

**RIVERSIDE COUNTY
REGIONAL PARK AND OPEN-SPACE DISTRICT**

Natural Resources Management Division

Open Space and Wildlife Habitat Areas



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I. Introduction and Purpose

This report is written to help formulate a program for the management of the Open-Space/Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan properties (also known as reserves) currently overseen by Riverside County Regional Park and Open Space District (“District”) Natural Resources Management Division. Because the Reserves are somewhat varied in their resources and permitted uses, some management actions will require site specific evaluation and management goals.

For District owned Open-Space properties, these management goals will generally follow the District Strategic Plan and any specific stipulations that are associated with the purchase of the land and/or conservation easements. For the Regional Conservation Authority (RCA) owned properties, management activities will follow guidelines and input described by the MSHCP plan and the RCA, respectfully. Although there are some differences in permitted uses, there are certain issues that all properties, regardless of ownership, have in common. These issues include (but not limited to) illegal dumping, access control/trespassing, Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) use, and illegal hunting. With this in mind, this plan’s purpose is to provide an adaptable and fluid framework within which management actions can be evaluated, and then accepted or rejected depending upon their costs and demonstrated results. By following such an adaptive strategy, as time progresses, management is fine-tuned to accomplish its goals in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

II. Description of the Resources

Currently there are 22 reserves and parks under the Natural Resources Division (“NRM”) banner, totaling approximately 60,000 acres. Following below is a description of each of the reserves or parks.



The Santa Rosa Plateau in autumn.

Table 1. Reserves and Parks Managed by the Natural Resources Management Division.

NAME	VICINITY	ACRES	NOTES
RCA Owned Land - MSHCP	Western Riverside County	43,000	Managed Through Contract with RCA
Box Springs Mountain Reseve	Moreno Valley / Riverside	2,427	Co-Managed with Operations
Devil's Garden Preserve	Desert Hot Springs area	185	
Double Butte Park	Hemet	580	Co-Managed with Operations
Fish Traps Archeological Site	La Quinta area	202	Co-Managed with Operations
Goose Flats Wildlife Area	Colorado River	230	Co-Managed with Operations
Harford Springs Reserve	Gavilan Plateau	529	
Hidden Valley Wildlife Area	Santa Ana River,	1,544	
Iodine Springs Reserve	Wildomar	219	
Johnson Ranch	Lake Skinner area	1,060	Co-Managed with CNLM
Kabian Park	Quail Valley	878	Co-Managed with Operations
Ringing Rock Archeological Preserve	Menifee	18	Co-Managed with Historic Unit
Maze Stone Archeological Preserve	Hemet	6	Co-Managed with Historic Unit
Mockingbird Canyon Archeological Preserve	Mockingbird Canyon	30	Co-Managed with Historic Unit
San Jacinto River SBKR Preserve	Hemet	16	

Norton Younglove	San Timoteo Canyon	3,873	
Santa Ana River Mitigation Bank	Santa Ana River	255	
Santa Ana River Regional Park	Santa Ana River	947	
Sylvan Meadows Unit/Santa Rosa Plateau E.R.	Santa Rosa Plateau	1235	Co-Managed with CNLM
Upper May Valley Preserve	Mountain Center	129	
Valley Hi Oak Park	Twin Pines	91	
Warmington Mitigation Site	Menifee	67	
	Total	59,521	

1. **RCA Owned Land - MSHCP**

Approximate Acreage: 43,000
As of May 2011

Location: Western Riverside County. Northern and southern border of Riverside County from approximate ridgeline of San Jacinto Mountains to the Western border of Riverside County.

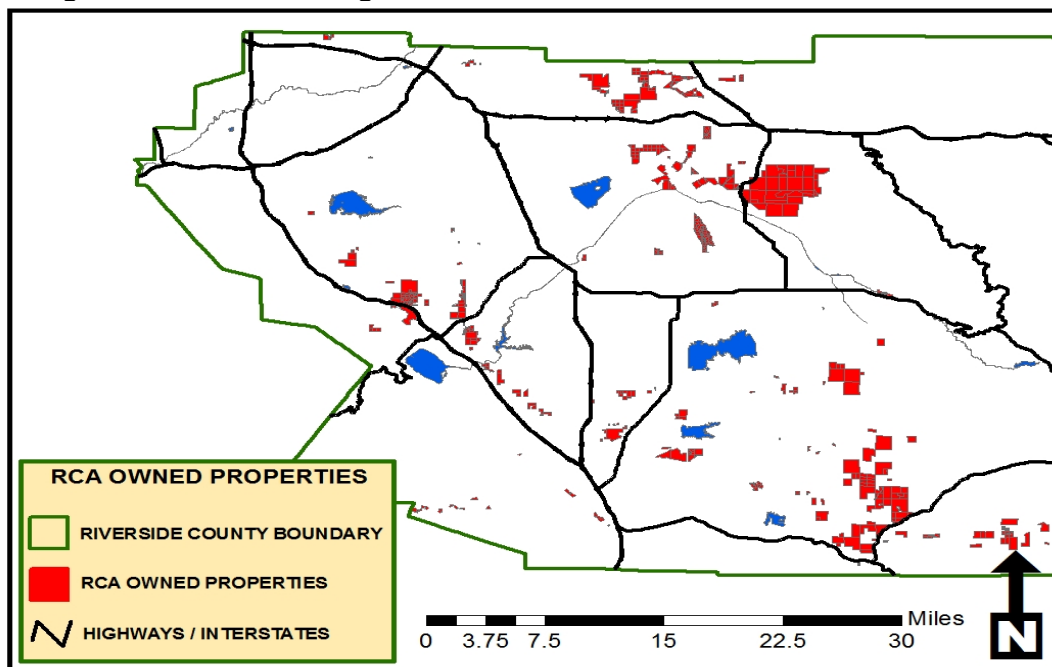


Topography: RCA properties are comprised of various types of topography.

Vegetation: Coast sage-scrub, Chaparral, Riparian and Riparian Variants, Oak woodlands and Evergreen.

Principle Issues: Illegal dumping, trespassing, illegal hunting/poaching, weed abatement, OHV trespass, invasive species, and repeated human caused wildfires.

Notes: A large patch of semi-natural open space rapidly becoming surrounded by urban development. For the most part, these boundaries have already been built-out, with substantial connections to other natural open space areas only possible to the northeast. Minor connections could be made to the west toward Sycamore Canyon Park. Used extensively for hiking and mountain biking.



2. Box Springs Mountain Park

Approximate Acreage: 2,427

Location: The mountains immediately east of the City of Riverside and northwest of the City of Moreno Valley.

