



Natural & Farm Lands Conservation Working Group

May 28th, 2020

10:00 am – 12:00 pm

www.scag.ca.gov



HOUSEKEEPING



1. Meeting length: approximately 2 hours
2. This meeting will be recorded and posted on the SCAG website
3. All participants will be muted except for breakout sessions
4. At the end of each presentation, there will be a Q&A session
5. If you have a question during the presentation, type it into the chat box
6. We will log all questions and answer them during Q&A
7. Think of something later? Email brookover@scag.ca.gov
8. All presentations will be emailed to those who registered to participate in today's meeting

AGENDA



1. Introductions

India Brookover, SCAG

2. BRAINSTORM: IMPLEMENTING CONNECT SOCAL'S CONSERVATION STRATEGIES

India Brookover, SCAG

3. CONNECT SOCAL COVID-19 OUTREACH

Jason Greenpsan, SCAG

4. SOCAL GREENPRINT UPDATE

Abigail Ramsden, The Nature Conservancy

5. RCIS UPDATE: SAN BERNARDINO & ANTELOPE VALLEY

Josh Lee, San Bernardino Transportation Authority

Scott Fleury, ICF

6. ADJOURN

Introductions



Please type your name and the agency you represent in the chatbox.

Voluntary Icebreaker:

What is your favorite plant?



Implementing Connect SoCal's Conservation Strategies

India Brookover, Associate Regional Planner

Sustainability Department

5/26/2020

www.scag.ca.gov





- A long-range visioning plan that balances future mobility and housing needs with economic, environmental and public health goals.
- Connect SoCal Goals fall into 4 categories:
 - Economic Vitality
 - Increased Mobility
 - Complete Communities
 - **Environmental Protection**
 - Includes habitat and agricultural conservation

Connect SoCal Main Conservation Goal



Promote
conservation of
natural and
agricultural lands
and restoration of
habitats

Conservation is Embedded in Several Connect SoCal Goals



Promote conservation of natural and agricultural lands and restoration of habitats.



Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality.



Support healthy and equitable communities.



Adapt to a changing climate and support an integrated regional development pattern and transportation network.

Recommended Conservation Policies and Strategies



Promote Land
Conservation
Best Practices

Facilitate
Partnerships and
Collaboration

Encourage
Regional
Conservation
Planning

Expand Data
Sharing

Support
Innovative Land
Use Policies

Recommended Conservation Policies and Strategies

Improve Natural
Corridor
Connectivity

Encourage
Urban
Greening/Green
Infrastructure

Connect to
Public Health

Include Climate
Smart
Conversation

Seek Funding
Opportunities

Conservation Next Steps

Continue to
Engage
Stakeholders

Develop Regional
Greenprint

Encourage
Regional Advanced
Mitigation
Program (RAMP)

Align with Funding
Opportunities

Provide Incentives
for Jurisdictions to
Work across
County Lines

SCAG Regional Advance Mitigation Program (RAMP)



Advance mitigation anticipates and identifies mitigation needs for multiple development projects early in the planning process. By avoiding piecemeal mitigation for individual projects, this method is more conducive for maintaining habitat connectivity and prioritizing sites with the highest ecological benefits

SCAG's program intends to:

- Establish and/or supplement regional conservation and mitigation banks, and/or programs to address impacts for projects that support reduction of per-capita VMT.
- Support long-term management and stewardship or mitigated properties.

Potential SCAG RAMP Activities

Inventories of anticipated impacts from transportation projects

Endowment funds to support long-term management and stewardship of mitigated properties.

Facilitate coordination between different agencies for shared mitigation projects.

Support new scientific and cultural research in conservation and restoration methods.

Potential RAMP Partner Agencies

Cities

Counties

County
Transportation
Commissions

Councils of
Government

Land Trusts

Resource
Management
Agencies

Tribal
Governments

Questions?



Please type your question in the chat box

Poll Questions



- How familiar are you with Advance Mitigation?
- Which of the recommended policies ties most closely to your work?
- Which of the recommended policies would you like to see SCAG expand upon in the near future?

Breakout Groups with Sharebacks



Q: How does your organization hope to impact the region?/ What would you like to see as a focus for conservation?/ What are some of your conservation-related priorities?

Q: What are some challenges your jurisdiction/organization is facing regarding developing or implementing conservation strategies?

Q: Elaborate on some of the strategies you selected in the Poll and how you'd like to see them happen.

Next Steps

- Review your input
- Develop list of priority strategies for FY-21
- Next meeting in Fall 2020

Questions?



