CHAPTER 2.0
PROJECT COORDINATION EFFORTS AND OVERVIEW OF POTENTIAL PROJECTS

2.1 COORDINATED PLANNING PROCESS

The SAMP is being prepared as part of a coordinated public planning process that includes the preparation of two other major planning and regulatory components within the area of the San Juan Creek Watershed and the western portion of the San Mateo Creek Watershed. In addition to the SAMP, this coordinated public planning process includes: (1) an NCCP/MSAA/HCP for the Southern Subregion covering 132,000 acres that includes most areas of the watersheds, and (2) a General Plan Amendment and Zone Change (hereafter referred to as the GPA/ZC) for the 22,815-acre RMV Planning Area.

For the reasons outlined below, the County of Orange, participating landowners, and the state and federal agencies with primary planning and regulatory responsibility within the Southern Subregion (USFWS, CDFG, and the USACE) determined that a "coordinated planning process" should be pursued that would be most protective over the long term for the sensitive biological and hydrologic resources located within the two watersheds and NCCP Southern Subregion. The need for the coordinated planning process and the relationship between the program components is summarized below. A summary of the three major planning and regulatory components is set forth in subchapters 2.1.1 through 2.1.3 followed by discussions of the need for and objectives of the coordinated planning process (subchapters 2.1.4 and 2.1.5), the sequence of key agency actions (subchapter 2.1.6), and key product/decision/milestones and linkages (subchapter 2.1.7).

2.1.1 GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT/ZONE CHANGE

On November 8, 2004, the Orange County California Board of Supervisors approved the Rancho Mission Viejo GPA/ZC (PA 01-114) (also referred to as the "B-10 Modified Alternative"). The approved project would have allowed for the development of various land uses and preservation of open space on the approximately 22,815-acre RMV Planning Area over an approximately 20- to 25-year period. A detailed discussion of the GPA/ZC is provided in the County's EIR (The Ranch Plan Final EIR 589; referred herein to as the GPA/ZC EIR 589) that was certified on November 8, 2004.

Subsequent to this action by the County Board of Supervisors, the B-12 Alternative was developed to address the sub-basin-level Southern Planning Guidelines and the Watershed Planning Principles in addition to the overall goals and objectives of the SAMP Programs and NCCP/MSAA/HCP. This alternative is based on input from the USACE, CDFG, USFWS, the environmental community, and the general public. The following is a description of the B-12 Alternative, the "project" for which one of the current SAMP participants, Rancho Mission Viejo, is requesting Section 404 permits. In this EIS, this project is termed "RMV Proposed Project."

The RMV Proposed Project allows for the development of 5,873 acres of the 22,815-acre RMV Planning Area with up to 14,000 residential dwelling units (of which up to 6,000 are to be senior housing units), urban activity center uses, business park uses, neighborhood retail uses, and golf course uses. Approximately 16,942 acres would be retained in open space. Ranching activities would also be retained within a portion of the proposed open space area. Infrastructure would be constructed to support all of the proposed uses, including road improvements, utility

improvements, and schools. Existing agriculture uses may also be expanded within defined areas subject to certain restrictions concerning the protection of biological resources.

In approving the B-10 Modified Alternative, the County changed the zoning of the RMV Planning Area from A-1 General Agricultural and Sand and Gravel (S&G) Extraction Districts (for portions of San Juan Creek) to Planned Community (PC) zoning district. The PC zoning designation would also apply to the Proposed Project (Alternative B-12). The PC zoning designation is intended to "provide the authority, regulations, and procedures whereby large land areas can be planned, zoned, developed, and administered as individual integrated communities" (County of Orange, 2002). In addition, three elements of the County of Orange General Plan were amended within the 22,815-acre RMV Planning Area as follows:

2.1.1.1 Land Use Element

The land use designation for portions of the RMV Planning Area was amended from Open Space (5) to Rural Residential (1A), Suburban Residential (1B), Employment (3) and Urban Activity Center (6). Remaining areas were retained in their Open Space and Open Space Reserve designations.

2.1.1.2 Transportation Element

The Transportation Element was amended to include the addition of three new roads (Cow Camp Road, Cristianitos Road, and F Street), the reclassification of a portion of another arterial highway (Avenida Talega), and the identification of specific locations/alignments for proposed bikeways and riding and hiking trails within the RMV Planning Area. Scenic highway designations were also amended.

2.1.1.3 Resources Element

Two figures within the Natural Resources Component of the Resources Element were amended to reflect the approved RMV Proposed Project.

2.1.2 SOUTHERN SUBREGION NCCP/MSAA/HCP

The proposed Southern Subregion NCCP/MSAA/HCP is being prepared by the County of Orange in cooperation with CDFG and the USFWS in accordance with the provisions of the state Natural Community Conservation Planning Act of 1991 (NCCP Act), California Endangered Species Act (CESA), federal Endangered Species Act (FESA), and Section 1600 et seq. of the California Fish and Game Code. The Southern Subregion is part of the five-county NCCP Study Area established by the state as the Pilot Study Area under the Southern California Coastal Sage Scrub NCCP Program.

The Southern California Coastal Sage Scrub NCCP Program is the pilot program under the State's NCCP Act. It is being undertaken jointly by the CDFG and the USFWS pursuant to a December 4, 1991 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Under the 1991 MOU, CDFG is responsible for developing the NCCP process and for preparing planning guidelines. The USFWS role is to review and approve the process guidelines. The two agencies also agreed to work together to ensure that NCCP/HCPs are prepared by local governments and landowners in a manner that will facilitate compliance with Section 10(a)(1)(B) of FESA, with Section 2800-2840 of the NCCP Act of 1991, and with Sections 2080.1, 2081, 2084, and 2086 of the CESA as set forth in the Fish and Game Code.

The proposed Southern Subregion NCCP/MSAA/HCP would provide for the conservation of designated state and federal listed and unlisted species ("Covered Species") and associated habitats that are currently found within the 132,000-acre Southern Subregion NCCP/MSAA/HCP study area. The NCCP/MSAA/HCP is a voluntary, collaborative planning program involving landowners, local governments, state and federal agencies, environmental organizations, and interested members of the public in the formulation and approval of the NCCP. The purpose of the NCCP Program is to provide long-term, large-scale protection of natural vegetation communities and wildlife diversity while allowing compatible land uses and appropriate development and growth. The NCCP process was initiated to provide an alternative to "single species" conservation efforts. The shift in focus from single species, project-by-project conservation efforts to large scale conservation planning at the natural community level was intended to facilitate regional and subregional protection of a suite of species that inhabit a designated natural community or communities.