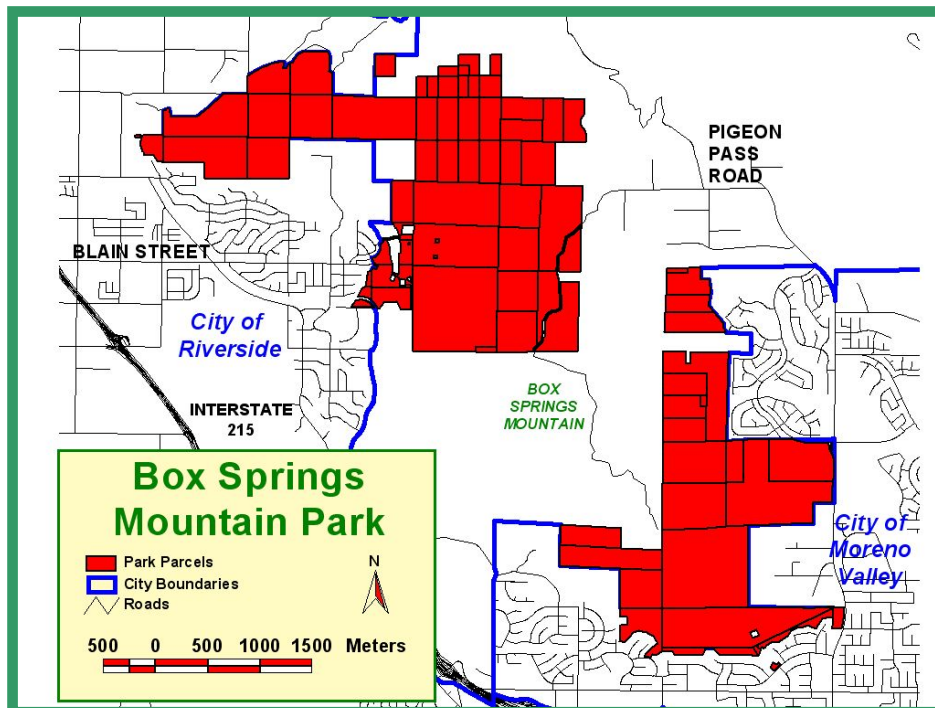
Topography: Steep-sided mountains and canyons. It also includes small alluvial aprons to these mountains on all sides.



Vegetation: Primarily Riversidian sage scrub, with patches of chaparral. Some of the canyons support riparian vegetation consisting primarily of willows and mule fat. Much of the former sage scrub has been converted to non-native annual grasses and mustard by repeated wildfires.

Principle Issues: Illegal dumping, weed abatement, some OHV trespass, repeated wildfires, endangered species present.

Notes: A large patch of semi-natural open space rapidly becoming surrounded by urban development. For the most part, these boundaries have already been built-out, with substantial connections to other natural open space areas only possible to the northeast. Minor connections could be made to the west toward Sycamore Canyon Park. Used extensively for hiking and mountain biking.



3. **Devil's Garden Preserve**

Approximate Acreage: 185

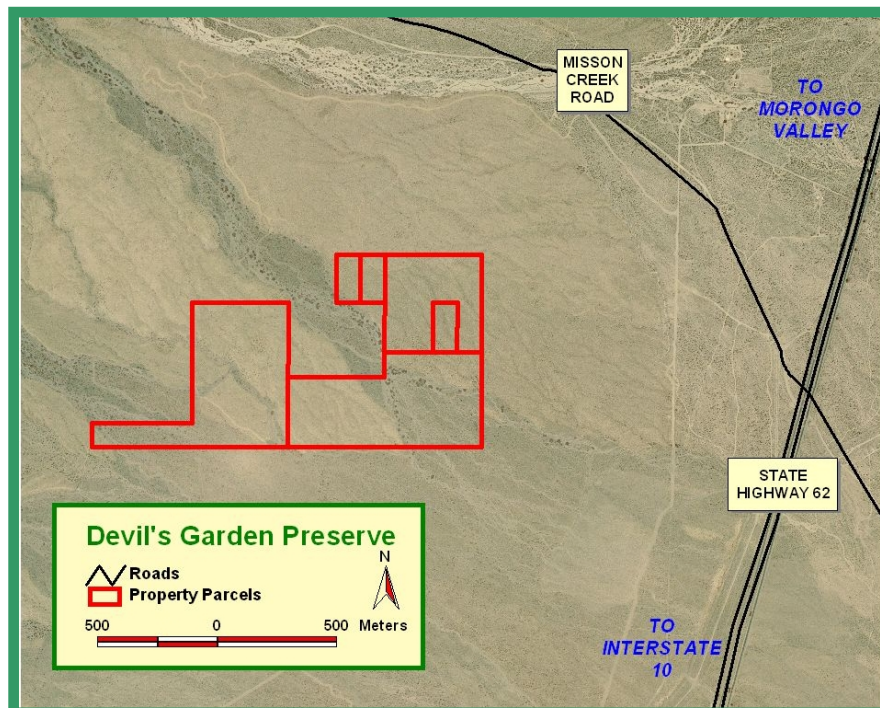
Location: Approximately 2 kilometers west of Highway 62, about 8 kilometers north of Interstate 10.

Topography: Gently sloping, east-southeast-facing rocky alluvial surface, cut by two significant washes, descending from the eastern lip of Whitewater Canyon. Small raised areas separate the washes.

Vegetation: Desert scrub dominated by creosote bush, brittle bush, cheesebush, and burrow weed. Mustard and some non-native annual grasses have invaded the site, and are becoming prominent.

Principle Issues: Minor OHV use, some minor illegal dumping, a component of the Coachella Valley Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan..

Notes: A substantial piece of more or less natural Colorado Desert. Because of its relatively high altitude and proximity to the Mojave Desert, biodiversity appears high. Much of the surrounding lands are also in protected status.



4. **Double Butte Park**

Approximate Acreage: 580

Location: Immediately northwest of the town of Winchester.

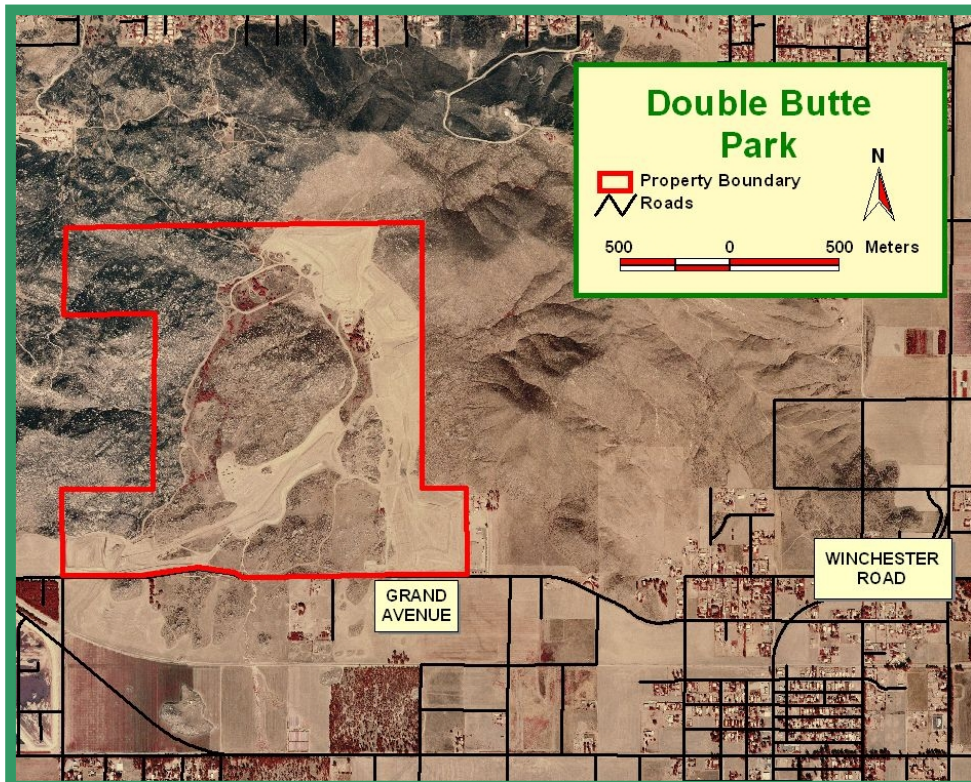
Topography: Steep-sided mountain and shoulder ridges with alluvial aprons and a small valley. Much of the southern and eastern areas of the property previously supported a sanitary land fill.



