for those who would like to provide verbal comments on the draft CCP/EA. These comments will be recorded and considered as part of our review and consideration of all comments received during the public comment period. See page 6 for more information.

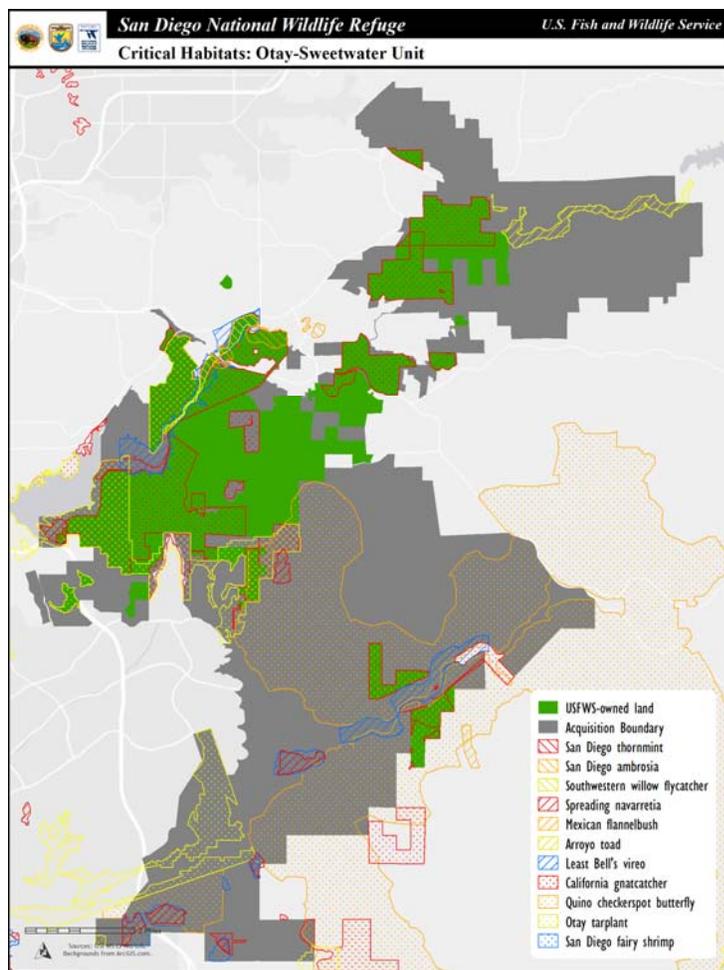
## Why Prepare a Comprehensive Conservation Plan?

One of the primary reasons for preparing a CCP is to provide guidance on how best to achieve the purposes and goals of a refuge. The CCP describes the desired future conditions of the refuge and provides direction to the refuge manager and others on how to achieve those future conditions. CCPs are intended to ensure consistent management over time, while also addressing the potential for adapting management actions should monitoring indicate that our current actions are not accomplishing the anticipated results. CCPs also provide important background information such as why a refuge was established and what are its primary purposes. The information contained in a CCP also informs the public about the importance of the resources being conserved on a refuge and the opportunities available to enjoy and learn more about these resources.

## Why was the San Diego NWR Established?

The San Diego NWR was established to contribute to the recovery of endangered, threatened, and rare species; to support the native biodiversity of the southwestern San Diego Region by contributing to the development of a regional preserve under the San Diego Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP); and to provide opportunities for compatible wildlife-dependent recreation. A total of 16 species currently listed as threatened or endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and/or the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) are known to occur on the Refuge or have occurred here within the last 20 years. Many other species of concern, including at least 35 species covered by the San Diego MSCP have been documented on the Refuge.

As of August 2013, the San Diego NWR encompasses approximately 11,537 acres, preserving native habitat and listed and sensitive species. The Refuge includes about 11,477 acres within the Otay-Sweetwater Unit and an additional 60 acres of vernal pool habitat within the Del Mar Mesa Vernal Pool Unit.



