

TransNet

ENVIRONMENTAL MITIGATION PROGRAM

FACT SHEET



TransNet will provide \$850 million for the Environmental Mitigation Program

- » \$650 million for the mitigation of regional and local transportation projects
- » \$200 million for regional habitat acquisition, management, and monitoring

Overview

Through the Environmental Mitigation Program (EMP), SANDAG protects, preserves, and restores native habitats as offsets to disturbance caused by regional and local transportation projects.

The EMP is funded by *TransNet*, a regional half-cent sales tax for transportation administered by SANDAG. San Diego County voters approved the original *TransNet*, a 20-year, \$3.3-billion program in 1987. Before the measure expired in 2008, voters supported extending it for another 40 years to 2048. The EMP was established as part of the *TransNet* extension, which is expected to generate an additional \$14 billion for highway, transit, and local road projects, as well as other transportation improvements. All EMP-related expenditures are reviewed by the *TransNet* Independent Taxpayer Oversight Committee to ensure fiscal accountability.

In 2012, the California chapter of the American Planning Association recognized the EMP with the Best Practices Award.

Saving Money and Expediting Projects

The EMP goes beyond traditional mitigation. The program allows SANDAG to buy land early – at lower costs and in larger parcels – and bank it for future mitigation needs as opposed to buying land in small pieces to satisfy mitigation requirements project by project. As SANDAG and its partner agencies seek permits to construct projects over the next several decades, portions of the land purchased earlier will be used as mitigation. The economic benefit will be the difference between the cost of the land purchased in

large parcels earlier, and the higher price if acquired in smaller parcels at later dates.

Mitigation costs under a traditional project-by-project approach could approach \$850 million. Under the EMP's comprehensive approach to mitigation, it is estimated that \$200 million in savings could be achieved, which in turn will be applied to regionwide habitat preservation efforts.

(Continued on reverse)



The Hidden Valley property, 953 acres bordering the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge in Jamul, was acquired as mitigation for portions of Interstates 5, 8, and 15, State Routes 52, 94, and 125, and the construction of local streets and roads.



401 B Street, Suite 800
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 699-1900
Fax (619) 699-1905
sandag.org



TransNet Extension
Environmental Mitigation Program (EMP)
(in millions, 2002 dollars)



Plus up to \$30m in financing costs for advanced habitat acquisition



This site was restored to native habitat in the Tijuana River Valley as mitigation for the San Ysidro Freight Improvement Project. It is part of the County of San Diego Tijuana River Valley Park.

Ultimately, the EMP accelerates project delivery by ensuring a reliable approach for funding the required mitigation in advance of projects. Through the EMP, SANDAG meets the mitigation needs of major transportation infrastructure projects identified in the

Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) while promoting the preservation of habitat identified in regional habitat conservation plans.

Accomplishments

As of July 2016, the EMP has helped conserve more than 8,600 acres of habitat with a value of nearly \$158 million, in partnership with nonprofit conservation groups and local, state, and federal agencies. In addition, the program has supported scientific research and regional collaboration on land management, joint use of resources, promotion of best management practices, and strategies for long-term funding.

In its early years, the EMP focused on acquisition of uplands and was able to save taxpayer money due to favorable market conditions. Now focus is shifting to the acquisition and restoration of wetlands, including coastal lagoons. The I-5 North Coast Corridor Program, approved in August 2014 by the California Coastal Commission, includes the acquisition and restoration of 160 acres of coastal wetlands and enhancements for an additional 500 acres in conjunction with highway, transit, and pedestrian improvements.

Following massive wildfires that burned more than 600,000 acres in San Diego County in 2003 and 2007, the program

funded efforts to restore damaged habitat and assess the level of recovery. With support from the EMP, the U.S. Geological Survey in 2011 finished a five-year evaluation that found neither the coastal sage scrub nor the chaparral habitat has fully recovered. The findings helped to raise awareness of lost biodiversity, and the importance of proactively planning for recovery after wildfires.

Other efforts funded by the EMP include: the installation of steel barriers to keep illegal off-road vehicles from infringing on vernal pools; mapping of the dwindling cactus patches used as habitat by the California cactus wren; removal of exotic weeds from endangered species habitat; field research on the Thorne's hairstreak and Hermes copper butterflies to determine whether they should be listed as endangered species; an ongoing study to track the movement of mountain lions in the area between the coast and eastern foothills of San Diego County; and the construction of two platforms on San Miguel Mountain and Jamul Mountain to serve as nesting sites for golden eagles.

Regional Collaboration and Oversight

Through the EMP Working Group, SANDAG coordinates with local, state, and federal agencies, as well as nonprofit groups to manage, monitor, and acquire land. This collaborative approach ensures that best practices are disseminated, gaps in resources are identified, and duplicate efforts are eliminated. To learn more about the strategic implementation plan for management and monitoring efforts, visit SDMMP.com.

For More Information

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