Vegetation: Vegetation on the hills is primarily disturbed sage scrub dominated by California buckwheat and California sagebrush. This growth is sparse most likely due to repeated wildfires. Many of the lower areas now support non-native annual grasses and mustard.

Principle Issues: OHV trespass, illegal dumping, minor target shooting, weed abatement.

Notes: An island of open space in a rapidly developing area of the County. Substantial open space remains to the east and northeast, but further connections are mostly stopped in that direction by busy Winchester Road and State Highway 74, respectively.



5. **Fish Traps Archeological Site**

Approximate Acreage: 202

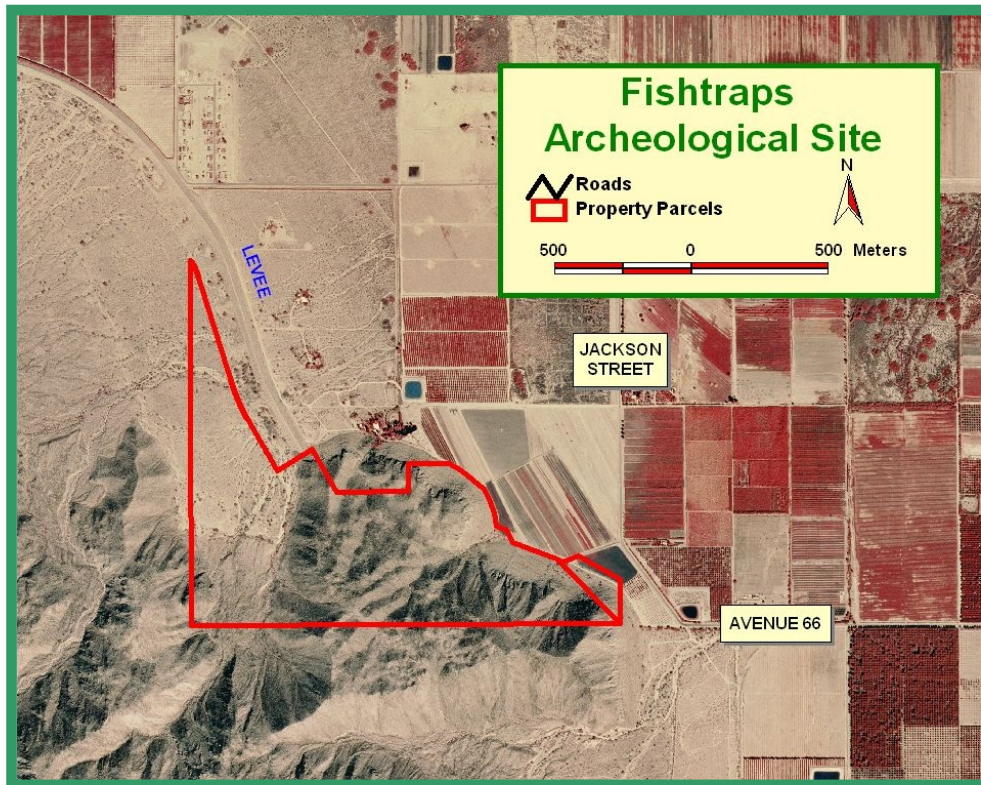
Location: Southwest of La Quinta, at the corner of Avenue 66 and Monroe Street.

Topography: Principally steep desert mountains and canyons.

Vegetation: The rocky slopes support little vegetation, whereas the lower areas are dominated by cheesebush, creosote bush and burro bush.

Principle Issues: Some OHV activity, some vandalism, illegal dumping.

Notes: This site contains the remains of fish traps used by native Americans. Flood control levees make it difficult to access this site, except cross-county on foot or with the use of OHVs. Development is progressing rapidly to the east of the levee.



6. **Goose Flats Wildlife Area**

Approximate Acreage: 230

Location: Adjacent to the Colorado River, approximately 4 kilometers southeast of the City of Blythe.

Topography: Backwater sloughs and channels separated by small ridges of sandy but vegetated soils.



Vegetation: Scrub dominated by arrow weed and mesquite.

Principle Issues: Illegal dumping, target shooting, some OHV trespass, some vandalism (i.e., wood gathering).

Notes: Lovely backwater channels supporting varied migratory waterfowl. Adjacent to housing area

7. **Harford Springs Reserve**

Approximate Acreage: 242

Location: The Gavilan Plateau, east of Gavilan Hills Road and north of Idaleona Road.

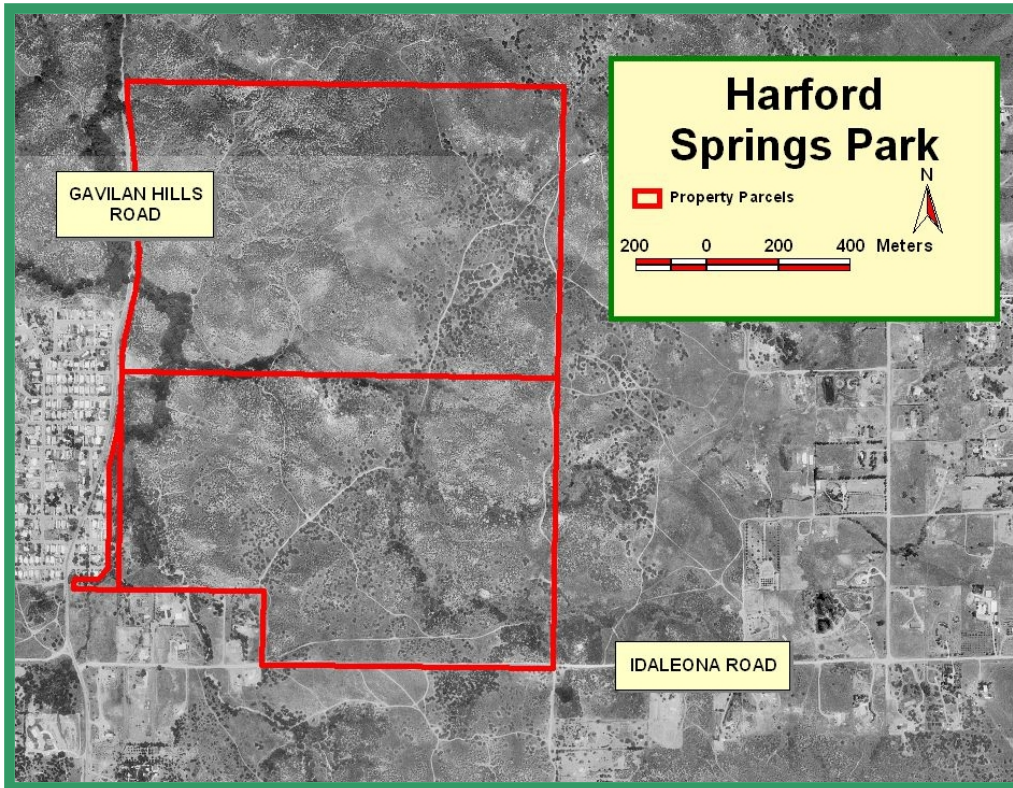
Topography: Varied. Includes open flats, rocky hillocks, and relatively deep intimate canyons.