## What is a Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan/Environmental Assessment?

The San Diego NWR draft CCP/EA integrates the requirements of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act for preparing a CCP with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which ensures that all Federal agencies consider the environmental effects of the actions they undertake. The draft CCP/EA includes a discussion of the purpose and need for the CCP; an outline of each Refuge's purposes, vision, goals, and objectives; a description of the affected environment (e.g., physical, biological and cultural resources, surrounding social and economic conditions); a presentation of the various refuge management alternatives being considered; and the potential effects to the environment (the environmental consequences) of implementing the various alternatives. The draft CCP/EA provides the public and various agencies with an understanding of the actions we are considering for implementation, while also explaining how the implementation of those actions could affect the environment.

## Management Alternatives Presented and Evaluated in the Draft CCP/EA

Four alternatives have been identified and evaluated for managing the Refuge over the next 15 years. Each alternative differs in the extent and focus of the wildlife and habitat management actions and/or the types and intensity of wildlife-dependent recreational uses to be provided on the Refuge. Based on the analysis presented in the draft CCP/EA, Alternative D has been identified as the preferred alternative (i.e., the alternative that appears to have the greatest potential to achieve the purpose for which the Refuge was established). The preferred alternative may however be modified in response to comments received during public review. A final decision on which alternative to implement will not be made until after the draft CCP/EA has completed public review and all of the comments provided have been considered.

**Alternative A (No Action):** Under Alternative A, the Refuge would continue to be managed as it has been, with a significant amount of staff time dedicated to the management and monitoring of listed and sensitive species, particularly within the Otay-Sweetwater Unit. Refuge staff would also continue to coordinate with the City of San Diego and other partners on the management of listed and sensitive species on the Del Mar Mesa Preserve, which includes the 60-acre Del Mar Mesa Vernal Pool Unit. Under this alternative, as with all of the alternatives under consideration, user-created trails would be subject to closure. This alternative represents the baseline from which other “action” alternatives will be evaluated.

**Alternative B:** Under Alternative B, which focuses on maximizing habitat values and species protection, new and expanded wildlife and habitat management actions would be implemented to protect, restore, and enhance habitat values and support listed and sensitive species. The wildlife-dependent recreational uses currently occurring on the Refuge (i.e., wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, interpretation) would be managed to minimize disturbance to plants and wildlife. Public access would be restricted to a designated trail system consisting of both non-motorized multiple use (i.e., equestrian, mountain biking, hiking) trails and hiking only trails. Unauthorized, user-created trails that contribute to erosion, habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, and species disturbance would be closed and restored to native habitat. Way-finding and directional signage would be installed to encourage the public to stay on the designated trails. No dogs would be permitted on the Otay-Sweetwater Unit under the alternative. Habitat management and public use on the 60-acre Del Mar Mesa Vernal Pool Unit would occur in accordance with the City of San Diego’s Carmel Mountain and Del Mar Mesa Preserves Management Plan under all of the action alternatives (i.e., Alternatives B, C, and D).

**Alternative C:** Alternative C proposes to expand the opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreational uses on the Otay-Sweetwater Unit, including providing hunting opportunities in designated locations within this Unit, while implementing the same wildlife and habitat management activities proposed for the Otay-Sweetwater Unit under Alternative B. The number of trails included within the designated trail system would be expanded slightly under this alternative and all designated trails would be open to non-motorized multiple use. As described under Alternative B, user-created trails would be subject to closure. Also under Alternative C, interpretive and environmental education programs would be expanded; a dog may accompany a trail walker provided the dog is under leash control; and hunting, conducted in accordance with Refuge-specific regulations, would be permitted on portions of the McGinty Mountain, Las Montañas, and Otay Mesa and Lakes management areas of the Refuge.

