

INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

This Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP or Plan) has been created to address problems caused by the presence of endangered butterflies on San Bruno Mountain in San Mateo County. Figure I-1 shows the general location of San Bruno Mountain on the San Francisco peninsula. The Mountain encompasses approximately 3,600 acres of land. The butterflies are in danger of extinction and in order to increase their chances of survival, their habitat must be preserved and improved. Necessary improvements include increasing the number of butterfly food plants on the Mountain and preventing destruction of the habitat by off-road vehicles.

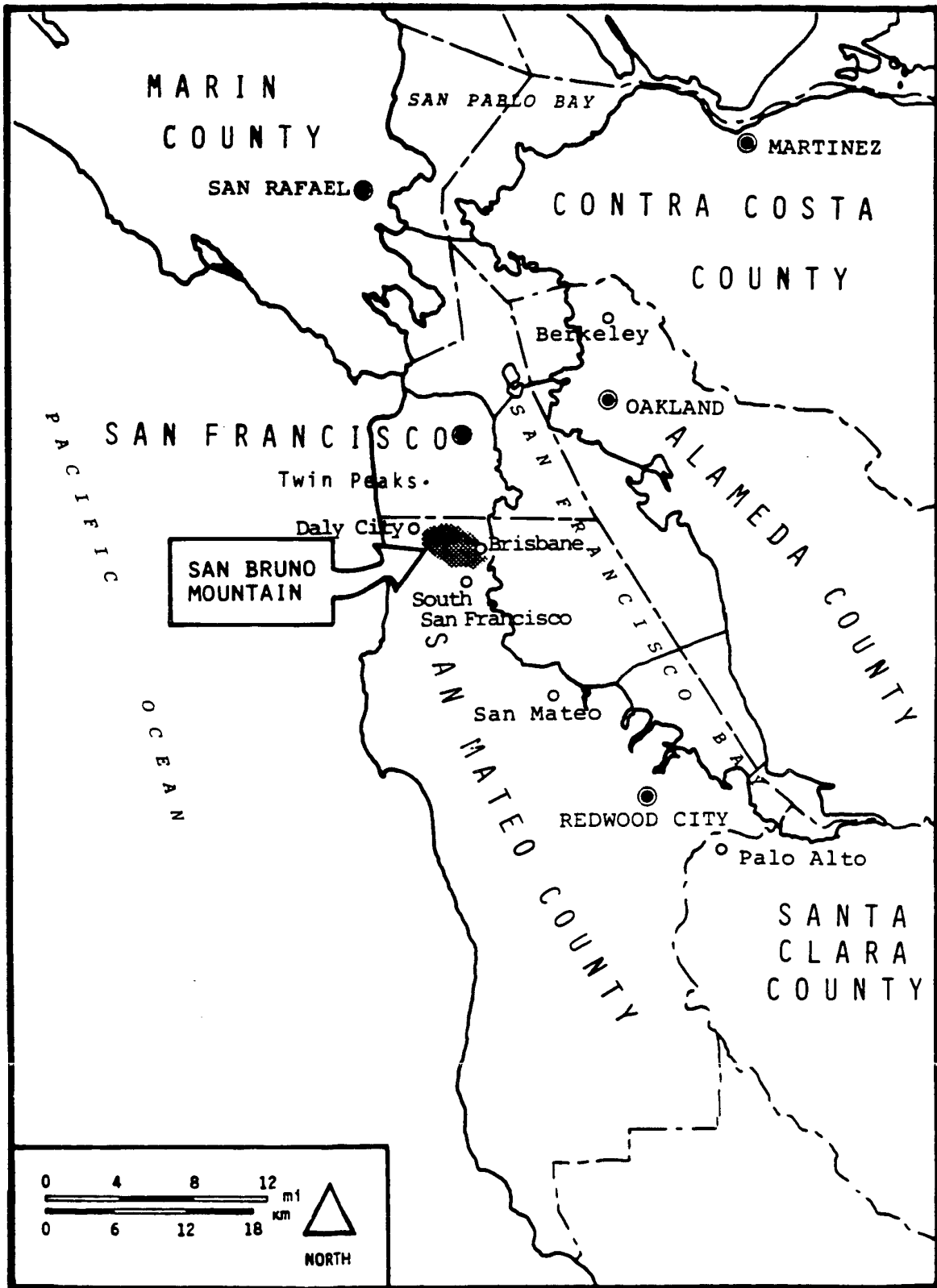
Large portions of the habitat on San Bruno Mountain are presently held by private landowners, one of largest being Visitacion Associates (VA). Prior to the discovery of the butterflies, VA had planned to develop much of its land. However, the Endangered Species Act prohibits killing or injuring any endangered butterfly. No development could occur on private or public land without killing or injuring some of the butterflies, and therefore, at present, no development is possible.

