

# SADDLE CLUB PRESERVATION PROPERTY FINAL SITE USE PLAN



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## ACRONYMS

CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CMP	Corrugated Metal Pipe
CSS	Coastal Sage Scrub
CWA	Clean Water Act
F/ETCA	Foothill/Eastern Transportation Corridor Agency
FY	Fiscal Year
IFB	Invitation for Bid
NCCP	Natural Communities Conservation Plan
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Society
OC	Orange County
OCFA	Orange County Fire Authority
OCTA	Orange County Transportation Authority
OHWM	Ordinary High-Water Mark
PAR	Property Analysis Record
SCPP	Saddle Club Preservation Property
TBD	To Be Determined
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Site Plan lays out the Foothill/Eastern Transportation Corridor’s (Agency) vision, goals, and objectives for the Saddle Club Preservation Property (SCPP). It is the Agency’s vision to have a site that balances habitat conservation, wildlife refuge, and public recreational uses. Consistent with its “environmental stewardship” and “best practices” initiatives, the Agency will continue to identify, implement and maintain science-driven adaptive environmental management best practices and efficiencies on this site to ensure balance and sustainability.

The Site Plan’s three resource areas: **(1) habitat conservation**, **(2) wildlife refuge**, and **(3) recreation** are planned and will be managed adaptively within the limits of acceptable site changes as outlined in Figure ES-1 and Table ES-1 below.

**Figure ES-1:** Resource Management Process



<b>Activity</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	<b>Action Plan</b>
Habitat Restoration and Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect vulnerable habitats from development</li> <li>• Maintain site conservation values, and create, restore, and/or enhance site habitat values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a Site Resource Management Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual biological monitoring and reporting based on performance criteria (e.g. vegetation cover, vegetation variety in composition, type and structure, soil exposure and compaction, water quality, wildlife/bird usage of the site etc.)</li> <li>• Restored areas will be considered successful once they produce a self-sustaining riparian and upland habitat similar to existing habitat in the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify areas of concern and issues</li> <li>• Redefine and describe required management actions (e.g. targeted restoration activities)</li> </ul>
Wildlife Refuge and Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a refuge for wildlife</li> <li>• Enhance connectivity with surrounding open spaces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a Habitat Restoration Plan</li> <li>• Remove Wildlife movement barriers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual biological monitoring and reporting</li> <li>• Wildlife cameras to monitor wildlife use of the site</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify areas of concern and issues</li> <li>• Partial/full closure of the public access if impeding wildlife uses of the site</li> </ul>
Public Recreational Use Pilot Program <sup>1</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide public recreational opportunities on the site – hiking/ equestrian trail</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for connecting site trails with adjacent properties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a Recreation and Public Access Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inventory the landscape. Ensure the site is not degraded (determine number of visitors and how much can be accommodated before the site starts to degrade with overuse) – <i>Ecological Capacity</i></li> <li>• Identify potential conflicts between uses and way to overcome them</li> <li>• Regular user inventory to document number of users, use type, accessibility, current and potential uses, as well as limitations – <i>Social Capacity</i></li> <li>• Continued dialogue with the community (conduct surveys to assess local needs)</li> <li>• Interview users regularly to find out who does what (type of recreation) and what they think</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify areas of concern and issues</li> <li>• Dispense of certain uses to reduce impact</li> <li>• Accommodate uses with less risk of conflict</li> <li>• Partial/full closure of the public access if impeding habitat conservation and wildlife uses of the site</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> To be implemented in two phases

**Plan Organization**

**Section 1** sets the Agency's vision, goals and objectives, action steps and an implementation schedule of the proposed activities. **Section 2** provides the community setting background, including the site's regional context, neighborhood description, and specific site description. **Section 3** details the site plan and design guidelines including the conceptual demolition plan, habitat restoration plan, and the recreation and public access plan. **Section 4** provides information on the site maintenance and management activities, including general site maintenance and management, trail maintenance and management, as well as the monitoring and maintenance schedule.

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## SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

The Foothill/Eastern Transportation Corridor Agency (F/ETCA or Agency) takes pride in its environmental stewardship and unparalleled 25-year record of meeting its mitigation obligations as prescribed by the resource and wildlife permitting agencies. Currently, the Agency in conjunction with its sister agency, the San Joaquin Hills Transportation Corridor Agency, has completed 51-miles of roadway and to minimize and mitigate these projects, it has conserved approximately 2,100 acres of valuable open space in Orange County. Consistent with the Agency’s historical practices, and to meet anticipated mitigation needs for existing and future capital projects, the Agency purchased the Saddle Club Preservation Property (“SCPP” or Property) in December 2017.

Located in Trabuco Canyon along Live Oak Canyon Road near the main entrance to O’Neill Regional Park and adjacent to Trabuco Creek, the SCPP consists of 32.73 acres that includes approximately 14 acres of oak and riparian woodland and 13 acres of CSS (other areas consist of sparse upland habitat, which serve as buffer areas). The property also contains a valuable ephemeral streambed and a seasonal pond that would aid the Agency with offsetting any impacts required by the Regional Water Quality Control Board or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The property is directly adjacent to the Orange County Transportation Authority’s Wren’s View (formerly O’Neill Oaks) Preserve property and Orange County’s O’Neill Regional Park.

According to the Orange County Parks Department, Gaspar de Portola led an expedition into what is now Orange County and camped a few miles east of the San Juan Capistrano area in 1769. The expedition headed inland to avoid the many streams and swamps in the area. They found a large plateau area and camped that night on its western edge by a canyon which the Franciscans named San Francisco Solano. This was on the eastern side of Trabuco Creek about three miles downstream from the present Trabuco Oaks. While camped here on July 24-25, 1769, one of the soldiers lost his "trabuco" or musket. To mark this loss, the stream was named Trabuco. The name has been associated with the mesa, the canyon and the entire area ever since.

### **Vision, Goals and Objectives**

#### Vision

Striving to have a site that balances habitat conservation, wildlife refuge and connectivity, and public recreational uses. The F/ETCA will restore and enhance habitats onsite for mitigation, protect open space areas, while providing opportunity for recreational pursuits that foster physical activity and contemplative experiences for the community. Access to the multiuse trail promotes adventure while also encouraging stewardship for the site and area wildlife.

#### Goals

1. Maintain site conservation values, and create, restore, and/or enhance site habitat values
2. Provide a refuge for wildlife and enhance connectivity with surrounding open spaces
3. Provide recreational opportunities on the site

## Objectives

### *Habitat Restoration and Conservation*

- Restore disturbed areas (remove remnant structures and exotics [e.g., coniferous trees and bird of paradise plants] along portions of Live Oak Canyon Creek)
- Restore and enhance Live Oak Canyon creek bed and other riparian areas
- Promote self-restoration of the upland vegetation communities (Oak communities, coastal sage scrub [CSS])
- Protect critical habitat onsite for threatened and endangered species

### *Wildlife Refuge and Connectivity*

- Protect vegetation
- Remove wildlife movement barriers (fences)
- Minimize conflicts between wildlife and human activities

### *Public Recreational Use Pilot Program*

- Provide designated multi-use trail connectivity
- Provide recreational facilities
- Provide educational kiosks around the site and trail system

## Action Steps

### *Habitat Restoration and Conservation*

- Develop site assessment and restoration plans following the principles of landscape ecology
- Prepare and implement a habitat restoration plan in coordination with the resource agencies
- Protect and enhance the riparian environment
- Protect and enhance the upland vegetation
- Maintain a buffer between conservation areas and multi-use trail
- Remove remnant structures including utility connections on the lower section of the property

### *Wildlife Refuge and Connectivity*

- Maintain, monitor and evaluate vegetation to provide high quality habitat
- Remove barriers to connectivity (fences)

### *Public Recreational Use Pilot Program*

- Provide public access to the multi-use trail onsite<sup>2</sup>
- Coordinate with County of Orange (OC) Parks on connecting site trails to the existing O'Neill Regional Park trail system
- Demarcate and provide buffers around environmentally sensitive areas

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<sup>2</sup> The Agency acquired the Saddle Club Preservation Property for mitigation purposes; however, at its discretion the Agency will allow some restricted public access as long as it doesn't conflict with the Agency's primary goal of natural habitat conservation.

- Construct deer-proof fencing around the citrus trees
- Provide buffer between the restored Live Oak Canyon Creek and the parallel trail by installing a trail boundary marker along the entire length of the Creek
- Add shade structures and benches as appropriate.

