



6.0 SAN FRANCISQUITO CREEK CONSERVATION AREA

The San Francisquito Creek Planning Area is 120.0 acres including 20.1 acres of TTM 52455 in size. It should be noted that the size of the SFCPA changes from 120.6 to 114.4 acres under the Plan B Alternative. This 6.2-acre reduction is specifically removed from Sub-Area Eight and Sub-Area Nine and added to Sub-Area Three to accommodate the minimum size requirements for the Junior High School and shared public park under this alternative. The San Francisquito Creek is the dominant land feature of the entire Specific Plan Area and surrounding community. This creek which bisect the Specific Plan Area is also referred as the San Francisquito Creek Conservation Area.

6.1 COMMUNITY DESIGN FOR SUSTAINABILITY / LIVABILITY

The San Francisquito Creek Conservation Area is generally defined as that area between the creek banks, and also includes an area referred to as the Upland Preserve Zone. The Upland Preserve Zone Area is beyond the creek bank and is an "Upland " area usually with different natural vegetation than that existing in the creekbed riparian area.

The following provides a listing of objectives for this planning area.

- ❖ Maintain and protect areas that possess biotic resources that are uncommon, rare, unique, or critical to the maintenance of wildlife.
- ❖ Establish the San Francisquito Creek as a major centralized open space corridor.
- ❖ Establish an adequate buffer and mitigation measures to maintain and enhance the habitat value of the area and preserve the river resources.
- ❖ Provide revegetation of creek and Upland Preserve Areas when disturbed as a result of development activities.



The multi-purpose and river trail system also occurs within the Upland Preserve Zone. The pedestrian and bicycle portions of the River Trail shall be located along the outermost margin of the Upland Preserve Zone contiguous with the easternmost 15 feet of the SAT setback line on the east side of San Francisquito Creek with the exceptions of bridge undercrossings. The three proposed trailheads are to be located outside the Upland Preserve Zone. The planned 15" sewer line which is proposed to run along the east side of San Francisquito Creek shall be located outside the Upland Preserve Zone, or shall be encased in concrete. Although the Upland Preserve Zone is shown and described in this Section as being a functional component of the Conservation Area, the river trail system is also included in the discussions of the Eastcreek and Decoro South Planning Areas. Note: the river trail system within the Upland Preserve Zone has not been double counted in the calculation of the total Specific Plan Area.

The San Francisquito Creek Conservation Creek Planning Area, including the Upland Preserve Zones are designated open space and zoned as Specific Plan - Open Space (OS). This land use designation includes the following areas (see Tables 6-1 and 6-1B).

Area	Acres
Creek Areas	59.5
Upland Preserve Zone	61.1
Total* (includes 20.1 acres of TTM 52455)	120.6*

Area	Acres
Creek Areas	58.0
Upland Preserve Zone	56.4
Total* (includes 20.1 acres of TTM 52455)	114.4*

