

INTRODUCTION



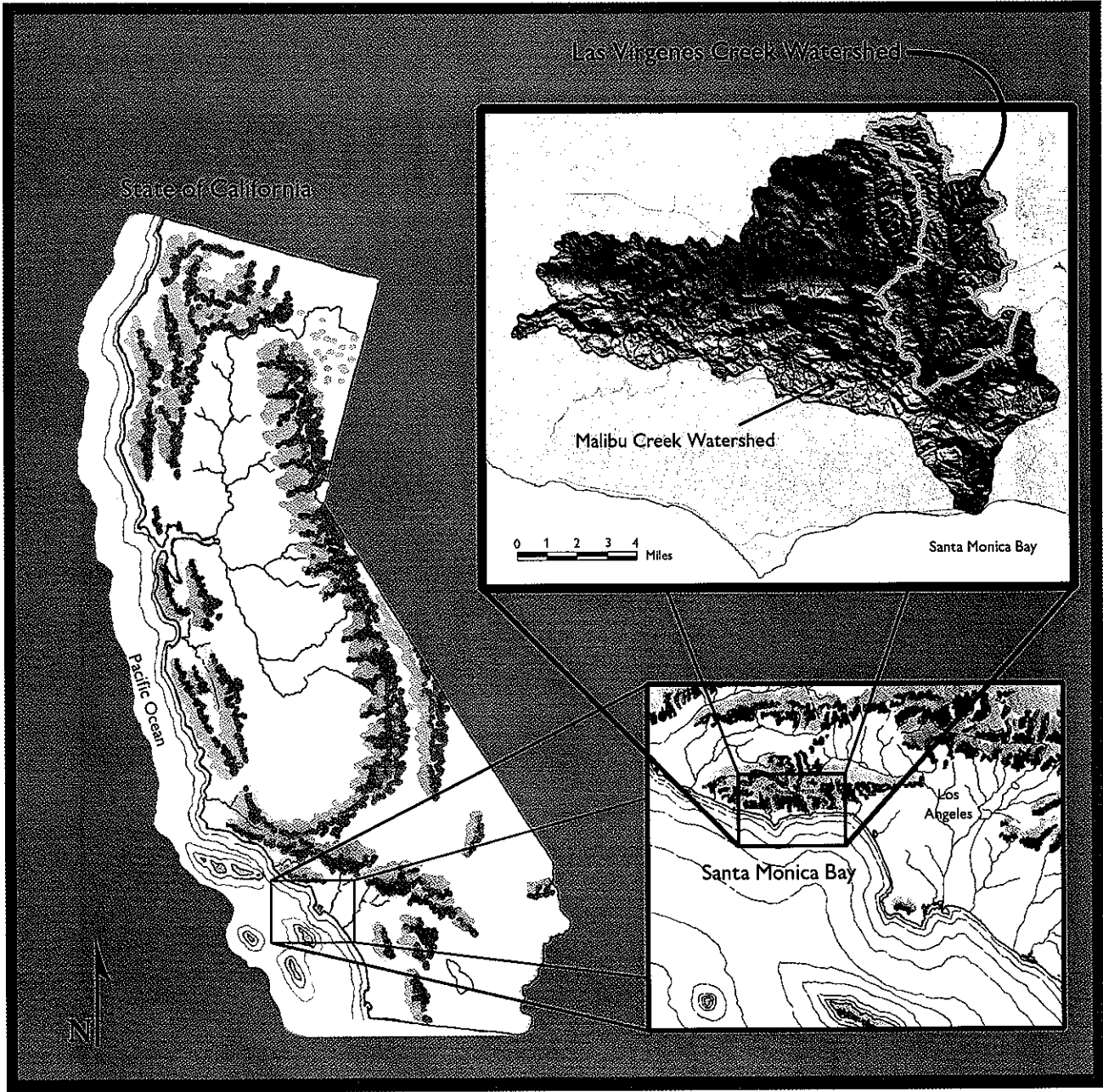


Figure 1-1. Site Context, Malibu Creek and Las Virgenes Creek Watersheds

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

Human development has often taken for granted the support elements that comprise our environment— sunlight, air, water, soils, vegetation. These basic components provide the building blocks of our food web; the food web is a complex interaction of organisms and natural process that, when healthy, produces biodiversity that can guard against catastrophic breakdown.