Under current federal law, and without the NCCP/MSAA/HCP, each local government/agency/ landowner proposing to impact occupied listed-species habitat would need to obtain either a FESA Section 7 consultation or a Section 10 permit in order to proceed with projects within their respective jurisdictions. Similarly, local governments, agencies, and landowners proposing to alter the bed and/or bank of a stream subject to the jurisdiction of CDFG would need to obtain a Streambed Alteration Agreement (SAA). The NCCP/MSAA/HCP would provide an alternative to a project-by-project, single species review currently practiced under existing state and federal law. Under the NCCP/MSAA/HCP, participating local governments, public and quasi-public agencies, and landowners receive regulatory coverage for projects addressed by the NCCP/MSAA/HCP for all species and habitats identified for coverage in the NCCP/MSAA/HCP. Therefore, a desired effect of the NCCP/MSAA/HCP would be to protect the eight listed species which occur or may occur within the Southern Subregion, a broader suite of unlisted species, and certain habitats while reducing regulatory uncertainty, time delays, and economic impacts on adopted and proposed projects resulting from the state and/or federal listings.

2.1.3 SAMP

As previously addressed in Chapter 1.0, the SAMP is a voluntary watershed-level planning and permitting process involving local landowners and public agencies that seek permit coverage under Clean Water Act Section 404 for future actions affecting jurisdictional Waters of the U.S. Specific to the proposed San Juan and Western San Mateo Watersheds SAMP, permit coverage would be provided for the San Juan Creek and Western San Mateo Creek Watersheds. The purpose of the SAMP is to provide for reasonable economic development and the protection and long-term management of sensitive aquatic resources (biological and hydrological). To the extent feasible, federal Waters of the U.S., including wetlands, would be avoided and unavoidable impacts would be minimized and fully mitigated under the SAMP.

2.1.4 NEED FOR A COORDINATED PLANNING AND REGULATORY PROCESS

The desire of the reviewing agencies and participating landowners to coordinate the preparation of a SAMP with the NCCP/MSAA/HCP reflected the experiences of the participants over the past several years of NCCP/HCP planning.

First, the proposed coordinated approach reflects a desire on the part of the involved public agencies to maximize protection and management of aquatic and upland resources and geomorphic and hydrologic processes by coordinating the preparation, approval, and implementation of the two state/federal regulatory programs. Such coordination would provide

the ability to coordinate the long-term implementation of the NCCP/MSAA/HCP adaptive management strategy with the implementation of the SAMP Aquatic Resources Conservation Program in a manner that would enable coordinated and effective long-term protection and management of both upland and aquatic species.

Second, the proposed coordination of these planning/regulatory programs reflects the experience of the private and agency participants involved in earlier NCCP/HCP programs approved in San Diego (MSCP) and Orange counties (Central/Coastal Subregion NCCP/HCP). These participants discovered that state and federal Incidental Take authorizations provided under a NCCP/HCP were of limited practical value if the "planned activities" covered by the NCCP/HCP were not reviewed in coordination with state/federal agencies responsible for issuing permits for aquatic resource impacts (i.e., USACE Section 404 permits and CDFG Section 1600 Streambed Alteration Agreements). Participating landowners found that NCCP/HCP Take authorizations reflecting subregional level analysis did not adequately address Section 404/1600 impacts to aquatic resources taking place at the "project" level. Because "planned activities" approved under the NCCP/HCP could not be implemented without the Section 404/1600 approvals, the ability to assemble a NCCP/HCP Habitat Reserve and implement adaptive management measures in a timely manner consistent with the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) and the terms of the NCCP/HCP Implementation Agreement was jeopardized. Therefore, the decision to include preparation of an MSAA in the NCCP/HCP and the coordination of the SAMP with the NCCP/MSAA/HCP is proposed to facilitate implementation of the Aquatic Resources Conservation Program with the larger NCCP/MSAA/HCP Habitat Reserve and adaptive management measures.

Third, the Southern Orange County NCCP Science Advisors (Science Advisors) convened by The Nature Conservancy in 1997 to provide science guidance for the Southern Subregion NCCP/HCP recognized the significant benefits to subregional planning for species and habitats that would accrue if that planning considered the underlying geomorphic and hydrologic processes at work at the "watershed level." The Science Advisors recognized that these hydrologic and geomorphic processes served to sustain the conditions necessary for the survival of the species and habitats being addressed by the NCCP/MSAA/HCP. Whereas the species and habitat database focus on information that provides "snapshots" of conditions at various time intervals, the underlying geomorphic and hydrologic process information provides the basis for understanding how and why much of the observed biological functions and values are present and what kinds of factors need to be considered as part of a program designed to assure effective long-term management of those biological and aquatic resources.

In recognition of these factors, the participating landowners and public agencies decided to coordinate the preparation and public approval processes for the SAMP and the NCCP/MSAA/HCP.

2.1.5 OPERATING ASSUMPTIONS FOR THE COORDINATED PUBLIC PLANNING PROCESS

Consultation among the County of Orange, landowners, and state and federal agencies generated the following conclusions regarding the operating assumptions for the coordinated planning approach:

First, orderly implementation of the NCCP/MSAA/HCP would require coordinated processing of a watershed-level program addressing the protection, restoration, and management of aquatic resources (i.e., the SAMP). The SAMP watershed-level approach would enable participating

public agencies and landowners to obtain necessary permits and agreements for planned activities within the NCCP/MSAA/HCP that would affect aquatic resources regulated under Sections 401 and 404 of the Clean Water Act.

Second, the ability to obtain Section 401 water quality certifications, Section 404 permits resulting from the SAMP process, and Section 1600 Streambed Alteration Agreements under the NCCP/MSAA/HCP, in a timely manner would require that a development application be filed and processed as part of the coordinated program so that the location, type, and intensity of land uses within proposed development areas would be established.

Third, the USACE would be the lead agency responsible for preparing the SAMP. The County and USFWS, in coordination with CDFG would be the lead agencies responsible for preparing the NCCP/MSAA/HCP. This determination is consistent with state and federal requirements.

Fourth, all agencies responsible for reviewing and approving projects that impact wetlands, streams, and other Waters of the U.S. within the SAMP Study Area would be fully involved in the preparation, coordination, and review of each component of the coordinated process.

Fifth, preparation and approval of the GPA/ZC, SAMP, and NCCP/MSAA/NCP should be coordinated to efficiently address major issues. The coordination process would allow for more effective identification of major issues and better resolution of potential conflicts among the various planning and regulatory programs in a timely manner.

Finally, the coordinated process would allow individual regulatory components to be prepared and approved separately while still enabling applicants and lead agencies, other reviewing agencies, and the public to identify and address resource protection, resource management, and cumulative impact issues related to proposed new development in a coordinated fashion.

2.1.6 SEQUENCE OF LEAD AGENCY ACTIONS FOR THE GPA/ZC, SAMP, AND NCCP/MSAA/HCP

As previously addressed, under the coordinated process, the County of Orange, as a lead agency, is responsible for the review and action upon the GPA/ZC project and the NCCP/MSAA/HCP project. The County of Orange Board of Supervisors certified the Final Environmental Impact Report and approved the GPA/ZC project on November 8, 2004 that addressed the GPA/ZC purposes in consideration of the goals and objectives of the SAMP, NCCP, HCP, and MSAA. The next actions by the County would be consideration of certification of the final NCCP/MSAA/HCP EIS/EIR and consideration of approval of the NCCP/MSAA/HCP project and Implementation Agreement.

