

The TransNet logo features the word "TransNet" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. To the left of the text is a stylized graphic of three horizontal lines with arrowheads pointing to the right, suggesting motion or a network.

# **TransNet**

*Environmental Mitigation Program*

*Conservation. Research. Stewardship.*

The SANDAG logo consists of the word "SANDAG" in a bold, white, sans-serif font, followed by a stylized white arrow pointing to the right.

**SANDAG**



Habitat Conservation

The open space conserved by the EMP helps to expand existing parks and preserves and create continuous wildlife corridors that benefit a variety of species, including the California gnatcatcher, Ridgeway's Clapper Rail, Hermes copper butterfly, Least Bell's Vireo, Otay Mesa Mint, Arroyo Toad, coastal cactus wren, mountain lion and burrowing owl. The land acquisitions are located in strategic areas countywide, helping to close gaps between conserved areas.

In its early years, the EMP focused on acquisition of uplands. Focus has shifted to the acquisition and restoration of wetlands, including coastal lagoons identified under the North Coast Corridor Public Works Plan. Additional efforts will aim to identify and restore freshwater wetlands.



Historical agricultural fill was removed, invasive species controlled, and riparian and coastal sage scrub planted on the 31.4 acre Deer Canyon Wetland site to provide habitat for the federally endangered least Bell's vireo and coastal California gnatcatcher.



In June of 2018, SANDAG completed the acquisition of 111 acres of undeveloped land for preservation, with 12 acres of this restored as wetland for mitigation for regional transportation projects. The acquisition of Deer Canyon East is the last inholding needed to complete the City of San Diego's Del Mar Mesa Preserve.

Conservation. Research. Stewardship.

Overview

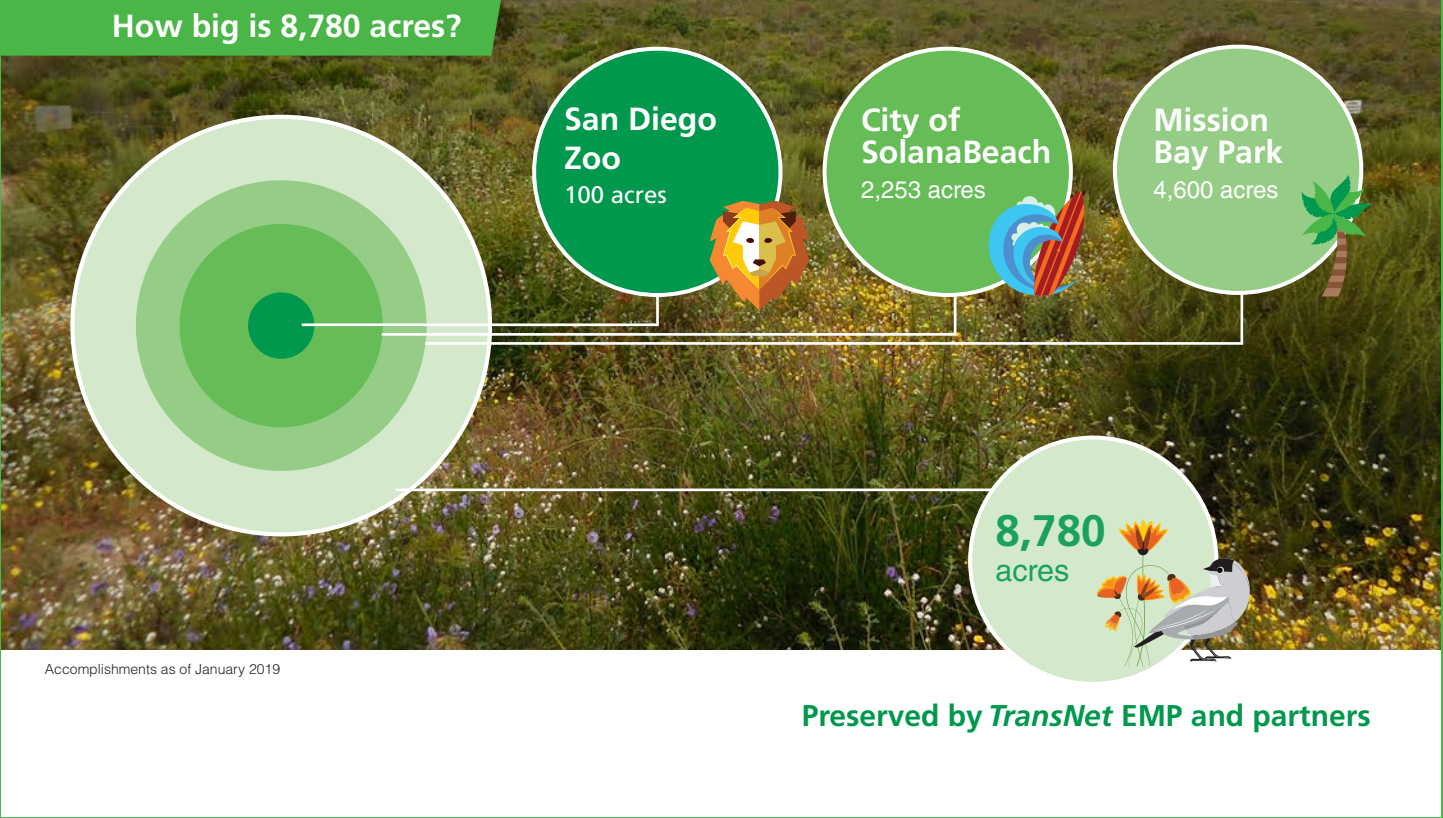
Since its inception in 2008, the *TransNet* Environmental Mitigation Program (EMP) has played a vital role in habitat conservation, scientific research, and land management across San Diego County.

