

**FINAL DRAFT INITIAL STUDY/
MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION**

**RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN
ALISO AND WOOD CANYONS WILDERNESS PARK
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

LSA

July 2009

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MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION**

**RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN
ALISO AND WOOD CANYONS WILDERNESS PARK
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

Submitted to:

County of Orange
Orange County Parks
13402 Old Myford Road
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LSA Project No. ORG0601

LSA

July 2009

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Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State CEQA Guidelines, this Initial Study (IS) has been prepared as documentation for a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the proposed Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park (AWCWP) Resource Management Plan (proposed project or RMP). This IS includes a description of the proposed project, location of the project site, project sponsors, evaluation of the potential environmental impacts, findings from the environmental review, and proposed mitigation measures to lessen or avoid impacts on the environment.

The project area is located in Southern Orange County, west of Interstate 5 and off of South Coast Highway (Figures 1 and 2). AWCWP stretches from El Toro Road and Laguna Canyon Road on the west to Moulton Parkway and Alicia Parkway on the east. The main entrance to the park is located in Laguna Niguel off of Alicia Parkway.

The County of Orange is proposing to adopt a Resource Management Plan (RMP) to guide the long-term management of the AWCWP. AWCWP encompasses 3,873¹ acres of open space that include the hills, canyons, and floodplain surrounding Aliso and Wood Canyons and portions of the Laguna Canyon/El Toro Cliffs area. AWCWP is located within the Central and Coastal Subregion Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP) Reserve known as the Nature Reserve of Orange County (NROC).

The NCCP/HCP agreement requires preparation of a RMP for AWCWP. The RMP provides a comprehensive, long-term management plan for AWCWP. The fundamental objective for the RMP is to identify the best way to manage, protect and enhance the natural resource values of the park while providing safe recreational and educational opportunities to the public. The major plan objectives are to enhance wildlife habitats, develop vegetation management practices, and provide recreational opportunities and public access that have minimal impacts on resources.

This IS/MND has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970 (CEQA), as amended (Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.), and the State CEQA Guidelines for Implementation of CEQA (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15000 et seq.). Under the requirements of CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, the County is the Lead Agency for environmental review and must evaluate the environmental effects of the RMP. The intent of this IS/MND is to inform the County, local agencies, and the general public of the potential environmental impacts that may be associated with the implementation, construction, or operation of the improvements/programs identified in the RMP and to identify appropriate feasible mitigation measures that may be adopted to reduce or eliminate these impacts. The IS/MND is circulated for public review by Responsible Agencies, affected agencies and interested parties prior to any action on the RMP. The IS/MND and any comments received on the IS/MND are forwarded to the County for

¹ Total acres = 3,355 Fee, 256 Easements, and 262 IOD (Irrevocable Offer of Deed Dedication).

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Figure 1: Regional Location

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Figure 2: Project Location

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their review. As part of its consideration of the RMP, the County must review and approve the IS/MND prior to taking any action on the RMP.

1.2 FINDINGS OF THIS INITIAL STUDY

Pursuant to CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines, this IS has been prepared to determine whether implementation of the proposed project would result in significant environmental impacts that would require mitigation or the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) if significant impacts cannot be avoided.

This IS is based on the County's Environmental Checklist form, as suggested in Section 15063(d)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines. The completed form is found in Section 3.0 of this IS/MND. It contains a series of questions regarding the proposed project for each of the listed environmental areas. The form is used to evaluate whether there are any significant environmental effects associated with implementation of the proposed project and, if there are, whether mitigation measures can be identified to lessen or avoid such impacts.

Section 4.0 provides an explanation for each answer indicated on the form. The form and accompanying evaluation provide the information and analysis upon which the County would make its determination as to whether an EIR must be required for the project. The form is used to review the potential environmental effects of the proposed project for each of the following areas:

- Land Use and Planning
- Agriculture
- Population and Housing
- Geology and Soils
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Transportation/Circulation
- Air Quality
- Noise
- Biological Resources
- Aesthetics
- Cultural/Scientific Resources
- Recreation
- Mineral Resources
- Hazards
- Public Services
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Mandatory Findings

1.3 EXISTING DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

Section 15150 of the State CEQA Guidelines permits an environmental document to incorporate by reference other documents that provide relevant data.

The documents outlined in this section are hereby incorporated by reference, and the pertinent material is summarized throughout this IS/MND, where that information is relevant to the analysis of potential impacts resulting from the project. Any document incorporated by reference is available for review at the Irvine Ranch Historic Park, 13402 Old Myford Road, Irvine, CA.. The following were

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used as source documents in preparing the responses to the Environmental Checklist in Section 4.0; the reference numbers indicated below have been incorporated into the text.

1. *County of Orange General Plan, 2000.*
2. *County of Orange Zoning Code, 2005.*
3. *Eagle Aerial 2005.*
4. *USGS Laguna Beach, California 7.5-minute Quadrangle.*
5. *Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Department of Conservation (2000).*
6. *Aliso and Wood Canyons Regional Park General Development Plan Environmental Impact Report, 1992.*
7. *Existing Conditions Report, Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park, 2006*
8. *Administrative Draft Resource Management Plan, Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park, 2006*
9. *Aliso and Wood Canyons Regional Park Emergency Response Map*
10. *California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), California Scenic Highway Program, 1999 (Updated 12/7/2007) (http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/)*
11. *Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan/Implementing Actions Program Aliso Viejo Segment of the Aliso Creek Planning Unit, 1987*
12. *Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan/Implementing Actions Program The Aliso Creek Planning Unit (Excluding Aliso Viejo Segment), 1986*

1.4 CONTACT PERSONS

The Lead Agency for the IS for the proposed project is the County of Orange. Any questions regarding the preparation of this IS, its assumptions, or its conclusions should be referred to the following CEQA contact person:

Mr. Ron Tippets
OC Public Works
300 North Flower Street
P.O. Box 4048
Santa Ana, CA 92702-4048
(714) 834-5394

Questions regarding the RMP should be referred to the Project Manager:

Ms. Joanne Quirk
OC Parks
13402 Old Myford Road
Irvine, CA 92602-2304
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2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 PROJECT SITE

Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park (AWCWP) covers 3,873² acres including the hills, canyons, and floodplain surrounding Aliso and Wood Canyons and portions of Laguna Canyon. The landscape ranges from oak woodlands to broad expanses of grassland and coastal sage scrub. The diverse landscape and topography provides views and opportunities for a variety of visitor experiences.

The project area is located in Southern Orange County, west of Interstate 5 and off South Coast Highway (Figures 1 and 2). The park stretches from El Toro Road and Laguna Canyon Road on the west to Moulton Parkway and Alicia Parkway on the east. Because of its size and its “Y” shaped configuration, the park has a lengthy perimeter that borders several different communities. The main entrance to the park is located in Laguna Niguel off of Alicia Parkway. Bordering cities include Laguna Woods, Laguna Hills, and Aliso Viejo (north); Laguna Niguel (east); Dana Point (south); and Laguna Beach (west).

Orange County Parks (OC Parks) owns, manages, and operates AWCWP. Conservation efforts by the County and others have helped to ensure that the open space remains undeveloped and its natural and cultural resources remain intact. The park is designated as a Wilderness Park. As defined by the Orange County General Plan Recreation Element, a Regional Wilderness Park is “a regional park in which the land retains its primeval character with minimal improvements and which is managed and protected to preserve natural processes.”

AWCWP is located within the Central and Coastal Subregion Natural Communities Conservation Plan/Habitat Conservation Plan (NCCP/HCP) Reserve known as the Nature Reserve of Orange County (NROC); therefore, it is subject to provisions of the NCCP/HCP Implementation Agreement (Figure 3). This NROC forms a large island of habitat almost entirely surrounded by urban development. Despite its long history of use and proximity to urban development, the NROC supports many of the typical and unique landscapes of California -coastal sage scrub, chaparral, native grassland, and oak woodland – and sustains important habitat for a number of native animal species including California gnatcatcher, coastal cactus wren, mule deer, bobcat, and southwestern pond turtle. The connectivity between these areas within the NROC provides a rare opportunity to preserve a functional wildland habitat.

The lands within the AWCWP boundaries were historically part of the Rancho Niguel, granted to Juan Avila in 1842. The land was used for cattle, and later sheep ranching from the early 1840s into the 1870s. During this time, many of the large landholdings were subdivided and a diversified agriculture centered on citrus fruits, grapes, and grains appeared. From the late 1880s until the 1950s, the ranch maintained a diversified economy based on cattle ranching, agriculture (including dry

² Total acres = 3,355 Fee, 256 Easements, and 262 IOD (Irrevocable Offer of Deed Dedication).

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Figure 3: Nature Reserve of Orange County

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farming) and tenant farming. Following World War II, pressure for urbanization came from the rapid Orange County housing expansion that was occurring in nearby cities. The ranch was divided and developed into what eventually became Aliso Viejo, Laguna Woods, Laguna Hills, and Laguna Niguel.

AWCWP is owned and operated by OC Parks. The County began acquiring park lands in 1979. At that time, the Mission Viejo Company, master developer of the Aliso Viejo community, made an Irrevocable Offer of Dedication of nearly 2,351 acres of undeveloped open space to the County of Orange in conjunction with approval of the Aliso Viejo Planned Community. The following year, the Orange County Board of Supervisors approved this Dedication for inclusion into the County's park system for a new regional park. This core dedication continues to be augmented by offers of dedication extending from Laguna Niguel Ridge to the Aliso Creek valley floor and back up to the City of Laguna Beach. Other undeveloped land parcels adjacent to the core dedication have subsequently been added to AWCWP.

AWCWP currently encompasses approximately 3,873 acres of land and offers many opportunities for recreation use, including hiking, running, mountain cycling, equestrian use, nature viewing, birding, painting, photography, and wilderness education with an extensive 30-mile trail network. Hitching rails located at the park entrance, Wood Canyon at Mathis Trail, and at the Old Sycamore Grove accommodate equestrian uses, and a family rest area located under the sycamore trees provides for small gatherings in the park.

Information kiosks exist at six key locations within AWCWP to convey information and communicate with park users. The kiosks address a variety of topics including rules and regulations regarding use of roads and trails, maps of the park, and wildlife information. In addition, information signs are posted throughout AWCWP to post use restrictions, regulations, and other important information such as warnings about potential safety hazards from wildlife, poison oak, ticks, and steep slopes. Directional signs are also used at trail intersections to identify trails and indicate trail lengths.

A total of 36 entry sites provide access into AWCWP. Approximately 24 entry points are gated meaning that they can be closed, as needed, to prevent unwanted access. The majority of these gates are open during park operating hours. As described above, the main entrance to the park is located in Laguna Niguel off of Alicia Parkway. The parking lot accommodates 48 cars including spaces for disabled visitors. The Orange County Parks Rangers Headquarters, a small family picnic area, trashcans and portable restrooms are also located at the main park entrance. Two "informal" trailheads are located at Alta Laguna Park (Top of the World) and Canyon View Park. These areas provide restrooms and parking as well as access to AWCWP. Numerous unofficial entry points provide access from community parks and schools along the Aliso Creek Bikeway and from adjacent residential neighborhoods. Some of these entry points are unauthorized, "end of street" points used to gain access to unauthorized trails; others are informal entries meaning there are no developed trailheads at these locations.

2.2 SURROUNDING LAND USES

AWCWP is almost completely surrounded by urban development associated with the communities of Aliso Viejo, Laguna Niguel, Laguna Hills, Laguna Woods, and Laguna Beach (Figure 4). These

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Figure 4: Surrounding Land Uses

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surrounding communities provide existing and potential connections to AWCWP. Public open space located adjacent to or near the park includes: Moulton Meadows Park and the City of Laguna Beach Open Space, Laguna Niguel Regional Park, Laguna Coast Wilderness Park, Crystal Cove State Park, and Indian Hills Community Park. At its southern end, the park borders Aliso Creek Gold Course. Soka University, a small private college, occupies a prominent location in the viewshed of the park along the eastern ridge of Wood Canyon.

Property to the north between Aliso and Wood Canyons is within Aliso Viejo. Planned uses for this community include medium and high density residential, light industrial, and community commercial. The area north of the Aliso Viejo community is occupied by the City of Laguna Woods, which includes Rossmoor Leisure World, a retirement community that includes single and multi-family residences plus commercial uses and private parks and open space.

The Chet Holifield Federal Building and parking lot lies near the northeastern extent of AWCWP, along Upper Aliso Creek. Other existing land uses near that portion of the park include commercial and residential development. Residential areas border the west side of the park in the Temple Hill/Top of the World area of the City of Laguna Beach and the east side of the park along Highlands Avenue and Alicia Parkway in the City of Laguna Niguel.

2.3 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In its role as land manager, the County desires to maintain and enhance the biodiversity of AWCWP by overseeing the edge effects from nearby urbanization and ensuring that the land continues to be a viable part of the NROC. The RMP has been developed with a set of management goals and actions to ensure the long-term protection of AWCWP's natural and cultural resources.

2.3.1 Purpose of the RMP

The purpose of the RMP is to provide a comprehensive, long-term management plan for the AWCWP. The RMP would serve as a clear and realistic blueprint for the management of AWCWP for the next several decades and guide the County on future policy, land use, budget, and capital improvement decisions relating to the AWCWP. The fundamental objective for the RMP is to identify the best framework to manage, protect, and enhance the natural resource values of AWCWP while providing safe recreational and educational opportunities to the public. The major plan objectives are to enhance wildlife habitats, develop vegetation management practices, and provide safe, low-impact recreational opportunities and public access.

2.3.2 RMP Goals

The RMP includes goals and objectives that outline a management framework to protect the resources of AWCWP. A compendium of all RMP objectives is contained in Appendix A of this Initial Study for reference. RMP goals are listed below.

Public Use and Access

- Achieve compatibility between protection of the park's natural and cultural resources and human use demands.

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- Allow for passive recreational uses that contribute to enjoyment of the natural resources and promote healthy lifestyles (recognizing that park uses must have minimal impact on park resources and be compatible with a wilderness experience).

Biological Resources

- Protect, restore, preserve, and enhance the natural resources of the park.
- Maintain a park that is compatible with the entire San Joaquin Hills ecosystem and the Aliso Creek watershed.

Water Quality

- Improve the quality of streamwater that flows through the park.

Cultural Resources

- Protect and preserve the important cultural/historical resources of the park.

Interpretation/Education

- Provide an appropriate interpretive program that increases the public's understanding and appreciation of the significant natural and cultural resources of the site.

Visual Resources

- Protect and enhance significant views.

Stewardship

- Provide effective stewardship of the park to ensure natural and cultural resources are preserved in perpetuity for the recreation, education, and inspiration of all visitors.

2.3.3 Proposed Management Actions

Proposed management of AWCWP would remain consistent with the County's definition of a wilderness park. As such, the County will protect and preserve the native habitat in AWCWP for the benefit of its natural resources. Outdoor education and low-impact recreation would continue to be provided consistent with resource protection goals. A summary of the management actions proposed in the RMP is provided below.

Public Access and Recreation

The RMP proposes modifications to the existing network of trails and entry points, including construction of new trails, enhancement of existing authorized trails, formalization of several existing unauthorized trails, and closure of most unauthorized trails. The proposed public access and recreation plan is shown in Figure 5.

At present, the County uses trail guidelines detailed in the Regional Riding and Hiking Trails Design Manual (September 13, 1991). The RMP provides trail maintenance guidelines to minimize road and trail impacts to the natural and cultural resources of the site, including best management practices (BMPs), design standards, maintenance and management strategies for all roads and trails.

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Figure 5: Public Use and Recreation

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The RMP recommends that most unauthorized trails that have been closed be actively restored to native habitat. Unauthorized trails that have been closed include: Ibis, Paradise, Dog Park, Smoothies, Alpine, Schoolyard, Red Rider, No Way Out, and JTs.

In implementing the RMP, the County would create the following new trails and entry points or improve existing unauthorized trails to provide access to key destination points, viewing locations, and off-site destinations and to provide needed loops and connections:

- 1. Reroute Corridor Trail.** The County Regional Riding and Hiking Trail Master Plan designates a connection between the northern end of AWCWP and LCWP. At present, users originating within Laguna Canyon at El Toro Road and the San Joaquin Hills Transportation Corridor, access AWCWP at Upper Wood Canyon via two unauthorized trails that lead to the Cholla Trail, these trails are known as the “unauthorized Corridor routes.” The existing unauthorized trails, along with the existing Stairstep Trail and other trail alignments would be evaluated in order to create an accessible route in both an uphill and down hill direction for all trail uses. This rerouted Corridor Trail would become the preferred access to and from LCWP and El Moro.

The Stairstep Trail currently provides the only authorized trail access these other parks (a trail under management by the City of Laguna Beach). The Stairstep Trail is very steep and rugged and not appropriate for many trail uses. The RMP identifies preparation of a feasibility study to evaluate several options with a goal to achieve this linkage.

- 2. Aliso Beach Park Class 1 Bikeway.** The Aliso Creek Bikeway is an Orange County master-planned regional bikeway intended to stretch from the mountain foothills to the Pacific Ocean. The paved Class I bikeway begins at the foot of the Santa Ana Mountains, at the intersection of Santiago Canyon, El Toro, and Live Oak Canyon roads (Cook’s Corner) and extends south toward AWCWP. The three mile section within AWCWP begins at Sheep Hills Park in Laguna Hills and ends at the junction of the creek and the Aliso Water Management Authority (AWMA) Road just north of the main park entrance. The Orange County Master Plan of Regional Bikeways provides for the trail to extend from AWCWP to the Pacific Ocean.