Vegetation: This site supports an excellent example of California juniper woodland, interspersed with chaparral, Riversidian sage scrub, and sycamore/willow riparian strips.

Principle Issues: OHV trespass, illegal dumping, weed abatement, endangered species.

Notes: This site has an onsite caretaker who coordinates with the District through the Operations Division.



8. **Hidden Valley Wildlife Reserve**

Approximate Acreage: 1,544

Location: Within and adjacent to the Santa Ana River between Van Buren Blvd. on the east and the City of Norco on the west.

Topography: Flat river bottom with ponds, and bluffs above to the south and to a lesser degree the north.

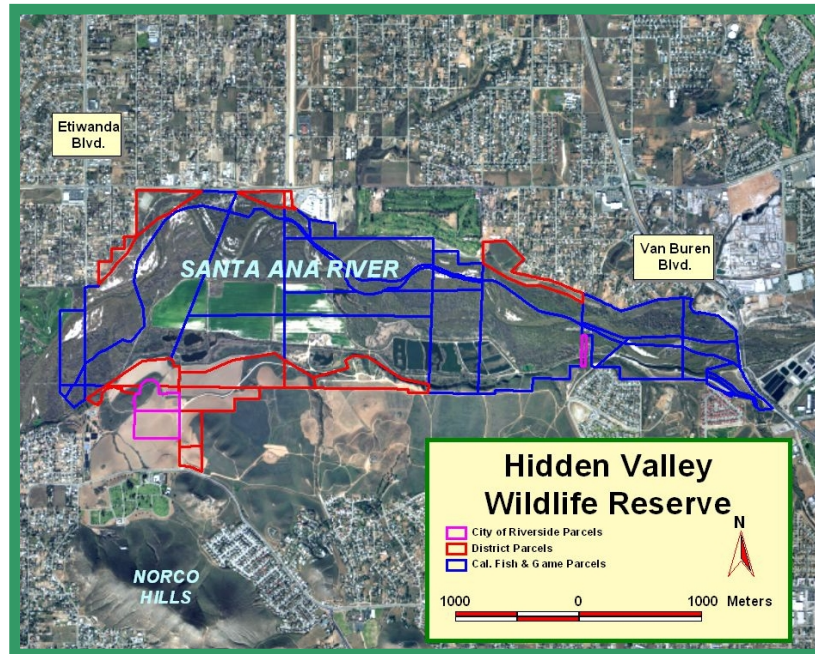


Vegetation: The river bottom supports a mixture of native willow riparian forest (willows, cottonwoods) interspersed within a matrix of the invasive exotic, *Arundo donax*, or giant reed. Upland bluff areas generally support non-native annual grasses, with mustard and other weeds. A large active agricultural operation is within the site.

Principle Issues: Homeless individuals, illegal fires (i.e., BBQs), some OHV trespass, vandalism, equestrian use dominates, unadvisable swimming in the Santa Ana River, illegal dumping, some poaching, minor

weed abatement, endangered species and wetlands issues, Arundo removal program (Prop. 13).

Notes: The forgotten park within Riverside; few know of its existence. It is principally an equestrian park, with many trails within and above the River. It is the center of operations for the Natural Resources Section.



9. Iodine Springs Reserve

Approximate Acreage: 219

Location: North of Clinton Keith Road, approximately 2 kilometers northeast of its junction with Interstate 15.

Topography: Varied. The site includes a significant streambed and its flat flanks in the southern areas. The northern areas include some small but steep-sided mountains.

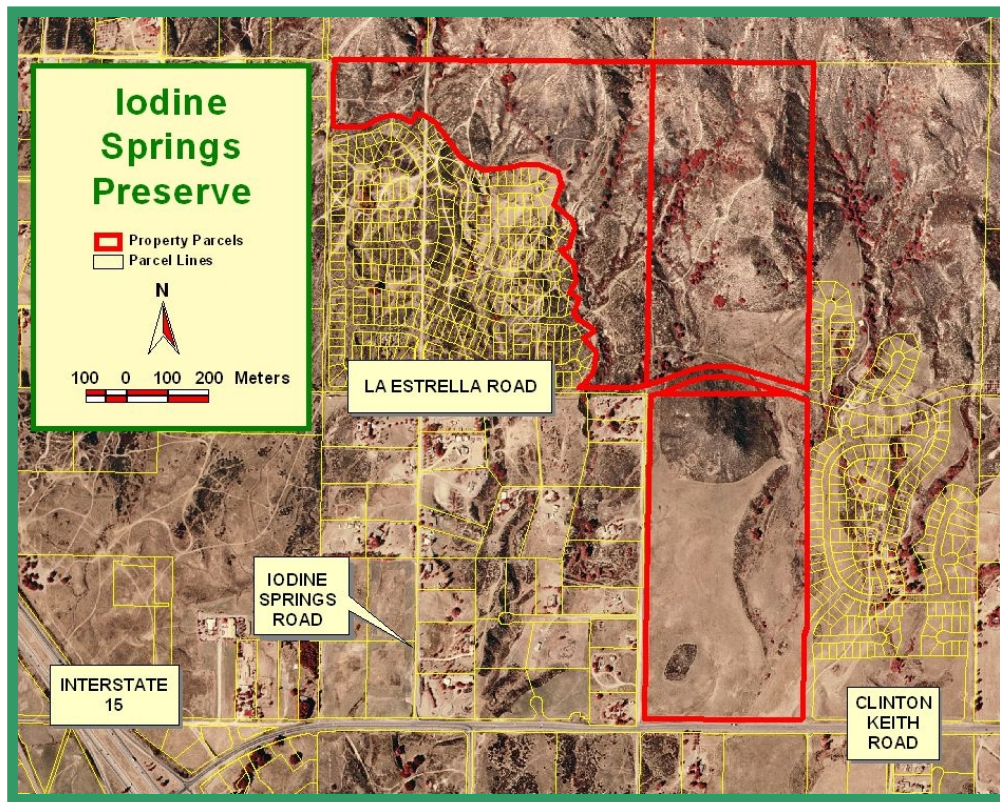
Vegetation: The flatter areas have been disturbed, and as a result support primarily non-native annual grasses and mustard. As one approaches the mountains, limited sage scrub gives rise to mature



chaparral dominated by chamise. Some ornamentals remain from a former residence on the site.

Principle Issues: Illegal dumping, some OHV trespass, weed abatement.

Notes: The site is split by Estrella Road. The southern portions, south of Estrella Road, are currently being considered for purchase by the San Jacinto Community College District.



10. Johnson Ranch

Approximate Acreage: 1,060

Location: This site lies between Borel Road and Rancho California Blvd. to the north and south, respectively. The site is bisected by Buck Road.

