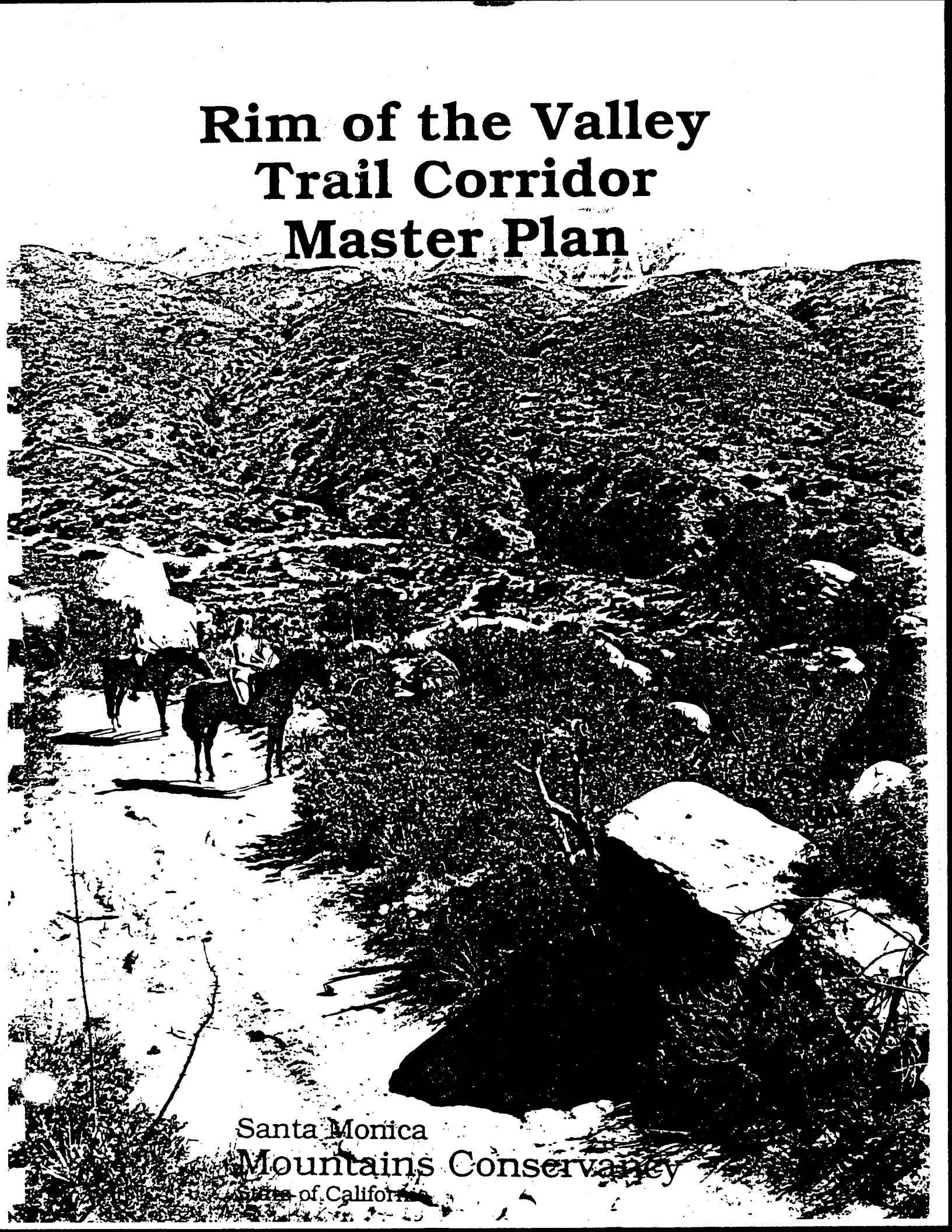


Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor Master Plan



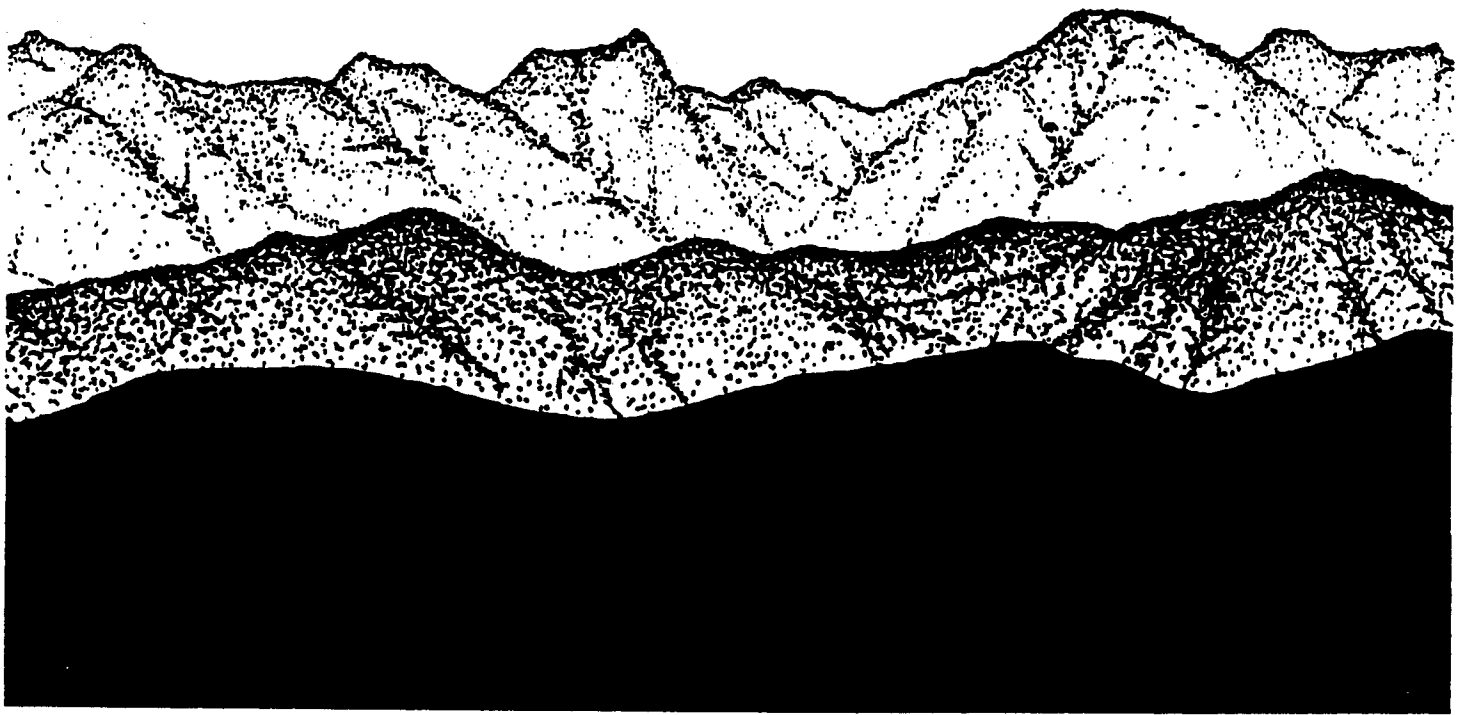
Santa Monica
Mountains Conservancy
State of California

Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor Master Plan

June 28, 1990

Santa Monica
Mountains Conservancy
State of California

prepared by
Dangermond & Associates



Summary

Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor Master Plan

The preparation of the following Master Plan is the direct result of AB 1516 authored by Assemblyman Richard Katz which was approved by the Legislature and signed by Governor George Deukmejian in 1989. The Master Plan is intended to guide both the Mountains Conservancy and the Legislature over the next five to ten years in preserving important resources within the Rim Corridor and providing public recreation.

The legislation requires the preparation of the plan, specifies elements which must be included, requires a number of public hearings, and establishes a deadline for reporting back to the Legislature. The specific requirements have been met in accordance with the legislation.

Eleven public hearings were held by the Mountains Conservancy, as required in the legislation. These were well attended by elected officials, agency and group representatives as well as the general public. The suggestions and ideas regarding plan elements and needs of the area make up the backbone of the Master Plan which is hereby presented.

The primary components of the Master Plan are the Rim of the Valley Trail and an interlocking system of wildlife habitats and open space areas which provide a corridor connection between the Santa Monica Mountains, the Santa Susana Mountains, the Sespe Mountains and San Gabriel Mountains. Those interrelated components create a major recreation resource and a wildlife link vital to the long-term health and diversity of this region of southern California. Numerous special opportunities exist within this area and when joined together they represent an overall project of tremendous statewide significance.

The major components of the Master Plan include:

1. The Rim of the Valley Trail, which completely encircles the San Fernando and La Crescenta valleys and unifies the various parts of the corridor recreational system.
2. A wildlife corridor which connects the Santa Monica, Santa Susana, Sespe and San Gabriel Mountains. This will provide for long term biological diversity and will incorporate major habitat areas along the way, including the Santa Susana Mountains State Park, Rocky Peak and the Santa Clarita Woodlands.
3. Periodic access trails and trailheads which provide convenient points of access with companion facilities for all users.
4. Major access and loop trails which connect the Rim Trail with important natural and historic areas including: Santa Anita Canyon, Santa Clarita Woodlands,

Placerita Canyon State /County Park, Happy Camp County Park and Santa Susana Mountains State Park.