Thank You

India Brookover

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Connect SoCal & COVID-19



SCAG Regional Council adopted Connect SoCal for Federal conformity purposes. Our next steps:

- “(2) Allow for more time (*120 days*) to review Connect SoCal and consider its implications in light of the short and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the region as requested by many stakeholders;
- (4) provide a progress report describing modifications to the SCS and associated modeling and analysis within 60 days;
- (5) work with local authorities to identify and restore locally approved entitlements as conveyed by local jurisdictions...”



SCAG is listening to stakeholders and community based organizations:

- What are the immediate impacts of COVID-19 on your community's transportation and housing needs?
- How can SCAG and our partners better engage your communities during the pandemic recovery period?
- What are the long term considerations regarding COVID-19 and your communities?



During the 120-day period:

- Listen to varied stakeholders
- Develop research and data to assist informed decision making
- Make limited technical refinements to Connect SoCal regarding entitlements
- Refine planned implementation programs based on community input to address a “post-pandemic recovery world”
- Identify long-term considerations for future plan amendments & the 2024 plan update



Opportunities for Engagement

- **Regional Planning & Technical Working Groups (May–July)**
 - Safety
 - Active Transportation
 - Natural and Working Lands
 - Public Health
 - Climate Adaptation
 - Sustainable Communities
 - Environmental Justice
 - Technical Working Group
- **Regional Workshop (June)**
- **Survey (June)**
- **Community Based Organizations (May–July)**
- **Stakeholder Briefings (Ongoing)**





SoCal Greenprint Update

Natural & Farm Lands Conservation Working Group

Abigail Ramsden, The Nature Conservancy

May 27, 2020

www.scag.ca.gov

in collaboration with



What is a Greenprint?

A greenprint is a strategic conservation plan or assessment tool that reveals the economic and social benefits that parks, open space, and working lands provide to communities.



Why do we need a Greenprint?

- Urbanization has led to habitat loss
- Conservation is not considered early in planning
- Decision-makers have uneven access to natural resource data
- Multi-benefit and landscape-scale planning is *uncommon yet desired*



What is the SoCal Greenprint?

- A custom, web-based, interactive map tool
- Diversity of geographies, landscapes, communities
- Guided by feedback from potential users
- Compiling regional data about conservation and growth



What could the SoCal Greenprint do?

- Support goals of Connect SoCal
- Foster collaboration
- Support better land use planning
- Direct conservation actions
- Guide infrastructure siting and assessment
- Accompany grant and funding applications
- Become an educational resource for communities



SoCal Greenprint Goal Statement



The Goal of the Greenprint is to protect, restore, and enhance natural lands, public greenspace, working lands, and water resources and the benefits they provide to people and nature throughout the SCAG region.

As a planning tool, the Greenprint provides relevant data and analysis to help prioritize and conserve our valued natural assets and working lands, ensure access to urban green spaces for all, and guide development to avoid conflicts with nature.

Key Users

- Infrastructure agencies
- Conservation practitioners
- Community-based organizations
- Developers
- Town, city, and county planners



Project Timeline

2020

2021

2022

SCOPING

STRATEGIC OUTREACH

- Connect with stakeholders
- Intersect with SCAG working groups
- Gain insights on tool uses and datasets
- Conduct rapid assessments
- Develop case studies

DATA GATHERING & TOOL DEVELOPMENT

- Develop themes, goals and objectives
- Gather datasets
- Connect with science advisers
- Develop reporting framework
- Wireframe/mockups

LAUNCH & EVALUATION

- Website and Greenprint tool
- Report on funding and implementation

Advisory Committee Meeting 5/20



Meeting Goals:

- Get to know each other
- Build understanding about greenprints and why SCAG is sponsoring one now
- Set expectations about how to participate in this process
- Get your feedback on the purpose, audience, themes and uses of a greenprint

Ideas we have heard are important



- Transit and transportation networks
- Pollution (especially air pollution)
- Renewable energy development
- Resource extraction (e.g. sand, oil, etc.)
- Environmental justice
- Urban areas
- Public health

Questions to Consider

- How would you use the SoCal Greenprint?
- Who are the users we should be focusing on, and what are those 'use cases'?
- Who are the other users who should be included in this conversation?
- What themes are important?