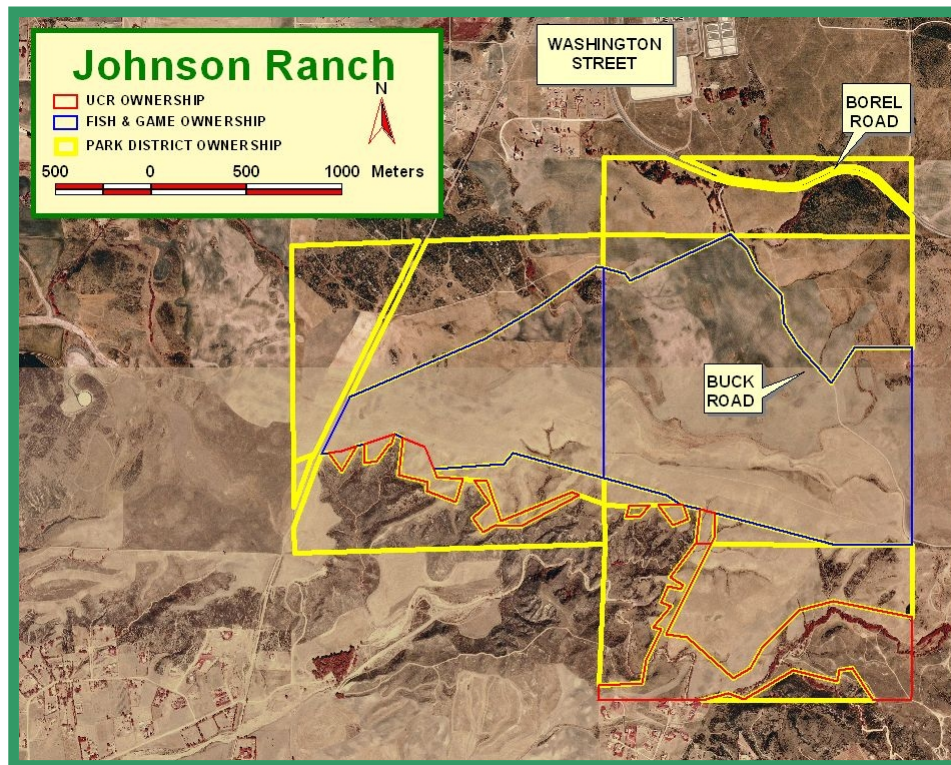
Topography: Generally gently sloping hills surrounding a wide shallow drainage. Side drainages cutting into these hills are more pronounced and much steeper.

Vegetation: The central portion (mostly owned by Cal. Dept. of Fish and Game) supports non-native annual grasses and mustard. The hills to the

north and south (mostly owned by the District and UCR), support Riverside sage scrub and chaparral.

Principle Issues: OHV trespass, fence vandalism, illegal dumping, shooting, endangered species, weed abatement.

Notes: This site is covered under the AD161 Habitat Conservation Plan, and is managed under contract by the Center for Natural Lands Management. As such, many of the management duties are performed by the Center.



11. **Kabian Park**

Approximate Acreage: 878

Location: Quail Valley. Immediately west of Goetz Road, east of the San Jacinto River, and north of the City of Canyon Lake.

Topography: Most of the site consists of rounded hills, but the northern area hills are larger and

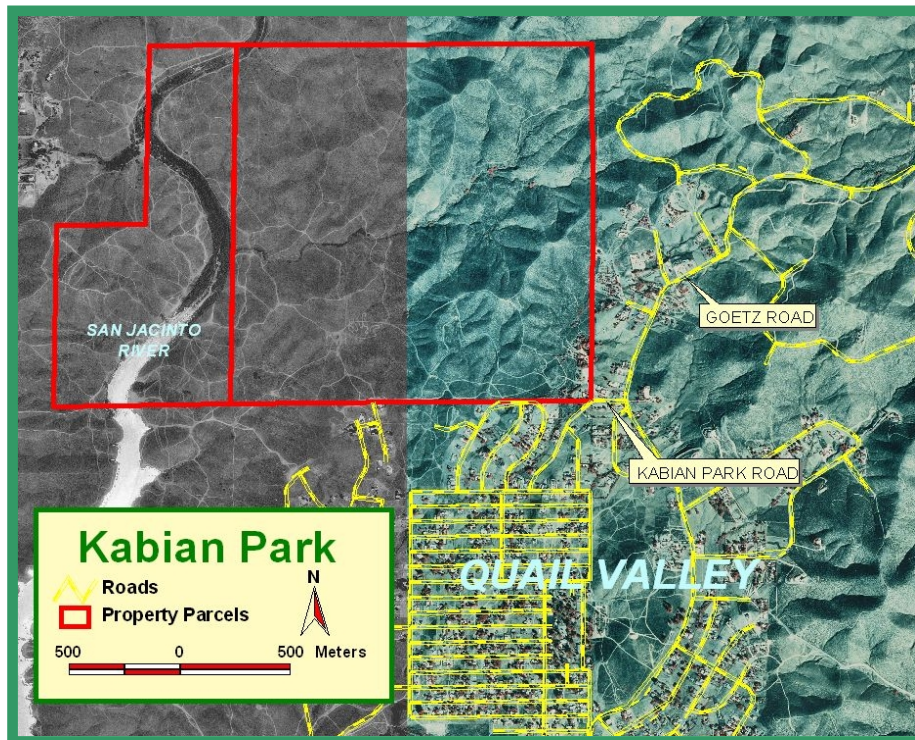


steeper, forming substantial mountains. The San Jacinto River bisects the site in a north-south direction.

Vegetation: Riversidian sage scrub with a few patches of chamise chaparral. There has been a heavy infestation of non-native annual grasses and mustard.

Principle Issues: OHV trespass both for its own sake and for access to the San Jacinto River for launching personal watercraft, vandalism, trash dumping, some weed abatement, target shooting and poaching.

Notes: This area has been used for OHV recreation for years. As a result, the site is a spider-web of trails, and vandalism of fences and signs is very high. Attached is a small developed park area administered by Operations Division, with a resident caretaker.



12. **Maze Stone Park**

Approximate Acreage: 6

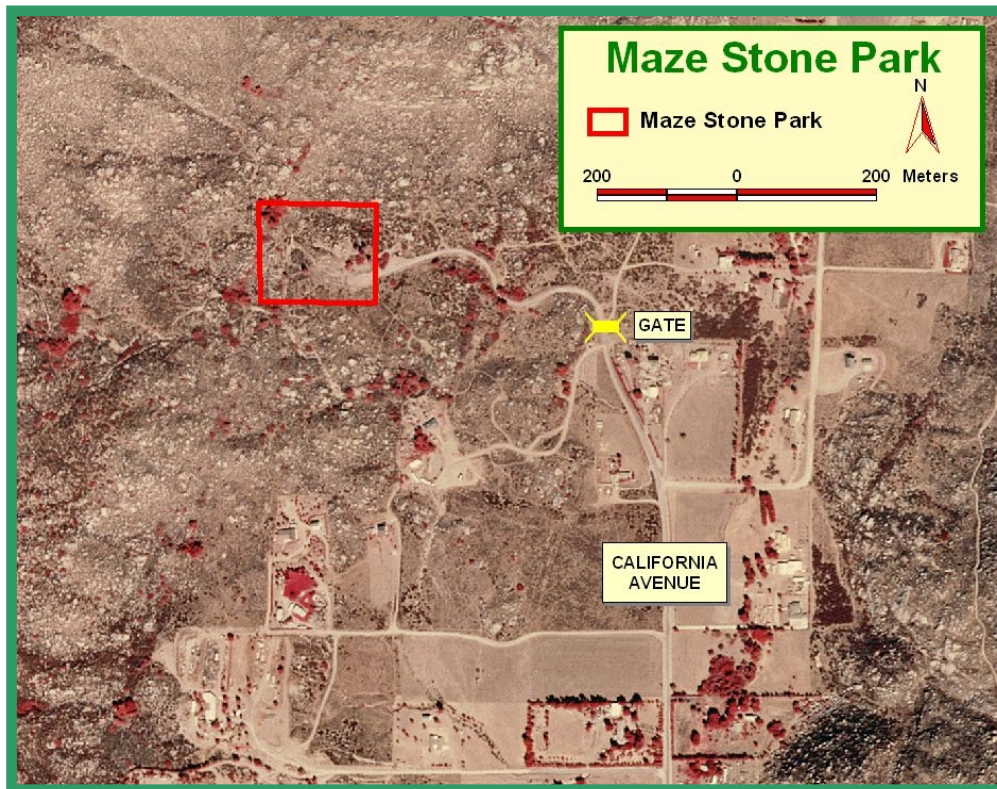
Location: At the northern end of California Street, north of State Highway 79, immediately west-northwest of Hemet.