As lead agency for the SAMP, the USACE would be responsible for issuance of the Record of Decision (ROD), and relevant Section 404 permitting procedures resulting from the SAMP process. Prior to finalization of the SAMP EIS, the USACE is responsible for consultation with the USFWS under Section 7 of the FESA for any effect on listed threatened and/or endangered species and/or adverse modification of designated critical habitat resulting from the federal action of establishing one or more of the three proposed permitting procedures/USACE Section 404 permits. Prior to issuance of any Section 404 authorizations in conjunction with finalizing the SAMP, the applicable RWQCB would be required to issue a Section 401 certification for a proposed action.

In the timeframe of the Section 7 consultation with the USFWS for the federal activity of establishing the proposed permitting procedures, resolution of the effects on listed threatened

and/or endangered species and/or adverse modification of designated critical habitat occurs in two possible ways. The first involves the USFWS approving the NCCP/MSAA/HCP. The USFWS would issue a ROD and a Section 10 permit for incidental take of federally-listed species covered under the HCP component of the NCCP/MSAA/HCP. The USFWS would reference its internal Biological Opinion in issuing a Biological Opinion to the USACE for the proposed permitting procedures. The CDFG would then approve the Master Streambed Alteration Agreement that would provide coverage for planned activities addressed by the MSAA. The second way involves the USFWS issuing a separate Biological Opinion just for the proposed permitting procedures. In the event the USFWS determines not to approve the NCCP/MSAA/HCP, the USFWS could issue an incidental take permit for some or all of the activities analyzed under the SAMP. In any event, the finalization of the SAMP cannot occur until Section 7 consultation with the USFWS has been completed.

It is anticipated that, within the same general timeframe as the USACE takes action on the proposed permitting procedures and SAMP mitigation program, the USFWS and CDFG would consider approval of the NCCP/MSAA/HCP. If approved, the USFWS would issue the ROD and ESA Section 10 permits for Incidental Take of federally-listed species covered under the HCP component of the NCCP/MSAA/HCP. CDFG would publish its Management Authorization for Incidental Take of state-listed species. For the MSAA, the CDFG would approve the Master Streambed Alteration Agreement to provide coverage for planned activities addressed by the MSAA.

It is possible that final actions on the SAMP and related proposed permitting procedures by the USACE could require reconciliation of treatment of some impacts related to the GPA/ZC and NCCP/MSAA/HCP based on differences in the final terms of approval for each of the components. However, the objective of ongoing close coordination is to limit the potential scope of such a reconciliation process.

2.1.7 KEY PRODUCT/DECISION/MILESTONES AND LINKAGES

While it is noted that all proposed work program work products and actions are being coordinated, the sequencing and timing of certain work products and decisions are particularly important to the successful completion of the overall coordinated process. These critical products and milestones, presented in the order of occurrence, include the following:

2.1.7.1 Identification of a Consistent Set of GPA/ZC, NCCP/MSAA/HCP, and SAMP Alternatives

Based on the analysis of goals for each of the coordinated planning process programs, a common set of development/open space alternatives have been developed for analysis in the GPA/ZC EIR 589, the SAMP EIS, and the NCCP/MSAA/HCP EIS/EIR. Areas that are proposed for avoidance for the SAMP within the lands covered by the GPA/ZC are proposed for incorporation into the NCCP/MSAA/HCP reserve design. Identification of project alternatives under each component of the program has been and would continue to be coordinated. For a full description of alternatives, please refer to Chapter 5.0, Development of Alternatives, of this EIS. To date, no component of the coordinated process has limited the range of alternatives that was considered or is being considered as part of any of the other process components, or the selection of any particular alternative.

2.1.7.2 Selecting a Reasonable Range of Alternatives for Each of the Coordinated Planning Process Programs

Based on the analyses of the goals for each of the coordinated planning process programs, a common set of reserve design/development alternatives has been developed for analysis in the GPA/ZC EIR 589, the SAMP EIS, and the NCCP/MSAA/HCP EIS/EIR. The intent has been to identify alternatives that are compatible with each other in order to facilitate achieving program goals and objectives for each of the planning processes. While intending to further coordination among the three planning processes, the common set of alternatives is not intended to limit the formulation of additional alternatives within the framework of the individual planning processes. One important goal of the formulation and review of a common set of alternatives is to assess alternative conservation strategies within each of the planning processes so that compatible conservation and management programs can be selected consistent with regulatory standards and the goals of each of the planning processes.

With respect to the SAMP, the review of alternatives will focus on the SAMP goals set forth in subchapter 1.1 and the SAMP "Purpose" discussed in subchapter 3.1.2. The EIS alternatives analysis is directed toward assessing whether one or more of the alternatives, or a modified version of one or more alternatives, can feasibly attain the goal of a SAMP consistent with the SAMP purpose statement. The alternatives analysis in this EIS uses the ERDC alternatives analysis and the SAMP Tenets in consideration of the findings from the Southern Planning Guidelines and the Watershed Planning Principles and additional aquatic species planning considerations from the Southern Planning Guidelines and the Watershed Planning Principles, as well as other studies referenced in subchapter 1.1 of this EIS. The Southern Planning Guidelines are provided in Appendix B1 and the Watershed Planning Principles are provided in Appendix B2 of this EIS. If the EIS analysis of alternatives identifies one or more alternatives capable of achieving the SAMP Purpose, the alternative(s) is analyzed for compliance with the Section 404 (b)(1) Guidelines. The final EIS would be used to conclude the SAMP process, determine the Clean Water Act Section 404 permitting procedures within specified areas where future activities would be allowed to occur, and identify aquatic areas to be preserved, restored, enhanced, and managed over the long term.

2.1.7.3 Coordinated Preparation and Public Review of Draft Environmental Documents

The public review draft of the EIS for the SAMP and the EIR/EIS for the NCCP/MSAA/HCP would be completed and reviewed by the public in coordinated parallel processes. In this way, the analysis of avoidance, minimization and mitigation, management, and monitoring issues would be carefully coordinated. To assure the overall completeness and consistency of the environmental documents during their preparation, databases are being shared by the respective lead agencies.

2.2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A key feature of the coordinated planning process involved the public consultation that occurred during the initial formulation of the SAMP and the Southern Subregion NCCP/HCP. The public participation process for the SAMP Study Area and the Southern Subregion NCCP/HCP centered on public workshops conducted by the three lead agencies. This process also was supported by the convening of an "Ad Hoc" group by The Nature Conservancy (see subchapter 2.2.2) and by creation of a citizen outreach program by the County Supervisor with responsibility over the Supervisorial District that includes the 22,815-acre RMV Planning Area. This public participation process was initiated following the June 14, 2001 Public Workshop.

