

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **ES.1 Introduction**

The purpose of developing the San Dieguito Watershed Management Plan (WMP) was to maintain and enhance the long-term health of the watershed's resources while balancing the effects of urbanization and changes in land use. The San Dieguito River Watershed Planning Guidance Group or Watershed Stewardship Initiative Group (WSIG) was formed in January 2004 and includes representatives from the community groups, professional consultants, governmental jurisdictions, agriculture, environmental conservationists, and water agencies. This group has guided the development of a WMP for the San Dieguito Watershed.

The WMP was prepared in three stages. The first stage included gathering and summarizing information on the existing conditions within the watershed (Section 2). In the second stage, concerns and goals of the watershed were identified (Section 3). The last stage involved developing a framework and strategic action plan for watershed management (Section 4).

### **ES.2 Existing Conditions**

The watershed drains an area of approximately 346 square miles in the west-central portion of the County and includes portions of the cities of Del Mar, Escondido, Poway, San Diego, and Solana Beach, and unincorporated San Diego County. The San Dieguito River and tributary creeks are intermittent streams fed primarily by runoff from rainfall as well as some groundwater. Due to the Hodges and Sutherland Dams, the watershed can be broken down into three discrete segments: Lower (below Hodges Dam), Middle (Hodges Reservoir to Sutherland Dam), and Upper (above Sutherland Reservoir to the headwaters at Volcan Mountain). The majority of the watershed is not congested and has large expanses of open space, particularly in the middle and upper sections.

The San Dieguito River Watershed is one of our regions most diverse, unique, and valuable watershed areas. Recreational trails, agricultural lands, water supply reservoirs, Native American lands, historical cultural resources, and threatened and endangered species are some of the numerous resources within this watershed.

### **ES.3 Issues**

Watershed issues and goals were developed in close coordination with stakeholders. The wide ranging issues affecting the San Dieguito River Watershed were organized into groupings that included Water Quality Modifications, Physical Modifications, Hydrological Modifications, Invasive Species, Water Use and Others. The issues in these categories were evaluated and placed into a matrix based on their affect on the watershed functions of Water Quality, Water Supply, Biological Resources and Habitat, and Social and Community Resources. This information is summarized in greater detail in Tables 3.1-4 to 3.1-6.

## **ES.4 Action Plan**

Stakeholders used information from several sources to develop action lists: findings within the Existing Conditions Report which is integrated into the WMP as Section 2, existing municipal planning documents, numerous coordination meetings, and three public workshops. Similar actions were grouped under a common objective, then the objectives were integrated under one of the four watershed functions.

With Lake Hodges soon to be designated as an Emergency Storage Project, the protection of the water supply and water quality of Lake Hodges, its groundwater basin, and its tributary drainages will be a major priority in the watershed to ensure local and regional water supply.

Several of the water quality (Section 4.3) issues that were identified include nutrients, erosion, toxicity, pathogens, salinity, and trash. Strategies that were developed to address these issues include ideas to limit impervious surfaces, reduce discharges contributing to impairments, evaluate, implement, and monitor Best Management Practices (BMPs), limit erosion, and control litter.

Increased demand relative to available water supply (Section 4.4), reducing reliance on imported sources, and protecting groundwater from contamination were important issues identified during stakeholder meetings. Stakeholders identified several potential solution strategies to reduce these problems including those related to water conservation, reclaimed water use, minimizing runoff, and maximizing infiltration into soil.

The types of stressors (Section 4.5) that affect the quality of native biological resources and habitat include new development, non-existent narrow buffers near urban development, agriculture, invasive plants and non-native animals, fire, and sedimentation. Solution strategies that were developed to address these concerns include preserving native habitat and maintaining natural stream flow regimes, restoring degraded habitat areas, minimizing the impacts of development, and conducting extensive public outreach.

One way to achieve a reversal in environmental degradation is to change human behaviors that have led to the initial or ongoing degradations. The recommended program (Section 4.6) to support public awareness and involvement in the San Dieguito Watershed include maintaining land use compatibility, preserving agricultural land, and promoting a positive attitude and stewardship in the watershed.

The San Dieguito River Watershed Management Plan presents a unique opportunity for coordinated and thorough watershed assessment, monitoring, and management. These programs will assess the state of water quality, water supply, biological resources and habitat, and social and community resources. Each program includes components to identify existing conditions, track trends over time, and evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to protect the San Dieguito watershed's vital resources.

The stakeholders identified one immediate action necessary to effectively implement this plan in its entirety and make modifications to the plan through the years that reflect changes in the

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watershed conditions. There is an immediate need for an administrative champion, Board, and/or other structured group with established bylaws or operating ordinances to coordinate the implementation of this WMP. After reviewing many Watershed Management Team approaches nationwide, the stakeholders identified a preferred administrative organizational structure in a Watershed Council led by the San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority and the San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy.

Renewal of the Municipal Storm Water Permit, General Construction Storm Water Permit, General Industrial Storm Water Permit, and the initiation of the Emergency Storage Project (ESP) may represent significant changes in the regulatory requirements and will likely require consideration when implementing this WMP.