

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE INRMP

The primary purpose of this Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) is to integrate Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar's (also referred to as Station) land use needs, in support of the military mission, with the management and conservation of natural resources. The INRMP establishes MCAS Miramar's approach and guidelines relative to natural resources to accomplish this end. The INRMP summarizes the baseline information which ensures compliance with regulatory and planning processes, such as those required by the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, and Clean Water Act. This INRMP fulfills other responsibilities with regard to Department of Defense (DoD) and Marine Corps policies, and legal requirements regarding natural resource planning (summarized in Chapter 6 and Appendix A).

This INRMP is intended to be a technical document to be used by persons planning and/or preparing Station approvals, management actions, orders, instructions, guidelines, standard operating procedures, and other plans. The intended use is to provide technical guidance to such persons for the integration of natural resource issues into their planning and decision-making processes. This INRMP is not intended to be used by persons operating in the field. Field personnel are expected to be operating under guidelines, plans, orders, or other approvals that have been developed using this INRMP and have already had environmental compliance review and, where applicable, regulatory approvals and/or permitting. This INRMP does not dictate land use decisions but rather provides important resource information to support sound land use decisions and natural resource management.

1.1.1 Requirement for Preparation of an INRMP

Marine Corps installations, such as MCAS Miramar, having custody of Class I property (land and water) suitable for the conservation and management of natural resources are required to prepare and implement an INRMP. The INRMP is to include all elements of natural resources management applicable to the installation. The INRMP is to be prepared by professionally trained personnel and must address compliance with mandates protecting specific natural resources. This includes compliance with the Biological Opinion (1-6-95-F-33) and Section 404 Permit number 95-20158-ES for the Realignment of Naval Air Station (NAS) Miramar to the MCAS Miramar. This compliance requires MCAS Miramar to A... develop and implement their proposed Multiple Species Habitat Management Plan (MHMP) in a manner that is consistent with the guidelines that have been established for subarea plans for the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP).@MCAS Miramar has elected to fulfill these requirements by preparing this INRMP. Preparation of this INRMP, as required by the Sikes Act Improvement Act of 1997, has been accomplished in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), and California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). This cooperation ensured that the INRMP reflected mutual agreement of these parties concerning conservation, protection, and management of fish and wildlife resources on the Station. Also, as required by the Sikes Act Improvement Act of 1997, this INRMP will reflect comments received by the Station following public review.

1.1.2 Approvals and Revisions

Drafts and revisions of the INRMP are reviewed and approved by an INRMP Executive Steering Committee, which is composed of representatives from the following offices:

- Assistant Chief of Staff, Environmental Management (G-7)
- Assistant Chief of Staff, Logistics (G-4)
- Assistant Chief of Staff, Operations (G-3)
- Assistant Chief of Staff, Community Plans and Liaisons
- Assistant Chief of Staff, MCCA
- Third Marine Air Wing (G-4)
- Counsel, Marine Corps Air Bases Western Area
- Marine Corps Western Area Counsel Office
- Marine Air Group 46 (G-4)

The INRMP will be revised and/or reapproved at least every five years. Currently this INRMP does not address the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act, which is part of the responsibilities of the Environmental Management Department, Natural Resources Division. The next revision of the INRMP in five years is planned to incorporate cultural resources (archaeological and historical) management.

1.1.3 Relationship to Regional Conservation Planning Efforts

As a result of progressive natural resources stewardship by the Department of the Navy (DON), valuable biological resources remain on MCAS Miramar. These resources include important habitats for many rare and sensitive species of plants and wildlife, as well as regional habitat linkages and wildlife corridors. Unfortunately, important biological resources (e.g., vernal pools, coastal California gnatcatcher [*Poliophtila californica californica*] habitat, and wildlife corridors) have not fared as well on civilian holdings throughout the southern California coastal region. Many species and their associated habitats are declining due to greatly increased civilian development. Those habitats that remain in the region are becoming increasingly fragmented. As a result, the city, county, state, and federal governments, as well as the general public, have given greater attention to the biological resources on MCAS Miramar in the context of regional conservation planning.