5. Additional wildlife and scenic open space areas throughout the corridor area. These lesser spaces will also be connected to the primary wildlife corridor between the mountains.
6. Recommendations for major recreational area improvements for future development at Hansen Dam, Happy Camp, Chatsworth Reservoir and Devil's Gate. These will provide large regional park facilities which are also connected to the Rim system by trails.
7. Recommendations for special use trails for nature study and for special populations such as the physically impaired.
8. Recommendations for a chain of campsites along the Rim Trail to accommodate users on extended trips.
9. Proposals for information and interpretive programs to ensure that all residents of the region have access to the parks, to inform users, and to foster good stewardship of the resource.
10. Specific recommendations for a series of boundary adjustments are proposed as a means of incorporating the important projects and additions for the Rim of the Valley Corridor system. The recommendations are: a boundary adjustment easterly to Santa Anita Canyon; westerly to the join the Conservancy Zone boundary at Calleguas Creek; and boundary adjustments to include areas north of Simi Valley and the proposed Santa Clarita Woodlands Park.

This Master Plan is a combination of all the elements found in this report, i.e.,

1. The definitions, objectives and criteria
2. The plan, as described in the text and illustrated in the figures
3. The proposed project list
4. The proposed boundary adjustments

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Section 1: Background.....	2
The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy	2
The Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor	2
Section 2: AB 1516: The Rim of the Valley Corridor Master Plan.....	4
Master Plan Requirements	4
Section 3: Methods/Process.....	7
Definition	7
Identification/Location	8
Recommendation	8
Prioritization	9
Section 4: Master Plan Components.....	10
Wildlife Habitat	11
Objectives	11
Criteria	11
Recreation	12
Trails and Trail Corridors	12
Objectives	13
Criteria	14
Trailheads, Campgrounds, Picnic Areas, and Developed Parks	15
Objectives	15
Criteria	16
Programs	17
Objectives/Criteria	17
Boundaries	17
Objectives/Criteria	17
Section 5: Master Plan Recommendations.....	18
Section 6: Master Plan Priorities.....	21
Section 7: Master Plan Maps.....	23
Appendix A	
Existing Public Parks and Open Space	
Existing Parks and Open Space	
Existing Parks and Open Space by USGS Map	

Appendix B

Suggested Projects for the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor

Proposed Projects

Proposed Projects by Reference

Proposed Projects by Priority

Appendix C

Meetings with Government Agencies

Appendix D

Public Hearings

Appendix E

Summary of Questionnaires

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Function Diagram
Figure 2	Study Area
Figure 3	USGS Maps: Legend and Key
Figure 4	Val Verde
Figure 5	Newhall
Figure 6	Mint Canyon
Figure 7	Moorpark
Figure 8	Simi
Figure 9	Santa Susana
Figure 10	Oat Mountain
Figure 11	San Fernando
Figure 12	Sunland
Figure 13	Condor Peak
Figure 14	Newbury Park
Figure 15	Thousand Oaks
Figure 16	Calabasas
Figure 17	Canoga Park
Figure 18	Van Nuys
Figure 19	Burbank
Figure 20	Pasadena
Figure 21	Mt. Wilson
Figure 22	Beverly Hills
Figure 23	Hollywood
Figure 24	Los Angeles