Q & A

Please use the raise hand function or put your question in the chat

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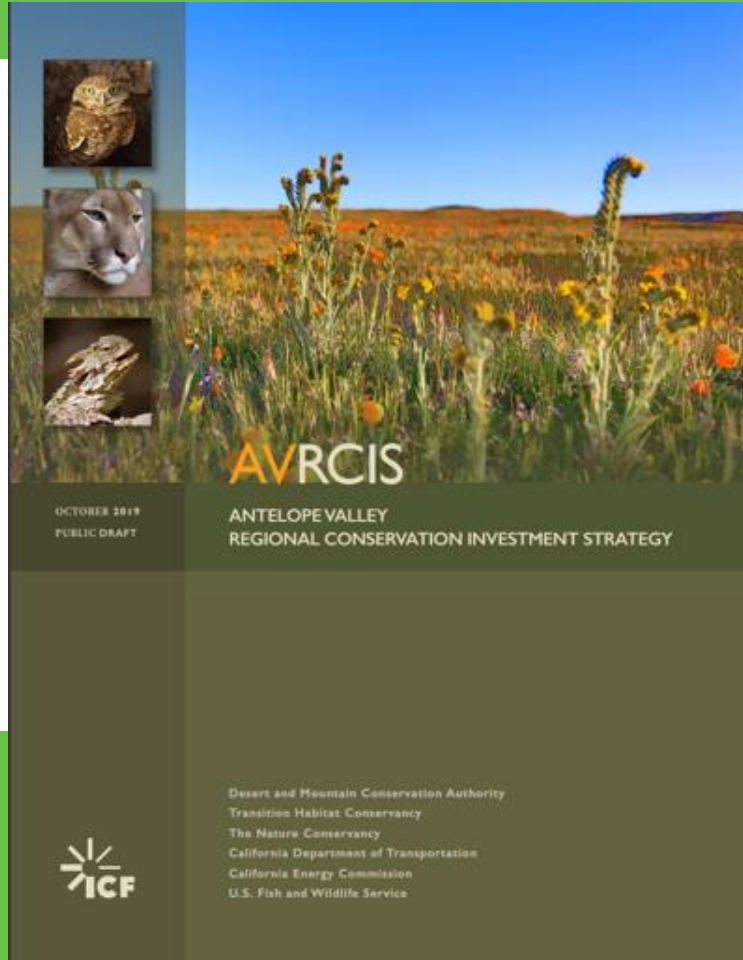
in collaboration with



Antelope Valley RCIS Overview



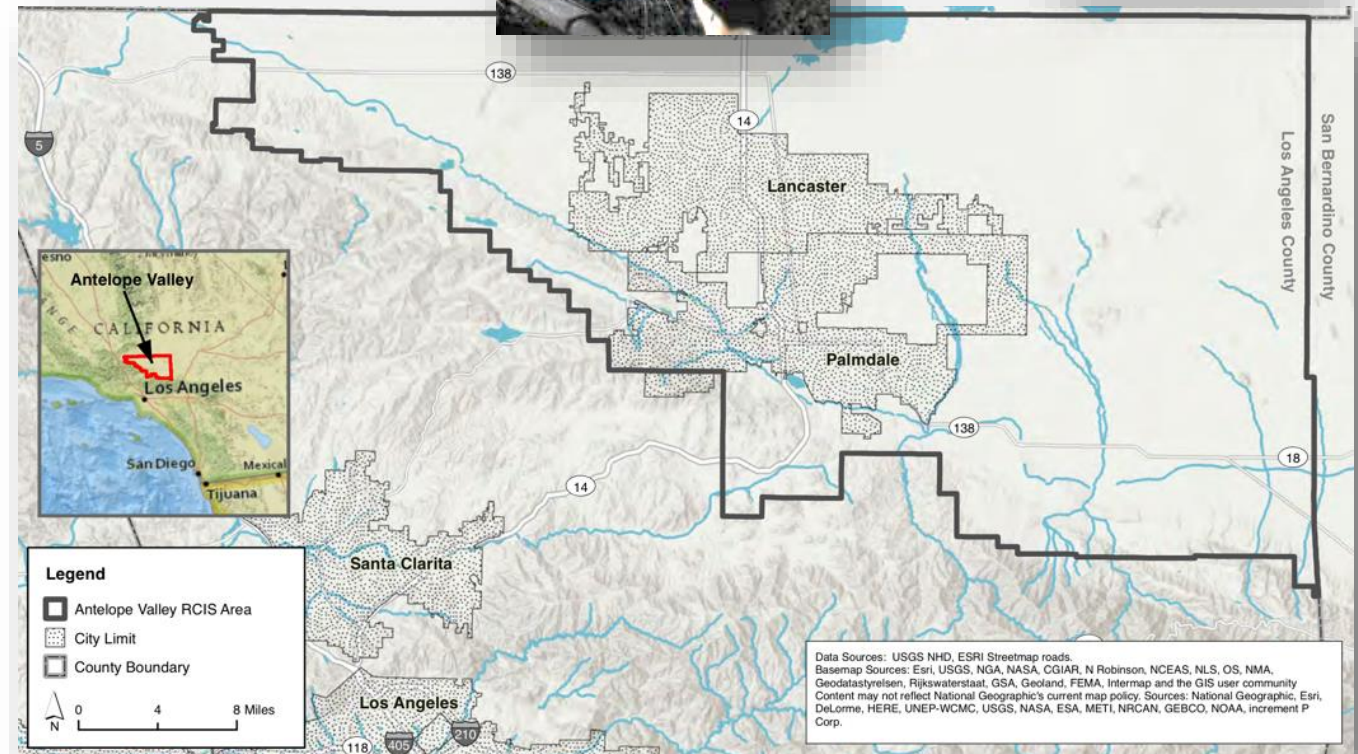
Scott Fleury, Ph.D.
Conservation Biologist,
ICF



