



# County of San Diego

## DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

BRIAN ALBRIGHT  
DIRECTOR

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[www.sdparks.org](http://www.sdparks.org)

### **NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT/ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

Public Review Period: November 7, 2011 through December 18, 2011

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the County of San Diego, Department of Parks and Recreation (County) will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the San Elijo Lagoon Restoration Project (SELRP or project). The County is seeking public agency, interest group, and citizen input on the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the EIR/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Because the SELRP is a cooperative effort between the County and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), the project will require the preparation of a joint National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)/CEQA EIS/EIR. A separate Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS for this project will be sent out by the Corps.

The SELRP is a restoration project to enhance and restore the biological function and values of the San Elijo Lagoon. The study area covers approximately 961 acres. The project will require approval by the Corps, as well as other federal, state, and local resource agencies and jurisdictions. The project is located within the City of Encinitas, in San Diego County.

A Notice of Preparation document, which contains a more thorough project description, a regional location map, and a study area map, along with a description of the probable environmental effects of the project, is attached and can be reviewed at <http://www.sanelijo.org/restoration> or [http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/parks/public\\_review.html](http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/parks/public_review.html). Comments on the Notice of Preparation document must be in writing and must reference the project name; they may be sent to the following email or address:

Ms. Megan Hamilton  
[megan.hamilton@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:megan.hamilton@sdcounty.ca.gov)  
County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation  
5500 Overland Avenue, Suite 410  
San Diego CA 92123



Comments on this Notice of Preparation document must be received no later than December 18, 2011. For additional information, please contact **Megan Hamilton** via email or at (858) 966-1377. Public scoping meetings will also be held **at the locations and times listed below**. The meetings will provide a public forum for information dissemination; identification of issues; presenting the scope of review; and questions on the SELRP, EIS/EIR, and the overall process.

1. **Carlsbad: November 15, 2011 at 1:00 P.M.**  
**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Conference Room 1**  
**6010 Hidden Valley Road, Suite 101**  
**Carlsbad, California 92011**
  
2. **Encinitas: November 29, 2011 at 6:00 P. M.**  
**City of Encinitas Community Center**  
**1140 Oakcrest Park Drive**  
**Encinitas, CA 92024**
  
3. **Solana Beach: December 1, 2011 at 6:00 P.M.**  
**Holiday Inn Express Meeting Room**  
**621 South Highway 101**  
**Solana Beach, CA 92075**



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### NOTICE OF PREPARATION DOCUMENTATION

**DATE:** November 7, 2011

**PROJECT NAME:** San Elijo Lagoon Restoration Project (SELRP)

**PROJECT APPLICANT:** San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy

**PROJECT LOCATION:**

The proposed project is within the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve located at the southern boundary of the City of Encinitas adjacent to Solana Beach (Figure 1). The project study area is composed of approximately 961 acres, which has been separated into four basins or areas (East Basin, Central Basin, West Basin, and coastal area), as depicted in Figure 2.

#### PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The overall goal of the San Elijo Lagoon Restoration Project (SELRP or project) is:

1. To protect, restore, and then maintain, via adaptive management, the San Elijo Lagoon ecosystem and adjacent uplands
2. To perpetuate native flora and fauna characteristics of southern California.
3. To restore, then maintain estuarine and brackish marsh hydrology
4. To avoid and minimize impacts to recreational opportunities within and adjacent to the SEL
5. To improve water quality.

The San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve serves as habitat for sensitive, threatened, and endangered plants, and resident and migratory wildlife, as well as provides recreational opportunities to the public. However, due to encroachment by development, the San Elijo Lagoon has gradually been constrained and its ecological function compromised. Development adjacent to the lagoon and within its watershed has restricted the tidal prism within the lagoon, and led to consistent degradation of water quality, leading to elevated bacteria levels and beach closures. Lagoon habitat is transitioning from mudflats to mid-marsh habitat, with the expansion of key vegetation that will continue to contribute to



saltmarsh and riparian habitat within the lagoon, further restricting the tidal prism. The proposed project is an effort to restore lagoon function and values through dredging or excavation, channel clearing, repositioning of the lagoon inlet, or other hydrologic modifications.