2.2.1 PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

The three lead agencies initiated a series of joint "Public Workshops." The Public Workshops preceded and contributed information important to the completion of this EIS and the Draft NCCP/HCP, and related EIS/EIR and Implementation Agreement. Beginning in June 2001, and continuing through May 2003, a total of six public workshops were held. Public attendance at these meetings ranged from 250 to about 500 persons. These workshops were intended to provide a collaborative and consultative public forum. The Public Workshops were conducted to:

- Explain the coordinated approach.
- Identify key planning issues that needed to be addressed and assure that the full range of public policy and planning issues were addressed.
- Discuss SAMP/MSAA and NCCP/HCP reserve design tenets and principles.[1]
- Identify and consider alternative habitat reserve designs.
- Discuss adaptive management and species conservation issues and methodologies.
- Obtain public comments and suggestions prior to preparation of draft documents.

2.2.2 AD HOC MEETINGS

In support of the Public Workshops, The Nature Conservancy, in 2001, convened an "Ad Hoc" group designed to involve representatives of the involved agencies, environmental groups, and local landowners in constructive dialogue within a smaller setting that could focus on SAMP/MSAA and NCCP/HCP issues. The Ad Hoc group met as needed to discuss significant SAMP/MSAA and NCCP/HCP[2] planning issues and to provide comments to the agencies as they prepared agendas and discussion topics for the Public Workshops. The purpose of these meetings was to increase information exchange among the lead agencies, participating landowners, and public by informing the Ad Hoc participants, thereby enabling participants to convey issues and information to their respective organizations/constituents and discuss issues in advance of the public workshops. These meetings also were designed to make the Public Workshops more effective by providing a forum for discussions of significant issues with informed public interests prior to the public workshops.

2.2.3 SCORE MEETINGS

Additionally, Orange County Supervisor Tom Wilson, whose Fifth District includes the RMV Planning Area, initiated another element to support the coordinated participation process by involving interested citizens in planning related to the GPA/ZC for the Rancho Mission Viejo property: the South County Outreach and Review Effort (SCORE) program. The overall goal of the SCORE program was to establish positive and constructive communications among all potentially interested parties including members of the Rancho Mission Viejo staff, Orange

[1] As addressed in subchapter 1.5.1, Scoping Process, of this EIS, the MSAA was originally proposed to be a part of the SAMP document. On May 12, 2005, a second Notice of Intent was published in the Federal Register noting that the SAMP would not be a joint federal and state document and therefore only an EIS was required, and that the MSAA was now a part of the proposed Southern Subregion NCCP/MSAA/HCP document.

[2] Ibid.

County staff and appointed officials, representatives of all the neighboring jurisdictions, representatives of specific community interest groups, and members of the public at large.

Supervisor Wilson convened two task forces to review Rancho Mission Viejo development issues, one to address land use and one to address urban runoff. Each task force was given a scope for review (the charge) and a set of ground rules for operation. The Task Forces produced a joint report (SCORE Phase One Report) containing commentary based on their review of certain preliminary reserve design concepts, and a list of potential solutions to address urban runoff issues. This report was presented to the Orange County Planning Commission on October 23, 2002. Another report (SCORE Phase Two Report) , including a review of draft land use alternatives, was produced in September 2003 and presented to the Orange County Planning Commission.

2.3 SAMP PARTICIPANTS

Participants in the SAMP are identified as either "current" participants or "future" participants. Current participants have identified proposed projects within the SAMP Study Area and have undergone extensive pre-application review by the USACE, CDFG, and USFWS and complied with the Section 404 (b)(1) Guidelines as part of this EIS evaluation. Current participants have also coordinated with EPA and San Diego RWQCB on a more limited basis. Future participants have not identified potential projects, have yet to undergo pre-application review with the aforementioned agencies, and have yet to comply with the Section 404 (b)(1)Guidelines.

2.3.1 CURRENT SAMP PARTICIPANTS

The following private landowner and public agency have identified proposed projects and are current participants in the SAMP:

- Rancho Mission Viejo for permitting of residential, commercial/retail, recreational development, and associated infrastructure (roads, storm drainage, sewer and water systems, and other utilities) as well as preservation, restoration, and management of aquatic resources.

- Santa Margarita Water District (SMWD) for operation and maintenance of existing water and sewer facilities and development of certain future facilities including the Gobernadora Multipurpose Basin and four storage reservoirs on three sites.

Proposed projects are collectively referred to as "Applicants' Proposed Projects" and are briefly described here and discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8.0 of this EIS. These current participants in the SAMP process would be eligible for permitting via an Individual Permit/LOP on the basis of extensive pre-application review by the USACE, CDFG, USFWS, and compliance with the Section 404 (b)(1) Guidelines evaluated as part of this EIS evaluation. The Individual Permit would set forth requirements for avoidance, minimization, and compensatory mitigation for identified impacts to be implemented over the long-term as described in Chapter 8.0 of this EIS. The LOP is intended as a verification process for determining consistency with the Individual Permit that would lead to issuance of LOPs as Section 404 permit approval for activities determined to be consistent with the avoidance, minimization, and compensatory mitigation provisions of the Individual Permit.

2.3.1.1 Description of RMV Planning Area

The RMV Planning Area includes approximately 22,815 acres located in the southern portion of unincorporated Orange County. It constitutes the remaining undeveloped portions of Rancho Mission Viejo within the unincorporated area of the County. The planned community of Ladera Ranch and the cities of Mission Viejo, San Juan Capistrano, and San Clemente bound the RMV Planning Area on the west and south. The City of Rancho Santa Margarita bounds the northern edge of the RMV Planning Area and U.S. Marine Corps Base Camp at Pendleton (MCB Camp Pendleton) in San Diego County bounds the southeastern edge.

Substantial portions of the 22,815-acre RMV Planning Area have been used for ranching and agricultural uses for the past 120 years and these uses continue today. Commercial nursery operations, research and development uses, and natural resources extraction are ongoing activities within the RMV Planning Area through lease agreements. Previous extractions of mineral resources within the RMV Planning Area included rock aggregate, silica sand, clay, and expanded aggregate. Rancho Mission Viejo grows and harvests citrus and avocados on several hundred acres of the ranch.

The RMV Planning Area is comprised of a series of sub-watersheds (or sub-basins) of the San Juan Creek Watershed and western portion of the San Mateo Creek Watershed. The sub-basins of the two watersheds are shown in Figure 2-1. Subchapters 4.1 and 4.2 provide more details on the sub-basins. The sub-basins of the San Juan Creek Watershed that are located within the RMV Planning Area and evaluated as part of this EIS are:

- Verdugo Canyon Sub-basin
- Central San Juan Creek Sub-basin (including Trampas Canyon)
- Cañada Gobernadora Sub-basin (including Wagon Wheel and Sulfur Canyons)
- Cañada Chiquita Sub-basin (including Narrow Canyon)

In the western portion of the San Mateo Creek Watershed, the sub-basins evaluated as a part of this EIS are:

- Gabino Sub-basin (including Blind Canyon)
- La Paz Sub-basin
- Cristianitos Sub-basin
- Talega Sub-basin
- Undesignated area east of Cristianitos Creek (“Other Planning Area”)

San Juan Creek Watershed

The major watercourses located within the RMV Planning Area are: Chiquita Creek, Gobernadora Creek, Verdugo Creek, and Trampas Creek. The headwaters of Chiquita Creek lie outside of the RMV Planning Area boundary in the Upper Chiquita Canyon Conservation Area owned by Rancho Mission Viejo and managed by the Transportation Corridor Agencies

pursuant to a conservation easement granted by Rancho Mission Viejo. Chiquita Creek is a north-south naturally perennial watercourse that confluences with San Juan Creek upstream of the existing Ortega Highway bridge. Chiquita Creek has a sandy substrate and resultant high infiltration rates.