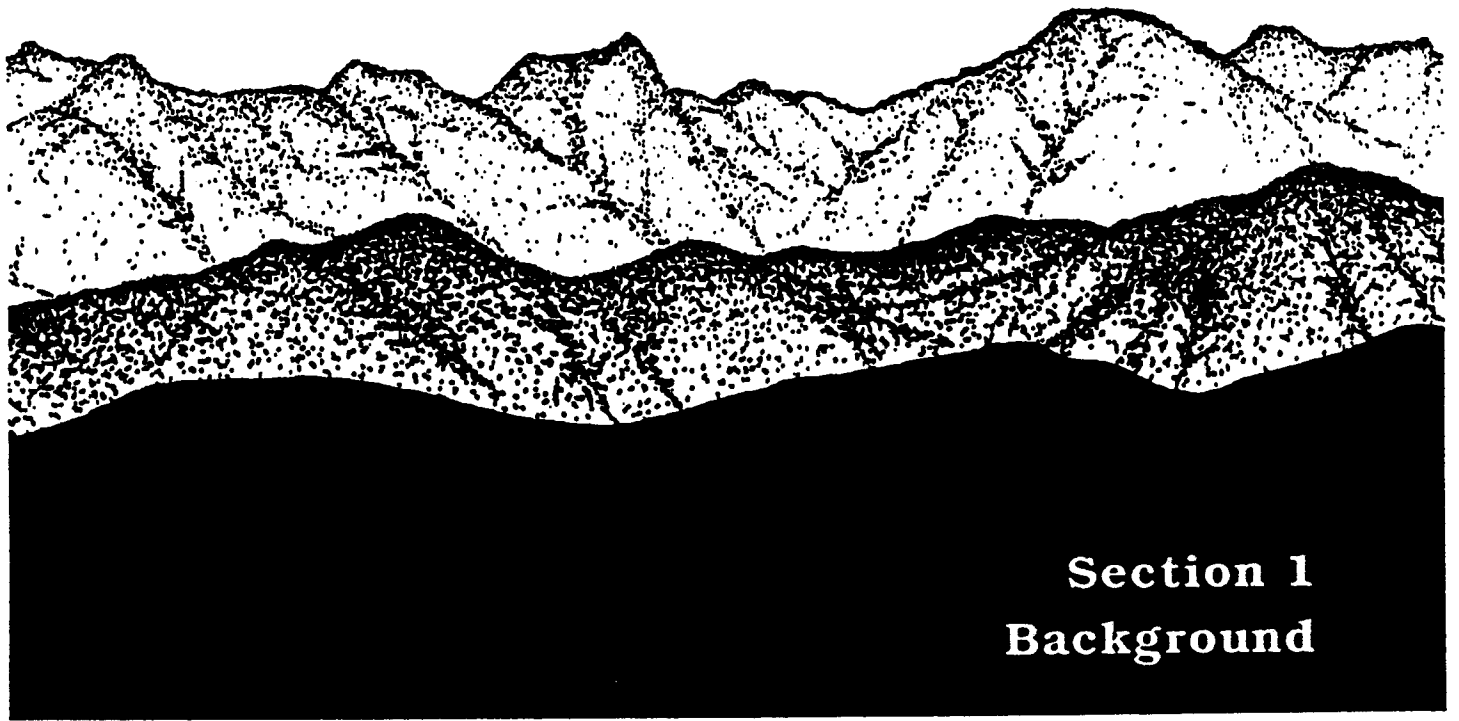
Introduction

INTRODUCTION

The study described in this report was authorized by Assembly Bill No 1516 of the 1989-90 session of the California Legislature, relating to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor. The primary goal of that legislation, and therefore this study, is to establish a "master plan", or framework, for the activities and expenditures of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Conservancy) within the general Rim of the Valley Corridor area over the next ten years.

The following section of this report describes the background of the Conservancy which precedes AB 1516, while Section 2 considers in detail the language and objectives of that proposed legislation. The process and methods used in the study are presented in the third section, followed by a discussion of the Master Plan components in the Section 4. Section 5 provides an overview of the complete Master Plan. Criteria for prioritizing the projects is discussed in Section 6.

All projects considered in this study are listed in Appendix A and keyed to the 21 USGS topographical maps in Section 7 of this report. The maps indicate the location of existing and proposed parks, trails and public open space. The list includes a description of each proposed project and the source of the proposal.



Section 1
Background

SECTION 1 BACKGROUND

THE SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy is a State agency created in 1980. Its goals and activities, like those of the California Department of Parks and Recreation or the National Park Service, center around both land preservation and providing opportunities for recreation. There are, however, basic and important differences. The Conservancy's range of activity is more extensive than either of those agencies or local park agencies, including greater flexibility regarding land transactions. Also, the Conservancy often uses its available funds in nontraditional ways by forming partnerships with other agencies. As such, the Conservancy is the agency with primary responsibilities for funding the acquisition of projects with statewide and regional significance, as specified in the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor Plan of 1990 adopted pursuant to Section 33204.3 of the California Public Resources code. The Conservancy undertakes acquisitions and provides grants to local governments and non profit organizations for various combinations of planning, acquisition, improvement, operation and maintenance of wildlife habitat and recreation resources.

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy has filled a void between local government and state and federal agencies by working on resources of major significance in a locally relevant and sensitive manner, and by serving as a coordinator among citizen groups, agencies and landowners.

THE RIM OF THE VALLEY TRAIL CORRIDOR

Legislation in 1983 extended the geographic limits of the Conservancy's authority to encompass an area known as the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor (Corridor). The Rim of the Valley concept was first conceived and copyrighted by Marge Feinberg in 1974 as a Master's thesis at Cal State University, Northridge.

