

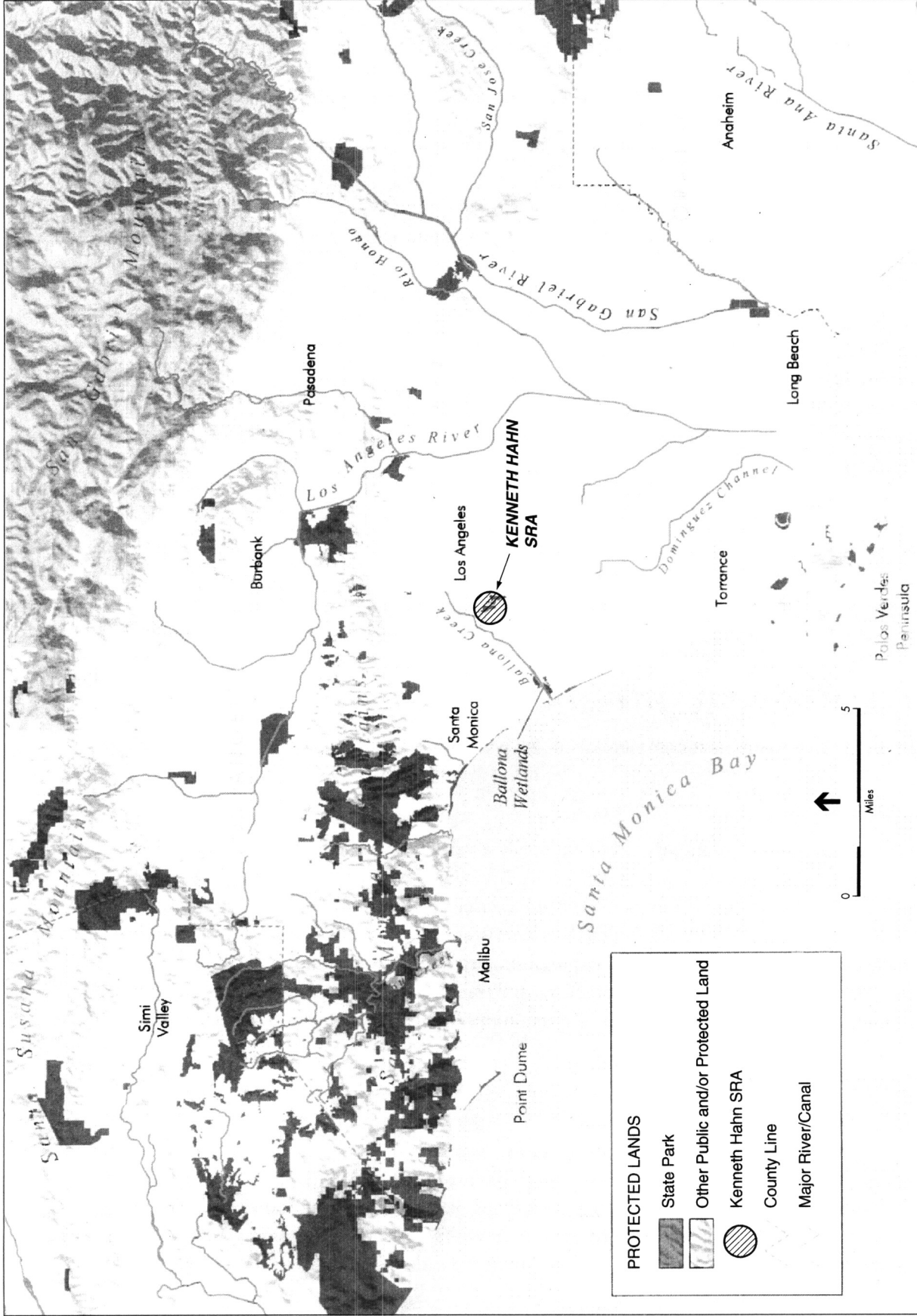
## NATURAL RESOURCES

### *OVERVIEW*

This information is based on an ecological assessment of the Baldwin Hills conducted by the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County Foundation in 2000-2001. The park and the larger Baldwin Hills area represent the largest remaining expanse of the once dominant coastal sage scrub habitat in this area of the Los Angeles Basin, and contain remnants of the riparian (streamside) and grassland habitats that once made up much of the surrounding area. Coastal sage scrub is unique to Southern and Central California, and the park is home to hundreds of native plant and wildlife species. Historically, the coastal sage scrub habitats in the park and vicinity were largely separated from those of the Palos Verdes Peninsula, Santa Monica Mountains, and hills of the eastern Los Angeles Basin by other natural habitats such as freshwater marshes and grasslands, creating a natural island effect (Figure 11). Over a century of agriculture and urbanization has fragmented the former habitat of the region, and the park is now surrounded by the intensively developed and densely populated cities of Los Angeles, Culver City and Inglewood.

The park is a series of hills running from north to south ascending to just over 500 feet above the coastal plain. Native park habitats are categorized as coastal scrub, grassland and riparian. All of the habitats have been degraded to varying degrees by urbanization, fragmentation and invasion of non-native plants and animals. Fragmentation occurs when roads, trails, buildings, non-native landscaping or other development break a habitat into many smaller pieces. Invasive, non-native species often thrive in disturbed and fragmented habitat and contribute to continuing and increasing fragmentation. The least disturbed areas of the park are coastal scrub communities located in canyons.

While natural habitats of the park are degraded and fragmented, they still provide important habitat for animals that depend on coastal scrub species as well as an important educational opportunity for the many human visitors to the area. Historic data on the park's flora and fauna is limited, but it is clear that the habitat in the hills today has lost those plant and animal species which are affected by human disturbance. The park is now dominated by plants and animals able to exist in close proximity to an urban environment. Some habitat specialists (species that are dependent upon one or a few habitat types), are still present and others have recently disappeared from the area and become locally extinct. The recent nature of many local extinctions, continued presence of some habitat specialists and the expanses of relatively intact habitat suggest that there is good potential for habitat restoration. Today, there are estimated to be over 72 species of native plants in the park, that in turn support hundreds of native animal species, including hundreds of insects, at least 12 species of reptiles and amphibians, over 166 species of birds and 21 species of mammals.



SOURCE: Community Conservancy International; GreenInfo Network

Kenneth Hahn SRA Recirculated General Plan Amendment and EIR / 2023.10

**Figure 11**

Ecological Areas of Los Angeles County

### ***NEED FOR CONNECTING HABITAT AREAS***

Local extinctions are more frequent when habitat is isolated from other similar habitats that would serve as sources of species to re-populate an area under normal conditions. To prevent total habitat isolation, provide routes for re-population of an area with native animal species and ensure vital genetic exchange between populations, it is important to re-connect habitat areas in the Baldwin Hills and to maintain habitat corridors between similar habitats. This will allow animals to find new food sources, den sites and mates, and will help preserve the long-term health and viability of native wildlife populations.

Habitat specialists require the presence of specific habitat components in sufficient quantity in order to maintain a viable population. A viable population is one that is likely to persist through time. In urban settings, competition from non-native or invasive species is often a limiting factor in the success of native populations. Invasive species can out-compete native plants and animals, resulting in serious declines and sometimes extinctions of native plants and animals. The loss of a single or group of species can have a cascading effect of loss on dependent species. Mesopredators are omnivores and smaller carnivores, such as gray fox, feral cats and dogs (domestic species which have reverted to living in a wild state), that flourish in the absence of a top carnivore, such as coyote. Studies show that the loss of large predators allows mesopredators, particularly non-natives such as cats and dogs, to grow unchecked and decimate smaller prey species such as birds, reptiles and small mammals. Improved habitat connections in the park and larger Baldwin Hills area can help protect the remaining native species to survive and thrive.