The AWMA Road connects the main park entry to the Coastal Treatment Plant owned and operated by the South Coast Wastewater Authority (SOCWA). Currently the agreement between the County and SOCWA allows for public access Monday through Friday on the dirt trail that parallels the road up to the entry gate. On weekends the public is allowed to use the asphalt road up to the entry gate. Consistent with the County Regional Riding and Hiking Trail Master Plan, the Class 1 Bikeway would extend from the main park entry to the coast. Working with SOCWA, the bikeway would be on the existing roadway with a parallel riding and hiking trail. At the southern terminus of the trail, this area would be improved as a rest stop for the eastern park boundary to include restrooms, a picnic area and interpretive displays. Equestrian use would terminate at the Coastal Treatment Plant with a corral for horses. From the proposed rest area, a new trail would take trail users upslope to an overlook with views of the Pacific Ocean.

- 3. Car Wreck.** The unauthorized Car Wreck Trail, named for the crashed 1947 car protruding from a ravine along the route, snakes its way up a narrow and heavily rutted route over

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- exposed bedrock and through dense coastal sage scrub and chaparral before joining with Mathis Canyon Trail at the top. Authorizing the Car Wreck Trail would offer an additional loop opportunity between the Mathis Trail, West Ridge Trail and Wood Canyon. Several sections of Car Wreck would need to be repaired or rerouted to improve drainage and safety. Oak Grove Trail is currently a dead end requiring an “out and back” trip. Improving Car Wreck as an authorized trail would provide access from the Oak Grove Trail to other areas of AWCWP.
- 4. Nestall Trail (Birthday Trail).** Originating at the midpoint of Nestall Road, the Nestall Trail connects Nestall Road/Alta Laguna Boulevard at the Top of the World to the Dripping Cave Trail. This trail is extremely steep (elevation gain of 600 feet) and technical, crossing through the east facing hillside. Current conditions render uphill mountain biking very difficult and switchbacks would need to be added to protect native plants and enhance trail safety. In addition, authorization of this existing unauthorized trail would require signing and maintenance along most of its 1.25-mile length.
 - 5. East Ridge Trail (Five Oaks Link).** Five Oaks Trail connects Wood Canyon Trail to the water tank hill (Moulton Peak) at the east side of AWCWP. Private property prevents legal access to this trail from the east side of AWCWP. Five Oaks can only be accessed legally via Wood Canyon Trail thus requiring an “out and back” trail experience. A utility access road serves the water towers located at Moulton Peak and public access is currently prohibited. The utility road connects with several unauthorized trails in order to achieve a loop trail ride (or hike) from Five Oaks Trail. Lack of a loop trail in this location is a common complaint from trail users. The RMP identifies preparation of a feasibility study in conjunction with the utility provider to evaluate the unauthorized routes in order to connect Five Oaks Trail north to Moulton Peak, Chollo Trail and Gate #7.
 - 6. Aliso Creek (East).** Along the east side of Aliso Creek, an on-grade dirt maintenance road runs through Aliso Canyon from Alicia Parkway to the Coastal Treatment Plant. The dirt road provides access to SOCWA pipelines along the east side of Aliso Creek, is closed to the public, and is difficult to access from the west side of Aliso Creek. The County would work with SOCWA to open this area in order to create a loop trail between the ACWHEP structure (Aliso Creek Wetlands Habitat Enhancement Project) and the proposed trail on the west side of the creek that would come to the treatment plant and eventually connect to the coast. This trail would provide an opportunity to connect the Laguna Niguel Regional Park with AWCWP. This trail would require an additional creek crossing for the public at the southern end. This would be a multi-use trail.
 - 7. Aliso Summit Trail to Aliso Creek East.** The Aliso Summit Trail hugs the eastern ridge of Aliso Canyon in Laguna Niguel and borders residential communities. The trail is discontinuous in the existing route requiring users to make connections by leaving AWCWP and walking through a residential neighborhood before re-entering the park. At present the trail does not make a connection to other trails within AWCWP. A proposed connection from the Aliso Summit Trail downslope to the proposed Aliso Creek East Trail could follow an old road alignment and provide this needed connection to other areas of AWCWP.
 - 8. Esslinger Trail.** The Esslinger Trail would be a new trail that would begin northwest of the Coastal Treatment Plant and connect the AWMA Road to the existing Aswut Trail north of Moulton Meadows. From the AWMA Road the trail would extend diagonally northwest and

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upslope. The Esslinger Trail would make a needed loop connection and provide access to desirable destinations in this southern area of AWCWP.

In addition, the RMP identifies the following improvements to enhance the main entry and parking area:

- Place monument park signage on Alicia Parkway to announce the park.
- Enhance the entry and entry road with native plants and trees native to the project site.
- Reconfigure the parking area to highlight the sense of arrival.
- Create a forecourt or pre-entry to serve as a transition zone from the parking lot to the center as well as a gathering place for visitors.
- Create a paseo feature, a centralized access route to the park linking the forecourt, ranger's station, modular building for interpretive program, outdoor classrooms, and picnic and staging areas. These entry improvements are shown on Figure 6.

Figure 6: Proposed Main Entry Improvements

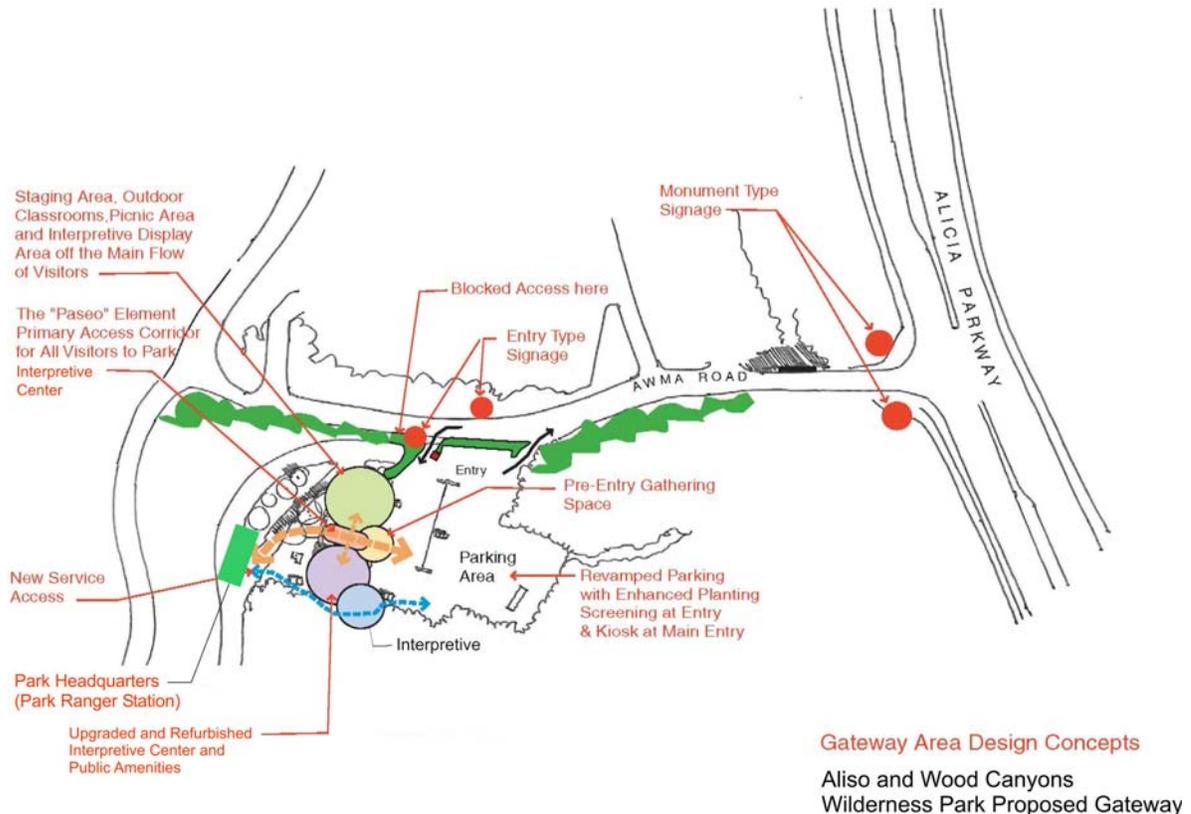


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Habitat Enhancement/Restoration

In order to improve biological productivity and diversity, habitat areas need to be evaluated for their conservation value and then prioritized for restoration and enhancement. NCCP/HCP criteria for high conservation values and low conservation values will be used in conjunction with professional judgment to evaluate habitats for their conservation value. Primary habitat enhancement and restoration activities include: (1) closure/restoration of unauthorized trails; (2) eradication of invasive and non-native species; and (3) re-establishment of native habitat by replanting.

Pest Species Control

Pest species have the potential to reduce the conservation value of AWCWP by directly affecting one or more NCCP/HCP target and identified species through direct predation or degradation of habitat. This group of pests includes the brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*), a group of medium-sized mammalian predators known as “meso-predators” [including feral dogs and cats, opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), striped skunk, and nonnative red fox (*Vulpes fidva*)], red-eared sliders (*Trachemys scripta elegans*), the American bullfrog, African clawed frogs (*Xenopus laevis*), and Argentine ants (*Iridomyrmex humilllis*). Pest animal control activities shall be coordinated with NROC, USFWS, CDFG, and animal control officers and may include: cowbird trapping, limiting turf areas within AWCWP, encouraging increased coyote use of problem areas, excluding domestic pets, removing American bullfrogs, African clawed frogs, and/or red-eared sliders, and avoiding long-term irrigation. As a Wilderness Park, there are no turf areas within AWCWP and no turf areas will be considered in future plantings.

Biological Monitoring

The NCCP/HCP requires that all resource management activities be monitored directly to assess their effectiveness in meeting the goals set by the NROC to (1) promote biodiversity, (2) increase habitat for target species, and (3) increase habitat values. Direct monitoring of some of the “target and identified species” and key vegetation communities is recommended using annual park-wide plot monitoring activities and target resource monitoring using a systematic sampling program. Target resource monitoring would occur on semi-permanent plots (e.g., 2 to 40 acres each) with a point-intercept line transect of 25- and 100-meters. In addition, data would be collected on passively managed special interest species and resources using techniques such as permanent photo points.

The data collected through the monitoring program, as described in the Monitoring and Adaptive Management Program, would be analyzed and used as the basis for evaluating and guiding park management. Analysis would compare current and previous data, with greater emphasis on identifying long-term trends rather than short-term phenomena.

Water Quality Management

AWCWP is located within the Aliso Creek watershed, which encompasses a drainage area of approximately 36 square miles. Runoff from urban development within the watershed can adversely affect water quality by contributing sediment and other pollutants to creeks and streams within AWCWP. Surface water quality has been studied extensively over the past approximately 15 years within the Aliso Creek watershed. Water quality monitoring has identified the following list of Constituents, Parameters, or Conditions of Potential Concern (CPCOPCs) for the urban runoff that flows through AWCWP: bacteriological indicators, toxicity, temperature, erosion and resulting sediments, and biostimulatory nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen).

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The RMP recommends that the County conduct ongoing visual monitoring to be alert to signs of potential contamination of park water resources resulting from park activities, as well as, urban runoff from outside park boundaries. The RMP also provides evaluation criteria to help the County assess projects that may affect surface water quality in AWCWP. The evaluation criteria include: recommendations from the Drainage Area Management Plan (DAMP), analysis of pre- and post-project water quality concentrations, regulatory compliance, operational evaluations, and development of park-specific evaluation criteria, BMPs, and adaptive management.

Cultural Resources Management

AWCWP is very sensitive with respect to cultural resources. A records search of the South Central Coastal Information Center conducted for the RMP identified 51 resources within the park boundaries. Sites within AWCWP are considered highly significant and have contributed greatly to research into the prehistory of Orange County. Some of the cultural resources within AWCWP have been or are in danger of being destroyed by human or natural disturbance and/or neglect. The fundamental objective of the RMP with regard to cultural resources is to manage, protect, and enhance park resources while still providing educational and recreational opportunities to the public. Recommended management actions for cultural resources within AWCWP include: establishing a cultural resources records management system, identifying Native American Traditional Cultural Areas, conducting focused surveys in areas proposed for park improvements, routinely patrolling culturally sensitive areas, and conducting park-wide surveys for cultural resources. The RMP also outlines the recommended steps for dealing with cultural resource discoveries within AWCWP.

Paleontological Resources Management

AWCWP contains an abundance of paleontological resources. With the exception of rock units considered too young to contain fossils, all geological units within AWCWP have the potential to yield important, significant fossils. However, a current and comprehensive survey of the AWCWP has not been conducted and very few of the localities that have been recorded within AWCWP have been thoroughly studied. Therefore, many unknown resources may exist within AWCWP. Recommended management actions for paleontological resources within AWCWP are very similar to those for cultural resources. The RMP outlines the recommended steps for dealing with paleontological resources discoveries within AWCWP. In addition to paleontological resources management, the RMP proposes development of an interpretive facility at Pecten Reef, provided one could be constructed with minimal environmental impacts.

Public Outreach and Education

The County would develop a Comprehensive Interpretive Plan to convey information about AWCWP. The interpretive plan would include recommendations for interpretive trails and displays; enhancement of existing facilities and displays; interpretive programming; and interpretive methods, such as live programs, tours, and school programs. The County would explore the possibility of developing an interpretive facility in the Pecten Reef area to highlight the unique paleontological resources in this area, while minimizing potential impacts to those resources.

Fire Management Plan

Existing fuel modification areas are located on the edges of the AWCWP where they meet urban developments. The current maintenance procedures for the fuel modification zones require the residential developments to mow, disc, weed whip, and hand-thin/clear these areas according to the fuel management plans for individual developments.

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Excessive fuel management practices increase the “edge effect” and allow nonnative invasive weeds, rather than natives, to become easily established within the fuel modification zones and adjacent natural areas. Existing fuel management and long and short-term fire management practices appear to be severe (e.g., erosion, denuded slopes) along some of the areas between residential development and AWCWP. Proper management of these areas is important for erosion and weed control, and wildlife management.

In response to the 1993 Laguna Fire, a required component of the NCCP/HCP is preparation of a Fire Management Plan for NROC. The purpose of the Fire Management Plan is to address the role of fire in the NROC and to provide for appropriate short and long term fire management policies that are sensitive to species conservation while providing for effective fire protection of urban development adjoining the NROC. Following adoption of the fire management plan for the entire NCCP/HCP Reserve, a specific fire management plan should be prepared for AWCWP.

Park Maintenance

Operations and maintenance efforts strive to keep the park safe, functional, and attractive for residents and visitors. The County will maintain facilities in the park to ensure that resource values are preserved and that management activities are supported. Routine patrol of public use ensures compliance with the rules and regulations and allows staff to assess level of use by area of the park. County staff will continue to enforce park policies to promote safety for park visitors and to protect park resources. The County would enforce park boundaries by maintaining property fencing and access points and signing park property.

The County would protect and enhance views and distinctive landscape features that contribute to the setting, character, and visitor experience, through the expansion of recreation and interpretive opportunities associated with visual and scenic resources, by working cooperatively with local jurisdictions to protect key views into AWCWP from visual intrusion and light pollution, by using native plantings to visually buffer developed areas and by siting park facilities to be sensitive to scenic views both into and out of AWCWP.

Monitoring and Adaptive Management Program

Adaptive management is defined as a flexible, iterative approach to long-term management of biotic resources that is directed over time by the results of ongoing monitoring activities and other information. Biological management techniques and specific objectives are regularly evaluated in light of monitoring results and other new information. These periodic evaluations are used to adapt both the management objectives and techniques to better achieve overall management goals. This approach involves managing CSS and adjacent habitats in a manner designed to support a broad range of “CSS Species” over the long term with particular emphasis on the “target and identified” species.

Park Administration, Management, and Operations

Park administrative operations are currently provided at the park office at the Main Entry. The park office may be redeveloped as part of renovation plans for the main entry and/or development of other interpretive facilities. This office would continue to be the center of control for all park operations and resource management operations.

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2.4 DISCRETIONARY ACTIONS

The following discretionary actions are required for project approval:

- Adoption of RMP

The following discretionary actions may be requested to implement the goals and policies outlined in the RMP in the future:

- Issuance of a Coastal Development Permit
- California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG): Streambed Alteration Agreement
- California Department of Transportation (Caltrans): Encroachment Permit
- County Coastal Development Permit
- Regional Water Quality Control Board: Section 401 Certification
- United States Army Corps of Engineers: 404 Permit
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): Section 7 Consultation

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3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS CHECKLIST



ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS CHECKLIST Mitigated Negative Declaration Number IP 08-269 for the Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park Resource Management Plan

ISSUES & SUPPORTING DATA SOURCES:	Potential Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/ Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
1. LAND USE & PLANNING. Would the project:				
a) Physically divide an established community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. AGRICULTURE. Would the project:				
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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3. POPULATION & HOUSING. Would the project:				
a) Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4. GEOLOGY AND SOILS. Would the project:				
a) Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
iv) Landslides?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Be located on expansive soils, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the California Building Code (2001), creating substantial risks to life or property?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal system where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5. HYDROLOGY & WATER QUALITY. Would the project:				
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner, which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner, which would result in flooding on- or off-site?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned storm water drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Have a significant adverse impact on groundwater quality or otherwise substantially degrade water quality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
h) Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures, which would impede or redirect flood flows?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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i) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
j) Inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. TRANSPORTATION/CIRCULATION. Would the project:				
a) Result in an increase in traffic, which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system (i.e., result in a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume to capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Exceed, either individually or cumulatively, a level of service standard established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that result in substantial safety risks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Result in inadequate emergency access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Result in inadequate parking capacity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Conflict with adopted policies, plan or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g. bus turnouts, bicycle racks)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7. AIR QUALITY. Would the project:				
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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c) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions, which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. NOISE. Would the project result in:				
a) Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive ground borne vibration or ground borne noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d) A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a private or public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working the project area to excessive noise levels?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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9. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES. Would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on Federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Conflict with provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. AESTHETICS. Would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect a scenic vista?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11. CULTURAL/SCIENTIFIC RESOURCES. Would the project:				
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in Section 15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. RECREATION. Would the project:				
a) Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities, which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. MINERAL RESOURCES. Would the project:				
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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14. HAZARDS. Would the project:				
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) For a project within the vicinity of private airstrip, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
g) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Expose people or structures to a significant risk or loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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i) Include a new or retrofitted storm water treatment control Best Management Practice (BMP), (e.g. water quality treatment basin, constructed treatment wetlands), the operation of which could result in significant environmental effects (e.g. increased vectors and odors)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
15. PUBLIC SERVICES. Would the project:				
a) Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
i) Fire protection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
ii) Police protection?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
iii) Schools?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
iv) Parks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
v) Other public facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
16. UTILITIES & SERVICE SYSTEMS. Would the project:				
a) Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which would cause significant environmental effects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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ISSUES & SUPPORTING DATA SOURCES:	Potential Significant Impact	Less Than Significant w/ Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
e) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider, which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
f) Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Comply with federal, state and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MANDATORY FINDINGS				
a) Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife population to drop below self sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Does the project have possible environmental effects, which are individually limited but cumulatively considerable? ("cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of an individual project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Does project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

LSA ASSOCIATES, INC.
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FINAL DRAFT INITIAL STUDY/MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN ALISO AND WOOD CANYONS WILDERNESS PARK
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

DETERMINATION:

Based upon the evidence in light of the whole record documented in the attached environmental checklist explanation, cited incorporations and attachments, I find that the proposed project:

COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a negative declaration (ND) will be prepared pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Article 6, 15070 through 15075.

