

SANDAG



2024
ENVIRONMENTAL
MITIGATION PROGRAM

Annual Report

[SANDAG.org](https://www.sandag.org)

Free Language Assistance | Ayuda gratuita con el idioma | Libreng Tulong sa Wika | Hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ miễn phí
免費語言協助 | 免費語言協助 | مساعدة ترجمة مجانية | 무료 언어 지원 | کمک زبان رایگان | 無料の言語支援 | Бесплатная языковая помощь
Assistència lingüística gratuïta | मुफ्त भाषा सहायता | Assistance linguistique gratuite | ជំនួយភាសាឥតគិតថ្លៃ
ఉచిత భాషా సహాయం | ການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອດ້ານພາສາພຣີ | Kaalmada Luqadda ee Bilaashka ah | Безкоштовна мовна допомога



SANDAG.org/LanguageAssistance | 619.699.1900



About the ENVIRONMENTAL MITIGATION PROGRAM

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, funds the EMP.

As of December 2024, the EMP has helped acquire more than 9,215 acres of valuable open space in partnership with other government agencies and conservation groups. The program has also provided 136 grants to local organizations and jurisdictions for land management that help protect rare plant and animals species.

OVERVIEW

9,215 total acres **preserved** by EMP and partners

\$164 million* in **open space** investments

\$33.2 million in leveraged funds from **conservation partners**

136 land management grants awarded since the start of the EMP, **totaling \$18.8 million awarded** to local organizations, jurisdictions, and non-profit organizations **benefitting over 71 species** of rare plants and animals.

\$64.3 million secured for **Regional Management and Monitoring** *Including leveraged funds

Completed distribution surveys for over **47 species of rare plant and animals**

Performed long-term monitoring for over **50 species of rare plant and animals**

Produced management plans for **23 species of rare plant and animals and threats**

Collaboration and coordination with **115 partner organizations**

Mitigation secured for over **3/4** of TransNet Early Action Projects

Banked over **300 acres of habitat** for local and regional transportation projects

Regional Habitat CONSERVATION VISION

SANDAG has been working with conservation stakeholders and members of the Regional Habitat Conservation Taskforce to implement the Regional Habitat Conservation Vision as identified in the 2021 Regional Plan.



Protect existing native species through the strategic acquisition, management, and monitoring of critical habitat areas identified in regional habitat conservation plans



Connect habitat areas through wildlife corridors and linkages, as well as connecting people to local species and natural habitats



Respect native species and habitat. Balance the demands for recreation opportunities while protecting landscapes. Encourage respect for natural lands through increased public outreach and education of San Diego's unique biodiversity

Habitat CONSERVATION

Highlighted projects for FY 2024

San Dieguito Lagoon | San Dieguito Restoration Project Phase II

- » \$87 million restoration project
- » Mitigation for the I-5 North Coast Corridor Program, which includes LOSSAN Double Track Improvements, the City of San Diego's El Camino Real Bridge Replacement Project, and the San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority (SDRPJPA) Coast to Crest Trail.
- » Partnerships with Caltrans, SDRPJPA, City of San Diego, Southern California Edison and 22nd Agricultural District
- » Phase II of this project helped complete restoration in the lagoon that was started in 2012 by Southern California Edison.
- » Construction of the 84 acres of coastal wetland habitat completed in September of 2024
- » Restoration of the wetland habitat has allowed rare species such as the Ridgeway rail and Savannah sparrow to move in
- » The completed wetland welcomes in visitors with a new mile-long trail to explore.
- » SANDAG and Caltrans will continue their work by monitoring the wetlands for the next decade to ensure that the ecosystem remains healthy and intact.



Environmental STEWARDSHIP

The SANDAG Board of Directors awarded \$2.4 million in funding for 19 TransNet EMP Land Management Grants (LMG). The EMP Land Management Grant Program is to assist regional land managers with the protection of threatened, rare, and endangered species and enhance their habitats to avoid future listing of endangered species in San Diego County.

Annie's Canyon Trail Enhancement Project

The project's aim is to address threats to the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve by off-trail human interaction and nonnative species. The project produced 200 feet of new fencing to discourage off-trail foot traffic, implemented erosion control measures to repair damage caused by off-trail use, controlled two-acres of invasive species, restored one-acre of native habitat, and installed one new interpretative sign to Annie's Canyon Trail.



Otay Ranch Preserve Enhancement

The project was successful in restoring and increasing the quality of habitat for the federally endangered Quino checkerspot butterfly through seasonal road closure, seeding, and planting within suitable Quino checkerspot butterfly habitat.



Scientific RESEARCH

The purpose of the Regional Management and Monitoring Program scientific research is to better inform land managers about best management and monitoring practices for rare, threatened, and endangered species and their habitats in San Diego County.