### ***VEGETATION COMMUNITY TYPES***

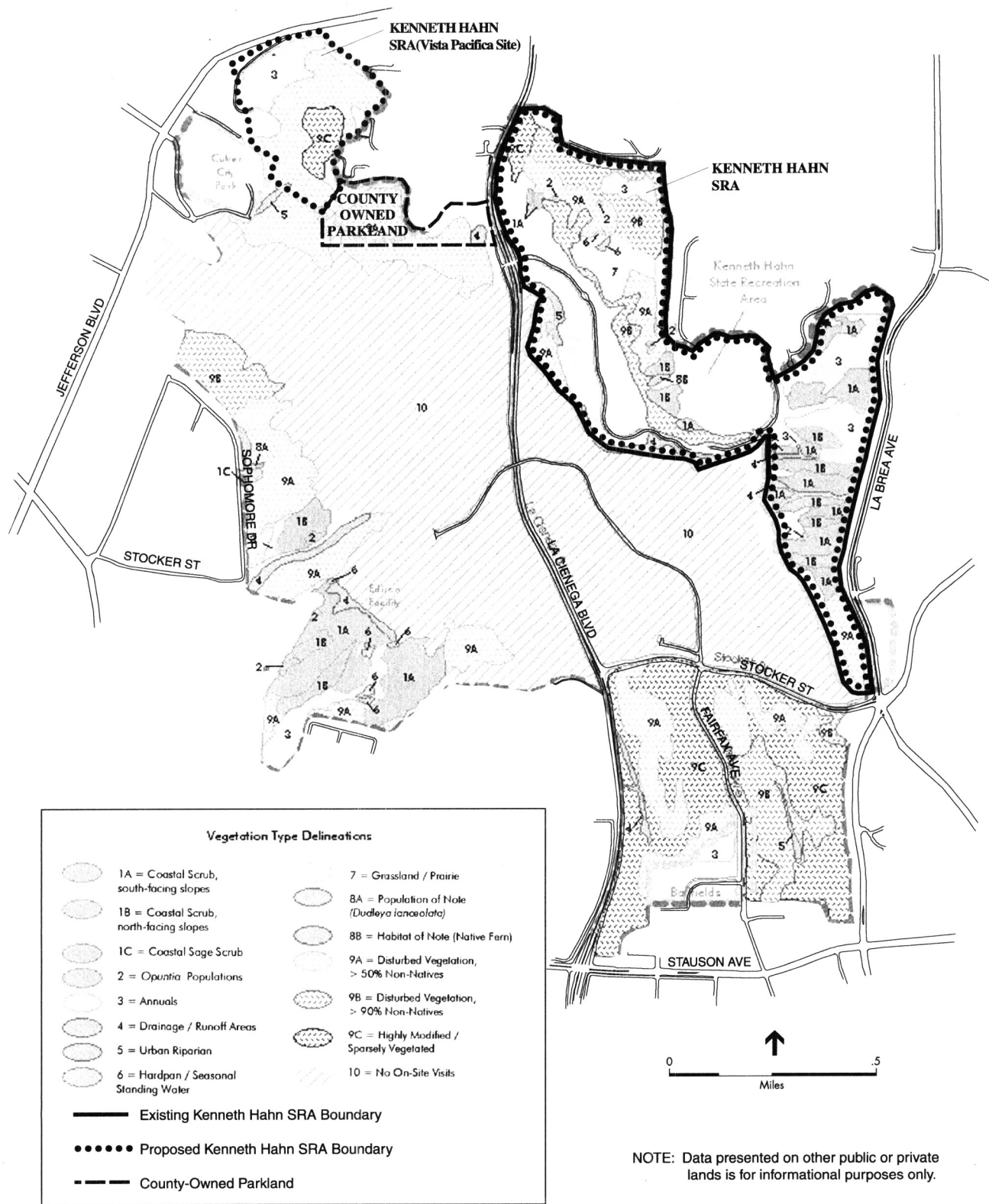
There are three main plant communities in the park (Figure 12).

#### **Coastal Scrub**

The dominant plant community is coastal scrub, a variant of coastal sage scrub lacking the sage (*Salvia* spp.) component. This habitat type is threatened by urban development throughout Southern California, and is the focus of many conservation efforts. Coastal scrub in the park is characterized by California sagebrush, coyote brush, bush sunflower and California buckwheat. It has been impacted by grazing, oil exploration, urban development, park landscaping, non-native species, improper irrigation practices and trail establishment. Growing on slopes of low elevation, this vegetation association is tolerant of drought and adapted to periodic fire.

#### **Grasslands**

Grasslands represent a smaller component of the park landscape and have been heavily impacted by the introduction of non-native annual plants. Modern day non-native annual plants – such as wild mustard, radish and various grasses – have replaced historic native bunch grasses that once grew in the area. A few native bunch grass species have recently been found to persist in the park and adjacent lands; these, and the presence of several species of native annually flowering plants, suggest that perhaps perennial grasslands or prairie did historically occur in the area. Today,



SOURCE: Community Conservancy International; GreenInfo Network

Kenneth Hahn SRA Recirculated General Plan Amendment and EIR / 202310 ■

**Figure 12**  
Detailed Vegetation Types Map

zones of grassland occur primarily on ridge tops and low saddle areas within the park. These areas are overwhelmingly dominated by exotic grasses and other plants that originated from the Mediterranean region.

### **Riparian Woodlands**

The former natural riparian (streamside) community has been largely replaced by artificial aquatic and riparian habitats maintained via park maintenance and watering regimes. Arroyo willow and mule fat still thrive in wet canyon bottoms. Historical evidence suggests that vernal pools existed in the general vicinity of the Baldwin Hills. Plant species present in the areas identified in historic records are often found in vernal pool sites; however, no vernal pool indicator species have been identified in recent surveys of the park.

Native riparian or streamside communities in southern California typically consist of large alder, willow, sycamore and cottonwood trees intermixed with shorter stands of willow and mule fat. Historically, the larger drainages in the park and Baldwin Hills must have supported some riparian growth, and riparian woodland was extensive in the bottomlands of Ballona Creek and its tributaries. Because no significant natural watercourses presently flow through the park, the existing patches of riparian habitat are supported, in large part, by landscape maintenance or its runoff or other runoff on site. Compared to more natural riparian woodlands, these zones are reduced in extent and species composition, and exhibit a shrubby growth form. Some ponds and intermittent streams exist along and at the foot of natural drainages throughout the park, and these provide an important source of water for wildlife.

### ***SENSITIVE AND SPECIAL INTEREST PLANT POPULATIONS***

The only plant species identified within the park and cited as a species for conservation concern (Davis et al. 1994) is the California walnut. The individual shrubs of this species may or may not represent a formerly widespread woodland. Of interest may be the persistence of lance-leaf dudleya (*Dudleya lanceolata*) on a sandy bluff near the Vista Pacifica Scenic Site near West Los Angeles College. This species is not considered rare in general, but it is coastal scrub plant represented by only a small number of individuals.