COULD have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because the mitigation measures have been added to the project. A negative declaration (ND) will be prepared pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Article 6, 15070 through 15075.

MAY have a significant effect on the environment, which has not been analyzed previously. Therefore, an environmental impact report (EIR) is required.

Signature: _____

Planner: Ron Tippets, Chief

Planning and Development Services Division, OC Public Works

Telephone: (714) 834-5394

NOTE: All referenced and/or incorporated documents may be reviewed by appointment only, at the County of Orange Resources and Development Management Department, 300 N. Flower Street, Santa Ana, California, unless otherwise specified. An appointment can be made by contacting the CEQA Contact Person identified above.

Revised 2-5-03

4.0 CHECKLIST RESPONSES

4.1 LAND USE AND PLANNING

Would the Project:

a) Physically divide an established community?

No Impact. AWCWP is almost completely surrounded by urban development associated with the communities of Aliso Viejo, Laguna Niguel, Laguna Hills, Laguna Woods, and Laguna Beach. However, no established communities are located within AWCWP. Therefore, implementation of the RMP would not divide an established community.

b) Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?

Less Than Significant Impact. AWCWP is identified in the Orange County General Plan (2004) as Open Space Reserve and in the County Zoning Code (2005) as Open Space (OS). The location of the Coastal Treatment Plant is designated as Planned Community. The goals, objectives, and management actions included in the RMP are designed to protect and enhance natural, cultural, and visual resources within AWCWP and are compatible with the policies in the Land Use, Resources, and Recreation Elements of the Orange County General Plan.

The majority of AWCWP is located within the Coastal Zone as shown in Figure 7. Both the County and the City of Laguna Beach have approval authority over projects within this portion of the Coastal Zone. Three Local Coastal Programs (LCPs) have been approved by the Coastal Commission and are administered by the County of Orange. Most of AWCWP is located within the Aliso Viejo Segment of the Aliso Creek Planning Unit Local Coastal Program (LCP) with small portions located within the Aliso Creek Planning Unit (excluding Aliso Viejo Segment) LCP.

Small portions of AWCWP are also located within the City of Laguna Beach. The City of Laguna Beach's General Plan (1992) constitutes the LCP for this portion of the City (certified by the Coastal Commission in 1993). The Coastal Commission has approved the General Plan and associated Coastal Resources Appendix, and the City administers the General Plan. Both the City and County review and approve Coastal Development Permits for activities within this portion of the Coastal Zone. All of these documents anticipate preservation of open space in Aliso and Wood Canyons to protect natural and cultural resource values and to provide for passive recreation use.

Coastal Development Permits (CDPs) would be required to construct improvements proposed in the RMP (i.e., trails, trailheads, interpretive facilities) due to their location within the Coastal Zone. Any Section 404 authorizations would be subject to coastal consistency review by the California Coastal Commission.

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

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Figure 7: Coastal Zone

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

As described above, the recommendations included in the RMP are intended to protect and enhance park resources while allowing for continued passive recreation use of the park. The RMP would be consistent with all three LCPs and any development would be required to obtain a CDP and/or a coastal zone consistency determination from the Coastal Commission.

Implementation of the RMP is a requirement of the Natural Communities Conservation Plan/Habitat Conservation Plan (NCCP/HCP). Therefore, the RMP does not conflict with the NCCP/HCP.

c) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated. The project area is located within the Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP) Reserve. The County is a participating member of the NCCP/Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and the RMP is being prepared in compliance with the NCCP. Therefore, the RMP does not conflict with the NCCP/HCP. Also, see Response 4.9(F).

4.2 AGRICULTURE

Would the Project:

a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?

No Impact. According to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the National Resource Conservation Service (NCRS, 2000), there is no designated Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance in the project area.

b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?

No Impact. According to the County Zoning Code (2005) and the Orange County General Plan – Figure VI-2 (2004) there is no agriculturally zoned land or land protected by a Williamson Act contract within the study area. Therefore, there would be no impact to agriculturally zoned or protected lands.

c) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to nonagriculture?

No Impact. Although historically used for agriculture, the study area has been used for open space/recreational purposes for almost 20 years. Changes to the existing environment within the study area would not lead to conversion of farmland either directly or indirectly because there is no active agricultural land in the vicinity of the project site. The project does not provide increased roadway capacity and would not facilitate conversion of agricultural land in areas in the vicinity of AWCWP. Therefore, the proposed project would not lead to the conversion of existing farmland.

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

4.3 POPULATION AND HOUSING

Would the Project:

- a) **Induce substantial population growth in the area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?**

No Impact. The proposed project establishes management policies to enhance and preserve an existing wilderness park and does not directly result in population growth nor indirectly add capacity to existing roadways or infrastructure allowing population growth.

- b) **Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?**

No Impact. No communities or housing exist within the project area, and housing displacement would not occur. Therefore, the proposed improvements do not require displacement of substantial numbers of people nor the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.

- c) **Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?**

No Impact. Refer to Response 4.3(b).

4.4 GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Would the Project:

- a) **Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:**

- i) **Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.**

Less Than Significant Impact. The proposed project is not within an Alquist-Priolo Special Studies Zone (Almanza and Associates, 1992), and fault rupture is not anticipated because there are no known active faults that cross or project into the project site. A short segment of a verified, inactive fault, the Shady Canyon Fault, traverses upper Wood Canyon in an east-west trend (Almanza and Associates, 1992).

- ii) **Strong seismic ground shaking?**

Less Than Significant Impact. Fault movement from regional faults, including the Newport-Inglewood, San Andreas, or Elsinore Faults, could cause secondary seismic effects such as ground shaking in the study area. The Newport-Inglewood Fault is located approximately two miles from the project site (Almanza and Associates, 1992) and is the closest fault to the

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

proposed project. As there are no structures for human habitation associated with the proposed RMP, special seismic design standards are not required. Any proposed structures (e.g., interpretive facilities) would meet appropriate County seismic design requirements. Potential impacts to future park users during regional seismic events would be similar to existing conditions and are considered less than significant.

iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated. According to the California Geological Survey (Seismic Hazard Zone Maps, 1998 and 2001), the possibility for hazard from ground failure or liquefaction exists in portions of AWCWP, particularly around Aliso Creek. While the RMP contains goals and guidelines to ensure the appropriate location of proposed facilities, development and expansion of recreational and interpretive facilities could expose visitors to impacts related to seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.4-1, described below, would reduce potential impacts to less than significant levels.

Mitigation Measure

4.4-1: Prior to approval of final plans for specific facilities, as needed and where appropriate, a geotechnical study shall be completed by an engineering geologist or equivalent to evaluate seismic and non-seismic soil conditions, including but not limited to, expansion potential, subsidence, slope stability and corrosiveness. This report shall include evaluation of soil characteristics, identification of potential soil concerns and appropriate measures to address site specific soil conditions. Recommendations of the geotechnical study shall be incorporated into the final design plans. The final geotechnical study shall be submitted to Orange County Parks for review and approval.

iv) Landslides?

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated. Portions of AWCWP are characterized by steep slopes and loose soils which are susceptible to landslides (California Geological Survey, 1998 and 2001). While the RMP contains goals and guidelines to ensure the appropriate location of proposed facilities, development and expansion of recreational and interpretive facilities could expose visitors to impacts related to landslides. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.4-1, described above, would reduce potential impacts to less than significant levels.

b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

Less Than Significant Impact. A long history of use, prior to establishment of AWCWP, has facilitated the development of visitor-created unauthorized trails and shortcuts. Steep trails without adequate ground cover are heavily eroded with cutting and compaction along their edges. In some areas, trails act as drainage ditches carrying water during storm events. Implementation of the management actions recommended in the RMP, including the closure or rehabilitation of unauthorized trails would reduce erosion by revegetating steep trails that exacerbate conditions that are conducive to erosion.

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

The additional development of recreational and interpretive facilities as outlined in the RMP would include grading activities that could result in short-term soil erosion during the construction period. Exposed soils are considered erodible when subjected to concentrated surface flow or wind. Soil erosion and loss of topsoil would be minimized through compliance with the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) Rules 402 and 403 and the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit requirements. See Responses 4.5(a) and 4.7(b) for further discussion of soil erosion and loss of topsoil.

- c) **Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?**

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated. As described above, the possibility for hazard from landslide or liquefaction is moderate to high in certain areas of AWCWP [Section VI (a)(iv)]. The conditions related to lateral spreading, subsidence or collapse are not known at this time. The potential for these conditions to occur would be considered during the design of proposed facilities. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.4-1, described above, would ensure that unstable soil conditions would be remediated as part of the design and construction of proposed facilities.

- d) **Be located on expansive soils, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the California Building Code (2001), creating substantial risks to life or property?**

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated. According to the USDA soil surveys reviewed, some of the soil associations have expansive qualities (Almanza and Associates, 1992). Expansive soils shrink and swell as a result of moisture changes that can cause heaving and cracking of slab-on-grade, pavements, and structures founded on shallow foundations. Any construction activities would be subject to the engineering and building standards set forth in the Uniform Building Code (UBC). If native soil materials or soil conditions do not meet these standards, fill material meeting the specific standards would be imported for the project. This impact is considered less than significant.

- e) **Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal system where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?**

No Impact. No new septic tanks or systems are proposed as part of the RMP. The RMP will have no impacts to soil conditions related to septic tanks or alternative wastewater treatment systems.

4.5 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

Would the Project:

- a) **Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?**

Less Than Significant Impact. AWCWP contains several major habitat types within the park and includes the confluence of two main watersheds including the canyon slopes surrounding each of the creeks. As part of the Aliso Creek watershed, Aliso Creek flows approximately 9 miles (15 kilometers) from its headwaters in the Cleveland National Forest south past the confluence with

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

Wood Canyon creek and into the ocean at Aliso Beach in the City of Laguna Beach. The AWCWP portion of Aliso Creek encompasses the drainage section south of Moulton Parkway and Aliso Canyon through which Aliso Creek flows before entering the ocean. AWCWP also includes the Wood Canyon watershed which extends northwesterly from its confluence with Aliso Canyon and includes Mathis Canyon and its tributaries. Wood Creek is approximately 3 miles (4.8 kilometers) long from its headwaters at a detention basin to its confluence with Aliso Creek at an elevation of approximately 90 feet (27 meters).

Runoff from urban development within the watershed can adversely affect water quality by contributing sediment and other pollutants to creeks and streams within AWCWP. In addition, activities within the park have the potential to impact water quality, especially during construction of proposed facilities.

Short-Term Impacts: During construction of proposed recreational and interpretive facilities, some discharge of sediments and pollutants might occur into surface waters from the use of construction equipment and as a result of excavation and construction activities. While these discharges might occur, their effect on water quality would be minimized through the incorporation of several procedures imposed on the project. Such conditions are those prescribed in the Standard Specifications for Public Works Construction (“Green Book”), the general National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit for Construction Activities issued by the California Water Resources Control Board, and the Areawide Urban Stormwater Runoff Permit for Orange County issued by the California Regional Water Quality Control Board. The following standard procedures are contained in the plans and specifications and enforced by the County through the inspection program:

- All equipment maintenance shall be conducted within a specified area of the project site designated for such purposes. The construction inspector shall approve the location of this maintenance area as well as appropriate signage and protection from soil contamination through the use of an impervious barrier.
- All storage areas for oils, solvents, coolants, wastes, and other miscellaneous fluids shall be covered and protected with secondary containment structures such as lined troughs in the event of leakage from drums, barrels, cans, or other primary structures.
- Disposal containers for oils, solvents, hydraulic fluids, coolants, and other filter and chemical wastes from maintenance activities shall be provided on site, within the designated staging area. Disposal of these wastes shall be conducted in accordance with California Administrative Code Title 22 regulations. Under no circumstances shall disposal occur on site or within the project area.

In consideration of the nature of the proposed project (i.e., resource management) and the implementation of the requisite conditions identified above, impacts are considered less than significant.

Long-Term Impacts: RMP policies to enhance and protect natural landscapes and open space areas could potentially result in beneficial impacts to water quality due to higher levels of cleansing effects related to increased vegetation. Implementation of the proposed trail plan, which includes closing and

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

restoring unauthorized trails, will minimize the effects of unauthorized trail use (i.e., building new trails and going off trail).

Operation of new facilities associated with the proposed project would have little potential for substantially increasing pollutant levels in local runoff because only a negligible amount of impervious surface (i.e., foundations/slabs for restrooms and enhanced entry features, interpretive kiosks, bike trail, interpretive facilities) is associated with the proposed project and the habitat enhancement/restoration activities would further stabilize soil conditions, reducing erosion.

New trails, with the exception of the proposed bikeway, would be composed of graded earth, which allows for infiltration of stormwater, and would be designed and constructed using BMPs to minimize the potential for erosion and sedimentation of area waterways. Implementation of the RMP would result in a net decrease in trail miles due to the closure of unauthorized trails, thereby providing an overall increase in vegetation within the AWCWP.

The proposed Aliso Beach Park Class I Bikeway would be located on the existing road to the Coastal Treatment Plant. Therefore, no additional impervious surface would be required. Additionally, the number of vehicles using the bikeway and other trails would be limited to Coastal Treatment Plant employees and Orange County personnel or contractor vehicles, and deposition of constituents that may affect storm water quality would be limited. This condition would be the same or less than the current condition as the total trail mileage would be reduced with implementation of the RMP.

- b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level which would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?**

Less Than Significant Impact. The RMP does not propose construction of large areas of impervious surfaces that would prevent water from infiltrating into the groundwater system nor does the project result in direct additions or withdrawals to existing groundwater. Potable water, if provided, would be made available to trailheads via existing lines in adjacent local streets and no groundwater would be used for this purpose. Therefore, potential impacts to groundwater supplies or groundwater recharge are considered less than significant.

- c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner, which would result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?**

Less Than Significant Impact. Numerous drainages exist within the AWCWP and are shown on Figure 8. The primary drainage is Aliso Creek. None of the proposed improvements (i.e., new trails, trailheads, and interpretive facilities) would be constructed in a manner that would alter the course of any drainage, which results in substantial erosion or siltation. Through the siting policies outlined in the RMP, avoidance of sensitive resources, such as drainages, is a priority consideration when locating any future facilities. Furthermore, implementation of habitat restoration and protection goals of the RMP would restore hydrological systems and natural communities within AWCWP and would

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Figure 8: Hydrology

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not substantially alter existing drainage patterns in ways that would jeopardize resources within the existing watersheds or result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site.

- d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner, which would result in flooding on- or off-site?**

Less Than Significant Impact. As described in Responses 4.5(a) and 4.5(c), numerous drainages are located within AWCWP; the primary drainage is Aliso Creek. None of the proposed improvements (i.e., new trails, trailheads, and interpretive facilities) would be constructed in a manner that would alter the existing drainage pattern within the project site, alter the course of a stream or river, or result in any on- or off-site flooding. Through the siting policies outlined in the RMP, avoidance of sensitive resources, such as drainages, is a priority consideration when locating any future facilities. Furthermore, implementation of habitat restoration and protection goals of the RMP would restore hydrological systems and natural communities within AWCWP and would not substantially alter existing drainage patterns or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site.

- e) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned storm water drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?**

Less Than Significant Impact. Implementation of the RMP would result in the development of new recreation and interpretive facilities including new trails, trailheads, entry improvements and interpretive facilities at the main entry. However, the RMP does not propose the construction of large areas of impervious surfaces and the amount of off-site runoff is expected to be similar to existing conditions. Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be used during project construction to protect water quality. In addition, some cleared or graded areas and some decommissioned trails are planned to be re-vegetated further reducing the amount of runoff. The preservation and enhancement of upland areas and riparian habitats proposed in the RMP would decrease runoff after large precipitation events, benefiting the existing stormwater drainage system and reducing polluted surface runoff. Restoration of native upland vegetation would provide a better system of branches and roots to hold erosion-prone soil in place reducing the level of sediment in downstream flows. Given the limited nature of improvements on-site and habitat enhancement and restoration activities associated with the RMP, the future quantity of off-site runoff is expected to be reduced and the quality of off-site runoff is expected to be improved compared to existing conditions. Therefore, potential impacts are considered less than significant.

