



Officials Announce Effort To Preserve Lakeside Land

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By Dwane Brown, City News Service



Credit: San Diego Association of Governments

A view of 410-acre Lakeside Downs property, Oct. 13, 2015.

More than 400 acres west of Lakeside will be preserved under an arrangement announced Tuesday by the [San Diego Association of Governments](#), [U.S. Department of Defense](#) and the [Endangered Habitats Conservancy](#).

The 410-acre Lakeside Downs property, located west of state Route 67 in an unincorporated part of the county, is home to a robust population of the threatened coastal California gnatcatcher, a coastal sage scrub habitat and extensive stands of spiny redberry, the host plant for the rare Hermes copper butterfly, according to SANDAG.

Michael Beck with the Endangered Habitats Conservancy said at least 80 percent of the gnatcatcher's habitat is gone.

"It doesn't exist anymore and what's left is very fragmented," Beck said. "There are very few core areas that support gnatcatchers and a number of other species that are endemic to this community."

The land was once the site of a proposed development that would have included 140 homes.

"Lakeside Downs is the 34th open space acquisition that SANDAG has helped to complete through the TransNet Environmental Mitigation Program," said agency Chairman Jack Dale, a councilman in Santee, which is near the property. "Thanks to the voter-approved TransNet program, we've preserved nearly 3,800 acres of important natural resources to date."

SANDAG put up half of the \$8 million cost of the property, while the Defense Department put up the other half. MCAS Miramar is three miles away, and a large military housing complex is nearby.

The conservancy, which helped broker the deal, will own and manage the property, according to SANDAG. EHC manages around 5,000 acres of open space.

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