

PROTECTING WILDLANDS

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT THREATENS SAN JACINTO WILDLIFE AREA

by JEFFREY A. VOLBERG, DIRECTOR OF WATER LAW AND POLICY

If you live in Southern California and hunt waterfowl on public land, there's a good chance the San Jacinto Wildlife Area is your go-to spot. Framed by dramatic mountains and loaded with green-winged teal, it received almost 4,000 hunter visits last season. It's critical to waterfowlers in a region that's big on human development and short on huntable wetlands.

That's why California Waterfowl fought a proposal to put houses *literally* within shotgun range of the wildlife area's southern boundary.

We scored a partial victory: The Riverside County Board of Supervisors approved the 3,300-acre "Villages at Lakeview" project on Dec. 5, but nixed a proposal to put single-family residences on large lots north of the Ramona Expressway, with a 200-foot "green space" buffer between the houses and the wildlife area. Directly north of the buffer are upland fields used for pheasant hunting and dog training.

Unfortunately, the board approved plans to put commercial development within 1,000 feet of San Jacinto, and it did not address a host of concerns raised by the Department of Fish and Wildlife:

- Light and noise impacts
- Height and size of buildings
- Potential bird strikes
- Light spillage onto the wildlife area
- Increased trash
- Effects on nocturnal animals
- Increased traffic day or night
- Noise and light pollution
- Nitrogen deposition from air pollution and yard fertilizer
- Need for increased staff to handle the increased workload associated with a larger population

- Increased water demand from the project
- Flood-control issues caused by increased concrete and pavement
- Increased need for law enforcement patrols to prevent trespassing
- Fence repair and signage on the boundary between the project and the wildlife area
- Need for outreach to local groups that want to use the wildlife area such as mountain bikers, trail users, school groups, community groups

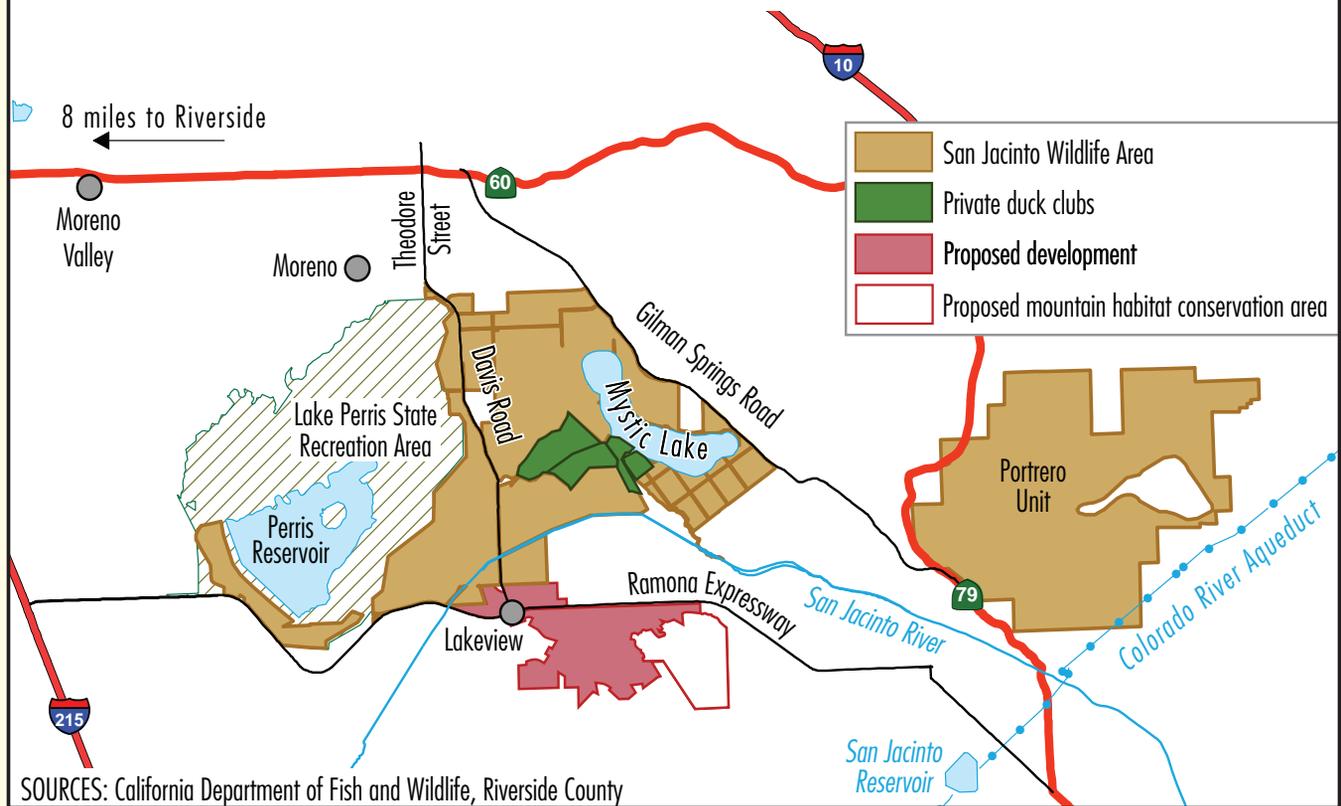
We also remain concerned about other obvious conflicts between the wildlife area and the residential neighborhood: Homeowners are going to complain about shotgun noise or barking dogs. Cats and dogs from the houses are almost guaranteed to explore the wildlife area. Feral cats are a serious problem for nesting birds. Roaming dogs can also disturb wildlife. Residents will be tempted to break through fences and trespass on the wildlife area.

