



## 10.0 SANTA CLARA RIVER CONSERVATION AREA

The Santa Clara River along with San Francisquito Creek, Bouquet Creek, and the South Fork Santa Clara River are the dominant land feature of the Specific Plan. This network of river and creeks which bisect the Specific Plan area are collectively referred to in this chapter as the River Area (See Exhibit 22).

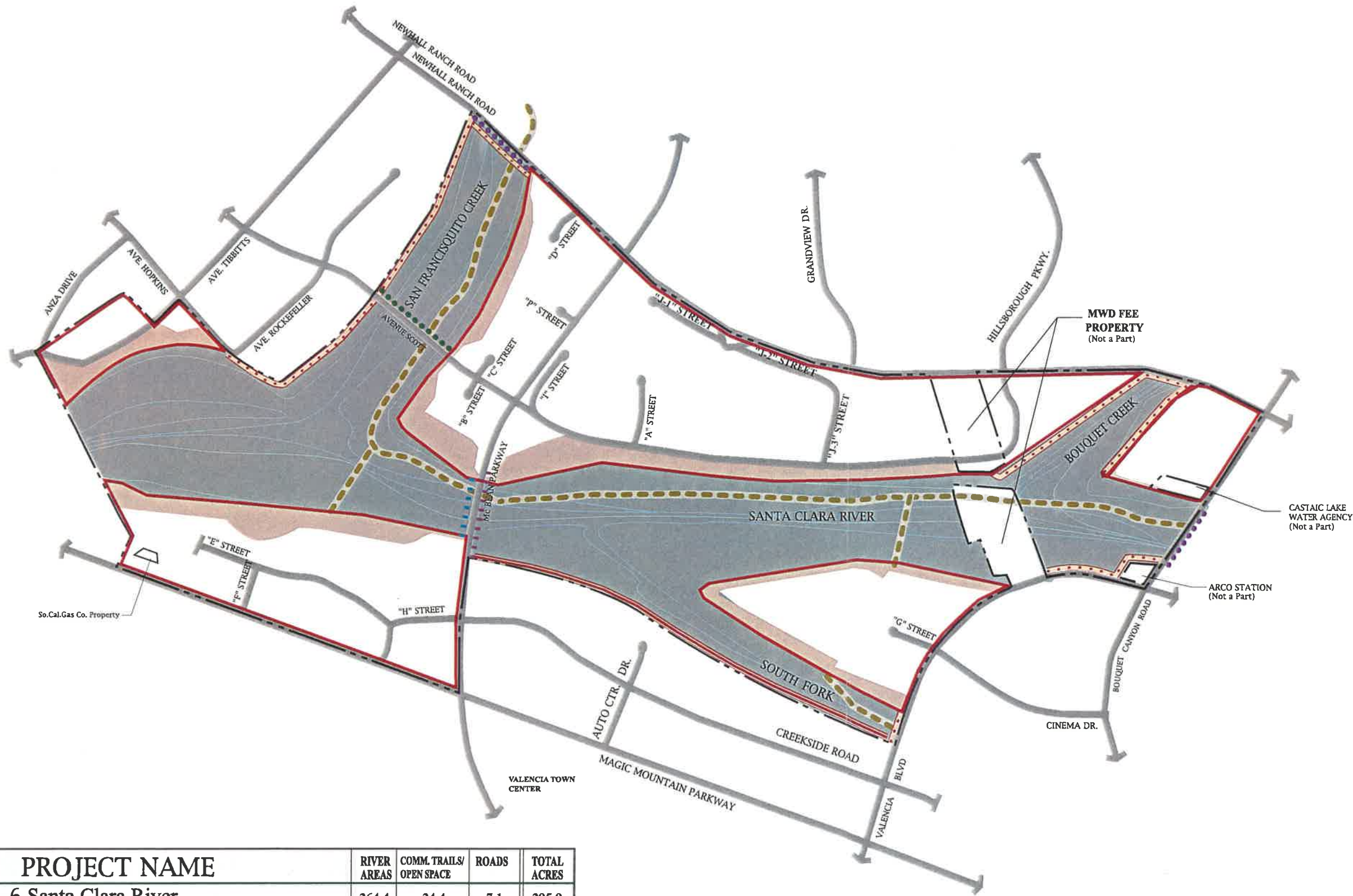
In addition to the River Area which is generally defined as that area between the river banks, the Santa Clara River Conservation Area includes an area referred to as the upland preserve zone. Although the upland preserve zone is shown and described in this section as being a functional component of the River Conservation Area, it is also shown in the discussions of the Lago De Valencia, Pony League, South River Village, and Valencia Industrial Center development areas. The upland preserve zone has not been double counted in the calculation of the total Specific Plan area.

The community trails/open space and roads included in the Santa Clara River Conservation Area are lots adjacent to the river areas that are not included in the development projects. The road category includes segments of roads adjacent to the river areas plus bridge crossings over the river area.

The river area and upland preserve zones are zoned as Specific Plan - Open Space (OS) in the Specific Plan.

Santa Clara River Conservation Area	
Area	Acres
River Areas	264.4
Community Trails / Open Space	24.4
Roads	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>295.9</b>

As previously discussed, the functional area of the Santa Clara River Conservation Area includes the upland preserve zones which are part of the adjacent development areas. These upland preserve zones total 83.6 acres.



