

Measure M2 Environmental Mitigation Program Ferber Ranch

Measure M2 Overview

In 2006, Orange County voters approved the renewal of Measure M, effectively extending the half-cent sales tax in the County from April 2011 to March 2041. Renewed Measure M (or Measure M2) will continue to provide funding for transportation projects and programs in the County, including select freeway and roadway improvements, transit programs, and two environmental programs.

OCTA's M2 Freeway Environmental Mitigation Program (EMP) provides comprehensive mitigation to offset the environmental impacts of the 13 Measure M2 freeway improvement projects. The EMP is spearheaded by the Environmental Oversight Committee (EOC), which is made up of OCTA Board members and representatives from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), resource agencies, environmental groups, and the public.



Cooper's Hawk

Environmental Mitigation Program (EMP)

Instead of mitigating the natural resource impacts of Measure M2 freeway projects on a project-by-project basis, the EMP presents a comprehensive mitigation approach that provides not only replacement habitat, but also provides the opportunity to improve the overall functions and value of sensitive biological resources throughout Orange County. Working collaboratively with the resource and regulatory agencies, it was ultimately decided by OCTA that the creation of a Natural Community Conservation Plan (NCCP)/Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)/Master Streambed Alteration Agreement (MSAA) would best serve as the main implementation tool for the EMP.

Based on the evaluation of mitigation opportunities in the County, Priority Conservation Areas (PCA) were identified, which included candidate parcels and properties that could be considered for open space purposes. A standardized criteria and prioritization process was also developed to facilitate the property evaluation and assessment. Properties for acquisition and restoration were selected based on:

- Conservation Values
- Policy Considerations
- Mitigation Credits
- Mitigation Plan Review and Adoption and
- Real Estate Value/Economics.



Ferber Ranch

The Ferber Ranch property is a 399-acre parcel located northwest of the City of Rancho Santa Margarita in Trabuco Canyon. Access to the property is from Trabuco Oak Road and Rose Canyon Road. The property features rolling terrain with elevations ranging from 1,120 - 1,650 feet above mean sea level. The Cleveland National Forest to the north and Trabuco Creek to the south are important natural features proximate to the Ferber Ranch Property. Hickey Creek drains the western side of the property. In addition, the property is adjacent to the Joplin's Boys Ranch, which is maintained predominately in open space. Low density residential uses are also located in the area.

The Ferber Ranch property is located within the Trabuco Canyon area of the Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan. The Specific Plan was adopted in 1991 by the Orange County Board of Supervisors to establish regulations for development that would preserve the rural character and protect the natural resources in the area. The Specific Plan has identified several important wildlife movement corridors on the Ferber Ranch property, which extend from Trabuco Creek to the Cleveland National Forest. Major large mammals expected to be using these corridors include mule deer, mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes, gray foxes, badgers, raccoons, and ring-tail. The Ferber Ranch property is one of the larger landholdings within the Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan and has a land use designation that would allow the construction of 188 dwelling units. However, OCTA's acquisition of this property will allow this core segment of the Trabuco Canyon area to be preserved as open space. This will maintain the natural open space values and ensure the preservation of wildlife mobility in the area.



The Ferber Ranch property was identified as a priority conservation area because of the diversity of habitat types found on the property and its value for wildlife movement, including scrub habitats, riparian and herbaceous wetlands, woodlands, grassland, and cliff and rock habitat. The property is within the designated critical habitat for the arroyo toad and the coastal California gnatcatcher, both endangered species. The California Natural Diversity Database considers the following communities on the property to be rare or worthy of consideration:

- arroyo willow riparian forest
- California native grassland
- coast live oak riparian forest
- scalebroom scrub
- sycamore riparian woodland

Other special status species reported on the property include:

- intermediate mariposa lily
- Coulter's matilija poppy
- Humboldt lily
- Cooper's hawk
- cactus wren
- coastal California gnatcatcher



Humboldt Lily