- f) Have a significant adverse impact on groundwater quality or otherwise substantially degrade water quality?**

Less Than Significant Impact. Implementation of the RMP would not substantially degrade groundwater or surface water quality. As described in Response 4.5(e), the RMP does not propose construction of large areas of impervious surfaces that would prevent water from infiltrating into the groundwater system nor would the project result in direct additions or withdrawals from existing groundwater. Potable water, if provided, would be made available via existing lines in adjacent local streets and no groundwater would be used for this purpose. Therefore, potential impacts to groundwater quality and supply are considered less than significant.

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

As described in Response 4.5(a), policies to enhance and protect natural landscapes and open space areas could potentially result in beneficial impacts to water quality. Operation of proposed recreation and interpretive facilities would result in a minimal increase in impervious surface. Closure and restoration of unauthorized trails would actually reduce the overall trail mileage in AWCWP. Given the limited nature of improvements on-site and habitat enhancement and restoration activities associated with the RMP, the quality of runoff would be improved and potential impacts are considered less than significant.

Construction of proposed facilities could potentially degrade water quality during the construction period. As described in Response 4.5(a), compliance with treatment measures outlined in the General Construction Permit, the County Drainage Area Master Plan (DAMP), and the measures, as described in Response 4.5(a), would ensure that potential effects to water quality encountered during construction would be minimized.

g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or other flood hazard delineation map?

No Impact. The proposed project does not involve the construction of housing.

h) Place within a 100-year flood hazard area structures, which would impede or redirect flood flows?

No Impact. The proposed project does not include construction of any structures that could impede or redirect flows and would not change existing flooding conditions within the project area.

i) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of the failure of a levee or dam?

No Impact. The risk of loss, injury, or death involving flooding as a result of the proposed project will not change from the existing risks associated with the AWCWP. No levees or dams currently exist within the study area. In addition, no structures intended for human occupation are proposed by the project.

j) Inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?

Less Than Significant Impact. Impacts related to inundations by seiche, tsunami and mudflow are described below.

Seiche. A seiche is a long wavelength, large-scale wave action set up in a closed body or reservoir. No impact related to seiche exists given that there are no large bodies of water in close proximity to the project area.

Tsunamis. Tsunamis are defined as sea waves created by undersea fault movement. A tsunami poses little danger away from shorelines, however, when it reaches the shoreline, a high swell of water breaks and washes inland with great force. Waves may reach fifty feet in height on unprotected coasts. The Orange County Sheriff's Department Emergency Management Bureau has identified

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

Aliso Beach and the City of Laguna Beach as communities that could be impacted by tsunami. However, the topography of AWCWP effectively separates the park from those communities and limits the possibility that AWCWP would be affected by a tsunami on the coast. Therefore, the potential impacts related to tsunami are considered less than significant.

Mudflows. Mudflows typically occur in mountainous or hilly terrain. Topography is steep within the project area and there is a potential for mudflows to occur in heavy rain following disturbances, such as wildfires, to the upland hill slopes. The RMP does not propose any alterations to the existing terrain in a manner that would create mudflows and therefore, the potential impacts related to the proposed project are considered less than significant.

4.6 TRANSPORTATION/CIRCULATION

Would the Project:

- a) **Result in an increase in traffic, which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system (i.e., result in a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume to capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections)?**

Less Than Significant Impact. Access to AWCWP is available through a network of regional and local roadways, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Regional access to AWCWP is provided via the Pacific Coast Highway and the San Joaquin Hills Transportation Corridor. Local access to AWCWP is provide from Alicia Parkway, Moulton Parkway, El Toro Road and several smaller, local roadways that provide access to the park from the communities of Laguna Beach, Laguna Niguel, and Aliso Viejo. As outlined in the project description, the only formal parking area for AWCWP is located at the main entry off of Alicia Parkway. Two other parking areas are located outside the AWCWP: Alta Laguna Park (Top of the World) and Canyon View Park. In addition, there are numerous unofficial entry points from community parks and schools along the Aliso Creek Bikeway and from adjacent residential neighborhoods. Some of these entry points are unauthorized, “end of street” points used to gain access to unauthorized trails; others are informal entries meaning there are no developed trailheads at these locations.

The proposed project is a RMP that provides management actions to protect and enhance natural, cultural, and visual resources and allows for passive recreation use. Limited new facilities are proposed as part of the RMP to maintain/enhance the biological resource within and manage public access to AWCWP. Planned habitat restoration activities would require closure of numerous existing trails resulting in a net reduction in recreational facilities in AWCWP. Given the intent of the RMP is to manage/restore natural resource and maintain the existing recreational opportunities not to facilitate/increase use of AWCWP, use of AWCWP is not expected to increase beyond existing levels. Therefore, implementation of the RMP would not interfere with traffic on local roadways since the number of trips to and from AWCWP would not generate a substantial number of vehicle trips and would not affect the existing or future traffic load and capacity of local roadways. The number of vehicle trips accessing AWCWP would be similar to the number of trips occurring today. This impact is considered less than significant.

Implementation of the proposed RMP would not result in substantial increase in total vehicle trips such that local roads would be negatively impacted operationally. Also, park users generally access

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

AWCWP outside of the AM and PM weekday peak hours and on the weekends; times when the local circulation system is less congested. As the types of new facilities proposed are limited, the number of trips accessing AWCWP is anticipated to be similar to or less than the number of trips occurring today. Implementation of the RMP would result in a reduction of trips on some local roads due to the elimination of unauthorized access points, primarily in residential neighborhoods (through the fencing program and closure of unauthorized trails). This impact is considered less than significant.

b) Exceed, either individually or cumulatively, a level of service standard established by the County congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?

Less Than Significant Impact. See Response 4.6(a).

c) Result in a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location that result in substantial safety risks?

No Impact. AWCWP is located approximately eight miles south of John Wayne Airport and approximately four miles south of the El Toro Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS), which was closed for use in 1999 (Google Maps, 2008). AWCWP is a regional recreational resource and does not currently contain any structures, nor are any structures proposed in the RMP, that would affect air traffic or attract visitors that would increase demand for air travel.

d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?

Less Than Significant Impact. As described in Response 4.4(b), AWCWP currently contains numerous visitor-created unauthorized trails and shortcuts. Steep trails without adequate ground cover are heavily eroded creating unsafe conditions for trail users. Numerous unofficial entry points provide access into the park, including unauthorized, “end of street” points. Use of these “end-of-street” access points make enforcement of regulations difficult and facilitates the creation of unauthorized trails.

Implementation of the RMP would improve safety within AWCWP. Closure of unauthorized trails within AWCWP would enhance the safety of the trail system by eliminating dangerous short cuts and steep grades. Trail facilities would be maintained and improved consistent with County safety standards. The provision of additional property fencing and signage, as outlined in the RMP, would secure AWCWP boundaries and alert visitors to potentially dangerous conditions (i.e., entry onto private property, steep slopes).

e) Result in inadequate emergency access?

Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated. The County has an established Emergency Response Map that outlines appropriate emergency access routes into and within AWCWP. The Emergency Response Map identifies the location of call boxes within the park and the most direct routes to those call boxes, including the AWMA Road and Wood Canyon Trail (County of Orange). Implementation of the RMP would not alter roads or other infrastructure comprising emergency access routes on the local streets adjacent to AWCWP. The design of entry improvements, proposed

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

as part of the RMP, has not yet been finalized. Implementation of the following mitigation measure would ensure that emergency access roads/trails and gates would provide adequate emergency access.

Mitigation Measure

4.6-1: The Orange County Fire Authority shall be consulted during the design of emergency access roads or emergency access gates to ensure that appropriate accommodation for emergency and fire suppression vehicles is provided.

f) Result in inadequate parking capacity?

Less Than Significant Impact. The primary parking area for AWCWP is located at the main entry. This parking lot accommodates 48 cars including two handicap spaces. Two informal parking areas are located outside of the park: Alta Laguna Park (Top of the World) and Canyon View Park (Gate 7). Implementation of the RMP is not expected to result in increased visitation to AWCWP nor an associated increase in the number of car trips to the project site; therefore, no additional parking would be required. Improvements to the main entry, proposed as part of the RMP, would reconfigure the parking area to increase efficiency and enhance the natural character of the site; it would not reduce the parking capacity at the main entry.

g) Conflict with adopted policies, plan or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g., bus turnouts, bicycle racks)?

No Impact. AWCWP provides facilities for walking, bicycling and equestrian use and connects to adjacent recreational facilities (i.e., Laguna Coast Wilderness Park), as well as assorted local and County bikeways and trails. Trailheads provide opportunities for access to AWCWP on foot, bicycle or horseback from local residential areas.

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) provides transit services to AWCWP. Stops near the park include: Moulton Parkway and El Toro Road, Moulton Parkway and Alicia Parkway, Alicia Parkway and Market Place, Alicia Parkway and Aliso Creek Road, Aliso Creek Road and El Toro Road, Aliso Creek Road and Pacific Park, and Aliso Creek Road and Aliso Viejo.

4.7 AIR QUALITY

Would the Project:

a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

No Impact. The proposed project is a RMP that provides management actions to protect and enhance resources and to allow for passive recreation use. Limited vehicle emissions would be associated with implementation of the RMP. As described in Response 4.6(a), the number of trips would be similar since the RMP does not propose any facilities that would attract substantially greater visitors than current operations. Vehicle emissions associated with visitors to the park and surveillance/maintenance by County staff and stationary source emissions associated with operation of AWCWP would be similar to what occurs today under existing conditions. Such limited emissions would not affect the implementation of the applicable air quality plan.

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b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?

Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated. Air pollution emissions associated with the proposed project would occur over the short term in association with construction activities, such as grading and vehicle/equipment use. No increases in long-term emissions would result from the proposed project.

Long-Term (Operational) Emissions: Long-term air emissions impacts are associated with any change in permanent use of the project site by on-site stationary and off-site mobile sources that substantially increase vehicle trip emissions. As described above in Response 4.7(a), the potential pollutant emissions associated with motor vehicles accessing AWCWP or stationary equipment used on-site would be similar to what occurs today as part of ongoing maintenance and recreational activities. Therefore, no additional long-term emissions would result from the implementation of the RMP.

Short-Term (Construction) Emissions: Air pollutant emissions associated with the proposed project would occur over the short term associated with facility construction (i.e., trails, interpretive facilities/office, and informational signage), habitat restoration activities, and fuel modification/fire management activities. Construction activities could generate exhaust and fugitive dust emissions that would affect local air quality.

Construction activities could generate combustion emissions from utility engines, on-site heavy duty construction vehicles, equipment hauling materials to and from the site, and motor vehicles transporting construction crews. Exhaust emissions during construction would vary daily as construction activity levels change. The use of construction equipment would result in localized exhaust emissions. Due to the limited extent of development proposed (i.e., trails, interpretive facilities/office, and informational signage), the projected short-term emissions of criteria pollutants as a result of project construction are expected to be below emissions thresholds established by the SCAQMD.

Fugitive dust emissions are associated with excavation, land clearing, exposure, and cut-and-fill operations. Dust generated daily during construction would vary substantially, depending on the level of activity, the specific operations, and weather conditions. On a limited basis, nearby sensitive receptors and on-site workers may be exposed to blowing dust, depending on the prevailing wind.

Due to the nature of the project and the standard operating procedures of the County, ambient air quality would not deteriorate beyond the levels projected by the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). As a part of the standard procedures contained in the plans and specifications and enforced by the County, construction inspectors would require the following standard operating procedures.

- Confirm that, in compliance with SCAQMD Rule 403, fugitive dust shall be controlled through the use of a watering truck as necessary, and/or the use of an environmentally safe chemical dust suppressant. Controls shall be applied to all on-site, unpaved roads and ramps, stockpile areas,

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actively excavated or exposed sites, and all areas that may be temporarily inactive but include exposed (i.e., denuded or devoid of vegetation) or disturbed surfaces.

- Confirm compliance with SCAQMD Rule 403 as follows:
 - Moisten soil and debris not more than 15 minutes prior to excavation or movement.
 - Apply environmentally safe chemical stabilizers to disturbed surface areas (i.e., graded areas or areas subject to erosion from wind or water) within five days of completing grading or apply dust suppressants or vegetation sufficient to maintain a stabilized surface.
 - Water exposed surface areas at least twice a day under calm conditions or as often as needed on windy days or during dry weather in order to maintain a surface crust and prevent the release of visual emission of dust from the construction site.
 - Cease grading operations when wind speeds exceed 25 miles per hour if dust is being generated and cannot be controlled by watering alone.
 - Provide street sweeping, as needed, on adjacent roadways to remove dirt, mud, and/or debris dropped from construction vehicles entering or leaving the project site.
 - Maintain a minimum of 2 feet of freeboard capacity on all trucks hauling dirt, debris, and/or construction materials to and from the construction site.
 - Mobile heavy equipment (e.g., bulldozers, haul trucks) on unpaved surfaces shall be limited to an on-site speed that avoids fugitive dust impacts off site as determined by the County Project Engineer.

Incorporation of these procedures, as determined applicable to the specific nature of the construction activities will ensure that the fugitive dust generation will be less than significant.

- c) **Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions, which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?**

Less Than Significant Impact. As discussed in Response 4.7(b), no exceedance of the SCAQMD criteria pollutant emissions thresholds would be anticipated either during operation or construction of the proposed project. The projected short-term emissions of criteria pollutants as a result of project construction are expected to be below emissions thresholds established for the region, complying with SCAQMD Rule 403 and the County's Standard Procedures (as described in Response 4.7(b)). As the proposed project would result in similar long-term emissions such as occur under existing conditions (i.e., minor park, maintenance, and fire protection vehicle trips), and short-term construction emissions would be below the SCAQMD emissions thresholds with compliance with SCAQMD Rule 403 and the County's Standard Procedures (as described in Response 4.7(b)), the proposed project's contribution to cumulative emissions of criteria pollutants is considered less than significant.

- d) **Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?**

Less Than Significant Impact. Sensitive receptors adjacent to the project area include park users and neighboring residents. As described in Responses 4.7(a) and 4.7(b) above, implementation of the

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proposed project is not expected to result in increased visitation to the park nor an associated increase in the number of car trips to the project site. Vehicle emissions associated with use of the park would be similar to what occurs today under existing conditions. Air pollutant emissions are anticipated to be the same as currently occurs and potential exposure of sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations is considered less than significant.

Construction of the proposed recreation and interpretive facilities may expose surrounding sensitive receptors to airborne particulates and fugitive dust as well as a small quantity of construction equipment pollutants (i.e., usually diesel-fueled vehicles and equipment). As described in Response 4.7(b) above, impacts would be below peak-day pollution threshold criteria and would be of short duration. In addition, construction contractors would be required to implement measures to reduce or eliminate emissions by following standard construction practices in compliance with SCAQMD rules (as described in Response 4.7(b)). Therefore, sensitive receptors are not expected to be exposed to substantial long-term or short-term pollutant concentrations, and no significant air quality impacts would result from the proposed project.

e) **Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?**

Less Than Significant Impact. Some objectionable odors may emanate from the operation of diesel-powered construction equipment during construction of proposed recreation and interpretive facilities (i.e., trails, interpretive facilities). However, these odors would be short term in nature and would not result in permanent impacts to surrounding land uses, including sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the project site. Air pollutant emissions are anticipated to be the same as currently occurs and long-term exposure of sensitive receptors to objectionable odors is considered less than significant. Therefore, no significant impacts related to objectionable odors would result from the proposed project.

4.8 NOISE

Would the Project:

a) **Exposure of persons to or generation of noise levels in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?**

Less Than Significant Impact. Primary noise sources within AWCWP include traffic along neighboring roadways, airplanes flying overhead, construction, and minimal noise associated with recreation use of the park. For visitors, noise coming from outside the park is limited to those locations proximate to major routes adjacent to AWCWP. For neighbors, noise coming from inside the park is generally the result of visitors congregating at popular trailheads and traffic parking on residential streets.

The County Noise Element determines that regional open space land uses are compatible with noise sources above 60 A-weighted decibels (dBA) community noise equivalent (CNEL) provided interior noise levels can be mitigated to between 45 and 65 dBA CNEL, depending on interior use.

The County's Noise Ordinance establishes the maximum permissible noise level that may intrude into a neighbor's property and noise level standards for various land use categories affected by stationary

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noise sources. The County's Noise Ordinance also regulates the timing of construction activities and includes special provisions for sensitive land uses. According to the County's Noise Ordinance, construction activities shall occur only between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., Monday through Saturdays. No construction shall be permitted outside of these hours or on Sundays and federal holidays.

Long-Term Noise Impacts: As described in Response 4.6(a), implementation of the proposed project would not result in a substantial increase in daily traffic trips in the project vicinity from the project site; subsequently, the proposed project would not result in substantial traffic noise effects on adjacent land uses and are considered less than significant. Impacts from maintenance activities associated with the proposed project after its completion would be intermittent and are anticipated to be less than significant.

Short-Term Noise Impacts: Portions of AWCWP are adjacent to residential development and other sensitive receptors, such as schools. These sensitive receptors could be exposed to high intermittent noise levels during construction of facilities proposed in the RMP. However, construction of these facilities would not substantially affect land uses adjacent to the project site through compliance with applicable provisions of the County's Noise Ordinance.

b) Exposure of persons to or generation of excessive ground borne vibration or ground borne noise levels?

Less Than Significant Impact. Construction of facilities proposed in the RMP (i.e., trails, entry improvements, interpretive facilities) would not require construction activities that would generate excessive ground borne vibration, such as pile driving. The level of construction would be limited to minor grading to prepare areas for habitat enhancement/restoration and construction of minor structures (trailheads, interpretive facilities) within AWCWP. Impacts related to ground borne vibration or noise are considered less than significant.

c) A substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?