The purpose of this report is to provide a document with which to manage Las Virgenes Creek watershed with regard to biodiversity and human use, provide a tool on which to base grant requests for related projects, expand the existing educational base, and to provide a model from which to draw from in other similar geographic areas.

Protecting the natural resources of Las Virgenes Creek watershed will be a step towards maintaining a healthy support system for ourselves and our environment.

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREA

Las Virgenes Creek runs south through the Santa Monica Mountains, joining Malibu Creek which ultimately empties into the Pacific Ocean; as such, Las Virgenes watershed is a sub-shed of the Malibu Creek watershed and the issues of the two watersheds are intertwined (see Figure 1-1). Las Virgenes watershed is approximately 24 square miles, and Malibu watershed is approximately 105 square miles (Las Virgenes inclusive). Elevation within the watershed ranges from 500 to 2800 feet and annual rainfall averages 13.6 inches.

The watershed is located within an area where many agencies and private citizens share concerns for the environment. Especially, it is of prime concern for environmental planning functions



within organizations such as the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (National Park Service, United States Department of Interior), and Malibu State Park (California State Parks and Recreation Department). Two corridors for habitat movement have been identified within the watershed, and for this reason the watershed provides a key function for habitat linkage to the surrounding natural areas of the Malibu Mountains, Simi Hills, Santa Susanna Mountains, and beyond.

Las Virgenes Creek watershed lies within two counties— Ventura in the north, and Los Angeles in the south, approximately one-third to two-thirds, respectively. In addition, one city— a portion of The City of Calabasas, lies within the watershed, covering about one-quarter of the watershed area (see Figure 1-2).

The City of Calabasas is the major local political influence and is strategically in a high profile position regarding many highly contested planning issues. It incorporated in 1991 as a response by local citizens to the development practices of Los Angeles County, and legacy projects are still evident today as the industrial park corridor along US 101 continues to expand based on previously approved plans. The county refers to this as the Ventura Economic Corridor.

Before 1991, The City of Calabasas was an unincorporated town in Los Angeles County. As



