

BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

RIDGECREST GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

Wildlife Habitats

In general, wildlife habitats provide food, shelter, movement corridors, and breeding opportunities for a variety of wildlife species. Habitats can be classified in broad terms with an emphasis on vegetation structure, and include other elements such as vegetation species composition, soil structure, and water availability. Climatic conditions also affect habitat types and the Ridgecrest Planning Area is comprised of a limited number of habitats that thrive in dry desert-like conditions. These habitats primarily consist of alkali and desert scrub habitats in addition to urban areas that provide some minimal habitat values to wildlife. A summary of the acreages for each habitat type occurring within the Planning Area are provided below in Table 1.

Ridgecrest Planning Area Habitats 2007

Habitat Type	Acreage
Urban	13,750
Desert Scrub	11,050
Alkali Desert Scrub	1,790
Barren	310
Water	30
Total	26,930

Source: FRAP, 2007

Outside of urban areas, desert scrub habitat dominates the Planning Area. These desert habitats are briefly described below. Several unique special status species with potential to occur in the Planning Area are also shown in the photos provided below. These special status species include the American Badger (*Taxidea taxus*), desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), and the California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*).

Alkali Desert Scrub. Alkali desert scrub habitats are comprised primarily of perennial species. Allscale (*Atriplex polycarpa*), desert holly (*Atriplex hymenelytra*), black greasewood (*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*), big saltbush (*Atriplex lentiformis*), western Mojave saltbush (*Atriplex spinifera*), Nevada ephedra (*Ephedra nevadensis*), common snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*), and Mojave seablite (*Suaeda moquinii*) are all common plant species in alkali desert scrub. This habitat is home to numerous wildlife species including the pallid kangaroo mouse (*Microdipodops pallidus*), Mojave ground squirrel (*Spermophilus mohavensis*), and the zebra-tailed lizard (*Callisaurus*



draconoides).

Desert Scrub. Desert scrub habitats are typically open areas with scattered plants. Canopy cover is usually less than 50 percent, with bare ground often present between plants. This habitat is often dominated by creosotebush (*Larrea tridentate*), however desert agave (*Agave deserti*), barrel cactus (*Ferocactus diguetii*), desert globemallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*), ocotillo (*Fouquieria splendens*), desert sand verbena (*Abronia villosa*), galletagrass (*Hilaria jamesii*), and Mohave yucca (*Yucca schidigera*) are often present. Desert scrub habitat provides habitat for numerous wildlife species; especially reptiles and rodents. Common species in desert scrub habitat include the black-throated

sparrow (*Amphispiza bilineata*), desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), common kingsnake (*Lampropeltis getula*), various pocket mice, kangaroo rats, and the coyote (*Canis latrans*).

Barren. Barren is defined as any areas where vegetation is absent. In the Planning Area this typically includes areas of exposed rock or sandy areas where vegetation is absent.



Biological Resource Regulations

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The USFWS administers the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 USC Section 703-711), the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 USC Section 668), and the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA, 16 USC Section 153 *et seq*). Projects that would result in adverse affects on any federally listed threatened or endangered species are required to consult with and mitigate through consultation with the USFWS. This consultation can be pursuant to either Section 7 or Section 10 of the ESA, depending on the involvement by the federal government.