### ***EXOTIC FLORA AND POTENTIAL FOR RESTORATION OF NATIVE SPECIES***

The intentional and accidental introduction of exotic plant species has permanently changed historic plant communities of Southern California. Some non-native plants out-compete native species in the absence of natural fires to which native species are adapted. Other non-natives also appear to be more tolerant of air pollution than native species. Members of the sage (*Salvia* sp.) family are particularly sensitive to air pollution, and this may explain why sage is absent from the area. Some non-native plants that threaten native species are weedy species blown or because they are less able to survive in neighboring habitat and are unlikely to adapt to the rapid addition of exotic predators and competitors. Others that are very aggressive and pose serious threats to native plants, such as pampas grass, have been planted in KHSRA and have now seeded into

natural habitat. Non-natives such as German ivy outgrow and crowd native species; the shallow root structure of the ivy also creates soil erosion problems. Non-native plants also tend to dominate where soil has been disturbed.

Two native plant species adapted for wet soils, an aquatic cattail and the nut sedge, are located at the tops of drainages in coastal scrub communities of the park. The persistence of these two species in these places indicates artificial water is entering the system. This negatively impacts coastal scrub species because other non-native insects move in to the altered drainage and out-compete native species; this causes a domino effect of loss in the food web, as many other animals are dependent on those native insects.

Removal of non-native plant species must be targeted considering the biology of each species. Some non-natives such as Pampas grass (*Cortaderia jubata* and *C. selloana*) are notoriously invasive and laborious to remove. However, diligent removal efforts would promote healthier and more abundant coastal scrub plants. Native coastal scrub shrubs such as coyote bush (*Baccharis pilularis*) and bush sunflower (*Encelia californica*) planted along the edges of park landscaping could help to contain non-native landscaping plants. The County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation conducts regular removal of exotics from the park. Areas of highest priority for habitat restoration appear in Figure 13.

## **ANIMAL LIFE**

The park is home to a number of native species, including hundreds of insects, at least 12 species of reptiles and amphibians, over 166 species of birds and 21 species of mammals.

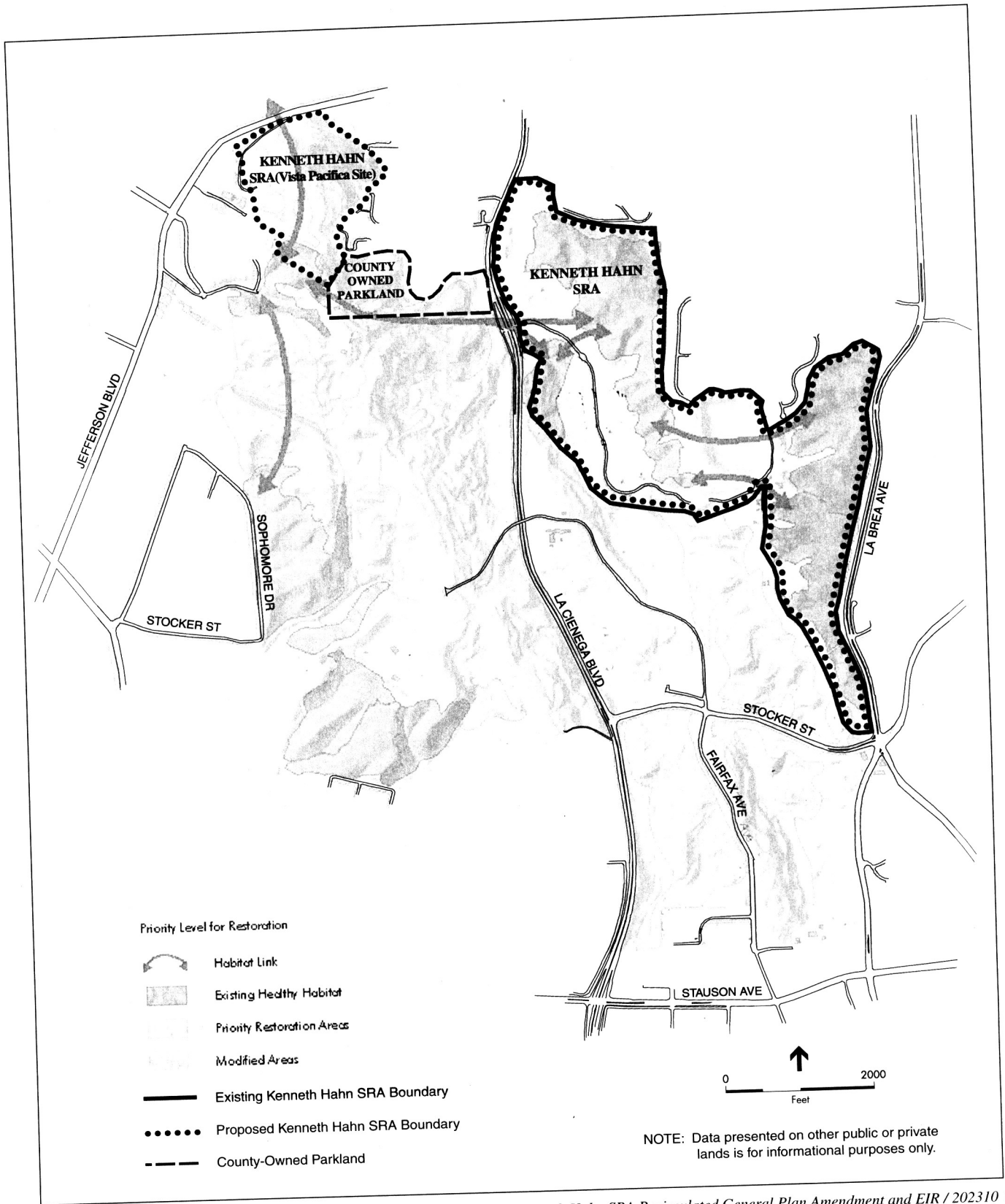
### **Native Arthropods**

The diversity of arthropod populations is generally dependent upon plant diversity. Because many insects specialize on one or a few closely related species of plants, they are often limited by the densities and distributions of the host plant species upon which they feed. The most important habitat in the park for insects is coastal scrub.

There are many cosmopolitan and introduced species of arthropods within the park, probably numbering in the thousands. These include some 48 species of beetles, 15 species of bees and non-parasitic wasps, and 15 species of spiders. Additionally, 12 species of butterflies have been identified and up to 33 are expected to occur; all but one are native. Nearly 60% of these feed on a variety of common landscaping plants. The remainder feed upon a narrow range of hosts that are not well represented in the park. Insect species in the park are dominated by species common to much of southern California and often encountered in urban areas.

### **Exotic Arthropod Species**

Exotic arthropods such as the Argentine ant (*Linepithema humile*), the pill bug (*Armadillidium vulgare*) and the European earwig (*Forficula auricularia*) tend to dominate in the park due to irrigated landscaping adjacent to native, drier coastal scrub vegetation. Irrigation has altered the



SOURCE: Community Conservancy International, GreenInfo Network

Kenneth Hahn SRA Recirculated General Plan Amendment and EIR / 202310 ■

**Figure 13**  
Habitat Restoration Priorities

ecosystem of the native vegetation, causing native insect species to be out-competed by the non-natives. The only other ant species identified was the thief ant (*Solenopsis molesta*). It is a small species that has a habit of co-occurring with other ant species from which it takes food resources (Hogue 1993), perhaps explaining its ability to persist in the presence of the Argentine ant.

The pill bug and European earwig are also considered an important threat to native species as they may prey upon their eggs and larvae, as well as directly compete for space. Native insect species dependent upon a narrow range of habitats are most vulnerable to non-native species.