The Corridor, the definition of its existing boundaries, and much of the impetus for the Conservancy's involvement, came from a grass roots movement to protect the aesthetic, recreation and wildlife resources of the foothills and mountains encircling the San Fernando/La Crescenta Valleys. The Corridor is essentially a defined planning area, a broad band circling the north, east and west edges of the San Fernando/La Crescenta Valleys. It was created to facilitate the development of an interlocking, connected system of public parks, trails and wildlife habitat preserves within the mountain areas. The backbone of that system, the thread which would tie it together, was to be a multi use, long distance trail--the Rim of the Valley Trail (Rim Trail).

Within the Corridor, the Conservancy has placed particular emphasis on a cooperative approach--actions are taken basically at the request of the public or local government, acquisitions are made from willing sellers, agreements are formed with other agencies to jointly accomplish a project, and grants are made directly to local governments and non profit groups.



Section 2
AB 1516: The Rim of The Valley Corridor
Master Plan

SECTION 2
AB 1516
THE RIM OF THE VALLEY TRAIL CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN

Recognizing the need for the preservation and connection of open space and wildlife habitat and the maximum use of recreation resources, AB 1516 has set one primary goal—the preparation of an overall, coordinated master plan for the recreational and environmental resources of the Corridor area. Because of the Conservancy's unique role and its relationship with other agencies, this is not a master plan in the traditional sense. It does not define inflexible boundaries for acquisition and development of facilities to then be retained and administered by the Conservancy. Instead this master plan defines objectives and criteria for developing a system of trails and other recreation facilities, and for preserving viable wildlife areas and corridors. That approach allows program flexibility while avoiding fragmented and unbalanced results.

MASTER PLAN REQUIREMENTS

AB 1516 specifically requires that the master plan include, but not be limited to, four items. Those four items are listed below with additions indicated in bold. A summary phrase has been added at the head of each item to simplify future reference to it. The text in item three and the completely new item five, were added in order to include projects requested by the public and local agencies. Item six is part of the legislation, although not a requirement.

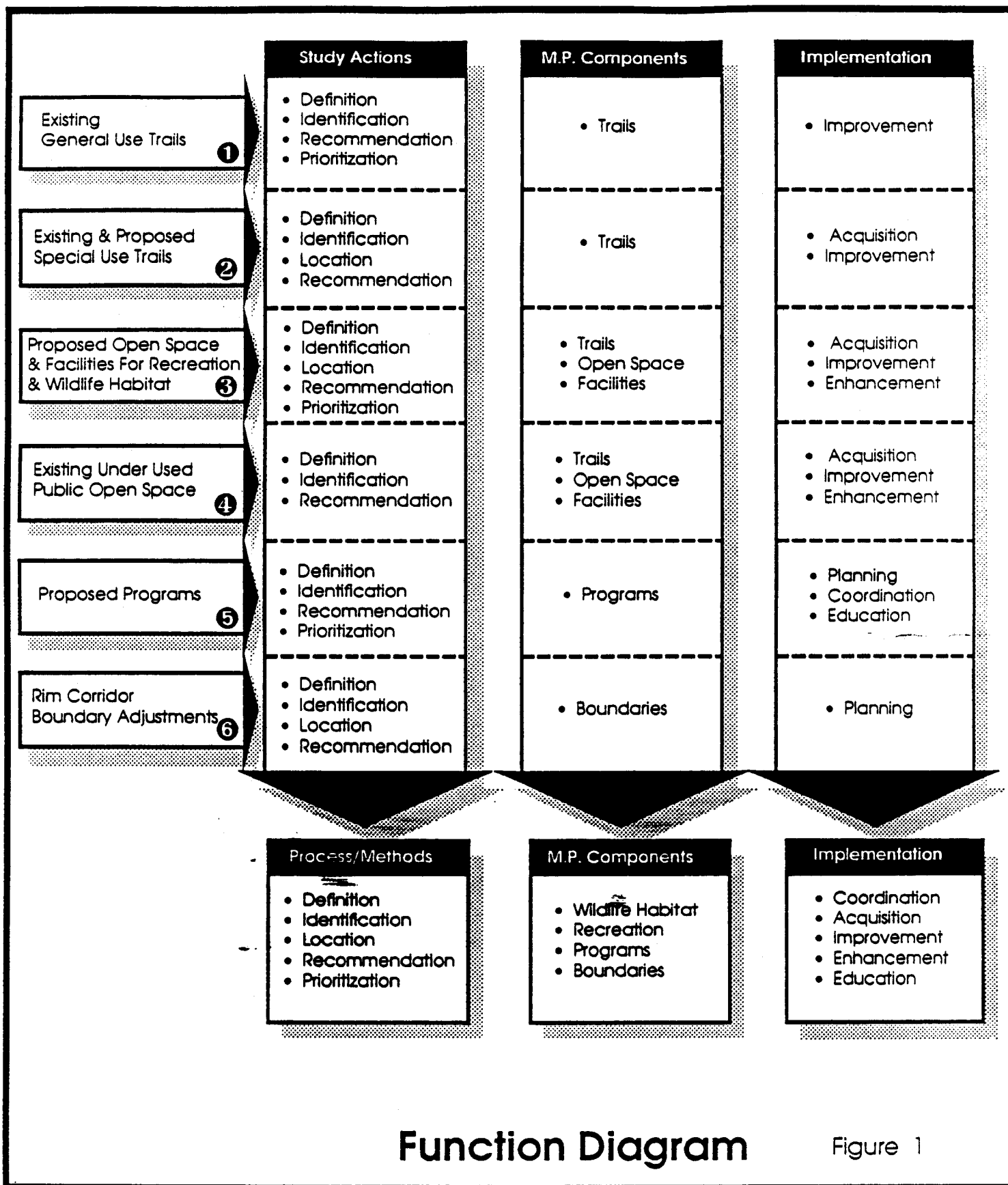
1. **Existing general use trails.** Identification of major hiking and equestrian trails and important secondary and feeder trails that cross jurisdictional lines, and a priority program for improving those trails.
2. **Existing and proposed special use trails.** Identification of special purpose trails, where appropriate, for special population groups and special user groups, such as mountain bicycles, where the special purpose trails will have no significant environmental impact.
3. **Proposed open space and facilities for recreation and wildlife habitat.** Identification of, and a priority program for implementing, those additional recreation access and wildlife habitat conservation needs, including, new or expanded trails that should be added to the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor, and additional or upgraded facilities, parks, or open spaces that may be necessary.
4. **Existing under utilized public open space.** Identification of under used existing public open spaces and recommendations for providing better public use and enjoyment of these areas.