EMP funds make it possible for scientists, including the San Diego Management and Monitoring Program (SDMMP) to coordinate science-based biological management and monitoring of conserved lands in San Diego County in order to conserve those species that are listed and/or at risk of extinction.



Mountain Lions

Mountain lion populations have been heavily impacted by depredation permits that are issued after they have killed a domestic animal. Another reason their populations are declining is because of collisions with vehicles.

SANDAG has been working with the University of California, Davis on studies that help understand how lions move across the landscape, in addition to, educating land owners on how to protect their livestock and reduce these interactions.



Hermes Copper Butterfly

Native to southern and Baja California, the Hermes copper butterfly depends on the spiny redberry as its host plant. Due to drought and wildfires in the region, their numbers have severely declined.

SANDAG has been working with the University of Central Missouri on annual surveys to understand Hermes population status with ongoing threats. Future efforts include the development of spiny redberry nurseries with translocation of butterfly populations as insurance against fire, drought and small population size.



Western Burrowing Owl

In southern California, the western burrowing owl was once widespread and abundant from the coast to the foothills, but has experienced declining populations for decades. Because of these declines it is now a candidate species for listing by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

SANDAG and regional stakeholders have worked for decades to coordinate on implementing actions that help conserve the burrowing owl in spite of its decline and listing as a candidate species. The San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance has led the way on projects including the development of a regional monitoring plan, restoration of suitable habitat, and the reintroduction of owls back onto conserved lands in San Diego County.



Baja Oatgrass

Last seen in Baja California in 1886, the Baja Oatgrass (*Sphenopholis interrupta* ssp. *Californica*) was observed for the first time in the United States in 2021, in Carlsbad, California.

Through SANDAG's partnership with the SDMMMP, this discovery has been shared to provide coordinated efforts on more research for this species.



Crotch's Bumble Bee

Crotch's bumblebee is a unique bumblebee named after the entomologist George Robert Crotch. This bumble bee exists primarily in California, including the Mediterranean region, Pacific Coast, and Western Desert.

SANDAG, in partnership with the University of Central Missouri is developing a Pollinator Monitoring Plan which will support conservation efforts and monitoring of critical pollinator populations throughout the region, including the Crotch's bumblebee.



The SDMMMP's mission is to coordinate science-based biological management and monitoring of lands in San Diego that have been conserved through various conservation planning and mitigation efforts.

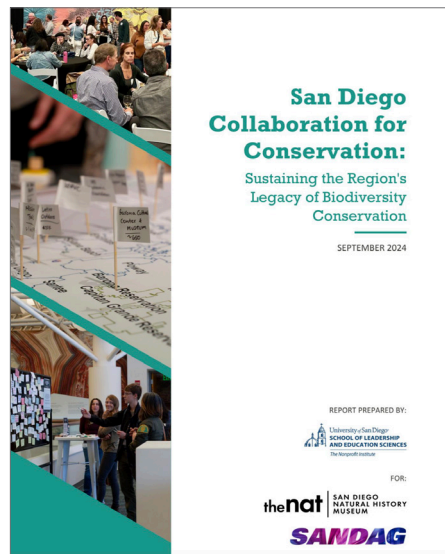
Regional COORDINATION



SANDAG partnered with the San Diego Natural History Museum (The NAT) to develop a regional stakeholder workshop to look at the state of biodiversity in the region and help identify gaps and opportunities to further the Regional Habitat Conservation Vision

San Diego Collaboration for Conservation Report

- Highlights priorities identified by stakeholders to continue conservation efforts in the region. The top five priorities include habitat monitoring and management, ecosystem benefits and economic resilience, education and public awareness, equitable access that supports biodiversity, and research and policy.
- Identifies multiple areas in which conservation efforts can be improved. These areas include community outreach, long-term funding for environmental programs, binational collaboration, and research.



Next Steps

SANDAG and regional stakeholders are working on completing a regional habitat needs assessment to understand the funding needs and levels of investment for acquisition, management and monitoring in order to fulfill the commitments made in the regional habitat conservation plans.

SANDAG.org



Vision

Pursuing a brighter future for all

Mission

We are the regional agency that connects people, places, and innovative ideas by implementing solutions with our unique and diverse communities.

Commitment to Equity

We hold ourselves accountable to the communities we serve. We acknowledge we have much to learn and much to change; and we firmly uphold equity and inclusion for every person in the San Diego region. This includes historically underserved, systemically marginalized groups impacted by actions and inactions at all levels of our government and society.

We have an obligation to eliminate disparities and ensure that safe, healthy, accessible, and inclusive opportunities are available to everyone. The SANDAG equity action plan will inform how we plan, prioritize, fund, and build projects and programs; frame how we work with our communities; define how we recruit and develop our employees; guide our efforts to conduct unbiased research and interpret data; and set expectations for companies and stakeholders that work with us.

We are committed to creating a San Diego region where every person who visits, works, and lives can thrive.

SANDAG

