

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.



css photo: Marc Hochovsky, Calif. Dept. of Fish and Game



San Diego Horned Lizard

Phrynosoma coronatum blainvillii

These flat, spiny "horned toads" feed on native ants. They have become rare due to destruction of their coastal sage scrub habitat and collecting for pets. They are currently considered a Federal Special Concern species (FSC) and a California Special Concern species (DFG-CSC). California Department of Fish and Game gives them full protection from collecting. They produce clutches of 6 to 21 eggs from May to June. Hatching occurs in August and September. Watch for these camouflaged lizards on roads, bare ground, and around ant mounds.

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).

Coastal Sage Scrub

Coastal sage scrub is a unique combination of low, fragrant shrubs and other plants that grow on dry hills and mesas near the southern California coast. This once common vegetation community has been greatly reduced by urban growth. As a result, many species of plants and wildlife that live nowhere else have become very rare and threatened with extinction. Characteristic plants in coastal sage scrub include California sagebrush, California buck wheat, black sage, broom baccharis, coyote brush and lemonadeberry. Some coastal sage scrub communities also contain prickly pear, barrel cactus and cholla cactus. California sagebrush has soft, thin, light green leaves with a strong sage odor. California buckwheat is best recognized by its white to pink flowers or dark red fruit clusters. Workers should learn to identify some common sage species to avoid unnecessary impacts to these sensitive resources. California sagebrush should only be cleared with approval from the Construction Coordinator.

California Gnatcatcher

Polioptila californica californica

The California gnatcatcher is a tiny songbird that lives only in coastal sage scrub habitats. This grayish bird has a black tail and mews like a kitten. It is listed as threatened by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and is, therefore, fully protected against harmful actions. Harmful actions may include clearing of coastal sage scrub habitat or disturbance of birds during the nesting season (February 15th through August 30th).

Coastal Cactus Wren

Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus sandiegensis

Coastal populations of the cactus wren are restricted to large, dense stands of cactus within coastal sage scrub vegetation. They are considered sensitive by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. These large, speckled wrens emit a raucous "chortling" call. Their bulky pouch-shaped nests are easily identified in prickly pear or cholla cactus.



photo: Dr. Lloyd Glenn Ingles, Calif. Academy of Sciences

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