## **Implementation Schedule**

An Implementation Matrix for the proposed improvements summarizes the plan recommendations in a chart form and identifies estimated cost, potential partnering or collaboration opportunities and funding options, and recommended timeframe for implementation. As a living document, this Implementation Plan is subject to further refinement and will be used to develop annual work plans and budgets. This Implementation Plan is intended to focus on priorities for the next 5 years.

<b>Table 1: Activity Implementation Plan Summary<sup>3</sup></b>		
<b>Activity<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>Estimated Completion Date:</b>	<b>Estimated Cost:</b>
<b>1. Demolish Structures</b>	FY23	TBD
a) Office building and all ancillary structures (two bathrooms with septic tank underneath)		
b) Caretaker building and all ancillary structures		
c) Remnant equestrian facilities		
d) Split rail pasture areas with covered shelters, cow pen, cattle watering troughs, etc.		
e) Interior fences and other barriers (chain link, barbed-wire and wooden fences)		
f) Remove perimeter hedge (along Live Oak Road/Trabuco Canyon Road)		
<b>2. Remove wildlife movement barriers</b>	FY23	TBD
a) Clean out (dredge) existing culverts		
b) Remove remnant fences within the property		
<b>3. Design and implement multi-use recreational trail</b>	FY24	TBD
a) Complete design of ancillary structures <sup>5</sup>		
b) Construct ancillary recreational facilities- educational kiosks, etc.		
c) Paint or replace horse hitching rails and perimeter fencing		
<b>4. PAR Analysis</b>	FY23	TBD
<b>5. Preparation of a Resource Management Plan</b>	FY23	TBD
a) Restoration of riparian areas		
b) Restoration of Upland communities (if needed) <sup>6</sup>		
a) Oak woodland communities		
b) Coastal Sage Scrub communities		

<sup>3</sup> Additional details begin on Page 17.

<sup>4</sup> Activity Number corresponds with the Photo Number in *Figure 1: Activities Implementation Plan*

<sup>5</sup> The trail system will utilize the existing access roads onsite, no additional design or grading anticipated.

<sup>6</sup> The Agency will allow the site to self-restore to its natural state and only at the Agency-Biologist's recommendation restore and/or enhance specific areas as needed.



Figure 1: Activities Implementation Schedule  
\*Photo Number corresponds to the Activity Number in Table 1

## SECTION 2 - COMMUNITY SETTING

### Regional Context

#### *Location and Physical Context*

The Saddle Club Preservation Property (SCPP) is located at 31101 Live Oak Canyon Road in Trabuco Canyon, in unincorporated Orange County. The site is regionally accessible by State Route 241, El Toro Road, and Santiago Canyon Road. The property is bordered by the Orange County Transportation Authority's Wren's View Preserve to the North and East, Live Oak Canyon Road to the West, and Trabuco Canyon Road to the South. Additionally, O'Neill Regional Park is across from the site along Live Oak Canyon Road and Trabuco Canyon Road to the South.

### Neighborhood Description

The subject property is in a rural, very low-density residential neighborhood. The surrounding area is dominated by single family homes on large equestrian oriented lots. Land uses in the immediate area are listed in the following table.

<b>DIRECTION</b>	<b>LAND USE</b>
North	OCTA's Wren's View Preserve is immediately north of the Project site. Single family homes on large rural lots extend north along either side of Trabuco Canyon Road.
West & South	O'Neill Regional Park and Wilderness Areas are located to the west and south of the subject property. O'Neill Regional Park's 4,500 acres are situated in Trabuco and Live Oak Canyons. The Park is heavily wooded with coast live oak and sycamore trees. The hillsides surrounding the park are filled with cactus, wild buckwheat, sagebrush and chaparral with scrub oak, buckthorn, and mountain mahogany. Trabuco and Hickey Creeks also meander through the park, flowing in winter and early spring, dry in summer and fall. More than 23 miles of scenic trails can be explored by foot, bicycle, or horseback.
East	OCTA's Wren's View Preserve is immediately north of the Project site. Fronting along Trabuco Canyon Road is the Live Oak Center, a local specialty retail center with a bike shop, feed and tack store, chiropractic office, dental office, wellness center and the US Post Office as tenants. Rugged hillside terrain extends from behind the center to Trabuco Oaks Drive, one mile to the east. Trabuco Oaks Drive is improved with a General Store, a well-known local steakhouse, and single-family homes typical of canyon living.

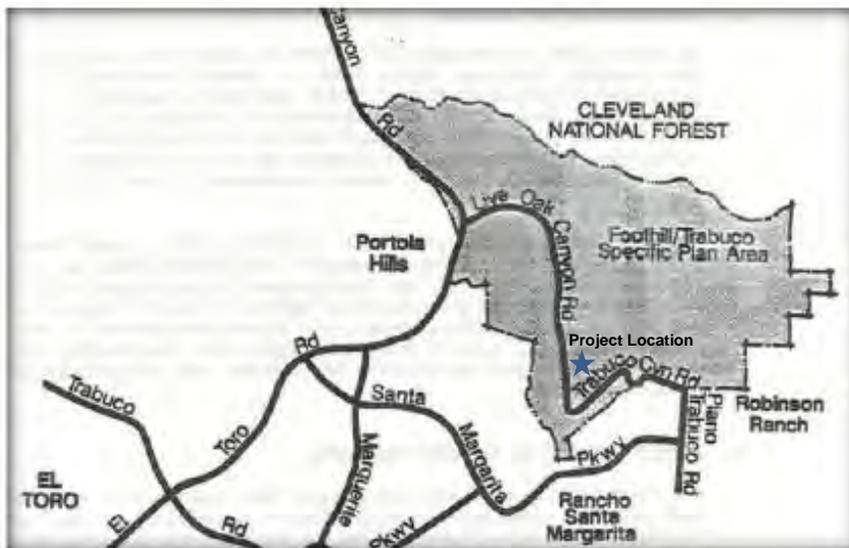


Figure 2 – Regional Location

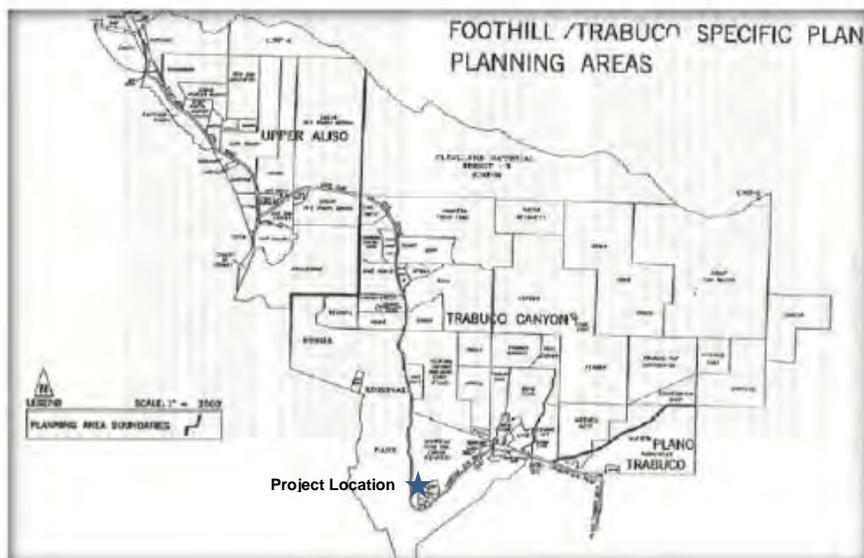
Access to the subject property is direct via Trabuco Canyon Road. Trabuco Canyon Road is a county road that is accessed from the north at Santiago Canyon Road; a meandering rural road that extends south to become El Toro Road in Lake Forest and north to Orange where it turns into Chapman Avenue. Both Chapman Avenue and El Toro Road extend west to freeway and toll road access.

From the south, Trabuco Canyon Road is accessed from Plano Trabuco Road at the east side of the City of Rancho Santa Margarita. The location is less than three miles from retail services.

### Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan



**Figure 3:** Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan Area



**Figure 4:** Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan Planning Areas

The SCPP is located within the Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan. The Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan Area encompasses approximately 6,500 acres located within the foothills of the Santa Ana Mountains. The area is bound on the north by the Silverado/Modjeska Specific Plan Area and the Cleveland National Forest; to the south by the Rancho Trabuco, Rancho Santa Margarita and Robinson Ranch Planned Communities; to the east by the Cleveland National Forest; and to the west by the Santiago Ranch project and the Foothill Ranch and Portola Hills Planned Communities. The Foothill/Trabuco area contains abundant natural and scenic resources, including oak woodlands, ridgelines, stream courses and the backdrop of

mountainous terrain within and adjacent to the Cleveland National Forest.

To facilitate planning efforts, three individual planning areas were created within the overall Foothill/Trabuco Plan Area. The planning areas were based primarily upon road access, the proximity and availability of other infrastructure (e.g., sewer lines) and the differing development opportunities and constraints within each planning area.

The SCPP is located within the Trabuco Canyon Planning Area. The Trabuco Canyon Planning Area is in the interior of the Specific Plan Area. All properties within the planning area, except for the properties on the south side of Trabuco Creek, are dependent on access to Live Oak Canyon Road/Trabuco Canyon Road. The planning area is bounded on the north by the Silverado/Modjeska Specific Plan Area, on the east by the Cleveland National Forest and on the south by the Plano Trabuco Planning Area. The planning area includes O'Neill Regional Park and portions of the Cleveland National Forest.

The SCPP is located on an inside elbow where Trabuco Canyon Road turns north and becomes Live Oak Canyon Road. Access is provided via a private driveway from Trabuco Canyon Road and a smaller gated access further north on Live Oak Canyon Road. The subject site is served by municipal power and water. Southern California Edison provides electricity, to the property while Trabuco Canyon Water District provides water.

**Site Description**



**Figure 5:** Existing Conditions

*Note:* On both the Saddle Club Property and OCTA's Wren's View Preserve, the proposed Coyote Connection Trail is currently an existing access road/trail maintained for respective sites' management purposes and not open for public recreational use.

*Land Use*

The approximately 33-acre site allows for very low-density home sites which must average two acres per dwelling unit. The site was previously used as an equestrian center for approximately 50 years. As such, the site has various structures related to this use, including fences, corrals, an open hay storage barn, a small office and restrooms. There is a natural creek that runs north and south on the property. Improvements have been made to the creek, which placed the flow underground near the parking and equestrian area.



The undeveloped site includes local native vegetation, non-native vegetation, ornamental vegetation, and an ephemeral CDFW streambed/banks and pond.



*Hydrology/Drainage*



Most of the property is located in Flood Zone X and not in a Special Flood Hazard Zone per FEMA Panel 060212 - 06059C 0336J and 0338J dated 12/03/2009. Zone X is an area that is determined to be outside the 100- and 500-year floodplains. The area along the street, which includes the equestrian improvements, is in Zone A. Areas in this area are subject to inundation by a one percent-annual-chance flood event determined by detailed methods.

### *Soils and Topography*



The site topography consists of gently rolling terrain along the street and rugged hills along the east side of the property. On-site elevations range from approximately 925 feet near the intersection of Live Oak Canyon and Trabuco Canyon Roads to 1,015 feet near the easterly property line.

Soils mapped by the USDA/NRCS within the parcels primarily consist of Cieneba sandy loam (eroded) on 30 to 75 percent slopes, with Soboba cobbly loamy sand on 0 to 15 percent slopes mapped along the western and southern portions of the survey area and Botella clay loam on 9 to 15 percent slopes in the northwestern portion of the survey area. Soil textures observed on-site were generally consistent with those mapped by the Soil Survey, with the streambed of the Live Oak Canyon Drainage primarily consisting of sediment deposition as fine to gravelly sand.

### *Existing Vegetation Communities*



A preliminary biological survey conducted on the property<sup>7</sup> observed one special-status vegetation community on-site – Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest, and five other relatively distinct vegetation communities: Coast Live Oak Woodland, Coastal Sage Scrub, Coastal Sage Scrub/Chaparral Mix, Mule Fat Scrub, ornamental vegetation, and disturbed habitat (see *Figure 6-Vegetation Communities*). A total of nineteen wildlife species were observed including those common to woodland and scrub habitats such as California scrub jay, red-tailed hawk,

American crow, acorn woodpecker, California towhee, and California ground squirrel.

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Baker International Memorandum- November 2017

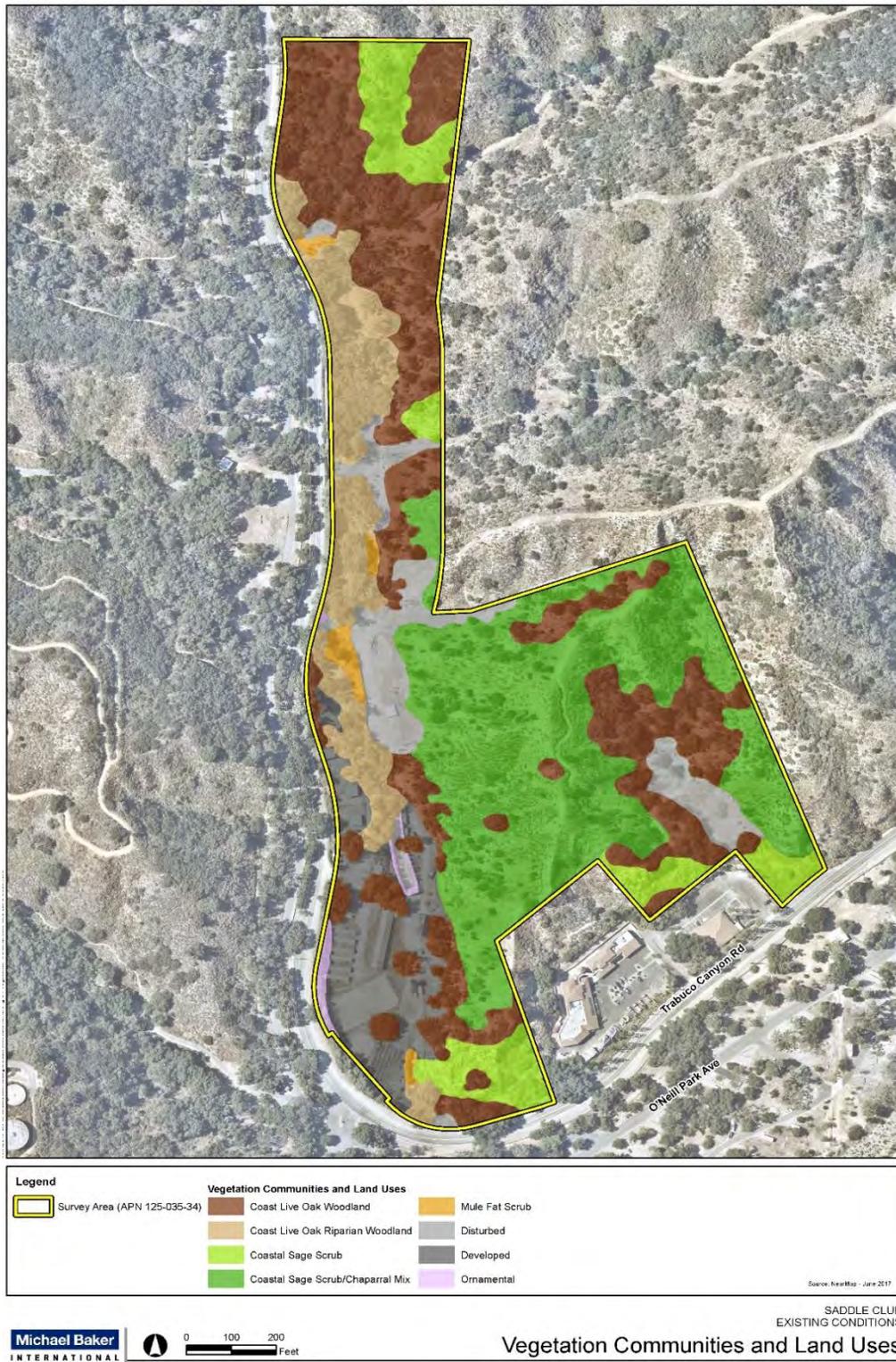


Figure 6: Vegetation Communities and Land Uses



#### Coast Live Oak Riparian Woodland

The Live Oak Canyon Drainage, which conveys flows from north to south along the western boundary of the site, is comprised of a relatively broad riparian corridor primarily consisting of coast live oak riparian woodland vegetation. The riparian canopy is primarily dominated by mature coast live oak, and inclusive of mature western sycamore and scattered blue elderberry. The understory within this community is dominated by native species such as mule fat, wild parsley, California mugwort, wild tarragon, desert indigobush, and nonnative grasses



#### Coast Live Oak Woodland

Coast live oak woodland vegetation, mapped primarily within the northern and southeastern portions of the property (including scattered remnants of the woodland throughout develop portions of the property), primarily consists of mature coast live oak. These areas were mapped separate from the riparian corridor based on distance from the Live Oak Canyon Drainage channel. Understory within this community is primarily leaf litter, with scattered nonnative grasses.