### **Native Reptiles and Amphibians**

Reptiles and amphibians found in the park are habitat generalists that have adapted to urbanization, including 12 observed species and several additional species likely to occur. All of these except the one turtle species encountered (Red-eared slider) are native to California. The species encountered most frequently were the side-blotched lizard and western fence lizard.

The composition and abundance of amphibian and reptile populations are directly related to the amount of suitable habitat present. Portions of the park that support native vegetation are often fragmented and have been degraded by the invasion of introduced plant species. These invasions reduce the quality of such habitats for native amphibians and reptiles by altering protective cover, often increasing the vulnerability of such organisms to native and introduced predators, such as feral dogs and cats (domestic species which have reverted to living in a wild state).

Historic accounts indicate that the fauna was once more diverse. Amphibians are especially dependent upon water resources for breeding success and have likely been affected detrimentally by the draining and channelization of historic riparian areas. The artificial drainages currently present in the park provide limited habitat for amphibians or reptiles in the area. The presence of the western toad and the pacific treefrog are a positive sign, as both have skins sensitive to pollutants in water and air and are therefore important indicators of the area's overall environmental health.

### **Reptiles and Amphibians of Concern**

Reptile and amphibian diversity has probably been lost because of cascading effects of changes to the park ecosystem. The invasive Argentine ant prospers in areas of southern California with artificial water supply, including the park. The Argentine ant has displaced native ant communities and the demise of native ant colonies has deprived the coast horned lizard of its preferred food species. Thus it is of little surprise that the coast horned lizard, a California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) Species of Concern found only in coastal scrub habitat, was not found in the park

The garden slender salamander is also a CDFG Species of Concern that historically occurred in the Baldwin Hills. This salamander was not detected in recent surveys, but the dry conditions during the survey period would have made it difficult to detect, and thus it may persist in the area.



### **Exotic Reptile and Amphibian Species**

The exotic bullfrog is a predacious species threatening native amphibians throughout its expanded range. While the bullfrog was not observed during the recent survey period, its presence in the park is likely. The bullfrog thrives in habitats with persistent water where its voracious tadpoles eat native tadpoles, thereby eliminating native species. Because bullfrog tadpoles require two years to develop, they cannot survive in seasonal freshwater habitat. However, the park's artificial waterways provide ample habitat for bullfrogs. Control of this and other exotic predators such as the feral dog and cat could help to sustain herpetofauna diversity and health in the park.

### **Birds**

There are 166 species of native birds in the park and surrounding Baldwin Hills, including 41 who regularly nest here and 18 who do so occasionally. There have been significant historical changes in the avifauna of the park. Comparison of recent surveys with sporadic historical accounts suggests that the diversity of the bird species present in the park has decreased with habitat fragmentation and destruction.

### **Birds of Concern**

A number of bird species are found in the park that do not breed in the surrounding urbanized lowland areas. Documented breeders in the park and surrounding open space include the California quail, Cassin's kingbird, barn swallow, Bewick's wren, phainopepla, orange-crowned warbler, common yellowthroat, spotted towhee, California towhee, song sparrow and black-headed grosbeak. An additional six species that do not breed in urban habitats may breed in the Baldwin Hills but have not been verified.

The greater roadrunner and burrowing owl no longer occur in the Baldwin Hills, and the cactus wren and California thrasher have possibly also been lost from the suite of species that were resident there. Former breeding species of the park which now only occur as non-breeding visitors include the loggerhead shrike and blue grosbeak. The decline in populations of species which are dependent on native habitats is likely due to habitat loss and degradation and the impacts of native and non-native predators such as feral cats and dogs, raccoons, gray foxes, fox squirrels, and jays, crows and ravens.

Two sensitive habitats were identified within the park: California sagebrush and coast prickly-pear. Both of these habitat types are included in the Coastal Scrub association in the *List of California Terrestrial Natural Communities Recognized by the Natural Diversity Data Base (NDDB)* compiled by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in 1997. The coast prickly-pear habitat is considered in the NDDB to be "rare or worthy of consideration." The habitats are sometimes used by the coast cactus wren (coast prickly-pear) and the California gnatcatcher (California sagebrush). Coastal scrub habitats have been reduced and their floristic composition has probably changed considerably, and several bird species such as the greater

roadrunner, cactus wren and California thrasher that require this habitat seem to have disappeared in recent years.

Two nesting pairs of coastal cactus wren were observed in the canyon area to the southwest of the Vista Pacifica Scenic Site in 1991. The coastal cactus wren is a Federal and a California Species of Concern, but it is not listed as Threatened or Endangered under the federal or state endangered species acts. The cactus wren was not recorded during surveys in 2000, although it was recorded as recently as 1996. The rufous-crowned sparrow is known only from a recent sighting of 1-2 individuals that may represent the last of a remnant population or recent colonizers or seasonal wanderers.

The peregrine falcon is the only state or federally listed species documented to occur currently in the Baldwin Hills area. Until recently the peregrine falcon was listed as federally endangered, but was removed from the list because of species recovery. It remains as a California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) listed endangered species. CDFG Species of Concern observed in or near the park within the last decade includes burrowing owl, belted kingfisher, olive-sided flycatcher, Swainson's thrush, yellow warbler, yellow-breasted chat, blue grosbeak and tri-colored blackbird.

### **Exotic Bird Species**

While native to the greater Los Angeles area, several species have expanded their range into urban and suburban habitats to the detriment of other bird species. The western scrub-jay, American crow and common raven have all exploded in population in recent decades in urban areas, as all three are very adaptable to urban environments. These species are considered extremely detrimental to smaller birds as they prey extensively on eggs and nestlings.

Restoration of natural riparian areas and native grasslands could enhance populations of several native bird species. Feral cats and free-ranging feral dogs are very detrimental to ground-nesting birds as well as to native small mammals and reptiles. The natural re-colonization of coyotes would contribute to the goal of eliminating exotic predators and superabundant native mesopredators in the park.

### **Mammals**

Results of mammalian surveys indicate that the current mammal community of the park is species-poor compared to the area's historical fauna. It is characterized by species that are generalists and able to survive amid intense human activity. This includes 18 species of mammals, although up to 10 additional species (mostly bats) could occur. The current mammal fauna includes the native pocket gopher, woodrats, mice, a native rabbit and hare, the gray fox, raccoons, skunks, opossums, and the introduced house mouse and feral cats, dogs, and the fox squirrel. Most habitat specialists have been lost from the mammalian fauna of the park.

### **Mammals of Concern**

Two bat species of concern possibly still occurring in the park are the pallid bat and the western mastiff bat. Populations of these species are suspected to be in decline or are highly localized and require active management to prevent them from becoming endangered or threatened species. Another California state species of special concern that could potentially occur in the park is the Los Angeles pocket mouse.

### **Exotic Mammal Species**

The present composition of the mammal community in the park appears to largely reflect the surrounding urban area; only the gray fox, native rodents, and the jackrabbit have close associations with native scrub habitats. The apparent loss of a top predator, the coyote, has important ramifications for the health of the entire coastal scrub community as the presence of such predators keeps populations of smaller predators, such as foxes and feral cats, in check. Feral dogs and cats not only threaten native species by directly preying upon them, but also by competing with native species for resources. Feral cat-feeding stations were observed in the vicinity of the park, further exacerbating the problems associated with feral cats.