May 28, 2020

Antelope Valley RCIS Background

- **Planning process began in Spring 2016**
 - Funded by Bechtel Foundation
 - Managed by Conservation Strategy Group
- **Steering Committee**
 - Desert and Mountains Conservation Authority (lead)
 - California Energy Commission
 - Caltrans
 - LA Metro
 - Transitions Habitat Conservancy
 - The Nature Conservancy
 - Conservation Strategy Group
- **Active Advisory Committee**
 - (30+ members)



27 Focal Species in the AV RCIS

Plants (5)	Reptiles (4)	Birds (13)	Mammals (5)
Alkali mariposa-lily	Coast horned lizard	Burrowing owl	American badger
Joshua tree	Desert horned lizard	California condor	Desert kit fox
California juniper	Desert tortoise	Golden eagle	Mohave ground squirrel
Spreading navarretia	Western pond turtle	Le Conte's thrasher	Tehachapi pocket mouse
Short-joint beavertail cactus		Least Bell's vireo	Mountain Lion
		Loggerhead shrike	
		Mountain plover	
		Northern harrier	
		Prairie falcon	
		Willow flycatcher	
		Swainson's hawk	
		Tricolored blackbird	
		Long-billed curlew	

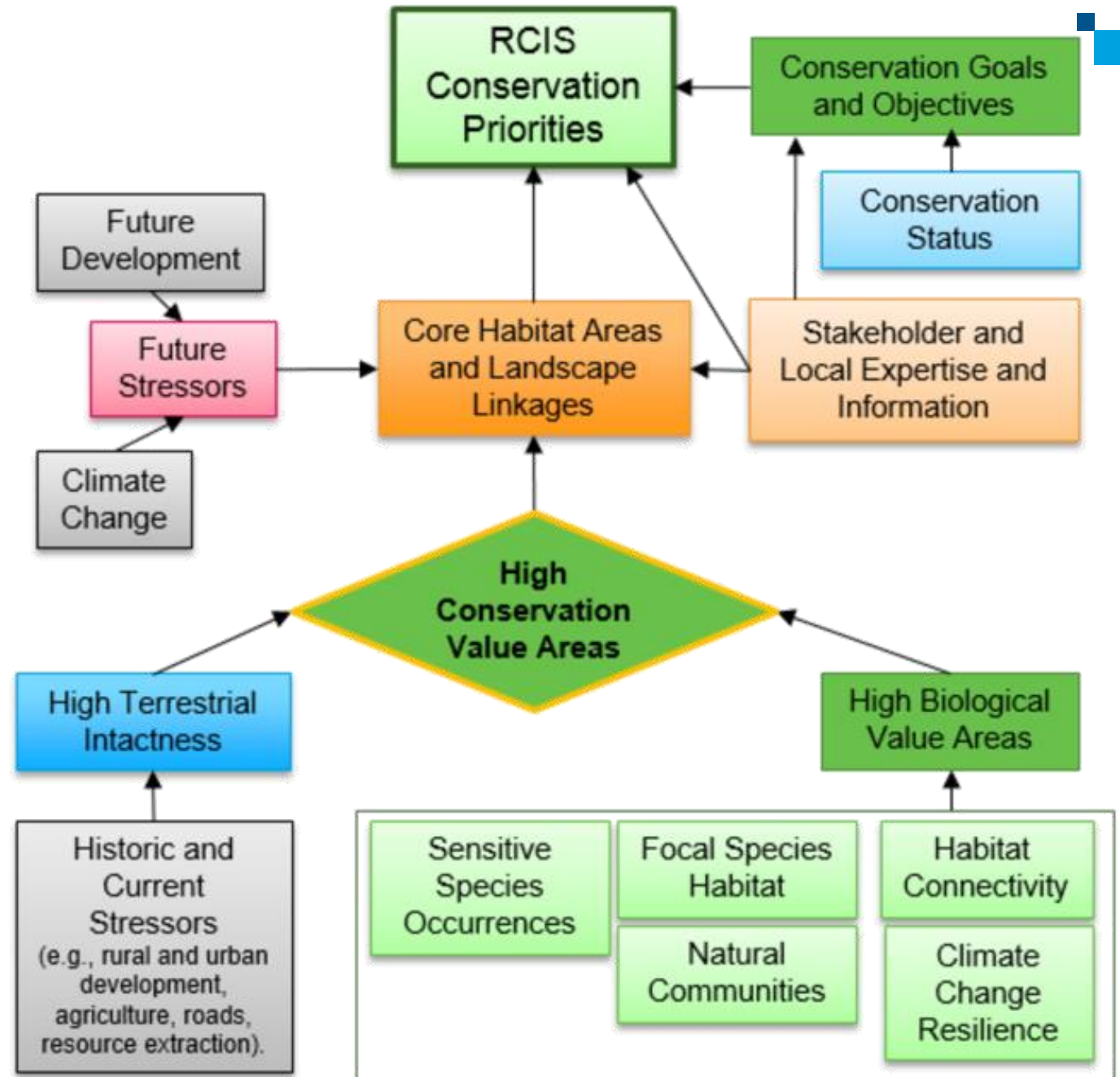


Process to Determine Conservation Priorities

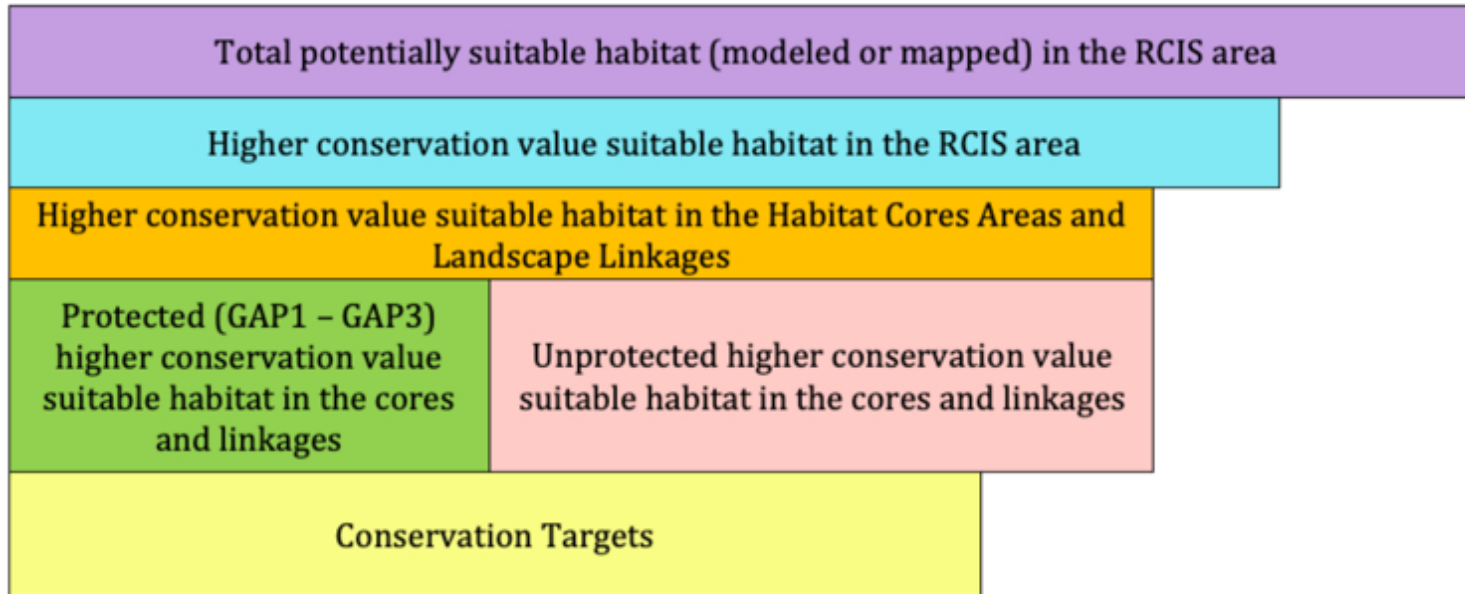
Species Grouped by General Habitat

1. Desert species
 2. Grassland/Agriculture species
 3. Foothill/Riparian species
- Conservation Value Areas identified for each group

Conservation Value Matrix		Biological Value (Supporting Species, Natural Communities, and Other Conservation Elements)		
		High	Moderate	Low
Landscape Intactness (Level of Fragmentation and Degradation)	High	H/H	M/H	L/H
	Moderate	H/M	M/M	L/M
	Low	H/L	M/L	L/L



Determining the Conservation Targets



- How much habitat?
- How much is high value?
- and in cores/linkages?
- How much is protected?
- How much is not?
- Set conservation target based on sensitivity and risk.