5. **Proposed programs.** Identification of programs for Conservancy participation which do not require land acquisition or facility development, although they may be associated with specific locations or facilities. Examples might be educational/training programs for park volunteers, transportation for groups to park and open space areas or camping/interpretation programming for young people.
6. AB 1516 also makes possible adjustments to the existing Corridor boundaries, where necessary, to implement the above defined projects and programs of the master plan.

Each of the six items outlined above is composed of three parts which:

1. Specify actions to be taken as part of this study.
2. Name tangible components or products of the master plan.
3. Imply future Conservancy action, directly, or in cooperation with other government agencies or non profit organizations, to implement the master plan.

Figure 1 illustrates the break down of each of the six items from AB 1516 into the three parts named above, which are then summarized and reassembled under headings consistent with discussions in the remainder of this report.



Function Diagram

Figure 1



Section 3
Methods/Process

SECTION 3 PROCESS/METHODS

Five actions comprise the process used in this study. Those actions--definition, identification, location, recommendation and, prioritization--and any methods or assumptions used, are addressed in this section.

The ultimate goal of the process, the methods used and actions taken, is to develop a Master Plan, with both physical and program elements, for Conservancy participation in the Corridor.

DEFINITION

As a first step, definition included establishing the geographic boundaries of the study area, and confirming the study goals. It was determined that the study area would include the 175 square miles of the existing Corridor and the broad extensions proposed by citizen groups and local governments before AB 1516 was proposed.