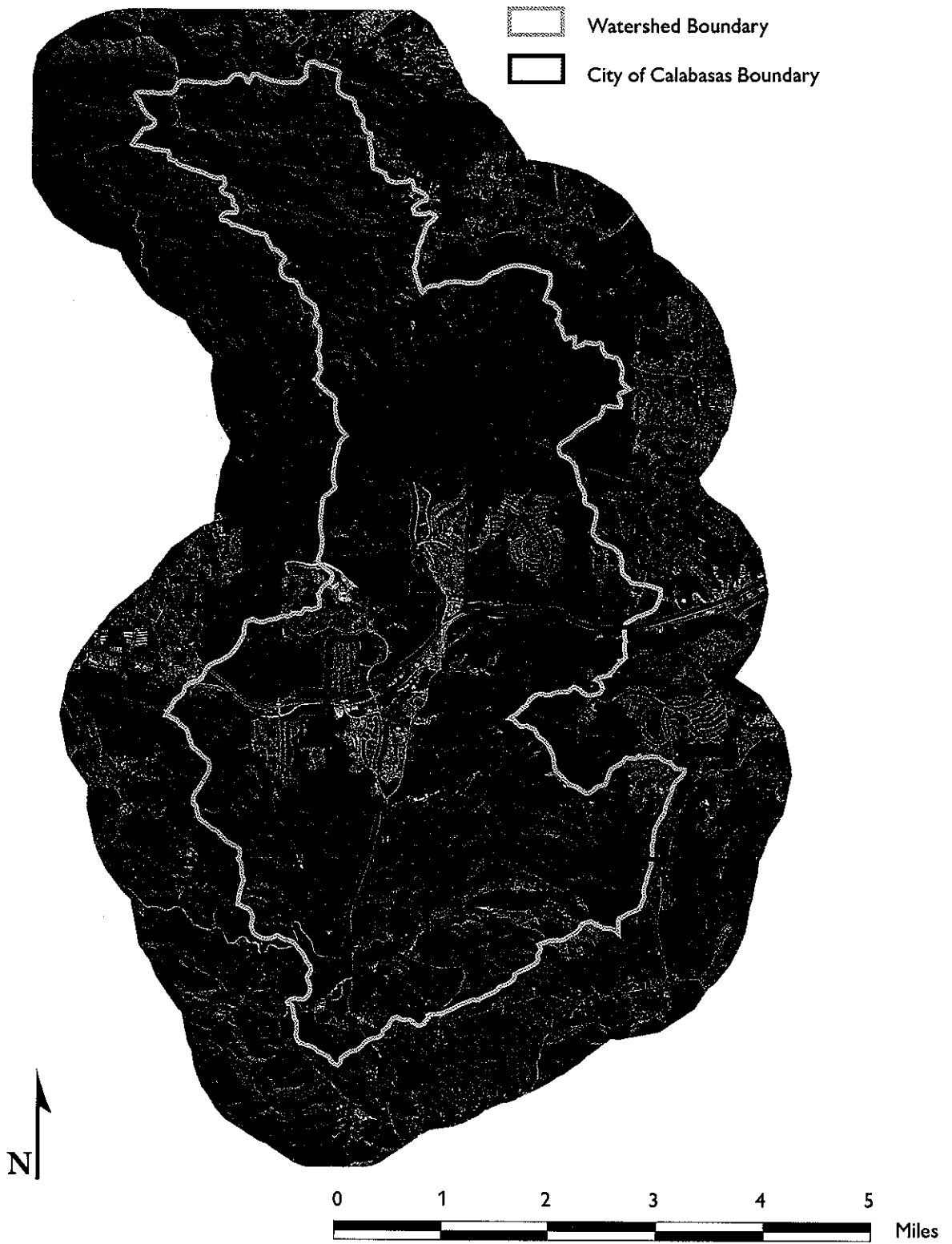


Figure 1-2. Aerial Photo, Las Virgenes Creek Watershed

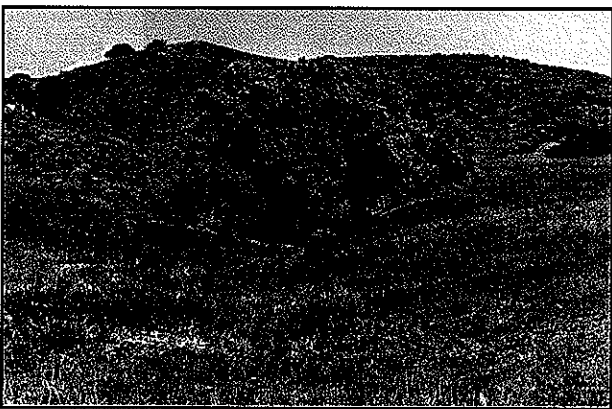
the first westerly post office outside the city of Los Angeles, just to the west of Woodland Hills (formerly Girard) in the San Fernando Valley, Calabasas cultivated an image of an outpost, or frontier town.

This “frontier” location of Calabasas also was an underlying reason that the city did not receive water supplied by the Metropolitan Water District (MWD, state and federally supplied) until the early 1970s. Before that, locals relied on local wells for water; however, the groundwater in the Calabasas area is notoriously poor in quality and quantity, and many people imported water from supply companies using tanker trucks. This expensive solution eventually led to pressure for an alternative; the result was a connection with the MWD in the early 1970s under the management of the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District (LVMWD).