No Impact. As described in Response 4.8(a) above, the proposed project, once complete, would not result in increased visitation to the AWCWP or an associated increase in the number of car trips to the project site. Ambient noise associated with recreation use of the AWCWP would be similar to existing conditions. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in a permanent increase in ambient noise levels above levels existing without the project.

d) A substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the project vicinity above levels existing without the project?

Less Than Significant Impact. Construction of facilities proposed in the RMP (i.e., trails, entry improvements, interpretive facilities) would temporarily increase ambient noise levels in the project vicinity. As described in Response 4.8(a), impacts resulting from temporary construction noise can be mitigated to a less-than-significant level through compliance with the Orange County Noise Ordinance.

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- e) **For a project within an airport land use plan or, where such plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a private or public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?**

No Impact. The proposed project is not located within an airport land use plan or within two miles of any airport. The El Toro Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS), located approximately four miles north of the project site, was closed for military use in July 1999. The nearest operating airport, John Wayne Airport, is located approximately eight miles northwest of the project area (Google Maps, 2008).

- f) **For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project expose people residing or working the project area to excessive noise levels?**

No Impact. According to the *Laguna Beach, California* USGS 7.5-minute quadrangle, the proposed project is not located within the vicinity of a private airstrip.

4.9 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The information summarized below is based on information in the Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Existing Conditions Report prepared for Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park (AWCWP). The RMP is a requirement of the Central Coastal Orange County Natural Communities Conservation Plan/Habitat Conservation Plan (NCCP/HCP), because most of the AWCWP is part of the NCCP/HCP Reserve.

The purpose of the RMP is to identify allowable uses in the park, and provide for the management of the resources in conjunction with the public recreational use. Because one of the primary purposes of the RMP is the management of resources to maximize habitat value within the AWCWP, there are generally no substantial impacts to biological resources associated with the RMP. Nevertheless, the public uses have the potential to adversely affect some resources, i.e., construction of new trails and visitor serving facilities could impact valuable habitat. Implementation of RMP goals and strategies will ensure that the locations for any of these facilities would be carefully chosen so as to minimize impacts to special status species and their habitats. Avoidance of sensitive species would be a primary consideration in the siting of future recreational trails, trailheads and interpretive facilities. The relocation of certain trails and facilities would benefit special status species by restoring habitat in areas where trails are unauthorized, and providing new trails in areas where impacts will be minimized.

In 1993, vegetation communities within the County were further described and defined by Jones and Stokes in *Methods Used to Survey the Vegetation of Orange County Park and Open Space Areas and The Irvine Company Property* (Jones and Stokes 1993). The information discussed within this section is summarized and adapted from the RMP which in turn is taken from previous work in the AWCWP. Table 4.9A lists each vegetation community along with the Orange County Classification Code and the reported approximate acreage, with some modification, if indicated, due to recent changes in acreages. These vegetation communities are shown on Figure 9.

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LSA ASSOCIATES, INC.
JULY 2009

FINAL DRAFT INITIAL STUDY/MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN ALISO AND WOOD CANYONS WILDERNESS PARK
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Figure 9: Vegetation Communities

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Among the various habitat types, six major types are relatively widespread within AWCWP.

Coastal Sage Scrub. Coastal sage scrub (CSS) is a structurally diverse vegetation community where animals have opportunities to find food and shelter. Several associations and sub-associations of CSS exist based on variations in dominant plants within this community (e.g., sagebrush scrub, coyote bush scrub, southern cactus scrub). Combining all classifications of CSS, approximately 1,825 acres of CSS have been identified in AWCWP. CSS generally occurs in low-lying coastal areas subject to development, so this habitat has been disproportionately reduced in acreage in southwestern California and is widely associated with species identified in the NCCP/HCP such as the coastal cactus wren, Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow, and the federally listed threatened coastal California gnatcatcher.

Table 4.9.A: Vegetation Types within AWCWP

Vegetation Community	Orange County Classification Code	Total Acres
Southern coastal bluff scrub	2.1	n/a*
Venturan-Diegan transitional coastal sage scrub	2.3	n/a
California sagebrush/California buckwheat scrub	2.3.1	770 ¹
California sagebrush/orangebush monkey flower scrub	2.3.2	87 ¹
Black sage scrub	2.3.4	492 ¹
Sagebrush scrub	2.3.6	438 ²
Buckwheat scrub	2.3.7	n/a*
Coyote bush scrub	2.3.9	38 ¹
Mixed sage scrub	2.3.10	n/a*
California sagebrush/coyote bush scrub	2.3.12	n/a*
Southern cactus scrub	2.4	0.3 ²
Maritime chaparral-sagebrush	3.1	XX ³
Southern mixed chaparral	3.2	447 ^{1,3}
Southern maritime chaparral	3.6	234 ^{1,3}
Toyon-sumac chaparral	3.12	44 ^{2,3}
Annual grassland	4.1	794 ¹
Southern coastal needlegrass grassland	4.3	n/a*
Ruderal grassland	4.6	92 ¹
Freshwater seep	5.2	7 ^{1,3}
Coastal freshwater marsh	6.4	n/a
Riparian herb	7.1	0.25 ²
Southern willow scrub	7.2	68 ¹
Mulefat scrub	7.3	137 ¹
Southern sycamore riparian woodland	7.4	6 ¹
Southern coast live oak riparian forest	7.5	33 ²
Southern arroyo willow forest	7.6	2.5 ²
Southern black willow forest	7.7	n/a*
Bramble thicket	7.11	n/a*
Coast live oak woodland	8.1	131 ¹
Mexican elderberry woodland	8.4	2 ¹
Cliff faces	10.2	n/a

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Vegetation Community	Orange County Classification Code	Total Acres
Rock outcrops	10.3	2 ²
Other disturbed areas	15.6	41 ¹
Notes: ¹ Approximate acreages reported in Almanza & Associates, Inc. (1992) that covers all of AWCWP. ² Approximate acreages reported by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (2003) and only apply to the Wood Canyon watershed portion of AWCWP. ³ Acreages have changed since the dates of cited references. * Habitat occurs in the San Joaquin Hills and the adjacent Laguna Coast Wilderness Park and may occur in AWCWP. n/a No acreage values reported.		

Source: LSA Associates, 2006

Chaparral. Chaparral is generally transitional between CSS and woodland habitats in terms of structure and moisture content. Approximately 725 acres have been identified in AWCWP. Most of the bird species found in CSS also occur here, but some specialized species such as the coastal California gnatcatcher are almost nonexistent.

Grassland. Grassland habitat is a major habitat type in AWCWP, with approximately 886 acres identified. Many wildlife species use this habitat, but the lack of vegetative structure generally results in fewer species and fewer individuals than in more structurally diverse habitats. As in most habitats, birds are the most conspicuous inhabitants of grasslands. Birds of prey (raptors) are commonly associated with grasslands, where they primarily feed upon rodents, birds, reptiles, insects, and other invertebrates.

Woodland. Approximately 133 acres of woodland have been identified in AWCWP; most of this is comprised of coast live oak woodland. Oak acorns and the large, dense canopy and trunk structures of woodland trees are important for wildlife. The presence of trees in woodland habitats allow for additional species that do not occur in the less structurally diverse habitats, such as the acorn and Nuttall's woodpeckers, northern flicker, Hutton's vireo, oak titmouse, and house wren. Trees also provide roosting and nesting sites for species such as the white-tailed kite, Cooper's hawk, red-tailed hawk, and great horned owl that forage over grasslands and within the woodland canopy.

Riparian. This category includes everything from riparian herbaceous habitat (e.g., cat-tails) to mulefat scrub to sycamore riparian woodland and coast live oak riparian forest. Riparian communities account for the fourth largest general vegetation type within AWCWP. Riparian habitats are associated with stream channels, lakes, or ponds or are dependent upon the existence of perennial, intermittent, or ephemeral surface or subsurface water drainage. In AWCWP, riparian habitats are associated with the perennial streams and floodplains of Aliso Creek and Wood Creek and range from herbaceous plants to multilayered tree species.

Developed Areas and Ornamental Vegetation. Developed and ornamental vegetation areas include the existing Orange County Natural History Museum/ranger station and the water treatment facility, among other habitats. Although not natural, these habitats often substitute for native woodland in their value to native wildlife, especially for nesting raptors such as Cooper's hawk, red-shouldered hawk, red-tailed hawk, and great horned owl. Eucalyptus woodland is often valuable for wintering land birds, such as the yellow-rumped warbler, and as a nesting substrate for a wide range of other birds. Although some wildlife species have been adapted to nonnative habitats, nonnative trees and ornamental plantings displace native vegetation and the corresponding native wildlife.

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Would the project:

- a) **Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?**

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated. As noted above, the County is a participating member of the NCCP/HCP, as a Reserve Owner/Manager. Therefore, the County is responsible for ensuring that all activities within the portions of AWCWP that are in the Reserve are consistent with the allowable uses in the Reserve. The visitor-serving activities contemplated in the RMP are certainly consistent with these allowable uses, as long as impacts are minimized as described in the NCCP/HCP. The goals, strategies, and management measures set forth in the RMP will implement the NCCP/HCP provisions. In fact, the preparation of the RMP itself, and its review by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) are required under the NCCP/HCP.

In general, the NCCP/HCP program is a habitat-based, multiple-species management and conservation strategy that focuses on conserving natural vegetation communities such as coastal sage scrub (CSS), cliff and rock, coastal chaparral, and oak woodlands. In addition, the program focuses on 39 identified plant and animal species. Of the 30 identified animals, three of the species are target species: the orange-throated whiptail, coastal cactus wren, and coastal California gnatcatcher. Coverage of a species means that future incidental take of target and identified species would be permitted for new development (planned activities) addressed by the NCCP/HCP and that no additional habitat mitigation for such take would be required. Therefore, minor impacts to CSS habitat, oak woodland, and most wildlife species in the NCCP Reserve, which may be associated with the activities described in the RMP, are allowed without additional mitigation.

The project's potential effects on sensitive or special status species are described below.

Threatened/Endangered Species: Ninety-eight special interest species (34 plant and 64 animal) with the potential to occur within the AWCWP or vicinity are discussed in the RMP and summarized in the two sections that follow.

Special Status Plant Species: Two federally/State-listed threatened plant species have been observed within or immediately adjacent to the AWCWP boundaries. These are big-leaved crownbeard (*Verbesina dissita*), which occurs in southern maritime chaparral on the south side of Niguel Hill and at the southern end of the park, and Laguna Beach dudleya (*Dudleya stolonifera*), which grows in thin soils associated with rock outcrops along the West Ridge Trail just outside the park boundary.

Due to the limited distribution and immobile nature of the plant species, direct impacts to these species will be avoided through careful alignments of any new trails, awareness of the need to avoid impacts during trail maintenance activities, and enforcement of measures to prevent unauthorized trails. Impacts to the primary habitats for the CAGN (sagebrush-buckwheat scrub, sagebrush scrub, sagebrush scrub-grassland ecotone, and coastal goldenbush-grassland ecotone) associated with trail locations are minimal and will be compensated by revegetation efforts associated with the restoration of unauthorized trails, which will occur prior to the opening of new trails. The CAGN was one of the

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primary species targeted under the NCCP/HCP in coastal Orange County. The AWCWP is an important component of the habitat reserve for this species and other CSS obligates, including the non-listed cactus wren.

Special Status Animal Species: Two federally or State listed as threatened animal species either occur or have a moderate chance of occurring in AWCWP. The federally listed as threatened coastal California gnatcatcher (CAGN) is regularly observed in coastal sage scrub (CSS) throughout the park, and the federally and State listed as endangered least Bell's vireo regularly occurs during the breeding season in riparian habitat associated with Aliso Creek. There are no specific plans to impact this habitat. However, activities in the park, such as the planned trail to Laguna Canyon Road at the north end of the park, various trail and stream stabilization projects, and habitat enhancement have the potential to have minor, mostly short-term impacts on habitat for this and other riparian bird species.

In addition, a breeding pair of the California fully protected white-tailed kite has been observed south of the Aliso and Wood Canyons confluence. Two listed species that have at least a moderate chance of occurring in the park include the State listed endangered American peregrine falcon and the federally listed endangered tidewater goby. The latter, a fish species, as historically been observed in the mouth of Aliso Creek.

Other Special Interest Species: Of the 32 additional special interest plant species and 59 additional special interest animal species identified in Appendix B of the Existing Conditions Report, 22 plants and 51 animals have either been observed or judged to have a moderate-to-high probability of occurrence. These include species typical of all the major natural habitat types on site. As with the listed species, minor impacts to habitat for these species may occur with park improvement and maintenance activities, but will be minimized, and in most cases compensated for, by the management activities described in the RMP.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.9-1 would ensure compliance with the NCCP/HCP and reduce potential impacts to covered species to a less-than-significant level.

Mitigation Measure

4.9-1 NCCP/HCP Mitigation. Project implementation would result in minimal effects to biological resources that are consistent with the NCCP/HCP. The County's participation in the NCCP/HCP affords certain impacts and activities without additional mitigation; therefore, impacts to covered habitat that are in conformance with the NCCP are mitigated by participation in the NCCP. However, impacts and activities within the NCCP are restricted and regulated. The following policies from NCCP/HCP Guidelines in Section 5.8.5 guide the siting and construction of permitted recreational facilities within the Reserve System.

- Temporary impacts to CSS shall require revegetation in the form of hydroseeding in accordance with the requirements of the NCCP/HCP.
- All known locations of sensitive bird species associated with CSS and riparian habitats within 100 feet of the grading limits shall be mapped on the grading plan to facilitate avoidance during construction.

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- The United States Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), CDFG, and Nature Reserve of Orange County (NROC) shall be consulted regarding the final design and location of the project to mitigate and minimize impacts on CSS, oak woodland, and wetland riparian habitat and associated species.
- The project biologist shall ensure that the contractor has roped or fenced the grading boundaries prior to initiation of vegetation removal.
- The USFWS and CDFG shall be notified seven days prior to clearing of CSS.
- Preconstruction meetings shall be conducted with the biological monitor, construction supervisors, and equipment operators to ensure maximum practicable adherence to the HMMP measures.
- Vegetation removal shall not occur during the primary nesting season for local birds (February 15–August 30, consistent with the NCCP requirements) where riparian habitat, wetlands, and CSS or associated subtypes occur on or adjacent to the proposed project. If vegetation removal must occur in these areas during this period, then preconstruction surveys shall be conducted in the appropriate habitats within and up to 100 feet from the project boundary to identify nesting birds within or adjacent to the proposed project. If active nests are observed within or adjacent to the project boundary, a 100-foot buffer is required until either the young have fledged or the nest becomes inactive. In addition, a preconstruction survey shall be conducted within the project boundary as well as a 100-foot buffer for sensitive species.
- Clearing of vegetation within or immediately adjacent to CSS and riparian habitats mapped within the study area shall be monitored by a qualified biologist. Flushing or capture and relocation of any NCCP-identified or other sensitive species found within this vegetation shall also be conducted by the monitor during these activities.

b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated. Sensitive natural communities such as coastal sage scrub, coast live oak woodland, and willow riparian woodland are located within AWCWP. As described above, impacts to coastal sage scrub are covered under the HCCP/NCP and would be reduced to less than significant with compliance of the HCCP/NCP as described in Mitigation Measure 4.9-1.

The CDFG, under Section 1602 of the California Fish and Game Code, regulates alterations to lakes, rivers, and streams (defined by the presence of a channel bed and banks and at least an intermittent flow of water) where fish or wildlife resources may be adversely affected. Riparian vegetation communities within the park are located primarily along site drainages as shown on Figure 8. The proposed project has the potential to impact riparian vegetation that is under the jurisdiction of CDFG. Such impacts would typically be associated with trail crossings across drainage courses or stabilization of streams to protect existing or proposed trails located adjacent to site drainages. Implementation of Mitigation Measures 4.9-2 through 4.9-4 would reduce potential impacts to CDFG waters to a less-than-significant level.

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Mitigation Measures

- 4.9-2** Prior to issuance of any grading permit, the Orange County Parks shall be responsible for conducting wetland assessment/delineation to determine the extent of waters of jurisdictional waters (waters of the U.S. and State) that would be impacted by construction of the proposed improvement.
- 4.9-3** If the wetland assessment/delineation determines that the wetlands would be impacted by construction of proposed improvements, the Orange County Parks shall obtain a Streambed Alteration Agreement for any impacted waters of the State, from the CDFG. As part of this approval, the Orange County Parks shall submit a mitigation plan that demonstrates replacement of impacts waters/wetlands/riparian at a minimum ratio of 1:1. The mitigation plan for replacement of impacted jurisdictional waters/wetlands shall be prepared by a qualified biologist and provide for replacement of impacted habitat values through restoration of wetland and riparian habitat. Any conditions set forth in the Streambed Alteration Agreement issued by the CDFG shall be incorporated into the Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) and all construction documents. A qualified biological monitor shall ensure compliance with the measures identified in the HMMP.
- 4.9-4** Permanent and temporary erosion control measures identified for any project that involves grading or other earthwork shall be incorporated and refined, as necessary, to minimize erosion of soils from construction activities and deposition of soil or sediment in off-site areas, especially in the vicinity of the riparian/wetlands areas associated with Aliso Creek or Wood Canyon Creek. Any conditions set forth in the 401 Certification issued by the RWQCB and obtained in compliance with these recommended mitigation measures shall be incorporated into the HMMP.

- c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?**

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) regulates discharges of dredged or fill material into waters of the U.S. These waters include wetlands and nonwetland bodies of water that meet criteria, including a direct or indirect connection to interstate commerce.

The RWQCB is responsible for the administration of Section 401 of the CWA. Typically, the areas subject to jurisdiction of the RWQCB coincide with those of the Corps (i.e., waters of the U.S., including any wetlands). The RWQCB also asserts authority over “waters of the State” under waste discharge requirements pursuant to the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act.

