



O'NEILL OAKS PRESERVE

M2: ENVIRONMENTAL MITIGATION PROGRAM

OCTA's Measure M2 Freeway Environmental Mitigation Program (EMP) provides comprehensive mitigation to offset the environmental impacts of the 13 Measure M2-funded freeway projects.

The EMP presents a comprehensive mitigation approach that provides not only replacement habitat, but also the opportunity to improve the overall functions and value of sensitive biological resources throughout Orange County.

Based on the evaluation of mitigation opportunities in the County, priority conservation areas were identified, including candidate parcels and properties that could be considered for wilderness preservation purposes. Properties were then selected for acquisition and restoration. These properties are protected to enhance wildlife connectivity, safeguard sensitive species and substantial parcels of valuable habitat.



Chaparral Yucca

ABOUT THE PRESERVE

The O'Neill Oaks Preserve is a 118-acre parcel located northwest of the City of Rancho Santa Margarita in Trabuco Canyon, and immediately north of O'Neill Regional Park and Trabuco Creek. Access is from Live Oak Canyon Road and Trabuco Canyon Road. The Preserve features rolling terrain with elevations ranging from 920 to 1,250 feet above mean sea level.

The Preserve has a variety of habitats including:

- Coastal Sage Scrub
- Chaparral
- Oak Woodland

O'Neill Oaks provides habitat for several important species such as:

- Coastal California Gnatcatcher
- Cactus Wren
- Intermediate Mariposa Lily
- Many-Stemmed Dudleya
- Chaparral Nolina
- Coast Horned Lizard
- Orange-Throated Whiptail
- Mountain Lion
- Bobcat

Several important wildlife movement corridors have been identified on O'Neill Oaks. One was specifically identified that runs along the western edge and extends adjacent to Live Oak Canyon Road which provides connectivity to the Cleveland National Forest. Mammals expected to use the corridors include mule deer, mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes and gray foxes.

The acquisition of this preserve contributes to the EMP's goal of joining together adjacent open space areas at the foothills, while at the same time limiting urban encroachment. The Foothill/Trabuco Specific Plan would have allowed the construction of 36 dwelling units; however, OCTA's acquisition of this property allows the area to be preserved as open space. This enhances the natural open space value of O'Neill Regional Park, and provides a larger open space buffer adjacent to Trabuco Creek, which is also an important wildlife corridor.

