

Executive Summary

The County of Riverside is undertaking an integrated planning effort (Riverside County Integrated Plan -- RCIP). The RCIP is a three-part program addressing transportation, habitat conservation (Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan -- MSHCP), and County's General Plan (local land use) in two watersheds. Together, the Santa Margarita (473,000 acres) and San Jacinto (470,000 acres) watersheds total approximately one million acres.

The Special Area Management Plan (SAMP) is an important component of these planning efforts. The Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District is conducting a comprehensive aquatic resource plan to achieve a balance between aquatic resource protection and reasonable economic development. SAMPs are designed to be conducted in geographic areas of special sensitivity under intense development pressure.

There are two main goals of the SAMP process: to establish a watershed-wide aquatic resource reserve program, and to minimize individual and cumulative impacts of future projects in these watersheds. At the end of the SAMP process, there will be areas that will be protected and preserved, as well as areas where future activities would be allowed to occur, provided that they meet specific criteria developed for protection of the watersheds.

The SAMP consists of three phases estimated to last a total of approximately four years. Phase I includes identification and characterization of aquatic resources in the western Riverside County. Phase II involves preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement including the 404(b)(1) alternatives analysis. Phase III of the SAMP involves finalizing the environmental documents, completion of an aquatic resource restoration plan, and finally issuance of programmatic Section 404 permits.