

BALANCING INVESTMENTS IN WATER RELIABILITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT



Coast live oaks inhabit part of the 14,000-acre Southwestern Riverside County Multi-Species Reserve

MULTI-SPECIES HABITAT PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION PROGRAMS

Being a **regional wholesale drinking water provider**, the largest in the nation, brings a range of responsibilities. These responsibilities are carried out under Metropolitan's mission statement, which showcases dual priorities for being both economically and environmentally responsible. Metropolitan goes about the business of providing its 5,200-square-mile, six-county service area with reliable high-quality water supplies guided by these principles. This means that infrastructure investments bring both supply reliability and environmental benefits that carry far into the future.

This overview showcases Metropolitan's environmental projects and programs for habitat protection and preservation that have been tied, in some cases, to major infrastructure projects such as the building of the Eastside Pipeline and the Southland's largest reservoir, Diamond Valley Lake.

Metropolitan has set precedent with public/private partnerships that focus on environmental protection of entire ecosystems rather than individual species.

Southwestern Riverside County Multi-Species Reserve



The Quino checkerspot butterfly, a federally endangered species, resides on the Multi-Species Reserve

In 1992, Metropolitan helped to create California's first agreement for multi-species protection with the creation of the Southwestern Riverside County Multi-Species Reserve. The original reserve included 9,000 acres that surround and connect DVL with nearby Lake Skinner through the 2,500-acre Dr. Roy Shipley Reserve, which Metropolitan purchased as partial mitigation for construction of DVL. With additional land acquisitions by Metropolitan and other partners, the total acreage for the reserve currently encompasses 14,000 acres.

The reserve is managed in partnership by Metropolitan, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Riverside County Regional Park and Open-Space District, and Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency.

At least eight types of habitat and many sensitive bird, animal and plant species live in the reserve. Notable species include the Stephens' kangaroo rat, the coastal California gnatcatcher, Bell's sage sparrow, the coast horned lizard and the Munz's onion.

More than 30 miles of biking, hiking and equestrian trails are provided in the reserve, including the North Hills, Wildflower, and Lake Skinner trails. More information about these trails can be found at <http://www.dvlake.com> and <https://www.rivcoparks.org/santa-rosa-plateau-ecological-reserve/>.

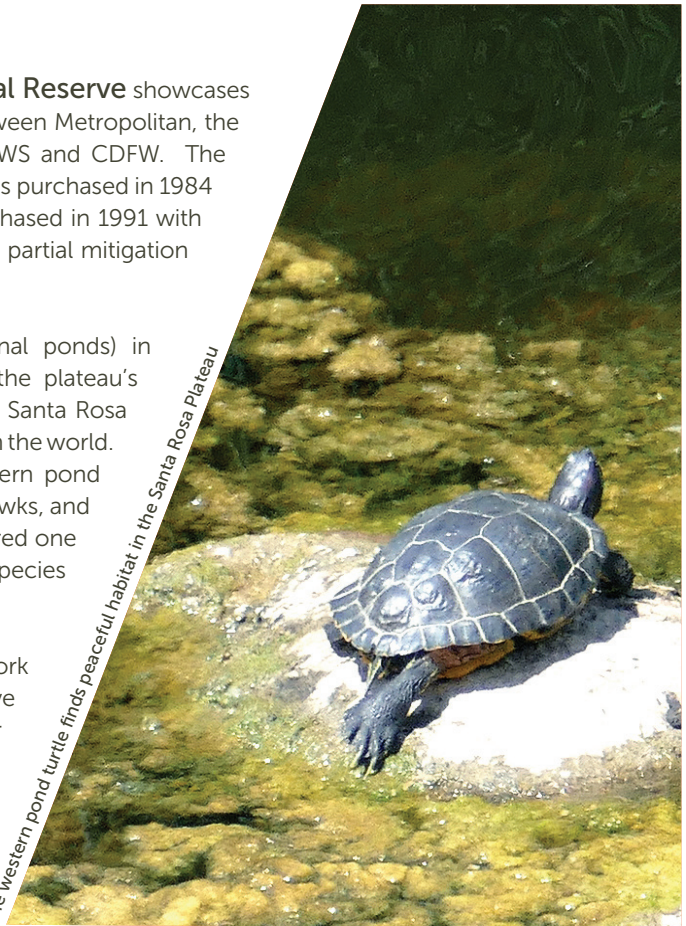
Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve

The Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve showcases innovative preservation partnerships between Metropolitan, the Nature Conservancy, RCPOSD, the USFWS and CDFW. The Reserve began with an original 3,100 acres purchased in 1984 by TNC. Another 3,700 acres were purchased in 1991 with financial assistance from Metropolitan as partial mitigation for construction of DVL.