Gobernadora Creek is located in Cañada Gobernadora and is also tributary to San Juan Creek. Gobernadora Creek is also perennial in its upper reaches outside the RMV Planning Area primarily due to urban development. Perennial flow in the lower portion of Gobernadora Creek within the RMV Planning Area is likely a combination of urban runoff (Coto de Caza is a significant contributor), increased recharge from upstream areas, and lateral subsurface inflow to the valley floor. Gobernadora Creek also has a sandy substrate.

Verdugo Creek in Verdugo Canyon is an intermittent watercourse with a predominately coarse substrate. As a tributary to San Juan Creek, Verdugo Creek is an important contributor of coarse sediment to San Juan Creek. Trampas Creek in Trampas Canyon is also tributary to San Juan Creek and is characterized by clayey silts and sands.

San Mateo Creek Watershed

In the western portion of the San Mateo Watershed, Cristianitos Creek is a north-south watercourse that outside the RMV Planning Area confluences with San Mateo Creek. Above the confluence with Gabino Creek, Cristianitos Creek is characterized by a clay substrate that contributes fine sediments downstream. Below the Gabino confluence, the Gabino Creek geomorphology dominates. Tributaries to Cristianitos Creek are Gabino and Blind Creeks. Gabino Creek in Gabino Canyon is an intermittent watercourse characterized by clay substrate in the upper portions of the creek and sands and cobbles in the middle portion of the creek. Substrates in the lower portion are mixed. The coarse sediments are probably important to downstream channel structure and provide geomorphic elements of habitat for sensitive species (i.e., arroyo toad) downstream. Blind Creek in Blind Canyon is characterized by erodible and less erodible clays which also contribute fine sediments downstream. La Paz Creek confluences with Gabino Creek in Gabino Canyon and is characterized by a relatively large proportion of very coarse substrates (i.e., large cobbles and boulders). These coarse substrates are likely mobilized very infrequently during large-scale episodic storm events, at which time they play a significant role in reshaping the geomorphology of the lower portions of the San Mateo Watershed. La Paz Creek is an intermittent watercourse.

Three vernal pools in the RMV Planning Area are located along Radio Tower Road south of San Juan Creek.

Slope wetlands primarily occur in Chiquita Canyon, with five slope wetlands located in the Radio Tower Road area south of San Juan Creek and ten slope wetlands located laterally to Chiquita Creek north of San Juan Creek. One slope wetland is located in a tributary to Gobernadora Creek and one is located on the northern tip of the Donna O'Neill Land Conservancy just west of the RMV Planning Area.

The terrain in the RMV Planning Area and surrounding area has a wide variety of geological characteristics. Two faults–the Mission Viejo fault and the Cristianitos fault–traverse the RMV Planning Area. The Cristianitos fault is classified as inactive; the Mission Viejo fault is classified as potentially active. The nearest known active fault is the Newport-Inglewood fault, located 9.3 miles to the south. Landslides are located throughout the RMV Planning Area with the greatest number located west of the Cristianitos fault.

2.3.1.2 Rancho Mission Viejo Proposed Project

As described in subchapter 2.1.1, the Orange County Board of Supervisors approved a General Plan amendment and zone change for the RMV Planning Area on November 8, 2004 in the form of the B-10 Modified Alternative. Subsequent to this action by the Board of Supervisors, the B-12 Alternative was developed to address the sub-basin-level Southern Planning Guidelines and the Watershed Planning Principles in addition to the overall goals and objectives of the SAMP and NCCP/MSAA/HCP Programs. The following is a description of the B-12 Alternative (RMV Proposed Project). The RMV Proposed Project provides for 5,873 acres of development and 16,942 acres of open space within the RMV Planning Area. Alternative B-12 would include 14,000 dwelling units. The proposed development would also include an urban activity center, business park, neighborhood center, and golf resort uses, as well as supporting circulation system and infrastructure. It is reviewed for consistency for Section 404 (b)(1) Guidelines in Chapter 8.0.

As depicted in Figure 2-2, the RMV Proposed Project provides for development within six planning areas: Planning Areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 8. Planning Area 9 would be 16,942 acres of open space. In addition to the above development, Rancho Mission Viejo is requesting the approval of the following additional facilities to the extent that these facilities impact aquatic resources under USACE jurisdiction. These additional facilities are:

- relocation of Rancho Mission Viejo headquarters on an approximately 25-acre site
- relocation of CR&R/Solag Disposal Company facility (waste management facility) on an approximately 18.3-acre**Error! Bookmark not defined.** site
- relocation of employee housing on an approximately 14-acre site
- 50 acres of orchards

The RMV Proposed Project is described in further detail in Chapters 5.0 and 8.0.

2.3.1.3 Santa Margarita Water District Proposed Project

Projects identified by SMWD include operation and maintenance of existing facilities and construction and subsequent operation and maintenance of future facilities. The following is an overview of both types of activities. The SWMD projects are collectively referred to in this EIS as "SMWD Proposed Project" and are fully described below and in Chapters 5.0 and 8.0.

Existing Facilities

SMWD provides water and sewer service to approximately 52,000 households through a network of existing facilities of 1,330 miles of water and sewer mains, 15 connections to other water districts, 30 domestic reservoirs (298 million gallons of storage), 4 non-domestic reservoirs (1.5 billion gallons of capacity), 21 water pump stations, 30 pressure reducing stations, 6 non-domestic water pump stations, 2 wells with chlorine injection, 21 sewer lift stations, and 3 sewage treatment plants. These existing facilities are depicted on Figure 2-3. These existing facilities require ongoing operation and maintenance described as follows:

***Access Roads and Right-of-Way*.** Periodic grading and clearing of vegetation, periodic improvements and/or upgrades, patrols, and inspections.

***Facilities*.** Facilities include domestic water, reclaimed/recycled water and sewer lines, valves, vaults, pump stations, and appurtenances. Additionally there are facilities for wastewater treatment, reclamation and recycled water plants, appurtenances and supporting utilities and access roads; maintenance and repair of plant and pipelines, replacement, rehabilitation, retrofitting, and upgrading of plant and pipelines; provision of lay down areas, flushing of blow-off values and pipelines, pumping of storm water from valve vaults, and other activities required by various laws and regulations.

Facilities include open and closed reservoirs and multipurpose basins; and related activities include maintenance and repair of reservoirs, appurtenances and communication facilities, weed and vector abatement, sediment removal, and treatment of open reservoirs.

Future Facilities

In addition to existing facilities, SMWD has identified the need for several future facilities which may impact Waters of the U.S. in their initial construction and that, subsequent to construction, would require ongoing maintenance and operation as described above. The future facilities are the Gobernadora Multipurpose Basin and the storage facilities (Figure 2-3).