Prior to the establishment of Los Angeles County, Calabasas was part of the Spanish land grant system started in the 1700s, and before that it was inhabited by native American tribes, predominantly Chumash, who flourished from the central coast southward.

PROJECT GOAL

The goal of this project is to shape a healthy watershed ecosystem for biodiversity, recreation, and education by using comprehensive management planning.



OBJECTIVES

- Protect Las Virgenes Creek by enhancing water quality, and managing stormwater and sediment discharge.
- Enhance genetic diversity, facilitate animal movement and access along the creek corridor and through regional habitat areas.
- Foster appreciation of Las Virgenes Creek as an amenity for the city (education, access, recreation, aesthetics).

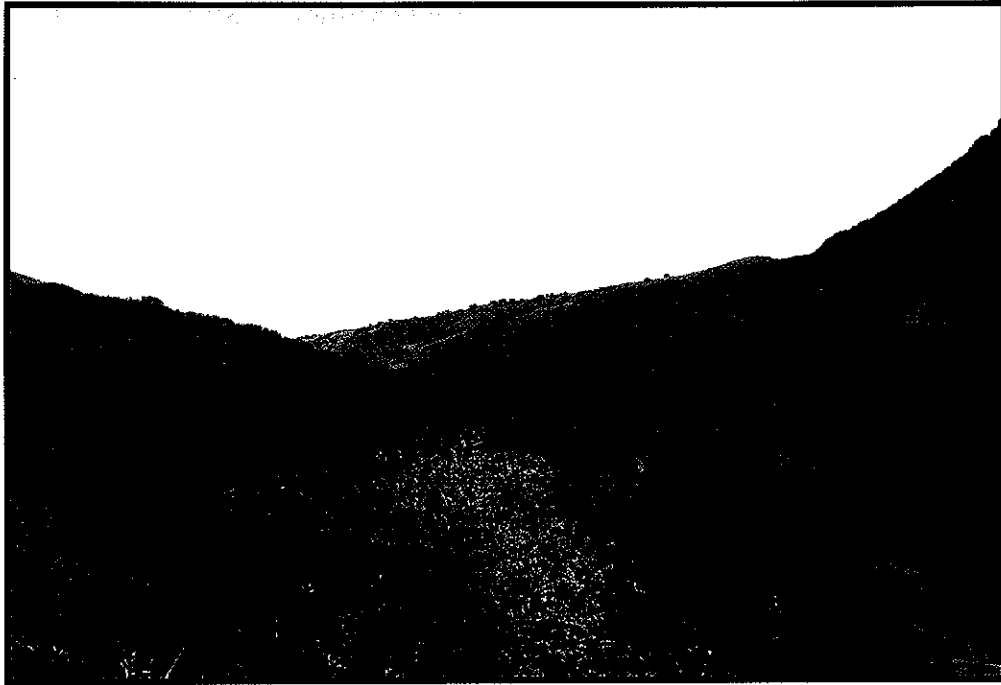
ISSUES

- Protection of rare and endangered species
- Habitat Diversity: potential of species and ecosystems to function in the watershed.
- Corridor Continuity: wildlife needs to move safely through the watershed and connect with other corridors or patches.
- Water Quality: the stream must support aquatic and terrestrial habitat.
- Recreation: access for walking/jogging/ biking/picnicking in the corridor.
- Education: creek use for education of young people and the general public.

PLAN COMPONENTS

- A **creek protection** component which is structural and functional in order to manage direct impacts to the creek.
- A **habitat linkage** component to encourage and enable wildlife movement across and through the creek, and to protect threatened and endangered species.
- A **riparian greenway** component to foster human care and enjoyment of the creek, without compromising the other objectives.





Pristine Upper Watershed of Las Virgenes Creek.



Native Bunch Grass (Upper Watershed).



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