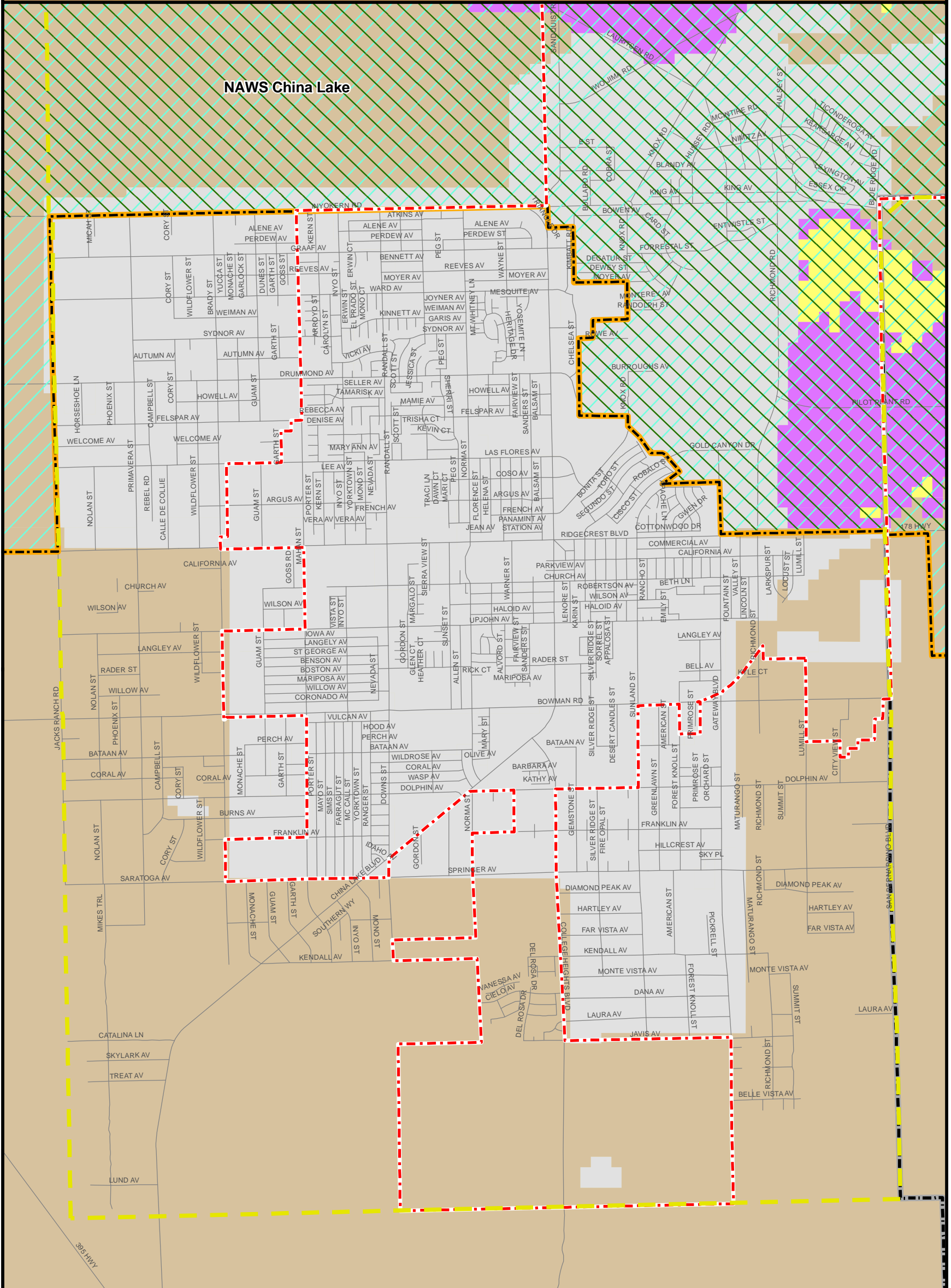
California Department of Fish and Game. CDFG administers a number of laws and programs designed to protect fish and wildlife resources. Principal of these is the California Endangered Species Act of 1984 (CESA – Fish and Game Code Section 2050 *et seq*), which regulates the listing and “take” of endangered and threatened species. A “take” of such a species may be permitted by CDFG through issuance of permits pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 2081.

Special-Status Species

Special-status species are plants and animals that are legally protected under state and federal Endangered Species Acts (ESAs) or other regulations and species that are considered sufficiently rare by the scientific community to qualify for such listing. Special-status species potentially occurring within the Planning Area are listed in the table below. These species may fall under the following categories:

- Plants or animals listed or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered under the federal ESA;
- Plants or animals that are candidates for possible future listing as threatened or endangered under the federal ESA;
- Plants or animals listed or proposed for listing by the State of California as threatened or endangered under the California ESA;
- Plants listed as rare or endangered under the California Native Plant Protection Act;
- Plants that meet the definitions of rare and endangered under CEQA;
- Plants considered under the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) to be “rare, threatened or endangered in California”;
- Animals fully protected in California (California Fish and Game Code, Sections 3511 [birds], 4700 [mammals], and 5050 [reptiles and amphibians]).





Habitats*

- Alkali Desert Scrub
- Barren
- Desert Scrub
- Urban

— Roads

- Existing Planning Area
- City Limits
- County Boundaries
- NAWS China Lake

Threatened & Endangered Species Habitat*

- Desert Tortoise
- Mojave Ground Squirrel

*Habitat mapping shown on this figure is based on the most current statewide vegetation data collect prior to 2002 and published in 2003



Acres

80	40
	20 10

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Special-Status Species Within the Planning Area