This project, by Lewis Homes, has been through the approval process before. Riverside County approved the project in 2010, but the environmental documents were challenged in court and the developer had to start over. Now it has the green light.

So what can we do? California Waterfowl will work with Lewis Homes to address DFW's remaining concerns. California Waterfowl has the resources to do remedial and mitigation work that will reduce or prevent impacts to the wildlife area from the proximity of the urban development.

Continued on page 36.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ABUTTING THE SAN JACINTO WILDLIFE AREA



ABOUT SAN JACINTO

BORN AS MITIGATION: The San Jacinto Wildlife Area was established in 1980 as mitigation for the environmental impacts of the State Water Project, including impacts to rare plants, endangered species such as the Stephens's kangaroo rat, waterfowl habitat and hunting opportunity in Southern California.

REGIONAL IMPORTANCE: The San Jacinto Wildlife Area is one of just two major public waterfowl hunting areas in Southern California. Located just East of Lake Perris, near the city of Moreno Valley, the wildlife area is the nearest public waterfowl hunting opportunity for residents of Los Angeles and Riverside Counties. The next closest major public waterfowl hunting area in Southern California is the Wister Unit of the Imperial Wildlife Area at the Salton Sea. Many Southern California duck hunters go east to the Owens Valley or north into the San Joaquin Valley, but those entail lengthy treks.

SIZE AND LOCATION: Consisting of 19,000 acres in three units, the wildlife area includes 9,000 acres of restored wetlands. To the west is Lake Perris and the 8,800-acre Lake Perris Recreation Area. To the north are farms between the wildlife area and the city of Moreno Valley. To the east are private duck clubs on Mystic Lake, and to the south are