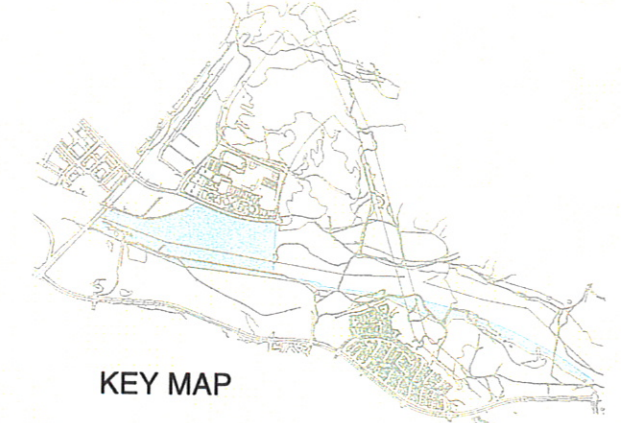


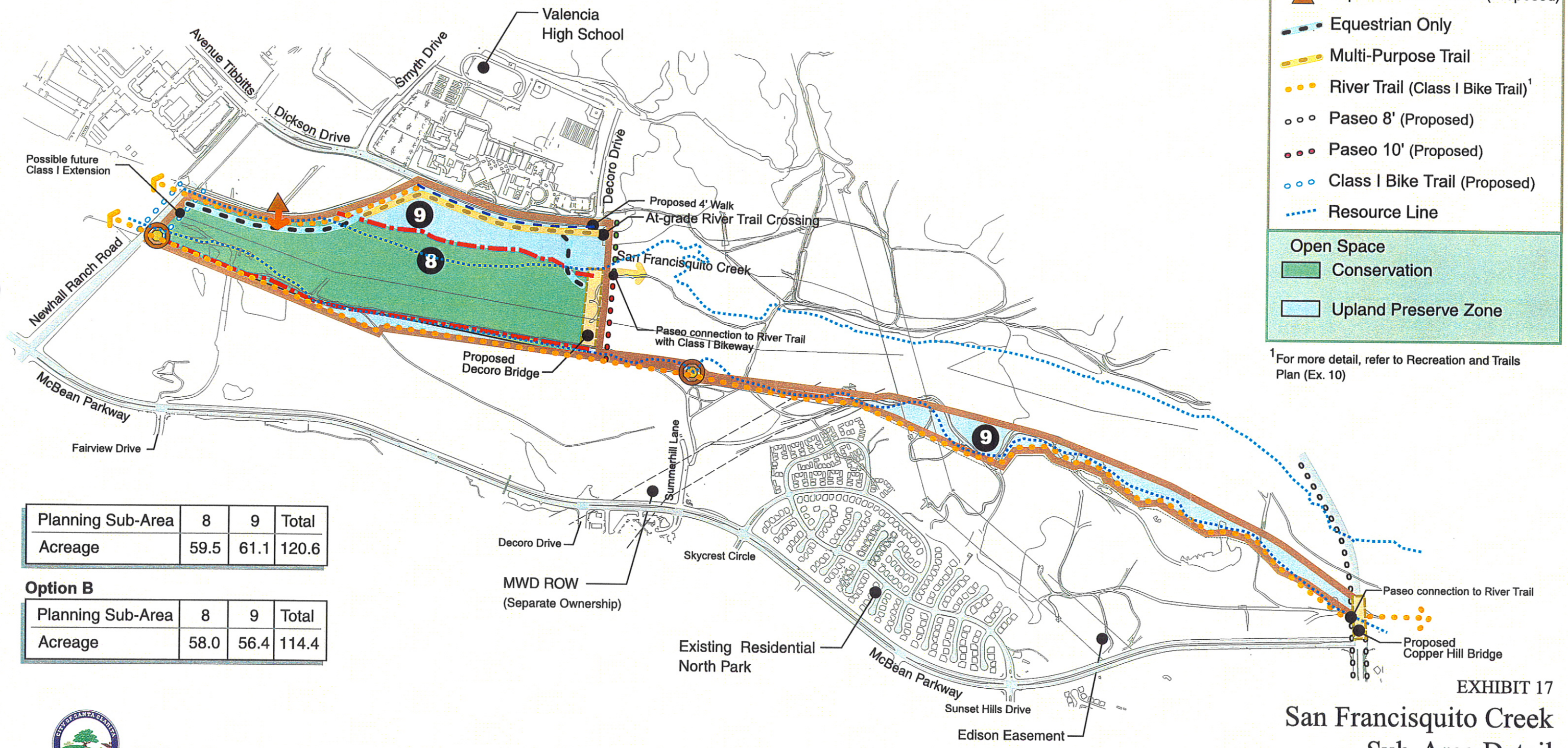
EXHIBIT KEY

- 8 San Francisquito Creek Sub-Area 8
- 9 San Francisquito Creek Sub-Area 9
- Sub-Area Boundary
- Planning Area Boundary
- Trailhead (Proposed)
- ▲ Equestrian Trailhead (Proposed)
- Equestrian Only
- Multi-Purpose Trail
- River Trail (Class I Bike Trail)¹
- Paseo 8' (Proposed)
- Paseo 10' (Proposed)
- Class I Bike Trail (Proposed)
- Resource Line

Open Space

- Conservation
- Upland Preserve Zone

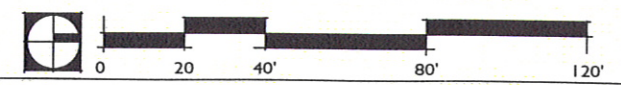
¹ For more detail, refer to Recreation and Trails Plan (Ex. 10)



Planning Sub-Area	8	9	Total
Acreage	59.5	61.1	120.6

Option B

Planning Sub-Area	8	9	Total
Acreage	58.0	56.4	114.4



October, 1999



As discussed previously, the San Francisquito Creek is bordered by a wide range of existing and proposed land uses including residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational.

6.2 GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATIONS

The City of Santa Clarita General Plan classifies the creek areas as a Significant Ecological Area SEA Overlay (Refer to Exhibit 4) and sets forth several goals and policies related to the river and creek open space.

Policy 1.9 Establish the Santa Clara River and its tributaries, when appropriate, as a major centralized open space corridor linking a variety of public recreation and open space uses.

The General Plan designates a Significant Ecological Area SEA that impacts the San Francisquito Creek Area of the Specific Plan. The following information regarding the San Francisquito Canyon SEA is an excerpt from the City's General Plan.

6.3 SAN FRANCISQUITO CANYON SEA

San Francisquito Canyon SEA contains an intermittent stream that drains the hillsides north of the Planning Area in the Angeles National Forest. Riparian vegetation is located in the canyon bottom along the stream channel, while grasslands and chaparral are found on the walls. This SEA was designated because it supports populations of the Unarmored Threespine Stickleback, a federal and state-listed endangered species. The San Francisquito Canyon SEA prevents downstream siltation of the Santa Clara River and provides constant water flow to preserve designated critical habitat for the Unarmored Threespine Stickleback. The San Francisquito floodplain is included in the SEA in order to preserve downstream Stickleback habitats.

6.4 SAT BOUNDARIES

Exhibit 3 depicts the boundaries of the Scientific Advisory Team (SAT) Area. These boundaries were used to define the San Francisquito Creek Conservation Area. Please refer to Section 4.6 of the EIR for a detailed discussion of the SAT assumptions and methodology and other biological issues.