Over the past several years, southwestern San Diego County has been a focal point for regional planning efforts to ensure the continued survival of sensitive plant and wildlife species, and representations of their associated habitats. These efforts have been facilitated by the Natural Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) Act of 1991 passed by the State of California. The NCCP process was developed to encourage the conservation of natural communities before species within those communities are threatened with extinction. The NCCP program goals are to provide long-term protection for natural communities on a regional basis while allowing continued urban development and growth. It is designed to be a voluntary, collaborative effort, primarily involving landowners, local government, and state and federal agencies.

Three subregional plans have been developed in San Diego County under the NCCP program umbrella. MCAS Miramar, along with several other jurisdictions, is located within the MSCP subregion of the southwestern portion of the county. The DON supports the NCCP program's aims and efforts (Williams 1992). However, the conservation of sensitive biological resources at MCAS Miramar are being planned separately out of concern that the creation of preserves on MCAS Miramar, as part of the MSCP, arbitrarily prohibits military activities. The Marine Corps believes that military activities generally can be compatible with the conservation of sensitive biological resources (Brabham 1995). In considering participation in regional ecosystem approaches to resolving land use conflicts, the Marine Corps considered the following principles (from Brabham 1995):

1. The overriding mission of DoD is the protection of the national security of the United States, and military activities on departmental lands are vital to fulfillment of that mission.
2. Such agreements, and their projects, will not detract from the DoD national mission, now or in the future.
3. Military lands cannot be used for the mitigation of impacts of non-department actions occurring off the installation that affect the environment.
4. Military lands cannot be set aside as perpetual environmental preserves. While conservation is, and shall be, practiced on our installations, we maintain the flexibility to adapt our defense mission to political and technological developments.
5. The DoD's first priority shall be to integrate the management of natural and cultural resources with the military mission within the ecosystem supporting the installation.

1.2 MILITARY MISSION

The mission of MCAS Miramar is to maintain and operate facilities and provide services and material to support operations of a Marine Aircraft Wing, or units thereof, and other activities and units as designated by Commandant of the Marine Corps in coordination with the Chief of Naval Operations. The Station is managed under the purview of the Commander, Marine Air Bases, Western Area (COMCABWEST). The Assistant Chief of Staff, Environmental Management for COMCABWEST, is responsible for environmental compliance on the Station. The



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mission of the Third Marine Air Wing, the Station's primary tenant, is to "Provide combat-ready, expeditionary aviation forces capable of short-notice, world-wide deployment to Marine Air Ground Task Force, fleet, and unified commanders."

1.3 MANAGEMENT APPROACH

It is the Marine Corps' policy that ecosystem management become the basis for the management of natural resources on land under Marine Corps' jurisdiction. An ecosystem can be defined as a dynamic, natural complex of living organisms interacting with each other and with their associated nonliving environment. Ecosystem management has been defined in various ways (e.g., Leslie et al. 1996); however, all encompass a similar approach to management. As this approach is employed by the Marine Corps, the following definition from Marine Corps Environment Compliance and Protection Manual (Marine Corps Order [MCO] P5090.2A) is applicable:

A goal-driven approach to managing natural and cultural resources that supports present and future mission requirements; preserves ecosystem integrity; is at a scale compatible with natural processes; is cognizant of natural processes' time scales; recognizes social and economic viability within functioning ecosystems; is adaptable to complex, changing requirements; and is realized through effective partnerships among private, local, state, tribal, and federal interests. Ecosystem management is a process that considers the environment as a complex system functioning as a whole, not as a collection of parts; and recognizes that people and their social and economic needs are a part of the whole.

MCAS Miramar's overall strategy for conservation and management is to (1) limit activities, avoid development, and perform mitigation actions in areas supporting high densities of predominantly vernal pools, threatened or endangered species, and other wetlands; and (2) manage activities and development in areas of low densities, or no regulated resources, with site-specific measures and programmatic instructions (Chapter 5). This strategy will enable MCAS Miramar to meet its goals and objectives relative to natural resources management and conservation, both locally on the Station and within the region. A Habitat Evaluation Model (HEM) was developed to identify ecologically important areas on the Station, which were, in turn, employed to delineate Management Areas on MCAS Miramar (Chapter 5).