Common Name (<i>Scientific Name</i>)	Status: Fed/State/ CNPS	Habitat
Fish		
Mohave tui chub (<i>Gila bicolor mohavensis</i>)	FE/SE, CFP/--	Endemic to the Mohave River basin, adapted to alkaline, mineralized waters. Needs deep pools, ponds, or slough-like areas and vegetation for spawning.
Reptile		
Chuckwalla (<i>Sauromalus ater</i>)	--/--/--	Found in a variety of desert woodland and scrub habitats; but most often in creosote communities. Requires large rock outcrops, boulder piles or scattered large rocks. Sandy, well-drained soil needed for nesting.
Desert tortoise (<i>Gopherus agassizii</i>)	FT/ST/--	Most common in desert scrub, desert wash, and Joshua tree habitats; but occurs in almost every desert habitat. Require friable soil for burrow and nest construction. Creosote bush habitat with large annual wildflower blooms preferred.
Bird		
Burrowing owl (<i>Athene cunicularia</i>)	--/CSC/--	Forages in open plains, grasslands, and prairies; typically nests in abandoned small mammal burrows.
California condor (<i>Gymnogyps californianus</i>)	FE/SE, CFP/--	Require vast expanses of open savannah, grasslands, and foothill chaparral in mountain ranges of moderate altitude. Deep canyons containing clefts in the rocky walls provide nesting sites. Forages up to 100 miles from roost/nest.
Inyo California towhee (<i>Pipilo crissalis eremophilus</i>)	FT/SE/--	Resident of the Argus Mountains of Inyo County. Inhabits willow thickets growing at permanent springs or seepages in canyons; ranges into adjacent desert brushland to forage.
Le Conte's thrasher (<i>Toxostoma lecontei</i>)	--/CSC/--	Desert resident; primarily of open desert wash, desert scrub, alkali desert scrub, and desert succulent scrub habitats. Commonly nests in a dense, spiny shrub or densely branched cactus in desert wash habitat, usually 2-8 feet above ground.
Least Bell's vireo (<i>Vireo bellii pusillus</i>)	FE/SE/--	Summer resident of southern California in low riparian in vicinity of water or in dry river bottoms; below 2000 feet. Nests placed along margins of bushes or on twigs projecting into pathways, usually in willow, baccharis, or mesquite.
Loggerhead shrike (<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>)	--/CSC/--	Nests in dense shrub or tree foliage, forages in scrub, open woodlands, grasslands, and croplands.
Prairie falcon (<i>Falco mexicanus</i>)	--/CSC/--	Breeds on cliffs, bluffs and outcrops near large, open areas.
Southwestern willow flycatcher (<i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>)	FE/SE/--	Riparian woodlands in southern California.
Yellow-billed cuckoo (<i>Coccyzus americanus</i>)	FC/SE/--	Nests in densely foliated deciduous trees and shrubs especially willow, in broad riparian forest.
Mammal		
American badger (<i>Taxidea taxus</i>)	--/CSC/--	Occurs in a wide variety of open forest, shrub, and grassland habitats that have friable soils for digging.
Mohave ground squirrel (<i>Spermophilus mohavensis</i>)	--/ST/--	Open desert scrub, alkali scrub and Joshua tree woodland. Also feeds in annual grasslands. Restricted to Mohave Desert. Prefers sandy to gravelly soils, avoids rocky areas. Uses burrows at base of shrubs for cover.
Nelson's bighorn sheep (<i>Ovis canadensis nelsoni</i>)	--/--/--	Widely distributed from the White Mountains in Mono County to the Chocolate Mountains in Imperial County in open, rocky, steep areas with available water and herbaceous forage.
Pallid bat (<i>Antrozous pallidus</i>)	--/CSC/--	Occurs at low elevations. Uses caves, crevices, mines, buildings, some bridges, and hollow trees for day roosts, and more open spaces for nighttime roosts. Prefers rocky outcrops, cliffs, and crevices with access to open habitats for foraging.
San Joaquin kit fox (<i>Vulpes macrotis mutica</i>)	FE/ST/--	Occurs in native valley and foothill grasslands and chenopod scrub communities of the valley floor and surrounding foothills. Prefers open level areas with loose-textured soils supporting scattered, shrubby vegetation and little human disturbance.
Spotted bat (<i>Euderma maculatum</i>)	--/CSC/--	Roosts primarily in crevices in cliff faces. Primarily feeds on moths. Maternity colonies active April through July.
Townsend's big-eared bat (<i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>)	--/CSC/--	Throughout California in a wide variety of habitats. Most common in mesic sites. Roosts in the open, hanging from walls and ceilings. Roosting sites limiting. Extremely sensitive to human disturbance.
Yuma myotis (<i>Myotis yumanensis</i>)	--/--/--	Often near reservoirs, optimal habitats are open forests and woodlands with water sources to feed over. Roosts in buildings, trees, mines, caves, bridges, and rock crevices. Maternity colonies active May through July.
Plant		
Charlotte's phacelia (<i>Phacelia nashiana</i>)	--/--/1B.2	On granitic soils in sandy or rocky areas on steep slopes or flats. 600-2200m. Blooms Mar-Jun.
Red Rock poppy (<i>Eschscholzia minutiflora</i> spp. <i>twisselmannii</i>)	--/--/1B.2	Grows in volcanic tuff areas, often with Larrea, Lycium, Eriogonum, Isomeris, and Hemizonia. 680-1230m. Blooms Mar-May.
NOTES:	CNPS Code Extensions	
STATE	.2 = Fairly endangered in California (20-80% occurrences threatened)	
California Department of Fish and Game:	FEDERAL	
SE = Listed as Endangered by the State of California	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service:	
ST = Listed as Threatened by the State of California	FE = Listed as Endangered by the Federal Government	
CSC = California species of special concern	FT = Listed as Threatened by the Federal Government	
CFP = California fully protected species	FC = Candidate for Federal listing	
California Native Plant Society (CNPS):	SOURCE: CNPS, 2007; CDFG, 2007; USFWS, 2007	
List 1B = Plants rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere		