#### Coastal Sage Scrub

Coastal sage scrub vegetation was observed primarily on south-facing slopes located in the northern and southern portions of the survey area. These areas were dominated by California sagebrush and California buckwheat, with other components such as deerweed, common sandaster, giant wild rye, chaparral yucca, coast prickly pear, and white sage scattered throughout.



### Coastal Sage Scrub/Chaparral Mix

Comprising most of the southeastern portion of the survey area is a mosaic of coastal sage scrub and scrub oak chaparral vegetation, with the interstices consisting of disturbed habitat vegetation described below. Sage scrub species present in this community primarily include California sagebrush, California buckwheat, and black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), with others observed such as chaparral yucca, toyon, lemonade berry, and laurel sumac. Dominant chaparral species observed include inland scrub oak, and peninsular beargrass, with scattered individuals of holly leaf redberry, sweetbush, and slender poreleaf.



### Mule Fat Scrub

Dominated by mule fat, and to a lesser extent by other species, including California mugwort, wild tarragon, and western ragweed, mule fat scrub vegetation is dominant along portions of the Live Oak Canyon Drainage where coast live oak and/or western sycamore canopies are absent.



### Ornamental

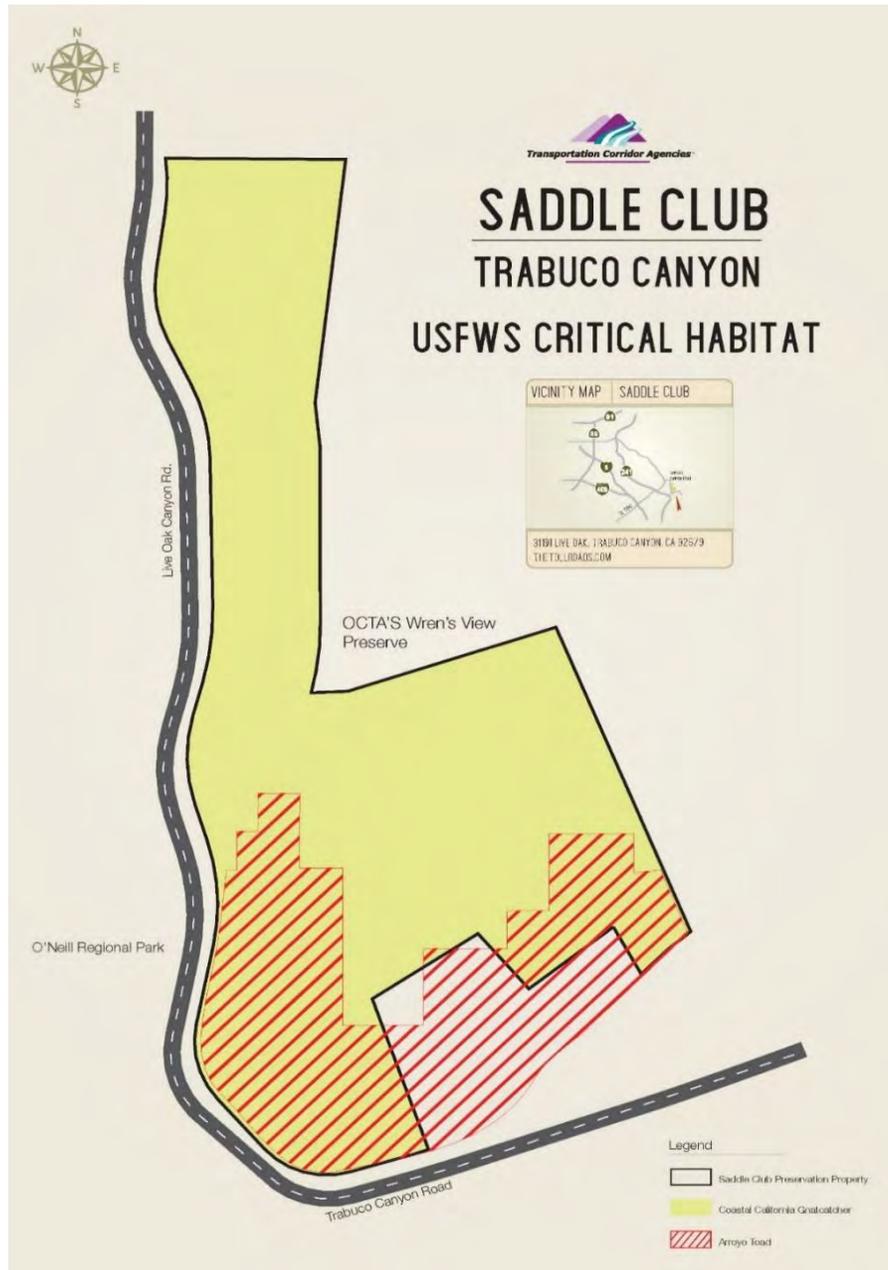
Ornamental vegetation was mapped along southwestern boundary as planted white alder adjacent to Live Oak Canyon Road, and Italian cypress lining the channelized portion of the Live Oak Canyon Drainage north of the culverted portion.

### Disturbed Habitat

Disturbed habitat are areas that are frequently and repeatedly disturbed, and thereby consist of compacted soils or otherwise dominated by opportunistic, primarily nonnative species that often limit the reestablishment of native vegetation. Dominants within this nonnative vegetation community on-site primarily include nonnative grasses listed above, foxtail barley, pigweed, black mustard, Italian thistle, tocalote, redstem filaree, short-pod mustard, horehound, tree tobacco, castor bean, and Russian thistle.

Designated Critical Habitat

The entire property is within an area mapped as USFWS-designated Critical Habitat for coastal California gnatcatcher, with only portions mapped as coastal sage scrub suitable to support the species. The southern portions of the property, located adjacent to Arroyo Trabuco, are mapped as USFWS-designated Critical Habitat (Sub Unit 10b) for arroyo toad<sup>8</sup> (see *Figure 7*: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Designated Critical Habitat).

