Rethinking Regional Habitat Conservation Plan Monitoring Programs: An Innovative Approach in San Diego, California

Keith A. Greer¹,²
Melanie Johnson Rocks³,⁴

¹San Diego Association of Governments
401 B Street, Suite 800
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 699-7390
(619) 699-1905 fax
²kgr@sandag.org
³City of San Diego
202 C Street MS 5a
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 533-6300
(619) 236-6478 fax
⁴MSJohnson@sandiego.gov

Abstract
Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) have become a common, albeit still controversial, method for conserving endangered species at the regional level while balancing the social and economic needs of a region. Since 1982 when Congress first amended the Endangered Species Act to allow for HCPs, more than 400 HCPs have been implemented (USFWS 2005). Monitoring is a mandatory element of all HCPs (USFWS 1996) and is part of the implementation obligations. Without adequate and appropriate monitoring, the success of plans cannot be evaluated (Kareiva et al. 1999). This paper will focus on experiences in the review and revisions to the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) monitoring program. The MSCP, adopted in 1998, is a large and complex HCP covering portions 900 square miles (2330 km²) of San Diego County, California (Ogden 1996). We suggest that this process can serve as a model for other HCPs in the initial development and periodic review of monitoring programs.

About the Authors
Keith Greer is a Regional Environmental Planner and Biologist for the San Diego Association of Governments. Formerly the Deputy Planning Director for the City of San Diego, he has been involved in environmental planning, biological management and monitoring in San Diego for the past 15 years. Keith holds a Bachelors of Science in Biology and a Masters in Geography, with a concentration in Natural Resources and Environmental Policy.

Melanie Johnson Rocks is a Biologist for the City of San Diego Planning Department's Multiple Species Conservation Program. She has worked in environmental planning and biological monitoring/management for seven years and holds a Master of Science degree in Environmental Science.