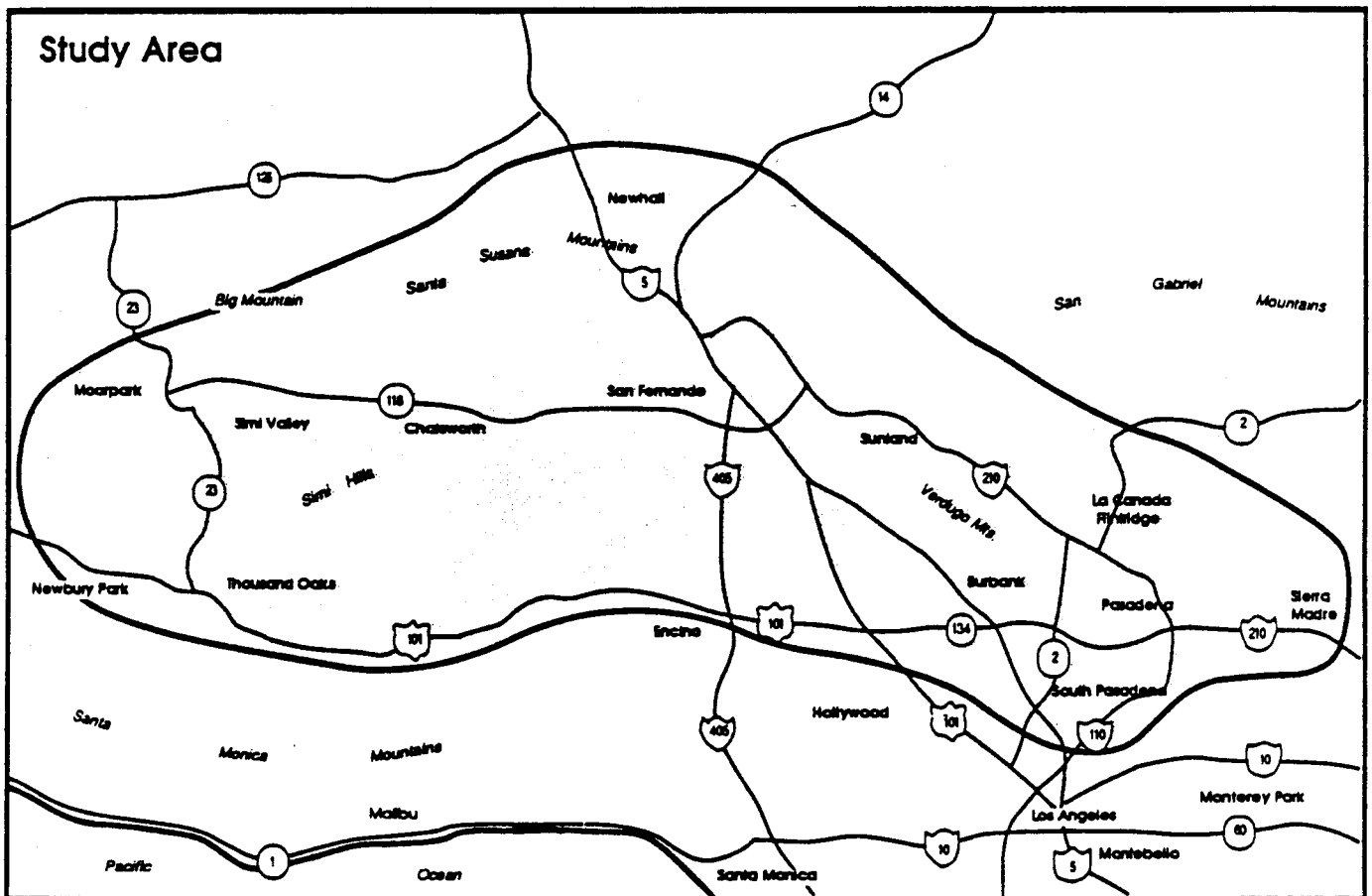


Figure 2

The primary goal of this study, as contained in the AB 1516, is to prepare an overall, coordinated master plan for the Corridor area which will structure the activities of the Conservancy for the next decade. The Conservancy itself is dedicated to providing recreational opportunities for residents of the Los Angeles area valleys, and preserving and interpreting important wildlife habitat in the surrounding foothills and mountains.

Definitions of and criteria for terms used in the study are discussed more specifically in the next section on Master Plan Components.

IDENTIFICATION/LOCATION

Identification was an essential part of all six items contained in AB 1516 (refer to Section 2). Identification of potential projects was made on the basis of suggestions by local agencies and the public in meetings, public hearings and questionnaires, and from the consultant's field inspections and review of maps and resource material.

Summaries of meetings with local agencies, public hearings and the distributed questionnaires, appear in the Appendices of this report. More specific information is found in Appendix B, which contains the complete list of proposed projects and the group or individual from whom the suggestion came.

In addition to the input from outside sources, Dangermond and Associates and the Conservancy staff conducted a broad brush survey of the study area using available sources of biological data, topographic and aerial maps. Those areas which seemed likely projects, or where the sources were unclear, were then individually examined more closely.

All known existing parks, trails and public open space, and all proposed acquisition, development and improvement projects, are described in Sections 6 and 7 of this report. Proposed programs or planning projects that have no spatial component are also described.

RECOMMENDATION

The overall responsibility of the consultant in this process was to ensure that the Master Plan identify a coordinated and balanced approach to providing recreation and preserving environmental resources in the Corridor area. The project recommendations resulting from the process of definition, identification and location are included in the Master Plan on the basis of their individual merits, but do not result in a coordinated, overall plan. To fulfill that responsibility, it was necessary for the consultant to develop a physical plan which, while incorporating all relevant inputs from the public process, includes recommendations for projects whose primary