Through the *TransNet* EMP, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) purchases, conserves, and restores native habitat to offset potential impacts from the development of transportation projects. *TransNet*, a regional half-cent sales tax for transportation approved by San Diego County voters, sets

aside \$850 million to fund the EMP. The *TransNet* Independent Taxpayer Oversight Committee closely monitors program expenditures to ensure public accountability.

As of January 2019, the EMP has helped acquire 8,780 acres of valuable open space in partnership with other government agencies and conservation groups. The program also has provided 117 grants to local organizations and jurisdictions for land management efforts, such as native habitat restoration and invasive species removal.

Accomplishments



To see pictures and locations of all the land acquisitions, check out the *TransNet* interactive story map on [KeepSanDiegoMoving.com](https://www.KeepSanDiegoMoving.com).

Videos of conservation projects also are available on the same website.

An 8-episode mini web series on California Mountain Lions is also available on Youtube. <https://youtu.be/MGEdiCLPOGs>

Scientific Research



Photo courtesy of Alexandra Houston

EMP funds are making it possible for scientists to conduct a host of cutting-edge field studies in the San Diego region. These studies include regional monitoring of coastal California gnatcatchers across the U.S. range, including a separate study to determine how well gnatcatchers are recovering from the 2003, 2007, and 2014 wildfires in San Diego County. These studies have identified characteristics of habitat used by gnatcatchers to guide coastal sage scrub restoration by land managers.



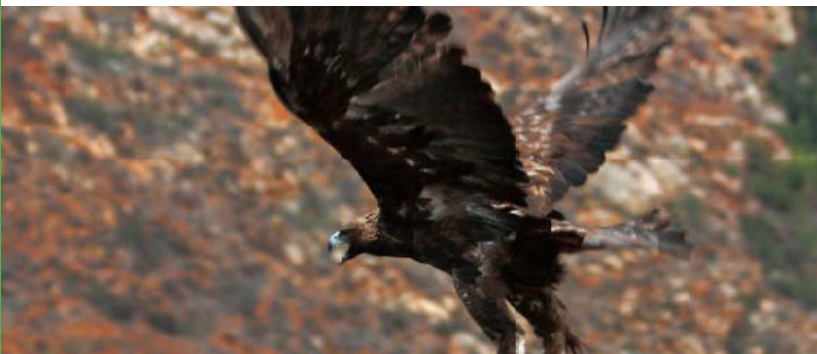
Photo courtesy of Alexandra Houston

A five-year study is being completed to determine how habitat quality, drought, predation, insect food supply, and other factors are affecting cactus wren reproduction and population size. This study along with genetic testing will help to reverse the decline of coastal cactus wren.



Photo courtesy of Chris Brown

Development of a region-wide monitoring strategy for the arroyo toad will help coordinate future regional surveys and priority objectives for land managers.



Telemetry research on golden eagles is being used to develop habitat selection models related to land use and terrain.





### Environmental Stewardship

EMP grants support land management activities, coordination, and collaboration across the region. Activities funded by the grants include but are not limited to invasive plant removal, trail restoration, protective fencing, habitat restoration, and monitoring of animals and plants.



*In 2018, photos of basking juvenile southwestern pond turtles were documented at Sycuan Peak Ecological Reserve. The U.S. Geological Survey has been removing invasive species at this location to promote the continued existence of these species with EMP funding.*



*Invasive plants, which adversely affect the nesting sites for the California least tern and other rare plant species such as Nuttall's lotus, were removed by volunteers from the sand dunes at Mission Bay funded by an EMP grant to the San Diego Audubon.*



*The annual monitoring of over 30 rare plant species continues with workshops held to train land managers and land owners on rare plant monitoring protocols. These surveys are used to create a monitoring baseline to track future changes these for species and prioritize management needs.*

### Regional Coordination

As part of the EMP, a working group of land managers and conservationists meet regularly to discuss regional environmental issues, share insights and findings with each other, and collaborate on strategic planning for species and habitat management.

In addition, the EMP established the San Diego Management and Monitoring Program (SDMMP) in 2008 to coordinate science-based biological management and monitoring of lands in San Diego County that have been protected through various conservation planning and mitigation efforts. The SDMMP works collaboratively with over 115 partner organizations, many of which own conserved lands, to create more efficient strategies for managing and monitoring plants and animals. These partners include local, state and federal government agencies, non-profit organizations, and research and education organizations.



115 partner organizations, including 14 research and education, 32 government and wildlife agencies, and 69 NGOs.



Over 1,800 documents are available on the SDMMP website, including the Management & Monitoring Strategic Plan.



132 projects submitted to the website from 16 collaborators. SDMMP has been involved with over 68 restoration projects covering 12,600+ acres.



Over 500 geographic datasets gathered and formatted for stakeholder use. Over 1,000 rare plant surveys stored in a uniform database.



Held over 27 trainings and workshops for land managers, researchers, and policy makers, as well as over 80 monthly Management and Monitoring Coordination Meetings.