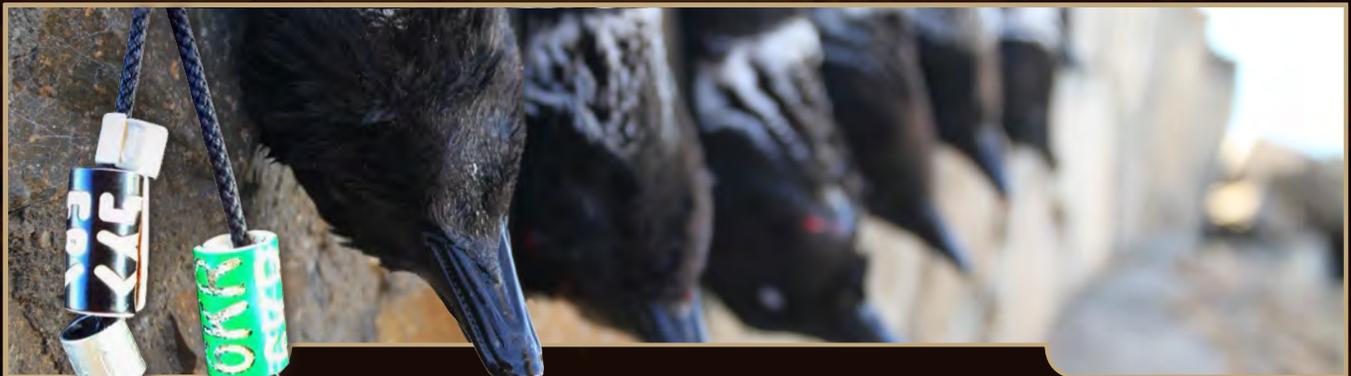
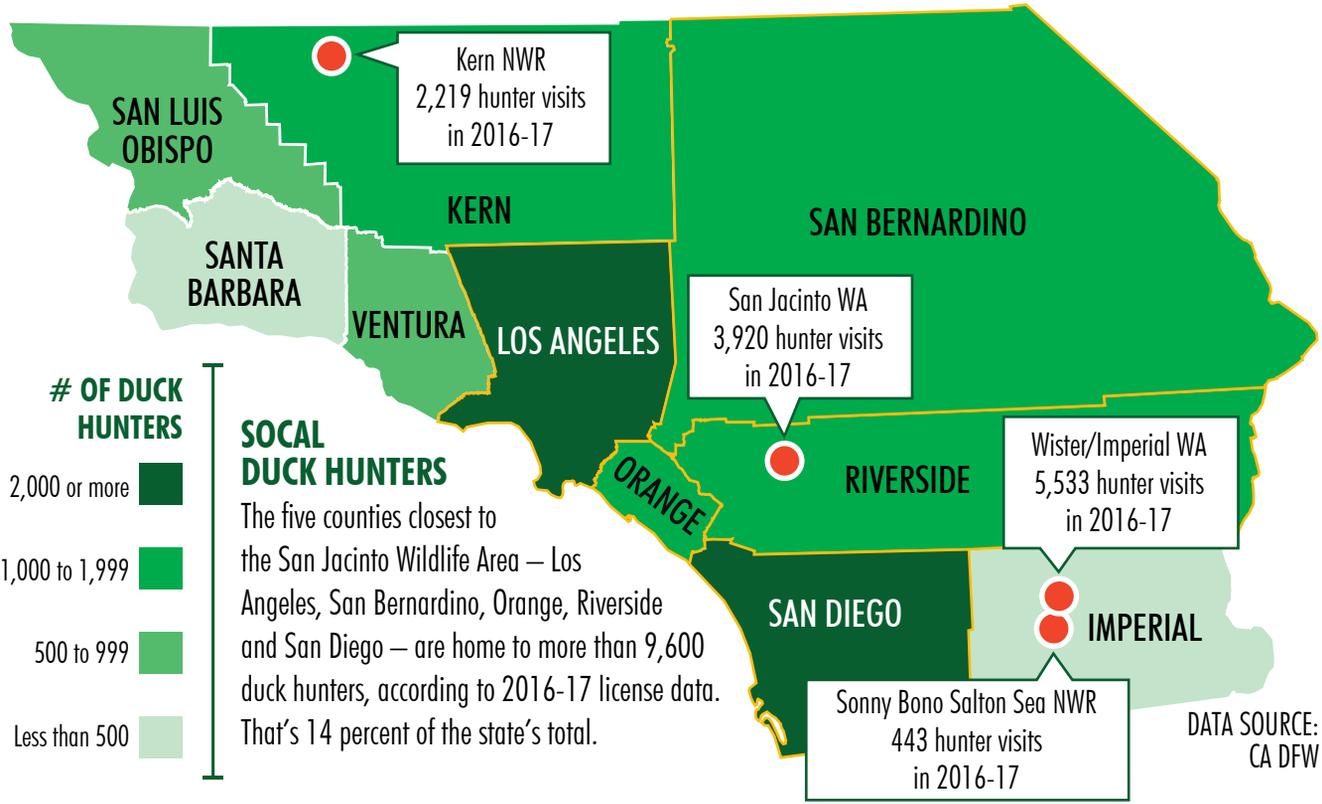
farms operated by the Amway Corporation Nutrilite Division. Running to the south of the farms is the Ramona Expressway. The area to the south of the Ramona Expressway is a semi-rural area of small farms and rural residences. Lakeview and Nuevo are two small communities serving the area.

HABITAT WORK: The California Department of Fish and Wildlife has invested \$80 million and thousands of hours of staff time to provide mitigation and hunting opportunity. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has worked with the department and local business interests to develop and maintain a multi-species habitat conservation plan under the federal Endangered Species Act.

California Waterfowl has worked on wetlands restoration projects at the San Jacinto Wildlife Area, and is currently replacing pipelines and valves on the wildlife area, which should be completed next year. California Waterfowl's projects have greatly improved the quality of waterfowl habitat, which has drawn increasing numbers of prime species for hunting.

PREVIOUS DEVELOPMENT THREATS: In 1994, a lawsuit supported by California Waterfowl challenged the adequacy of the environmental documents for a 7,200-home subdivision across the road from the San Jacinto Wildlife Area. The developer dropped the project.

HUNTERS AND PUBLIC LAND OPTIONS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



Pacific Black Brant Hunting

Confidently choose from among the best-available, all-inclusive Black Brant hunting packages ranging from fabled San Quintin Bay to the vast wetlands near Obregon, where ducks, quail, doves and bass fishing are also available. It's duck season somewhere. Ready to pull the trigger? Contact Ramsey Russell to discuss your waterfowl hunt of a lifetime.



Call 1.866.438.3897 today or visit

Ramsey Russell's
GetDucks.com