**Alternative D (Preferred Alternative):** Alternative D proposes to optimize species and habitat protection, while expanding opportunities for compatible public use over those currently provided on the Refuge. Under this alternative, hunting in accordance with State regulations for big game (i.e., deer, feral pig), resident small game (i.e., rabbits), and resident and migratory upland game bird (e.g., dove, quail, wild turkey) is proposed, subject to Refuge-specific conditions, on a portion of the Otay Mesa and Lakes management area. The designated trail system on the Otay-Sweetwater Unit would consist primarily of non-motorized multiple use trails, with some hiking only trails. Dogs, which must be under leash control at all times, would only be permitted on those trails designated for multiple use. As described under Alternative B, user-created trails would be subject to closure.

**Additional information is available at [http://www.fws.gov/refuge/San\\_Diego/what\\_we\\_do/planning.html](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/San_Diego/what_we_do/planning.html).**

## Refuge Goals

Outlined below are the goals for the San Diego NWR. Although the goals are the same for all of the alternatives currently being considered, there are a variety of ways in which to achieve these goals. Therefore, the strategies for achieving each goal vary among the alternatives.

The Refuge goals for the San Diego NWR include:

- Goal 1:** Protect, manage, and, where appropriate, enhance or restore habitat to support the recovery of the federally and State listed endangered and threatened species and other species of concern currently or historically present on the Refuge.
- Goal 2:** Protect, manage, and restore the Refuge's native habitats, MSCP-covered species, and other species of concern for their inherent value and to contribute to the regional effort of conserving the biological diversity of southwestern San Diego County.
- Goal 3:** Engage in partnerships and provide leadership in coordinating land management and acquisition efforts throughout southwestern San Diego County in support of the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) and other resource protection objectives developed for the Region.
- Goal 4:** Provide safe and high-quality opportunities for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses that foster public appreciation of the unique natural heritage of the San Diego region.

## Step-down Planning

Achieving some of the habitat management and public use objectives outlined in the CCP requires more in-depth planning than the CCP process is designed to provide. For these actions, the Service prepares step-down plans. Step-down plans provide additional planning and design details necessary to implement the strategies (projects or programs) identified in the CCP. Two draft step-down plans have been prepared concurrently with the draft CCP and are provided for review and comment as appendices to the draft CCP/EA. These step-down plans include a draft Integrated Pest Management Plan and a draft Feral Pig Monitoring and Eradication Plan. A future step-down plan will also be needed to define appropriate trail alignments for the generalized trail corridors illustrated on the figures prepared for each alternative. Upon completion of the Final CCP for the San Diego NWR, work will begin on the preparation of a step-down Trail Plan, as well as a Hunt Plan. Additional step-down plans likely to be prepared in the future include a Habitat Management Plan, Inventory and Monitoring Plan, and Visitor Services Plan.

### General Contact Information

For more information about the CCP process:

**Victoria Touchstone, Refuge Planner**

San Diego NWR Complex

P.O. Box 2358, Chula Vista, CA 91912

619-476-9150 ex. 103 (phone), 619-476-9149 (fax)

Email: victoria\_touchstone@fws.gov

Concerns regarding Refuge operations:

**Jill Terp, Refuge Manager**

San Diego NWR

14715 Highway 94/P.O. Box 746, Jamul, CA 91935

619-468-9245 ex. 226 (phone), 619-468-9249 (fax)