### ***PALEONTOLOGY<sup>2</sup>***

Paleoenvironmental reconstruction of the general area show it to possess an environment fairly similar to today, but with more moisture and lower humidity. The area was a plain or open rolling country with an interior, semi-arid type of vegetation where grass-covered surfaces were interspersed with copses of trees and brush, favoring the existence of a diverse population of hoofed animals. In this environment, bison, horse, mylodont ground sloth, elephant, camel, and antelope would have been plentiful. Associated with these herbivores were the typical carnivores like the lion-like cat, coyote, sabertooth cat, and dire wolf. The park and surrounding area were similar to other parts of North America where big game hunting existed. It is reasonable to assume that even without an artifactual complex present (as we have in other areas) man was exploiting the Pleistocene megafauna in this area. In this period, Southern California populations shifted from a big game hunting subsistence to a small game and plant gathering. Because of the drier climate, water became less available in the desert which in turn lowered the grass resource production. This factor, as well as the changing resource base, resulted in a population movement from inland deserts to the more suitable environments of coastal areas. Environmental adaptation in terms of settlement patterns and subsistence resources permitted a general population increase.

---

<sup>2</sup> Paleontology is a branch of geology that studies prehistoric life forms other than humans, through the study of plant and animal fossils. Fossils are the remains of organisms that lived in the region in the geologic past and therefore preserve an aspect of Southern California prehistory that is of scientific importance, since many species are now extinct. Fossils are found embedded in geologic formations that range in thickness from a few feet to hundreds of feet. These formations form a complex relationship below the surface. Sedimentary formations are layered atop one another, and over time the layers have been squeezed, tilted, folded, and shaped by fault activity. Sensitive fossil bearing formations found at the surface also may extend from just below the surface to many miles below the surface. Consequently, the task of predicting paleontologically sensitive areas is difficult.

There are two main sedimentary formations that exist within the park, Pleistocene marine and marine terrace deposits, and Upper Pliocene Marine formations, that are likely to contain fossil<sup>3</sup> material of now extinct marine species. Invertebrate paleontological specimens have been identified within the Vista Pacifica Scenic Site. Types of fossils included several species of Cephalopods. Due to the geologic makeup of the project's locality, there is a potential for project excavation to uncover fossil resources.

## CULTURAL RESOURCES

### *OVERVIEW*

In its natural state, the park is associated with chaparral environment. Characteristics of chaparral environment include hills, broad valleys, and alluvial soils. Native plant and animal resources in this area were of dietary importance to the Southern California Native Americans that occupied the area. Archaeological sites are known to exist within a one-quarter mile radius of the park. The Vista Pacifica Scenic Site was previously surveyed and monitored for archaeological resources as part of the mitigation process for previously approved development. Archaeological sites were identified during mitigation monitoring. While modern disturbance has most likely removed some surface deposits, there is a probability of uncovering subsurface finds during any future construction or excavation activities.

The Native Americans inhabiting the park just prior to Spanish contact were a Shoshonean linguistic group called the Gabrielino or Tongva. It is assumed that certain aspects of that heritage were retained and diffused into Southern California. European colonization occurred from A.D. 1540 to 1771 followed by three distinct periods to the present: the Mission Period (A.D. 1771 to 1834), the Mexican Period (A.D. 1822 to 1846), and the Anglo Period (A.D. 1848 to present). The first documented instance of European contact in the general area was the 1542 voyage of Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, who was sailing up the California coast searching for a Northwest Passage to China. On October 8, 1542, Cabrillo, upon entering what is now San Pedro Harbor, sighted the smoke from many fires in the Palos Verdes Hills; thus, he named San Pedro Bay the "Bahía de los Fumos" or the Bay of Smokes. More than two hundred years later, in 1769, an expedition under the direction of Captain Gaspár de Portola left San Diego to reach and supply Monterey. An important member of this expedition was Father Junipero Serra who intended to establish a mission chain through Alto California to convert the Native Americans to Christianity.

On September 8, 1771, Father Angel Somera and Father Pedro Cambón founded Mission San Gabriel where the majority of the Native Americans of the Los Angeles Basin (including those from the Baldwin Hills area) were taken; hence, the Spanish name for the Native Americans of historic times, Gabrielino (the native name being Tongva), is derived from this Mission. Native Americans in the immediate area and from more distant areas were gathered into the Mission to provide a labor force for building, herding, farming, weaving, and cooking. The culture shock and

<sup>3</sup> Paleontologists consider all vertebrate fossils to be of importance. Fossils of other types also are considered significant if they are representative of a new record, a new species, a most complete specimen of its kind, a rare species, or a species useful in the dating of stratigraphic formations.

subsequent exposure to European diseases decimated the aboriginal population and resulted in the reduction of vast numbers of Native Americans. By the end of the 1700s, the Native Americans and their culture had been virtually destroyed in Southern California by Spanish missionization (which forced new cultural adaptations, i.e., agriculture). This led to extremely high death rates from disease and warfare and reduced the native population to half of what it was at the beginning of the period.

In the beginning of the 1780s, the concept of the rancho was developed. In the Baldwin Hills area, there were three main ranchos: 1) Rancho La Ballona, 2) Rancho Rincón de los Bueyes, 3) Rancho Cienega O'Paso de la Tijera. The social and economic systems revolved around the ranchos as exhibited by the stratified nature of the Spanish, Mexican, and Native American cultures. The Spanish owners, or "Gente de Razón" were the elite of the area, controlling vast amounts of land which enabled them to exert a vast amount of political and economic influence. Family influence and relatives in the Mexican civilian government permitted some families and/or small landholders to dramatically increase or gain vast amounts of land.

In 1800, the Alcalde (mayor) of the Pueblo de los Angeles was Joaquin Higuera. His son, Bernardo, was to settle the land that joined the Rancho La Ballona on the northeast and called it Rancho de los Bueyes. The Rincón Rancho was settled in December 1821 under Governor Noriega. The origin of Rincón de los Bueyes, "corner for cattle", was a natural corral created by a ravine in the Baldwin Hills (which lies just southwest of the Vista Pacifica Scenic Site in Culver City). Shortly after Bernardo Higuera and Señor Lopez, his partner, settled the Rancho Rincón, Spanish control of California ended; henceforth, California was now under Mexican jurisdiction.

The Rancho Cienega, which comprised the majority of the Baldwin Hills, was called Rancho Cienega O Paso de la Tijera ("ranch of the swamp or passage of the scissors"). In 1843, Governor Manuel Micheltorena granted this Rancho to Vicente Sanchez. In 1875, his son sold a half interest of this Rancho for \$60,000 dollars. Unable to pay off his loan, the remaining acreage was sold at auction to E.J. Baldwin, who used the Rancho for sheep ranching even though it was unprofitable (something unusual for this Comstock Mining millionaire). Baldwin, who was sometimes known as Lucky Baldwin, held his luck even after death when oil was discovered on the property in 1924. The Baldwin Hills (Inglewood Field) attracted major oil companies including Standard, Getty, Texaco and Shell, establishing the area as a very productive oil and natural gas field.

### ***ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES***

The region of the park was home to Native American population groups for at least 6,000 to 8,000 years. The native ecological environment consisted of river and stream drainages, which were prime locations for Native American food processing and village sites. These locations were often valued for their water sources, and therefore quickly urbanized once Europeans entered the region. Past construction often did not disturb the subsurface soils more than a foot or two. Prehistoric archaeological sites are often covered by three-feet or more of topsoil thereby

protecting the sites after the area has become highly urbanized. However, some prehistoric sites do occur on the surface in desert locations.

