

MASON VALLEY

Location:

Anza-Borrego Desert
State Park, San Diego
County, CA

Acres:

842

Natural Resources:

Habitat for numerous
sensitive species,
including peninsular
bighorn sheep, least
Bell's vireo, and San
Diego horned lizard

Cultural Resources:

Extensive evidence of
Native American use
and historical trade
route through property

Incompatible Uses:

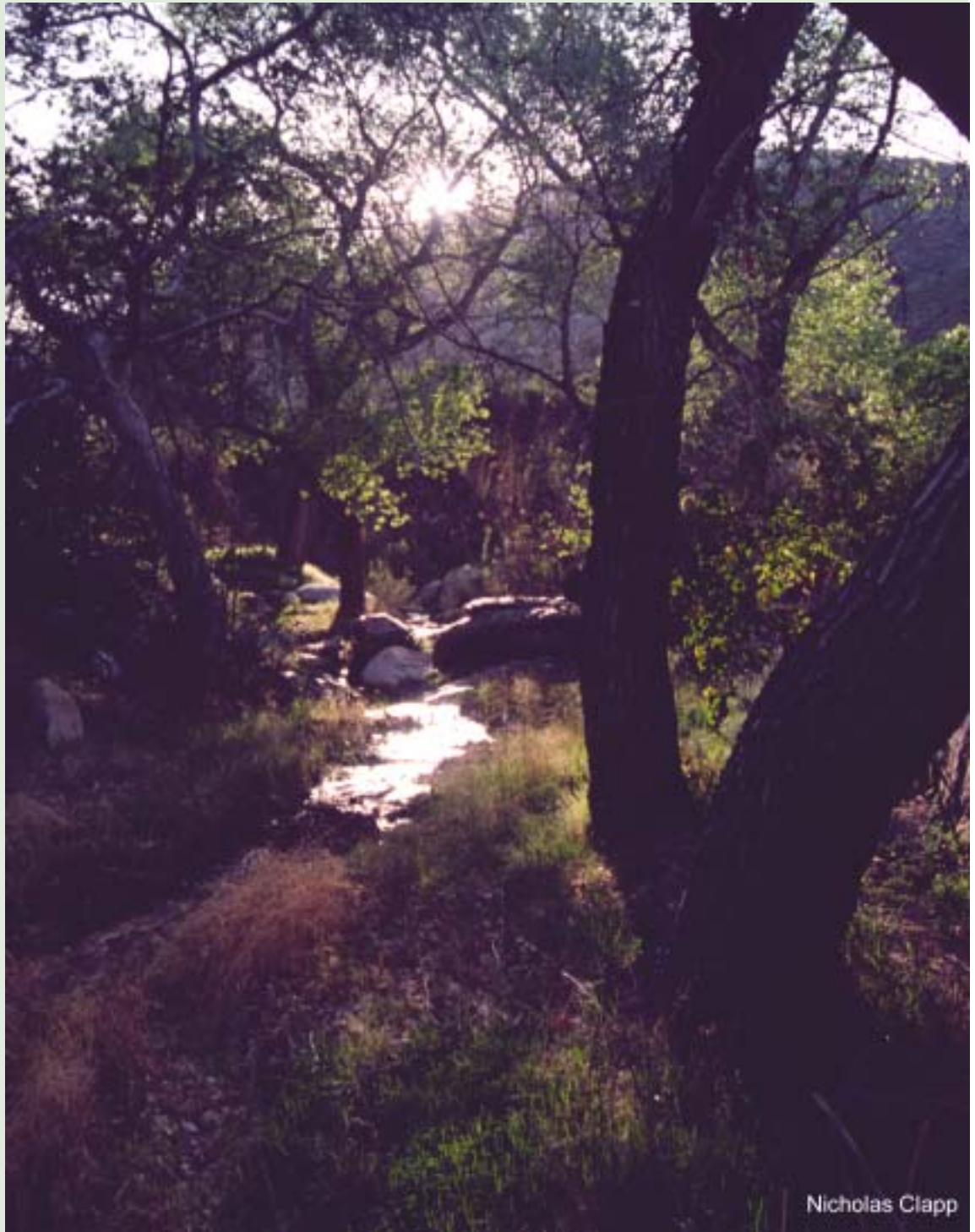
Cattle grazing and rural
homesites

Opportunity:

Currently optioned to
Anza Borrego
Foundation and
available for public
purchase

Price:

\$1.2 million



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Location

The property is located in the high desert of San Diego County approximately six to seven miles southeast of the historic town of Julian. Mason Valley is approximately five miles south of the junction of S-2 and Highway 78, or “Scissors Crossing”. Scissors Crossing is at the western entrance to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, California’s largest park. The property includes two non-contiguous parcels located in Oriflamme (680 acres) and Rodriguez Canyons (162 acres). The Oriflamme Canyon portion abuts lands managed by California State Parks on three sides while the Rodriguez Canyon parcel is completely surrounded by state parklands. To the south of the Oriflamme Canyon portion of the property are private ranchlands and public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management. ■



Natural Resources

Mason Valley provides an important link in the protection of biodiversity in San Diego County and southern California. Its natural resources are an extension of surrounding state parklands. This floristically rich area transitions from creosote at the valley floor to a Jeffrey pine forest and alpine meadow at the 6,000 foot high





elevation of the surrounding Laguna and Cuyamaca Mountains. Vegetation types include a 23.5-acre Desert Willow series along Vallecito Wash, providing a connective corridor between Oriflamme and Rodriguez Canyons and the Vallecito. Rare and unusual plants known to occur in Mason Valley include Payson's jewelflower, Cove's cassia, curly herrissantia and the impressive Mason Valley cholla, a hybrid cactus known to occur in the Mason Valley to Agua Calienta Hot Springs area.

In addition, there are 3.2 acres of the Fremont Cottonwood and willow vegetation series, an important bird habitat, along the perennial stream in Oriflamme Canyon. Management of this riparian corridor will improve habitat for such rare birds as the endangered least Bell's vireo, southwestern willow flycatcher and summer tanager. Protection of this wildlife corridor will enhance populations of wildlife that need large tracts of open space including the endangered Peninsular bighorn sheep, mountain lions, deer, badger and golden eagles. Some rare reptile species likely to occur in the area are the San Diego horned lizard and the rosy boa.

As a part of the transition zone between the Peninsular Ranges and the Colorado Desert, Mason Valley is a place to observe the intergradation of montane chaparral plants with high desert species. In late Spring masses of sky-blue wild hyacinth, the showy white and gold prickly poppy, and brilliant red torches of Indian paintbrush color the hillsides and valleys. ■





Cultural Resources

The property is rich in history and has been used extensively by Native Americans, pioneers, immigrants and cattle ranchers. The property contains historical trade and immigrant routes including a section of the Southern Emigrant Route and the route of Pedro Fages' 1772 exploration expedition. Routes of mail carriers, traders and settlers follow Oriflamme Canyon westward to Cuyamaca and San Diego, connecting with the Southern Emigrant Route northward to Los Angeles through Box Canyon. In addition, twenty-three identified Native American archaeological sites are found on the property (see photo of metates).

Today the Mason Valley area and surrounding parkland is enjoyed by thousands of recreationists including hikers on the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, located approximately one half mile to the west of the Rodriguez Canyon portion of the property. ■



Incompatible Uses

Cattle grazing and the potential for rural homesites are incompatible uses with surrounding parkland and make this property a key acquisition to improve the connective corridor between Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and Cuyamaca Rancho State Park. ■

