



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

May 15, 2006

Jim Bartel, Field Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office
6010 Hidden Valley Road
Carlsbad, CA 92009

Subject: Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Coachella Valley
Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP), and Santa Rosa and San
Jacinto Mountains Trails Plan, Riverside County, California (CEQ # 20060134)

Dear Mr. Bartel:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the above-referenced document pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

EPA reviewed the Draft EIS and provided comments to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on March 7, 2005. We rated the Draft EIS as Environmental Concerns-Insufficient Information (EC-2) and requested additional information on impacts to waters of the U.S., consultation with Tribal governments, environmental justice issues, conformity with air quality standards, and impacts to cultural resources and migratory birds. EPA appreciates the additional information on these issues in the FEIS and Response to Comments volume.

In our comment letter, EPA recommended that the USFWS provide clear future opportunities for public input on the implementation and management of the MSHCP, which would help ensure adequate enforcement and oversight. We continue to recommend public input opportunities towards this end, such as the inclusion of an associated public committee, or the allowance of non-land holding public representatives on the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this FEIS. If you have any questions, please contact me at (415) 972-3988, or Karen Vitulano, the lead reviewer for this document, at (415) 947-4178 or vitulano.karen@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

Duane James, Manager
Environmental Review Office
Communities and Ecosystems Division

cc: Jim Sullivan, Coachella Valley Association of Governmen