RCIS Area		Foreseeable Future Infrastructure and Urbanization	Existing Development
Potential <i>Preservation</i> Gap	Protection and Preservation Gap		
Quantitative Conservation Goals for <i>Preservation</i>	Quantitative Conservation Goals for <i>Protection</i> and <i>Preservation</i>		
Potential Conservation Actions:	Conservation Actions:		
Restoration, enhancement, and long-term management	Acquisition, conservation easements, long-term management, restoration, and enhancement		

In protected areas create mitigation credit by restoration, enhancement, and management/monitoring.

In unprotected areas create Mitigation credit by acquisition or easement and management/monitoring.

Conservation Values Map to Guide Priority Conservation Areas

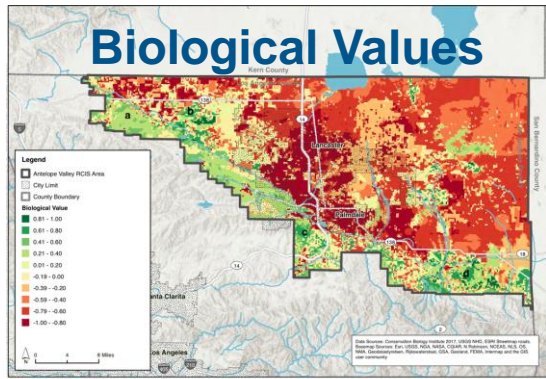


Figure 3-13
Foothill/Riparian Biological Values Model for the Antelope Valley RCIS Area

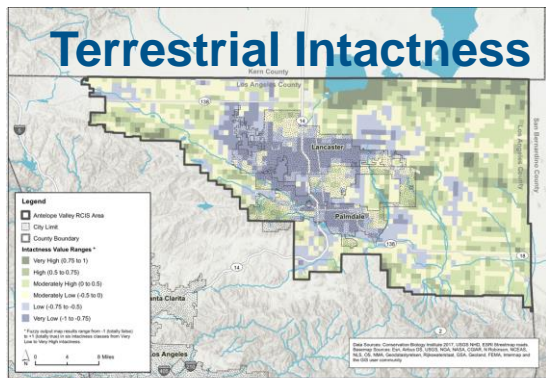


Figure 3-16
Terrestrial Intactness Model Results for the Antelope Valley RCIS Area