KEY MAP

EXHIBIT KEY

	SPECIFIC PLAN BOUNDARY
	PLANNING AREA BOUNDARY
	UPLAND PRESERVE ZONE
	SANTA CLARA RIVER CONSERVATION AREA
	CLASS I BIKE LANE
	CLASS II BIKE LANE
	10' SIDEWALK
	6' SIDEWALK
	RIVER BOTTOM EQUESTRIAN TRAIL
	TRAILS (EXISTING)
	TRAILS (PROPOSED)

PROJECT NAME	RIVER AREAS	COMM. TRAILS/ OPEN SPACE	ROADS	TOTAL ACRES
6 Santa Clara River	264.4	24.4	7.1	295.9





UPLAND PRESERVE ZONES	
Area	Acres
Lago De Valencia	32.3
Pony League	18.0
South River Village	23.1
Valencia Industrial Center	10.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>83.6</b>

The functional area of the Santa Clara River Conservation Area is 295.9 acres plus the upland preserve zone of 83.6 acres, for a total of 379.5 acres.

The Santa Clara River is a 100-mile long river that stretches from Acton to the Pacific Ocean. The river maintains much of its attractive natural state as it traverses Los Angeles and Ventura Counties on its way to the Pacific Ocean. Its width varies from 300 feet to one-quarter mile. Its banks and bottom are home to a host of aquatic, bird, and mammal species: fish, frogs, coyote, bobcats, deer, rodents, and many birds including endangered species. The river also supports a wide variety of riparian plant types: cottonwoods, willow, cattails, and other river species.

The Santa Clara River is bordered by a wide range of land uses including residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural.

## 10.1 GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATIONS

The City of Santa Clarita General Plan classifies the river areas as open space and sets forth several goals and policies related to the river open space area such as Goal 1, Policy 1.9 which states:

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 also designates two Significant Ecological Areas (SEA) that impact the river area of the Specific Plan. The following information regarding the Santa Clara River and San Francisquito Canyon SEAs are direct excerpts from the City's General Plan.



### ***10.1.1 Santa Clara River SEA***

The Santa Clara River is the largest SEA in the Santa Clara Valley, extending through the City of Santa Clara and along the entire Santa Clara watershed. It supports a variety of natural habitats off-site including freshwater marsh, coastal sage scrub, oak woodland, and riparian woodlands. A great portion of the river channel, through the planning area, remains dry for most of the year. In scattered areas, however, because of water discharge from the County sewer treatment plant, the water table under the stream bed is high, and lush riparian vegetation provides refuge for birds and wildlife. This assemblage of vegetation described as a broad wash association in the SEA descriptions is unlike that found in steeper mountain canyons. It is the only major river drainage from the San Gabriel Mountains that remains unchannelized for most of its length. This was designated as an SEA primarily because of the threat of loss of suitable habitat for the Unarmored Threespine Stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus williamsoni*), a federal and state-listed endangered species. This species formerly occurred in the Los Angeles, San Gabriel, and Santa Ana rivers but is now restricted to San Francisquito Canyon, three areas in the Santa Clara River, and San Antonio Creek on Vandenberg Air Force Base. The Stickleback requires clean, free-flowing perennial streams and ponds surrounded by natural vegetation. The adjacent floodplain of the Santa Clara River is included in this SEA. The natural vegetation along the intermittent portion of the stream slows heavy runoff during rainy seasons and thus decreases destruction and siltation of Stickleback habitats downstream.

### ***10.1.2 San Francisquito Canyon SEA***

San Francisquito Canyon SEA contains an intermittent stream that drains the hillsides north of the planning area in the Los 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.



### **10.1.3 SEA Boundaries**

The SEA boundaries are generally defined as being the same as the boundary of the 100 year flood plain (See Exhibit 3).

### **10.1.4 Unarmored Threespine Stickleback**

Although discussion of sensitive and endangered species is extensively 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 Specific Plan area. A second zone was identified in the Santa Clara River more than 2.5 miles downstream from the Specific Plan area. Other studies report the occurrence of the fish in the Specific Plan river areas where open water is present.

## **10.2 AREA CONCEPT**

The Santa Clara River Conservation Area will be maintained in a natural state and none of the development proposed for Lago De Valencia, Bouquet South, Pony League, South River Village, or Valencia Industrial Center, 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 river areas. This upland preserve zone is beyond the river bank and is an "upland" area with different natural vegetation than that existing in the riverbed riparian area. The natural vegetation will be resolved and the upland preserve zone will serve as a foraging area for wildlife living in the river bed area. In areas where the buffer is less than 150 feet wide and where development is occurring, the natural vegetation will be enhanced to improve its value for foraging. This upland preserve zone totals 83.6 acres of the 707.1 acre Specific Plan area.



Behind this upland preserve zone and adjacent to development areas, a transition area is to be provided. The purpose of the transition area is to provide a separation between dwelling units and the upland preserve zone to provide a barrier to assist in keeping household pets and people out of the upland preserve zone. The transition area will vary in width and can consist of trails, sidewalks, parking, or roadways. In areas where a total width of 50 feet and where trails, sidewalks, parking, or roadways cannot be provided, a fence or landscape barrier will be provided to prohibit easy access to the upland preserve zone.

Riparian trees such as Cottonwoods, Sycamores, and Alder trees will be used as accent trees. It should be noted, as per the biological studies, no exotic or invasive material will be planted. See Exhibit 10 for typical roadway landscape treatments.

The River Area as mentioned previously is designated by the General Plan as an important open space area for the entire Santa Clara Valley. The City has a desire to obtain ownership of the River Area, the upland preserve zone, plus 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 River Area, and an easement on the adjacent trails.

### **10.3 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 Santa Clara River and San Francisquito Creek beds. Consequently, very little bank stabilization will occur on River and Creek banks themselves; it will only occur at the banks where: 1) McBean Parkway and Avenue Scott bridges cross the River and Creek, respectively; 2) where water quality/filtration areas are proposed near the River; and 3) adjacent to the City drainage facility presently under construction on the South River Village planning area. 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 (See Exhibit 9).