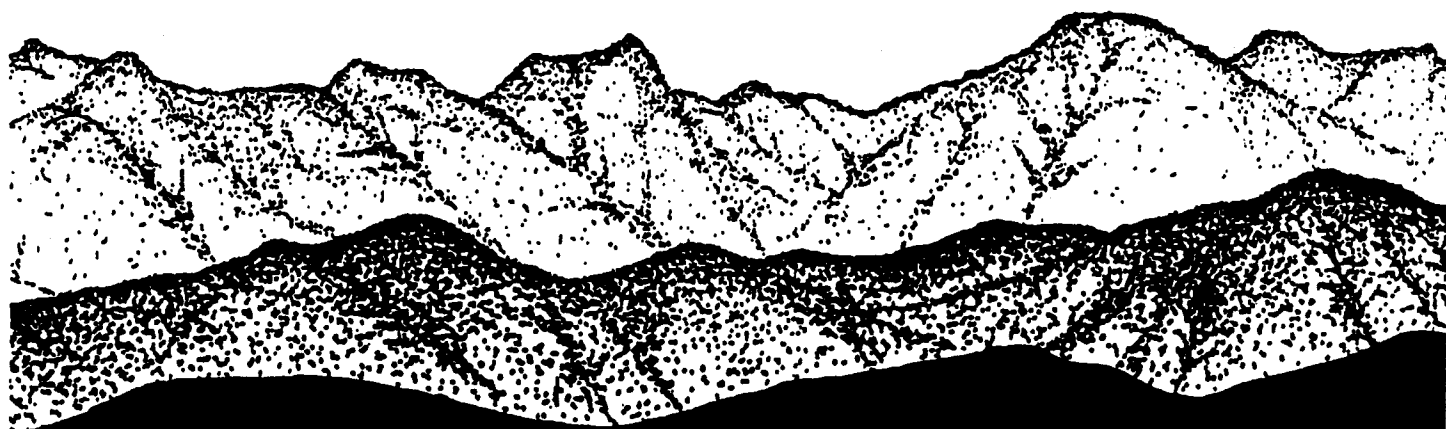
purpose is to provide the necessary connections to create a complete system. The overall Master Plan is described more fully in Section 5.

Criteria for resource quality were also necessary, as many projects are included without specific boundaries or alignments, or with those definitions open to change. These criteria are explained for each component of the Master Plan in the following section.

It was also clear early in the study, that the long list of proposed projects would require adjustments to the boundaries of the Corridor. A discussion of those adjustments appear in the following section.

PRIORITIZATION

Development of a physical plan and list of recommended projects does not fully satisfy the requirement for a coordinated and balanced approach to Conservancy activity in the Corridor when funds are limited. Therefore, criteria were developed to determine priorities for allocating limited funds each year, based on the degree of significance or impact of the project. The criteria have been used to establish priorities for the current list of projects, and are intended to provide structure for the Conservancy for the changing conditions likely to occur over the next ten years. Those criteria are explained in greater detail in Section 6.



Section 4
Master Plan Components

SECTION 4 MASTER PLAN COMPONENTS

The Corridor Master Plan can be broadly divided into four categories: wildlife habitat; recreation; programs; and boundary adjustments. Definitions, objectives and criteria for each category are presented in this section.

These components must also be viewed wholistically in the final Master Plan, however, in order to create an interlocking and complementary system of wildlife habitat and recreational facilities which is better than the sum of its parts. All the components of the Master Plan, but particularly wildlife habitat and recreation, share three objectives despite other differences: they must provide continuity, diversity and access in order to function. These common objectives are discussed first in order to establish an integrated view of the plan components.

Continuity. Continuity or linkage between all elements of a system, whether natural or man made, must be maintained if the system is to survive. An interlocking, continuous system of parks, trails and areas of preserved wildlife habitat, provides maximum opportunities for recreation and is far more likely to support the survival of native flora and fauna. Research has shown that even high quality habitat areas lose species diversity when preserved in isolated patches.

While linkages and connections are essential, they are also particularly vulnerable. In the urban context, for instance, roads and pipelines are means for moving vehicles, water and waste from point to point in a continuous manner. If that continuity is interrupted, the system ceases to perform its function. If the interruption were permanent, not only would vehicles become useless, but all the other systems dependent on their movement and the delivery of water and waste would also break down.

The two interruptions, or barriers, most destructive to continuity of the Corridor systems, are urban growth and road development. If identification and acquisition of land for both recreation and wildlife is accomplished quickly, it is possible to prevent urban growth from closing necessary connections and corridors forever. Barriers caused by road development can be modified—not eliminated—more readily, if the wildlife and recreation needs are recognized before the roads are planned or constructed. In only a very few cases is it possible to establish safe crossings for wildlife, equestrians and pedestrians after a road is constructed.

Diversity. Habitat must provide a variety of food sources and shelter in order to support the mass and diversity of wildlife necessary to a self sustaining ecological system. The recreation needs and preferences of a large urban population are also diverse. A recreation system which provides access and continuity but only for hikers, or only for swimmers, also fails to fulfill its function.