### Prehistoric Period (Prior to 1542)

The Prehistoric cultural history of the park and environs is illustrated by the following chronology<sup>4</sup>:

- **Early Man Horizon.** From the end of the Pleistocene (approximately 11,000 years ago) to approximately 6,000 B.C. archaeological assemblages attributed to this horizon area were characterized by large projectile points and scrapers. The limited data available suggests that prehistoric populations focused on hunting and gathering, moving from region to region in small nomadic groups.
- **Milling Stone Horizon.** This horizon is characterized by the appearance of hand-stones and milling-stones, and dates between approximately 6,000 B.C. to 1,000 B.C. Artifact assemblages during the early Milling Stone period reflect an emphasis on plant foods and foraging subsistence systems. Inland populations generally exploited grass seeds, which became the primary subsistence activity. Artifact assemblages are characterized by choppers and scraper planes, but generally lack projectile points. The appearance of large projectile points in the latter portion of the Milling Stone Horizon suggests a more diverse subsistence economy.
- **Intermediate Horizon.** Dated between 1,000 B.C. to A.D. 750, the Intermediate Horizon represents a period of transition for Prehistoric Native American groups. Little is known about the people of this period, especially those occupying inland Southern California. Archaeological site assemblages possess many attributes of the Milling Stone Horizon. In addition, however, these sites generally contain large stemmed (or notched) projectile points and portable mortars and pestles. It is believed that the mortars and pestles were used to harvest, process, and consume acorns. Due to the general lack of data on the subsistence system and the cultural evolution of this period, the substrates of the behavior are not well understood.
- **Late Prehistoric Horizon.** From A.D. 750 to Spanish contact in A.D. 1769, the Late Prehistoric Horizon reflects an increased technological sophistication and diversity. This period is characterized by the presence of small projectile points, which imply the use of bow and arrow, as opposed to spear. In addition, site assemblages also include steatite bowls, asphaltum, grave goods, and elaborate shell ornaments. Utilization of bedrock milling slicks is prevalent throughout this horizon. Also, an increase in hunting efficiency and widespread exploitation of acorns provided reliable and storable food resources. These innovations seem to have promoted greater sedentism.

---

<sup>4</sup> Wallace, William J., 1955. *A Suggested Chronology for southern California Coastal Archaeology*. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 11(3); 214-230.

## ***NATIVE AMERICAN GROUPS: THE GABRIELINO***

The Gabrielino occupied nearly the entire Los Angeles basin in Los Angeles and Orange counties. Their traditional lands included the watersheds of the San Gabriel, the Santa Ana, and Los Angeles rivers, several of the smaller streams of the Santa Monica Mountains and Santa Ana Mountains, to Aliño Creek in Orange County. They also inhabited the offshore islands of San Clemente, Santa Catalina, and San Nicholas. Precise data on village locations can no longer be obtained.

The Gabrielino populated a large territory, but in many ways are considered the least known of all Southern California Native American groups. This can be attributed to their location in the Los Angeles basin where they were quickly assimilated into the missions and European culture during the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Early ethnographers believed that the last Gabrielino died about a century ago, and because of this, the Gabrielino have never been granted Federal recognition. Historic population estimates of the Gabrielino are difficult, but likely ranged into the thousands. As many as 50 to 100 villages existed at any one time during the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Spanish reports estimate village populations to be between 50 and 200 individuals.

Gabrielino material culture is reflected in an elaborately developed artisanship that can be exhibited in utilitarian items that are elaborately decorated with shell, rare materials, carvings and paintings. The most well known Gabrielino items are those made of steatite (soapstone), which was quarried on Santa Catalina Island and carried to the mainland by plank canoes, which are similar to those constructed by the Chumash Indians. The Gabrielino also produced high quality basketry constructed from grasses and rush stems. The Gabrielino constructed their houses similar to those of the Chumash.

Labor was divided between gender. Men carried out most of the heavy, but short-term labor, such as hunting and fishing, conducted most trading ventures, and had as their central concerns the well being of the village and family. Women collected and processed most of the plant materials, and practiced basket production. The elderly members of the group taught children and cared for the young.<sup>5</sup>

The information presented above reflects a generalized overview of the cultural background of the Gabrielino people. Archaeologists, anthropologists, ethno-historians, and historians are constantly refining and redefining the variations between various groups of California Indians. However, this information is still a long way from depicting the true nature of prehistoric California occupation.

## ***PROJECT AREA HISTORY***

Spanish explorations of California began in 1542 with the expedition led by Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo. In 1579, Sir Francis Drake claimed California for England, calling it "Nova Albion".

---

<sup>5</sup> Information excerpted from Bean, Lowell John and Charles R. Smith, 1978, *Gabrielino, Handbook of North American Indians*, op.cit.,pp. 538-549.

In 1602, the expedition of Sebastian Vizcaino followed the route of Cabrillo along the California coast, and as in the case of the Cabrillo expedition, did not venture inland. On September 4, 1781, Gaspar de Portola and a Franciscan monk named Junipero Serra, dedicated a new town located one days ride north of San Pedro. Padre Junipero Serra named the town after Saint Francis of Assisi's first church, called Saint Mary of the Angels -- El Pueblo de Nuestra Senora la Reina de Los Angeles. There were forty-four original settlers which included twenty-six of African descent and seven Native Americans, who were settlers from the Mission San Gabriel.

The present day Culver City area was off the main highway of travel during the early period of the European occupation of California that began in 1769. Culver City was made up of a valley formed by the La Ballona Creek that flowed toward Playa del Rey. Old maps of the cliffs of Ballona's easterly boundary are labeled as "Guacho", sometimes, "Huacho", a Gabrielino word meaning high place. The Gabrieliño people built brush and mud huts against these cliffs.

In 1784, the Spanish Viceroy granted a parcel land to Augustin and Ygnacio Machado and to Felipe and Tomas Talamantes for the acreage of land named Rancho La Ballona. The area of Rancho La Ballona included the proposed project area. The area encompassed by Rancho La Ballona, was previously also known as "Pass of the Carretas". It is this name that appears on the oldest maps of the area.

The park is also situated in the former Rancho Rincon de los Bueyes that operated during the Mexican Period<sup>6</sup>. In 1821, military commander Jose de la Guerra y Noriega granted Rancho Rincon de los Bueyes to Bernardo Higuera. Bernardo Higuera was the son of Joaquin Higuera, who operated the Rancho la Ballona. The origin of the name, "Rincon de los Bueyes" translates to "corner for cattle". The "rincon" refers to the natural corral created by a ravine in the Baldwin Hills. From that "corner", with its rising knolls that are attractive to grazing cattle, the name was applied to the new rancho. Like many ranchos of its time, Rancho Rincon de los Bueyes' main business was cattle and the hide trade.

In 1822, Mexico declared its independence from Spain. On January 9, 1847 Commodore Stockton recaptured Los Angeles for the third and final time. Shortly after, on January 13, 1847, Captain John C. Fremont accepted the surrender of Governor Pio Pico and Commander Jose Maria Flores. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo formally annexed California to the United States in early 1848, ending the Mexican War and beginning the American Period.

### ***ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDS REVIEW***

A review of archaeological records was conducted for the park at the South Central Coastal Information Center on May 22, 2002. This search included a review of all recorded historic and prehistoric archaeological sites within a one-quarter mile radius of the park, as well as a review of all known relevant cultural resource survey and excavation reports. In addition, the California State Historic Resources Inventory (2001), the National Register of Historic Places (2001), the

---

<sup>6</sup> The Mexican Period in California lasted from 1822 to 1847.



listing of California Historical Landmarks (1996), and the California Points of Historical Interest (1992) were checked. Due to the sensitive nature of cultural resources, archaeological site locations are not released.

