



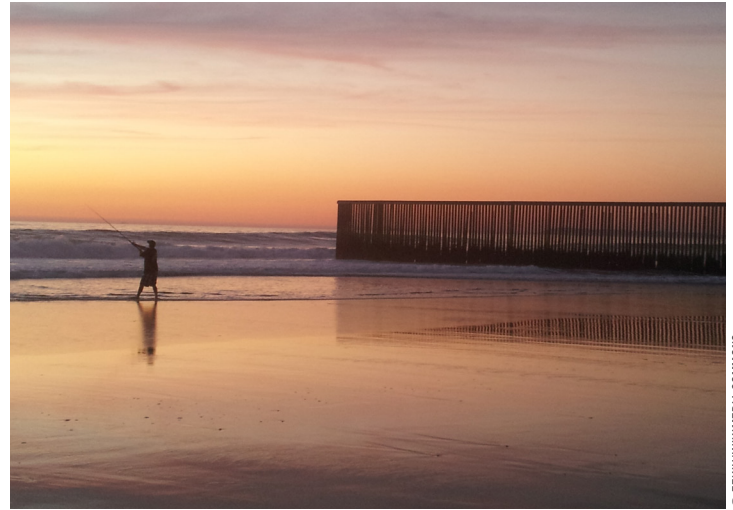
THE 2,000-MILE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER PASSES through several conservation hotspots, areas important to imperiled species and other wildlife in which the United States and Mexico have significant investment in conservation lands and collaborative projects. The densely populated coastal area of southern California and northern Baja California, Mexico, collectively called the Californias, is one of these borderlands hotspots.

The Californias sustain over 400 species of plants and animals classified as endangered, threatened or at risk, including the endangered California condor, Peninsular bighorn sheep and Quino checkerspot butterfly. The region is part of the larger California Floristic Province, identified by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as one of the world's most biologically important and imperiled regions. At least 75 percent of the original habitat in the province has already been lost. Moreover, 72 percent of the U.S.-Mexico border in the Californias is already blocked by pedestrian fencing. Adding even more barriers—an action made exempt from environmental review and other laws by the Real ID Act in 2005—would have devastating consequences:

- Further imperil rare, endangered and threatened species and their habitats from wall construction and operation.
- Make it impossible to maintain the habitat connectivity necessary for healthy cross-border populations of Peninsular big horn sheep and other species.
- Waste billions of taxpayer dollars that could help conserve wildlife and habitat.
- Hurt local economies dependent on ecotourism and outdoor recreation.
- Stymie bilateral efforts essential for successful borderlands conservation.

Conservation lands and collaborations on the line

Lands designated for conservation on the U.S. side of the region include the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve; Tijuana Slough and San Diego Bay national wildlife refuges; Otay Mountain, Carrizo



An angler works the surf beside a wall segment south of San Diego. Local communities are concerned about the effects of the wall on economy-boosting outdoor recreation and tourism.

“We should not waste funding on an unnecessary wall that would cost our region jobs and revenue, or damage our environment.”

—San Diego City Councilwoman Georgette Gomez

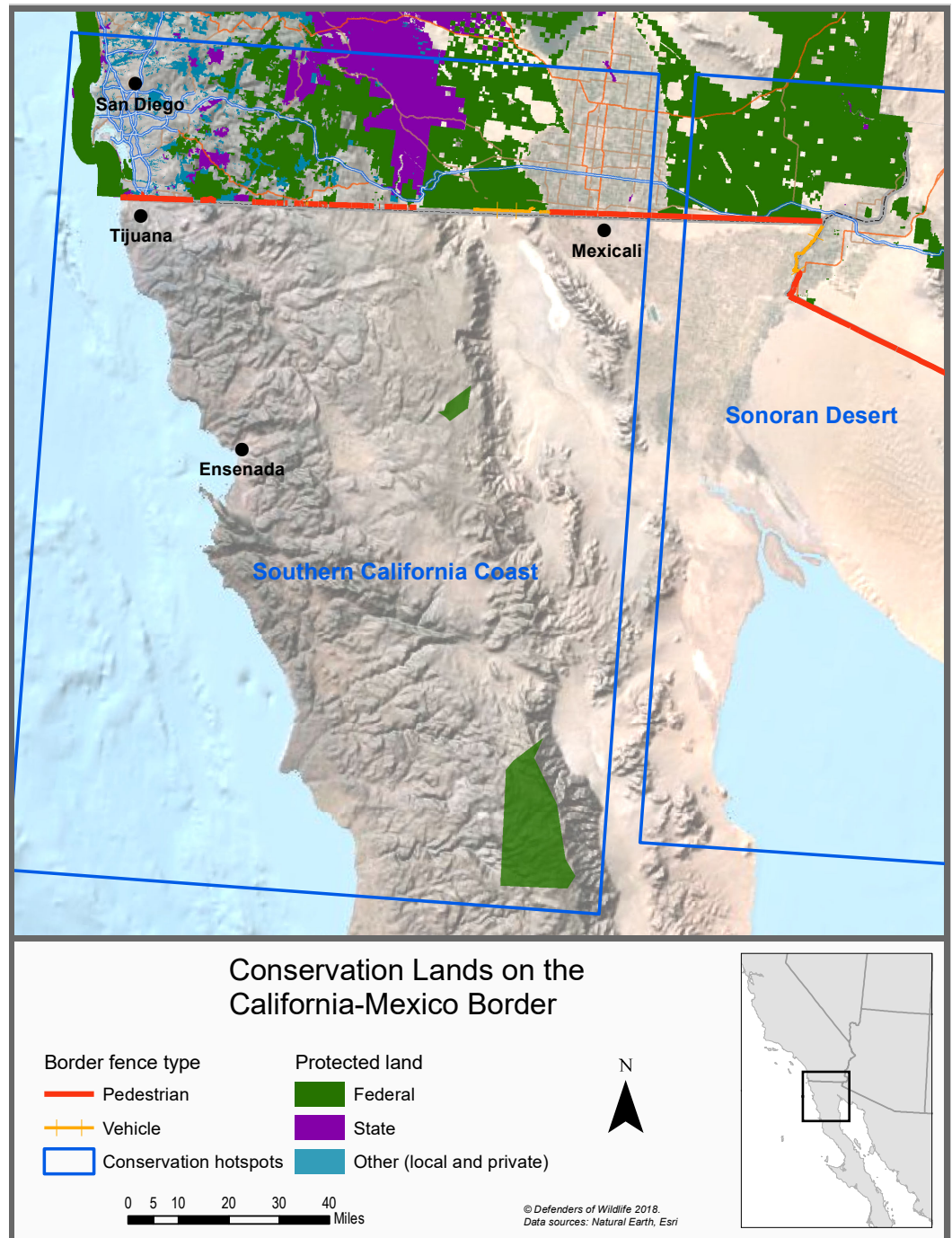
Gorge, Jacumba, Pine Creek and Hauser designated wilderness areas; Cuyamaca Rancho and Anza-Borrego Desert state parks; and Rancho Jamul and Sycuan Peak ecological reserves. These coastal and inland reserves total more than 1,000 square miles with diverse habitats ranging from coastal beaches to mountains and valleys, forests, freshwater streams and vernal pools.

South of the border in Mexico lies Parque Nacional Constitución de 1857 protecting 19-square-miles of coniferous forest and shrubland, including shallow freshwater lakes, ponds and meadows that provide habitat for endangered Peninsular bighorn sheep. Further south is 282-square-mile Sierra de San Pedro Martir National Park protecting chaparral and desert shrub in the lowlands up into high-elevation coniferous forests. The park is home to mule deer, Peninsular desert bighorn sheep, bald eagles, golden eagles and more than 30 species of bats.

The wall threatens the goodwill and spirit of cooperation between the United States and Mexico that foster conservation collaborations.

Examples of collaborative conservation

- The program pioneered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the San Diego Zoo to raise California condors for release in the wild expanded to Mexico in 2002 with releases in the Sierra San Pedro Martir in Baja California. Today nearly 300 condors fly free in the United States, 39 in Mexico.
- Las Californias Binational Conservation Initiative, an international alliance of organizations and government agencies focused on habitat conservation, is advocating to protect the only remaining wildlife corridor along the mountains of the Sierra Juárez. Their goal is to link Parque Constitución de 1857 in Baja California with state parks, national forest lands and wilderness areas in California's San Diego and Imperial counties.
- The South Coast Missing Linkages Project involves more than 20 U.S. and Mexican agencies and organizations, including U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, California State Parks, The Nature Conservancy, Conabio, Pronatura and the Universidad Autonoma de Baja California, in protecting key U.S. parcels from development and working with transportation agencies on wildlife crossing structures on the region's busiest highways.



The Trump administration's border wall would jeopardize wildlife, habitat and years of conservation progress and collaboration between the United States and Mexico. We cannot allow that to happen. There are far better uses for taxpayer dollars than walling off our southern border. Nothing less than our nation's natural heritage is at risk.



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