Topography: Rocky foothills.

Vegetation: Mixture of chaparral and sage scrub communities with ornamental trees planted around the stone itself. Mustard and non-native grasses have invaded the disturbed areas. The vegetation is recovering from wildfire.

Principle Issues: Minor trash dumping and vandalism, used as a party spot by local teens, protection of unique feature.

Notes: A small site dedicated to the protection of the Maze Stone, a unique anthropological site. Once open to the public, it is now closed with a locked gate across the paved access road.



13. **Mockingbird Canyon**
Archeological Preserve

Approximate Acreage: 30

Location: Mockingbird Canyon,
at the junction on Harley John
Road and Mockingbird Canyon
Road

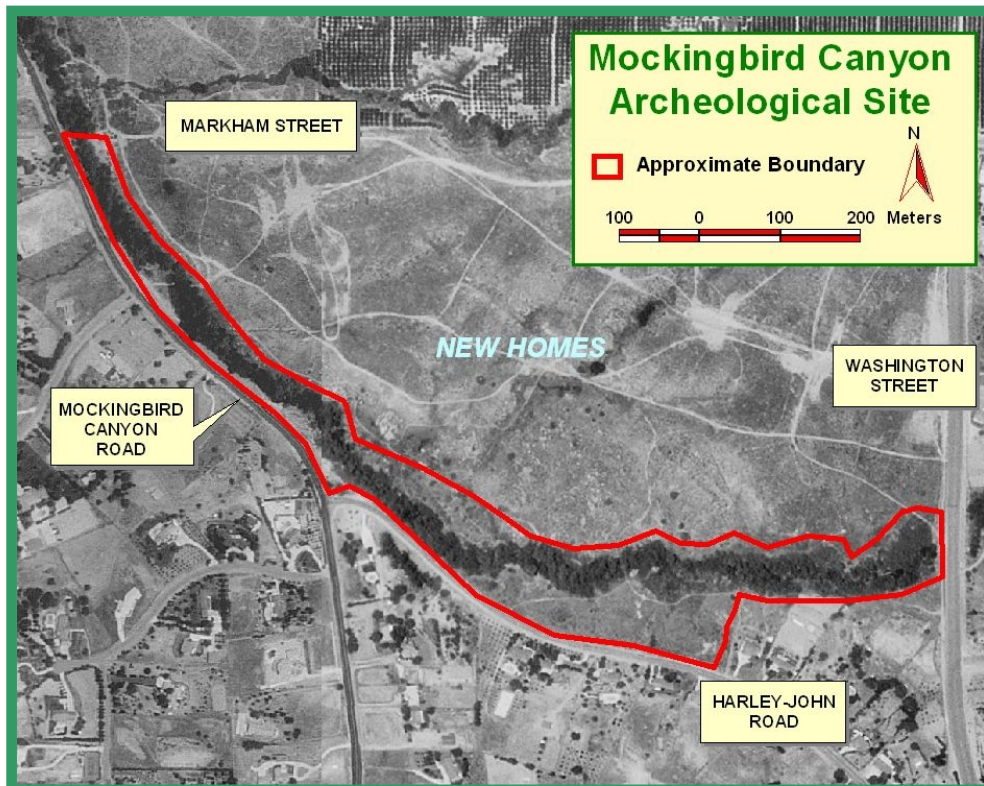


Topography: The site consists of
the bottom lands of Mockingbird
Creek and the immediate slopes adjacent to it.

Vegetation: Willow riparian scrub with scattered individuals of
cottonwood and juniper. Adjacent slopes support Riversidian sage scrub.
Non-native annual grasses and mustard have invaded the more disturbed
areas such as along the trails.

Principle Issues: Minor illegal dumping, equestrian area with trails, weed
abatement, protection of unique features.

Notes: This site is in place to protect several Native American
petroglyphs carved into a rock outcrop next to the creek. It is used
extensively by local equestrians, and to a lesser degree, hikers.



14. **Ringing Rock**
Archeological Site

Approximate Acreage: 18

Location: On Haun Road between Scott Road on the south and Newport Road on the north.

Topography: The eastern 2/3 of the site are flat or gently sloping, while the west is dominated by a low rounded hill.



Vegetation: The flat areas are ruderal (weedy) and dominated by non-native annual grasses and mustard. The western hill supports a sparse growth of Riversidian sage scrub. A few ornamentals have been planted around the caretaker's residence.

Principle issues: Weed abatement, endangered species.

Notes: This area is to protect a sensitive Native American site, located principally on the western hill. An onsite Native American caretaker is housed in a mobile home. The site is fenced, and closed to the public.



15. **San Jacinto River SBKR Site**

Approximate Acreage: 16

Location: The San Jacinto River in Valle Vista, adjacent to State Highway 79.

Topography: Basically the rocky and sandy bottom of the San Jacinto River, and the immediate bluff rising to Highway 79 on the south.



Vegetation: Alluvial scrub.

Principle Issues: OHV trespass, minor illegal dumping, fence vandalism, endangered species.

Notes: This site is designated to protect the critically endangered San Bernardino Merriam's kangaroo rat (SBKR). The boundary along Highway 79 is fenced, with some strategic k-rails placed to prevent continued vandalism of the fence.



16. **Norton Younglove**

Approximate Acreage: 3,872

Location: North of State Highway 60 and south of San Timoteo Canyon Road, approximately 5 kilometers west of Interstate 10.

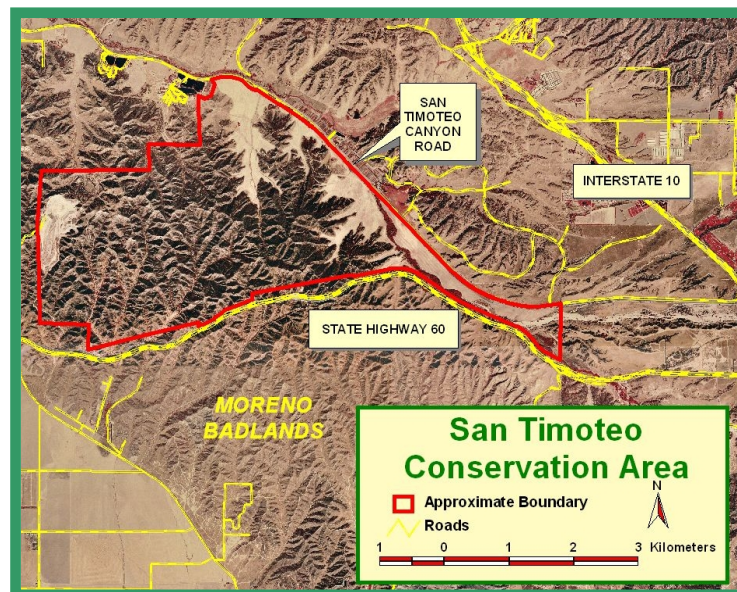
Topography: Varied. The site includes the wash bottom of San Timoteo Creek and the flats surrounding is on the east. The western portions are composed of “swell and swale” badlands topography of steep-sided mud hills and ridges, separated by small narrow canyons.