Success of this INRMP will be measured by the implementation of the high priority planned actions which in turn implement the INRMP's goals and objectives (Chapter 7). This will help ensure that the Station meets the requirements of the Sikes Act Improvement Act of 1997. Those implementing this INRMP also need to ensure that there is no net loss in the capability of MCAS Miramar's lands to fulfill the military operational requirements as required by the Sikes Act Improvement Act of 1997. The DoD, and MCAS Miramar in particular, recognize that degradation of the land degrades its use for realistic training, and thereby degrades readiness.

1.4 GOALS

Goals, such as those for natural resources management, are general expressions of desired future conditions that represent the long-range aim of management. Marine Corps natural resources management goals, as established in MCO P5090.2A, are as follows:

- preserve the Marine Corps' mission access to air, land, and sea resources
- strengthen national security by strengthening conservation aspects of environmental security
- preserve the opportunity for a high quality of life for present and future generations of Americans

Natural resource management goals specifically adopted by MCAS Miramar are as follows:

- support the Marine Corps' military mission by ensuring compliance with applicable environmental laws and regulations
- include natural resource management as a component of planning for execution of Marine Corps operational requirements
- identify and select opportunities for maintaining biodiversity, including conservation of important plants and animals
- secure regulatory agency and public recognition of Marine Corps environmental stewardship efforts

1.5 LOCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

MCAS Miramar is located approximately 13 miles north of downtown San Diego and 4 miles east of the Pacific Ocean (Figure 1). The MCAS Miramar property is about 12 miles long from east to west and about 4 miles from north to south encompassing 23,116 acres. State Route 52 and Interstate 805 (I-805) form the southern and western borders of the installation, respectively. I-15, State Route 163, and Kearny Villa Road bisect the Station into east and west. I-15 and Miramar Road are the main access roads to the Station. Several nearby communities continue to grow in the vicinity of MCAS Miramar including Mira Mesa, Scripps Ranch, Poway, Santee, Clairemont, Kearny Mesa, and others (Figure 2).

The western portion of MCAS Miramar is located on a marine terrace, or mesa, on the coastal plain that rises gradually from the Pacific Ocean. Western Miramar is relatively flat with deeply incised canyons. East Miramar is made up of coastal foothills and canyons with moderate to steep slopes. Elevation ranges from 240 feet in the west to 1,178 feet in the eastern areas of the Station. The major vegetation types that occur on MCAS Miramar include chaparral, coastal sage scrub, grassland, and riparian vegetation.

1.6 EXISTING NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Conserving undeveloped areas of high biological value on MCAS Miramar has been given a high priority in all ongoing planning efforts. As such, the Station has been widely recognized for its natural resources efforts. The Station was awarded the Secretary of the Navy Natural Resources Conservation Installation award in 1992, 1995, and 1996. Two individuals received the Secretary of the Navy Natural Resources Conservation Award in the Individual Category in 1991, 1994, and 1995. Recent and ongoing Station conservation and management actions include resource mapping and inventories, biological surveys, habitat restoration, prescribed burns, and participation in national programs (e.g., Partners in Flight). The Natural Resources Division at MCAS Miramar uses the most current tools and techniques, such as Geographic

