

MWD MULTI-SPECIES AND ECOLOGICAL RESERVES

. . . at a glance

From the Colorado River and Northern California, through the State Water Project, the Metropolitan Water District imports water used by nearly 19 million Southern Californians in six counties. Metropolitan wholesales this water to 26 member public agencies, which along with about 130 subagencies, deliver it to homes, businesses and agriculture in Metropolitan's 5,200-square-mile service area.



THE SOUTHWESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY MULTI-SPECIES RESERVE

With the creation of the Southwestern Riverside County Multi-Species Reserve in 1992, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California helped forge California's first agreement for multi-species protection. The reserve includes 9,000 acres surrounding and connecting Diamond Valley Lake with Lake Skinner via the 2,500-acre Dr. Roy Shipley Reserve, which Metropolitan purchased as partial mitigation for DVL construction. Subsequent acquisitions by Metropolitan, the Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency and other partners have resulted in a nearly 13,500-acre reserve.

Features

The reserve is home to at least eight types of habitat and up to 16 sensitive bird, animal and plant species. Three types of habitat dominate: Riversidean sage scrub, non-native grasslands and chaparral. Smaller habitats include: coast live oak woodland, southern willow scrub, sycamore, and cottonwood willow riparian forests.

The reserve offers more than 10 miles of hiking and equestrian trails, including the North Hills Trail at DVL. More information can be found at Metropolitan's Web sites www.mwdh2o.com and www.dvlake.com.

Notable species include:

- The Stephens' kangaroo rat, which lives throughout the reserve's grasslands and open shrub habitats.
- The California gnatcatcher, which makes its home in the low-growing, fragrant Riversidean sage scrub.
- The Bell's sage sparrow, which nests in Riversidean sage scrub and chaparral.

- The San Diego horned lizard and the orange-throated whiptail, which are found throughout the reserve in sage scrub, chaparral and grassland areas.
- The Payson's jewelflower and Parry's spineflower, which appear in Riversidean sage scrub areas.

Managing the Reserve

Metropolitan committed nearly \$14 million for initial management, research, habitat and species surveys, and additional property acquisitions. With establishment of the reserve, Metropolitan also committed to provide long-term management funding to ensure that mitigation agreements for the DVL reservoir project remain in force. A Reserve Management Committee composed of Metropolitan, the Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency, the Riverside County Regional Park and Open Space District, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the California Department of Fish and Game cooperatively manages the reserve.

In 1993, wildfires burned more than 6,000 acres of habitat in the reserve, destroying nearly two-thirds of the Riversidean sage scrub, grasslands and chaparral areas from the south hills of DVL to the northern shores of Lake Skinner. Within six months of the fire, many trees and shrubs were green with new growth and wildflowers were in bloom. Although full recovery was expected in 8 to 10 years, the more fragile sage scrub communities have not yet fully returned to their pre-fire conditions. An additional 2,000 acres of grassland and shrub habitats in the reserve burned in the 2004 wildfires.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is to provide its service area with adequate and reliable supplies of high-quality water to meet present and future needs in an environmentally and economically responsible way.



THE SANTA ROSA PLATEAU ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

The Nature Conservancy purchased the original 3,100-acre portion of the reserve in 1984 when residential development was beginning to boom in western Riverside County. In 1991, Metropolitan, as additional mitigation for the construction of DVL, joined Riverside County, the California Wildlife Conservation Board and The Nature Conservancy to buy and protect 3,825 additional acres. The county, the conservancy and other partners added 740 acres in 1996 with the acquisition of Sylvan Meadows. The Nature Conservancy is continuing its conservation efforts with acquisitions in the Tenaja Wildlife Corridor in an attempt to connect the reserve to the Cleveland National Forest.

A Plateau Management Committee composed of Metropolitan, The Nature Conservancy, the Riverside County Regional Park and Open Space District, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the California Department of Fish and Game cooperatively manages the reserve.

The agreement that established the reserve was one of 13 environmental projects nationwide in 1992 to receive a citation from the President of the United States.

Feature

Several basalt-capped mesas on the plateau contain some of Southern California's last vernal pools (seasonal ponds) that support fairy shrimp, wintering waterfowl and spring

wildflowers. Creek beds running through the reserve contain deep holes called tenajas that hold water throughout the summer and nurture sycamore and willow trees, several amphibians and southwestern pond turtles.

The reserve has an extensive system of multi-use trails and a comprehensive interpretative program and visitor center. More information can be found at the reserve's Web site www.santarosaplateau.org.

Notable species include:

- Band-tailed pigeons, acorn woodpeckers, red-shouldered hawks, grasshopper sparrows and white-tailed kites, which nest in the oak woodlands.
- A stand of Engelmann oak trees, labeled as one of the largest protected stands of this species in the world.
- San Diego coast horned lizards, California quail and roadrunners, found in the reserve's Diegan coastal sage scrub.
- Coyotes, bobcats, mule deer, mountain lions and golden eagles, which roam the breadth of the reserve.

A Balanced Model

DVL, with its two nature reserves, is a model for how progress need not come at the expense of nature. It sets a precedent for public/private partnerships and focuses on the environmental protection of entire ecosystems rather than individual species.



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of Southern California**

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