Some of the last vernal pools (seasonal ponds) in Southern California can be found on the plateau's basalt-capped mesas. They support the Santa Rosa Plateau fairy shrimp, found no place else in the world. Other notable species include the western pond turtle, California quail, red-shouldered hawks, and a grove of Engelmann oak trees considered one of the largest protected groves of this species in the world.

The reserve has an extensive network of multi-use trails, a comprehensive interpretative program and a visitor center. More information can be found at <https://www.rivcoparks.org/santa-rosa-plateau-ecological-reserve/>.

The western pond turtle finds peaceful habitat in the Santa Rosa Plateau



Upper Salt Creek Wetland Preserve

This 40-acre preserve, purchased as mitigation for the Eastside Pipeline Project, provides protection for unique vernal pool habitat and rare plants.

40-acre Upper Salt Creek Wetland Preserve in Riverside County



Orange County Central-Coastal Natural Community Conservation Plan/Habitat Conservation Plan



A coastal California gnatcatcher is one of the many species found in the reserve

The Orange County Central-Coastal NCCP/HCP is a voluntary, collaborative effort between the CDFW, the USFWS, more than a dozen local government entities and private companies, and 11 participating landowners, including Metropolitan. It was one of the first state-federal plans implemented in the country to mitigate the impacts of development by conserving protected species, expanding native habitat and/or managing natural ecosystems at a landscape-scale. The effort created nearly 37,500 acres of preservation area covering a number of types of habitats and animal species. Notable among these include coastal sage scrub, grassland, and riparian habitats and the coastal California gnatcatcher, cactus wren, and orange-throated whiptail lizard.

Lake Mathews Multiple Species Reserve

The 5,100-acre reserve surrounding Lake Mathews is managed for native habitat and sensitive plant and animal species that include the endangered Stephens' kangaroo rat and coastal California gnatcatcher. The Reserve is managed in partnership between Metropolitan, RCHCA, USFWS and CDFW. In 2019, the reserve was named in honor of Lois B. Krieger, the first Chairwoman of Metropolitan's Board of Directors from 1989 to 1992.

The endangered Stephens' kangaroo rat



Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program



Nesting yellow-billed cuckoo. Photo: Southern Sierra Research Station

The Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program was created to balance the use of the Colorado River's water resources with the conservation of native species and their habitats. The program involves state and federal agencies, and stakeholders from Arizona, Nevada, and California representing water and power utilities, municipalities, Native American tribes, and conservation organizations. Metropolitan is the largest non-federal contributor to the program. The LCR MSCP creates over 8,100 acres of habitat comprised of conservation areas, that will benefit a variety of protected and native fish and wildlife species. The program area extends over 400 miles of the lower Colorado River from Lake Mead to the border with Mexico, and includes lakes Mead, Mohave, and Havasu, as well as the historic 100-year floodplain along the main stem of the lower Colorado River.

Dennis Underwood Conservation Area

The Dennis Underwood Conservation Area is the latest addition to the LCR MSCP. It was established in 2019 to honor the water industry veteran whose service included commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation from 1989 to 1993 and general manager of Metropolitan from 1999 until his passing in 2005. The 635-acre site in the Palo Verde Valley will be transformed into a natural habitat of cottonwood, willow and honey mesquite trees next to the Colorado River. It is expected to attract a variety of species such as the yellow-billed cuckoo and Arizona Bell's vireo.

First saplings of what will become a 635-acre natural habitat at the Underwood Conservation Area



OUR MISSION

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.

ABOUT METROPOLITAN

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a state-established cooperative of 26 member agencies – cities and public water agencies – that serve nearly 19 million people in six counties. Metropolitan imports water from the Colorado River and Northern California to supplement local supplies and helps its members develop increased water conservation, recycling, storage and other resource management programs.

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Special thank you to Metropolitan contract biologist Bill Wagner for sharing his photography and vast knowledge.