Vegetation: Varied. The flat portions support ruderal (weedy) vegetation dominated by non-native annual grasses and mustard. The creek supports willow scrub riparian forest with scattered cottonwood. The hills of the west support a highly disturbed (by wildfire) mixture of chaparral and sage scrub species with scattered scrub oak in the shadows.

Principle Issues: OHV trespass, illegal dumping, fence vandalism, target shooting and hunting, paintballs, endangered species.

Notes: This site is a conglomeration of properties which include the former De Anza Cycle Park and the Norton Younglove Preserve. Highly subject to OHV trespass and illegal dumping with the accompanying fence and sign vandalism. Most of the site is fenced, but fences are regularly cut. The site is currently under review for transfer to the State.



17. **Santa Ana River**
Mitigation Bank

Approximate Acreage:

Total District Lands: 303

Mitigation Bank Units: 174

Location: Santa Ana River in the City of Riverside. Located between Van Buren Blvd. on the west and Martha McLean Anza Narrows Park on the east.

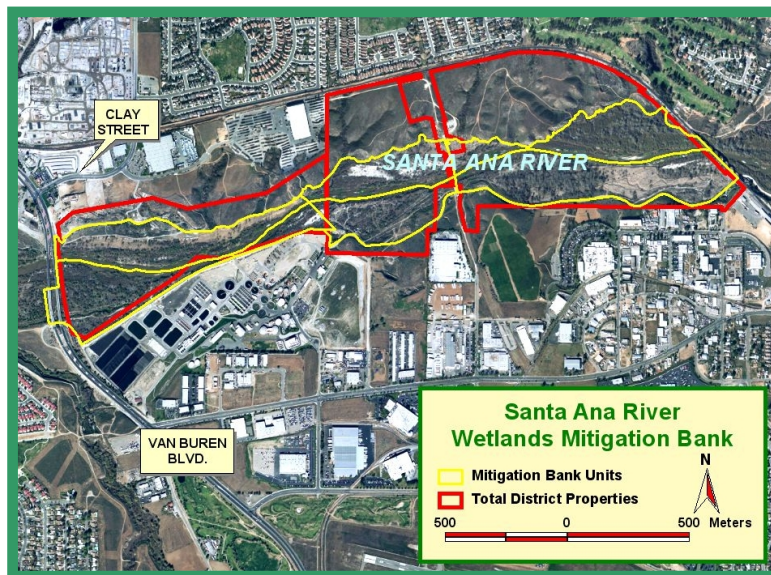


Topography: River bottom. Surrounding alluvial aprons and bluffs.

Vegetation: The natural vegetation of the site is willow riparian forest within the river, and Riversidian sage scrub and chaparral on the slopes and bluffs above the river. This site has been invaded by the exotic, *Arundo donax*, or giant reed, which has been the focus of the Mitigation Bank's restoration efforts. Non-native grasses and mustard have invaded many of the areas away from the river.

Principle Issues: Homeless individuals, illegal fires (i.e., BBQs), paintballs, some OHV trespass, vandalism, inadvisable swimming in the Santa Ana River, adjacent parking issues, some illegal dumping, minor non-*Arundo* weed abatement, endangered species and wetlands issues, continued Mitigation Bank maintenance for 20 years.

Notes: In 2003, the original Mitigation Bank was completed. Efforts are underway to expand the Bank upstream. The Van Buren Blvd. crossing has become a Mecca for bathers during the hot summer months with extensive trash dumping, and the potential for wildfires from BBQs.



18. **Santa Ana River
Regional Park
(Arundo Removal Areas)**

Approximate Acreage: 612

Location: The Santa Ana River. Immediately upstream from the Santa Ana River Wetlands Mitigation Bank (#19 above) and downstream from the end of the northern-bank Flood Control levee.



Topography: River bottoms with occasional hummocks, swamps, sloughs, and small lakes.

Vegetation: The native vegetation type was mixed willow / cottonwood riparian forest with mule fat, elderberry and coyote bush, however, the area has been invaded and taken-over by *Arundo donax*, the giant reed.

Principle Issues: Homeless individuals, illegal dumping, paintballs, minor OHV trespass, inadvisable swimming in the river, potential for wildfire from BBQs, feral dogs and pigs, minor poaching.

Notes: This area is the current main focus for the Proposition 13 funded Arundo removal program. Habitat Management Units 1, 8 and 9 are being proposed for inclusion in the Santa Ana River Wetlands Mitigation Bank.



19. **Santa Rosa Plateau**
Sylvan Meadows Unit

Approximate Acreage: 1,235

Location: Adjacent to the Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve; South Clinton Keith Road southwest of Murrieta.

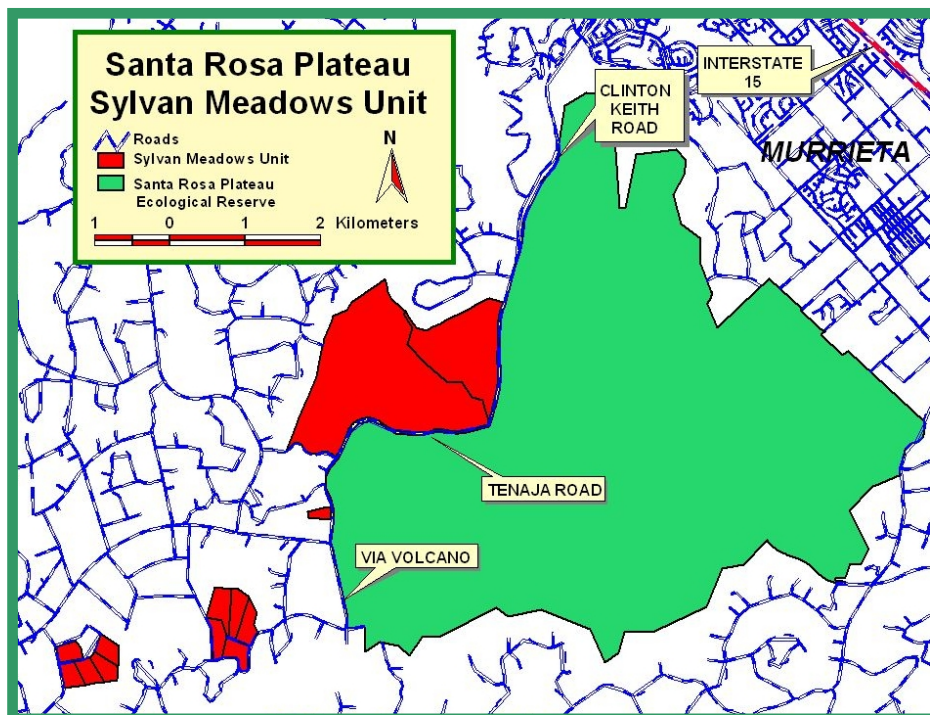


Topography: Varied, but most of the larger parcel is relatively flat or rolling terrain. Localized rocky hills and small drainages.

Vegetation: Native perennial bunch grasses, with some invasive non-native annual grasses beginning encroachment. Riparian areas support mule fat scrub and streamside coast live oak woodland. Oaks scattered across landscape, with some mixed chaparral and sage scrub on the exposed hillsides.