As described in Response 4.9(b), jurisdictional waters may be present within AWCWP in riparian areas along park drainages as shown on Figure 8. Waters of the U.S. and State may be impacted by improvements, particularly new trail construction and maintenance and improvement of existing trails where those improvements are located adjacent to or across drainages.

Implementation of Mitigation Measures 4.9-2, 4.9-4, and 4.9-5 would reduce potential impacts to federally protected wetlands to a less-than-significant level.

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

Mitigation Measures

4.9-5 Prior to implementation of any project that affects jurisdictional waters of the U.S., the Orange County Parks shall obtain a Section 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and a Section 401 Water Quality Certification from the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). As part of this approval, the Orange County Parks shall submit a mitigation plan that demonstrates replacement of impacts waters/wetlands at a minimum ratio of 1:1. The mitigation plan for replacement of impacted jurisdictional waters/wetlands shall be prepared by a qualified biologist and provide for replacement of impacted habitat values through restoration of wetland and riparian habitat. Any conditions set forth in the 404 Permit issued by the Corps shall be incorporated into the Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) and all appropriate construction documents. A qualified biological monitor shall ensure compliance with the measures identified in the HMMP.

d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

Less Than Significant Impact. The NCCP/HCP identifies several important linkage functions for AWCWP that unify locally established open space and wilderness areas. Several wildlife corridors still exist, although they have been significantly reduced in width and continuity due to dense residential developments immediately west and east of AWCWP. Existing wildlife corridors within AWCWP are described below and shown on Figure 15 in the RMP.

Corridor A: Corridor A consists of several segments linking AWCWP with LCWP. One steep portion of Corridor A connects LCWP to the northernmost section of AWCWP through Upper Wood Canyon near El Toro Road and State Route 73 and crosses over El Toro Road and Laguna Canyon Road. Sparse riparian habitat also continues under the State Route 73 bridge into James Dilley Greenbelt Reserve. A similarly steep and open section of the corridor exists along the entire length of the northern two-thirds of Wood Canyon. This wide, natural corridor continues west to LCWP after passing over Laguna Canyon Road, which is lined with homes and small businesses. These segments make up a nearly contiguous, wide passage that is suitable for use by most plant and wildlife species. This area is scattered with rock outcroppings and densely vegetated with mature coastal sage scrub, and chaparral.

Corridor B: Corridor B consists of the upper portion of Aliso Creek between Moulton Parkway and the confluence with Wood Canyon. The Aliso Creek Bikeway and Aliso Creek Trail pass through this area. This section of Aliso Creek is vegetated with a very narrow band of willow riparian forest edged with coyote bush scrub and coastal goldenbush scrub but has large sections that are infested with nonnative giant reed. Beyond Moulton Parkway, Aliso Creek narrows through dense urban development and agriculture and continues eastward nearly to the Cleveland National Forest.

Corridor C: A second corridor from upper Aliso Creek (Corridor C) passes along Sulphur Creek between the main park entry under Alicia Parkway to the Sulphur Creek Reservoir open space area.

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

Corridor D: This connection includes several narrow corridors through residential communities in Laguna Beach. From lower Aliso Canyon, this corridor passes west over the steep and naturally vegetated hills topped by Aswut Trail near Meadows Trail and then passes northwest through currently undeveloped land and patches of ridgetop homes before crossing over Laguna Canyon Road into LCWP. This same route could also be accessed from the southernmost portion of Aliso Canyon but would also pass through ridgetop homes after passing through very steep and heavily vegetated hills owned by the Athens Group, just west of the Coastal Treatment Plant.

Corridors E and F: Two eastern corridors (Corridors E and F) pass from lower Aliso Creek, up the steep slope northeast of the Coastal Treatment Plant, then over Aliso Summit Trail through narrow portions of a housing tract. Corridor E terminates in non-reserve open space; while Corridor F terminates in an existing use area. Both canyon corridors terminate before meeting Crown Valley Parkway and extensive residential developments. The vegetation along these corridors and within the canyons is dominated by coastal sage scrub and chaparral.

Corridor G: Corridor G passes through two small patches of AWCWP, crossing Emerald Ridge Trail, Monarch Point Trail, Sea Island Drive, and Pacific Island Drive. This corridor also has a somewhat interrupted connection to Salt Creek Corridor Regional Park, a narrow park that terminates at Golden Lantern Street. The corridor is vegetated with native scrub and chaparral, while Salt Creek Corridor Regional Park is vegetated with nonnative annual grasses and forbs with patches of native plant communities along the riparian scrub creek channel.

Because of its minimal impact on existing conditions, the proposed project is not expected to make any contribution to habitat fragmentation within or adjacent to the AWCWP boundaries. The RMP recommends maintenance activities, including: habitat restoration, removal of invasive species, prohibition of domestic pets, and reduction of night lighting, in order to preserve and enhance corridor usage. Therefore, the proposed project will not increase the impact to wildlife movement within the area. No native wildlife nursery sites per se exist in the AWCWP. However wildlife breeding and rearing typically take place throughout the native habitat in the park. Protection of and maintenance of wildlife is a stated goal of the RMP, and the strategies and management activities in the RMP will enhance breeding opportunities.

e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

Less Than Significant Impact. Resolution Number 86-1284 by the Orange County Board of Supervisors, dated October 7, 1986, created criteria for nominating outstanding trees as “Orange County Heritage Trees.” Twenty-six trees within the park are eligible (under the County’s criteria) to receive this designation, including 21 coast live oaks and 4 western sycamores. Construction or placement of new trails and other facilities would not result in the removal of any heritage trees. Implementation of RMP goals and guidelines would ensure that the locations for any of these facilities would be carefully chosen so as to minimize impacts to sensitive resources, including heritage trees. As outlined in Section 7.3.1, resource protection would be a guiding principal for locating trails within the park.

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

The County does not have any local ordinances protecting biological resources. However, it is a stated policy in the Resource Element of the General Plan, as well as the RMP, to preserve and protect oak trees. A major portion of the project area is located within the NCCP/HCP area. The County is a participating member of the NCCP/HCP; therefore, minor impacts to CSS habitat, oak woodland, and most wildlife species in the NCCP Reserve, which may be associated with the activities described in the RMP, are allowed without additional mitigation, if such impacts are consistent with the NCCP/HCP. Refer to Response 4.9(a) for further discussion of the NCCP.

f) Conflict with provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project area is located within the area of the NCCP/HCP and the County is a participating member of the NCCP/HCP. The NCCP/HCP provides take authorization or conditional take authorization for certain species and habitats to participants in the NCCP/HCP program. Therefore, minor impacts to CSS habitat, oak woodland, and most wildlife species in the NCCP Reserve, which may be associated with the activities described in the RMP, are allowed without additional mitigation.

One of the key components of the NCCP/HCP is the creation of the 38,738-acre Nature Reserve of Orange County (NROC). Most of AWCWP is within the NROC or Reserve lands. Within Reserve lands, take of covered habitat, like CSS habitat and take of identified species are allowed only in relation to specified planned activities (i.e., allowable uses) regarding the amount of take and other parameters specified in the NCCP/HCP Implementation Agreement. For example, a planned activity or allowable use includes construction of infrastructure facilities, which are defined in the NCCP/HCP as “all public and quasi-public service facilities and structures, including but not limited to roads, landfills, flood control facilities, water transmission lines and facilities, electric utility lines, and sewer facilities.”

As required by the NCCP/HCP, programs for implementing NCCP/HCP policies and guidelines will be developed. The RMP contains policies for managing resources, public access and recreation, public outreach and education, fire management, habitat restoration and enhancement, exotic plant control, invasive and pest species control, and long-term monitoring in accordance with NCCP/HCP policies and guidelines.

Several portions of AWCWP are not within the NROC or Reserve system of NCCP/HCP and are classified as Non-Reserve Open Space. These lands within AWCWP include the northwest and northeast portions of AWCWP, specifically the small sections of open space land in the northwest part just north and south of State Route 73 along Laguna Canyon Road and the northeast part up to the northeast boundary of AWCWP at Moulton Parkway. While activities in these areas are not restricted by the NCCP/HCP, they are nevertheless included in the RMP, and any impacts to habitats and species covered by the NCCP/HCP are mitigated by the County’s participation in the NCCP/HCP.

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

4.10 AESTHETICS

Would the Project:

a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

Less Than Significant Impact. AWCWP represents a significant visual and scenic resource within the region offering panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean, Santa Catalina Island, and the community of Laguna Beach to the west; the San Gabriel and San Bernardino Mountains to the northeast; and Wood Canyon and surrounding urban development to the south and east. “Top of the World,” which lies just outside the park, is one of the best-known vista points. Moulton Peak – the highest point in the park at 890 feet - provides sweeping views of the canyons, ridgelines, and hillsides of the park. In addition to these points, viewing areas that provide vistas of the park and the surrounding landscape occur at other high points in the park, such as along the Wood Creek, Alwut, Aswut, and Aliso Peak trails.

The aesthetic resources of the park are largely due to the native plant associations found there. The park’s landscape consists of rugged topography characterized by steep hillsides surrounding deep canyons. Views within the park range from intimate, secluded spaces to grand vistas. In the upper reaches of the two canyons, canyon walls and trees create enclosed spaces where views can focus on details such as rock formations, plants, and animals. Canyon walls also block views of surrounding development atop the ridgelines. In the wider, lower reaches of the canyons, views consist of broad expanses of grassland, coastal sage scrub and the surrounding hillsides. The diversity of the landscape and topography provides opportunities for a variety of visitor experiences.

Other visually distinctive features reflect the unique geology and history of the park. Such features include: Dripping Cave, Cave Rock, and the Old Corral. Figure 5 of the RMP shows the visual resources of AWCWP.

The RMP proposes minimal construction of kiosks, trails, trailhead improvements, and interpretive facilities. Facilities that would be constructed as a result of the RMP would not adversely affect the existing scenic quality by impacting scenic vistas, both into and from AWCWP, and are not expected to substantially damage scenic resources. Kiosks and interpretive facilities would be made of durable material that is visually compatible with the natural setting of AWCWP.

The RMP contains management actions to protect and preserve visual resources including: working with local jurisdictions in the land use planning and development process to protect key views; using native plantings to visually buffer developed areas; and locating any proposed structures to be sensitive to scenic views. Implementation of these management actions would ensure that facilities are sited appropriately to minimize visual impacts. Further, by protecting and enhancing natural habitats, the RMP would improve existing disturbed scenic vistas located primarily within fuel modification zones associated with adjacent residential development.

b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

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No Impact. No State scenic highways are located in the vicinity of AWCWP. Highway 1 (Pacific Coast Highway) is an eligible State scenic highway; however, it has not been officially designated (California Department of Transportation, 1999).

c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?

Less Than Significant Impact. The visual character of the project site is diverse, ranging from steep hillsides and deep canyons, to adjacent, dense residential development. As described above in Response 4.10(a), the visual quality of the site relies primarily on the natural resources and varied topography of the park that provides a variety of different landscapes as well as panoramic views. In some areas of the park, the proximity of urban development and the presence of built features within the park detract from its scenic quality.

Urban and rural development immediately adjacent to the park boundary is visually intrusive from several locations within AWCWP. As Orange County continues to urbanize, homes are being built on the ridgelines overlooking the park. In fact, views of the park are a key selling point for selling such real estate. This development has an adverse effect on views from the park and the overall scenic quality. Because of these hillside and ridgeline locations, the homes tend to be silhouetted against the sky, significantly altering the skyline and the perception of the park area as a rural, natural area. This problem is most evident along Lower Aliso Canyon, lower Wood Canyon, and around the Aliso and Wood Canyons Confluence, where residential development hugs the park boundary on bluffs above the park.

In several locations throughout the park, built features or human intervention detract from the overall visual quality and ultimately the visitor experience. These features include unauthorized trails, utility corridors, and other infrastructure.

As described in Response 4.10(a), the RMP proposes minimal new development. Facilities that would be constructed as a result of the RMP would not adversely affect the existing scenic quality. Kiosks and interpretive facilities would be made of durable material that is visually compatible with the natural setting of AWCWP. In addition, the RMP contains management actions to protect and preserve visual resources including: working with local jurisdictions in the land use planning and development process to protect key views; using native plantings to visually buffer developed areas; and locating any proposed structures to be sensitive to scenic views. Implementation of these management actions would ensure that facilities are sited appropriately to minimize visual impacts. Further, by protecting and enhancing natural habitats, the RMP would improve the scenic quality of the park.

d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

No Impact. Use of AWCWP after dark is prohibited; therefore there is no lighting associated with existing park facilities. The primary source of light and glare within AWCWP is adjacent development built on the ridgelines surrounding the park. Implementation of the RMP would not create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. New facilities proposed as part of the RMP include trailhead facilities, trails, interpretive

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

facilities, informational kiosks, and fencing. However, no lighting is proposed for these facilities. The RMP recommends that the County work with local jurisdictions to protect the AWCWP from existing and future ambient light sources in nearby developments and to reduce night lighting in wildlife corridor areas. Light glare and spillage into wilderness areas shall be reduced or eliminated. As potential light and glare impacts associated with park facilities would be less than currently occur, there is no impact associated with light or glare.

4.11 CULTURAL/SCIENTIFIC RESOURCES

Would the project:

- a) **Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in Section 15064.5?**

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated. The AWCWP is known to contain sensitive cultural resources. A records search of the South Central Coastal Information Center conducted for the RMP identified 51 resources within the park boundaries. Sites within the AWCWP are considered highly significant and have contributed greatly to research into the prehistory of Orange County.

Although the RMP proposes to protect and preserve cultural resources, ground disturbing activities, which may occur as part of park facility development and natural resource management, may disturb known or unknown cultural resources. Implementation of RMP goals and guidelines, including identification and evaluation of known resources in the vicinity of proposed facilities and monitoring of any earth-disturbing activities, would minimize the possibility that disturbance to cultural resources would occur during ground-disturbing activities. Due to the relative sensitivity of the entire AWCWP it is possible that previously unknown cultural resources could be discovered during grading and excavation work associated with new construction. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.11-1 would ensure that impacts to unknown cultural resources encountered during construction activities are adequately addressed and are reduced to below the level of significance.

Mitigation Measure

- 4.11-1** Prior to the approval of the project plans and specifications for development of individual projects recommended in the RMP by the Orange County Board of Supervisors, the Orange County Parks Director, or designee, shall confirm that the plans and specifications stipulate that a County-certified archaeologist will be retained to monitor excavation activities. The archaeologist shall be present at the pregrade conference and shall establish, in cooperation with the project engineer, procedures for temporarily halting or redirecting work to permit the sampling, identification, and evaluation of the artifacts as appropriate. If the archaeological resources are found to be significant, the monitor shall determine appropriate actions, in cooperation with the project engineer, for exploration and/or salvage.

- b) **Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5?**

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated. See Response 4.11(a) above.

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

c) **Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?**

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated. AWCWP is known to contain sensitive paleontological resources. With the exception of rock units considered too young to contain fossils, all geological units within AWCWP have the potential to yield important, significant fossils.

Although the RMP proposes to protect and preserve paleontological resources, ground disturbing activities, which may occur as part of park facility development and natural resource management, may disturb known or unknown paleontological resources. Implementation of RMP goals and guidelines, including conducting a paleontological assessment prior to any ground disturbing activities would minimize the possibility that disturbance to paleontological resources will occur during ground-disturbing activities. Due to the relative sensitivity of the entire AWCWP it is possible that previously unknown paleontological resources could be discovered during grading and excavation work associated with new construction. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.11-2 would ensure that impacts to unknown cultural resources encountered during construction activities are adequately addressed and are reduced to below the level of significance.

Mitigation Measure

4.11-2 Prior to the approval of the project plans and specifications for development of individual projects recommended in the RMP by the Orange County Board of Supervisors, the Orange County Parks Director, or designee, shall confirm that the plans and specifications stipulate that a County-certified paleontologist will be retained to monitor excavation activities. The paleontologist shall be present at the pregrade conference and shall establish, in cooperation with the project engineer, procedures for temporarily halting or redirecting work to permit the sampling, identification, and evaluation of the artifacts as appropriate. If the paleontological resources are found to be significant, the monitor shall determine appropriate actions, in cooperation with the project engineer, for exploration and/or salvage.

d) **Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?**

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated. Human burial sites have been discovered within the park boundaries (S. Conkling, pers. comm.). During construction, the potential exists to encounter human remains. However, with implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.11-3, the potential impact related to the discovery of human remains will be reduced to below a level of significance.

Mitigation Measure

4.11-3 In the event human remains are encountered, State Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 states that no further disturbance shall occur until the County Coroner has made a determination of origin and disposition pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 5097.98. The County Coroner must be notified of the find immediately. If the remains are determined to be Native American, the County Coroner will notify the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC), which will determine and notify a Most Likely Descendant (MLD). With the permission of the landowner or his/her authorized

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

representative, the MLD may inspect the site of the discovery. The MLD shall complete the inspection within 48 hours of notification by the NAHC. The MLD will have the opportunity to offer recommendations for the disposition of the remains.

4.12 RECREATION

Would the Project:

- a) **Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?**

No Impact. The proposed project would have no impact on existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities since the AWCWP provides recreational facilities and does not generate demand for such uses. The RMP does not propose new connections to existing parks that would increase use of those facilities.

- b) **Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities, which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?**

Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated. The project site is a Wilderness Park with recreational trails. The proposed RMP is primarily intended to protect and preserve the resource values of the park while balancing the needs of the local community for safe recreational and educational opportunities. Potential adverse effects on the environment related to the development of recreation facilities identified in the RMP (i.e., trails, enhanced entries, interpretive facilities) have been evaluated in this Initial Study. Implementation of the mitigation measures described in this Initial Study would reduce potentially adverse physical environmental impacts to less-than-significant levels.