### ***PREHISTORIC RESOURCES***

Two prehistoric archaeological sites were identified within the Vista Pacifica Scenic Site during mitigation monitoring in October and November of 2001. The site was identified by ESA monitoring archaeologist, Laurie Solis. These sites included:

- **19-002968.** This site is comprised of stone tools, burned bone fragments, fire affected rock, and shell fragments. These items were found in association with modern refuse.
- **19-002966.** This site is comprised of five ground-stone fragments, mano, two shell fragments and fire affected rock.

In addition, the record search indicated that fifteen prehistoric archaeological sites were previously identified within a ¼-mile radius of the park. These sites were identified as the following:

- **CA-LAN-1399.** Obsidian, broken abalone shells, various clam & mussel shells, ochre chunks;
- **CA-LAN-122.** "human bones; poss. of considerable antiquity;
- **CA-LAN-74.** Seasonal village or campsite;
- **CA-LAN-73.** Seasonal camping or village site;
- **CA-LAN-72.** Seasonal camp or village site;
- **CA-LAN-71.** Seasonal camp or village site;
- **CA-LAN-70.** Seasonal camp or village site;
- **CA-LAN-69.** Seasonal camp or village site;
- **19-100249.** Large chalcedony projectile point;
- **CA-LAN-68.** Seasonal camp or village site;
- **CA-LAN-53.** A camp or village site;
- **CA-LAN-58.** A camp or village site;
- **CA-LAN-57.** A camp or village site;
- **CA-LAN-56.** A camp or village site; and,
- **CA-LAN-55.** Camp site.

### ***HISTORIC RESOURCES***

One historic archaeological site was identified within the Vista Pacifica Scenic Site during mitigation monitoring in September 2001.

- **19-002967.** The site was identified by ESA monitoring archaeologist, Laurie Solis as an Historic Period Refuse Deposit (HPRD) consisting primarily of historic period pop bottle, sanitary seam cans, liqueur bottles, household utility items, and cosmetic bottles and jars.
- Three historic structures were identified within ¼-mile of the project area. These were identified as the following,
- **19-150440.** The Knaster Furniture Factory Building is located at 5901 Rodeo Road and was constructed in 1945. The structure is now known as the Sterling Furniture Mfg. Co.
- **19-150444.** The Bert G. Knaster Factory Building is located at 5915 Rodeo Road and was constructed in 1948.
- **19-150323.** The Culver Hotel is located at 9400 Culver Boulevard and was constructed in 1924. The structure is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

### ***CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEY***

The following surveys were previously conducted on various portions of the park

- **Clewlow 1975.** Dr. Carl William Clewlow Jr. of the Institute of Archaeology at the University of California Los Angeles conducted L-98 - The survey in 1975.
- **L-2632.** The survey was performed by Carol Demcak of Archaeological Resource Management Corporation of the Vista Pacifica Scenic Site in 1992.
- **L-2312.** The survey was performed by Gwendolyn R. Romani for David E. Moss & Associates in 1991.
- **L-2158.** The survey was conducted by Roberta S. Greenwood for David E. Moss & Associates in 1990.

In addition, a site visit was conducted by ESA staff archaeologist, Laurie Solis for the proposed project in May 2002. Undisturbed vegetation was observed within the park.

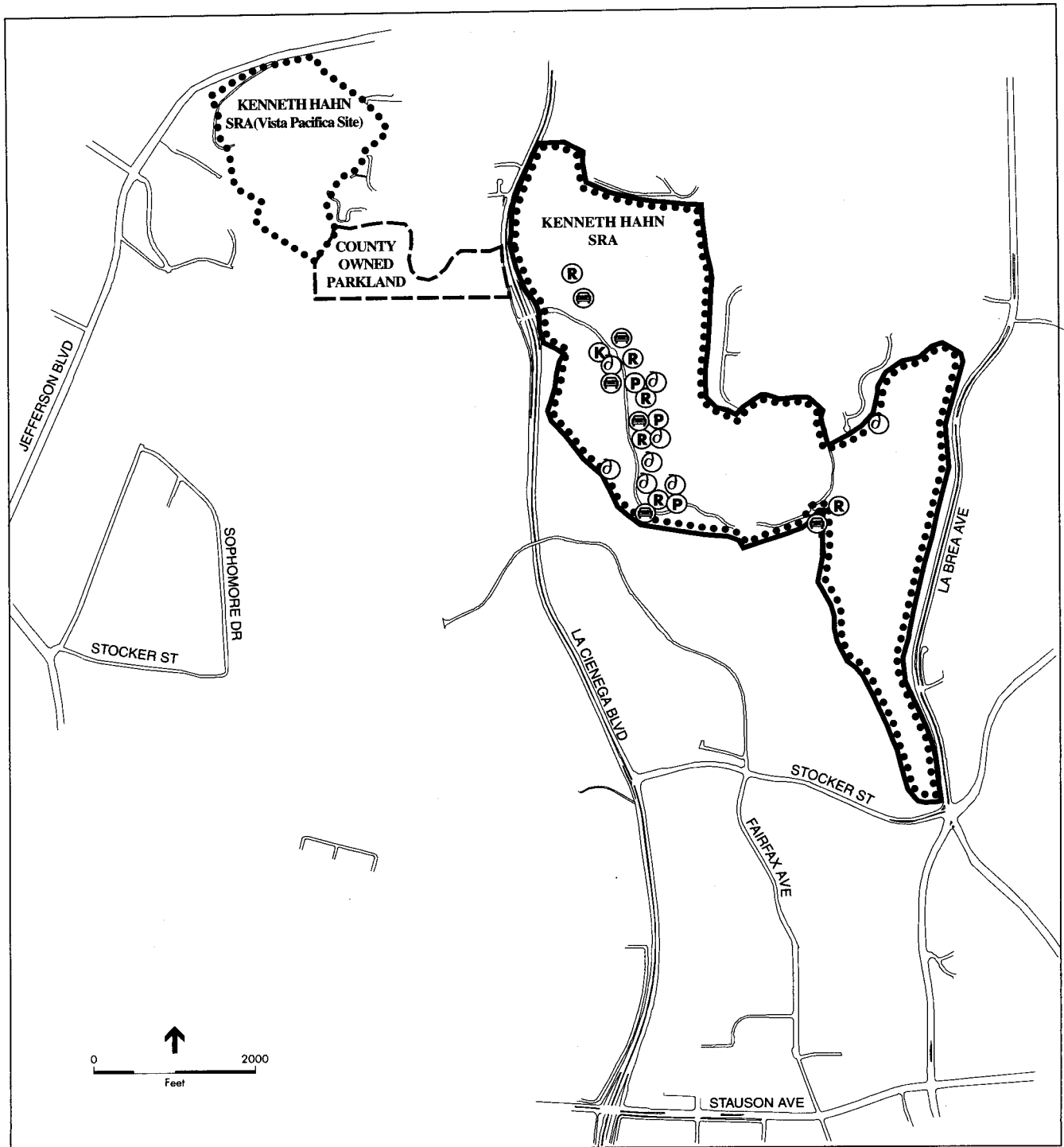
## **INTERPRETIVE AND EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES**

### ***VISITOR CENTERS AND INTERPRETIVE CENTERS***

The park currently includes one community center with interpretive panels, four administrative offices, a small meeting room, and restroom facilities (Figure 14).

### ***MUSEUMS AND HOUSE MUSEUMS***

The Park does not contain Museums and or House Museums.