Principle Issues: Minor illegal dumping primarily along roadways, some OHV trespass, minor shooting, illegal marijuana cultivation, mountain bike trespass, fencing damaged by auto accidents and minor vandalism, native grass community is very rare.

Notes: This area is a separate group of properties adjacent to the Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve, and managed by the same personnel.



20. **Upper May Valley Preserve**

Approximate Acreage: 129

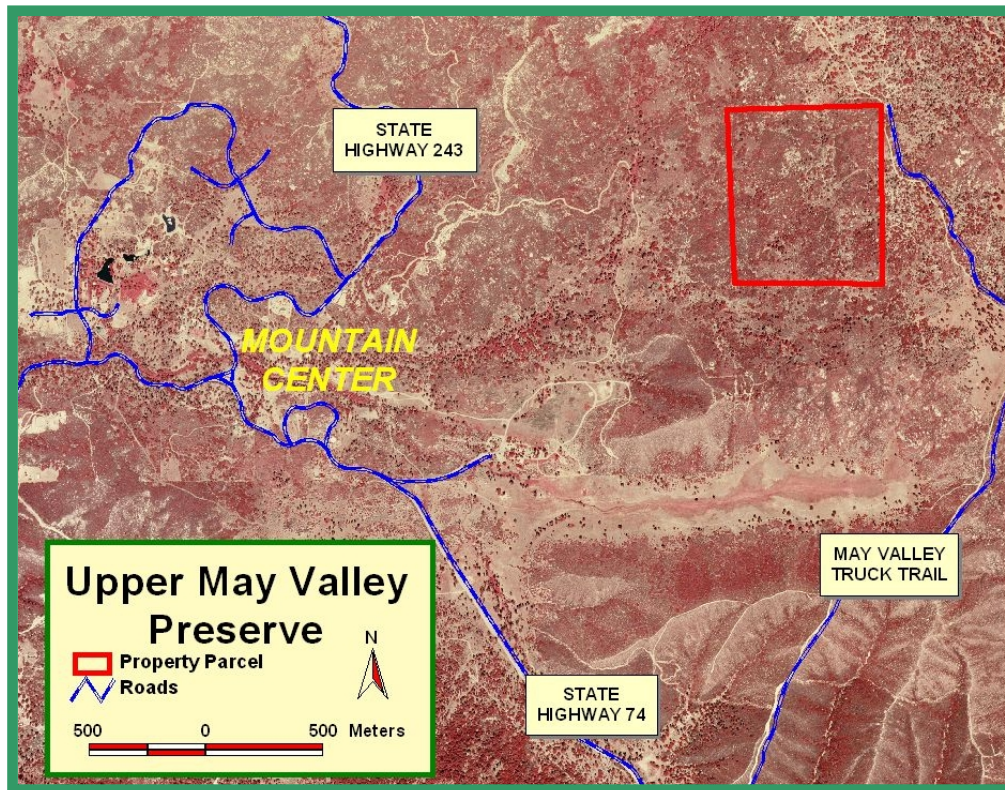
Location: Approximately 1.5 kilometers east-northeast of Mountain Center.

Topography: Rocky upland hills and slopes of the San Jacinto Mountains above May and Garner Valleys.

Vegetation: Mixed oak hardwoods and conifers with an understory of manzanita.

Principle Issues: Access, minor OHV trespass.

Notes: This remote site is currently in the process of being transferred to the U.S. Forest Service. Because of this, and since access is by foot only due to locked gates, no active management is proposed for this site.



21. **Valley Hi Oak Park**

Approximate Acreage: 85

Location: Located between State Highway 243 and Twin Pines Road, in the community of Twin Pines.

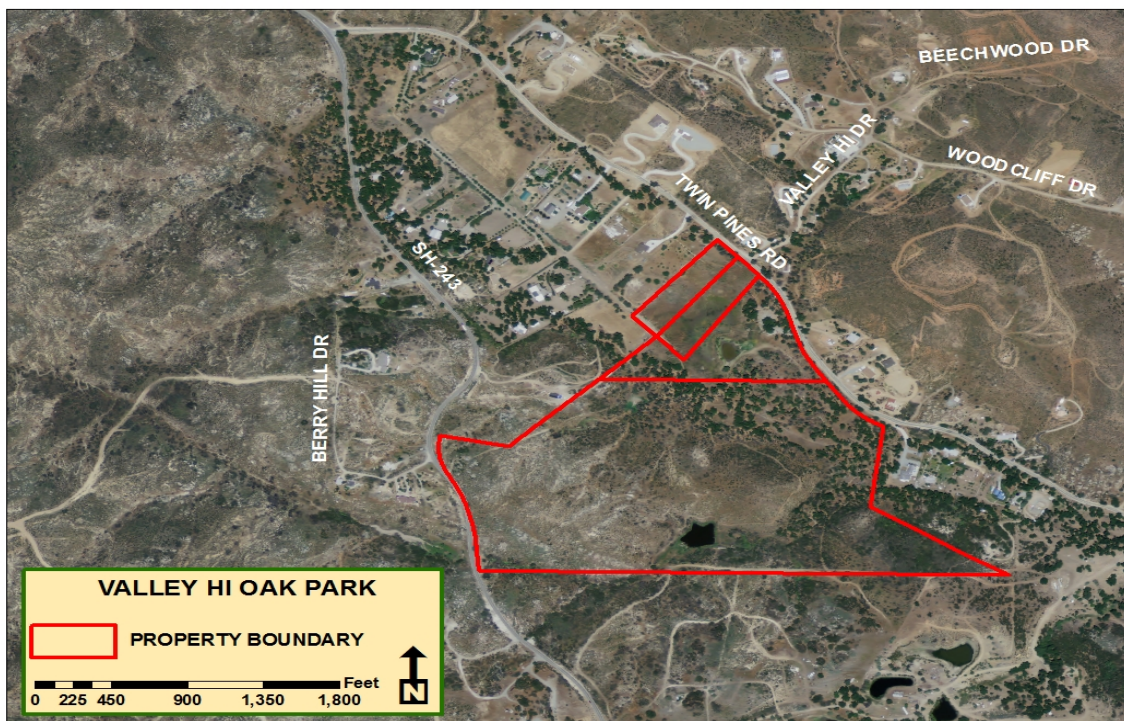


Topography: Hills and valleys throughout most of the southern 2/3 of the park. The northern extreme supports a flat meadow, with a small dam and intermittent lake.

Vegetation: Primarily oak woodland with widely scattered conifers. Understory is primarily Yerba Santa and manzanita. Meadow is dominated by non-native annual grasses, primarily brome grasses.

Principle Issues: Some weed abatement at the meadow, minor fence vandalism.

Notes: A lovely little park that has fallen into disuse. The onsite infrastructure that once included caretaker's mobile home, restroom, parking lot, flag pole, and a large storage trailer was removed in 2006.



22. **Warmington Mitigation Site**

Approximate Acreage: 67

Location: South of Scott Road, East of proposed Pitman Lane, west of Lindenerger Road, and north of Keller Road, in the vicinity of Menifee.



Topography: Rolling hills of low relief. A small drainage runs along the northern boundary.

Vegetation: Ruderal (weedy) non-native annual grasslands with mustard throughout. A few of the rockier hills still support highly disturbed Riversidian sage scrub.

Principle Issues: OHV trespass, illegal dumping, some fence and sign vandalism, endangered species likely present (i.e., Stephens' kangaroo rat)

Notes: This site is rapidly becoming surrounded by residential neighborhoods, with current development on the north and west.