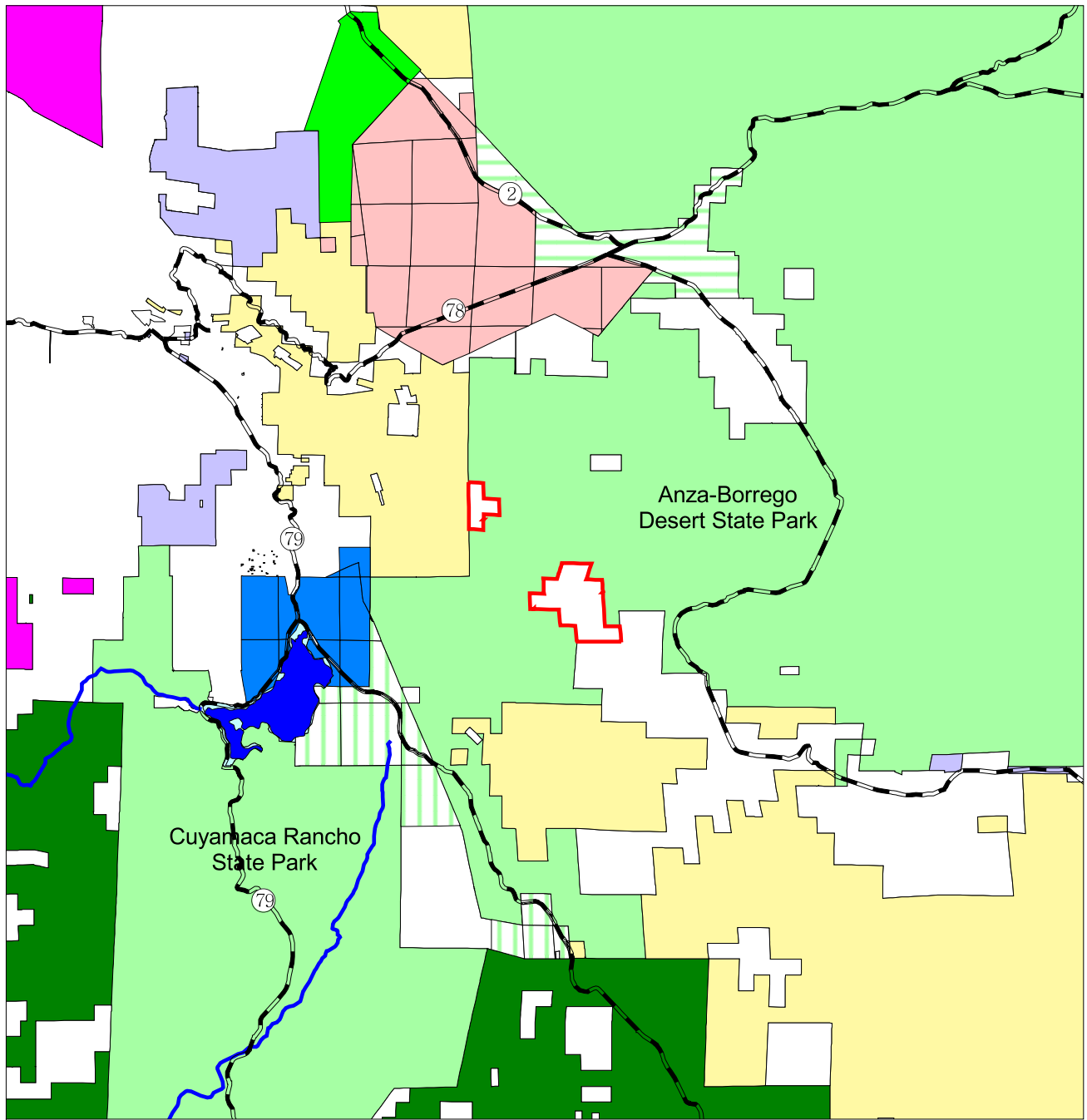
Opportunity

The Anza-Borrego Foundation (ABF), a non-profit public benefit corporation that acquires land for Anza-Borrego Desert State Park through donation or purchase from willing sellers, has secured an option to purchase the Mason Valley property until late 2002. ABF, with assistance from Conservation Land Group, is currently seeking public funds and private donations to ensure that the Mason Valley property is acquired and transferred to the State of California during the option term. The project is a memorial to the late Frank Wheat. Wheat, an ABF Trustee at the time of his death in July 2000, wrote *California Desert Miracle* detailing the work of leaders in the passage of the California Desert Protection Act. The Mason Valley property was the number one priority on his personal list of desert acquisitions. Acquisition of this property by the State will help round out other recent acquisitions in the area and protect existing wildlife corridors. ■

Price

\$1.2 million. An independent appraisal has been approved by the State of California. ■