- |              |                                      |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| Ⓟ Playground | — Existing Kenneth Hahn SRA Boundary |
| Ⓜ Picnic     | ⋯ Proposed Kenneth Hahn SRA Boundary |
| Ⓚ Kiosk      | - - - County-Owned Parkland          |
| Ⓜ Parking    |                                      |
| Ⓜ Restroom   |                                      |

SOURCE: Los Angeles Department of parks and Recreation

Kenneth Hahn SRA Recirculated General Plan Amendment and EIR / 202310 ■

**Figure 14**  
Existing Facilities

### ***INTERPRETIVE KIOSKS***

A kiosk is located at the entrance to park. The kiosk is primarily used as a ranger station, and fee drop, but often is also used as a form of communication between users of the park (through pamphlet displays, etc.).

### ***INTERPRETIVE TRAILS, ROADS, AND WAYSIDE EXHIBITS, GARDENS, AND OTHER FEATURES***

Several historic sites within the park are currently designated by explanatory signage, such as the Olympic Forest.

### ***EXHIBITS***

The Park does not contain exhibits at this time other than the historic signage mentioned above and interpretive materials located in the community center.

### ***EVENTS AND PROGRAMS (SUCH AS LIVING HISTORY, DEMONSTRATION, RE-ENACTMENT)***

No events or programs occur on-site at this time.

### ***EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (NATURE WALKS, GUIDED NATURE WALKS)***

Educational programs (including nature walks and guided walks) that are currently conducted, are done so by groups not affiliated with the State of California. School programs and guided walks are currently offered at KHSRA. These programs are coordinated by the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation.

## **AESTHETICS RESOURCES**

### ***VISUAL RESOURCES AND SCENIC CHARACTERISTICS***

The existing visual character of the park is determined by the attributes (color, form, texture) of specific site features and by the patterns that the features have assumed as a result of natural processes and human uses. The assessment of the visual attributes and patterns of the park's features in this document is organized according to the following general descriptive categories: site location and spatial orientation, landform, land uses, and vegetation. The existing visual character of the park is also influenced by atmospheric effects and by seasonal changes in the foliage of the natural vegetation on the site. The site does not contain specific built objects, such as buildings, that have aesthetic significance.

## **Land Uses**

Human development in the park is characterized by a fishing lake, restroom buildings, a small community center, ornamental gardens, and passive recreation facilities including picnic tables, shelters, seating and trails. The fishing lake is a man-made water body with handicapped-accessible ramps and paved seating areas. Ornamental gardens include a man-made stream, a water lily pond and the Olympic Forest, an assortment of non-native trees, including eucalyptus.

## **Vegetation**

Most of the well-preserved natural habitat areas are located in canyons and slopes on the eastern face of the east ridge and the western face of the west ridge. The predominant coastal sage scrub vegetation covers steep slopes and canyons from the ridgelines to the boundaries of the site. These general vegetation patterns are visible from long distances and from adjacent neighborhoods and streets. Views of natural habitat areas from existing trails are very rewarding, including wildflowers, native shrubs, many species of birds and small reptiles and mammals.

## ***NEGATIVE VISUAL FEATURES AND CHARACTERISTICS***

Areas surrounding the park include developed areas such as oil and gas extraction and processing facilities, utility structures, an electrical transmission facility, recreational facilities, residential and urban uses, and a municipal garbage truck transfer facility. Scarred denuded hillsides, paved and unpaved roads, intermittent oil wells, pipelines, pipe storage and related buildings and facilities characterize the areas of oil and gas production. Larger processing facilities are located in close proximity to La Cienega Boulevard and include buildings with an industrial character, large pipe structures, tanks and other associated equipment. Other structures related to oil production and processing include a series of small wooden buildings and a large historic residence built in the craftsman style in the northwest portion of the site. Stocker Resources Inc.'s headquarter buildings are located in the southeast corner of the site. They are commercial in nature.

Developed recreation facilities include the Ladera Little League fields, consisting of baseball diamonds with associated fencing, parking facilities and nighttime lighting. Existing facilities in Culver City Park include baseball diamonds with associated fencing and parking facilities. A handicapped-accessible trail linking the park entrance with the recreation facilities above is a dominant visual feature on the edge of the park. A small skateboard area located adjacent to Jefferson Boulevard is furnished with basic equipment and is highly visible from the park edge.

Due to the high elevations of the site, numerous microwave towers are located on the eastern ridge in the vicinity of the former reservoir site. Electrical transmission towers run from the Five Points intersection at La Brea Avenue and Stocker Street to the north. Additional utility towers in the southwest part of the site carry electricity from the Southern California Edison facility through the site to the north. Other types of communication towers are located on the ridge tops and are visible from inside the park as well as from a distance.

Multi-lane high-speed streets in the center and on the edge of the site produce high levels of traffic noise. La Cienega Boulevard, a six lane limited access roadway, is the main source of noise in the site area, especially during peak traffic flows. La Brea Avenue, a four-lane roadway on the eastern edge of the site, also generates significant traffic noise. Despite the presence of these noise sources there are many areas of the site that are protected by landforms where traffic noise is imperceptible. The steep hillsides and canyons on the edges of the site create highly efficient noise barriers. The industrial activities of oil extraction, drilling and processing create point sources with varying levels of noise impact. Noise from the active recreational activities at the Ladera Little League fields does not appear to cause problems as the fields are located far enough from adjacent residential areas. Urban and residential development form the remainder of the landscape – overpowering the natural elements of the park.

### ***VIEWSHEDS***

The east and west ridges of the park provide unique and unparalleled panoramic vistas of the Los Angeles basin, Santa Monica Bay and the San Gabriel and Santa Monica Mountains (Figure 15). These views provide a striking sense of the urban fabric of the city framed by natural elements of ocean and mountains. Although views of the basin from the north are commonly available from the Santa Monica Mountains, no other public open spaces afford nearly 360-degree views from the south looking at the ocean and mountain ranges that surround the basin. From the 500 foot elevations of the park, views of the Pacific Coast and all of Santa Monica Bay are visible, and visitors can see as far as Catalina Island on clear days. Views of mountain ranges to the north and east include the Santa Monica Mountains, the Hollywood Hills, the Verdugo Hills, the San Gabriel Mountains and the Santa Ana Mountains. The urban skylines of Santa Monica, Century City, Los Angeles, Hollywood, and the Century Boulevard corridor are present as well. These views are accessible from the existing ridge trail in the park and from the Vista Pacifica Scenic Site. Additional access to the Vista Pacifica Scenic Site and the western ridge will provide increased opportunities for views of the northern and western portions of the basin. The ridgelines also provide views into the interior of the park site, which when redeveloped will include views of restored natural areas, gardens and park landscapes. Existing views from within the site are varied, consisting of natural habitat areas, recreation uses and industrial facilities. The ridge and valley topography of the park provides opportunities for focused views of natural areas.

### ***DESIGNATED SCENIC AREAS OR ROUTES***

No officially designated scenic areas or route occur within close proximity to the park.

### ***EXTERNAL VIEWS***

The park is visible from many short-range, medium-range, and long-range vantage points. The park appears as a natural landscape in views from all vantage points.

0661 411100 0100 00



0661 411100 0100 00



0661 411100 0100 00



Top: View of Palos Verdes Peninsula Center: View of Santa Monica Bay and Pt. Dume Bottom: View of Santa Monica Mountains

SOURCE: Community Conservancy International

Kenneth Hahn SRA Recirculated General Plan Amendment and EIR / 202310

Figure 15  
Panoramic Views