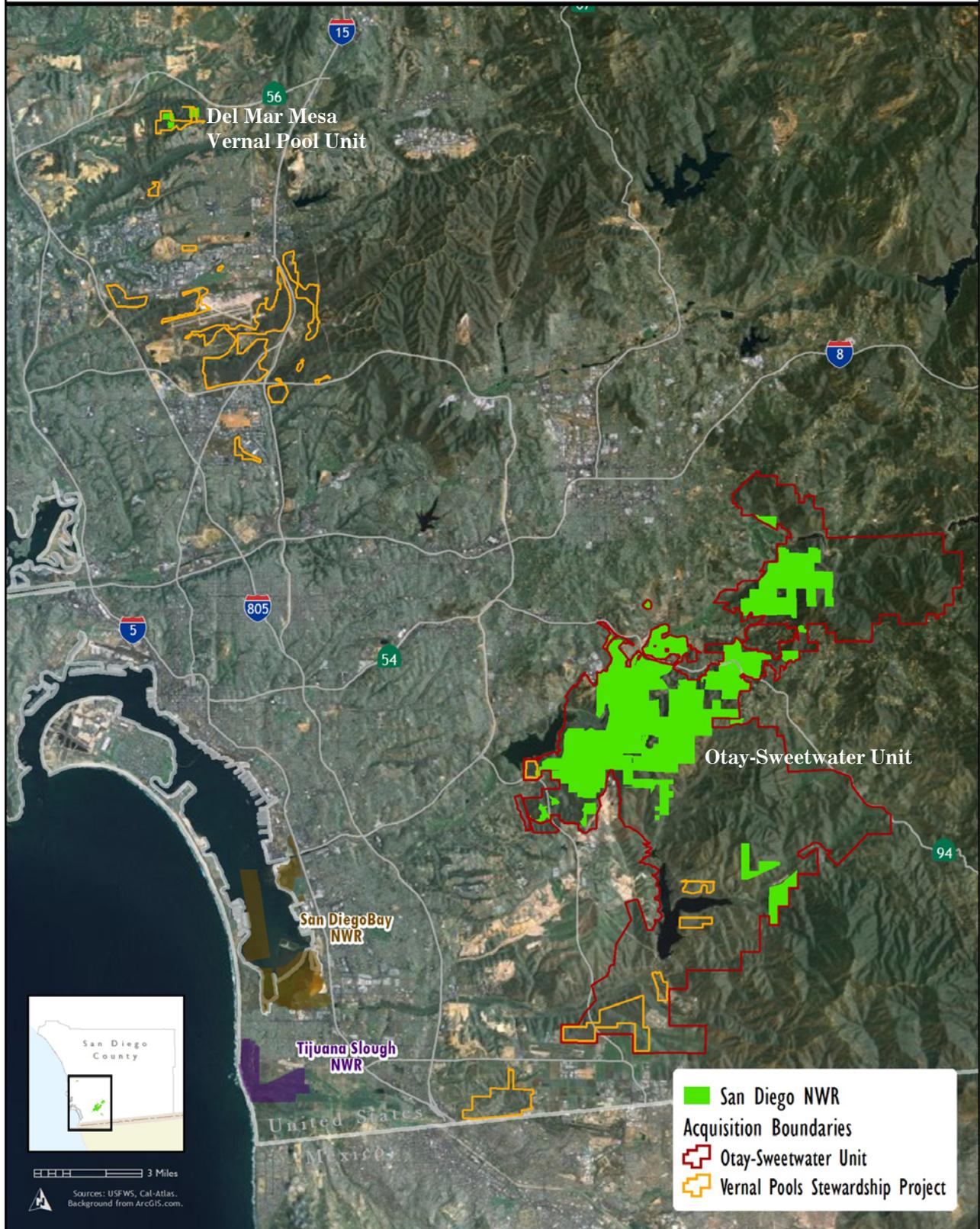
Email: jill\_terp@fws.gov



# San Diego National Wildlife Refuge

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

## Refuge Acquisition Boundaries



## Providing Your Comments

The draft CCP/EA for the San Diego NWR is now available for your review. We invite you to provide us with your comments. Written comments on the draft CCP/EA can be provided via mail, fax, or email. Written and verbal comments can also be presented at the upcoming Public Meeting (details below).

To enable us to analyze and respond to the comments at one time and to use this input in the preparation of the Final CCP, your comments should be provided no later than Monday, August 18, 2014. Comments should be specific and should address the document's adequacy and the merits of the alternatives described.

Comments may be mailed, faxed, or emailed to:

**Victoria Touchstone**  
**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, San Diego NWR Complex**  
**P.O. Box 2358, Chula Vista, CA 91912**  
**Telephone: 619-476-9150, extension 103**  
**Facsimile: 619- 476-9149**  
**Email: [Victoria\\_Touchstone@fws.gov](mailto:Victoria_Touchstone@fws.gov) (include "San Diego NWR CCP" in the subject line).**

All comments received from the public will be placed in the Service's record for this action. As part of the record, comments will be made available for inspection by the general public, and copies may be provided to the public. For persons who do not wish to have their names and other identifying information (e.g., address, email, phone number) made publicly available, anonymous comments will be accepted.