The County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation (County), in coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and other stakeholders, is working to address the restoration of the San Elijo Lagoon. Three alternatives are anticipated to be carried forward for evaluation in the restoration plan and the Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR), plus a No Project/No Action Alternative:

- Alternative 1A – Intertidal Alternative (Existing Inlet)
- Alternative 1B –Habitat Diversity Alternative (Existing Inlet)
- Alternative 2A –Habitat Diversity Alternative (Inlet Relocated)

These alternatives will undergo evaluation in the EIS/EIR before a final alternative is selected for construction. Under these alternatives, a number of actions could take place, including dredging or excavation to improve tidal circulation, channel clearing, repositioning of the lagoon inlet, or other hydrologic modifications. The project may be constructed in phases, if necessary, to maintain adequate habitat for sensitive lagoon species. Adaptive management strategies to maintain these restoration efforts are also included as part of the project. Excess sediment could be discharged on the beach or in the nearshore zone west of the lagoon if it is identified as suitable beach sand material. There are common design features that could be implemented as elements of each of the alternatives, such as micro-grading, facilitating the conveyance of seasonal freshwater flows through the system to the existing inlet, retention of avian nesting areas, and the inclusion of transitional upland areas. Brief descriptions of the SELRP alternatives are provided below.

#### Alternative 1A – Intertidal Alternative

Alternative 1A emphasizes enhancement of existing tidal channels and creation of new tidal channels to provide increased tidal flows in the three existing lagoon basins. This alternative would use the existing tidal inlet, create a north-south-trending tidal channel in the West Basin, enlarge the channel linking the Central Basin and East Basin beneath Interstate 5 (I-5), and enhance existing tidal channels in the East Basin. The inlet/undercrossing at U.S. Highway 101 would remain in the current location. No other infrastructure improvements would be made at the North County Transit District (NCTD) railroad trestle or at I-5. Because minimal changes are proposed as part of Alternative 1A, existing habitat areas would essentially remain intact. The tidal prism of Alternative 1A would be slightly increased compared to existing conditions.

#### Alternative 1B –Habitat Diversity (Existing Inlet)

Alternative 1B would increase the lagoon tidal prism and create a greater diversity of habitats compared to Alternative 1A. Alternative 1B would include the creation of a subtidal basin in the Central Basin, deepening and widening of tidal channels to the north and east of this tidal basin to provide additional tidal influence, and creation of an extensive network of tidal channels in the East Basin. The existing tidal inlet would remain the source of

seawater, and the main tidal channel would be extended throughout the lagoon. The existing U.S. Highway 101 bridge would be replaced in place as part of this project. No infrastructure improvements are assumed at the NCTD railroad trestle, but the channel under I-5 is assumed to be widened as part of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) I-5 North Coast Corridor Project. Thus, the tidal connection between the Central and East Basins would be widened and deepened, and the tidal prism of Alternative 1B would be substantially increased compared to Alternative 1A. Nontidal habitat areas would still exist in the East Basin. Several areas of transitional habitat above tidal elevations would be located in the western portion of the Central Basin.

#### Alternative 2A –Habitat Diversity (Relocated Inlet)

Alternative 2A would increase tidal influence within San Elijo Lagoon compared to Alternatives 1A and 1B by relocating the lagoon inlet to the middle of the West Basin. The new inlet would be protected by short cobble blocking structures. In addition, a new subtidal basin would be created just landward of the new inlet in the West and Central Basins. Tidal channels extending north and east of the basin would also be enlarged, as well as the channel under I-5 connecting the East and Central Basins. The main tidal channel would extend throughout the lagoon and be redirected just west of I-5, then extend into the East Basin. Infrastructure improvements are assumed to be completed by others at the NCTD railroad trestle, including the portion of the railroad directly parallel to the new inlet and the channel under I-5, which is assumed to be widened by Caltrans as part of the North Coast Corridor Project. A new bridge along U.S. Highway 101 would be constructed as part of the SELRP. This bridge would span the new lagoon inlet location, and would tie into the existing roadway. Excavation in the lagoon would result in onshore or nearshore placement of suitable beach sand material near the relocated inlet mouth. Nontidal habitat areas would remain in the East Basin. Transitional habitat areas above tidal elevations would be included in the Central and East Basins.

#### **PROBABLE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS:**

An initial study was not prepared for this project. Based on the County's preliminary analyses of the project, the following environmental issues will be examined in the EIS/EIR: Geology, Coastal Processes, Hydrology, Water and Aquatic Sediment Quality, Biological Resources (Aquatic and Terrestrial), Cultural and Paleontological Resources, Land Use, Recreation, Socioeconomics, Visual Resources, Traffic, Air Quality, Noise, Hazardous Materials, Mineral Resources, Public Services and Utilities, and Cumulative.

**PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING:** Consistent with Section 21083.9 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Statutes, three public scoping meetings will be held to solicit comments on the EIR:

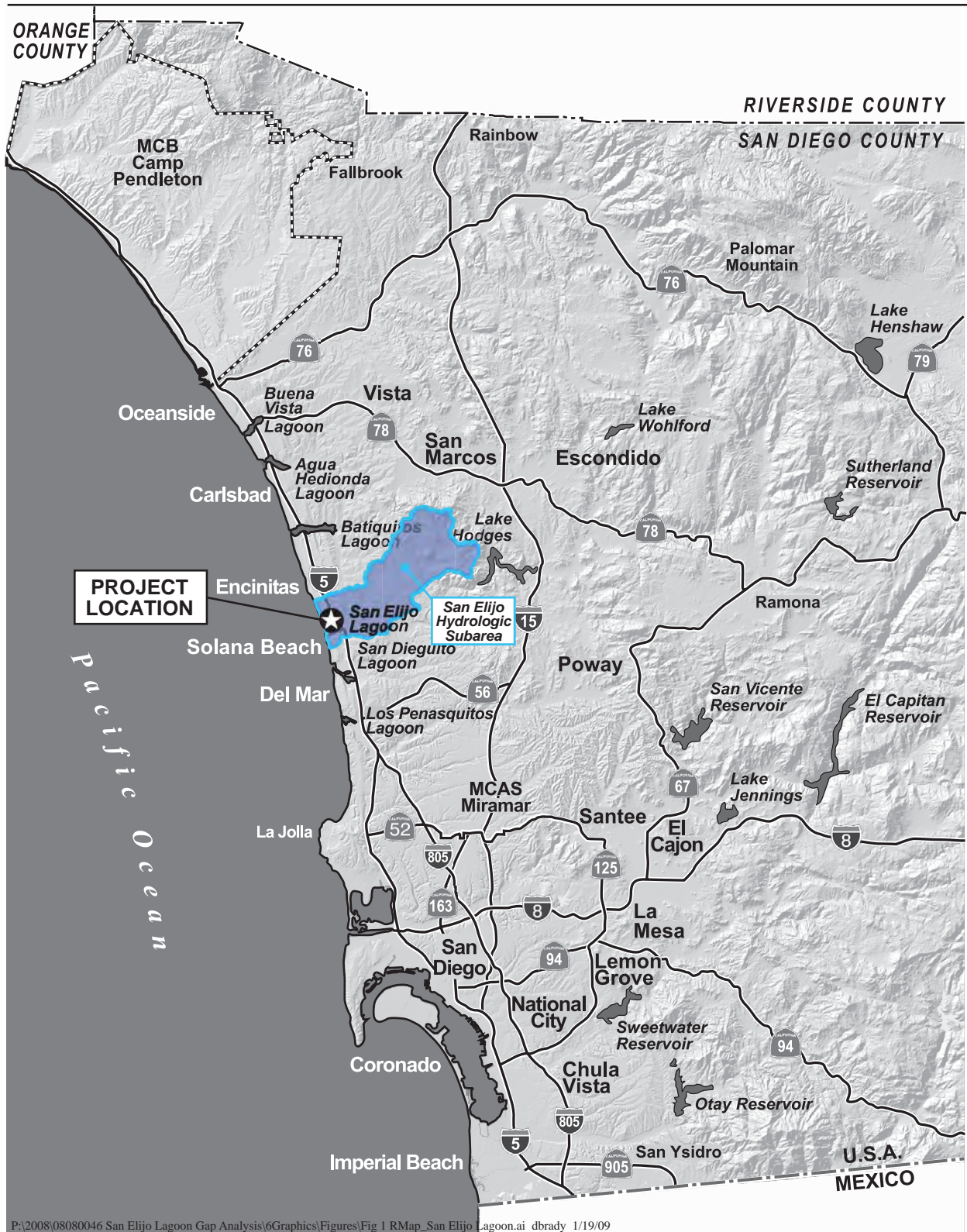
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Attachments:

Figure 1: Regional Map

Figure 2: San Elijo Lagoon Restoration Project Study Area and Land Ownership



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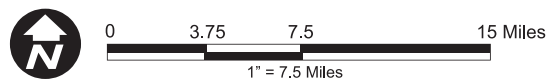
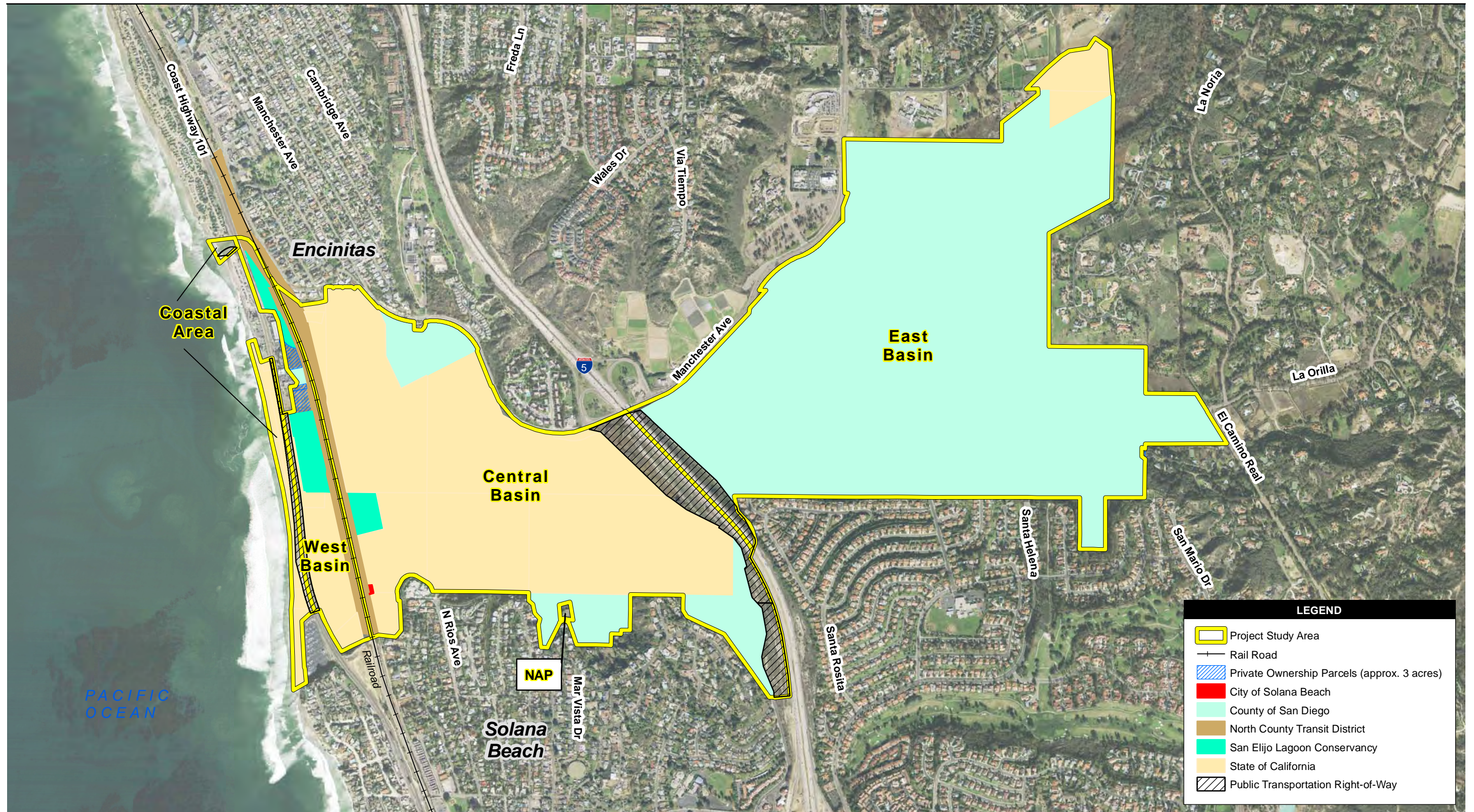
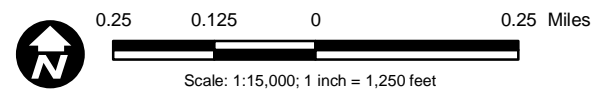


Figure 1  
Regional Map



Source: DigitalGlobe 2008; SanGIS 2008; SANDAG 2008



**LEGEND**

- Project Study Area
- Rail Road
- Private Ownership Parcels (approx. 3 acres)
- City of Solana Beach
- County of San Diego
- North County Transit District
- San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy
- State of California
- Public Transportation Right-of-Way

Figure 2  
San Elijo Lagoon Restoration Project  
Study Area and Land Ownership