This HCP is an effort to address both the problem of the butterflies' potential extinction and private landowner's desire to develop their land. It is the result of several years of work by San Mateo County, the cities of Brisbane, Daly City and South San Francisco, Visitacion Associates, other private landowners, the Committee to Save San Bruno Mountain, the State of California and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The butterflies which live on the grassland portion of San Bruno Mountain are the Mission Blue and the Callippe Silverspot. The existence of both butterflies is threatened by both natural and human forces. Most of their original grassland habitat has been destroyed over the years by urban development and encroachment of brush and exotic species. Their present habitat on San Bruno Mountain is being destroyed by dirt bikes and other off-road vehicles (ORV's). Their host plants are also being reduced by changes in the species composition of the grassland itself.

The impasse between private landowners and the butterflies has been detrimental to both sides. The butterflies are headed toward extinction and private landowner's are unable to develop their land. The goal of this HCP is to resolve the deadlock. The County of San Mateo contracted with Thomas Reid Associates, a Palo Alto environmental consulting firm, to perform a biological study of the Mission Blue and the Callippe Silverspot. The study was to determine the exact location of the butterflies on the Mountain, and the location of their food plants, along with other information about their habits and life cycles. The study was also to determine whether any development could occur without harming the butterflies' chances of survival. The study was paid for by private landowners, but supervised and administered through a contract between the County and Thomas Reid Associates to ensure biological independence of the study. Private landowners and developers are willing to help establish a funding source to pay for maintaining and enhancing the remaining habitat in order to preserve the butterflies, in exchange for the opportunity to develop some of the land.

FIGURE I-1
LOCATION



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The first phase of the biological study was completed in December 1980. The Phase I Report described the biological work in progress, directing the Work on the second phase which would provide a much more comprehensive picture of the status of the Mission Blue and Callippe Silverspot butterflies and other species of concern on San Bruno Mountain. The Phase II Biological Study is now complete. The findings form the basis of this Habitat Conservation Plan.

Based on the biological analysis, San Mateo County believes that this HCP can allow a limited amount of land to be developed on the mountain in order to raise the money necessary to preserve and improve the remaining habitat. Such development will provide a source of funding to conserve and maintain the habitat in an effort to prevent the extinction of the Mission Blue and to protect the viability of the Callippe Silverspot. Private landowners have agreed that in return for the opportunity to develop some of its land, they will donate the remaining land to the public to be preserved as butterfly habitat. Additionally, they will participate in a funding program to ensure the ongoing preservation and maintenance of the habitat. Funds will be raised through a combination of levies on the property after development and specified start-up contributions.

Today, roughly 95% of the SBM area (3380 acres) is undisturbed open space -- the remainder is roads and small developed areas. The open space comprises brush and grassland, which is the habitat for the Mission Blue. Some 1952 acres of the open space is already in public ownership; the HCP would add 800 acres of private land to the park which would mean that 81% of the present open space will be in public ownership. The development anticipated by the HCP would remove 368 acres (11%) of the open space, and 260 acres (8%) are yet unplanned.

In return for private donation of land and participation in the funding program, the local public entities have agreed to apply to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for a permit to take butterflies. The Service is authorized to issue such a permit under 610a of the Endangered Species Act if taking the butterflies will enhance their survival. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has participated in planning to conserve the butterflies' habitat. If the permit is issued, the local entities have agreed to allow limited development, which would result in the taking of butterflies according to the provisions in this HCP.

In working out the specific provisions of this HCP, the following points have been used as guidelines:

1. The Plan and studies should include the ecological whole of San Bruno Mountain. The Plan focused in this case on the mountain-wide impacts of the development proposals as allowed by the 1976 San Bruno Mountain General Plan Amendment, and other General Plans, because these proposals represented the greatest threat to the species of concern.
2. The Plan should set aside conserved habitat for the species through the transfer of ownership to the public. These ownership interests should be restricted so that the conserved habitat is protected permanently.
3. The Plan should provide a permanent funding source for conservation activity.

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4. The Plan should be based upon a biological study performed by an independent expert under contract to a public entity.
5. The Plan should rely on preservation rather than manipulation, unless manipulation is of proven effectiveness.
6. The Plan should comprehensively address all threats to the endangered species, including biological threats as well as threats from human activity.
7. The Plan should designate those areas in which development may occur and in which endangered individuals may be taken and habitat destroyed.
8. The Plan should simultaneously provide private landowners with a permanent resolution of endangered species and habitat issues, and provide the conserved habitat with protection against additional development proposals encroaching upon it.
9. The overall effect of the Plan should be sufficient to provide for the long-term, indefinite perpetuation of the species.