4.13 MINERAL RESOURCES

Would the Project:

- a) **Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?**

No Impact. As shown in the Resources Element of the County General Plan, the proposed improvements are not located within an area of known mineral resources, either of regional or local value.

- b) **Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?**

No Impact. Refer to Response 4.13(a).

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

4.14 HAZARDS

Would the Project:

- a) **Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?**

Less Than Significant Impact. Limited quantities of herbicides are currently used on-site as part of exotic vegetation removal. These herbicides are used and stored consistent with local, State, and federal regulations. The proposed project is a RMP that provides management actions to protect and enhance natural, cultural, and visual resources. Implementation of the RMP would continue/expand upon the existing habitat enhancement and restoration and recreational activities and would not require the routine use, transport, or disposal of hazardous materials. Limited quantities of herbicides would continue to be used on-site. These herbicides would be used and stored consistent with local, State, and federal regulations. Therefore, impacts related to these hazardous waste concerns are considered less than significant.

Construction of proposed facilities may involve the use of limited quantities of chemical agents, paints, solvents, vehicle fuel, and other hazardous materials. All use of hazardous materials during construction must comply with existing government regulations; thus, the potential for public exposure to upset and accident conditions related to hazardous materials is considered less than significant.

- b) **Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?**

Less Than Significant Impact. Given that future activities at AWCWP would be similar to existing activities and there would be no additional risk beyond current conditions, there are no known hazards on-site that would result in foreseeable upset or accident conditions.

- c) **Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?**

Less Than Significant Impact. A number of schools are located within one-quarter mile of AWCWP including: Don Juan Avila Middle School, Aliso Niguel High School, Wood Canyon Elementary School, Canyon Vista Elementary School, Oak Grove Elementary School, Top of the World Elementary School and Soka University. Activities at AWCWP do not currently emit hazardous emissions or require the handling of hazardous or acutely hazardous materials. Improvements posed as part of the RMP are similar to activities that currently occur within the park and would not emit hazardous emissions or require handling of hazardous materials. The use of any hazardous materials would be limited and would be conducted in accordance with State and federal regulations for use, storage, and disposal of such products.

- d) **Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?**

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

Less Than Significant Impact. The potential exists for unknown hazardous contamination to be revealed during project construction. If such materials are discovered, work would be stopped and appropriate state regulations regarding remediation would be followed. Due to the nature of the historic activities within the project area, the probability of contaminated soils being present on site is considered low. Therefore, this impact is considered less than significant.

- e) **For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?**

No Impact. The project site is not located within two miles of a public airport or public use airport. The El Toro Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) is located approximately four miles north of the project site; however, on July 2, 1999, the MCAS was closed for military use. John Wayne Airport is located approximately eight miles northwest of the project area. (3)

- f) **For a project within the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?**

No Impact. The proposed improvements are not located within the vicinity of a private airstrip and therefore, would not result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area. (3)

- g) **Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?**

Less Than Significant Impact. The County has an established Emergency Response Map that outlines appropriate emergency access routes into and within AWCWP. The Emergency Response Map identifies the location of call boxes within the park and the most direct routes to those call boxes, including the AWMA Road and Wood Canyon Trail.

Implementation of the RMP would not alter any roads or infrastructure comprising emergency response or evacuation routes. The number of vehicle trips accessing AWCWP would be similar to the number of trips occurring today. Implementation of the RMP would not interfere with traffic on local roadways since number of trips to and from AWCWP would not generate a substantial number of new vehicle trips (Response 4.6(a)) and existing or future traffic load and capacity of local roadways would not be affected.

The elimination of unauthorized trails and access points may facilitate emergency response/evacuation by reducing the number of cars parked on neighborhood streets adjacent to AWCWP. This concentration of users to designated trailheads would also allow for a coordinated evacuation of AWCWP during an emergency, thereby, improving the situation over current conditions. Potential impacts related to impairment of emergency response plans and evacuation routes are considered less than significant.

- h) **Expose people or structures to significant risk or loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?**

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

Less Than Significant Impact. Major portions of AWCWP have been designated as high fire classification by the Orange County General Plan. Areas most susceptible to fire have three common characteristics: 1) thirty percent slopes or greater; 2) medium to heavy fuel loading, predominantly coastal sage scrub; and 3) frequent critical fire hazard weather conditions. Canyon slopes meeting these three criteria appear on east facing Laguna Canyon slopes, both sides of lower Aliso Canyon, upper Wood Canyon, portions of Sheep Hills and Upper Aliso Canyon. The greatest potential for fire damage exists at the interface between AWCWP and adjacent residential development.

The proposed RMP includes limited new recreational facilities and does not involve the construction of any residential or commercial areas or any structures for human occupation. Further, the RMP contains policies aimed at reducing wildland fire risk by managing vegetation growth, maintaining fuel modification areas, and preparing a Fire Management Plan based on the NCCP Fire Management Plan. These policies would improve the urban/wildland interface between AWCWP and existing residential uses adjacent to AWCWP, reducing the potential for extensive damage related to wildfires within AWCWP compared to existing conditions.

- i) **Include a new or retrofitted storm water treatment control Best Management Practice (BMP), (e.g., water quality treatment basin, constructed treatment wetlands), the operation of which could result in significant environmental effects (e.g., increased vectors and odors)?**

No Impact. No new or retrofitted storm water treatment control BMP would be necessary for the proposed project. Refer to the water quality discussion in Section 4.5(a).

4.15 PUBLIC SERVICES

Would the Project:

- a) **Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public service including: fire protection, police protection, schools, parks, and other public facilities?**

No Impact. Fire protection and emergency response services for the project site and surrounding vicinity are provided by County rangers and the respective fire departments of each municipality in the area. As a wildland area subject to wildfires, the RMP contains policies aimed at reducing wildland fire risk by managing vegetation growth, maintaining fuel modification areas, and adopting a Fire Management Plan. These policies would improve the urban/wildland interface between AWCWP and adjacent residential uses, thereby reducing the potential for extensive damage related to wildland fire within AWCWP from existing conditions.

Preserve rangers and the Orange County Sheriff's Department provide police protection services to the project site and surrounding vicinity. The RMP recommends the provision of additional ranger staff to patrol the AWCWP, as well as additional fencing and signing to delineate and secure park

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

boundaries. Implementation of these recommendations could potentially reduce the need for police services by reducing trespassing and illegal activities within the park.

Because the RMP would not result in any local or regional population increase, implementation of the RMP would not require construction of new schools, or result in schools exceeding their capacities.

The RMP proposes to enhance existing recreation facilities (i.e., trails) and provide limited new recreation facilities (i.e., trails). No additional demand for park facilities would be generated as a result of the proposed project.

4.16 UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

Would the Project:

a) Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board

Less Than Significant Impact. Currently, the limited restrooms in the park are serviced with portable sanitary devices. Implementation of the RMP would result in the construction of entry improvements, trails, and interpretive facilities. Main entry facilities could include: restrooms, water fountains and interpretive facilities. These main entry facilities would be located adjacent to existing roadways and could be connected to existing public service systems, including local sewer or serviced with portable sanitary devices. The relatively small amount of wastewater generated from these structures can be accommodated by local sanitary sewer treatment systems or portable sanitary systems and would not exceed the wastewater treatment requirements of the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

b) Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts?

Less Than Significant Impact. As described in Response 4.16(a) above, implementation of the RMP would result in the construction of entry improvements, trails, and interpretive facilities. Main entry facilities would be located adjacent to existing roadways and could be connected to existing public service systems, including water and sewer. Other entries and/or trailheads would be served with portable sanitary devices. Implementation of the RMP is not expected to substantially increase demand for water or wastewater treatment. Land uses proposed in the RMP would not require large amounts of water or produce large amounts of wastewater. Given that limited new facilities are proposed and most of the unauthorized trails would be closed with implementation of the RMP, demand for water and wastewater treatment would be similar to existing conditions. Implementation of the project would not exceed the capacity of existing water and wastewater treatment facilities that would serve the project and are considered less than significant.

c) Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of which would cause significant environmental effects?

Exhibit 4: Mitigated Negative Declaration

Less Than Significant Impact. No park facilities are currently connected to the storm drainage system. Implementation of the RMP would result in limited new development; therefore, the project would not result in a substantial net increase in peak discharge and would not require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities that would cause significant environmental effects. Refer to the discussion in Section 4.5(a).

d) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded entitlements needed?

Less Than Significant Impact. Potable water is currently available at the main park entrance. As described above, implementation of the RMP is not expected to result in increased visitation to AWCWP given that limited new facilities are proposed and most of the unauthorized trails would be closed. Demand for potable water would be similar to existing conditions.

e) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider, which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?

No Impact. Refer to Response 4.16(a) regarding wastewater conveyance and treatment.

f) Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?

Less Than Significant Impact. Currently, trash receptacles are located throughout AWCWP, at trailheads/junctions to collect solid waste. Implementation of the RMP would not result in the generation of amounts of solid waste that are greater than occurs under existing conditions given that the number of users would remain the same and the types of solid waste deposited would generally be limited (food and beverage containers, paper, etc.). The project would generate a similar amount of solid waste as occurs today and is currently served by a landfill that could accommodate waste produced by park users.

g) Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

Less Than Significant Impact. The County currently places receptacles for recyclable waste at existing trail heads, and park managers contract with appropriate entities for the removal and processing of recyclable waste. As part of ongoing operations in AWCWP, the County complies with federal, State, and local statutes related to solid waste recycling. These programs would continue with implementation of the RMP and potential impacts are considered less than significant.

4.17 MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

a) Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?

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Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated. As described in the sections above, all environmental effects were determined to be less than significant or reduced to below levels of significance with mitigation. Overall, implementation of the RMP would provide a beneficial effect on biological and cultural resources due to the management recommendations.

The County is a participating member of the NCCP/HCP and is responsible for ensuring that all activities within the portions of the AWCWP that are in the Reserve are consistent with allowable uses in the Reserve. The visitor-serving activities contemplated in the RMP are consistent with these allowable uses, as long as impacts are minimized as described in the NCCP/HCP. Minor impacts to CSS habitat, oak woodland, and most wildlife species in the NCCP Reserve, which may be associated with the activities described in the RMP, are allowed without additional mitigation. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.9-1 would ensure compliance with the NCCP/HCP requirements.

Wetlands and riparian areas may be impacted by development of additional recreation/interpretive facilities proposed in the RMP, particularly trail crossings of on-site drainages. Mitigation Measure 4.9-2 through 4.9-5 shall ensure that impacts to waters/wetlands/riparian habitat are adequately addressed and are reduced to a less-than-significant level.

The AWCWP area is sensitive with respect to cultural resources. Previously unidentified buried prehistoric or historic resources may be present in the project area. Implementation of Mitigation Measures 4.11-1 and 4.11-2 shall ensure that impacts to unknown historical resources encountered during construction activities are adequately addressed and are reduced to below the level of significance.

b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (“Cumulatively considerable” means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)?

Less Than Significant. There are several past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects that have or will have an effect on the environment. Past, present, and future actions in the vicinity of the project site have been identified below. Each of these cumulative projects’ environmental effects are also identified.

- Laguna Coast Wilderness Park

The Laguna Coast Wilderness Park (LCWP) is an approximately 6,300-acre park owned jointly by the City of Laguna Beach, County, and CDFG. The County of Orange approved a General Development Plan (GDP) and Resource Management Plan (RMP) for the park in September 1998. Recreational use in the park is restricted to hiking, mountain biking, equestrian use, and picnicking. Prohibited uses include motorized vehicles, boating, swimming, wading, fishing, domestic animals, and cattle grazing. The Negative Declaration prepared by the County for this project concluded that potential project, and cumulative environmental effects associated with implementation of the GDP were mitigated to below a level of significance.

- Aliso Creek SUPER Project

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The Aliso Creek Water Quality SUPER project united individual efforts that were initiated to address the needed stability of the Aliso Creek Channel. A majority of the Aliso Creek Water Quality SUPER project will be built within the boundaries of AWCWP. The project name addresses the four goals of the project:

- Water Quality
- Stability of the Creek Bed and Banks
- Utility Protection
- Environmental Restoration

The County of Orange, SOCWA (South Orange County Wastewater Authority), MNWD (Moulton Niguel Water District), and SCWD (South Coast Water District) propose to implement the Aliso Water Quality SUPER Project. The SUPER Project will provide water quality benefits, stabilize stream bed and banks, protect utility infrastructure, and restore ecosystems in Aliso Creek beginning at Aliso Creek Road then downstream to the SOCWA Coastal Treatment Plant Bridge and from the Pacific Ocean upstream and through the County owned property. Implementation of the proposed SUPER project could have the following effects on AWCWP resources:

Trails and Public Access. The Water Quality SUPER project has the potential to affect several trails, crossings and AWCWP access points adjacent to Aliso Creek during installation of grade control structures, grading and contouring, habitat restoration, and other water quality improvement activities. The project area runs 4.5 miles along Aliso Creek from the northern limit at the AWMA Road Bridge to the southern limit at Pacific Coast Highway bridge. The following trails and entrances are adjacent to the project site and access to these sites may be limited or closed temporarily due to improvement activities: Aliso Creek Trail, Aliso Creek Bikeway, AWMA Road, Gates # 1,3,14,15,18,19 & 20, and Access # 12. The public should be notified in advance of any water quality improvement activities, and should be informed if access will be restricted to any of the above trails or access points.

Natural Resources. The upland portion of the project area is comprised primarily of grassland and scrub vegetation communities, with smaller amounts of maritime chaparral towards the southern end of the creek. The creek itself is vegetation with willow forest and riparian scrub communities, with extensive stands of non-native giant reed. There are several sensitive plant species in the SUPER project area, including vernal barley, small-flowered microseris, thread-leaved brodiaea, Turkish rugging and many-stemmed dudleya. In addition to native and sensitive plant species, a number of invasive exotic plants exist along the creek corridor, especially in the grassland habitat. The creek and surrounding habitat is also used by a variety of native fish, birds, reptiles, amphibians, mammals and invertebrates, including several species listed as threatened or endangered. Activities associated with implementation of the SUPER project would entail work in and around Aliso Creek that could degrade water quality, introduce invasive plant species, and result in direct impacts to sensitive plant and animal species. During SUPER project water quality improvement and restoration activities, care must be taken to prevent erosion, protect sensitive plant species, prevent the spread of invasive exotic plants and minimize impacts to fish, nesting birds and other wildlife.

Cultural Resources: Many of the archaeological resources within AWCWP are located along the Aliso Creek Drainage. Specifically, a National Register eligible resource is located at the upper end of AWCWP along Aliso Creek, and other un-evaluated resources are present along lower reaches of the drainage. Some of the sites along Aliso Creek are also deeply buried, with one significant resource

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located over 18 feet (6 meters) below the existing landform. These important sites are known to contain important artifacts, human and animal burials, and be significant for scientific research (Dr. Gary Hurd, personal communication, 1999). Proposed project activities, including slope and streambed stabilization, have a high likelihood for causing substantial adverse impacts to cultural resources.

The specific project designs should be evaluated by a qualified archaeologist. Steps to minimize project impacts should include a comprehensive survey of the SUPER Project area to identify cultural resources, evaluation of all sites that have not had prior California or National Register evaluations, development – in conjunction with appropriate consultation with local Native American and advocational groups – of a suitable mitigation plan to allow scientific excavation to recover important scientific data, and promote preservation in place of the archaeological resources. Cultural resource monitoring during construction should also be required to allow recovery of incidental discoveries from known archaeological sites, and to allow evaluation and treatment of any buried resources discovered through construction.

- Laguna Canyon Road Multi-Use Trail Project

The Laguna Canyon Road Multi-Use Trail Project (LCRMUTP) entails the establishment of a Multi-Use Trail to provide continuous recreational access within the Laguna Coast Wilderness Park. In addition to recreational access, the proposed trail would serve as a fire access road and maintenance and operations road for Southern California Edison (SCE) towers in the vicinity. The proposed trail would be approximately 1.4 miles long and would follow the alignment of an existing road/trail that begins under the existing SCE transmission lines and winds east to the north and then west, where it crosses the former alignment of Laguna Canyon Road. All environmental effects were determined to be less than significant or reduced to below levels of significance with mitigation.

The LCRMUTP Habitat Mitigation Project entails the enhancement of approximately 0.99 acre of ruderal wet meadow habitat within the Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park. The mitigation area is located southeast of the Laguna Canyon Road/El Toro Road intersection in Orange County. The Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) for the area has been prepared to mitigate for 0.02 acre of non wetland waters of the United States and 0.44 acre of State jurisdictional stream habitat that will be impacted as a result of the LCRMUTP, a multi-use trail located in the adjacent Laguna Coast Wilderness Park. The overall objective of the mitigation is to compensate for LCRMUTP's impacts such that no net loss of native habitat areas or functional values will occur. The enhanced habitat is expected to provide better functions and values than the habitats to be impacted.

The proposed project's contributions to cumulative impacts within the vicinity of the site are described below.

Air Quality, Noise, and Traffic: Due to the limited extent of development proposed in the RMP (i.e., trails, trailheads, and interpretive facilities) and the closure/restoration of numerous unauthorized trails, implementation of the RMP is not expected to increase the number of visitors to AWCWP and the number of vehicle trips to/from the park would be the same as occurs under existing conditions. Therefore, the long-term operation of the proposed project would not impact traffic conditions on area roadways nor would it generate noise or air quality impacts. Construction of improvements proposed in the RMP (i.e., trails, trailheads, interpretive facilities) could create temporary air and noise impacts

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during the construction period. However, these impacts would be mitigated to a less than significant level through compliance with County regulations including SCAQMD Rule 403, the County's Standard Procedures, and the County Noise Ordinance. Other foreseeable projects in the vicinity would be subject to similar measures. Therefore, the proposed project, in conjunction with the cumulative projects, would not result in a significant impact to air quality, noise, or traffic.