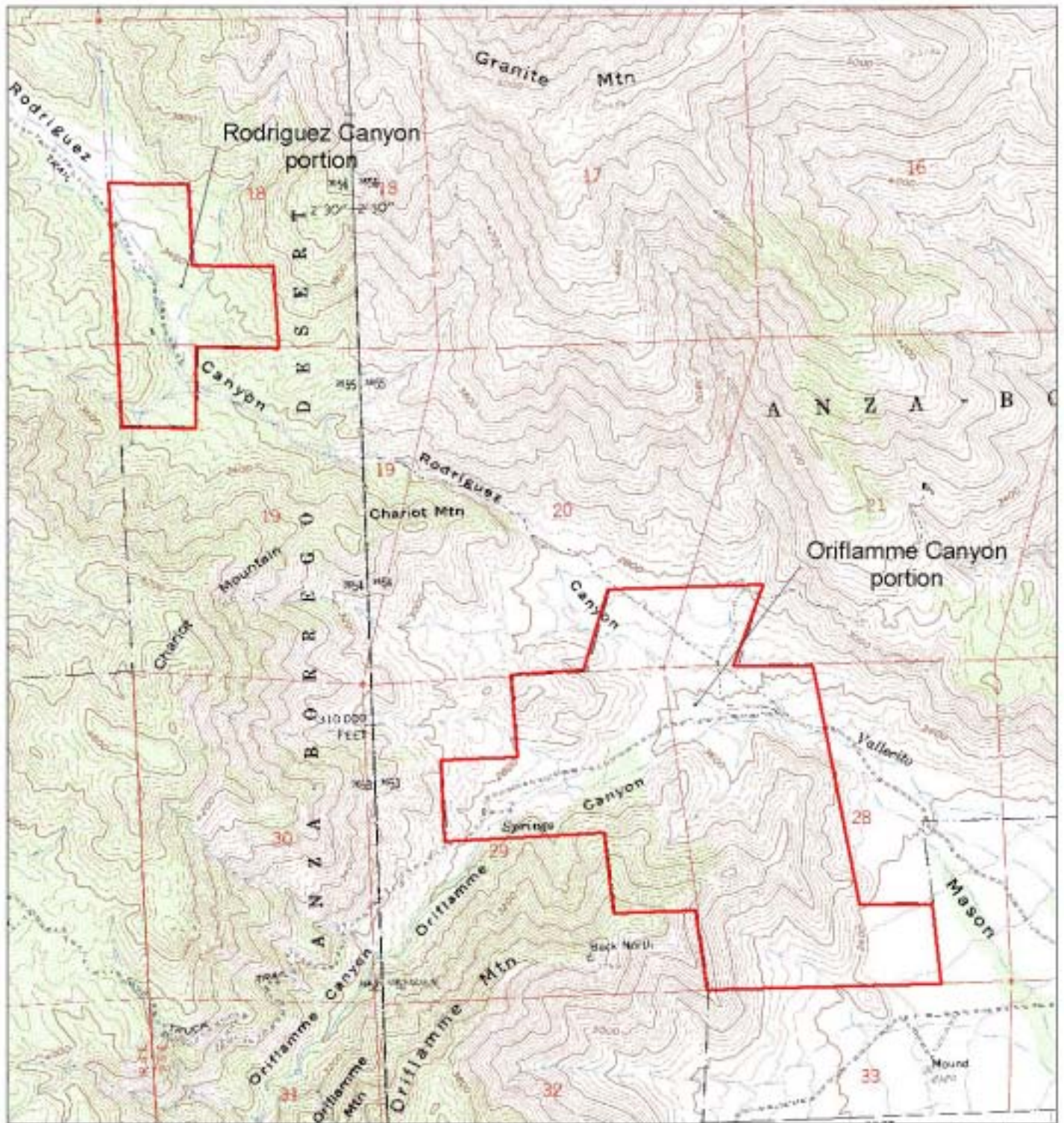


Mason Valley San Diego County Regional Ownership Map



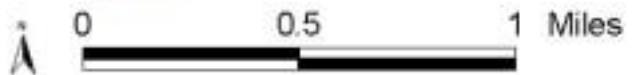
- Major Roads
- Rivers and Streams
- Cuyamaca Reservoir
- Mason Valley Parcels
- Rancho San Felipe
- Cuyamaca Ranch
- Completed CA DPR Acquisition (Lucky 5 Ranch)
- Completed CA DPR Acquisition (Sentenac)
- CA Dept. Fish and Game
- San Diego County
- Helix Water District
- CA Dept. of Parks and Recreation
- Indian Reservation
- Cleveland National Forest
- Bureau of Land Management
- Private Ownership

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**Mason Valley
San Diego County
Parcel/Topographical Map**

 Mason Valley Parcels



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