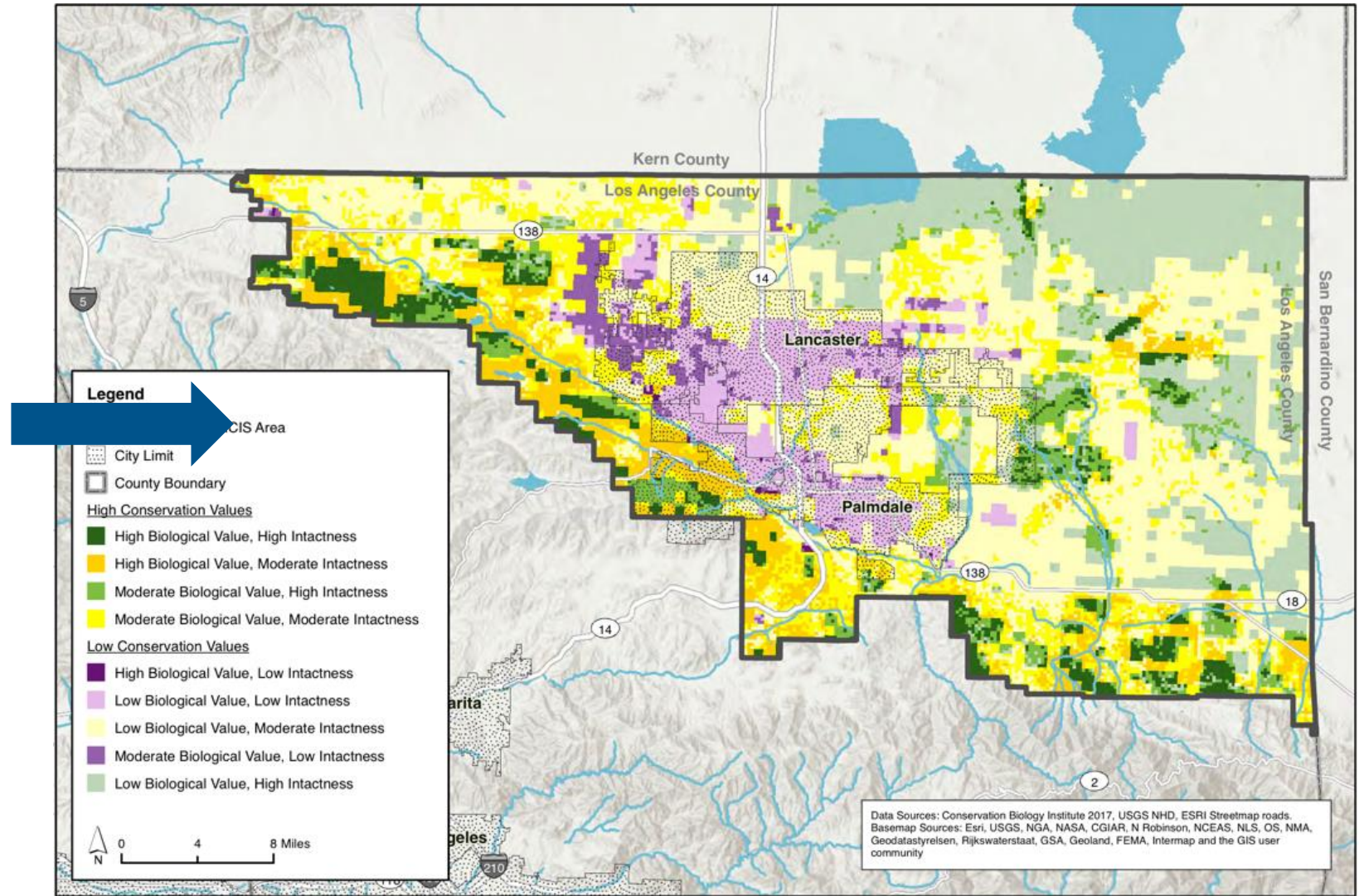
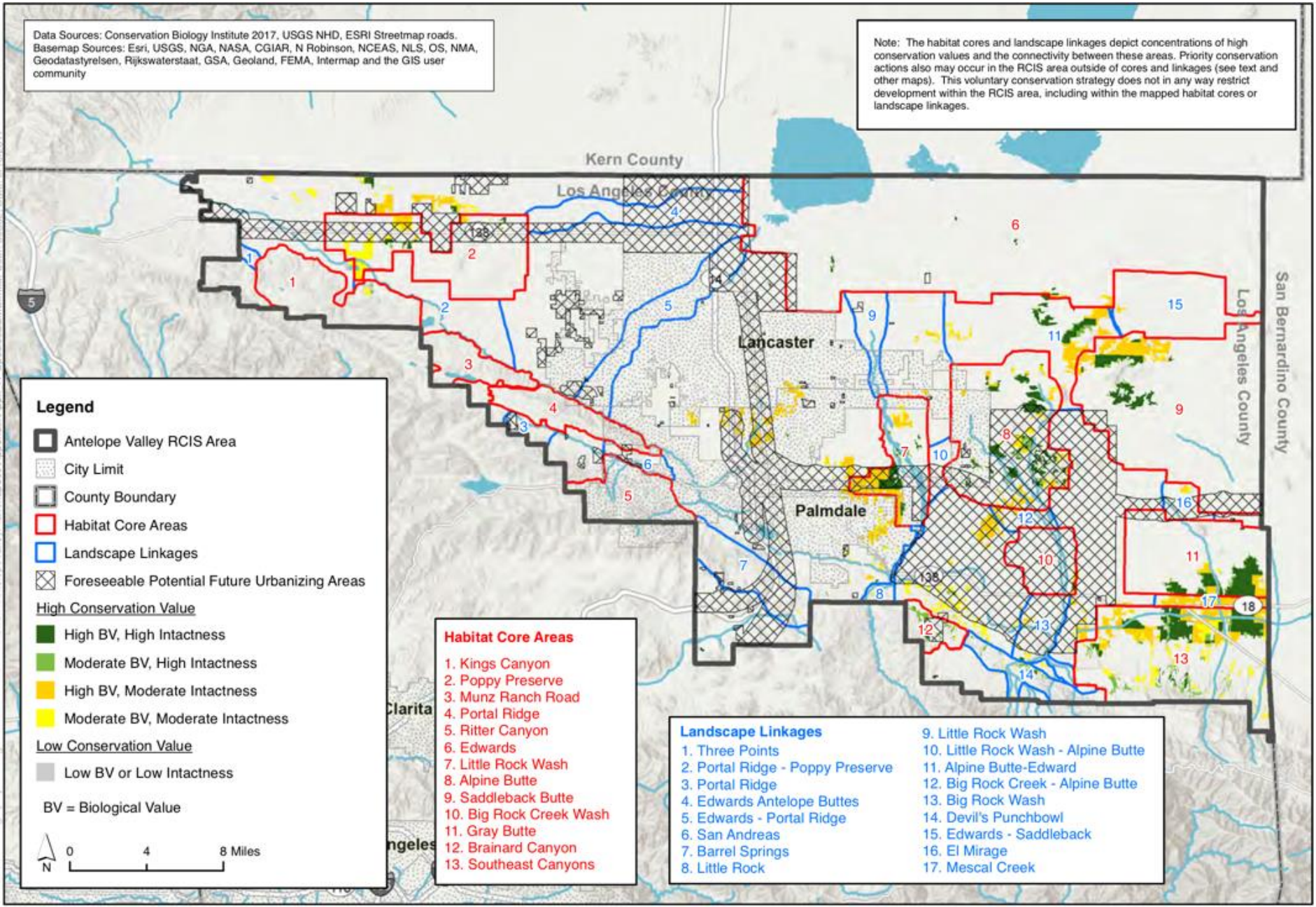