Gobernadora Multipurpose Basin

SMWD in partnership with Rancho Mission Viejo is proposing to construct the Gobernadora Multipurpose Basin to respond to erosion and sedimentation along Gobernadora Creek, high storm flows damaging the downstream restoration habitat area, excessive surface and groundwater originating upstream, and high bacteria counts resulting in degraded water quality. The Gobernadora Multipurpose Basin is proposed to include a storm detention basin to be established as a wetland and riparian habitat, a system to capture and divert flows to the wetlands, a pump station, and pipeline. The Gobernadora Multipurpose Basin is proposed to be used to capture and naturally treat urban runoff and storm flows for reuse to (1) reduce downstream erosion and sedimentation, (2) address excessive surface and groundwater, and (3) improve the water quality in the Gobernadora Creek that ultimately flows downstream to the Gobernadora Ecological Restoration Area (GERA).

Cañada Gobernadora is a sub-basin within the San Juan Creek Watershed. The upper portion of the Cañada Gobernadora Sub-basin has been developed over the past two decades primarily as the community of Coto de Caza, a private community in unincorporated Orange County, with over 4,000 dwelling units and two golf courses. Water service is provided to Coto de Caza by SMWD. Coto de Caza was developed prior to the current water quality regulations; therefore, no on-site detention, retention, or water quality treatment facilities are located within the community. All urban runoff and storm flows from the Coto de Caza development are currently directed to Gobernadora Creek, a tributary of San Juan Creek. The urban runoff and storm flows from this development have resulted in high bacteria counts and substantial erosion and degradation along the Gobernadora Creek, which is damaging the existing GERA wetlands. This damage is causing downstream erosion and sedimentation, excessive surface and groundwater, and degraded water quality. This instability is a result of uncontrolled and unretarded flow from upstream development. Additionally, SMWD has experienced damage to existing pipeline right-of-ways within the sub-basin. Rancho Mission Viejo has established a permanent photo monitoring station in Gobernadora Creek to document post-storm event erosion. Historic Rancho Mission Viejo accounts document the excessive surface and groundwater. Ongoing water quality monitoring associated with the SAMP has documented the degraded water quality of both urban runoff and storm flows. Limited positive changes to the

existing conditions have occurred through the education of homeowner associations and golf course managers on proper irrigation management and pesticides use. Therefore, the Gobernadora Multipurpose Basin project is proposed as a management measure to meet the recommendations contained in the Watershed Planning Principles.

To address excessive surface and groundwater, the Gobernadora Multipurpose Basin project is also proposed to include the use of excess water that is not required to support downstream wetland and riparian habitats, and associated wildlife. The amount of excess water budget available would be developed in consideration of the requirements of downstream wetland and riparian habitats. Water not required to support downstream habitats would be pumped to an existing non-potable reservoir owned by the SMWD where the water would be used for irrigation purposes to reduce the demand for imported water.

The Gobernadora Multipurpose Basin is proposed to be constructed off-line from Gobernadora Creek. The drainage area of Gobernadora Creek is 5.88 square miles. It has been estimated, for planning purposes, that the annual water yield for the creek at the Gobernadora Multipurpose Basin site is 1,000 acre-feet.[3] The site is within the boundaries of the RMV Planning Area and its impacts were addressed in the GPA/ZC EIR 589. As such, this EIS addresses the Gobernadora Multipurpose Basin as a part of the RMV Proposed Project rather than the SMWD Proposed Project.

The Gobernadora Multipurpose Basin project is proposed to be a pilot/demonstration project with high-quality precedents and practices that can serve as a prototype for other areas with similar urban runoff and storm flow difficulties within the SMWD region, southern California region, and throughout the state.

Storage Facilities

SMWD's long-term planning for the water district has identified the potential need for three storage facilities, two for domestic water and one for seasonal storage of recycled non-domestic water. The facilities would be built in compliance with the requirements of the California Division of Safety of Dams design standards. The purpose of these facilities is to store domestic water for emergency use and to store recycled water supply during the winter months when more supply is available and demands are low, then use the water during summer months when the demands are in excess of supply. While only three facilities (two domestic and one non-domestic) would be constructed, SMWD has identified multiple potential sites. The report, *Future Seasonal and Emergency Water Storage Needs* (Henry Miedema and Associates, July 2003), recommended further evaluation for four potential sites for each of the domestic storage facilities and the non-domestic seasonal storage facilities.[4] SMWD subsequently refined these four sites to two sites each for the domestic and non-domestic storage: the Upper Chiquita Site and San Juan Creek East 3 Site for domestic water storage and the San Juan Creek East 3 Site and Trampas Canyon Pit Site for non-domestic water storage.

Upper Chiquita Seasonal Domestic Water Storage Site. The Upper Chiquita site is located in a side canyon on the western side of Chiquita Canyon north of Oso Parkway and west of the current terminus of SR-241. The Upper Chiquita site is located east of the community of Las Flores in the City of Rancho Santa Margarita and is outside of the boundaries of the RMV

[3] *Gobernadora Multipurpose Basin Concept Plan and Estimated Yield*, Rivertech, Inc., September 1999.

[4] The *Future Seasonal and Emergency Water Storage Needs* study evaluated 20 different potential sites based on location, hydraulics, capacity potential, geographic dispersion, geotechnical constraints, land uses, and environmental sensitivity.

Planning Area but within the SAMP Study Area. The Upper Chiquita site would include development of an earthfill dam structure and a covered, domestic water reservoir. The reservoir footprint, inclusive of a temporary disturbance area, would be approximately 34.1 acres. It would have a high water level of 820 feet and a storage capacity of 860 acre-feet.

San Juan Creek East 3 Domestic Seasonal Water Storage Site. San Juan Creek East 3 Site is located in a tributary canyon on the south side of Verdugo Canyon east of Ortega Highway. The site is approximately 175 acres and is within the boundaries of the RMV Planning Area (Planning Area 4). The reservoir would be a conventional earthfill dam with a high water level of 600 feet and an estimated storage volume of 1,300 acre-feet. Because this proposed site is within an area that would be disturbed to implement the RMV Proposed Project, this EIS addresses the San Juan Creek East 3 site as part of the RMV Proposed Project rather than the SMWD Proposed Project.

San Juan Creek East 3 Non-Domestic Seasonal Water Storage Site. As noted above, the San Juan Creek East 3 Site is located in a tributary canyon on the south side of Verdugo Canyon east of Ortega Highway. Within the 175 acres, both domestic and non-domestic seasonal water storage facilities would be constructed. The reservoir would be a conventional earthfill dam with a high water level of 600 feet and an estimated storage volume of 4,600 acre-feet. The site is within the boundaries of the RMV Planning Area (Planning Area 4). Because this proposed site is within an area that would be disturbed to implement the RMV Proposed Project, this EIS addresses the San Juan Creek East 3 site as part of the RMV Proposed Project rather than the SMWD Proposed Project.

