



Fact Sheet: Water Reliability & the Environment __

Native Habitat Conservation, Preservation & Restoration.

Metropolitan's legacy of environmental protection spans decades and tens of thousands of acres of land. Through substantial financial investment and agency partnerships, we have protected and enhanced open spaces, sensitive native habitats, and regionally significant ecosystems.

This overview showcases Metropolitan's environmental projects and programs for habitat protection.

The Benefits are **Multiple & Meaningful**

- Protecting sensitive plants and wildlife
- Managing and restoring watersheds to maintain clean water supplies
- Providing trails, views and recreational assets that connect people with nature
- Ensuring natural landscapes are untouched by development



Above: The thousands of acres surrounding Diamond Valley Lake are part of the Southwestern Riverside County Multi-Species Reserve

Southwestern Riverside County Multi-Species Reserve

In 1992, Metropolitan helped 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 Diamond Valley Lake with nearby Lake Skinner via the 2,500-acre Dr. Roy E. Shipley Reserve, which Metropolitan purchased as partial mitigation for construction of Diamond Valley Lake. 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 dvmarina.com and rivcoparks.org/lake-skinner-recreation-area/.



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

Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve

The **Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve** showcases innovative preservation partnerships between Metropolitan, The Nature Conservancy, RCRPOSD, 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 rivcoparks.org/santa-rosa-plateau-wildlife-area.



The western pond turtle finds peaceful habitat on the Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve



40-acre Upper Salt Creek Wetland Preserve in Riverside County

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.

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

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.



A coastal California gnatcatcher is one of the many species found in the Orange County Central-Coastal NCCP/HCP reserve

Metropolitan focuses on environmental protection of entire ecosystems rather than individual species.



The endangered Stephens' kangaroo rat

Lois B. Krieger Lake Mathews Multiple Species Reserve

The 5,100-acre reserve surrounding **Lake Mathews** is managed for the protection, restoration and enhancement of native habitat and sensitive animal species including the endangered Stephens' kangaroo rat and coastal California gnatcatcher. The lake itself is an important bird resting and feeding site, especially in winter. 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.

Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program

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, water and power utilities, municipalities, Native American tribes, and conservation organizations from Arizona, Nevada & California. Metropolitan is the largest nonfederal 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 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.



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



One of many native
tree saplings planted in
the Dennis Underwood
Conservation Area

As part of the required habitat developed for the LCR MSCP the **Dennis Underwood Conservation Area** is special to Metropolitan and spans 635 acres of former farmland next to the Colorado River. It is being transformed into a natural habitat of cottonwood, willow and honey mesquite trees.

Once established, the new habitat is expected to attract numerous endangered species such as the yellow-billed cuckoo, vermilion flycatcher, Arizona Bell's vireo, western red bat, and Colorado River cotton rat. It was created through an easement granted by Metropolitan, which owns the land, to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation for the development and management of the habitat in perpetuity.

The DUCA was established in 2019 to honor the esteemed Western water expert and former commissioner of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation who briefly served as Metropolitan's general manager from April 2005 until his passing in November 2005.



At Metropolitan, we take a statewide view of our environmental stewardship responsibilities and work collaboratively with others to improve habitat and waterways throughout California. These efforts have led to important land conservation, protection and restoration in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, Colorado River Watershed, and Orange and Riverside Counties. For more information about these projects visit mwdh2o.com/reserves-and-habitats/

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 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.