6.5 UNARMORED THREESPINE STICKLEBACK

While discussion of sensitive and endangered species is covered in the Environmental Impact Report (EIR); a brief discussion of the Unarmored Threespine Stickleback fish is included in the Specific Plan because the City's General Plan specifically references the fish as a reason for the SEA designation.

The Unarmored Threespine Stickleback fish is classified as an endangered species. The Revised Unarmored Threespine Stickleback Recovery Plan of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service dated December 1985 identified a zone of essential habitat within San Francisquito Creek approximately six miles upstream from the Santa Clara River. A second zone was identified in the Santa Clara River more than 2.5 miles downstream, and other studies report the occurrence of the fish in the areas in between where open water is present.

6.6 AREA CONCEPT

The San Francisquito Creek Conservation Area will be maintained in a natural state and none of the development proposed for Eastcreek or Decoro South will encroach into the area. All structural development is outside of the SEA boundaries.

Additionally, a habitat buffer, referred to as the Upland Preserve Zone, is being designated adjacent to the creek areas. This Upland Preserve Zone is beyond the creek bank and is an "Upland" area usually with different natural vegetation than that existing in the creekbed riparian area. The natural vegetation will be preserved or enhanced and the Upland Preserve Zone will serve as a foraging area for wildlife living in the creek bed area.

River Trail System

As proposed, the river trail system located along portions of both sides of the San Francisquito Creek will provide an additional recreation amenity and open space element for the Specific Plan Area. The trail system is for the enjoyment of all residents and visitors and will provide a connecting route to the community paseo system.

In certain areas on the west side of the creek, the River Trail converts to a 30-foot multi-purpose trail accommodating equestrian uses in addition to pedestrians and bicycles. In the vicinity of the proposed Decoro Bridge equestrian trail markers will be set every 1,320 feet. The equestrian trail will be designated to avoid free flowing water and riparian vegetation.



Distinct from the community paseo system, the river trail system provides jogging, hiking, and bicycle riding and in some locations an equestrian right-of-way within the natural rural setting and adjacent to the San Francisquito Creek riparian environments. The trail system will provide a direct, safe and convenient route from the Specific Plan Area to Valencia Town Center Mall and communities to the north and south. The creek side trail system is accessed via the community paseo system as well as the internal sidewalk within each of the planning Sub-Areas. The paved river trail is sixteen (16) feet wide, located within the Upland Preserve Zone. The pedestrian and bicycle portions of the River Trail shall be located along the outermost margin of the Upland Preserve Zone contiguous with the easternmost 15 feet of the SAT setback line on the east side of San Francisquito Creek with the exceptions of bridge undercrossings. The three proposed trailheads are to be located outside the Upland Preserve Zone. The planned 15" sewer line which is proposed to run along the east side of San Francisquito Creek shall be located outside the Upland Preserve Zone, or shall be encased in concrete. Two-way cycling lanes and walking lane will offer recreation options for walkers, joggers, skaters, and cyclists. In selected areas the river trail converts to a multi-purpose trail accommodating equestrian uses. The river trail will also accommodate access for flood control maintenance purposes.

The landscape concept for this area will reflect the usage of water efficient, fast growing indigenous plant materials. Riparian trees such as cottonwoods, sycamores and alder trees will be used as accent trees. In addition to the riparian accent trees, evergreen vertical and deciduous grove trees will be intermixed with the riparian trees. No exotic or invasive species will be planted adjacent to or within the Upland Preserve Zone (refer to Exhibit 11).

The alignment for the trail will undulate horizontally and vertically where possible to provide variety for the pedestrian and bicyclist. Random and informal tree spacing will add to the informality of this trail. Where appropriate, the trail will be depressed in vertical elevation to provide privacy and a sense of separation from residential homes.

The San Francisquito Creek Area, as mentioned previously is designated by the General Plan as an important open space area for the entire Santa Clarita Valley. The City has a desire to obtain ownership of the creek area, the Upland Preserve Zone, and the adjacent trails to assure its continued preservation in a natural state. For that reason, an acquisition agreement and development agreement between the City and the Valencia Company is being processed concurrent with this Specific Plan. Through these agreements the City will obtain ownership of the San Francisquito Creek Area.



6.7 BANK STABILIZATION

It is the intent of the project to protect important biological resources present on the project site and to minimize the amount of bank stabilization necessary to protect development and property from erosion. In keeping with this intent, all development activities have been set back with an Upland Preserve Zone along the San Francisquito Creek bed. Consequently, very little bank stabilization will occur on the creek banks themselves; it will only occur at the banks where: 1) bridges crossings over the creek; and 2) adjacent to any City drainage facility. Along these areas, bank stabilization will consist of ungrouted rock or concrete or similar treatment. Where additional bank stabilization is required, it will be within the Upland Preserve Zone adjacent to the trail. In these cases, the stabilization feature will be buried. Once the bank stabilization feature is in place, the disturbed area will be returned to its present condition, and re-vegetated with native riparian and/or upland plant species. Only after final engineering plans are complete will the specific extent of stabilization be known.