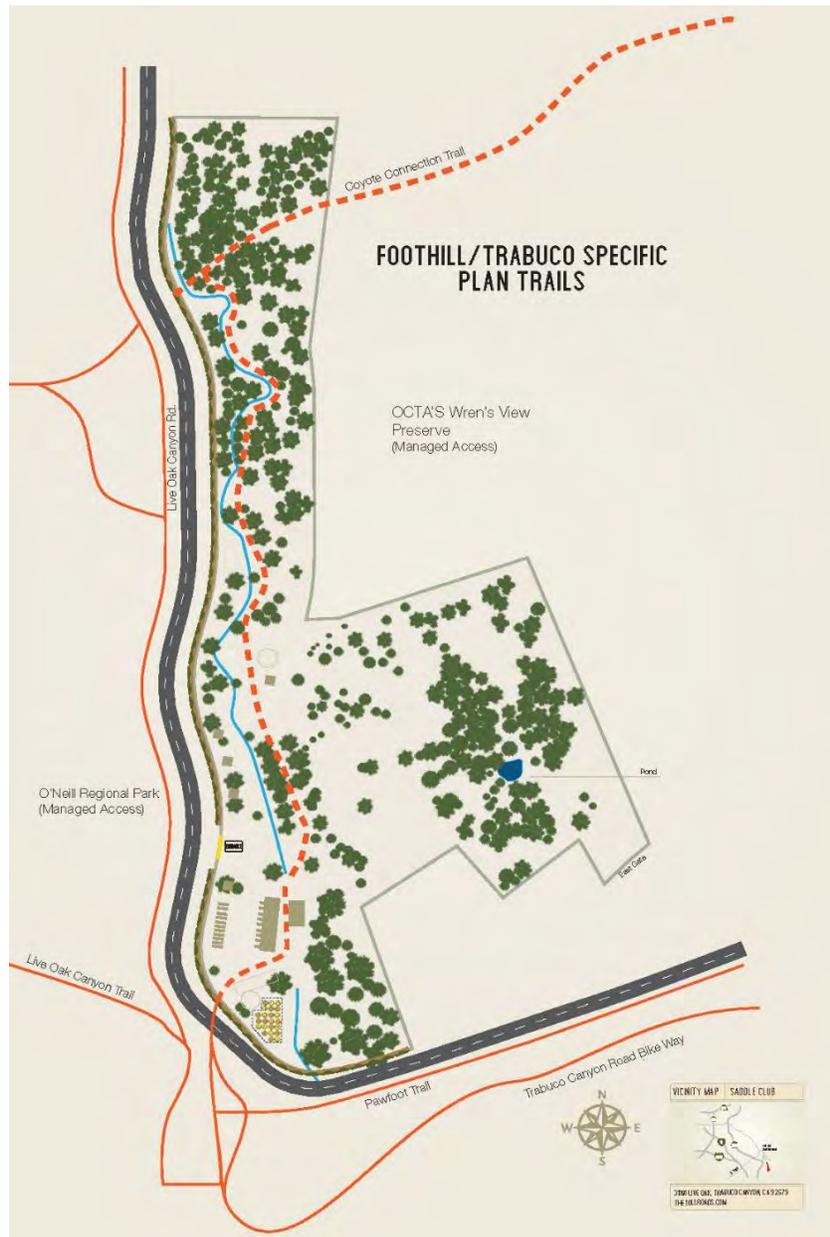


**Figure 7:** U.S. Fish and Wildlife Designated Critical Habitat

<sup>8</sup> Michael Baker International Memorandum- November 2017

### Recreation/ Trails

The SCPP is within the Trabuco Canyon Specific Plan (Specific Plan) Area. The Specific Plan has designated a trail, the Coyote Connector trail, running west to east through the northern portion of the site. Additionally, the Orange County Major Riding and Hiking Trails and Off-Road Paved Bikeways Map proposes a riding and hiking trail through the entire west side of the property heading north from the O'Neill Regional Park Main Entrance. (see *Figure 8: Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan Trails*)



**Figure 8:** Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan Trails

*Note:* On both the Saddle Club Property and OCTA's Wren's View Preserve, the proposed Coyote Connection Trail is currently an existing access road/trail maintained for respective sites' management purposes and not open for public recreational use.

### *Jurisdictional Resources*



The SCPP is located within the San Juan Creek Watershed. The average annual precipitation within the watershed ranges from 13 inches near the coast to 18 inches in the mountains. The FEMA maps indicate that the survey area along the western boundary (associated with the Live Oak Canyon Drainage floodplain) is within the 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard Zone (Zone A), with a small portion at the southern end within the 0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard Zone (Zone X), and the remainder of the survey area in an Area of Minimal Flood Hazard (Zone X).

All jurisdictional features on-site are ephemeral and convey storm flows generally north to south through the property. Only non-wetland waters of the U.S. were observed onsite during the preliminary biological survey in 2017<sup>9</sup>. Tributary to Arroyo Trabuco, flows from the Live Oak Canyon Drainage eventually discharge into San Juan Creek near San Juan Capistrano approximately eight miles to the southwest, and ultimately to the Pacific Ocean. The Unnamed Drainage in the southeastern portion of the property does not convey flows to downstream waters. The project jurisdictional features are shown on the map below with detailed descriptions following (see *Figure 9 – Preliminary Jurisdictional Delineation*).

#### Live Oak Canyon Drainage

The primary drainage feature that conveys most surface flows from the site to downstream waters is the Live Oak Canyon Drainage. It conveys flows into the survey area through two large partially buried corrugated metal pipe (CMP) culverts under Live Oak Canyon Road. The drainage meanders flow through survey area for approximately 1,600 feet in a generally south direction until it is then channelized for approximately 200 feet and converted underground via two large concrete culverts. The drainage remains underground through the Saddle Club for approximately 350 feet where it resurfaces for another 200 feet before entering a two large, partially buried CMP culverts and under Live Oak Canyon Road.

The OHWM throughout the Live Oak Canyon Drainage, which is used to identify the limits of non-wetland waters of the U.S. on-site subject to Corps and Regional Board jurisdiction pursuant to the Federal Clean Water Act (CWA) Sections 404 and 401, respectively, averages approximately 10 feet wide. Streambed and active banks subject to CDFW jurisdiction pursuant to California Fish and Game Code Sections 1600 *et seq.* average approximately 15 feet wide. Where coast live oak riparian woodland and mule fat scrub was observed, particularly in areas along the feature that are not culverted or channelized, the outer drip line of the canopy extends CDFW jurisdictional limits.

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Baker International Memo (November 9, 2017).

There are four (4) ephemeral, unvegetated features within the survey area (Figure 9) that are tributary to the Live Oak Canyon Drainage (Tributaries 1-4).

*Tributary 1* originates on-site via a small CMP culvert that conveys ephemeral flows under Live Oak Canyon Road and generally east for approximately 40 feet before converging with the Live Oak Canyon Drainage. The OHWM averages approximately 6 feet wide, with banks averaging approximately 10 feet wide. The riparian canopy associated with the primary drainage extends CDFW limits of this feature on-site.

*Tributary 2* conveys ephemeral flows from the northeast, southwest into the survey area in the northern portion of the survey area for approximately 420 feet before converging with the primary drainage. The OHWM averages approximately 2 feet wide, with unvegetated banks approximately 5 feet wide on average. CDFW jurisdictional limits are extended where it reaches the riparian canopy of the primary drainage.

*Tributary 3* conveys ephemeral flows east and southeast into the survey area via a small CMP culvert under Live Oak Canyon Drainage for approximately 100 feet, with an OHWM averaging approximately 2 feet wide and banks averaging approximately 10 feet wide. The riparian canopy associated with the primary drainage extends CDFW limits of this feature on-site.

*Tributary 4* conveys ephemeral flows for approximately 700 feet (approximately 485 feet on-site) from the east in a west and then southwest direction, primarily along the northern border of the southeastern portion of the survey area, before converging with the primary drainage. Several concrete pipe segments were previously placed consecutively within a portion of this feature, but nonetheless, it shows having a consistent OHWM averaging approximately 1 foot wide and unvegetated banks approximately 2 feet wide. CDFW jurisdictional limits are extended where it reaches the riparian canopy of the primary drainage.

One additional topographical feature observed in the mid-northeastern portion of the property did not reveal any evidence of ordinary flows or active banks, albeit mapped as a vegetated wetland by the NWI, is mapped as non-jurisdictional.