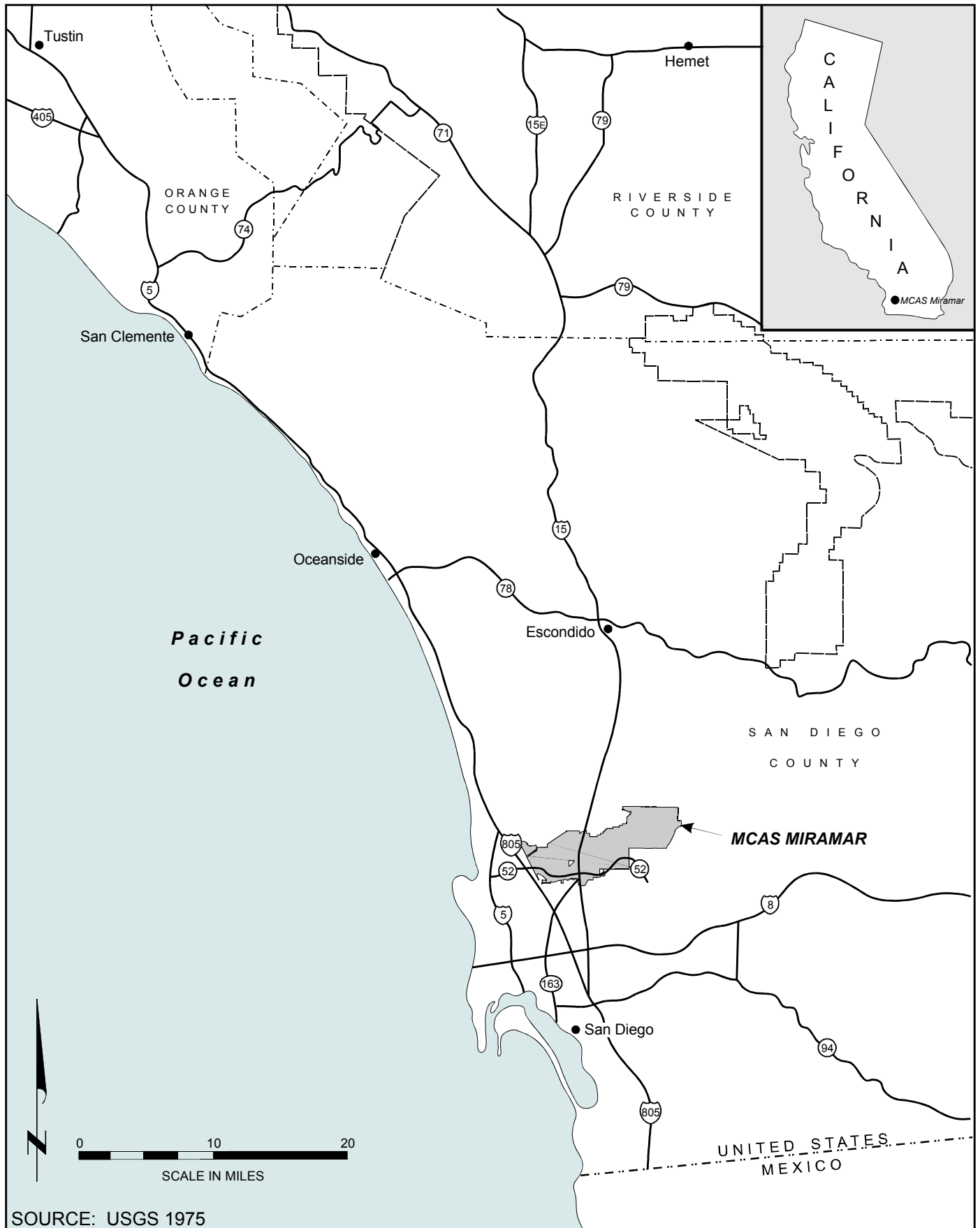


San Diego Horned Lizard *Natural Resources Branch*

Information Systems and Global Positioning Systems to help manage the natural resources on the Station. These and other natural resources management actions are further discussed in Chapter 7.

As part of the ongoing natural resources management program, a Comprehensive Natural Resources Management Plan (Kellogg 1994) was developed for the U.S. Navy to provide guidance for natural resources management on NAS Miramar. A number of specific management plans were incorporated and appended into this Natural Resources Management Plan, including the Fish and Wildlife Management Plan (USFWS 1993a), Outdoor Recreation Management Plan (NAS

Miramar 1991), Fuelbreak Management Plan (NAS Miramar 1992), and Vernal Pool Management Plan (Bauder and Wier 1991). The contents of these plans are summarized in the applicable sections of Chapter 7, which discuss specific management programs. These plans will be updated and revised to be included as part of this INRMP at a later date.



REGIONAL LOCATION OF MCAS MIRAMAR

Figure 1