### **Notice of Public Meeting**

**Tuesday, July 15, 2014 - 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm**

**at**

**Steele Canyon High School**

**12440 Campo Road (Highway 94), Spring Valley, CA 91978**

To assist you in the review of the draft CCP/EA for the San Diego NWR, we will hold a public meeting on Tuesday, July 15, 2014 to review the purpose of the CCP, present an overview of the various management proposals described in the draft, and describe the public review process. We will be available to answer questions regarding the various alternatives evaluated in the draft CCP/EA, and following a brief presentation, we will accept formal verbal comments on the draft CCP/EA. There is not requirement to provide verbal comments; this is merely another option available to you for providing comments on the draft CCP/EA.

For more information, call Victoria Touchstone, Refuge Planner, at 619-476-9150 ex. 103, or Jill Terp, Refuge Manager, at 619-468-9245 ex. 226.

## Frequently Asked Questions About Reviewing a Draft CCP/EA

### How long do I have to review the draft CCP/EA?

You will have 60 days to review and provide comments. To ensure that your comments receive full consideration, they should be provided no later than Monday, August 18, 2014 by one of the methods described on page 6.

### What documents will be available for review?

Documents available for review include the draft CCP/EA, Compatibility Determinations for all proposed public uses (Appendix A of the draft CCP/EA), a draft Integrated Pest Management Plan (Appendix D), and a draft Feral Pig Monitoring and Eradication Plan (Appendix E).

### What options are available for reviewing the draft CCP/EA?

All documents are available for review electronically and in print. Documents can be reviewed and/or downloaded at the San Diego NWR website: [http://www.fws.gov/refuge/San\\_Diego/what\\_we\\_do/planning.html](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/San_Diego/what_we_do/planning.html). To save paper, reduce energy use, and keep costs down, all of the documents are provided on one easy to use Compact Disc (CD). To request a CD, contact Victoria Touchstone (contact information provided on page 4).

Printed versions of the draft CCP/EA are available at:

#### **Bonita-Sunnyside Branch Library**

4375 Bonita Road  
Bonita, CA 91902  
*Call 619-475-4642 for library hours*

#### **Rancho San Diego Branch Library**

11555 Via Rancho San Diego  
El Cajon, CA 92019  
*Call 619-660-5370 for library hours*

#### **Spring Valley Branch Library**

836 Kempton Street  
Spring Valley, CA 91977  
*Call 619-463-3006 for library hours*

#### **Carmel Valley Library**

3919 Townsgate Drive  
San Diego, CA 92130  
*Call 858-552-1668 for library hours*

#### **San Diego NWR Complex Headquarters**

1080 Gunpowder Point Drive, Chula Vista, CA 91912  
*Call 619-476-9150 ex. 103 for office hours and access information*

#### **San Diego NWR Office**

14715 Highway 94, Jamul, CA 91935  
*Call 619-468-9245 ex. 226 for an appointment and access information*



The federally threatened San Diego thornmint occurs on McGinty Mountain within the San Diego NWR. (John Martin/USFWS)

**PLANNING SCHEDULE FOR THE SAN DIEGO NWR COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION PLAN**

<b>May 2006</b>	<b>Initiated Public Scoping</b>
<b>June 2006</b>	<b>Held two public scoping meetings</b>
<b>January 2007</b>	<b>Held a Public Use Workshop</b>
<b>February 2008</b>	<b>Held a Trails Workshop</b>
<b>June 19, 2014</b>	<b>Draft CCP/EA (60-day public review period)</b>
<b>July 15, 2014</b>	<b>Public Meeting (see page 6)</b>
<b>August 18, 2014</b>	<b>60-day comment period closes</b>
<b>October 2014</b>	<b>Publish Final CCP; begin step-down plans</b>