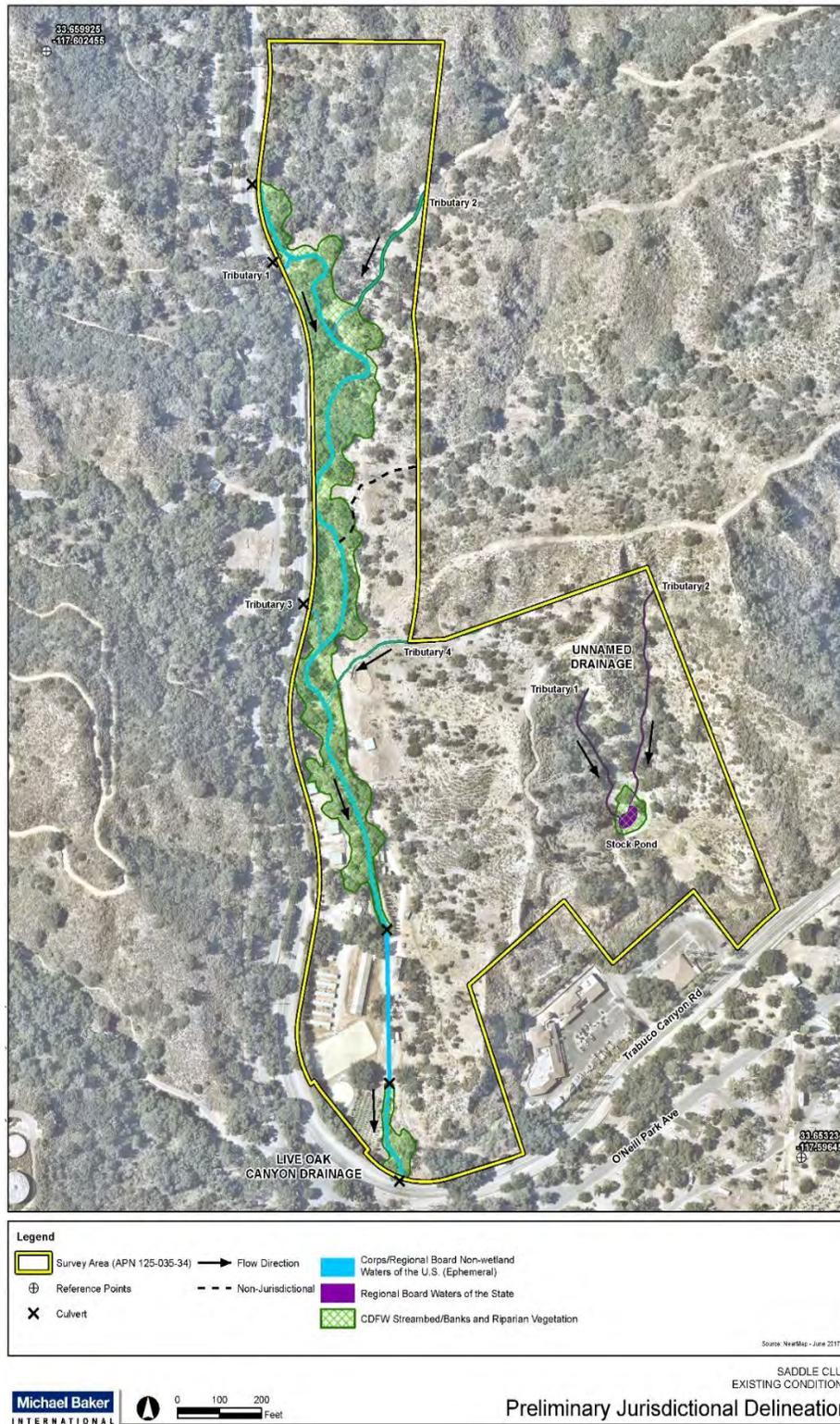


Figure 9: Jurisdictional Delineation

Unnamed Drainage

In the eastern portion of the survey area, a manufactured stock pond receives ephemeral flows from the north into the area that appears to have been dammed for historical uses when cattle grazed on-site. The area within this feature that typically ponds, as evidence by cracked soils, and the two tributaries (Tributaries 1-2) are considered waters of the State subject to jurisdiction of the Regional Board pursuant to Section 13263 of the California Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, but not to the Corps due to a lack of connection to downstream waters. CDFW jurisdictional limits within a lacustrine (lake or pond) situation are consistent with the spillway (or dam in the absence of a spillway) elevation and any associated riparian vegetation, whichever is greater. There are two mature willow (*Salix* spp.) trees present in the upstream portion of the ponded area that are included in the CDFW jurisdictional limits.

*Tributaries 1 and 2* associated with the Unnamed Drainage, convey ephemeral flows from the north for approximately 335 feet and 505 feet, respectively, into the stock pond, each having an OHWM approximately one-foot wide and banks approximately two feet wide. These features are also subject to Regional Board and CDFW jurisdiction only. Table 3 below provides the acreages of jurisdictional features onsite and is broken down by drainage and agency.

Feature	Linear Feet	Corps/Regional Board Non-Wetland Waters of the U.S.	CDFW Streambed/Banks and Riparian Vegetation	Regional Board Waters of the State
<i>Live Oak Canyon Drainage</i>				
Primary Drainage	2,554	0.58	3.85	--
Tributary 1	39	0.00	0.00	--
Tributary 2	420	0.02	0.04	--
Tributary 3	99	0.00	0.00	--
Tributary 4	487	0.01	0.02	--
<i>Unnamed Drainage</i>				
Stock Pond	--	--	0.13	0.03
Tributary 1	334	--	0.02	0.01
Tributary 2	507	--	0.02	0.01
<b>TOTAL*</b>	<b>4,439</b>	<b>0.62</b>	<b>4.09</b>	<b>0.05</b>

\* Totals may not equal to sum due to rounding.

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## SECTION 3 – SITE PLAN AND DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Site Plan for the SCPP consists of a conceptual Demolition Plan, Habitat Restoration Plan, and a Recreational and Public Access Plan.

### Conceptual Demolition Plan

The southern portion of the property is currently developed with equestrian improvements as well as structures that were part of the previous site use, including but not limited to office and caretaker buildings. These improvements will be demolished to accommodate a trailhead and as part of the site restoration efforts. A scope of work and engineering estimate will be developed followed by an Invitation for Bid (IFB) for the demolition work.



Demolish office and caretaker buildings, storage rooms, cap or remove septic tank(s)



Demolish horse wash-out areas and other miscellaneous improvements onsite



Demolish stables and cap all water supply pipes



Demolish stables but leave in-place one coral for use by equestrian trail users to rest their horses. Staff considered but did not carry forward the idea of using this site as an animal shelter during emergency evacuation episodes. OCFA<sup>10</sup> advised staff of potential challenges to using this property as an emergency evacuation center, including but not limited to the following:

- The property has one ingress/egress, which impacts the smooth evacuation of animals (ideally you need a single entry and a single exit, such that there are no turns or backups that may obstruct the flow of traffic);
- There will be additional maintenance requirements to ensure that corrals are clear of any fire dangers, including maintenance of the trees and other vegetation near the corrals; and
- The location of the property, in addition to the fact that it is surrounded by other open spaces, makes it highly susceptible to wildfires. If this community is under evacuation, it is highly possible that this property will be under the same evacuation needs as the rest of the community.



Demolish miscellaneous picket, barbwire and chain-link fences; Retain and restore two horse tie-bars in the parking lot.

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<sup>10</sup> Oral communication with Battalion Chief - Matt Levesque, Division Chief - Brian Norton, and Wildland Resource Manager - Dave Erickson of Orange County Fire Authority on September 20, 2018.



Remove all lockers and miscellaneous structures



Remove targeted ornamental vegetation (e.g., Texas privet hedge)



Remove the wood picket fence along the property boundary and replace with vinyl-type picket fence<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Staff will develop fence specifications to include durability, and UV protection.

## Conceptual Habitat Restoration and Conservation Plan

The Agency will allow the site to self-restore to its natural state consisting of a mosaic of ecologically appropriate native habitats. For the heavily disturbed areas the Agency will work with its biologists and restoration ecologists to develop site assessments and restoration plans to



improve the ecological functions within the property. Restoration and enhancement of appropriate habitats, including but not limited to, riparian, wetland, scrub, and oak woodland habitats, will increase the native plant species' diversity and structure as well as provide breeding territories for the regional target species for conservation. Coordination with Resource Agencies will occur at the time of project development. At a minimum the habitat restoration plans will include the restoration of the disturbed portions of the Live Oak Canyon drainage.<sup>12</sup>



Coastal California Gnatcatcher

The Agency remains committed to enhancing and protecting the existing critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher<sup>13</sup>.



Arroyo Toad

The restoration and conservation plans will also focus on the protection of the existing critical habitat for the arroyo toad<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Potential need for long-term management endowment if the property is used for mitigation purposes.

<sup>13</sup> The entire site falls within the USFWS designated critical habitat for the coastal California Gnatcatcher

<sup>14</sup> Subunit 10b covers approximately five miles of Trabuco Creek from Falls Canyon downstream to the lower end of O'Neill Regional Park.



The Agency is committed to maintaining, protecting and managing the natural landscape of the site comprising of canyons, and ridgelines; thereby, providing a natural sanctuary for the diverse wildlife. Mule deer, mountain lions, bobcats, and coyotes have been documented using and moving across the property.



The Agency will enhance wildlife use of the property and connectivity with surrounding open spaces by removing remnant fences from previous cattle ranching activities onsite.

The location of the SCPP, with the O’Neill Regional Park to the west and south, Trabuco Creek corridor to the south, OCTA open space to the east, and proximity to the Central-Coastal NCCP reserve areas to the north, makes it integral to the regional biological connectivity and wildlife movement in the area. Habitat restoration and conservation efforts onsite will provide co-benefits for wildlife refuge and connectivity.