Trampas Canyon Pit Non-Domestic Seasonal Water Storage Site. Trampas Canyon Pit Site is located in a mined pit on the Oglebay-Norton sand plant within Trampas Canyon. The site is approximately 46 acres and is within the boundaries of the RMV Planning Area (Planning Area 5). The reservoir would have a high water level of 475 feet and an estimated storage volume of 2,020 acre-feet. Because this proposed site is within an area that would be disturbed to implement the RMV Proposed Project, this EIS addresses the Trampas Canyon Pit site as part of the RMV Proposed Project rather than the SMWD Proposed Project.

2.3.2 FUTURE SAMP PARTICIPANTS

Based on a GIS analysis and input from County of Orange staff (T. Neely, pers. com), areas where development may occur in the future are portions of the Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan area (encompasses approximately 3,666 acres) and approximately 494 additional acres of land scattered throughout both unincorporated County jurisdiction and incorporated cities. These development areas are depicted on Figure 2-4. Landowners within these areas may identify potential projects in the future. It should be noted that these 494 acres do not represent all potentially available land within the SAMP Study Area, only those areas where development may affect natural resources. Vacant parcels within urban areas or redevelopment of existing uses are not considered as part of this analysis. These potential projects may be eligible for either Letter of Permission (LOP) Procedures or an Individual Permit, with the SAMP providing context for permit review for both types of permitting. A LOP authorization is an abbreviated process for an Individual Permit, whereby a decision to issue permit authorization is made after coordination with federal and state fish and wildlife agencies, a public interest evaluation throughout the EIS, and completion of an abbreviated environmental assessment.

In addition to the LOP Procedures/Individual Permit, future participants in the SAMP may be eligible for Section 404 permits through a Regional General Permit (RGP) for certain limited

activities and ongoing maintenance activities within the SAMP Study Area. The USACE proposes to establish the RGP program to authorize temporary impacts up to 0.5 acre in lower quality resource areas.

In conjunction with establishing the proposed permitting procedures, the USACE would revoke the use of selected NWPs within the San Juan and Western San Mateo Watersheds.

The proposed permitting procedures are more fully described in Chapters 3.0 and 8.0 of this EIS.

2.3.3 PROJECTS AND STUDIES IN AND ADJACENT TO THE RMV PLANNING AREA NOT SUBJECT TO THIS PERMITTING ACTION

2.3.3.1 Southern Orange County Transportation Infrastructure Improvement Project (SOCTIIP)

The Southern Orange County Transportation Infrastructure Improvement Project (SOCTIIP) (previously referred to as the Foothill Transportation Corridor South project) is the proposed extension of State Route 241 (SR-241) toll road south to Interstate 5 (I-5) near the City of San Clemente. This extension would traverse the RMV Planning Area. SR-241 extension is the final segment of the Transportation Corridor Agencies' 67-mile public toll road network. The proposed southerly extension is intended to relieve present and future traffic congestion along I-5 and local arterials in south Orange County. The SOCTIIP EIS/Supplemental EIR, distributed for public comment in May 2004, analyzes ten alternatives. The Foothill/Eastern Transportation Corridor Agency Board of Directors and the Federal Highway Administration are responsible for choosing a final alternative. The SOCTIIP Alternatives, in relationship to the SAMP Study Area and RMV Planning Area, are depicted on Figure 2-5. The Transportation Corridor Agencies, in conjunction with the FHWA, is pursuing separate Section 404 authorization for the SOCTIIP. The following are general descriptions of the ten alternatives.[5]

- ***Far East Corridor-West Alternative.*** This toll road alternative would extend the existing SR-241 Toll Road south from Oso Parkway to connect with I-5 south near the Orange/San Diego County line in MCB Camp Pendleton. This alternative alignment would cross Ortega Highway approximately 5.2 miles inland of I-5 and would pass through the west side of the Donna O'Neill Land Conservancy. This is the alignment reflected on the County of Orange General Plan and Master Plan of Arterial Highways. At full buildout, this alternative would provide eight travel lanes: six mixed flow lanes and two high occupancy vehicle lanes.

- ***Far East Corridor-Modified Alternative.*** This toll road alternative would extend the existing SR-241 Toll Road south from Oso Parkway to connect with I-5 at the Orange/San Diego County line in MCB Camp Pendleton. This alternative alignment would cross Ortega Highway approximately 6.1 miles inland of I-5 and would pass through a portion of the east side of the Donna O'Neill Land Conservancy and the inland portion of the San Onofre State Beach Park. At full buildout, this alternative would provide eight travel lanes: six mixed flow lanes and two high occupancy vehicle lanes.

- ***Central Corridor Alignment.*** This toll road alternative would extend the existing SR-241 Toll Road south from Oso Parkway to connect to I-5 at Avenida Pico in the City of San Clemente. This alternative alignment would cross Ortega Highway approximately

[5] Source: www.thetollroads.com, accessed August 3, 2005.

2.8 miles inland of I-5 and 0.25 miles east of Antonio Parkway. This alignment would run east of San Juan Capistrano city limits, and then enters the City of San Clemente to parallel Avenida Pico before connecting to I-5. Implementation of this alternative would displace existing residences and pass through the Prima Deshecha Landfill. At full buildout, the Central Corridor Alignment Alternative would provide eight travel lanes: six mixed flow lanes and two high occupancy vehicle lanes.

- ***Central Corridor-Avenida La Pata Variation Alternative.*** This toll road alternative would extend the existing SR-241 Toll Road south from Oso Parkway to Avenida La Pata in the City of San Clemente; it would not connect to I-5. Vehicles would use Avenida La Pata to reach I-5. This alternative alignment would cross Ortega Highway approximately 2.8 miles inland of I-5. This alternative would pass through the Prima Deshecha Landfill. At buildout, this toll road alternative would provide eight travel lanes: six mixed flow lanes and two high occupancy vehicle lanes.

- ***Alignment 7 Corridor-Far East Crossover-Modified Alternative.*** This toll road alternative would extend the existing SR-241 Toll Road south from Oso Parkway to connect with I-5 at the Orange/San Diego County line. This alternative alignment would cross Ortega Highway approximately four miles inland of I-5 and one mile east of Antonio Parkway. It would pass through the west side of the Donna O'Neill Land Conservancy and the inland portion of the San Onofre State Beach Park. At buildout, this alternative would provide eight travel lanes: six mixed flow lanes and two high occupancy vehicle lanes.

- ***Alignment 7 Corridor-Avenida La Pata Variation Alternative.*** This toll road alternative would extend the existing SR-241 Toll Road south from Oso Parkway to Avenida La Pata in the City of San Clemente; it would not connect to I-5. Vehicles would use Avenida Pico to reach I-5. This alternative alignment would cross Ortega Highway approximately 3.7 miles inland of I-5. It would displace residences and would pass through the east side of the Prima Deshecha Landfill. At buildout, this toll road alternative would provide eight travel lanes: six mixed flow lanes and two high occupancy vehicle lanes.