Aesthetics: The proposed project's contribution to cumulative aesthetic impacts would not be considerable. The amount and nature of development proposed in the RMP would be minimal and the RMP includes goals and guidelines to protect scenic resources and views both into and out of the park. When considered in conjunction with other projects in the vicinity, the proposed project effects would not result in a significant contribution to cumulative aesthetic impacts.

Biological Resources: The proposed project's contribution to cumulative biological resources impacts within the vicinity of the site will not be considerable given the limited extent of development/improvements proposed in the RMP (i.e., trails, trailheads, interpretive facilities). Mitigation of impacts would be accomplished through: (1) compliance with the NCCP/HCP incidental take authorization; (2) replacement of impacted wetland/riparian habitat at a minimum ratio of 1:1; and When considered in conjunction with other projects within the project vicinity, the proposed project effects would not result in a significant contribution to cumulative biological/wetland resource impacts. The project's cumulative impacts would be minimal and mitigated to a less-than-significant level.

Cultural Resources: Construction activities associated with the development of facilities proposed in the RMP (i.e., trails, trailheads, interpretive facilities) could result in impacts to archaeological resources and human remains. However, the proposed project would be subject to measures that protect identified and previously unidentified archaeological and paleontological resources. Other foreseeable projects in the County would be subject to similar measures. Therefore, the proposed project, in conjunction with the cumulative projects, would not result in a significant impact to cultural resources.

Geology and Soils: Construction of the proposed project would result in site-specific impacts affecting only the structures and users of the project site and would be reduced to a less-than-significant level with implementation of the mitigation measures recommended in Section 4.4, Geology, Soils, and Seismicity, and adherence to the construction standards in the 2007 UBC. The geologic impacts of other projects in the area would also be reduced with similar mitigation measures. Therefore, the proposed project would not contribute considerably to cumulative geology and soils impacts.

Hydrology: During construction of proposed recreational and interpretive facilities, it is possible that some discharge of sediments and pollutants might occur into surface waters from the use of construction equipment and as a result of excavation and construction activities. While these discharges might occur, their effect on water quality would be minimized through the incorporation of several procedures imposed on the project. Such conditions are those prescribed in the Standard Specifications for Public Works Construction ("Green Book"), the general National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit for Construction Activities issued by the California Water Resources Control Board, and the Areawide Urban Stormwater Runoff Permit for Orange County issued by the California Regional Water Quality Control Board. Other planned projects in the

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vicinity would be required to implement similar measures. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in a significant cumulative hydrology or water quality impact.

Hazards: Implementation of the proposed project could result in the release of hazardous materials used during construction of improvements proposed in the RMP (i.e., trails, trailheads, interpretive facilities). Planned projects in the vicinity could also release hazardous materials associated with construction activities. However, the hazard impacts of the proposed project and planned projects would be reduced to a less-than-significant level through adherence to federal, State, and local hazardous materials regulations and through implementation of standard mitigation measures and conditions of approval. Therefore, the cumulative hazards impacts of the project would not be considered significant.

c) Does the project have environmental effects, which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

Less Than Significant Impact. The proposed improvements would not have a substantial adverse or significant impact on human beings, either directly or indirectly. As described in Sections 4.7 (Air Quality) and 4.8 (Noise), the proposed project will have no long-term effects on local air quality and local noise levels. Overall, the construction of recreational facilities (i.e., trails) and the restoration of natural systems on the site would allow for outdoor recreation uses, educational opportunities, and nature appreciation, and would generally have a beneficial effect on human beings.

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FINAL DRAFT INITIAL STUDY/MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN ALISO AND WOOD CANYONS WILDERNESS PARK
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

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6.0 ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATED TERMS

bgs	below ground surface
BMPs	Best Management Practices
BRA	Biological Resources Assessment
CAGN	California gnatcatcher
Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CDFG	California Department of Fish and Game
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CNEL	Community Noise Equivalent Level
CO	Carbon Monoxide
County	County of Orange, California
CRA	Cultural Resources Assessment
CSS	Coastal Sage Scrub
CWA	Clean Water Act
DAMP	Drainage Area Master Plan
dBA	A-weighted decibel
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
FEIR	Final Environmental Impact Report
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
GDP	General Development Plan
HCP	Habitat Conservation Plan
HMMP	Habitat Mitigation and Monitoring Plan
I-405	Interstate 405
IS	Initial Study
ISA	Initial Site Assessment
JD	Jurisdictional Delineation
LCWP	Laguna Coast Wilderness Park
L _{max}	Maximum instantaneous noise level
LSA	LSA Associates, Inc.
MCAS	Marine Corps Air Station
MLD	Most Likely Descendent
MND	Mitigated Negative Declaration
mph	miles per hour
NAHC	Native American Heritage Commission
NCCP	Natural Communities Conservation Plan
NO ₂	Nitrogen Dioxide
NO _x	Nitrogen Oxide
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NROC	Nature Reserve of Orange County
OCFA	Orange County Fire Authority
OCFCD	Orange County Flood Control District

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PM ₁₀	Particulates less than 10 microns in diameter
PS&E	Plans, Specifications, and Estimates
RDMD	Resources and Development Management Department
ROC	Reactive organic compounds
RWCQB	Regional Water Quality Control Board
SCAQMD	South Coast Air Quality Management District
SCE	Southern California Edison
SO _x	Sulfur Oxide
SR-73	State Route 73 (San Joaquin Hills Transportation Corridor)
SR-133	State Route 133 (Laguna Canyon Road)
USACOE or Corps	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	United States Geological Survey
WQMP	Water Quality Management Plan

APPENDIX A

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

PARKWIDE GOALS AND STRATEGIES

In response to the Issues, listed in Section 5.1 of the RMP, the following goals and strategies outline a management framework to protect the resources of AWCWP. Goals and guidelines are necessary to perpetuate the park's important resource values and to respond to threats to those values. This section states resource management intentions and provides general guidance that support the natural, cultural, scenic, and recreation resources. Subsequent sections (e.g., Biological Resources Management) detail objectives and management programs to support these strategies.

The goals and strategies are divided into Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, Interpretation and Education, Public Use and Access, and Stewardship. A goal is a statement of intended outcome for management activities. A strategy is a management action for achieving the goals. All goals and strategies are offered for consideration based on the availability of County resources such as personnel and funding to achieve them.

PUBLIC USE AND ACCESS (USE)

Goals

- **Achieve compatibility between the protection of the park's natural and cultural resources and human use demands.**
- **Allow for passive recreational uses that contribute to enjoyment of the natural resources and promote healthy lifestyles (recognizing that park uses must have minimal impact on park resources and be compatible with a wilderness experience).**

Strategies

- USE-1:** Provide public use facilities and associated services within the park as needed to facilitate public enjoyment of the natural setting.
- USE-2:** Provide a trail system that provides a broad public benefit by accommodating diverse trail uses and abilities.
- USE-3:** Provide a comprehensive trail system that promotes linkages within the park and to adjacent communities and to other regional trails and destinations outside the park.
- USE-4:** Provide a trail system that balances recreation demand with the primary purpose to protect the natural and cultural resources within the park.
- USE-5:** Provide sufficient access to the park trail system to adequately serve the public and to discourage the creation of unauthorized and individual access points by adjacent neighbors.

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USE-6: Accommodate trail amenities that maintain the natural character of the land, enhance resource protection and contribute to the enjoyment of open space.

USE-7: Provide a trail system that promotes and enhances public enjoyment and appreciation of the natural, cultural and scenic resources.

USE-8: Identify appropriate passive uses of the park and prohibit inappropriate recreational uses.

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES (BIO)

Goals

- **Protect, restore, preserve and enhance the natural resources of the park.**
- **Maintain a park that is compatible with the entire San Joaquin Hills ecosystem and the Aliso Creek watershed.**

Strategies

BIO-1: Protect and maintain populations of native plant and wildlife with an emphasis on managing NCCP/HCP covered species.

BIO-2: Improve biological productivity and diversity through protection, enhancement, and restoration activities consistent with the adaptive management strategy of the NCCP/HCP.

BIO-3: Monitor enhancement and restoration activities as part of the adaptive management program to evaluate effectiveness and progress. Through monitoring, seek to identify new enhancement and restoration opportunities and priorities within the park.

BIO-4: Implement and coordinate with other adjacent landowners fire management methods that cause the least damage to park resources while providing effective fire control to protect human life and property.

WATER QUALITY (WQ)

Goal

- **Improve the quality of streamwater that flows through the park.**

Strategies

WQ-1: Protect water quality within the park. Identify water quality problems and work with regulatory agencies and property owners to correct water quality problems from storm water runoff and other causes in the watershed.

WQ-2: Develop and implement water quality management plan.

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CULTURAL RESOURCES (CULT)

Goals

- **Protect and preserve the important cultural/historical resources of the park.**

Strategies

- CULT-1:** Identify and implement a formal procedure for preserving known cultural resources within the park.
- CULT-2:** Maintain a cultural resources interpretive program in coordination with Local Tribal Leaders and the Archeological community.
- CULT-3:** Protect and preserve paleontological resources within the park.
- CULT-4:** Develop a paleontology interpretive program.
- CULT-5:** Follow established protocol if human remains are encountered during ground-disturbing activities in the park.

INTERPRETATION/EDUCATION (INT)

Goal

- **Provide an appropriate interpretive program that increases the public's understanding and appreciation of the significant natural and cultural resources of the park.**

Strategies

- INT-1:** Establish facilities and programs to enhance the public appreciation and understanding of park resources and to encourage research about park resources.
- INT-2:** Develop and implement an interpretive master plan.
- INT-3:** Provide high quality interpretive facilities and programs.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Goal

- **Protect and enhance significant views.**

Strategy

- VISUAL-1:** Protect and enhance views and distinctive landscape features that contribute to the setting, character, and visitor experience of the park.

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STEWARDSHIP

Goal

- **Provide effective stewardship of the park.**

Strategies

- STEW-1:** Maintain park facilities (i.e., trails, kiosks, gates, picnic areas) in the park to ensure that resource values are protected and management activities (i.e., habitat restoration, closure of unauthorized trails) are supported.
- STEW -2:** Enforce boundaries by establishing site fencing and patrolling park access points.
- STEW-3:** Maintain trails and roads to prevent erosion.
- STEW-4:** Patrol public use of the park to ensure compliance with the rules and regulations and to assess level of use by area of the park.
- STEW-5:** Develop a data management system to incorporate baseline data collected for the preparation of this management plan.

MANAGEMENT ZONES

Management zones are delineated on a map showing the entire park (Figure 16). These zones are an attempt to define spatially the management scheme for the park. Management zones allow for describing management goals by area or showing relationships between one area and another in terms of land use and management strategies. These areas are based on geographic relationships, resource values, ecological parameters, management issues, goals, or objectives, types and intensities of land use; or visitor use and experiences. Four (4) management areas have been created:

- Upper Aliso Canyon
- Lower Aliso Canyon
- Upper Wood Canyon
- Lower Wood Canyon

The management zones reflect consideration of a number of factors, including existing and potential resource values, type and intensity of recreation use, and the practicalities of everyday management and operations. The zones generally represent areas of the park that share common physical and use characteristics and should be managed as identifiable components or subareas. The resource management zones will allow for common referencing of geographic locations for all resource management activities (i.e., scientific surveys, exotic plant control, monitoring). The discussion below provides management goals and strategies for the four management areas.

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Upper Aliso Canyon (UALISO)

This zone constitutes the northeastern arm of the park and includes a segment of Aliso Creek as well as the paleontological rock outcropping known as the Pecten Reef formation in this northernmost extent of Aliso Canyon. The Pecten Reef formation contains a dense assemblage of fossils and, therefore, possesses extremely high value for paleontological resources. Due to its remote location from the park rangers' office, it has a high threat for illegal collection of resources. This narrow section of the park acts primarily as a transportation corridor connecting people to destinations north, south, and west. Numerous entry points from the many community parks and schools along the Aliso Creek Bikeway in this zone access the park. This area contains significant biological resource value associated with the riparian corridor along Aliso Creek. However, Aliso Creek is also heavily infested with *Arundo*, an invasive exotic weed species. Invasive species will need to be controlled in order to protect the riparian habitat.

Goals

- **Protect and interpret paleontological resources.**
- **Maintain a natural and scenic link for trail users.**
- **Enhance riparian habitat.**

Strategies

- UALISO-1:** Interpret the paleontological resources of Pecten Reef. Interpretation should focus on preserving paleontological resources in situ and notifying park rangers.
- UALISO-2:** Make Pecten Reef a primary park entry. It provides a prime location for displaying/distributing general information about the park.
- UALISO-3:** Create distinctive entries along Aliso Creek that signify the visitor is entering a wilderness park. Improve communication and connections with local communities and schools.
- UALISO-4:** Protect and restore riparian habitat along Aliso Creek through habitat restoration efforts and control of invasive exotic species.
- UALISO-5:** Continue to participate in and support Aliso Creek watershed planning efforts. Implement recommended strategies, as appropriate, to improve water quality.

Lower Aliso Canyon (LALISO)

This area encompasses the main park entry as well as the lower reach of Aliso Creek down to the southernmost extent of the park. The Main Park Entry is the busiest gateway into the park and includes the widest range of developed facilities that currently include a picnic area, parking, ranger station, and portable restrooms. Important cultural sites exist in this area of the park. The lower reach of Aliso Canyon is currently closed to the public. The Coastal Treatment Plant and its access road are located within this area. At the southern end of the park, several disparate parcels are connected by trails. This section of the park may be relatively unknown to all but local users, despite the fact that its steep hillsides offer dramatic and high quality views of the Pacific Ocean.

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Goals

- **Provide access into park to communities at southernmost segment of Lower Aliso Canyon.**
- **Enhance recreation use.**
- **Improve riparian habitat and water quality in Aliso Creek.**

Strategies

- LALISO-1:** Improve the main park entry to provide better directional information for access to parking and trails, and park amenities; improved restroom facilities; improved park ranger station and interpretive center.
- LALISO-2:** Provide bikeway to Aliso Beach Park consistent with the regional bikeway plan.
- LALISO-3:** Provide a trail on the east side of Aliso Creek from Alicia Parkway to the Coastal Treatment Plant.
- LALISO-4:** Provide trail to overlook at southernmost park boundary.
- LALISO-5:** Provide a rest stop at the southernmost park boundary to include restrooms, picnic area and interpretive displays.
- LALISO-6:** Emphasize the ACWHEP structure as a destination point. Explore the potential for providing a trail connection between the ACWHEP structure and the Aliso Summit Trail.
- LALISO-7:** Enhance Willow Hut as a destination point by providing ADA access and interpretive information.
- LALISO-8:** Protect and restore riparian habitat along Aliso Creek through habitat restoration efforts and control of invasive exotic species.
- LALISO-9:** Continue to participate in and support Aliso Creek Watershed planning efforts. Implement recommended strategies, as appropriate, to improve water quality.
- LALISO-10:** Develop checks and balances criteria for HBP's review of all future watershed practices within AWCWP.

Upper Wood Canyon (UWOOD)

This area represents the northwestern part of the park and is the primary entry into the park from "Top of the World." Part of this area consists of land that is owned by the City of Laguna Beach and leased to the County of Orange, as such, it represents a unique joint use and management area. This area contains many of the park's most popular and heavily used trails. Facilities and improvements in this area will focus on trails and interpretive opportunities.

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Goals

- **Maintain and enhance recreation resources.**
- **Protect natural resources.**

Strategies

- UWOOD-1:** Explore the opportunity to connect the north end of AWCWP to the Laguna Coast Wilderness Park as part of a regional hiking trail. A feasibility study will be required to evaluate alternative alignments.
- UWOOD-2:** Provide connection between the northern end of Five Oaks Trail at Moulton Peak to Wood Canyon Trail
- UWOOD-3:** Change status of “Car Wreck” Trail to “Authorized Trail” to provide a connection between Oak Grove Trail and Mathis Canyon Trail. Implement trail improvements for safety.
- UWOOD-4:** Provide trail connection between Dripping Cave Trail and the ridgeline to enhance trail recreation with a loop and to provide park operations with an improved route to patrol remote park locations. An environmental assessment will be required to evaluate potential biological impacts associated with trail implementation.
- UWOOD-5:** Formalize the Hunwut entry to provide access from eastern neighborhoods and Soka University.
- UWOOD-6:** Protect and manage native habitat, including coastal scrub, oak woodlands, chaparral, and native grasslands.
- UWOOD-7:** Provide a composting toilet at Sycamore Grove.

Lower Wood Canyon (LWOOD)

This area encompasses lower Wood Canyon below Mathis Canyon Trail, including Moulton Meadows. Lower Wood Canyon contains many of the park’s unique natural and geologic resources, including sensitive plant, bird and wildlife species, as well as Dripping Cave and Cave Rock. Important cultural sites are also located in lower Wood Canyon. It also contains many of the park’s unauthorized trails which come down from the ridge separating Wood and Laguna Canyons. A formal trailhead is provided for the Meadows Trail leading down to the Aliso and Wood Canyons confluence and for the Aswut Trail along the ridge to the west. The management intent for this zone is to maintain and protect park resources and improve wildlife corridors while continuing to provide trail access. Expanded opportunities for interpretation and education may also be pursued.

Goals

- **Protect, enhance and interpret biological resources.**
- **Continue to provide trail access.**

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ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Strategies

- LWOOD-1:** Protect and manage coastal scrub habitat, especially areas that are known habitat for sensitive plant species.
- LWOOD-2:** Provide loop trail connection from AWMA Road/Aliso Creek trail extension up to Aswut Trail/Moulton Meadows Park.
- LWOOD-3:** Provide interpretive signage and exhibits to educate park users of the park's valuable resources.