## Conceptual Public Recreational Use Pilot Program

Opportunities exist for the property trails to connect with other local and regional trails in the area<sup>15</sup> as noted in the discussion of the phasing plan below. This proposed Conceptual Public Recreational Use Pilot Program will focus on low impact recreational activities on the Saddle Club Preservation Property to minimize conflict between recreation, resource protection and conservation efforts, and wildlife use. The Agency acknowledges the economic and health benefits of parks, including but not limited to the following:

- Physical activity makes people healthier and increases with access to parks;
- Trees, parks, and green spaces have profound impacts on people's health and mental outlook; and
- Trails, like parks, add value to community and economic development sustainability. A connected system of trails increases the level of physical activity in a community, providing a wide variety of opportunities such as walking/running/hiking.



As a recreation resource or area where fitness activities can take place, most trails provide a much safer and more user-friendly resource than other linear corridors, such as local roads.



The trail planned on the Saddle Club property could enhance and protect many of the natural resources. Interpretive displays along trails will provide information to people of all ages on such topics as hydrology, history, ecology and wildlife in the area. These educational elements of trails will serve to increase awareness and appreciation of important local resources. Opportunities exist for the property trails to connect with other local and regional trails in the area.

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<sup>15</sup> A proposed regional trail traverses the property starting from the south, at O'Neill Regional Park and exiting the property at its north-east boundary that borders the OCTA's Wren's View Preserve.



### *Shade Structures*

A healthy outdoor environment can be promoted by providing public places, facilities, and open spaces that provide protection from sun.

### *Prohibited Uses*

Uses incompatible with the Agency's biological resources conservation and management efforts are prohibited. These include, but are not limited to: hunting, shooting, or target practice, off-roading, recreational drones, dog or any other pets, whether leashed or unleashed, trailblazing, camping, etc.



### *Public Access<sup>16</sup>*

Prior to acquisition by the Agency, the SSCP was privately owned and contained a network of existing dirt roads which were used by the previous property owner for routine management of the property; no public access was allowed. The Agency currently allows managed public access and upon completion of its demolition plan, the site will be fully open to the public pursuant to the public access guidelines in the site's RMP. The success of this Conceptual Public Recreational Use Pilot Program relies on the community's investment in the property and its involvement as environmental stewards to guard against misuse of the site's resources. The Agency will regularly inventory the site to measure its ecological and social capacities to ensure a



proper balance among the site's beneficial uses (habitat conservation, wildlife refuge and

<sup>16</sup> There was no public access on the property prior to the Agency acquiring the property in December 2017. The Site was privately owned and contained a network of dirt access roads and trails used in the routine maintenance and management of the property. The Agency is proposing scalable public access that will be actively and adaptively managed by changing its form, frequency, days and times, depending on circumstances and compatibility with the site's habitat restoration and conservation goals as well as impacts to wildlife uses of the site.

recreational uses). In the event the Agency documents conflicts and negative impacts on the site or adjacent properties' ecological uses, management measures will be put in place, including but not limited to partial or full closure of public access to the site and/or restriction of certain uses to reduce impact. Limited parking will be provided onsite, and proper gate access and signage will be installed as appropriate to control public access. Street parking along Live Oak Canyon Road is prohibited along the entire stretch of the property.

The property's resources will be evaluated on an annual basis (by December 31<sup>st</sup>) and the level of public access provided by the pilot recreational plan will be determined by staff, in coordination with its biologists and restoration ecologists, based on the performance criteria outlined in the Site's Restoration Plan.



#### *Multi Use Trails*

The main objective of the Agency's acquisition of the property is to preserve it as open space in perpetuity. However, the Saddle Club site is planned to be the first property the Agency grants public access through this Conceptual Public Recreational Use Pilot Program. Public access would be provided to the site daily but will be limited to a designated multi-use trail. Per the *Orange County Major Riding & Hiking Trails and Off-Road Paved Bikeways Map*, the

Saddle Club property has a proposed riding and hiking trail running north-south through the western side of the property. This correlates with the proposed equestrian/hiking trail.

The Conceptual Pilot Program proposes a trail that would follow the existing onsite dirt access road that begins at the main entrance of the site, heads south towards the orchard, circles around the orchard and continues north to the north end of the property. This trail is planned to be a multi-use equestrian/pedestrian trail.

In consultation with a biologist, trails will be determined and designed for maximum width necessary to provide buffer zones as needed.



*Trailhead*

An Entry Sign will be installed at the main gate to the property and will include the Do's and Don'ts of the Site, and Agency contact information in case of an emergency.



*Informational Kiosk*

An Informational Kiosk will be provided at the trailhead. The Kiosk will provide a brief overview of the history of the property, the Agency's conservation efforts, a map of the trails and site, and other pertinent site information.



*Nature Discovery Tot-Trail*

A discovery tot-trail through a drought-tolerant native plant garden will be provided at the property between the parking lot and the citrus garden.



*Interpretive Nature Garden*

The interpretive nature garden will consist of plants native to the area, with descriptive informational/educational signs.



*Public Amenities*

Rest benches will be provided at key locations, including under the large oak tree at the citrus orchard, and the shed on the trail heading north. No other public amenities (restrooms, phones, etc.) will be provided at the property. Trail users will have access to the public amenities at the O’Neill Regional Park.



*Interpretive Signage*

Directional and other informational signage will be provided at the trailhead and along the trails



#### *Trail Boundary Markers*

Trail boundary markers will be installed to keep trail users out of sensitive habitat/conserved areas

#### *Proposed Pilot Public Recreational Trail Plan*

The Conceptual Public Recreational Use Pilot Program proposes to provide a nature discovery-trail around the planned interpretive nature garden as well as allowing access on the planned regional trail that traverses the property in a generally north-south direction (see *Figure 10: Proposed Pilot Recreational Trail Plan*). The site's trail would allow future linkage with the proposed Coyote Connection trail on the OCTA Wren's View Preserve<sup>17</sup> parcel to the east, and the existing trails in the O'Neill Regional Park to the west and south, as contemplated in the *Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan* and *Orange County Major Riding & Hiking Trails and Off-Road Paved Bikeways Map*.

Currently, the Agency only allows managed public access to the property. Once the proposed demolition and site's RMP are completed, the public will be allowed to access the property pursuant to the RMP guidelines. Following demotion activities, other site enhancement activities, which will be detailed in the RMP, including but not limited to, habitat and streambed restoration activities, and implementation of the interpretive native plant garden in the southwestern portion of the site will commence. The southern portion of the site will include a family trail (parent/tot-trail around the Native Garden and Orchard and along the streambed), which will allow families to explore nature and spend time outdoors together walking along an easy trail and learning about nature. Public access on portions of the trail along the streambed and interpretive native garden may be partially interrupted during the proposed enhancement activities for safety reasons.

This proposed pilot public recreational trail plan only applies to the Saddle Club Property on which the F/ETCA has jurisdiction. The Coyote Connection Trail is a County-planned trail; therefore, any future connection of the trail beyond the Saddle Club property will be the responsibility of the County. The Agency remains open and available to be a part of any County-led process to provide a trail connection beyond the Saddle Club property but only to the extent that there would be impacts to the Saddle Club property.

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<sup>17</sup> The proposed Coyote Connection Trail is currently an existing access road/trail maintained for the Preserve's management and not open for public recreational use