- ***Arterial Improvements Only Alternative.*** This alternative would involve the widening of Antonio Parkway/Avenida La Pata between Oso Parkway and just south of Camino Las Ramblas to beyond its County Master Plan of Arterial Highways designation. One additional lane would be provided in each direction. Between San Juan Creek and Avenida Pico, six travel lanes would be provided. Between Oso Parkway and San Juan Creek Road, eight travel lanes would be provided. Smart Street/Transportation Systems Management improvements would be constructed in existing rights-of-way (to improve traffic flow) on Avenida Pico, Camino Las Ramblas, Ortega Highway between Antonio Parkway/Avenida La Pata and I-5, and Avenida la Pata between Avenida Pico and south of Camino Las Ramblas.

- ***HOV and Mixed Flow Lanes on I-5 Alternative.*** This alternative would widen I-5 from the I-405/I-5 confluence (El Toro "Y") to the Orange/San Diego County line. This alternative would add one additional high occupancy vehicle lane and one mixed flow lane in each direction between Cristianitos Road and Lake Forest Drive. Auxiliary lanes would be provided in some locations along this segment of I-5. The addition of lanes would require major reconstruction of bridges, interchanges, and other structures and the acquisition of property along I-5.

- ***No Action Alternative−OCP-2000.*** This No Action Alternative assumes the buildout of unincorporated Orange County and cities within the County consistent with their respective General Plans. It uses the demographic forecasts set forth in Orange County Projections-2000 (OCP-2000) which assumes 21,000 dwelling units on the RMV Planning Area. All components of the County Master Plan of Arterial Highways would be implemented with the exception of the southerly extension of the SR-241 Toll Road from its existing terminus at Oso Parkway. The No Action Alternative also assumes the implementation of 2001 Regional Transportation Plan improvements for south Orange County.

- ***No Action Alternative− RMV Development Plan.*** This No Action Alternative is a variation of the No Action Alternative−OCP-2000. This alternative assumes the same background land use and circulation system conditions. The following differences are applicable to this alternative. This alternative uses OCP-2000 projections for the County except for the RMV Planning Area. For the RMV Planning Area, 14,000 dwelling units (instead of 21,000 dwelling units) are assumed, consistent with Rancho Mission Viejo's request to the County and subsequent approval by the County in GPA/ZC EIR 589. Circulation improvements associated with the RMV Planning Area project are also assumed.

Construction of the SOCTIIP is estimated to begin in 2006/2007 with completion expected in 2008/2009 (www.thetollroads.com, accessed August 3, 2005).

2.3.3.2 Prima Deshecha Landfill Expansion

As depicted on Figure 2-6, the 1,530-acre Prima Deshecha Landfill site is located in south Orange County. The Orange County-owned landfill site includes land within the jurisdictions of the cities of San Juan Capistrano (570 acres) and San Clemente (133 acres). The remaining 827 acres are located within unincorporated Orange County. The landfill site is located outside of the SAMP Study Area. The County of Orange is processing a separate Section 404 permit for activities associated with expansion of the landfill. Mitigation for this expansion is anticipated to occur both on the landfill site (i.e., outside the SAMP Study Area) and off-site within Ronald W. Caspers Wilderness Park (within the SAMP Study Area). The Prima Deshecha 2001 General Development Plan and its 2002 Amendment (referred to collectively herein as the Prima Deshecha 2001 GDP) is the planning document that provides guidance for the coordinated long-term implementation of both interim and ultimate landfill site development uses. The Prima Deshecha 2001 GDP provides for the management of multiple uses on the site, including solid waste disposal, various regional park and recreational uses, and implementation of an arterial highway and road extension (Avenida La Pata) included in the County Master Plan of Arterial Highways (MPAH), Orange County Circulation Plan (OCCP), and the cities of San Juan Capistrano and San Clemente General Plan Circulation Elements. The Prima Deshecha 2001 GDP divides the 1,530-acre site into five zones for planning purposes.

- ***Zone 1.*** Zone 1 includes the current active landfill refuse disposal area. By approximately year 2019, Zone 1 is projected to be completely filled based on current assumptions. After closure activities have been completed, satisfactory access established, and sufficient settlement has occurred, the ultimate recreational uses will be identified in a needs analysis. A potential future stockpile area has been identified to the west of the Zone 1 refuse disposal area. The Phase B Landslide Remediation biological mitigation and Pre-mitigation Program areas are located east and south of Zone 1.

- ***Zone 2.*** Zone 2 includes the multiple use recreational trails that traverse the property. On-site city trails around Zone 1 can be used throughout the development of Zones 1 and 4 under the provision that the protection of public health and safety can be provided.

- ***Zone 3.*** Zone 3, Segunda Deshecha, contains native vegetation, including coastal sage scrub habitat−used by the California gnatcatcher−and mixed chaparral. The intent of the Prima Deshecha 2001 GDP is to retain the majority of Zone 3 in a native state. Some habitat restoration or enhancement can be implemented in Zone 3 as part of the Pre-Mitigation Programs. This can occur where portions of these areas have been disturbed or to compensate for a loss of habitat associated with the implementation of the Prima Deshecha 2001 GDP in other areas on-site or with other development areas in Orange County. Portions of Zone 3 are also proposed as supplemental open space for the NCCP Program.

- ***Zone 4.*** Zone 4 is planned for future refuse disposal following the completion of landfill activities in Zone 1 in 2019. The planned post-closure use for Zone 4 is a regional park. However, the actual use will be identified by a needs analysis. It should be noted that recreational uses may be limited over portions of Zone 4 that are designated as supplemental open space by the NCCP Program.

- ***Zone 5.*** Zone 5 encompasses the area of disturbance for construction of La Pata Avenue. The assumption in this EIS is that La Pata Avenue would be constructed prior to implementation to Zone 4.

The Prima Deshecha 2001 GDP does not specify a defined set of uses for the remaining property outside the boundaries of the five zones. This remaining property is currently used for ancillary landfill operations: landfill gas flare facility, Energy Recovery Facility, landfill infrastructure (i.e., scale house, field offices), and viewshed protection. In the future, this property may also be used for biological mitigation, flood control facilities, recreational trail staging area(s) and open space buffer.

2.3.3.3 San Juan Creek Watershed Feasibility Study

The Planning Branch of the USACE, Los Angeles District, began a watershed planning process for the San Juan Creek Watershed with publication of the 1997 Reconnaissance Study for the San Juan and Aliso Creek Watersheds. The Reconnaissance Study examined existing environmental, hydrologic/hydraulic, groundwater, water quality, floodplain, geomorphologic, and economic conditions in the watersheds and identified water resources-related problems. The Reconnaissance Study provided the framework for more detailed studies to be conducted during the feasibility phase. In 1998, the USACE initiated the San Juan Creek Watershed Management Feasibility Study. The Feasibility Study was a team effort sponsored by the USACE and the County to identify solutions to water and related land resource problems in the San Juan Creek Watershed that were identified in the Reconnaissance Study, including existing flooding, environmental degradation, water quality, water supply, and recreation issues. While the study recommended a variety of watershed improvement measures, the Feasibility Study has not been finalized. As a consequence, a subsequent phase to fund and implement recommended measures of the Feasibility Study has not been initiated.