Figure 3-19
Conservation Values Mapping for the Foothill/Riparian Species Group in the Antelope Valley RCIS Area

Data Sources: Conservation Biology Institute 2017, USGS NHD, ESRI Streetmap roads.
 Basemap Sources: Esri, USGS, NGA, NASA, CGIAR, N Robinson, NCEAS, NLS, OS, NMA,
 Geodastatysen, Rijkswaterstaat, GSA, Geoland, FEMA, Intermap and the GIS user
 community

Note: The habitat cores and landscape linkages depict concentrations of high conservation values and the connectivity between these areas. Priority conservation actions also may occur in the RCIS area outside of cores and linkages (see text and other maps). This voluntary conservation strategy does not in any way restrict development within the RCIS area, including within the mapped habitat cores or landscape linkages.



Using the RCIS:

Finding Mitigation for Focal Species (locating MCAs)

Example: Joshua Tree (*Yucca brevifolia*)



Figure H-3
 Joshua Tree High Conservation Value Habitat (Desert Species Group)

Recommended Conservation Actions to Create MCAs

Using the RCIS:

Table 3-13. Conservation Actions for Joshua Tree

ID	Cons. Obj.	Conservation Action
JOTR-1	3.1	Acquire parcels with known Joshua tree stands through fee title purchase or conservation easement, prioritizing large patches of continuous Joshua tree woodlands or areas adjacent to already-protected lands.
JOTR-2	3.2	Restore burned areas by planting young Joshua trees (caged to prevent herbivory), native shrubs, and perennial grasses to restrict invasion by annual invasive species. Burned Joshua trees should not be removed because they can resprout on occasion and provide habitat for wildlife.
JOTR-3	3.2	Fence preserved Joshua tree woodlands, excluding vehicle access that can increase human-caused ignitions of wildfire and garbage dumping.
JOTR-4	3.2	Periodically patrol preserved Joshua tree woodlands to monitor human uses.
JOTR-5	3.2	Prepare wildfire suppression plans for preserved Joshua tree woodlands to minimize resource impacts from fire suppression tactics.
JOTR-6	3.1	Conduct a fine-scale regional assessment to determine the most intact, largest extent of the oldest Joshua tree stands remaining in the RCIS area.
JOTR-7	3.3	Conduct monitoring and aid in research of Joshua tree populations—including, but not limited to, flowering timing and frequency, seed germination, sprout dispersal, and Yucca moth activity—to better understand effects of climate change on these populations and identify actions to facilitate adaptation to these effects.

Acquire

Restore

Manage

Monitor

Finding Mitigation for Focal Species (locating MCAs)

Example: Joshua Tree (*Yucca brevifolia*)



Criteria for Locating MCAs in the AV RCIS



Mitigation Credit Agreements should be:

- On land with:
 - Willing landowners
 - Presence of high conservation value and/or conservation potential
 - Without foreseeable future urbanization pressure

- In conservation priority areas

- Meet the mitigation needs and interests of the entities using the RCIS
 - e.g., which focal species, and which conservation actions

- Able to support intended conservation actions for the duration of the MCA

Potential Users of the Antelope Valley RCIS

■ Conservation Investments

- Desert and Mountains Conservation Authority
- Transitions Habitat Conservancy
- The Nature Conservancy
- Other conservation organizations and agencies

■ Infrastructure Mitigation (through Mitigation Credit Agreement)

- Los Angeles County Public Works/Planning/Parks
- California Energy Commission/Solar Developers
- SoCal Edison
- LA Metro
- Caltrans
- Others



Schedule to Finalize the Antelope Valley RCIS

- **October 2019:** Submitted to CDFW for Completeness Review
- **November 2019:** CDFW Letter determined RCIS is complete
- **December 13, 2019:** Public Review initiated (60-day review period)
- **December 23, 2019:** Local jurisdictions notified in writing
 - At least 60 days prior to submitting final RCIS
 - Allowed minimum of 30 days to comment
- **February 10, 2020:** End of Public Review period
- **Summer 2020:** Receive CDFW adequacy comments
- **Summer 2020:** Address public, local jurisdiction, and CDFW comments
- **Fall 2020:** Final RCIS Submitted to CDFW