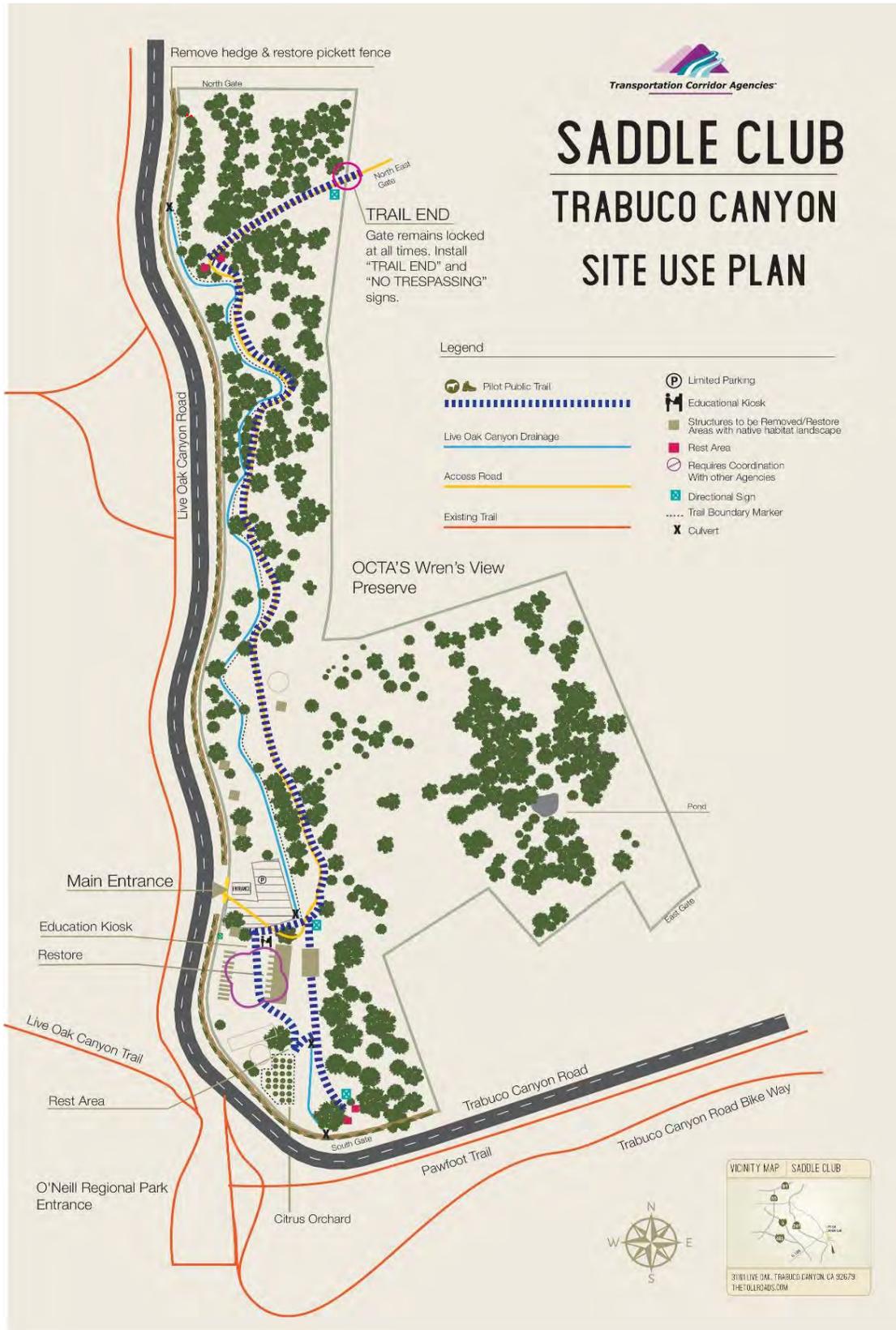


Figure 10: Proposed Site Use Plan

## Pilot Public Recreational Plan Summary

<b>Table 4: Trail Design Summary</b>	
Goal	Objectives
Property trails will be designed and managed to maximize safety and security of users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing a trail corridor with high visibility from adjacent roads and land uses;</li> <li>• Providing safe crossings at intersections with local roadways;</li> <li>• Designing trails that accommodate a variety of users and reduce user conflicts;</li> <li>• Providing emergency access to trails;</li> <li>• Restricting unauthorized motorized vehicle access;</li> <li>• Providing a code of conduct for trail users, consistent with the OC Parks guidelines;</li> <li>• Minimizing the potential for user conflicts through proper design, education and maintenance.</li> </ul>
Trail corridors will improve opportunities for safe, close-to-home recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing trails for a variety of users including runners, walkers, hikers, and equestrian uses;</li> <li>• Providing areas for rest along trails;</li> <li>• Providing recreation trail amenities such as distance markers, benches, and litter receptacles, where appropriate;</li> <li>• Promoting health/fitness benefits of trail use.</li> </ul>
Day-Use Access to SCPP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting community ownership of the site (i.e. the community demonstrates self-policing to retain privileges to the site);</li> <li>• Demonstrating the ability to provide public access to a site that provides co-benefits to competing uses;</li> <li>• Ensuring that habitat areas are not negatively impacted by public presence on the site;</li> <li>• Ensuring that wildlife is unaffected and continue to use and/or inhabit the site;</li> <li>• Ensuring that wildlife connectivity remains unobstructed, unimpeded, or unaffected by public use.</li> </ul>

## SECTION 4 – PROPERTY MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Agency will implement routine and ongoing property management activities, including but not limited to: dirt roads and unpaved parking lot maintenance, trail maintenance, brush clearing, hazard tree removal, weed control, construction and repair of signs, informational kiosks, fencing, graffiti removal, trash collection, and maintenance of the citrus orchard onsite, to ensure that the property is maintained in good condition.

### General Site Maintenance and Management

Goal	Objective
General Site Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trash pick-up, graffiti clean-up as necessary to keep the site in good clean condition</li> </ul>
Vegetation Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-foot site assessment to determine if non-native vegetation is out competing native/restored vegetation</li> <li>• Determine if restored vegetation is flourishing</li> <li>• Check on citrus orchard health</li> </ul>
Periodic Site Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-foot site assessment to determine, if public access is provided, if conservation areas are being negatively impacted.</li> <li>• Check fence integrity and signs of trespassing into restricted areas and adjacent properties.</li> </ul>

### Trail Maintenance and Management

#### *Access Road/Trail Maintenance*

Road/Trail management activities undertaken by the Agency to allow safe access by patrol and OCFA. Managing Public Access on Agency Lands, requires short-term, seasonal and permanent road closures to ensure public health and safety; minimize impacts to wildlife and their habitats; protect Agency infrastructure; or address budgetary constraints.

Goal	Objective
Trails will be properly managed and maintained to increase user safety and enhance the quality of facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set an example for high quality trail maintenance;</li> <li>• Design trails and amenities for low maintenance and vandal resistance;</li> <li>• Use the on-call habitat maintenance contracts for trail maintenance and fund adequately through the annual budgeting process;</li> <li>• Uniformly maintain all trails by developing a maintenance program which ensures that trails are inspected and maintained on a regular schedule;</li> </ul>

Goal	Objective
Trail corridors will highlight and enhance significant historical and natural resources in the area. Trail users will be made aware of the trail system and its rules and benefits through the use of educational kiosks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the education of property visitors to the value of trails through educational kiosks on-site;</li> <li>• Promote the education of property users about safe behavior and proper conduct;</li> <li>• Establish signage along the trails to educate the public about local ecology, history, geology and wildlife.</li> </ul>
Fuel Modification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As-needed maintenance of orchard, trail maintenance, fuel Modification/fire prevention per OCFA requirements</li> </ul>

### Monitoring and Maintenance Schedule

Activity	Responsible Party	Frequency
Site Monitoring	Security Patrol <sup>18</sup>	Weekly
	Environmental Team	Monthly
Site Maintenance*	General On-Call Habitat Maintenance Consultants	As needed based on monitoring
<i>Trail Maintenance</i>	OCFA	As needed based on monitoring

## **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

This document provides the framework for the SCPP management activities. Task level activities will be integrated into the annual environmental work plans and budget to ensure the property meets the stated goals and objectives in this plan. This is a living document that will be updated every five years, with annual activities determined by December 31<sup>st</sup> of each year consistent with the Agency's budgeting cycle. Annual memorandums regarding the annual activities will be attached in Appendix A: Addendum of Activities Completed in Planned Agency Fiscal Years.

<sup>18</sup> The security detail will be utilized to actively manage public access, if required, and to deter public trespassing into restricted areas and adjacent properties.

## REFERENCES

County of Orange. 1991. *Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan*. Orange County, CA.

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Orange County Transportation Authority. 2017. *O'Neill Oaks Preserve Resource Management Plan*.

Overland, Pacific, Cutler, Inc. 2017. *Phase I Environmental Site Assessment Report, Saddle Club LLC 32, APN 125-035-34, 31101 Trabuco Canyon Road, Trabuco Canyon, Orange County CA*.

## APPENDIX 1: ANNUAL REPORTING FORMS

### Recreation Use, Monitoring & Management:

Project/ Program/ Activity	2022 Status	2023 Work Plan	Funding Source

### Recreation Facility Construction & Maintenance:

Project/ Program/ Activity	2022 Status	2023 Work Plan	Funding Source

### Infrastructure Construction & Maintenance:

Project/ Program/ Activity	2022 Status	2023 Work Plan	Funding Source

### Habitat Restoration & Enhancement:

Project/ Program/ Activity	2022 Status	2023 Work Plan	Funding Source

### Miscellaneous Activities and Management Programs:

Project/ Program/ Activity	2022 Status	2023 Work Plan	Funding Source

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