

EMPLOYEE FIELD GUIDE

Guidelines for Maintenance and Construction in Environmentally Sensitive Areas

It is against the Department's Strategic Goals for our actions to threaten sensitive resources within our worksite. In order to fulfill our goals, every worker needs to adopt new approaches for construction and maintenance of facilities. These guidelines provide an environmentally sensitive approach which recognizes that often minor adjustments during planning, construction or maintenance activities can yield major benefits to the Department's goals.



photo courtesy of Planning Systems

Southwestern Arroyo Toad

Bufo microscaphus californicus

The southwestern arroyo toad is federally endangered and currently recognized by the state of California as a Species of Special Concern. Arroyo toads are also a target species of the Multiple Habitat Conservation Program.

The arroyo toad is a small (5 to 8 cm) (2 to 3"), light greenish gray or tan toad with warty skin and dark spots. Its underside is buff colored and often without spots. A light-colored stripe crosses the head and eyelids, and a light area usually occurs on each sacral hump and in the middle of the back. Its movement consists of hopping rather than walking. Its courtship vocalization is a high trill, usually lasting 8 to 10 seconds.

The arroyo toad is restricted to rivers that have shallow, gravelly pools adjacent to sandy terraces. Breeding occurs on large streams with persistent water from late March until June. Juveniles and adults forage for insects on sandy stream terraces that have nearly complete closure of cottonwoods, oaks, or willows and almost no grass and herbaceous cover at ground level. Adult toads excavate shallow burrows on the terraces where they shelter during the day when the surface is damp or during longer intervals in the dry season.

Arroyo toads were historically found along the length of drainages in southern California from San Luis Obispo to San Diego County, but now they survive primarily as small isolated populations. Urbanization and dam construction caused most of the extensive habitat degradation. Due to the isolation and the small sizes, almost all populations are at great risk of extinction. Several factors presently threaten the remaining habitat of the arroyo toad including:

- (1) Short-and long-term changes in river hydrology, including construction of dams and water diversions;
- (2) alternation of riparian wetland habitats by agriculture and urbanization;
- (3) construction of roads;
- (4) site-specific damage by off-highway vehicle use;
- (5) development of campgrounds and other recreational activities;
- (6) over-grazing; and
- (7) mining activities.



photo by Mike Kelly (Friends of Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve)

How to protect sensitive species

1. No vehicle or foot traffic may enter or cross the sensitive area.
2. No debris or material used in construction or equipment maintenance may enter the water or creekbed. Debris includes construction material, saw-cut and coring run-off, excavated material, and any other pollutant which results from any other associated work.
3. No construction activities including storage of machinery and materials will be allowed in areas designated as Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs).

Prepared by the Environmental Branch of the California Department of Transportation, District 11.



photo by Mike Kelly (Friends of Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve)