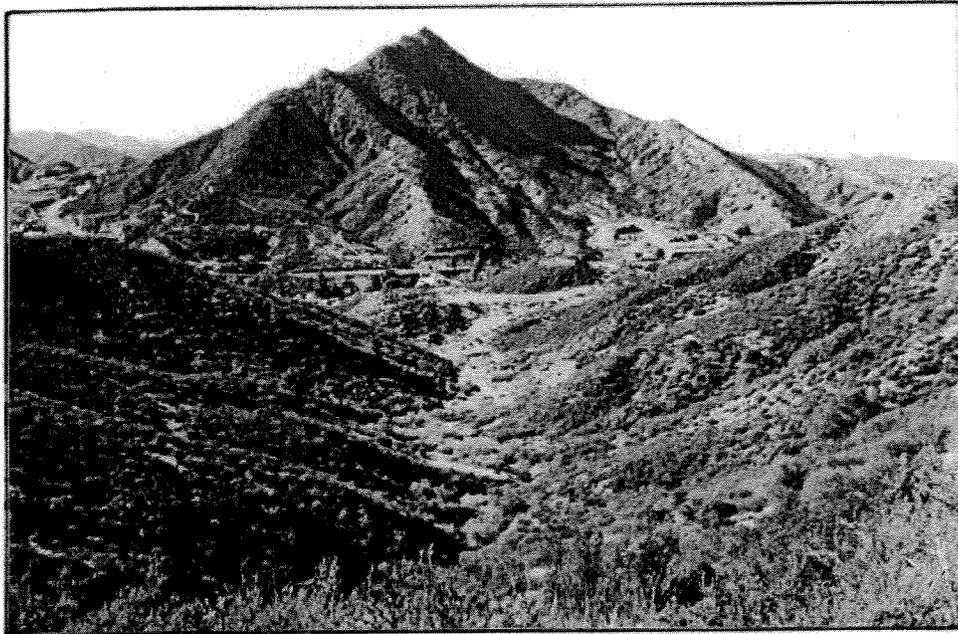


# THE SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS NORTH AREA PLAN



County of Los Angeles  
Department of Regional Planning  
James E. Hartl, AICP  
Director of Planning

**Adopted: October 24, 2000**  
by the Los Angeles County  
Board of Supervisors



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General Plan Amendment  
No. SP 97-181

Actions:

Adopt Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan  
Repeal Santa Monica Mountains Interim Area Plan  
Amend Los Angeles County Highway Plan  
Amend Los Angeles County Bikeway Plan



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# I. INTRODUCTION

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## A. Purpose of the North Area Plan

The *Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan* (North Area Plan is a synonym used in this document) is a component of the Los Angeles County General Plan. The North Area Plan replaces in its entirety the *Malibu/Santa Monica Mountains Interim Area Plan*, which previously served as the basic planning tool for the unincorporated area. The North Area Plan's primary role is to provide more focused policy for the regulation of development within the unincorporated area of the Santa Monica Mountains west of the City of Los Angeles and north of the Coastal Zone boundary--the planning area--as part of the overall General Plan area of Los Angeles County. The North Area Plan refines the policies of the county-wide General Plan as it applies to this planning area.



This plan is an outgrowth of a unique cooperative planning effort for the Ventura Freeway corridor (see Map 1 ~ '*Ventura Freeway Corridor Planning Area*' at the end of this chapter). The County participated with the cities of Westlake Village, Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, the Las Virgenes Unified School District, the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District and the National Park Service in drafting a long-range plan for the region--a term used throughout this document to identify the entire unincorporated area and adjacent cities mentioned above. That effort produced the *Ventura Freeway Corridor Areawide Plan* ('Corridor Plan').

The Corridor Plan identified the concerns and issues that were shared by all of the plan participants and includes much pertinent background information on the region. The Corridor Plan provided valuable guidance and was the model for the goals and policies in this North Area Plan. The many references to the "region" throughout this North Area Plan--which has jurisdiction only over the unincorporated County--is testimony to the need to consider surrounding and off-site impacts in this environmentally sensitive area and to the value of cooperative multi-jurisdiction planning. Certainly such regional factors as traffic, trails, and views are appropriate subjects for consideration by the Regional Planning Commission--the first regional planning agency created in the United States, in 1922.

The North Area Plan serves to:

- Identify the community's environmental, social, and economic goals.
- Provide a forum for area residents to mold a vision for the future of the area and to resolve local land use and planning conflicts.
- State the County's policies on existing and future development needed to achieve community goals.
- Establish within local government the ability to respond to problems and opportunities concerning community development in a way consistent with local, regional and state goals and policies.

- Inform citizens about their community and allow for opportunities to participate in the planning and decision-making process of local government.
- Identify the need for and methods of improving the coordination of community development activities among all local units of government.
- Create a basis for subsequent planning efforts, such as the preparation of specific plans and special studies.

## **B. Setting**

The jurisdiction of the Santa Monica Mountains North planning area is the unincorporated portion of the Santa Monica Mountains west of the City of Los Angeles and north of the Coastal Zone boundary. (See Map 1) Surrounded by a unique and distinctive environment characterized by steep mountains, rolling hills, canyons, streams and oak woodlands is an equally distinctive group of communities. Content of the North Area Plan is influenced by the close proximity of the four cities within the planning area as well as the Coastal Zone to the south. This beautiful Southern California setting is described in a recent research effort:

*'Few trips through Southern California's urban landscape offer such dramatic change as the drive westward out of the San Fernando Valley along... the Ventura Freeway. Winding up the Calabasas Grade from Woodland Hills, the scenery shifts abruptly.... Traffic begins to thin out. Densely packed urban development is replaced by large hilltop residences and small residential and commercial clusters... give way to golden, rolling grass hills of oak savannah and lush green riparian areas which line canyon bottoms.*

*Further along the freeway corridor, the landscape changes again. The dramatic Santa Monica Mountains loom large in the background, especially... Ladyface Mountain south of Agoura Hills. As the freeway widens to accommodate the breadth of the Conejo Valley, the meticulously planned streets and neighborhoods of Westlake Village... become evident, creating a different vision of suburbia.<sup>1</sup>*

The above description of the views from the Ventura Freeway characterizes the types of visual pleasures which occur throughout the entire area and not just from the Freeway--due in large part to the extensive preserves of publicly owned park lands.

The portions of the corridor planning area within unincorporated Los Angeles County are the focus of this planning report. The unincorporated area within the corridor encompasses 32.2 square miles and has an estimated 1995 population of 4,940.

## **C. Organization of the North Area Plan**

The North Area Plan consists of six components, described as follows:

### **Guiding Principles and General Goals**

This chapter establishes the basic vision statement of the North Area Plan, and sets forth principles and goals intended to guide and shape the content and direction of the policy elements that follow in the North Area Plan.

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<sup>1</sup>UCLA Extension Public Policy Program, *The 101 Corridor: Land-Use Planning and Intergovernmental Relations (Draft)*, Los Angeles, November 1993.

## **Intergovernmental Land Use Coordination**

This chapter discusses the roles, responsibilities and commitments of Los Angeles County with respect to coordination of land use planning with the four cities within the Ventura Freeway corridor and other public agencies providing services within the area.

## **Elements of the North Area Plan**

The following five elements provide the basic policy framework for the North Area Plan and are intended for use by the public and governmental decision makers for the regulation of uses and development within the jurisdiction of the North Area Plan:

- Conservation and Open Space Element,
- Safety and Noise Element,
- Land Use and Housing Element,
- Circulation Element, and
- Public Facilities Element.

## **Implementation**

This chapter identifies the major new implementation actions to be undertaken by Los Angeles County in support of implementation of the North Area Plan. Existing County programs are typically not included here.

## **Glossary**

Key terms used in the North Area Plan are defined, and such definitions are intended to be used in interpretation of goals and policies of the plan.

## **Appendices**

The Appendices contain important background information for use in administration of the North Area Plan. Such material is not an official part of the North Area Plan and may be modified, updated or deleted as deemed appropriate by the Director of Planning.

## **D. How to Use the North Area Plan**

This Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan is a component of the Los Angeles County General Plan. All of its goals, policies, standards, and implementing actions must be consistent with the county-wide chapters and elements of the General Plan. Users should be guided by the following:

- Should any areas of conflicting interpretation arise, unless specifically noted, the provisions of the county-wide chapters and elements shall prevail.
- No policy, whether in written or diagram form, shall be given greater weight than any other policy in evaluating the policy intent of this North Area Plan.
- The Land Use Policy Map is never to be interpreted by itself, but must be interpreted in light of applicable written policies.
- The interpretation of policy should be governed by the 'Guiding Principles' of the North Area Plan.
- Density Transfer: Following the provisions of the Countywide Plan, "a transfer of density within a project is allowed, regardless of the urban/non-urban boundary, where supported by geologic and/or topographic data and the change results in a superior design....etc," subject to consistency findings with policies of the North Area Plan. The North Area Plan does not, however, support the creation of urban densities within rural areas.

- Staff Consultation: While the North Area Plan is meant to be a guide for the public in determining allowable uses of private property, the public is encouraged to consult with members of the County's planning staff prior to investing in the preparation of development plans that might later prove to be inconsistent with the North Area Plan.
- Grandfather Clause: All legally established uses in existence at the time of formal adoption of this North Area Plan are deemed to be consistent with this plan. Existing legal lots are not affected, and may be developed--following current development requirements--regardless of lot size. Applications requesting expansion of such uses, however, which are not consistent with the goals and policies of the North Area Plan--once it is adopted--will be required to file for an amendment to the Plan to proceed. **Land division applications must meet the following general plan consistency requirements:**

**- Applications pending, and deemed complete, as of June 23, 1999: Must be found consistent with the Malibu/Santa Monica Mountains Interim Area Plan.**

**- Applications pending, but not deemed complete, as of June 23, 1999 as well as all applications filed on or after June 23, 1999: Must be found consistent with the plan in effect at the time of final County approval of tentative map.**

**Other discretionary applications (such as zone changes, use permits, oak tree permits) must be found consistent with the plan in effect at the time of final County approval.**

In addition to the direction provided by this North Area Plan, new development and land use activities are regulated by many agencies other than the Department of Regional Planning. Obtaining approval for certain types of actions may require proof of the availability of public services--including water/sewer, power, police, fire and schools--as well as fair-share provisions for public parks, libraries, streets, etc.

Along with the standard building requirements and zoning regulations that apply countywide, development in mountainous areas often require special considerations and permits from local, state and federal agencies. Such controls are often intended to ensure compatibility with off-site resources--such as downstream water quality and coastal areas--in addition to regulating the on-site impacts. For example, on-site sewage disposal systems--necessary in the more remote areas not served by public sewers--may require adherence to the requirements of several agencies due to grading, soil conditions, watertable, etc.; these agencies include the County departments of Public Works and Health Services, as well as the California Regional Water Quality Control Board. Also, any alteration of a streambed will likely require permits from the California Department of Fish and Game, and possibly from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers--in addition to compliance with County site design regulations.

## **E. Area Development**

The greatest asset of the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan and surrounding region – its beauty – has also, at times, been the source of its greatest problems. Despite its tranquil setting, the planning area is highly accessible to all of the amenities available within the Los Angeles metropolitan area. Located adjacent to the San Fernando Valley, and boasting an excellent school system, the area is a highly desirable place for families to escape from the congestion and hectic pace of the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

Thus, with the expansion of Ventura Freeway to a multi-lane freeway, a surge of development occurred in the 1970s that continued through the 1980s. During the last decade, the area

experienced a growth rate four times that of Los Angeles County as a whole. Residential development tended toward expensive, single family homes, although a period of intense apartment building occurred.

Today, the unincorporated Santa Monica Mountains North Area and adjacent cities comprise a series of individual rural, suburban and urban communities, each retaining their own unique identities. According to a 1998 report by the California Department of Finance, the population of the four corridor cities is estimated at about 51,400 persons. The most recent estimate for the unincorporated area (1995) recorded a population of about 4,900 persons.

## **F. Previous Planning Efforts**

The Santa Monica Mountains benefitted from a number of planning efforts during the past 22 years. These efforts, described below, include comprehensive planning efforts, focused park and resource management plans, municipal service master plans, and general plans prepared by individual cities and the County.

### **Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area Comprehensive Plan**

Following adoption of Proposition 20, the coastal initiative imposing state land use control over coastal areas, politicians such as then-Assemblyman Howard Berman sought to replicate the coastal model in the Santa Monica Mountains to protect vital natural resources. As a result, the state formed the Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Planning Commission, and gave that body the power to plan for the future of the mountains, but not the regulatory authority to ensure that its plans would be implemented.

In 1978 the Commission produced the *Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Plan* with the active involvement of the local governments then existing within the portion of Los Angeles County west of the City of Los Angeles. The plan proposed a regulatory approach toward preserving open space lands, and emphasized low density, large lot rural residential development in the mountains. Many of the components of this plan were later incorporated into Los Angeles County's Interim Area Plan for the Santa Monica Mountains, as well as into the General Plans of the region's cities. Ultimately, with the establishment of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, the Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Planning Commission was dissolved. The Comprehensive Planning Commission was replaced by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, a state agency whose mission it is to acquire lands within the Santa Monica Mountains for open space and environmental preservation purposes.

### **Malibu/Santa Monica Mountains Interim Area Plan**

Los Angeles County adopted the *Malibu/Santa Monica Mountains Interim Area Plan* in 1981 as the first step in what was envisioned to be an ongoing comprehensive planning process for this vast coastal and mountainous area. The plan recognized both the opportunities and the problems facing the Santa Monica Mountains and the cities that now straddle the Ventura Freeway corridor.

At the time of adoption, the plan covered the entire twenty-seven mile long Malibu coast line, the whole of the central Santa Monica Mountains west of Los Angeles city, and the interior valleys through which the Ventura Freeway now passes. Within the planning area, only Hidden Hills was an incorporated city during the plan preparation stage. Westlake Village incorporated during 1981 and Agoura Hills cityhood followed in 1982. The Interim Area Plan derives its name from the fact that it was only intended to remain valid for one year with the expectations that a revised plan would follow. However, in 1982 the Board of Supervisors choose to extend the Interim Plan for an additional two years. By 1984 the planning department staff was engrossed in the preparation of the Malibu coastal plan, and the Board again extended the life of plan, this time indefinitely.

### **Malibu Land Use Plan**

To meet the rigorous legal requirements of the California Coastal Act (1976), a separate planning process was initiated to prepare a land use plan for the southern half of the Santa Monica Mountains that fall within the Coastal Zone. Certified in 1986 by the California Coastal Commission, the coastal plan bifurcated the mountains into two planning units, and left much of the Interim Area Plan obsolete.

### **Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area General Management Plan**

The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area ("NRA") was established by Congress in 1978 to 'manage the recreation area in a manner which will preserve and enhance its scenic, natural, and historical setting and its public health value as an air-shed for the Southern California metropolitan area, while providing for the recreational and educational needs of the visiting public.' [P.L. 95-625, 92 Stat. 3467] The law creating the NRA authorized formulation of a Comprehensive Plan.

A *General Management Plan* was completed by the National Park Service in 1982. The plan 'embodies a commitment to... (its) neighbors, both landowners and agencies, to work together to create a system of land use, recreational opportunities, and resources conservation.' The other key plan that guides actions within the NRA is the *Land Protection Plan* (1984). This plan identifies the lands needed to protect significant natural, cultural, and scenic resources, and establishes priorities for protection. The *Land Protection Plan* presents a broad range of methods for protecting resource values in the Santa Monica Mountains, ranging from direct purchase to cooperative programs with landowners and local agencies for the management of private ownerships.

### **Service Agency Master Planning**

To cope with the area's rapid growth, both the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District and the Las Virgenes Unified School District undertook master planning efforts in the early 1980s. Using the Malibu/Santa Monica Mountains Interim Area Plan as the basis for growth projections, both of the districts' Master Plans were intended to define long-term capital improvements needs.

Due to subsequent amendments to the Interim Area Plan granting more growth, both districts encountered difficulties in ensuring that adequate facilities to support growth were in place in time to serve new development. In response, the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District adopted an ordinance requiring that projects developed at densities greater than allowed by the Interim Plan--as initially adopted--compensate the District for the costs of revising its Master Plan to ensure the availability of adequate facilities.

### **City General Plans**

The cities of Hidden Hills, Westlake Village, Agoura Hills and Calabasas each have adopted general plans. In 1993 Westlake Village and Agoura Hills adopted general plan updates; Hidden Hills adopted an update in 1995. Calabasas completed its initial general plan in 1995.

### **Ventura Freeway Corridor Areawide Plan**

In 1991 Calabasas incorporated, setting the stage for a new planning initiative to update the now aging Interim Area Plan. This time the emphasis was placed on a coordinated and joint planning process among all principal governmental agencies in the Ventura Freeway corridor planning area. In 1993, four cities, the County, two municipal service agencies, and the National Park Service formed a coalition to fund the preparation of comprehensive revision to the region's land use plans. The *Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan* fulfills the County's obligation to prepare a updated plan for the unincorporated portions of the corridor planning area.

## G. Region-wide Planning Coordination

The regional *Ventura Freeway Corridor Areawide Plan* was a collaborative effort by all of the jurisdictions and major public agencies with interests in the region, initiated in 1993 to address issues of growth, environmental management, and inter-jurisdictional coordination. Participants included Los Angeles County, the cities of Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, and Westlake Village, the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District, Las Virgenes Unified School District, and the National Park Service. The purpose of this plan was to:

- Establish a process for cross-jurisdictional information exchange;
- Produce an integrated land use and transportation policy plan that:
  - is acceptable to the program's participating agencies;
  - preserves open space;
  - resolves existing and potential conflicts between the agencies' planning programs;
  - defines what is meant by "rural," "urban," and "suburban" character;
  - establishes stable boundaries between urban and rural areas;
  - protects the character of existing urban and rural communities; and
  - respects the individual interests of each agency;
- Formulate a mutually agreeable environmental management plan that protects significant natural, cultural, and scenic resources, and recognizes that many features, such as significant biological habitats and linkages, do not correspond to jurisdictional boundaries, and that their protection requires a coordinated approach;
- Define a system to coordinate land development with the provision of infrastructure, particularly school and water and sewer facilities;
- Prepare a coordinated regional trails and open space system plan that provides for linkages throughout the northern portion of the Santa Monica Mountains; and
- Initiate an inter-jurisdictional process for reviewing development proposals and mitigating their inter-jurisdictional impacts.

This policy framework was accomplished by identifying regional issues, developing an areawide data base, and defining a consistent statement of policy for the region. This statement of regional policy will be used to help facilitate cross-jurisdictional planning matters, including the mitigation of project impacts. Municipal jurisdictions and agencies of all types that conduct operations within, or affecting, the region may consult the goals and policies of this collaborative Corridor Plan effort to provide direction for all types of activities within the Corridor Plan's purview--knowing that such goals and policies have the support of all Corridor Plan participating agencies.

These principles of the *Ventura Freeway Corridor Areawide Plan* have been incorporated by Los Angeles County into this Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan. In addition, the Corridor Plan has provided the cities with recommendations for amendments to their general plans as necessary to achieve consistency with policies of the region. It was also intended that the Corridor Plan be used by the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District, Las Virgenes Unified School District, and the National Park Service to update their Master Plans to reflect policy of the region and the most recent land use plans of the area's municipal governments.

The County of Los Angeles recognizes the importance of looking at the corridor planning area with a regional perspective, and owes a debt of gratitude to the cities and agencies that cooperated to produce the Corridor Plan. The Corridor Plan will be consulted for background information about

the region as well as for general guidance as to the issues, resources and activities which were identified by the communities in the region as being of special concern.

## **H. Environmental Impact Report**

A Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) was prepared to document the potential environmental impacts of the Ventura Freeway Corridor Areawide Plan. Since the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan is intended to be consistent with the goals and policies set forth in the Corridor Plan, the draft PEIR was circulated in compliance with CEQA requirements for environmental documentation of the possible impacts of the North Area Plan. A Final PEIR was prepared, augmenting the draft PEIR with modifications resulting from the public hearing process on this North Area Plan. It is intended that this final program document serve as the legally-required CEQA document for any amendments the participating cities may wish to make to their general plans to incorporate provisions of the Corridor Plan.

## **I. Relationship to the Santa Monica Mountains Local Coastal Program**

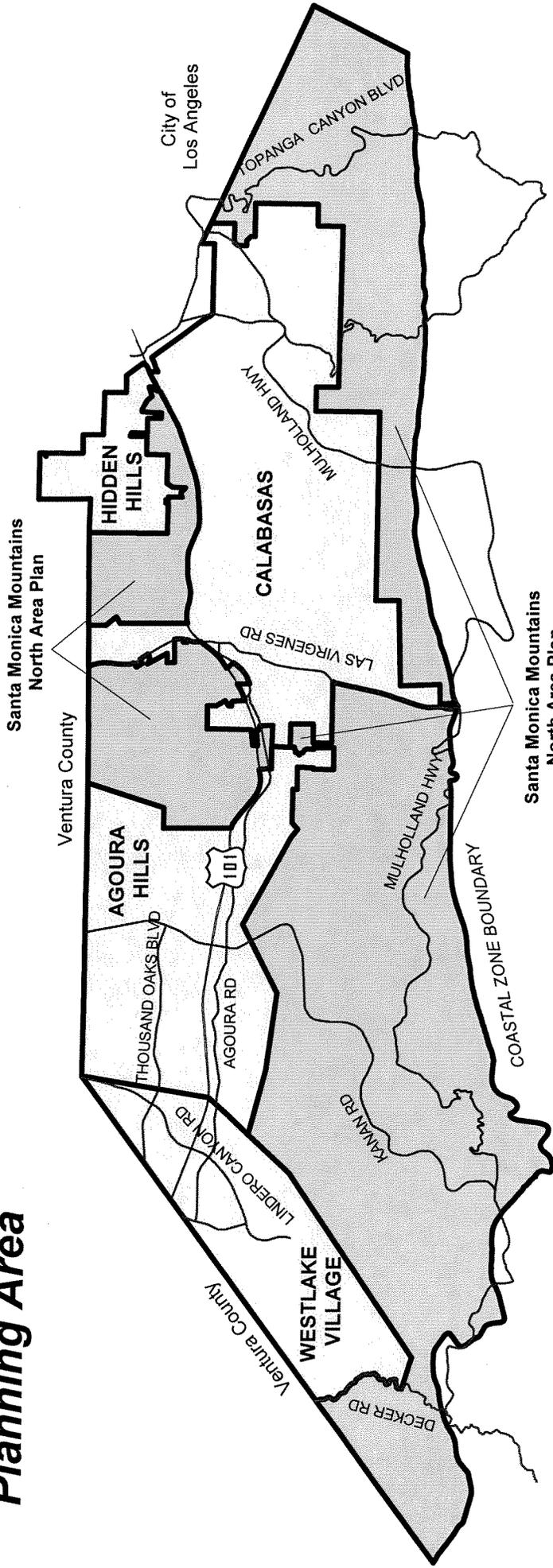
In compliance with the California Coastal Act of 1976, the unincorporated area of the Santa Monica Mountains is divided into two geographic components, one part within the coastal zone and the second part north of the zone. By necessity two separate plans must be prepared for this area. Notwithstanding this division of the unincorporated area by the coastal zone boundary, the County of Los Angeles is committed to the concept that planning for the Santa Monica Mountains should be governed by the following planning principle:

- 'integrated, comprehensive, regional in concern and in approach, consistent and fair in application of policies and regulations, and open to public participation from all parts of the region.'

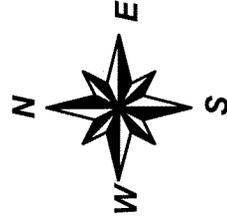
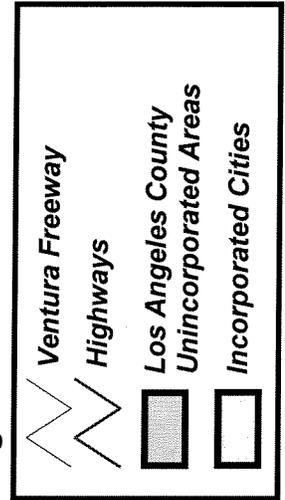
With this principle in mind, the County is undertaking a companion planning program to update and certify a revised plan for the coastal zone portion of the Santa Monica Mountains. Upon its completion, these two plans will serve as a comprehensive statement of regional policy for the regulation of uses within the Santa Monica Mountains. Implementation of the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan is designed to have fewer impacts on traffic, wildlife habitats and corridors, and downstream resources in the Coastal Zone than the plan that it is replacing. It is intended that the goals, policies, regulations, guidelines and implementing ordinances either contained within or associated with both of these plans shall be consistent with, parallel to and supportive of each other, thereby creating a continuity for planning within the greater Santa Monica Mountains/coastal Malibu region.



# Map 1 Ventura Freeway Corridor Planning Area



**Legend:**



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## II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND GENERAL GOALS

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### A. Guiding Principles

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The guiding principle of the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan is to:

**'let the land dictate the type and intensity of use.'**

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The overall goal of the North Area Plan is to maximize preservation of the area's natural environment, recognize the opportunities and constraints that the land imposes, accommodate new uses that minimize impacts on the natural environment, and ensure that new development is compatible with and enhances the quality of existing communities, and provide for a wide range of public and private recreational opportunities.

The area's diverse topography, biotic habitats, and rural/urban interface establish a character, sense of openness, and scenic experience that pervades the entire mountain area. These unique characteristics have intertwined to establish the public heritage of the area for this and future generations. The area's recreational opportunities and its rural and semi-rural lifestyle amenities are highly attractive to those living in nearby metropolitan areas. Natural conditions include an array of significant vegetative and habitat resources, key watersheds that drain into Santa Monica Bay, spectacular views, steep unstable slopes, and a high potential for brush fires. Water quality concerns are also prevalent as much of the area drains through natural canyons into the Santa Monica Bay. In addition, almost the entire North Area Plan area is part of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, a unit of the National Park System. The national recreation area includes both public and private lands. Successful management of this unique park unit depends on private/public collaboration with a common goal of natural resource preservation. Several federal park sites, Malibu Creek State Park, and open space lands managed by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy--over 5,000 acres in total just within the North Plan area--also represent a public heritage and trust requiring appropriate protection.

The scale of development that is possible within the North Area Plan area is constrained by not only natural resources--including the need for habitat linkages, but also by the cumulative limitations of infrastructure and public services in the area, and by public health issues related to the quality of water downstream and in Santa Monica Bay. No new freeways are planned to serve this area, and the existing roadway network, with identified improvements that can be accommodated in an environmentally sensitive manner, is the only means of vehicular circulation. There will be no areawide flood control system of concrete channels carrying off storm runoff and debris and protecting development. Finally, as noted by the Los Angeles County Wildland Fire Safety Panel, the Santa Monica Mountains are a fire-fed ecosystem in which fires are a natural occurrence, and homes within wildland areas face a potentially substantial risk due to the likelihood and severity of wind-driven wildland fires in the mountains, since it is impossible, once a wildfire has reached a critical size and intensity during Santa Ana wind conditions, to provide enough fire equipment to stop the fire without risk to structures.

Los Angeles County is committed to making consistent development-related decisions within a framework that recognizes the dictates of the land and the problems and risks that are inherent in

attempting to overcome those dictates--and that there are circumstances in which those dictates cannot be overcome.

## **B. General Goals**

To address issues with respect to environmental management, future development, and inter-jurisdictional coordination, the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan seeks to achieve the following general goals:

**Goal I**        ***Preservation of the unique cultural qualities and characteristics of rural and suburban areas including the pastoral setting that encompasses farmlands, ranch lands and similar mountain lifestyles.***

Goal I strives to maintain the continuation of existing settlement patterns that have developed within the region over the decades. This goal recognizes that the area's communities, especially the rural enclaves such as Malibu Lake and other, more remote areas, have cultures and characteristics which are important community assets. These rural communities provide a sense of refuge from the urban expanse of the Los Angeles metropolitan area. For purposes of the North Area Plan, 'rural' is defined as:

'A way of life characterized by living in a low density environment with resultant positive qualities, including, but not limited to: fewer people; a natural, peaceful, quiet setting; the allowance for a sense of solitude; unhindered views of stars in the night sky; and equestrian and agrarian uses that are sensitive to the land. Coupled with these positive qualities, rural areas can be further defined as those unencumbered by typical urban/suburban facilities, including: curbs, gutters, sidewalks, street lighting, formal, manicured landscaping, traffic signals, and commercial facilities dependant on large consumer volumes such as shopping centers.'

The best approach to development in the North Area Plan's jurisdiction, where feasible, is to embrace the area's rural and semi-rural character.

**Goal II**        ***Preservation and enhancement of the natural environments and scenic beauty of the area.***

Goal II provides a basis for the indispensable protection of those natural attributes, such as the sensitive floral and faunal biological habitats and scenic open space areas, that give the area its character. Contributing to these visual assets is surface and underground water quality, which is affected by alterations to watersheds. It has become accepted in recent years that the natural environment has an intrinsic value, and that the general habitat, riparian areas, ecological areas and scenic vistas are important components of the regional environment. It is required therefore, that environmental considerations be an essential component of all planning efforts. This area has a rich variety of natural environments that are sensitive to alteration from development. Intertwined with the natural environments, are the scenic vistas of the area. By protecting natural environments from insensitive development and accommodating habitat linkages, watershed preservation and scenic viewsheds, the scenic beauty of the area will also be preserved for future generations. Hence the protection of the natural environments and the scenic beauty is to be a central feature of the North Area Plan.

**Goal III      *Preservation of the area's natural terrain, with minimal alterations to existing undisturbed areas.***

Goal III provides the basis for preserving undisturbed terrain in its natural state. There are many reasons for preserving these lands in their natural state. Much of the planning area consists of rugged mountainous lands. For reasons of public safety, public health, protection of water quality, provision of public services, protection of sensitive environmental features, and protection of public investments in adjacent open space lands, these areas should be maintained as natural. Wherever any measures involving these areas are needed for public safety--such as fire fighting access, evacuation routes, vegetation clearance and fire-safe staging areas--the actions should be coordinated among all affected agencies. Debris from falling rocks, landslides, mud slides, and other hazards from the many unstable slopes are just some of the hazards of developing in these areas. The supply of public services (water, sewer, electricity, fire fighters, police, etc.) can be cost prohibitive in this region.

Unlike urbanized areas where the costs of infrastructure and services can be shared by a higher density population, these same levels of service in rural and suburban areas become more expensive per household because costs must be distributed among fewer residents. Police and fire fighters many times have difficulty negotiating the steep, winding roads inherent to the mountainous areas, especially during periods of heavy rain and/or wild fires. In addition, the grading necessary for development typically eliminates existing vegetation and adds impermeable surfaces, causing runoff and associated soil erosion to increase drastically during periods of high rainfall or wind, resulting not only in local impacts but also in repercussions on the public health and water quality of the beaches in the Santa Monica Bay. Given these facts, Goal III looks to minimize alterations to the natural terrain, not only to preserve natural environmental features, but also to protect residents' health and safety within the developed lands. This includes consciously choosing to protect the natural terrain in its natural state over allowing development projects to proceed simply because impacts can be mitigated.

**Goal IV      *Protection and expansion of the wide range of public and private outdoor recreational opportunities serving residents of, and visitors to, the area.***

Goal IV recognizes the role of the area as a major recreational and open space resource for the regional population owing to its strikingly scenic natural environment and system of linked public lands. The future focus for these recreational areas will be on an interconnected system of parks, regional trails, and use of existing facilities. Future public open space preservation programs will focus on the protection of natural resources, and provide passive and other recreational opportunities to the region consistent with the need for such environmental protection. In the past, the area's recreational potential has been recognized through substantial investments of public recreation funds (over \$200 million to-date) in federal, state, and county parks, and the establishment of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and agencies such as the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority. However, not all recreational opportunities and uses are limited to formal parks; other existing open lands provide substantial passive recreation to the County's residents as well. This includes significant investments by private land trusts holding land for future transfer to public agencies, as well as entrepreneurial and family investments in private recreational facilities.

**Goal V      *An orderly and cohesive pattern of development which maximizes open space; limits suburban sprawl; protects recreational uses, watersheds and downstream water quality and allows for the efficient delivery of public services, including public safety and health within areas committed to suburban and rural uses.***

Goal V furnishes the basis for land use planning within this unique scenic, recreational and ecological area. Development should be orderly, and within defined areas so as to preserve the natural environment, maintain scenic vistas, and provide recreational opportunities as a welcome transition from metropolitan Los Angeles to the east, and also from the suburban forms of development within the area itself. With development properly located, the public services will be intrinsically linked with area land uses, and, as a result, the delivery of these services will occur more efficiently.

**Goal VI**      ***A natural environment that protects Malibu Creek and other key watersheds, and prevents the negative impacts of urban and stormwater runoff in streams and to Santa Monica Bay and beaches.***

Goal VI not only reflects the emphasis of the North Area Plan to respect and protect the special environmental features of the region but also acknowledges the potential impacts of activities within the planning area on off-site resources. Drainage from the Santa Monica Mountains' watersheds impact water quality and water flows into the Los Angeles River and into Santa Monica Bay and the Pacific Ocean. One of Southern California's greatest assets--both environmentally and economically--is its miles of public beaches. The economic benefit to the entire State generated by beach usage is, in itself, a justification for protection and management of the area's significant drainages--particularly Malibu Creek.

**Goal VII**      ***A well integrated transportation system--including public transit modes--which supports the planning area's present and projected land uses and minimizes adverse impacts on the natural environment.***

Goal VII requires that the North Area Plan to come to grips with some significant contradictions facing the planning effort. The assets of the area cannot be used without providing for the safe movement of people, goods and services. However, increased accessibility and the subsequent impacts from roads, development, and recreational activity can, unless great care is exercised, degrade the very attributes that make the area attractive to live in and visit. Planning for transit alternatives, coordinated among the various agencies responsible for both public and private transportation in and adjacent to the region, is essential to providing convenient access to and through the area.

**Goal VIII**      ***Harmony between the differing missions of the individual agencies involved in the planning area.***

Goal VIII recognizes that planning in the study area will require an interagency joint planning and consensus-building process, including negotiations, compromises, and resolutions when individual agencies providing essential services and facilities in an area have differing missions. An integral part of North Area Plan implementation is the recognition that, when agencies are providing essential services and facilities in areas where other agencies also have jurisdiction, interagency negotiations must occur on how to best fulfill differing agency mandates. For example, the North Area Plan locality and surrounding areas are widely recognized for their natural resources and outdoor recreational opportunities. The study area also contains human-generated residential and commercial activities that can and often do impact natural resources. Continued open communication between the County and the National Park Service, as well as other park, land conservation and recreation-related agencies such as the State Department of Parks and Recreation, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, should enable planning officials to strike mutually acceptable balances between natural resource preservation and human occupation.

**Goal IX      *Land use "stability" within the planning area.***

Goal IX deals with the processes rather than with the substance of the North Area Plan. The policies of this plan are designed to carry out its General Goals, thereby creating certainty within the development process. But these Goals, and the resulting development certainty, will not be realized in practice unless the North Area Plan's policies are effectively implemented. In an area as varied and difficult to manage as the Santa Monica Mountains, effective implementation requires application of all the expertise and ingenuity that can be mustered in an ongoing program to revise ordinances and codes to reflect the Goals of the North Area Plan. The issue at hand is to define the desired future and gain consensus as to how that future will be achieved. Consensus building and values-based planning can help establish objective measures with which to evaluate land use proposals, thereby reducing the need for single-project amendments to local adopted plans. Plan amendments to accommodate specific situations cannot be eliminated, however, owing to the need for planning flexibility in addressing unforeseeable future events and opportunities. Comprehensive evaluation, update and amendment to the North Area Plan's policies and programs in a timely manner will be needed whenever there is an overwhelmingly demonstrated benefit to the Goals of the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan. By doing this, the plan and the planning area will reach a level of 'stability', better enabling planning and service agencies to make realistic projections for future service and/or resource needs.

**Goal X      *An environment which allows for a range of social, cultural, and aesthetic experiences for each individual living in or visiting the area that is consistent with the area's unique natural values, environmental and physical carrying capacities and unique terrain.***

Goal X expresses the philosophy that one measure of success of the North Area Plan is the satisfaction people derive from living in and visiting the area. People should be able to live, work and play in the area, but the pursuit of their activities should be respectful of both natural and humanistic values. With the realization of this goal, characteristics appealing to people of all ages and backgrounds (rural, suburban and urban) will be present for all to enjoy. In addition, allowing for a range of social, cultural and aesthetic experiences that are consistent with the area's natural values, the environmental and physical carrying-capacity and the unique terrain, individuals within the area will be exposed to and possibly learn from people of differing social, ethnic, and/or cultural backgrounds. This goal also recognizes that there can be infrequent, large-scale gatherings of people (e.g., pumpkin festivals, film festivals, western theme days) occurring in natural settings, which are not detrimental to the overall natural environments.

**Goal XI      *Economic health of Los Angeles County in North Area Plan implementation.***

Goal XI recognizes that, to implement the provisions of the North Area Plan, the County must be fiscally sound. Although new development often pays its way for new infrastructure and capital costs, local agencies need sufficient revenue streams to provide for ongoing operations and maintenance. The North Area Plan recognizes the dual, sometimes competing, objectives of preserving land resources for open space and allowing uses which generate positive income streams. It seeks to accommodate income-producing uses only if they can be introduced and managed in a manner offering the highest level of protection to the area's environmental sensitivity and the unique character of its communities, and will not result in long-term negative impacts or damage.

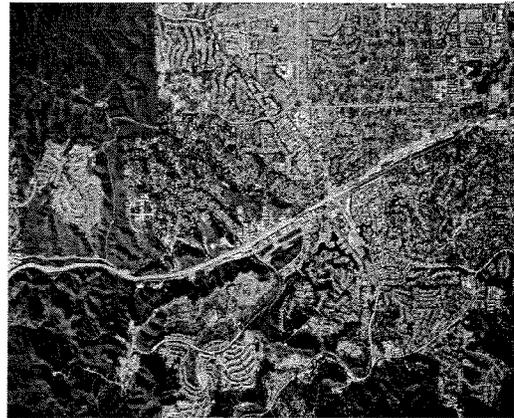


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### III. INTERGOVERNMENTAL LAND USE COORDINATION

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The Santa Monica Mountains North Plan is an outgrowth of the Ventura Freeway Corridor Areawide Plan. One of the key concepts, underlying the preparation of the Corridor Plan, stresses that coordination of area planning and the development review processes among local municipalities, the County, and the area's major service providers, is a critical function for maintaining vital, well-built and sustainable communities and a high quality of life for area residents.



Such coordination involves more than merely providing development proposals to service agencies and to adjacent municipalities for review and comment. In addition to project-by-project review, these agencies need to understand both short- and long-term development trends, including the location and pace at which new development can be expected to come on line and the need for new services and facilities. Local jurisdictions also need to have an ongoing understanding of the ability of area service agencies to support new development. Additionally, a system is needed to resolve impacts created by development in one jurisdiction that are experienced in another. Finally, there needs to be an effort to work toward a set of consistent development standards across jurisdictional boundaries to help eliminate inter-jurisdictional impacts associated from developments adjacent to two jurisdictions.

#### Land Development Coordination Goals and Policies

##### Goal III-1:

***Coordinated regulation of land development, infrastructure planning, and land management--including consideration of impacts on water quality and public health and safety--among the region's communities.***

##### Policies:

- III-1 Prohibit the development or management of land which would create impacts inconsistent with the Guiding Principles contained in the *Ventura Freeway Corridor Areawide Plan*.
- III-2 Maintain continued coordination and information exchange between the County, area cities, and area service providers.
- III-3 Ensure that service agency master plans are adequate to support implementation of local municipalities's long-term land use plans. Recognize that the lack of water, sewer, and roadway infrastructure present development constraints, but that the availability of such facilities does not justify development inconsistent with the policies of the North Area Plan.
- III-4 Support and promote inter-jurisdictional programs to integrate and coordinate development and environmental management standards of area jurisdictions, and to establish an ongoing inter-jurisdictional process for reviewing development proposals, addressing their inter-jurisdictional impacts, and resolving disagreements between agencies.

- III-5 Continue to refer major planning and land use proposals to all affected jurisdictions for review, comment, and recommendation.
- III-6 Require that new development avoid or mitigate impacts, and not export the impacts to surrounding jurisdictions. In reviewing development projects, consider the adopted long-term goals, objectives, policies, and standards of affected jurisdictions, as well as their environmental thresholds in determining appropriate mitigation for the impacts that will be created outside of the jurisdiction reviewing the project. In adopting statements of overriding considerations, ensure that the benefits of a development project outweigh the adverse impacts within each of the jurisdictions that will experience such adverse impacts.
- III-7 Provide prompt and constructive comments to other jurisdictions on proposed projects when they are submitted for review, comment, and recommendation.
- III-8 Prepare and adopt community standards districts or other effective controls for areas adjacent to the cities of Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Westlake Village and Hidden Hills and Ventura County, ensuring that development standards such as, but not limited to, allowable uses, setbacks, building heights, landscaping, parking, street improvements and the undergrounding of utilities are compatible across jurisdictional boundaries. The County will consult with these jurisdictions in this process.
- III-9 Support the annexation of lands, directly adjacent to incorporated cities, where the primary access and services, such as parks, are provided through the city.
- III-10 Ensure that each reviewing agency coordinates their development review procedures and processes with each other impacted jurisdiction.
- III-11 In the approval processes for land use and public activities within the planning area, critical public health issues--such as urban and stormwater runoff and resulting impacts on beaches, the Los Angeles River and Santa Monica Bay--must be fully addressed by the agencies with oversight for these issues; state-of-the-art management techniques shall be incorporated into all new project approvals as they become available.



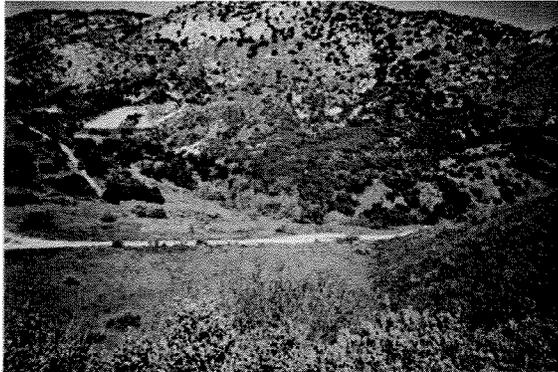
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## IV. CONSERVATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

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### A. Introduction

Management of the environment focuses on the relationship between the natural environment—focused on the Santa Monica Mountains—and human activities within it—with emphasis on those that complement the mountains, such as equestrian uses, nature studies, hiking, camping and picnicking. By focusing on this relationship, this element establishes a framework for both the preservation and management of the open space, scenic and natural resources of the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan, and the use and enjoyment of the area's wide range of recreational opportunities by local residents and area visitors. To minimize the impacts that future development may have on both the environment of the region, including its watersheds and coastal resources, and the opportunities for recreation within the Santa Monica Mountains, the following sections address the area's natural resources:

- Biological Habitats and Linkages,
- Hillside Management,
- Water Quality
- Scenic Resources,
- Open Space, and
- Recreation and Trails.

Each section provides goals and policies to help guide public decision-making.

### B. Guiding Principle

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The guiding principle for managing the natural environment is:

**'resource protection has priority over development.'**

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The North Area Plan's jurisdiction encompasses a complex and naturally dynamic landscape that is dominated by the Santa Monica Mountains. The scenic beauty and environmental diversity of the area, in close proximity to the second largest urban population in the United States, requires effective policy and action programs to manage and protect these environmental resources.

This principle recognizes that the Santa Monica Mountains possess irreplaceable resources, and that every user of the land is a trustee, shaping the area's heritage for future generations. Given this perspective, sensible resource management avoids degradation of the environment. The challenge of managing the natural environment is to ensure that the use of natural resources protects and enhances both the natural and the man-made environmental quality of the area.

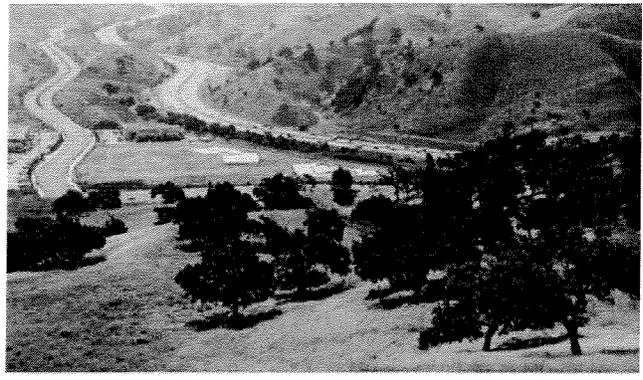
Development on any scale can enhance or disrupt the character of its natural setting--both those in the immediate area as well as those offsite, such as downstream impacts to coastal resources. Sensitivity to a full range of environmental factors is needed to ensure compatibility between the natural and built environments. In scenic and environmentally sensitive areas, development needs to conform to, and become a part of, the natural setting.

The County supports the general goals established by the jurisdictions (including the County) and agencies participating in the areawide planning program. These goals are articulated in the General Goals section. They focus on the maintenance of the unique elements of the area's natural setting and environment that provide a pleasant environment in which to live and recreate as well as protect significant biota or representative natural habitats and linkages.

Thus, the provisions of this element provide detailed guidance designed to locate new development so that it conforms with constraints of the natural environment, contributes to the open space character of the area and protects sensitive watersheds, downstream water quality, coastal resources, Santa Monica Bay and the Los Angeles River. The area's positive influence on the Los Angeles region, including scenic, recreational, and educational attributes, relies heavily upon sustaining the area's natural setting, the scenic beauty of varied land-forms, and the area's spectacular geologic formations, which provide a substantial recreational resource.

### C. Biological Resources And Habitat Linkages

The Santa Monica Mountains are home to rich and diverse biological resources. There are several significant plant communities as well as a variety of wildlife species. Critical to the maintenance of these resources are the habitat linkages present in the region. Appendix A contains a detailed discussion of these resources and linkages.



Palo Comado Canyon SEA

Photo by Daryl Koutnik

Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs) are of special interest and value. SEAs are areas that contain unique, rare or endangered species, or areas of habitat that are rapidly declining in Los Angeles County. The SEAs were established in unincorporated areas, including

areas that are now within the cities of Agoura Hills and Calabasas, to protect a special or sometimes unique collection of habitats and species from loss due to encroachment and human disturbances. Several SEAs are located within the region (see Map 2 ~ 'Ventura Freeway Corridor Significant Ecological Areas' at the end of this chapter).

- SEA No. 3A (Buffer) - Zuma Canyon
- SEA No. 3B (Buffer) - Zuma Canyon
- SEA No. 4 - Upper La Sierra Canyon
- SEA No. 6 - Las Virgenes
- SEA No. 12 - Palo Comado Canyon

It is important to recognize the biotic value of the areas within the SEA boundaries, as well as the need to ensure appropriately sensitive development/activities in areas adjacent to SEAs. It is necessary to protect the SEAs by providing sufficient buffers between SEA boundaries and development or related activity. Buffer lands and development setbacks can also be effectively employed to help protect SEA resources from runoff, erosion, grading and vegetation clearance.

## **Biological Resources Goals and Policies**

### *Goal IV-1:*

***An environment that retains significant animal and plant communities in an undisturbed condition and provides the highest possible protection for Significant Ecological Areas.***

### *Policies:*

- IV-1 Place primary emphasis on the preservation of large, unbroken blocks of natural open space and wildlife habitat areas, and protect the integrity of habitat linkages. As part of this emphasis, support programs for the purchase of open space lands, encourage clustering of development to increase the amount of preserved open space, reduce grading and the need for vegetation clearance, and develop design criteria for the construction of highways and other infrastructure improvements that meets environmentally-sensitive standards similar to those imposed on new development.
- IV-2 When determining which portions of a development site should be retained in open space, first priority should be the preservation of viable, sensitive habitat areas and linkages. Preserving open space for its aesthetic qualities is also essential, as discussed in Goal II.
- IV-3 Require development designs that protect and preserve significant, viable habitat areas and habitat linkages/wildlife corridors in their natural condition.
- a. Require buffers or other measures adequate to protect such areas.
  - b. Within designated habitat areas of rare, threatened or endangered species, prohibit disturbance of protected biotic resources.
  - c. Within the following areas, preserve plant communities which contribute to animal reproduction (including plant diversity, faunal resting areas, foraging areas and food sources), or when unavoidable, require the replacement of such plant communities so as not to result in a measurable reduction in the reproductive capacity of sensitive plant and animal communities:
    - riparian areas and wetlands subject to state and federal regulations (such as blue line streams on USGS quadrangles);
    - riparian woodlands, Sycamore-alder riparian woodlands, Southern and Valley oak woodlands and California walnut woodlands; and
    - animal habitat linkages/wildlife corridors.
  - d. Where plants listed as 'special' or 'of concern' by the California Natural Diversity Database (California Department of Fish and Game) are present, require that new development not result in a net reduction in the number of these plants. Maintenance of the number of plants may be accomplished by replacement in another part of the site or off-site in the appropriate habitat, with a monitoring program approved through the Conditional Use Permit process--which includes a requirement for at least one season of successful reproduction (i.e., producing seed

that germinates the following year, assuming the weather cooperates) before any disturbance of the existing habitat is permitted--to ensure the survival of the species in the replacement habitat.

- IV-4 Maximize the preservation of oak and sycamore trees and communities within proposed development sites.
- IV-5 Prohibit the use of motorized off-road vehicles within sensitive habitat areas, habitat linkages/wildlife corridors and riding and hiking trails, and limit off-trail activities to those that are consistent with protection of environmental resources.
- IV-6 Buffer zones shall be established adjacent to areas of important preserved biological resources, including natural streams and drainages. Such buffer zones shall be of an adequate width so as to protect biological resources from grading and construction activities, as well as from the long-term use of adjacent lands, the need for extensive lighting, and increased erosion and runoff, including winter stream flows. Permitted land modification activities within preservation and buffer areas are to be limited to those that are consistent with the maintenance of the reproductive capacity of the identified resource. The land uses and design of development adjacent to a vegetative preservation area, as well as activities within the designated buffer area, shall not disturb natural drainage patterns to the point that preserved vegetative resources receive too much or too little water to permit their ongoing health.
- IV-7 New landscape planting adjacent to areas of preserved biological resources shall not include invasive, non-indigenous species which could supplant native species and negatively impact the preserved resource. References to appropriate species for landscape use in the area--such as the lists available from the California Native Plant Society, Santa Monica Mountains Chapter--should be consulted.
- IV-8 Required preservation of natural biological habitats and habitat linkages should be ensured by land dedications in fee title wherever appropriate to a public agency which has the authority to manage, preserve or enhance park and open space lands. Secondary alternatives are conservation easements, granting of development rights or other similar protection measures. Financing for the long term maintenance of such areas should be assured through endowments or other public funding mechanisms.

## **D. Hillside Management**

Along with their supporting vegetation, the bold open ridges, deep canyons, rolling hills, and interior valleys of the area provide the basis for the natural beauty of the Santa Monica Mountains and the communities along the Ventura Freeway. A large portion of the area, and nearly all of the land that has not been committed to either development or long-term open space, consists of steep slopes in excess of 25 percent grade. Level topographic areas comprise only a small portion of the total land area. The natural hillsides remaining within the area are a significant biological and visual resource, and a key factor in the character of the area's communities.

Several significant topographical features are present within the region. To the south of Agoura Road at Kanan Road is Ladyface Mountain, identified as 'one of the most prominent land-forms in the area.' The portion of the Simi Hills immediately west of Las Virgenes Road is among the most visually prominent features visible from the freeway, providing the first visual impression of the area to drivers traveling from the San Fernando Valley. Just north of Malibou Lake, in the south central region of the study area, is Sugar Loaf, a landmark peak that is partially within the 'Paramount Ranch' portion of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Saddle Rock

and Turtle Rock are prominent rock formations located near the National Park Service's Rocky Oaks site. In addition, a large section (mostly the northern section) of the scenic Mulholland Highway corridor is located in the southern portion of the study area; buffers needed to protect this area extend north along Las Virgenes Creek to the Ventura Freeway.

While hillside areas are a notable asset of the region and worthy of sensitive treatment for their scenic and biotic values, they also require careful management to protect the quality of stream, ground and coastal waters--both within the planning area as well as downstream, all the way to the ocean waters along the Malibu coast. Grading, development, revegetation and equestrian and other specific use activities may all result in changes to the amount and quality of water runoff in these areas. Actions that may either directly or indirectly impact natural drainages and alter stormwater runoff are factors to be considered when evaluating the impacts of human intrusion into hillside areas.

### **Hillside Management Goals and Policies**

#### *Goal IV-2:*

***Hillside areas that retain their natural topographic character and native vegetative communities, and hillside development which protects public health and safety, minimizes erosion and development-induced runoff, and protects ridgelines and views from key public lands, trails and scenic highways.***

#### *Policies:*

- IV-9 New development projects shall be designed to protect significant natural features, and to minimize the amount of grading.
- IV-10 In areas over 25% slope, use special architectural and design techniques to ensure that development conforms to the natural land form, such as split level foundations, variable setbacks, and structures which blend with the natural environment in shape, materials and colors.
- IV-11 Grading in areas over 50% slope shall be severely limited to those circumstances where clustering is not possible and when demonstrated safety hazards and environmental degradation--including increased erosion, runoff and watershed impacts and aesthetic features--will be avoided.
- IV-12 Discourage the use of manufactured slopes in excess of ten vertical feet (10'), and require that any such slopes be land-form graded.<sup>2</sup>
- IV-13 Ensure that the overall project design/layout of hillside developments adapts to the natural hillside topography and protects ridgelines and natural-appearing views from surrounding vantage points such as highways, parklands and overlooks. Overall, emphasize fitting the project into its hillside setting rather than altering the hillside to fit the project.

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<sup>2</sup>"Land-form grading" is a contour grading method which creates manufactured slopes that have curves and varying slope ratios in the horizontal and vertical planes, and are thus designed to simulate the appearance of surrounding natural terrain.

- IV-14 Prohibit skyline development and require that structures be located sufficiently below ridgelines so as to preserve unobstructed views of a natural skyline.<sup>3</sup>
- IV-15 Require that structures within hillside development areas be sited in a manner that will:
- a. fit into the hillside's contour and relate to the form of the terrain;
  - b. retain outward views from the maximum number of units while maintaining the natural character of the hillside; and
  - c. preserve vistas of natural hillside areas and ridgelines from designated public places, including streets and highways.
- IV-16 Encourage clustering of dwellings in hillside areas as a means of decreasing the overall need for grading, thereby preserving the natural appearance of the hillside and maximizing the amount of open space. Do not, however, permit clustering of dwellings to result in urban character subdivisions within rural areas. Require that steep lands that are preserved in open space be permanently protected through, preferably, open space dedications to a public agency which has the authority to manage, preserve or enhance park and open space lands, wherever appropriate or, secondarily, effective easements.

## E. Water Quality

Water quality is a significant issue in the Santa Monica Mountains. The major watersheds within the North Area Plan area are:

- Malibu Creek (including Las Virgenes Creek and Medea Creek)
- Arroyo Calabasas
- Topanga Canyon
- Las Trancas Creek
- Zuma Creek
- Los Alisos Creek

These major watersheds feed both the Pacific Ocean (Santa Monica Bay) and the Los Angeles River as well as the numerous riparian corridors which are such significant features in the area. The Mountains possess scenic vistas and rural experiences which should be experienced by hikers and equestrians as well as motorists; they are a desirable place to build homes and ranches. However, human activities--along with natural as well as urban and stormwater runoff--in the mountains affect water quality not only locally, but in the Pacific Ocean as well, where much of the runoff ultimately goes. Human waste from faulty septic systems and animal waste, along with other toxic materials that come in ground contact, become part of the runoff from the Mountains, impact beaches and offshore waters, threaten public health as well as the long-term health of the Santa Monica Bay.

Protecting and improving water quality is a delicate balancing act. The canyons provide corridors for travel between the valleys and the coast, but roads and highways are a significant source of oil and grease, heavy metals, and gasoline. Traffic and development, even at low density levels, adversely impact water quality. Most of the area covered by the North Area Plan is located in the

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<sup>3</sup>In cases where application of this performance standard would prevent construction of any structures on a lot of record, ensure that obstruction of views of an unbroken natural skyline are minimized, limit heights of ridgelines structures, require that buildings be architecturally designed to conform to the natural topography, and require that appropriate landscaping be provided to soften the impact of the new structure.

Malibu Creek Watershed, the second largest watershed draining into the Santa Monica Bay and the watershed with the largest area of significant natural resources. The resulting run-off from impervious surfaces has been reported to be the largest single contributor of water pollution in the Santa Monica Bay. There has been increasing concern with viral contamination, public health issues and impacts on the tourist industry due to beach contamination. In addition to water quality-related discussions of erosion and runoff controls in the preceding Hillside Management section, groundwater recharge basins can be used both to protect the quality of runoff as well as contribute to the underground water supply.

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works have recognized the potentially serious impacts of development on water quality; mitigation requirements in the Los Angeles County NPDES (National Pollution Discharge Elimination System) Municipal Stormwater Permit and in the County's own stormwater management program provide measures at a countywide scale for reducing runoff pollution. Regulations adopted in 2000 by the California Water Quality Control Board for the Los Angeles Region regarding stormwater mitigation established very rigorous standards, implemented and enforced primarily by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works. The State's requirements apply to much of the Santa Monica Mountains, and include, for example, grading limitations, use of native vegetation, clustering of development, erosion protection and construction of retention basins. These regulations require that "Best Management Practices" –which will change with technology and experience–be employed. The Santa Monica Mountains, however, are an especially sensitive resource with potentially serious pollution consequences that justify exceptional treatment; the following policies are intended to provide area-sensitive measures to supplement countywide controls and to reinforce those established for the Los Angeles Region by the Water Quality Control Board.

## **Water Quality Goals and Policies**

*Goal No. IV-3:*

***Riparian corridors, watersheds and downstream coastal resources which are protected to the greatest extent possible from the impacts of development and from recreational activities of residents and users of the jurisdiction under the North Area Plan.***

### *Policies*

- IV-17 Promote comprehensive provisions for water conservation and reclamation to protect water supply and to reduce runoff and erosion, thereby helping to protect water quality.
- IV-18 New development shall be sited and designed to minimize the increase in run-off into the watershed that results in downstream pollution and increased size of flood plains in coastal lagoons—as required by Regional Water Quality Control Board and Los Angeles County regulations.. All new development shall incorporate best management practices (BMPs)—as updated periodically with new technology—to reduce runoff and erosion, such as the following:
- Minimizing new road and driveway lengths and the size of parking areas and other paved surfaces;
  - Maximizing the use of pervious surfaces wherever public safety and adequate access can be achieved;
  - Designing residential streets for minimum required pavement widths consistent with the provision of adequate, safe access;
  - Using permeable materials for private sidewalks, driveways, and interior roadways;
  - Promoting the use of shared driveways;
  - Using efficient irrigation practices such as drip irrigation, installing timers, etc.;

- Using reclaimed water and graywater on site wherever possible, and
  - Providing stormwater retention basins on site wherever feasible.
- IV-19 All new development shall incorporate BMPs which promote infiltration of stormwater--onsite wherever possible--where it will not exacerbate geologic hazards. Examples of BMPs include:
- Using pervious materials for parking lots, sidewalks, etc.
  - Installation of bioswales, french drains, cisterns, etc.
  - Directing rooftop and parking lot runoff to landscaped areas
  - Constructing subregional infiltration basin, wet ponds or constructed wetlands.
- IV-20 Minimize disturbance of natural drainages and avoid the channelization of streams for flood control purposes. New developments should avoid straightening or modifying streams or stream banks to the greatest extent possible, unless the project design results in better habitat protection, slower water flows and stabilized natural streambanks without channelization or hardening.
- IV-21 The County will cooperate with local and State transportation departments to implement BMPs to promote infiltration of runoff from roads and highways and to reduce flow into natural streams and creeks.
- IV-22 New development projects shall include strict provisions to prevent sediments and silts from entering and impacting storm drains and waterways or create the need for channelization of streams, including the incorporation of pervious surfaces and other BMPs.
- IV-23 Prohibit the non-emergency storage of construction or landslide materials on the shoulders of roads adjacent to streambanks.
- IV-24 Limit clearing and grading of native vegetation to the minimum amount needed to create a building pad, allow access, and provide fire protection.
- IV-25 Require appropriate--typically native--ground cover to prevent erosion in areas cleared of brush. Vegetate slopes with plants that establish deep root systems and have low water requirements.
- IV-26 Manage the location of livestock, including horses, and the collection/disposal of animal wastes in a manner that is protective of streams and natural drainages and the quality of water runoff and groundwater.
- IV-27 Require setbacks from natural streams and drainages which are adequate to protect them from development impacts in high storm flows.
- IV-28 Establish retention basins to diminish the impacts of stormwater runoff and to provide for greater groundwater recharge.

## **F. Scenic Resources**

The characteristic beauty of the area's natural setting is widely recognized as one of its most distinctive and valuable attributes. What takes place in the Santa Monica Mountains, whether building, recreation or farming, has greater visual impacts than in most other parts of Los Angeles County. Natural terrain throughout the area is highly visible to residents, motorists, and recreationists because of topographic features and generally rural conditions.

Given this set of conditions and relationships, the natural setting is particularly sensitive to any form of physical alteration. The visual impact of building or grading, as well as, the removal of vegetation can be every bit as dramatic as the natural features themselves. In some parts of the study area, natural features have been graded away and/or built upon, effectively obliterating the scenic qualities of the immediate settings and views related to them.



Views of natural features are the focus of scenic preservation and enhancement. The following policies do not assume a total exclusion of development from scenic areas as being necessary to protect scenic qualities. Their intent is to require and achieve a sensitive balance between development and the natural features of the area.

The scenic beauty of the general area is one of its primary attractions to residents, visitors, and businesses. Within the area, a distinctive environment characterized by occasional morning fog draping over rolling hills, canyon, and oak woodlands coexists with an equally distinctive group of communities. Also of particular interest to residents and visitors are the impressive views of the mountains and coast from the Ventura Freeway corridor, major arterial highways and public lands.

In the unincorporated area there are four particularly significant scenic routes, the Ventura Freeway, Mulholland Highway, Las Virgenes Road and Kanan/Dume Road. Other routes with scenic qualities include Agoura Road, Chesebro Road, Cornell Road, Old Topanga Canyon Road and Topanga Canyon Boulevard.

Views of natural, oak studded hillsides dominate the area along the north side of the Ventura Freeway between Craftsman's Corner westward beyond Las Virgenes Road. Driving west from the San Fernando Valley, this is the first visual break in the intense urbanization of the San Fernando Valley, and is often associated with the feeling of escaping the metropolitan area that motorists experience as they travel through the area. These hillsides also provide a dramatic entry into the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

While the Ventura Freeway is the main access route to the area's cities, Mulholland Highway is the main route to the area's recreational resources. Built in the 1920s to 'take Angelenos from the city to the ocean,' Mulholland Highway follows the crest of the Santa Monica Mountains for approximately 55 miles, beginning in the city of Los Angeles at the Hollywood Freeway, running through the region, and ending at the Leo Carrillo State Beach on the Malibu coast. While the Ventura Freeway area has many scenic roadways, Mulholland Highway's history; its proximity to local, state, and federal recreation areas; and the amount of resources already put into it by federal, state, and local jurisdictions make Mulholland Highway a unique resource for the Los Angeles region (see Map 3 ~ '*Mulholland Highway Scenic Corridor*' at the end of this chapter for a depiction of the highway as it passes through the Ventura Freeway planning region).

Las Virgenes Road is the third major scenic route through the area, winding from the freeway south to the ocean.

### **Scenic Resources Goals and Policies**

*Goal IV-4:*

***An environment that retains the area's scenic beauty, including specific natural features and broad vistas.***

*Policies:*

IV-29 Maintain and enhance the visual quality of vistas along the unincorporated portions of identified scenic routes and routes with scenic qualities, including:

*Scenic routes:*

- Ventura Freeway
- Mulholland Highway
- Las Virgenes Road
- Kanan-Dume Road

*Routes with scenic qualities:*

- Agoura Road
- Chesebro Road
- Cornell Road
- Old Topanga Canyon Road
- Topanga Canyon Boulevard

- IV-30 Regulate the alteration of the natural landscape and terrain to ensure minimal visual disruption of existing settings.
- IV-31 Preserve in their natural state, topographic features of high scenic value, including significant canyon walls, geological formations, creeks, and waterfalls. Preserve the area's hillside backdrop in its present state to the extent feasible and control the design of development on ridgelines so that it will not interfere with significant scenic views.
- IV-32 Ensure that any alteration of the natural landscape from earth-moving activity, as well as new development, blends with the existing terrain of the site and surroundings.
- IV-33 Limit the extent of vegetation clearance to that required for fire safety, and where possible, site structures so that no vegetation clearance encroaches on adjacent properties; consider the size and siting of development to reduce the level of vegetation clearance needed.
- IV-34 Design and site buildings, including clustered development, so as to be compatible and harmonious with the surrounding environment. For example, designs should incorporate mature stands of trees, rock outcroppings, streams, lakes, and reservoirs and other such natural features.
- IV-35 Preserve and, where feasible, restore tree communities--especially oak and sycamore woodlands--and savannas as important elements of the area's scenic character.
- IV-36 Prohibit the placement of new, and phase out any existing off-site advertising signs and onsite pole signs along designated scenic highways and the Ventura Freeway.
- IV-37 Preserve the quality of the night skies and visibility of stars by controlling lighting along area roadways, thereby reducing visual intrusion.
- IV-38 Within the network of scenic routes, establish Mulholland Highway as a major corridor within the North Area Plan's jurisdiction. Define the primary function of the Highway as a major access route within the Santa Monica Mountains, interconnecting most major park sites.

## G. Open Space

Over 5,000 acres of major public open spaces within the North Plan area--approximately one-fourth of the planning area, representing a major investment of public monies--have been preserved, including lands under the management of the National Park Service, the State of California, and the Santa Monica Mountain Conservancy. Additional committed open space areas include local park lands, and lands that were preserved as permanent open space as the result of various development approvals. The adjacent cities and Coastal Zone, as well as Ventura County, also include major blocks of publicly-owned open space parklands. Large additional blocks of open space lands exist through the region, but are not committed to long term open space and are, therefore, available for various types and intensities of development.

State General Plan law related to Open Space Elements describes four types of open spaces:

- ***Open Space for the Protection of Significant Environmental Resources.*** Most of the land acquired by the National Park Service, the State of California, and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy falls into this category, as these lands contain significant biological habitats and habitat linkages. Much of the remaining open spaces within the region contain a great abundance and variety of vegetative and wildlife habitats and linkages. They also represent a scenic resource of great value.
- ***Open Space for the Protection of Public Health and Safety.*** Many hillside areas have proven to be unstable; despite the best efforts of geologists, soils engineers, and civil engineers, man-made slopes within the region have been subject to failure. Thus, certain hillside areas are unsuitable for development, and are more appropriately left as open space. In addition, the fires that periodically rage through the Santa Monica Mountains are a reminder of the inherent difficulties with development in mountainous areas. Because fire is a natural and a needed phenomenon, certain areas within the mountains are best left in their natural condition, and protected from development. Currently, many steeply sloping areas, as well as areas subject to flooding have been committed to long term open space, primarily as part of past development approvals.
- ***Open Space for the Managed Production of Resources.*** Open space for the managed production of resources typically includes agricultural lands and lands used for mineral extraction. At this time, there is no open space in this category in the unincorporated area.
- ***Open Space for Public Recreation.*** These open space areas include the public and private parks managed by Los Angeles County and property owners' associations, as well as developed recreation areas owned and managed by the National Park Service and the California Department of Parks and Recreation.

### Open Space Goals and Policies

*Goal IV-5:*

***An integrated open space system that preserves valuable natural resources, manages water resources, and provides a variety of recreational opportunities, and a coordinated program among federal, state, and local agencies for the consistent management of public lands.***

*Policies:*

- IV-39 In the conditions of approval setting aside lands for open space, clearly define the land's intended open space functions, and ensure that the management and use of such lands are consistent with those intended open space functions.

- IV-40 Treat all parcels within existing clustered subdivisions that were set aside as open space, as permanent deed-restricted open space on the Land Use Policy Map.
- IV- 41 Preserve open space corridors which physically link open space and habitat areas to populated areas as well as to complementary recreational uses.
- IV-42 Structure the pattern and character of planned development so as to be compatible with and complementary to open space resources.
- IV-43 Diverse methods, including fee simple acquisition, purchase of development rights, regulations, and/or development density and clustering incentives, are appropriate where open space preservation is achieved.
- IV-44 Implement adequate legal protections to ensure the preservation in perpetuity of designated open space lands.
- IV-45 Preserve open space that protects streams and watersheds, prevents vegetation clearance or grading of steep areas and helps reduce development-induced runoff.

## **H. Recreation And Trails**

One of the most important functions of this portion of the Santa Monica Mountains is its ability to provide the Los Angeles metropolitan region with a wide range of public and private recreational opportunities. The natural environment of the mountains--throughout the unincorporated area as well as adjacent cities-- is particularly well suited for active and passive outdoor recreational experiences in an unstructured natural setting. In view of the need for energy conservation, the value of recreation in close proximity to the urban complex is immense. The Santa Monica Mountains area represents the last opportunity to maintain a critical element of a 'close-in,' outdoor, recreational-oriented lifestyle within the Los Angeles region, and the communities along the Ventura Freeway corridor serve a gateway function into the mountains.

The cornerstones of the area's recreation potential are the existing federal, state, and local parks and trails. These parks and proposed acquisitions, linked by the proposed scenic routes and a network of riding, hiking, and bicycle trails across all jurisdictions, would all integrate with the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. These public recreation areas, which could be supported by compatible commercial recreation uses, such as resorts, lodgings, camps and equestrian facilities, would maximize the recreational opportunities available to the public.

Although existing parks and recreational facilities are the basis for experiencing the area's recreational opportunities, the system is insufficient to meet regional needs. Although bicycle trails plans have been adopted, a comprehensive public trail or bicycle system does not exist to provide critical linkages to the varied recreational facilities. Traditional equestrian and hiking routes, unofficially established by years of public use, cross primarily private property, while only isolated bikeway segments exist. A system of trails and bikeways in the Santa Monica Mountains, could serve as usable, safe, parallel paths connecting recreation areas and the metropolitan area.

As these recreational amenities are expanded, there will be an increasing need for coordinated resource management in order to protect sensitive habitats from overuse and/or degradation. These opportunities and issues can best be resolved if the emphasis is placed on an integrated recreational plan coordinating the resources of multiple governmental jurisdictions and community groups.

Several entities are involved in the provision of parks and recreational opportunities within the planning region, including the National Park Service, the State of California, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and area cities. In addition, local property owners' associations are also actively involved in the provisions of recreational facilities in the region.

## **EXISTING AND PROPOSED PARK & TRAIL FACILITIES**

### ***Parks***

The County of Los Angeles does not currently operate any regional park facilities within the jurisdiction of the North Area Plan. While it is recognized that there are local park needs throughout the planning region, it is not advisable to plan for traditional active local parks in the unincorporated mountain area of the North Area Plan. As has previously been noted, this mountain area is largely steep with limited access and would not be suitable for an active recreation park.

### ***Trails***

The existing trail system in the study area is comprised primarily of regional trails within the Santa Monica Mountains, including those operated by the County and other public agencies, as well as those on private lands. There are many trails throughout the mountains, but most are not publicly protected unless they are within parklands. For those trail lands that are protected through public ownership or easements, trail maintenance--and often basic construction--is primarily due to the work of dedicated volunteers.

The National Park Service, California Department of Parks and Recreation, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and the Santa Monica Mountains Trails Council, together with a variety of other public agencies and private concerns--through a consortium known as the Santa Monica Mountains Area Recreational Trails (SMMART) Coordination Project--have proposed additions to the County's trails plan as well as new trail amenities (i.e. trail camps) to be considered by the park agencies.

Following up on the information developed by the SMMART Project, the National Park Service, California State Parks and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy are planning an integrated trail system (i.e., a system that provides connections with other local and regional trail networks) throughout the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area--which covers the multi-jurisdictional breadth of the Mountains. This system is intended to link area recreation facilities, and provide trail access between the mountains and the coast. The system will include trails of varying lengths and degrees of difficulty for people with a wide variety of skills and abilities, including the disabled, senior citizens, and families. A series of loop trails will be planned for hikers, equestrians and bicyclists. Overnight camps will be considered and established along longer trails to allow uninterrupted backpacking trips of several days' duration. The trail system may eventually connect with other major trails in the greater region, such as the Rim of the Valley Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail.

The Rim of the Valley Trail is within the state-designated Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor, stretching from Sierra Madre to Moorpark, and will link parklands and mountain open spaces encircling the San Fernando, La Crescenta, western San Gabriel, Simi, and Conejo Valleys. The Rim of the Valley Trail will link to the Pacific Crest Trail and the Santa Monica Mountains Backbone Trail.

The 2550-mile long Pacific Crest Trail (a National Scenic Trail) passes through northern Los Angeles County mostly in the San Gabriel Mountains, Sierra Pelona Range, and mountains northeast of Pyramid Lake (Angeles National Forest), as well as through intervening private lands,

before it cross the western Antelope Valley into Kern County. Trails within the planning area can provide links to this major trail resource.

### ***Future Regional Trails***

Planning for the Juan Bautista DeAnza National Historic Trail is underway. This trail is one of only seven national historic trails in the country. The trail commemorates the 1,200-mile expedition of Juan Bautista de Anza in 1775-1776, when he led a contingent of colonists from Mexico across deserts and mountains to found a colony for Spain at San Francisco. An approximately 5-mile segment of the Anza National Historic Trail will cross parklands in the Simi Hills north of the North Area Plan's study area. A spur trail to the south would connect the Anza National Historic Trail with Malibu Creek State Park, the approximate location of one of the expedition's camping sites. The National Park Service is coordinating this interstate planning effort. Alternative alignments are still in draft form at this time.

Public trails originating from the Ahmanson Ranch project, if it is developed as proposed in the adjacent Las Virgenes Canyon area of Ventura County, could provide both regional north-south and east-west trail connections. Ahmanson Ranch would be connected to the Santa Monica Mountains, as well as to Los Angeles, by the Valley Circle Scenic Corridor Trail, entering Los Angeles County from Ventura County through Crummer Canyon on the western side of Hidden Hills, connecting on south of the Ventura Freeway with the Calabasas-Cold Creek Trail. This trail would extend through Ahmanson Ranch and continue into the northern San Fernando Valley along Valley Circle Boulevard and tie into the trail system already established in the north valley. In this same general area, the connection of Cheseboro Park with Malibu Creek State Park is proposed through Liberty Canyon. If Ahmanson Ranch is not developed as proposed, other measures will be required to secure these trails.



The Las Virgenes Canyon trail is another proposed County trail that would connect Ahmanson Ranch to the Santa Monica Mountains. The County has obtained several easements for this trail, adequate to build the trail from the Ventura Freeway to Malibu Creek State Park. Easements north of the Ventura Freeway have not yet been obtained. The Ahmanson Ranch project has been conditioned to provide large staging areas on property at Las Virgenes Road in Ventura County.

The Zuma Ridge Trail is planned to eventually link Simi Valley to the sea, providing a continuous trail connection from the Arroyo Simi Equestrian park through the Simi Hills to Zuma Canyon. Portions of the regional trail are maintained by the County of Los Angeles and the Santa Monica Mountains Trail Council.

### ***Trails Acquisition Programs***

Trails easements and improvements over private lands are frequently obtained through conditions of development approval; funding mechanisms for sustained maintenance of such trails should also be sought at this opportunity. Open space lands, including new acquisitions, may contain existing trails or provide opportunities for new ones--although funding for construction and/or maintenance is not necessarily assured. As trail acquisition opportunities arise, regional coordination is needed to both ensure an integrated trails network as well as to dedicate particular trail segments to the agency best able to provide sustained funding for trail construction and maintenance.

## Recreation and Trails Goals and Policies

### Goal IV-6:

***A variety of recreational opportunities affording a range of experiences from wilderness to parks, including public trail access to public lands--all in a manner that respects natural resources.***

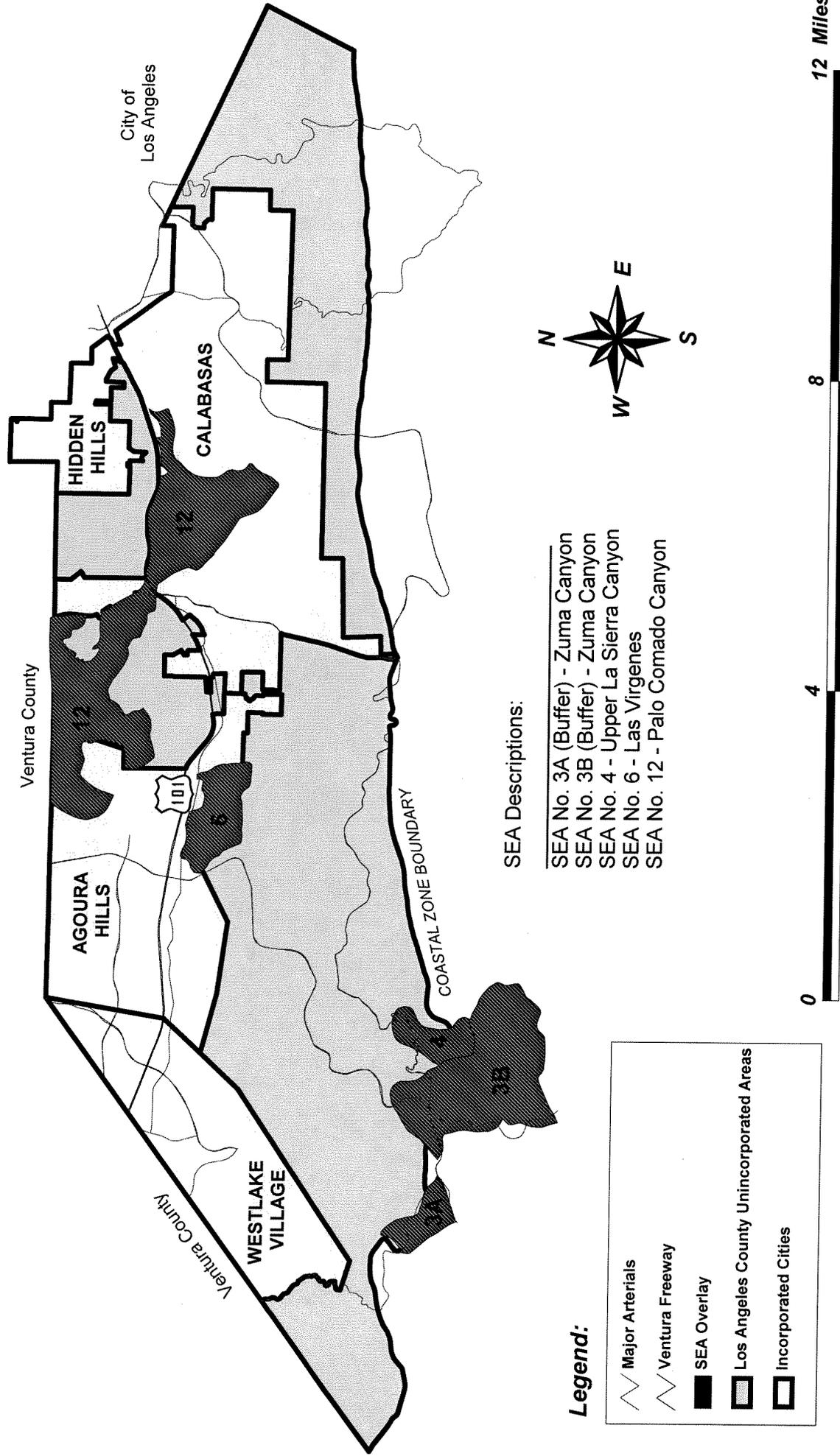
### Policies:

- IV-46 Ensure the opportunity for a full range of recreational experiences to serve regional and national visitors, including the the transit-dependent and the disabled.
- IV-47 Locate recreational facilities of all types in a manner consistent with the environmental values of the land, taking special care to avoid impacts on riparian areas. Regulate the intensity, timing, types, and location of recreational facilities to protect resources and established neighborhoods and rural communities.
- IV-48 Encourage opportunities for dispersed recreation when consistent with environmental values and protection of natural resources.
- a. Provide passive recreational experiences within undeveloped natural areas consistent with the tolerance capabilities and character of such areas. Natural areas with limited road access and the presence of sensitive environmental resources are to be limited to activities that are keyed to solitude and appreciation of the values of the natural environment.
  - b. Within natural areas intended for the protection of vegetative, habitat and scenic resources, regulate use to preserve resource values.
  - c. Expand trails systems for hiking, mountain bike riding, and equestrian uses to accommodate projected demands, following an evaluation that has considered such impacts as environmental quality and the safety and enjoyment of all users. Multi-use trails should be constructed wherever feasible. The trails system should provide linkages between major regional trails and area recreational facilities (see Map 4 ~ 'Ventura Freeway Corridor Hiking Trails' at the end of this chapter which identifies major hiking trails throughout the region).
  - d. Ensure that the routing and improvement of trails facilities is compatible with the resource values of adjacent lands.
  - e. Relocate or redesign any trails that may exist within environmentally sensitive areas to enhance their use and protect natural resources.
  - f. Prohibit motorized off-road vehicle use on the area trails system; restrict mountain bike use to those trails specifically designed and identified for such use and where conflict with equestrian and hiking uses would not occur.
  - g. Preserve public rights by obtaining trail easements where the public has acquired these rights through use, or where the trail is depicted on Map 4 (Hiking Trails) of this Plan.
- IV-49 Ensure that an appropriate portion of preserved open space areas is devoted to recreational facilities, consistent with the mountains area environment.

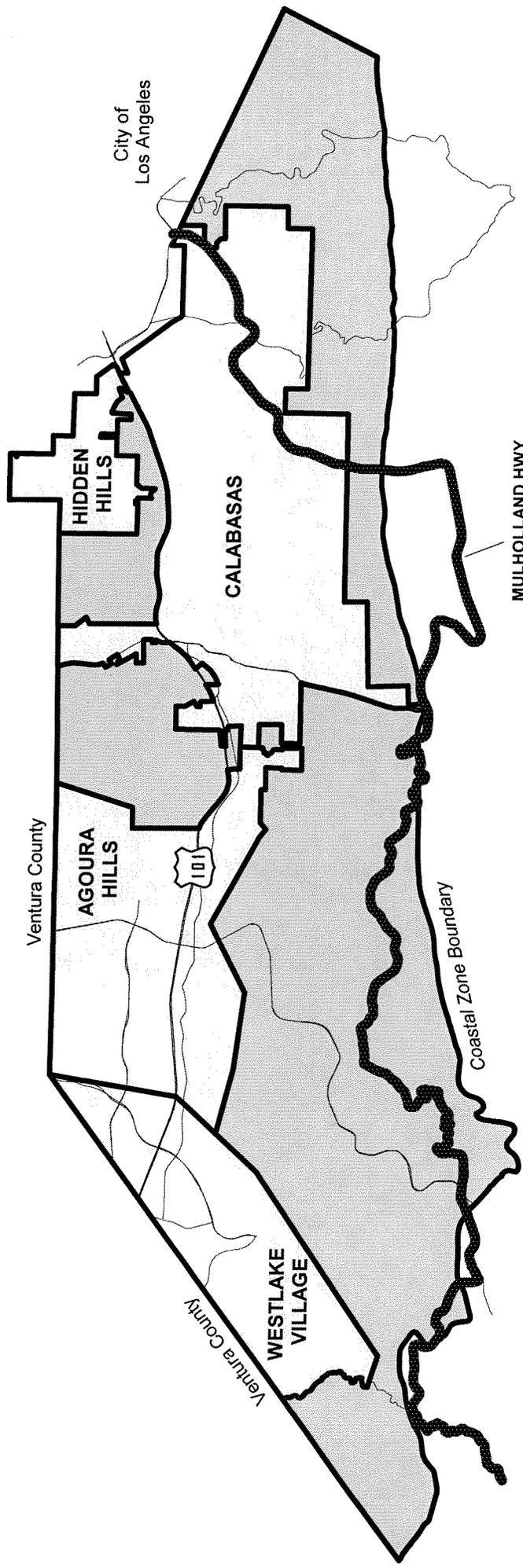
- a. Where appropriate, establish the facilities necessary for information/orientation, recreation, interpretation, education, and recreation area maintenance and operations;
  - b. At the periphery of areas devoted to dispersed recreation provide the following:
    - provide sufficient staging areas along trails—including space to accommodate horse trailers, where needed and appropriate—to ensure adequate access to the trails system,
    - campgrounds, roadside rests and picnic areas in areas of suitable land capability,
    - visitor information, and
    - day use facilities;
  - c. Expand the area's system of bicycle trails to provide an alternative means for travel in conjunction with automobile travel; and
  - d. Locate and design parking for recreation areas in a manner compatible with the need for preservation of natural resources, including scenic values, wildlife habitats and corridors, and water and groundwater quality.
- IV-50 Make use of open space easements, such as flood inundation areas, and establish other procedures to acquire land or the use of land for recreational and open space purposes.
- IV-51 Work to achieve common trails policies between the various agencies maintaining trails within the region.
- IV-52 Allow the development of new, and the retention of existing, private recreational facilities, including equestrian rental and boarding facilities, low intensity campgrounds and conference facilities in rural and mountain areas where the character of such facilities dictates the need for such a setting and can be developed and operated in a manner consistent with the environmental protection policies of the North Area Plan, and where such uses would be compatible with surrounding land uses.



# Map 2 Ventura Freeway Corridor Significant Ecological Areas

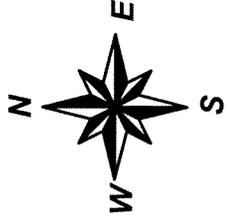


# Map 3 Ventura Freeway Corridor Mulholland Highway Scenic Corridor

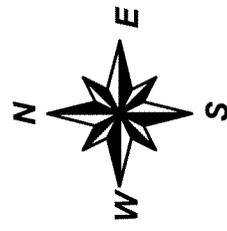
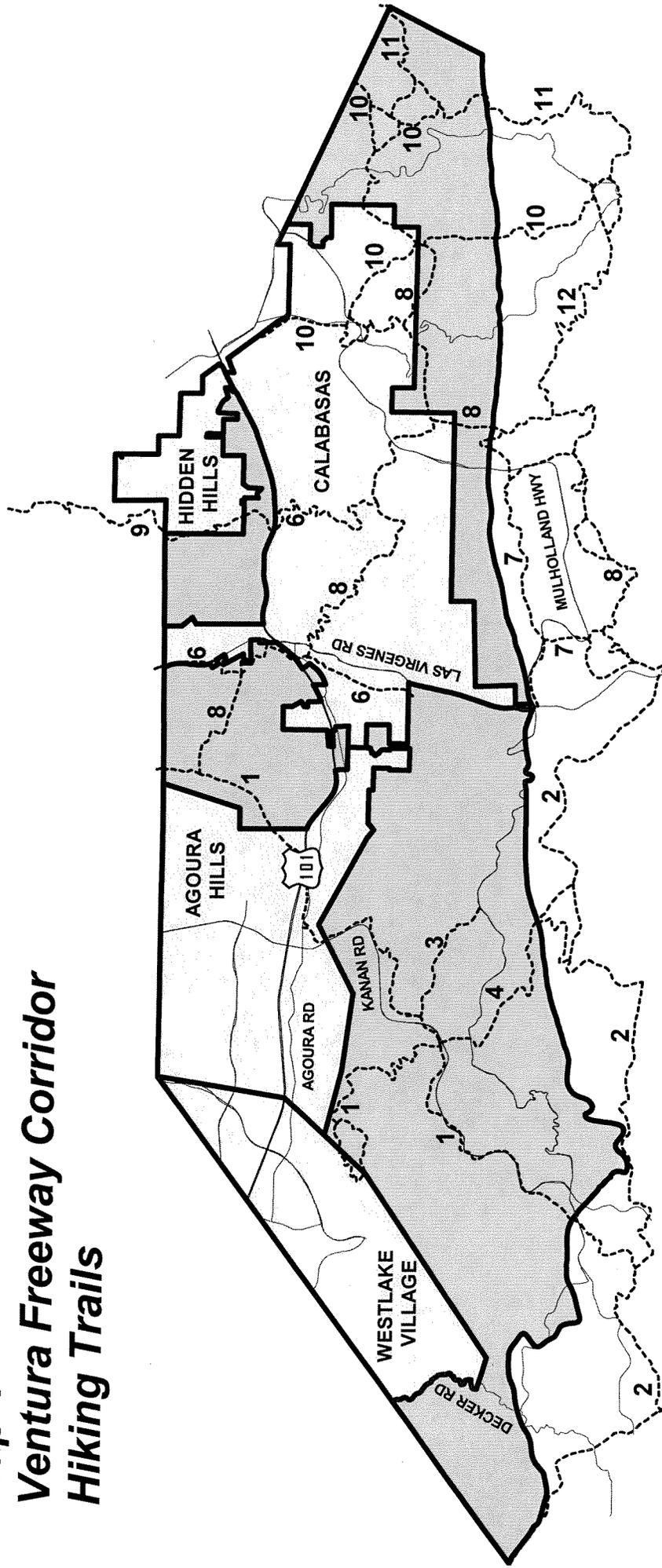


**Legend:**

- Major Arterials
- Ventura Freeway
- Los Angeles County Unincorporated Areas
- Incorporated Cities



# Map 4 Ventura Freeway Corridor Hiking Trails



- NAMES OF TRAILS:**
1. ZUMA RIDGE TRAIL
  2. BACKBONE TRAIL
  3. REAGAN CONNECTOR TRAIL
  4. MALIBU LAKE CONNECTOR TRAIL
  5. CALABASAS-COLD CREEK TRAIL
  6. LAS VIRGENES TRAIL
  7. STOKES RIDGE TRAIL
  8. CALABASAS-COLD CREEK TRAIL
  9. VALLEY CIRCLE SCENIC CORRIDOR
  10. TOPANGA HENRY RIDGE TRAIL
  11. SANTA MARIA CANYON TRAIL
  12. CAMP SCLAUSON CONNECTOR TRAIL

**LEGEND:**

- Trails
- Major Arterials
- Ventura Freeway
- Los Angeles County Unincorporated Areas
- Incorporated Cities



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## V. SAFETY AND NOISE ELEMENT

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### A. Introduction

The man-made and natural environments of the North Area Plan contain several types of hazards which require special consideration and treatment in order to protect the public's safety. Mountain fires, the Northridge earthquake, and landslides following heavy winter rains have provided strong evidence of the vulnerability of the region to an array of natural and man-made hazards. Natural drainage patterns include very high volumes of runoff during storm conditions. Fires, however, can also be an asset to the ecosystem of the mountains, as acknowledged in the Guiding Principles of the North Area Plan and are a natural occurrence in the mountains.

This element of the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan focuses on protecting the public from loss of life, damage to property, and the social and economic impacts of natural and manmade hazards, including seismic forces (earthquakes), flooding, wildland and urban fires, unstable earth conditions, hazardous materials, and noise. In addition, the element addresses emergency response provisions and the coordination of planning efforts by emergency response agencies. In protecting public health and safety, the following issues are addressed:

- Seismic Hazards,
- Flood Hazards,
- Fire Hazards,
- Non-seismic Geologic Hazards,
- Hazardous Materials, and
- Noise Hazards.

### B. Guiding Principles

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The guiding principle for protecting public health and safety is:

***'it is more prudent to avoid environmental hazards than to attempt to overcome them, and that the only environmental risks that should be tolerated are those that cannot reasonably be avoided or eliminated due to technological limitations, limited resources, or conflicting priorities.'***

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Although a great deal of individual and public effort is directed toward minimizing or eliminating perceived risks, a totally risk-free environment cannot reasonably be achieved. All aspects of life involve a degree of risk, and some degree of risk from environmental hazards must be tolerated. Development in the planning area must accommodate the natural conditions in the mountains, which include environmental hazards.

### C. Seismic Hazards

Within most areas of Southern California, there are two primary seismic considerations: 1) surface rupturing along fault lines, and 2) damage to structures due to seismically induced ground shaking. Other seismic considerations include liquefaction, landslides, rockfalls, and seismically induced settlement. The Malibu-Santa Monica-Raymond Hill fault system poses a potentially substantial risk of earthquake damage in the general area; the Simi-Northridge-Verdugo fault system may also affect the area. The San Andreas Fault, although located at a greater distance from the study area than these faults, also poses a potentially substantial risk for seismic damage throughout the

jurisdiction of the North Area Plan. Soils surveys by such agencies as the Soil Conservation Service are resources for identifying areas susceptible to landslides and slope failures--particularly during seismic events.

Structures built directly astride the surface traces of active faults are subject to various degrees of damage if there is further fault movement. No active faults have been identified within the region.

Although there are currently no active faults within the general area, the immediate region contains many large faults which pose a high potential for seismic risk. Even in the absence of active faulting in the area, the region is nevertheless subject to surface rupture during an earthquake along nearby faults, such as occurred in the vicinity of Las Virgenes Road south of Agoura Road in the January 1994 Northridge earthquake.

Even with the relatively low development densities throughout much of the area and the requirement that new development comply with current building and safety codes, seismic hazards related to ground shaking are potentially significant because of their widespread implications. Ground shaking resulting from an earthquake, besides directly damaging structures, roadways, and utilities, could trigger landslides in unstable areas, endangering lives and property. However, even in the absence of an earthquake, potentially significant hazards exist due to unstable slopes. Because of local groundwater and soil conditions, liquefaction is also a potential hazard in localized areas with high groundwater and sandy soils. Recently released maps by the California Divisions of Mines and Geology depict areas with a potential for 'liquefaction' and 'earthquake-induced landslides.'

The County requires that building designs and construction materials and techniques be commensurate with the expected level of ground-shaking in a major earthquake. These requirements are based on site-specific soils and geologic conditions, as well as on the level of risk associated with potential damage to the building. For all buildings, once environmental protection policies are met, construction techniques are regulated according to the most recent State of California Uniform Building Code, or increased requirements as necessary to reduce geologic and seismic risks to acceptable levels.

### **Seismic Hazards Goals and Policies**

*Goal V-1:*

***Minimal risks to life and property, and minimal economic and social dislocation related to potential seismic activity.***

*Policies:*

- V-1 In areas susceptible to potential seismically induced landslides, emphasize avoidance of development over the implementation of engineering solutions.
- V-2 When creating an engineered slope, use land-form grading techniques to recreate a natural hillside appearance, to the extent feasible.

## **D. Flood Hazards**

Natural drainage patterns include high water levels during storm conditions--a feature that should be given serious consideration in the use of, and improvements designed within, the mountains and surrounding areas. Policies throughout the North Area Plan as well as standards and regulations of other agencies that will help minimize exposure to flood hazards are those related to slope modification, setbacks, on-site water retention and percolation, and runoff controls, as well as the amount and type of paving and grading and fire clearance requirements. Potential flood hazards within the jurisdiction of the North Area Plan are generally limited to canyon and valley bottoms. In addition, although existing storm drain and flood control facilities generally have sufficient capacity to provide developed areas with adequate protection from flooding, localized areas within

adjacent cities are in need of additional drainage improvements--primarily in those areas between improved concrete channels and natural drainages. Such deficiencies can, of course, have impacts beyond jurisdictional boundaries. Future development will be required to be designed so as not to create flooding problems and to provide adequate protection from flooding, while protecting stream courses and natural drainages; strategies employed shall be accomplished in a manner consistent with the environmental protection policies of this North Area Plan--typically without damage to the natural environment.

Generally, the need for new storm drain facilities to serve rural development within unincorporated areas is not great – although they must be provided where necessary. The low densities that have been planned and are recommended for the mountain areas will generally not induce significant flooding impacts. Existing County building and safety codes are designed to be effective mitigation for potential flood hazards.

## **Flood Hazards Goals and Policies**

### *Goal V-2:*

***A built environment and flood control system that manages flood waters so as to minimize the potential for loss of life, physical injury, property damage, economic loss and social dislocation.***

### *Policies:*

- V-3 Prohibit construction which could impede storm flows within floodways, and avoid development within potential flood hazard areas.
- V-4 Retain stream courses in their natural state, along with development designs that respect natural flows.
- V-5 Require that adequate mitigation of flooding hazards is incorporated into proposed development projects so as to minimize levels of risk; such mitigation should also be consistent with the North Area Plan's environmental protection policies.
- V-6 Coordinate inter-jurisdictional planning of storm drain improvements where these facilities cross municipal boundaries.
- V-7 Develop master flood control and drainage plans on a watershed-by-watershed basis, develop comprehensive funding mechanisms that include contributions from both existing and future development on a fair share basis, and construct only those flood control and drainage facilities which are necessary after all on site measures have been implemented and which are consistent with the North Area Plan's environmental protection policies.

## **E. Fire Hazards**

When wildfires burn the slopes and canyons of Southern California, it is nature's way of eliminating dead and diseased brush from the rugged hillsides that ring the Los Angeles basin. Periodic wildfires are necessary to support diverse vegetative communities, and for the long-term health of several native plant species. Before organized fire protection was established early in this century, wildfires would burn for weeks. As migration into Southern California increased, thousands of cabins and small homes were constructed in brush-covered areas. No longer could wildfires be permitted to burn unchecked, and a policy of total fire suppression was initiated.

In its June 1994 report to the Board of Supervisors, the Los Angeles County Wildfire Safety Panel stated that scattered rural development, heavy brush and trees, and steep inaccessible slopes combine with Santa Ana winds to make the Santa Monica Mountains 'a true design for disaster.' It is in the Santa Monica Mountains, the Panel reported, that fires 'have crisscrossed the terrain that some residents have not only lost one home, but some sadly have lost three after rebuilding on the same site.' The entire jurisdiction of the North Area Plan and surrounding communities are susceptible to varying degrees of urban and/or wildland fire hazards. According to the Los Angeles County Fire Department, large fires in the Santa Monica Mountains between 1977 and 1996 include:



<u>Name/Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Estimated Cost to Fight</u>
Topanga Canyon	11/14/77	1,163	\$232,600
Carlisle (Nr. Encinal Cyn)	11/15/77	1,377	\$275,400
Kanan (From Agoura Hills to Pacific Ocean)	10/23/78	25,588	\$5,629,360
Dayton Canyon (N of LA Co. to Pacific Ocean)	10/9/82	43,060	\$9,688,500
Viewridge (Topanga Cyn)	9/6/84	401	\$92,230
Sherwood (in/around Westlake Village)	6/30/85	3,668	\$843,640
Green Meadow (largely to west in Ventura County)	10/23/93	38,536	\$9,314,151
Old Topanga (S of Calabasas, to Pac. Ocean)	11/2/93	16,562	\$4,003,000
Calabasas (Calabasas to Pacific Ocean)	10/21/96	12,502	\$4,006,000

Development in wildland areas complicates fire prevention and protection, particularly when the development is scattered and at low density, and where access is via narrow winding roadways. Ridge-top development is also an issue; during wildfires, such structures are often consumed as the heat of the fire actually pulls the fire uphill – sparing homes in the valley bottoms.

Standards for minimum road widths, fire safe construction—including low combustion building materials, fire flow requirements and clearances around structures are examples of existing County codes designed to alleviate or minimize the potential for urban and wildland fire hazards in the area. The potential impacts of wildland fire are severe, but cannot be eliminated. Wildland fire hazards must, therefore, be recognized as part of the costs of preserving a rural mountain environment.

In woodland and mountainous areas, adequately controlled ('prescribed burn') fires can have some beneficial effects, such as the control of excessive, dense brush and tree growth, reducing fire hazards, and providing enhanced wildlife habitats as these areas are re-vegetated. Where there is scattered rural development within a wildland area, however, prescribed burns cannot be used to prevent excessive undergrowth, and the potential for manmade fires is increased because of the proximity of people and buildings to wildland areas. Other means of control, such as growth inhibiting chemicals, mechanical cutting of top growth, and fire breaks could be employed; however, these measures are typically high cost and environmentally undesirable. Management of vegetation around individual homes within hillside areas substantially reduces risks to structures in a wildland fire, but also tends to disrupt wildlife habitats and scenic resources, and can cause serious erosion and sediment loading of streams and water course. Policy V-8 is intended to provide natural resource protection as well adequate fire safety.

### **Fire Hazards Goals and Policies**

*Goal V-3:*

***A built environment designed to minimize the potential for loss of life, physical injury, property damage, economic loss and social dislocation due to wildland fires.***

*Policies:*

- V-8 Promote fire prevention as the region's preferred management strategy and facilitate programs aimed at the prevention of fires; where fire safety is compromised by vegetation growth, vegetation management (selective plant clearance and use of low combustion plant materials) shall be emphasized over complete clearance.
- V-9 Promote the connection of fire and un-paved private roads to other local roads, to be used as escape routes in the event of fire.
- V-10 In fire-hazardous areas with significant biological resources, place a higher priority on avoiding development than on designing mitigation measures that would require intrusive fuel breaks and fuel modification areas to protect new development.
- V-11 Minimize potential biological impacts of fuel modification activities by limiting modification areas to those necessary to protect existing development, whenever feasible, and by emphasizing the planting of fire resistant vegetation that is compatible with the area's natural vegetative habitats, rather than the use of open fuel breaks.
- V-12 Require that new development within areas subject to wildland fires be designed and sited in a manner which minimizes the threat of loss from wildland fires (located low on slopes, or set well back from tops of slopes) while avoiding the need for massive vegetation clearance; such designs should facilitate access by firefighting equipment and provide adequate evacuation routes for residents. Improvements shall be set back from public lands where possible--particularly where required vegetation clearance may affect the public lands. However, massive vegetation clearance should be avoided where safety is not an issue in order to protect the area's natural environment.
- V-13 Prohibit development in areas with insufficient water pressure, fire flows or other accepted means for adequate fire protection unless such safety measures can be reliably provided.
- V-14 Encourage, where appropriate, 'prescribed burn' programs and special planting and maintenance programs to reduce potential fire hazards in hillside and wilderness areas.
- V-15 Maintain, where feasible, alternative water resources for fire fighting purposes during a disaster.

- V-16 Require that structures within rural areas be located along a paved, all-weather, and publicly accessible road in a manner which avoids the need for firefighters to move equipment onto private properties without adequate turnaround space. If a structure cannot feasibly be sited in this manner, require that interior fire sprinklers be installed.

## F. Non-seismic Geologic Hazards

Several areas in and around the Santa Monica Mountains are prone to slope stability problems such as landslides, mudslides, slumping, and rockfalls--activities that are exacerbated not only by seismic activity but also by the additional runoff that is often the result of development throughout the mountains watersheds. Development occurring within or in close proximity to these geologic conditions may endanger the public's safety. Landslides and mudslides have occurred and continue to occur in the hillside and mountainous portions of the area, despite the best efforts of geologists and civil engineers.

Shallow slope failures such as mudslides and slumping have occurred where graded cut and fill slopes have been inadequately constructed. Mudslides have the potential to occur with great suddenness and destructive force, thereby constituting a significant threat to life and property in the hillside areas. Soil slumping is a slower process that can also potentially cause extensive structural damage, although it is not as life-threatening as other soil stability hazards. Rockfalls are generally associated with seismic ground-shaking, blasting of rock as part of a new development, and rains washing out the ground containing large rocks and boulders. Rockfalls are a potential hazard for developments located at the base of steep slopes which have fractured rock outcroppings or large exposed boulders.

Another important concern is the shrink-swell behavior and erosiveness of clay-rich soils throughout the mountains, typically in the Topanga, Modelo and Conejo Volcanics formations, as discussed in the Environmental Impact Report. Ungraded native soils in lowlands exhibit the highest potential for shrinkage and swelling, and would have to be removed or extensively modified before development could occur. The Soil Conservation Service and other studies have identified soils types that are particularly susceptible to this activity, as well as to subsidence and hydrocompaction, which may also present development constraints due to soil conditions.

Soil erosion typically results from concentrated runoff on unprotected slopes or along unlined stream channels. Undeveloped hillside and mountainous areas within the boundaries of the North Area Plan could experience substantial erosion from runoff whenever the vegetation cover is destroyed by brushfire, removed by grading operations or cleared completely around structures. County development review procedures include consideration of soil erosion and require its mitigation.

### Geologic Hazards Goals and Policies

*Goal V-4:*

***A built environment designed and engineered to minimize the potential for loss of life, physical injury, property damage, economic loss and social dislocation due to non-seismic induced geologic phenomena.***

*Policies:*

- V-17 Emphasize avoidance of geologic hazards. Where avoidance is infeasible or undesirable, ensure through available engineering solutions that buildings will not be adversely impacted by geologic hazards.
- V-18 Restrict structures for human occupation in areas characterized by unstable geologic conditions, and limit grading of slopes in excess of 25 percent.

- V-19 Limit in-field discretion to modify approved grading plans to that which is necessary to deal with truly unanticipated conditions, and to protect public health and safety. Ensure that in-field grading modifications do not create significant adverse impacts that were not previously addressed during the project's environmental clearance.

## **G. Hazardous and Toxic Materials**

The use, storage, transport, and creation of hazardous materials and wastes is widespread today in business, industrial, and residential settings. Because improper management of hazardous materials/waste can pose a serious threat to the safety of the communities, they are regulated through a combination of federal, state, and county agencies. The transport of hazardous products along the Ventura Freeway route is of special concern; in the event of a freeway closure, alternative routes require vehicles to traverse mountain roads through environmentally sensitive areas.

Leaks or explosions have the potential to affect large segments of the communities' populations, although such accidents generally have only localized impact due to diligent efforts on the part of the Los Angeles County Fire Department to respond quickly to accidents involving hazardous materials/wastes. The fire stations located throughout the region typically will secure, evacuate and confine hazardous materials and hazardous waste spills until the Los Angeles County Hazardous Materials Division based in Newhall arrives at the location.

Another important safety issue involves underground facilities, such as storage tanks and natural gas pipelines. It is not believed that such facilities are a serious problem within the jurisdiction of the North Area Plan, due to its low level of development, but developers and residents should be aware of this potential problem.

Many portions of the North Area Plan's jurisdiction are underlain by a network of natural gas pipelines, the largest of which is a 15-inch transmission line. Natural gas is distributed under high pressure, thereby increasing its explosive potential. Natural gas leaks and explosions can occur as a result of either strong earthquakes or accidental rupture of gas lines during excavation operations at construction sites.

Hazardous materials/wastes are present throughout the region, but are widely varied in terms of both quantity and type. Such uses as light industry, dry cleaners, and automotive service shops routinely utilize solvents and other toxic substances, and also generate hazardous wastes which must be properly disposed of in compliance with strict federal and state regulations. Households also utilize and store materials and wastes which could be considered hazardous, although usually not of the same type and quantity as commercial and industrial uses. Homeowners need to be properly informed about the proper use, storage, and disposal of consumer goods containing hazardous substances. Development in the general area increases the amount of toxic materials in the ground and in water systems due to the use of pesticides, fertilizers, household cleaners, etc.--which are all unregulated concentrations having cumulative impacts.

### **Hazardous and Toxic Materials Goals and Policies**

*Goal V-5:*

***The transport, distribution, sale and use, storage and disposal of hazardous material and hazardous wastes in a manner that protects the health and safety of residents, workers, and visitors to the area, as well as the natural environment.***

*Policies:*

- V-20 Locate new facilities involved with the handling of hazardous and toxic materials and wastes at a safe distance from other land uses and natural features that may be adversely affected by this activity.

- V-21 Provide for monitoring of businesses using or storing substantial amounts of hazardous and toxic materials through conditional approvals of uses which will handle more than threshold amounts of hazardous materials.
- V-22 Explore the prohibition of hazardous waste disposal facilities within the jurisdiction of the North Area Plan, due to the sensitive seismic and geologic characteristics of the area.

Goal V-6:

***A land, air, and water environment with minimal cumulative impacts on both the public and on the environment from the use of toxic and hazardous materials.***

*Policies:*

- V-23 Protect the area's residents, workers, and visitors from the risks inherent in the transport, distribution, use, and storage of hazardous materials and hazardous wastes, recognizing that the use of these materials is integral to many aspects of society.

## **H. Noise Hazards**

The human environment contains a variety of noise sources that can affect the way people live and work. Some types of noise are only short-term irritants, like the pounding of a jackhammer or the whirring rattle of a lawnmower. These intermittent noise sources generally can be controlled through local noise regulations, such as noise ordinances. However, other noises, such as freeway and roadway noise, are permanent fixtures in the community. Transportation noise generated from the Ventura Freeway is a primary contributor to noise within the region.

Sound is technically described in terms of loudness or amplitude (measured in decibels), frequency or pitch (measured in Hertz or cycles per second), and duration (measured in seconds or minutes). The standard unit of measurement of the loudness of sound is the decibel (dB). Since the human ear is not equally sensitive to sound at all frequencies, a special frequency dependent rating scale is usually used to relate noise to human sensitivity. The A-weighted decibel scale (dB[A]) performs this compensation by discriminating against frequencies in a manner approximating the sensitivity of the human ear.

Noise is defined as unwanted sound, and is known to have several adverse effects on people, including hearing loss, speech interference, sleep interference, physiological responses, and annoyance. Based on these known adverse effects of noise, the federal government and the State of California have established criteria to protect public health and safety and to prevent disruption of certain human activities.

### **LAND USE COMPATIBILITY WITH NOISE**

The State of California Office of Noise Control has established standards and guidelines for acceptable community noise levels based on the community noise equivalent level (CNEL) rating scale. The purpose of these standards and guidelines, which are presented and discussed in greater detail in the county-wide General Plan, is to provide public agencies with a framework for setting local standards for human exposure to noise and for preparing General Plan Noise Elements. In the state's matrix, the degree of acceptability is categorized by noise exposures that are normally acceptable, conditionally acceptable, normally unacceptable and clearly unacceptable. In general, sensitive land uses should not be exposed to noise levels indicated by normally unacceptable conditions, or clearly unacceptable conditions.

The California Department of Housing and Community Development adopted noise insulation standards for the state in 1974, revised in 1988 (Title 24, Part 2, California Code of Regulations). The revised standards mandate that interior noise levels attributable to exterior sources not exceed 45 dB(A)  $L_{dn}$  or CNEL in any habitable room.

The department further recommends that an acoustical analysis be required for residential structures that are, or will be, located within the  $L_{dn}$  or CNEL contour of 60 dB(A) or greater where associated with an existing or proposed freeway, expressway, parkway, major street, thoroughfare, rail line, rapid transit line, or industrial use. The analysis must show that the building will limit exterior noise to a level of 45 dB(A) ( $L_{dn}$  or CNEL).

## Noise Goals and Policies

### Goal V-7:

***Lands and land uses which are sensitive to noise—including, but not limited to, wildlife habitats and public lands—that are shielded from excessive mobile and stationary noise.***

### Policies:

- V-24 Require development projects to demonstrate that: 1) no adverse noise effects on adjacent uses will occur from the project, and 2) no adverse effects will occur on the project from adjacent influences, if the project is proposed within a 60dBA or greater CNEL noise contour and would create or impact noise sensitive land uses.
- V-25 Use the policies within the Noise Element of the General Plan to determine the compatibility of land use when evaluating proposed new land uses within the jurisdiction of the North Area Plan. That document shall be used as a guide to assist in determining the acceptability of noise for existing or proposed land uses. Where a new land use is proposed to be located adjacent to a use which has a different noise standard, prohibit the new use from creating noise levels in excess of the adjacent use's standard at the property line.
- V-26 Prohibit, wherever feasible, new development from increasing ambient noise levels by more than 3 dB(A) within any natural area or sensitive land use.
- V-27 Consider noise impacts in the design of transportation systems, and ensure that roadway extensions and capacity enhancement projects mitigate related noise impacts to acceptable levels.
- V-28 Incorporate the consideration of noise impacts on significant wildlife habitats into the development and environmental review processes.
- V-29 Locate noise-tolerant uses and avoid noise-sensitive uses within noisy areas; emphasize the use of increased structure setbacks, sensitive building orientation, placement of the most noise tolerant portions of a project between sensitive portions and the noise source, and architectural design as the preferred noise management strategy, over the construction of noise barriers.
- V-30 New helicopter stops and pads shall be located in urban areas where noise impacts to residential areas can be limited, and shall avoid rural areas except where needed for emergency services.
- V-31 Outdoor amplified sound for commercial activities shall be prohibited between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. anywhere within the North Area Plan, except where specifically regulated by permit.



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## VI. LAND USE AND HOUSING ELEMENT

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### A. Introduction

The Land Use Element of the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan involves blending the environmental management, and public health and safety goals, guiding principles, and policies stated in previous chapters with quality of life issues, and translating these into a concrete program that will direct the general location, character, and intensity of future development within the area. Specific development policies are derived primarily from a consideration of environmental opportunities and constraints, the availability of public services and highway access, maintenance of the unique character of the various communities that comprise the North Area Plan and the understanding that activities within the general area often have off-site impacts--especially on the adjoining mountain and coastal areas. Key aspects of a sound plan for the area are clear:

- significant environmental resources need protection;
- mountain areas should provide urgently needed and readily accessible outdoor recreation;
- the unique character of existing communities should be preserved;
- a stable boundary should be established between suburban and rural areas, and
- development should be avoided which will have negative impacts on environmental resources such as downstream coastal resources and water quality.

### B. Guiding Principles

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The guiding principle for managing land use and development is:

***“the pattern of land use within the Santa Monica Mountains should be based on the following priorities:***

- ***Within areas that are not currently committed to suburban or rural development, the highest land use priority is,***  
  
***first, preservation and protection of significant environmental resources--including, wildlife habitats and corridors; watersheds; drainages; water quality and coastal resources--and,***  
  
***second, dispersed and developed recreation.***  
  
***While these lands may be able to support individual home sites at low densities (10 acres or larger average density), expansion of rural or suburban development areas is not appropriate on lands needed for either of these two priority uses.***
- ***Within and adjacent to areas committed to rural development, the highest land use priority are those uses which protect the integrity of existing rural communities, as well as significant environmental resources. Expansion of suburban development is not appropriate on lands needed for this priority land use.***
- ***Within areas committed to suburban development, the highest priority land use is for uses which protect the unique characteristics***

*of the various urban communities existing within the region, as well as significant environmental resources. Land uses which do not provide such protection are not appropriate.'*

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## C. Development and Environmental Resources

The North Area Plan establishes a balance between the natural and man-made environments. As part of this plan, environmental thresholds are established to define the capacity of the natural environment and thereby set environmental protection standards related to land use.

### Development and Open Space Goals and Policies

Goal VI-1:

***A pattern of land uses reflecting the priorities defined under 'guiding principles,' and use of land based on the concept of environmental threshold carrying capacity.***



*Policies:*

- VI-1 Emphasize retention of the area's natural setting, rural and semi-rural character, and scenic features over expansion of higher density suburban development areas.
- VI-2 Direct the location and intensity of new land uses in conformance with the environmental threshold carrying capacities as outlined in Figure 1~ *'Environmental Thresholds and Appropriate Levels of Development.'*
- VI-3 Preserve areas of diverse topography with large areas unbroken by man-made slopes, and long-range vistas of open ridgelines and mountain slopes which define the extent of urban and suburban development.
- VI-4 Preserve compact, well-defined suburban areas which are bounded by rural residential and natural open space. Commercial and office areas should be of low-rise design.
- VI-5 Limit ridgeline development occurring on hillsides and mountainous areas, following closely those North Area Plan policies and standards designed to protect the resources and views of these areas.
- VI-6 Preserve open space corridors that link major open space areas, natural habitats and public park lands to activity centers, other open space, and scenic routes to help define suburban form and beautify the region.
- VI-7 Use open space to define the boundaries of suburban areas, and to protect and enhance the unique character and identity of the area.
- VI-8 The impacts of permitted development should be mitigated pursuant to the environmental and development standards of the jurisdiction experiencing the impacts; impacts should not be exported to other jurisdictions.
- VI-9 Granting of a density bonus for low- and very low-income and/or senior citizen housing in *Mountain Lands* and *Rural Residential* lands shall be discouraged due to the rural area's remote locations, lack of access to public transportation, social services, employment opportunities, and other supportive services--as set forth in the Countywide General Plan locational guidelines for lower income housing, as well as the fact that the sizing of

infrastructure will not necessarily have been designed to accommodate demands beyond those based on maximum density of the adopted Land Use Policy Map.

VI-10 Affordable housing for low- and very low-income and senior citizen housing projects shall be encouraged in areas designated *Residential* on the Land Use Policy Map, consistent with the policies and development standards of the North Area Plan and the locational criteria for such housing in the Countywide General Plan. The following policies should guide the review and approval of affordable housing projects:

- private sector participation in the development of low- and very low-income should be encouraged;
- convenient access to public transportation shall be available;
- traffic impacts of high density development shall be avoided;
- new lower-income housing shall be dispersed throughout the urban designated county areas; and
- the design and construction of rental housing, including mobile home parks, to meet the needs of lower income households--particularly large families, senior citizens, and people with disabilities--shall be supported and facilitated.

## **D. Pattern and Character of Development**

While the previous section deals with directing development into the most appropriate locations under conditions which protect the area's natural environment, this section deals with the distribution of the various *types* of uses that make up the individual communities within the planning area, and the expected *character* of development. This section draws a distinction between areas that are suitable for urban/suburban development or expansion and those which are to be maintained as rural.

Suburban development is limited by the Land Use Policy Map to locations within and surrounded by the region's cities, in areas which are proximate to other urban/suburban land uses, where essential services are available and few natural constraints are present. The character of rural communities is recognized and protected through control of development intensity and site design. In specific communities and settings, design review and standards are applied to one or more components of development projects. Areas classified by the North Area Plan as Rural are not to be encroached upon by inappropriate suburban development.

The County General Plan established design review policies for hillside management areas--parcels with natural slopes of 25% or greater. (For density standards, see Figure 2 in this chapter.)

Figure 1

**Environmental Thresholds and Appropriate Levels of Development**

*If an area is generally like this,*

Areas whose environmental values are such that any alteration of the natural landscape would create significant environmental impacts, including lands that have previously been committed to open space as environmental mitigation in order to protect environmental resources.

*and has any of these specific characteristics,*

- Slopes in excess of 50 percent.
- Primary ridgelines forming a skyline.
- Habitat areas of rare, threatened, or endangered species identified by federal or state law.
- Archaeological sites that have been preserved in place as mitigation for a previous development project.
- Flood ways as defined by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

*it should be managed like this.*

Land use should be limited to environmental education, research, and enhancement programs. Development, including developed recreation, is generally inappropriate.

*If an area is generally like this,*

Areas with significant environmental features, where a certain degree of development may be tolerated without significant environmental impacts provided that development is appropriately clustered.

*and has any of these specific characteristics,*

- Areas owned or managed as part of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area or another public agency primarily for the preservation of natural open space.
- Hillsides having a slope between 25 and 50 percent.
- Areas susceptible to high water runoff, such as major watersheds and drainages.
- Extensive areas of unstable soils.
- Riparian and wetland vegetative communities, woodland areas, and areas that provide connectivity between core wildlife habitats where few linkage options are available.
- Habitat areas of "candidate" species.
- Coastal sage scrub and areas listed by the California Natural Diversity Data Base as "special" or "of concern."
- Significant archaeological sites (as defined by Appendix K of CEQA Guidelines).
- Areas of known and/or current mass wasting/landslides based on current soils and geology studies.
- Areas subject to 100-year flooding as defined by FEMA.
- Areas of outstanding scenic value.
- Lands mapped as part of a County Significant Ecological Area (SEA) or an SEA buffer area.

*it should be managed like this.*

Land use should be limited to undeveloped and developed recreation and low intensity rural use. While the primary use of these lands is preservation of environmental resources, development may be clustered into the least sensitive portions of the site in order to preserve and protect natural features. Water runoff should be prevented, and natural drainages protected, based upon State and local standards and regulations. The specific environmental features described to the left in this table, including the environmental features leading to the SEA designation and the buffer areas needed to protect those features, are to be preserved in place, and development should not be the visually dominant feature when viewed from designated scenic corridors. "Manufactured" open space areas, such as manmade slopes and introduced landscaping, should blend in with the surrounding natural environment.

***If an area is generally like this,***

Lands that retain a natural or open character, or which include rural development that is compatible with the characteristic natural setting. These lands may contain isolated, significant environmental features; however, these features do not generally dominate the natural landscape. As a result, these lands are generally suitable for some level of development.

***and has any of these specific characteristics,***

Rolling lands having slopes less than 25 percent, except in isolated areas. This does not include lands containing significant biological habitats such as oak savannas or riparian areas.

Areas located more than 600 feet from a public roadway, or 300 feet from a public roadway having only a single means of ingress and egress.

Designated scenic corridors.

Areas of moderate natural scenic value.

***it should be managed like this.***

New development should remain visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape. However, significant environmental features must be protected--including natural drainages, and introduced landscaping, manufactured landforms, structures, roads, and other manmade features should be compatible with the surrounding natural environment. Thus, landform grading and landform planting techniques are to be incorporated into new development.

***If an area is generally like this,***

Infill lands within currently developed urban and rural communities, and lands where manmade features are the predominant visual feature. In these areas, retention of natural landforms is neither practical nor feasible.

***and has any of these specific characteristics,***

Developed lands, areas committed to urban development, and open lands that have not been committed to open space, and are not needed to establish an integrated open space system.

Areas not containing significant biological resources; previously disturbed lands where re-vegetation is impractical.

Areas free from natural hazards.

Areas without significant natural scenic values.

Areas of primarily manmade land-forms.

***it should be managed like this.***

New development may visually dominate and even replace the characteristic natural landscape. A ***developed*** character, either urban or rural, that is compatible with the characteristics of the adjacent community is anticipated. Thus, development may be visually incongruent with natural features when seen in the foreground or middle ground. When viewed as foreground, new development and land management activities need not appear to borrow from the natural environment. To soften visual impacts, land-form grading and land-form planting techniques are to be incorporated into new development.

New development should not dominate the background. The visual characteristics of background views from the Ventura Freeway and designated scenic routes and key public lands are to be those of the natural environment.

## Pattern and Character of Development Goals and Policies

### Goal VI-2:

***A pattern of rural land use that complements the largely suburban development of adjacent cities, with a resulting design that promotes social, environmental, and economic well-being in a manner that reflects the environmental carrying capacity of the land within the North Area Plan's jurisdiction and its unique characteristics.***

### Policies:

- VI-11 Maintain distinctions between suburban and rural lands identified on the Land Use Policy Map, and provide appropriate buffer areas and transition zones between suburban and rural areas.
- VI-12 Provide separate “suburban” and “rural” standards for infrastructure and public services.
- VI-13 In addition to maintaining low densities within rural areas, require the provision/protection of the features that contribute to rural character and rural lifestyles, including, but not limited to:
- retention of the natural terrain and vegetation in hillside areas, rather than creation of large, flat pads with non-native landscaping;
  - natural features and streams which are protected by adequate development setbacks;
  - large lots that offer the ambiance of privacy and solitude in a rural setting;
  - rural road sections without curbs, gutters, or sidewalks;
  - opportunities for the keeping of horses;
  - limited or no commercial development;
  - irregular placement of dwellings on individual lots and variations in designs that result in custom-look housing;
  - an impressive physical setting, comprised of large areas of natural hillside, oak woodlands, canyons, riparian areas, and wildlife; and a visual character dominated by natural environmental features;
  - preservation of openness and scenic beauty of the community's natural environment;
  - preservation of significant environmental features, and incorporation of open spaces into the fabric of new developments;
  - a lack of night lighting and existence of dark skies, enhancing the visibility of stars at night;
  - hillside residential development designs which feature natural, rather than manmade forms, and which emphasize the use of custom foundations in place of slab construction;
  - size and height of houses and flat pad areas in hillside settings to those which are consistent with character of the natural setting; limit such features as tennis courts and paved areas; and

- protection of hilltops and ridgelines by prohibition of grading in those areas, unless required to provide or improve safety access to existing improvements.
- VI-14 In addition to considering the mass and scale of the entire development or structure, restrict the total square footage of and grading for rural structures to a size that maintains the area's open character, and is compatible with the open space characteristics of the surrounding hillsides. Within antiquated subdivisions, limit the mass, scale, and total square footage of structures and grading to a size which is compatible with the size of the parcel upon which the structure is placed so as to avoid a crowded appearance in the built environment.
- VI-15 Require that new developments use architectural and siting features which are compatible with adjacent existing and planned developments, and include the following:
- compatibility with prominent design features existing in the immediate area (i.e., trees, land-forms, historic landmarks);
  - compatibility with existing structures; and
  - the natural environment (i.e., hillsides, washes, native vegetation, community landscaping).
- VI-16 Require that new developments provide a transition to surrounding development, for example:
- the bulk of new structures should relate to the area's environment and to the adjacent development;
  - setbacks from streets and adjacent properties should relate to the scale of the structure, the function of the street, and the intended character of the development, and should encourage pedestrian scale and uses; and
  - multi-story residential structures should be made less imposing by using exterior profile designs that complement the contours of the land; variances from height restrictions shall generally not be permitted.
- VI-17 Require that new developments respect viewsheds and view corridors from public parks and trails, and scenic highways to the greatest extent possible:
- preserve and enhance, where applicable, view corridors from public roadways, which are oriented toward existing or proposed community amenities, such as parks, open space, or natural features;
  - encourage variations in architectural and landscape components which provide visual interest, but do not create abrupt changes or cause discord in the overall character of the neighborhood; and
  - provide appropriate transitions between different projects and suburban/rural land use transitions, including the provision of buffer areas, landscaping and other similar treatments (e.g., hedges, fences, berms, or landscaped open space). In providing transitions and buffers, physical barriers should not be placed in areas needed for drainage or wildlife movement (e.g. across stream courses or habitat linkages).
- VI-18 Encourage the clustering of development, particularly within lands designated either *Mountain Lands* or *Rural Residential*, for the primary purpose of preserving significant environmental features; clustered development should meet the following criteria:
- the resulting design shall provide public amenities beyond basic County requirements—such as improved circulation for the surrounding area, additional

dedicated public open space, additional protection of environmentally sensitive lands and/or the construction/maintenance of public facilities such as trails;

- the resulting intensity and character of the developed area which results from clustering is compatible with--although not necessarily identical in appearance to--the surrounding environment;
- lot coverage and pad grading should not result in an urban appearance, and side yard setbacks should prevent an urban-subdivision appearance;
- the result of clustering development shall yield a more desirable and environmentally sensitive development plan and preserve significant environmental features; and
- areas preserved in open space as the result of clustering are to be restricted to open space in perpetuity.

- VI-19 Require that light industrial and commercial uses include adequately landscaped open space, and be designed to relate to the surrounding environment.
- VI-20 Limit structure heights in suburban and rural areas to ensure compatibility of new development with the respective characteristics of the surrounding settings and sites.
- VI-21 Encourage siting of developments to include setbacks that protect public lands, streams, scenic features, views, and other natural features and that maximize open space areas; project density and structure placement shall be consistent with the need to minimize vegetation clearance for fire protection.
- VI-22 Preserve and enhance low density residential neighborhoods through enforcement of land use and development standards, ensuring that adjacent non-residential uses are buffered from residences in harmonious and attractive ways.
- VI-23 Retain existing rural communities primarily for low intensity, rural residential uses.
- VI-24 Coordinate the provision of greenbelts and open space within individual developments and community areas so as to foster and enhance local identity and sense of place and to connect trails and open space/wildlife corridors wherever possible.
- VI-25 Incorporate sufficient areas of open space in suburban development projects, including pedestrian spaces, sidewalks, and useable open space, to maintain a sense of openness in developed areas.
- VI-26 Exterior lighting--except that needed for safety--is discouraged. Require that new exterior lighting installations use low intensity directional lighting and screening to minimize light spillover and glare onto residential neighborhoods and park lands, thereby preserving--to the extent consistent with public safety--a natural night sky. Street lights shall be permitted only where required for safety.
- VI-27 Promote extensive landscaping in new suburban developments, while emphasizing the use of native and drought-tolerant plant materials as well as low volume irrigation and prohibiting the use of non-native invasive species,; require the use of regional native plants in rural developments and near natural areas, as identified by such sources as the California Native Plant Society, Santa Monica Mountains Chapter.
- VI-28 Locate suburban residential and non-residential development in areas accessible to major transportation routes and in areas where a suburban-level of infrastructure can be readily extended.

- VI-29 Concentrate light industrial, commercial and office uses adjacent to the Ventura Freeway corridor, and ensure that each project has adequate access, can handle the traffic, and is accessible to essential services, with appropriate site design standards to enhance community character.
- VI-30 Require that industrial and commercial uses be fully compatible with the capabilities of the Las Virgenes Metropolitan Water District system and other community and on-site sewage systems.

Goal VI-3:

***A well regulated telecommunications network that serves the needs of the general public, limits damage to the environment, and avoids contributing to visual and unsightly blight.***

Policies:

- VI-31 Wireless telecommunication facility sites shall preserve the character and aesthetics of areas chosen for such uses by limiting the visual and safety impacts of such facilities through careful design, screening, and mitigation requirements. The co-location and clustering of wireless telecommunication facilities and structures shall be encouraged, wherever possible, to help avert unnecessary proliferation of such facilities in public and private property.



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## LAND USE POLICY MAP

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The Land Use Policy Map for the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan graphically depicts the general location, character, and intensity of development throughout the jurisdiction of the North Area Plan. The pattern and distribution of land uses are derived primarily from the consideration of environmental opportunities and constraints, the availability of public services, highway access, the maintenance of local community character, and development necessary to serve local and regional needs, including business, housing and recreational opportunities.

It is important to recognize that it is the Land Use Policy Map that establishes the maximum number of units permitted overall on any parcel of land--rather than the zoning designation. The basic difference between land use policy and zoning:

1) **Land use policy** establishes the basic type and intensity of use permitted by the North Area Plan, including the overall lot density--the factor that determines the maximum number of units that can be created on any given parcel.

2) **Zoning** sets the specific standards that must be observed in utilizing the land, including such factors as the minimum size of any lot created by a subdivision. Zoning does not mean that all lots must be of minimum size; it merely says that no lot can be smaller than the minimum size. Once again, it is the land use policy that establishes the total number of lots or units that can be created.

It should be emphasized that neither land use policy or zoning standards are the sole determinants of the number of units appropriate for, or which may be approved, on a given parcel. The application of all other North Area Plan policies, along with the requirements of other regulatory agencies with jurisdiction over the property, may significantly reduce this number.

Figure 2

**RESIDENTIAL DENSITY CALCULATION**

1. Land Use Classification First, determine whether the parcel is in an urban or non-urban land use plan category.
  - A. Urban (more than one dwelling unit per acre): Density will be calculated using the **net area** of the parcel.
    - **net area** as defined in the Zoning Ordinance (Sec.22.08.010) excludes dedicated streets and private easements (e.g. access, flood control) where the owner of the underlying fee does not have the right to use the entire surface.
  - B. Non-Urban (one dwelling unit or less per acre): Density will be calculated using the **gross area** of the parcel.
    - **gross area** as defined in the Zoning Ordinance (Sec.22.08.010) includes dedicated streets and private easements.
2. Undersized Sections Second, determine if the parcel is the result of the normal division of an undersized section of land. (If the parcel is not within an undersized section, go to Step 3.)
  - A. An undersized section of land is one which contains less than 640 acres and includes a fractional section. A fractional section of land is an undersized section, often irregularly shaped, which has been divided into numbered lots by the original government survey of public lands.
  - B. The normal division of land is considered to be either:
    - i. A breakdown by quarters and/or halves, which results in parcels containing 320, 160, 80, 40, 20, or 10 acres, or
    - ii. A numbered lot created by the original government survey of a fractional section.
  - C. If the parcel complies with 2A and 2B and contains a gross area which is not less than 90% of the gross area of a similarly created parcel from a full sized section of land, for the purpose of residential density calculation the gross area of the parcel shall be considered the same as if it had been created from a full sized section.

Example: A nine acre parcel with 0.5 acres of dedicated street right-of-way, resulting from the normal division of an undersized section, would be given credit for a gross area of ten acres.
  - D. These provisions do not apply to parcels with a gross area of less than nine acres.
3. Residential Density Third, calculate the maximum potential density for a parcel based on the plan category and hillside management policy.

Figure 2 (cont.)

- A. The density factors for each land use category, indicating the maximum number of dwelling units allowed per acre, are: N20=0.05; N10=0.1; N5=0.2; N2=0.5; N1=1.0; U2=2.0; U4=4.0; U8=8.0. These densities do not apply, however, to those portions of non-urban lands (categories with an "N" prefix) with natural slopes of 50% or greater. On these lands, the maximum number of units per acre is 0.05, regardless of land use category.
- B. If the parcel is in a *non-urban category*, measure the number of acres—if any—having a slope of 50% or greater; then measure the number of acres in each land use category with slopes less than 50%. Express the results to the nearest 1/10 of an acre. For any portions of the parcel with slopes of 50% or greater, multiply the area by a density factor of 0.05 units per acre. For the area of the parcel with slopes of less than 50%, multiply the area within each plan category by its density factor and express the product to the nearest 1/10 of a unit.
- C. If the parcel is in an *urban category* ("U" prefix) measure the number of acres in each land use category and express the results to the nearest 1/10 of an acre. Multiply the area within each plan category by its density factor and express the product to the nearest 1/10 of a unit.
- D. If more than one category applies to a given parcel, add the component products. Round down any fractional number to the next lower whole number. The result is the maximum potential number of dwelling units or new residential lots that may be possible to develop on the subject lot or parcel of land.
- E. The calculation of the maximum potential residential density of a parcel is one of the initial steps in determining the magnitude of a proposed residential project. During the development review/approval process, all relevant policies of the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan will be identified and considered, and the number of dwelling units or new residential lots will be reduced as appropriate.

A policy framework for the North Area Plan is provided for in the county-wide chapters of the General Plan. The Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan Land Use Policy Map refines the broad policies of the county-wide chapters.

Although the Land Use Policy Map describes appropriate land use types and intensities of development, as noted above it is but one component of a comprehensive policy framework set out in the text of the North Area Plan which must be consulted during the case review process for making land use entitlement decisions. The map depicts land use classifications, each of which is intended to describe the predominant use characteristics within the area covered.

The Land Use Policy Map is not an attempt at site design or project layout, but represents a relatively detailed refinement of county-wide land use policy. The map allocates land uses and intensities to an area which can have various development designs consistent with North Area Plan policy.

While the map serves as a tool for coordinating future development, it is not predictive, and does not suggest that all lands shown for a particular use will be fully developed at the indicated densities or intensities of use allowed. In addition, the map represents extensive work with citizens and local governments within the Ventura Freeway corridor. It constitutes a collective statement

of local county policy for adjacent city, regional, state and federal governments and other public service agencies whose programs may affect the unincorporated area.

### **Prior Approvals and Time Extensions**

It is not the intent of the North Area Plan, including mapped or textual policies, to preclude approval of final maps and development approvals (permits) related thereto which are in substantial conformance with a tentative map approved or extended by the County of Los Angeles, except as California law may otherwise provide. However, a time extension for a previously approved project may not be granted where facts of record demonstrate that significant changed circumstances raising public health and safety concerns justify a reevaluation of the tentative approval, which could lead to the redesign of the project, the imposition of new or different conditions of approval, and possible denial.

### **Coastal Zone Boundary Changes**

In the event that a change in coastal zone boundary occurs, the boundary of the North Area Plan will automatically adjust to accommodate the change. The land use category applicable to any parcel that shifts out of the coastal zone will apply under the North Area Plan.

## **LAND USE CATEGORIES**

### ***OPEN SPACE***

The primary purpose of lands designated as *Open Space* is to provide areas for the preservation of environmental, historical, or cultural resources, recreation, and protection of the public health and safety. Uses consistent with the preservation of environmental, cultural, or historical resources, production of natural resources, and the protection of the public health and safety may be considered appropriate subject to applicable North Area Plan policies and ordinance provisions. Typical uses include equestrian activities, parks, nature preserves and sanctuaries, deed restricted private open space, streams, rivers and open drainage easements, trails, rural campgrounds and historical building sites.

The following *Open Space* land use categories are used on the Land Use Policy Map, indicating typical uses.

- OS** Conservancy lands, private parks, nature preserves, wildlife habitats, drainage easements, and cemeteries.
- OS-P** Public Parks, including federal, state and county parks
- OS-DR** Privately-owned lands which are deed restricted to remain in permanent open space.
- OS-W** Water bodies dedicated to an open space use.

### ***MOUNTAIN LANDS***

Lands designated *Mountain Lands* within the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan consist of those rolling hillside areas, steep slopes, and isolated remote mountain lands with difficult or no access. Mountainous Lands also include areas served by winding mountain roads which cannot accommodate substantial increases in traffic from new development. Permitted uses include low density single family housing, agriculture, equestrian uses, retreats, monasteries, private

camp grounds, bed-and-breakfast lodging, low intensity conference centers, public and private schools, water tanks, telecommunications facilities and other local serving commercial and public facilities. Clustering of uses may be beneficial in helping to reduce disturbances to the topographic, vegetative and biological settings. The following categories of *Mountain Lands* are used on the Land Use Policy Map:

**N 20 Mountain Lands 20**

Not to exceed a maximum residential density of one dwelling unit per 20 acres (1 du/20 ac)

**N10 Mountain Lands 10**

Not to exceed a maximum residential density of one dwelling unit per 10 acres (1 du/10 ac)

**N5 Mountain Lands 5**

Not to exceed a maximum residential density of one dwelling unit per 5 acres (1 du/5 ac)

***RURAL RESIDENTIAL***

The *Rural Residential* land use category is intended to provide for low density single family detached housing in a setting consistent with the North Area Plan's definition of 'rural' area. Clustering may be useful in providing community open space and protecting resources. Other uses that may be appropriate include: agriculture, equestrian uses, retreats, monasteries, private camp grounds, bed-and-breakfast lodging, low intensity conference centers, public and private schools and telecommunications facilities and other local serving public facilities, including uses permitted by the underlying zone such as local-serving commercial. Existing mobile home parks are deemed consistent with the category in which they are located and, in the event destroyed, may be rebuilt to existing densities, providing all other current policies--such as environmental protection--are incorporated into the rebuilt project; redevelopment of such sites to other uses including permanent housing must be consistent with the underlying land use category. The following *Rural Residential* land use categories are used on the Land Use Policy Map:

**N2 Rural Residential 2**

Not to exceed a maximum residential density of one dwelling unit per 2 acres (1 du/2 ac)

**N1 Rural Residential 1**

Not to exceed a maximum residential density of one dwelling unit per acre (1 du/ac)

***RESIDENTIAL***

The *Residential* land use categories are intended to provide for single family detached and attached dwelling units, including large lot estates, typical suburban tracts, small lot single family residences, and townhouses, as appropriate to the designated maximum density of land. Existing mobile home parks are deemed consistent with all *Residential* categories in which they are located and, in the event destroyed, may be rebuilt to existing densities--providing they incorporate all other current North Area Plan requirements; redevelopment of such sites to other uses including permanent housing must be consistent with the density specified by the underlying land use category. Public and private schools may be found compatible with this category. The following *Residential* land use categories are used on the Land Use Policy Map:

- U2 Residential 2**  
Not to exceed a maximum residential density of two dwelling units per acre (2 du/ac)
- U4 Residential 4**  
Not to exceed a maximum residential density of four dwelling units per acre (4 du/ac)
- U8 Residential 8**  
Not to exceed a maximum residential density of eight dwelling units per acre (8 du/ac).

**COMMERCIAL**

The following *Commercial* land use categories are used on the Land Use Policy Map:

- C Commercial**  
The primary purpose of areas designated as *Commercial* is to provide appropriately located areas for the general shopping and commercial service needs of area residents and workers, as well as the needs of highway users and tourists. Appropriate uses include a range of general commercial, including retail and personal service uses, specialty shops, offices, highway oriented uses, financial institutions, motels, and art and studio facilities. Quiet, non-polluting light industrial uses such as those found in "high tech" business parks may also be located in areas designated Commercial. Maximum land use intensity of 0.5 floor area ratio (FAR).

- CR Commercial Recreation - Limited Intensity**  
The primary purpose of areas designated as *Commercial Recreation - Limited Intensity* is to provide appropriately located areas for the establishment of low intensity uses and facilities adjacent to areas generally designated as *Mountain Lands* or *Rural Residential*. Appropriate uses include restaurants, general stores, bed and breakfast lodging, private recreation of a commercial nature including fish ponds, equestrian facilities, club houses connected to a private recreation use, and visitor-serving uses for visitors to the recreation areas of the Santa Monica Mountains. Maximum land use intensity of 0.3 FAR.

**PUBLIC AND SEMI-PUBLIC FACILITIES**

- P Public and Semi-Public Facilities**  
The primary purpose of areas designated as *Public and Semi-Public Facilities* is to provide appropriately located areas for the conduct of activities by public and quasi-public agencies, including landfills, probations camps, educational facilities, and public service facilities.

**TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR**

- TC Transportation Corridor**  
The primary purpose of areas designated as *Transportation Corridor* is to provide areas for major transportation facilities. Principal uses include freeways, transit stations, and commuter and freight rail lines. The Ventura Freeway is the only such use shown on the Land Use Policy Map.

**SPECIFIC PLAN**

- SP Specific Plan**  
The primary purpose of areas designed as *Specific Plan* is to allow areas to be planned as a unit with specialized regulations at a size and level less

than the entire North Area Plan. Allowable land uses and intensity of development are those permitted by the adopted specific plan.

## **OVERLAY**

### **SEA Significant Ecological Areas**

The primary purpose of lands designated as *Significant Ecological Areas* (Overlay) is to provide areas for the preservation of natural resources, while allowing low intensity compatible uses on public and private property. SEAs are lands possessing important biological resources, including habitat for rare and endangered species, sites with critical fish and wildlife values, important water courses, relatively undisturbed areas of typical natural habitat and regionally scarce biotic resources. Applicants for private development within an SEA must comply with the review procedures for an SEA-Conditional Use Permit. The underlying land use designation shall be used as a guide in determining compatible land uses and the intensity of use. Managers of public lands are encouraged to incorporate SEA values as a part of their resource management plans.



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## VII. CIRCULATION ELEMENT

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### A. Introduction

The ability to move people and goods within an area is necessary if a community is to be a desirable place in which to live, work, shop, and recreate. This mobility, or the lack thereof, is both a result and a determinant of the location and intensity of development.

Roads are the primary determinant of an area's access, and represent a major dilemma for the North Area Plan. Traffic congestion from both periodic recreational visitors and weekday commuters often overloads sections of the Ventura Freeway and the area's roadway network and creates potentially serious safety problems. Much of this congestion is due to through traffic--beginning and ending outside the planning area. Significant additional carrying capacity is needed on area roadways and highways to move traffic at desirable levels of service; however, to provide all such additional capacity in the North Area Plan would be environmentally destructive and disruptive to existing residential neighborhoods and rural communities. Transportation planning within the planning area cannot be expected to entirely resolve the problems that exist.

Several significant circulation and capacity problems currently constrain the carrying capacities of the Ventura Freeway and other regionally significant highways such as Malibu Canyon Road, Las Virgenes Road, Agoura Road, and Kanan-Dume Road. Many commuters traverse the Ventura Freeway through the corridor traveling to metropolitan Los Angeles. Because of serious traffic congestion problems in the San Fernando Valley and the Sepulveda Pass, a number of these commuters take a "Z" pattern route through the mountains to use Pacific Coast Highway. Rural roads through the Santa Monica Mountains area are, therefore, also commuter routes to West Los Angeles and the South Bay. Recognizing the need to accommodate this pattern of travel is central to developing an effective circulation policy for the mountains.

Physical and environmental constraints are significant deterrents to highway expansion throughout much of the planning area. Because of the mountainous topography within the boundary of--as well as surrounding--the North Area Plan, the existence of unstable hillsides and sensitive environmental resources, costs for extending or constructing major new roadways is exorbitantly high, even if physical and environmental mitigation could be provided. In recognition of the problems inherent in constructing, widening, or extending roadways through the area's natural terrain, policies have existed for the past 20 years limiting expansion of the area's existing roadway system.

Furthermore, the ability of local municipalities to influence the ultimate configuration of the interchanges and freeway ramps within the area is limited since modifications to these interchanges and ramps are primarily under the jurisdiction of Caltrans. Differences also exist between Caltrans and local municipalities with respect to what constitutes an acceptable peak hour Level of Service on the ramps at these interchanges, and funds for expansion of freeway bridges and interchange improvement are extremely limited.

To facilitate physical mobility in a manner consistent with the overall circulation needs of the region, this Chapter of the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan addresses the following issues:

- Balancing Roadway Carrying Capacity with Environmental Sensitivity
- Managing Roadway Carrying Capacity
- Transportation Alternatives
- Access to Recreational Areas.

## B. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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The guiding principle for facilitating mobility is:

***'the area's roadway and transportation system is an integral part of community character, and that facilities and programs to improve traffic flow must be accomplished within a framework of preserving the natural environment and protecting the unique character of the individual communities within the planning area.'***

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Although additional roadway capacity and alternatives to the Ventura Freeway are needed, past experience has shown that the area's municipalities cannot build their way out of traffic congestion problems without losing much of the natural beauty and environmental values of the area. Expansion of the area's roadway system using traditional roadway design principles will not respond well to the mountainous terrain that covers large portions of the region. Thus, the County, in cooperation with the area's cities, will approach future transportation improvements as follows:

- Transportation demand management strategies and alternative forms of transportation will be pursued, whenever feasible, before "supply side" solutions of increasing roadway capacity are implemented. Roadway carrying capacities will be expanded only where existing neighborhoods and rural communities are adequately protected, and it is economically feasible and environmentally prudent to do so.
- Land use planning decisions shall integrate places of residence, retail commerce, daily service needs, work, education, and recreation to the extent possible.
- The intensity of future development will be limited to that which can be accommodated on area roadways through creation of a mix of land uses that realistically balances the potential for growth in and around the North Area Plan's suburban and rural communities and mountainous areas, environmental and neighborhood protection needs, and the need to improve the performance of the area's roadway system.
- In analyzing the traffic impacts of a proposed development, the County will consider the project's effects system-wide, including effects on transportation alternatives, and will avoid the creation of bottlenecks in the area's roadway system.
- The County will ensure that each new development that would cumulatively contribute to the need for improvements or additions to the area's circulation system will construct or fund its fair share of such improvements or additions. Equitable funding mechanisms should be sought to ensure that individual dwellings placed on existing lots of record contribute their fair share to areawide roadway improvements.
- To the degree feasible, the County will encourage mixed-use developments to reduce vehicle trips, and reduce the number of home-to-work trips during peak travel hours through transportation demand management programs which increase average vehicle ridership and shift a portion of such trips to non-peak hours.
- To the extent feasible, the carrying capacity of existing roadways will be increased through implementation of transportation systems management concepts (e.g., traffic signal coordination, consolidation of driveways, use of off-street rather than on-street parking); such efforts will be coordinated with the region's cities and adjacent Ventura County.
- The County will participate in developing regional circulation improvement measures in cooperation with the region's cities as well as the city of Los Angeles, Ventura County, and the

city of Thousand Oaks. Such measures may include, but are not limited to, the development of reciprocal traffic improvement fee programs.

- The County will implement the provisions of the Los Angeles County Congestion Management Program by requiring development projects to analyze and provide appropriate mitigation for traffic impacts on regional circulation facilities.

### **C. Balancing Roadway Carrying Capacity with Environmental Sensitivity**

Road construction and maintenance can have a significant impact on the environment. The development and improvement of roads often involves major land-form modifications, resulting in erosion, siltation, rockfall, and scenic degradation in the rugged terrain of the Santa Monica Mountains and impacts on coastal resources and downstream waters.

In addition, with the major cross-mountain roads carrying substantial loads of recreation and commuter traffic, inappropriate highway improvements could lead to further increases in rural traffic volumes, as well as be growth-inducing. This new development would lead to a transformation in the character of the rural mountain communities. These consequences require that road improvements be sensitive to the environment and compatible with rural communities.

Transportation planning also needs to be coordinated with land use, air quality management, water quality issues, and environmental protection programs. The objectives of the North Area Plan are designed to improve traffic flow, local air quality, and energy conservation, as well as protect sensitive environmental resources through:

- increasing the area's roadway carrying capacity and eliminating congestion where such increased carrying capacity is feasible and environmentally prudent;
- reducing the number of automobile trips—particularly of single-occupant vehicles—and providing alternatives to automobile use;
- reducing the length of automobile trips by integrating land uses;
- providing an arrangement of land uses which promote efficient travel patterns; and
- limiting the intensity of future development to that which can be accommodated on a roadway system that has been planned to protect community character and significant environmental features.

Recreational opportunities in the Santa Monica Mountains should be readily accessible to the regional population, with provisions for convenient public transportation including park-and-ride lots and shuttle bus systems. Yet, access to these recreational areas has been inadequate. Improvements to the road network used to serve this recreation-using traffic have been considered; however, the mountainous nature of the recreational setting has largely precluded such additional access.

Improved vehicular movement, public transit, and non-motorized transportation options such as paths and bikeways are key considerations in increasing the accessibility of the parks within the Santa Monica Mountains. Frequent and convenient transit service would make it easier for people with cars to leave them at home or at staging areas when going to recreation areas, and would reduce the impact of the automobile on the tranquility of the area's natural setting. Transit could also be used to shift demand to lesser-known facilities.

## **Balancing Highway Capacity and Environmental Sensitivity Goals and Policies**

### *Goal VII-1:*

***A transportation system consistent with the area's rural and scenic quality, environmental threshold carrying capacities, and planned growth.***

### *Policies:*

- VII-1 Emphasize non-motorized transportation, where feasible, before pursuing construction or widening of roadways through hillside areas. Expand the carrying capacity of the area roadway system only where existing environmental resources (habitats/linkages, viewsheds, SEAs, etc.) , residential neighborhoods, and rural communities are adequately protected, and it is economically feasible and prudent to do so in light of the environmental threshold carrying capacities and environmental protection, environmental hazard mitigation, and community character policies contained in the North Area Plan.
- VII-2 Treat environmental and neighborhood protection as equal priorities to maintaining traffic flow and meeting roadway performance standards, evaluating the appropriateness of roadway construction and widening on a case-by-case basis. Environmental protection includes water quality impacts throughout the affected watersheds as well as protection of wildlife habitats and corridors.
- VII-3 Maintain appropriate rural and mountain road standards for the non-urban portions of the North Area Plan, which recognize and require roadways to respect natural topography. On mountain roads and two lane rural area highways, construct only those roadway improvements required for public safety, and avoid encouraging traffic volumes and speeds that would impact the serenity of the natural environment and established rural communities.
- VII-4 Encourage aesthetic design of road improvements, such as rock faced culverts, consistent with financial constraints and safety considerations.
- VII-5 Maintain a quality visual experience along the entire length of scenic highways, through protection and enhancement of views and the development of appropriate landscaping and roadside exhibits.
- VII-6 In reviewing projects that generate substantial amounts of "off-peak" traffic, analyze the intrusiveness of project traffic as a land use compatibility issue in addition to the traditional roadway capacity analysis.
- VII-7 Limit requirements for curbs, gutters, sidewalks, and streetlights to urban/suburban areas, unless required by public safety considerations.

## **D. Managing Highway Capacity**

The Ventura Freeway is the North Area Plan's primary regional traffic artery, with the cross-mountain roads serving as connecting links to Pacific Coast Highway. Completion of the Ventura Freeway in the 1970s served to connect large undeveloped blocks of land in Ventura County to growing employment centers in the San Fernando Valley and West Los Angeles via the San Diego Freeway through the Sepulveda Pass. However, construction of the freeway also eliminated portions of local-serving east-west roadways. As a result, there has been a substantial increase in commuter traffic along the freeway, and there is no convenient alternate route for local traffic and recreational users from Westlake Village through Agoura Hills and Calabasas into the San Fernando Valley. As periodic freeway "tie-ups" during peak rush hours and accidents occur, traffic spills out onto the local roadway system, which is incapable of accommodating even non-peak hour east-west through traffic.

Localized traffic congestion also occurs within the area, particularly near the freeway. This congestion is the result of area development; existing freeway design (narrow bridges and minimal separation of on- and off-ramps from frontage roads); environmental constraints; and the difficulties involved in constructing roadways through established rural communities, historic townsites, and steep and sometimes unstable hillside areas.

In response to the anticipated increase in traffic volumes, Los Angeles County will work to increase the efficiency of existing roadways by:

- improving the relationship of roadways with land uses, including restrictions on driveway access and limitations on development intensity where needed;
- promoting Transportation System Management and Transportation Demand Management techniques;
- improving coordination between affected agencies by establishing systems for the mitigating traffic impacts from projects in other jurisdictions; and
- encouraging the use of alternative modes of transportation, particularly the expansion of public transit services.

### **Managing Highway Carrying Capacity Goals and Policies**

*Goal VII-2:*

***A safe and efficient highway network which can accommodate projected future growth in traffic in a manner consistent with protection of environmental resources and existing neighborhood.***

*Policies:*

- VII-8 Work with Caltrans to maximize the capacity of the Ventura Freeway within its existing right-of-way and to expand the carrying capacity of bridges over the freeway; consideration should be given to the establishment of a high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane and the provision of other carpooling incentives.
- VII-9 Maintain the concentration of business park and commercial uses on major roads near the Ventura Freeway.
- VII-10 Limit the intensity and traffic generation of new residential, commercial, office, and business park development projects to that which is consistent with achieving and maintaining roadway performance objectives and protecting the integrity of existing rural communities and urban/suburban residential neighborhoods.
- VII-11 Require commercial development, including commercial recreational uses, to provide incentives for carpooling, such as van-pools.
- VII-12 Work with Caltrans to improve freeway access through redesign and construction of freeway ramps and frontage road intersections (see Figure 3 ~ '*Proposed Roadway Improvements*' for a listing of planned improvements).
- VII-13 Encourage the routing of through traffic onto the freeway and designated arterial streets, while discouraging through traffic in residential neighborhoods.
- VII-14 Modify the Highway Plan, as appropriate; complete the highway network, ( Map 5 - Highway Plan Policy, as amended) and improve roadways, as needed, to accommodate planned development and increases in recreational activities (Figure 3). All highway construction activity should be accomplished in a manner sensitive to adjacent habitat areas, streams and other sensitive areas that may be impacted by such activity.

**Figure 3**  
**Proposed Roadway Improvements**

Location	Improvement
<b>Ventura Freeway Mainline</b>	
Primary Freeway Lanes	Add one travel lane in each direction
<b>Ventura Freeway Interchanges</b>	
Kanan Road	Reconfigure ramps (NE & SW quadrants); new rights-of-way will likely be needed
Chesebro Road	Improve overpass to four lanes
Reyes Adobe Road	Reconfigure ramps (NE & SW quadrants) and improve overpass to six lanes; new rights-of-way will likely be needed
Lost Hills Road	Increase capacity of overpass by adding lanes or construction of a roundabout ; new rights-of-way will likely be needed
Lindero Canyon Road	Reconfigure EB and WB ramps. Improve overpass, realign and reconstruct ; new rights-of-way will likely be needed interchange at northbound off-ramp, northbound on-ramp and northbound direct on-ramp
<b>Unincorporated Arterial Highways</b>	
Kanan Road	Provide periodic passing, turnout, and acceleration/deceleration lanes
Las Virgenes/ Malibu Canyon Road	Provide periodic passing, turnout, and acceleration/deceleration lanes

Other improvements are likely to become necessary over the life of the North Area Plan in addition to those identified above, such as improvements to the Freeway interchange at Las Virgenes Road.

VII-15 Limit the intensity of development in rural and mountainous areas to that which can be provided with adequate access that does not create significant adverse impacts.

VII-16 Because transportation capital, operation, and maintenance funds are severely limited, pursue transportation funding based on the following principles:

- Additional roadway carrying capacity that is required by new development is to be paid for by those who generate the need for, and receive the benefit from the added capacity. Where improvements for additional capacity are necessary in adjacent jurisdictions, the County shall consider the performance standards and policies of these jurisdictions in establishing mitigation requirements.
- To the extent feasible, additional roadway carrying capacity that is necessitated by existing development should have needed improvements financed from transportation funds, such as gasoline taxes, Transportation Development Act funds, and local transportation sales taxes, etc. Freeway interchange improvements shall be coordinated with Caltrans and other appropriate agencies. Where funding sources prove inadequate, roadway funds should be augmented by assessment districts, impact fees and/or other equitable funding mechanisms.

- Existing, excess roadway capacity shall not automatically be granted to new users. Any capacity excess should be allocated on an equitable basis with capacity reserved to service all lands to at least their minimum development potential.

VII-17 Optimize the carrying capacity of existing roadways within established rights-of-way and roadway widths. Techniques include: minimizing driveway access, conflicting turning movements, and uncontrolled access; restricting on-street parking during peak travel periods; coordinating signal timing along through routes; and eliminating frequent stops, to the extent these are consistent with the character of adjacent land uses.

VII-18 Cooperate with adjacent jurisdictions and Caltrans in establishing an alternate emergency through route parallel to the Ventura Freeway which can be used for local travel and emergency access, and which do not impede wildlife corridors in adjacent canyons. From west to east, this route would consist of Agoura Road, Las Virgenes Road, Mureau Road, and Calabasas Road. To complete this route, the following improvements shall be required: the opening of Agoura Road between Liberty Canyon and Malibu Hills roads, constructing a new, four lane bridge carrying Mureau Road over the Ventura Freeway west of the present bridge, and widening of Calabasas Road to four lanes west of Parkway Calabasas. (See Map 6 ~ 'Ventura Freeway Proposed Emergency Alternate Route Plan' at the end of this chapter.)

VII-19 Work with the Sheriff's Department, California Highway Patrol, and Caltrans to establish emergency detours and traffic routing to handle emergencies on the Ventura Freeway.

## **E. Transportation Alternatives**

Alternatives to the private automobile--including carpooling, public transit, bicycles, and telecommuting from home--are opportunities to lessen the impacts of traffic on the region's roadways, and are of higher priority than the expansion of the roadway system.

### **Transportation Alternatives Goals and Policies**

*Goal VII-3:*

***Alternative modes of travel for the single occupant automobile for local, commuter, and recreational trips.***

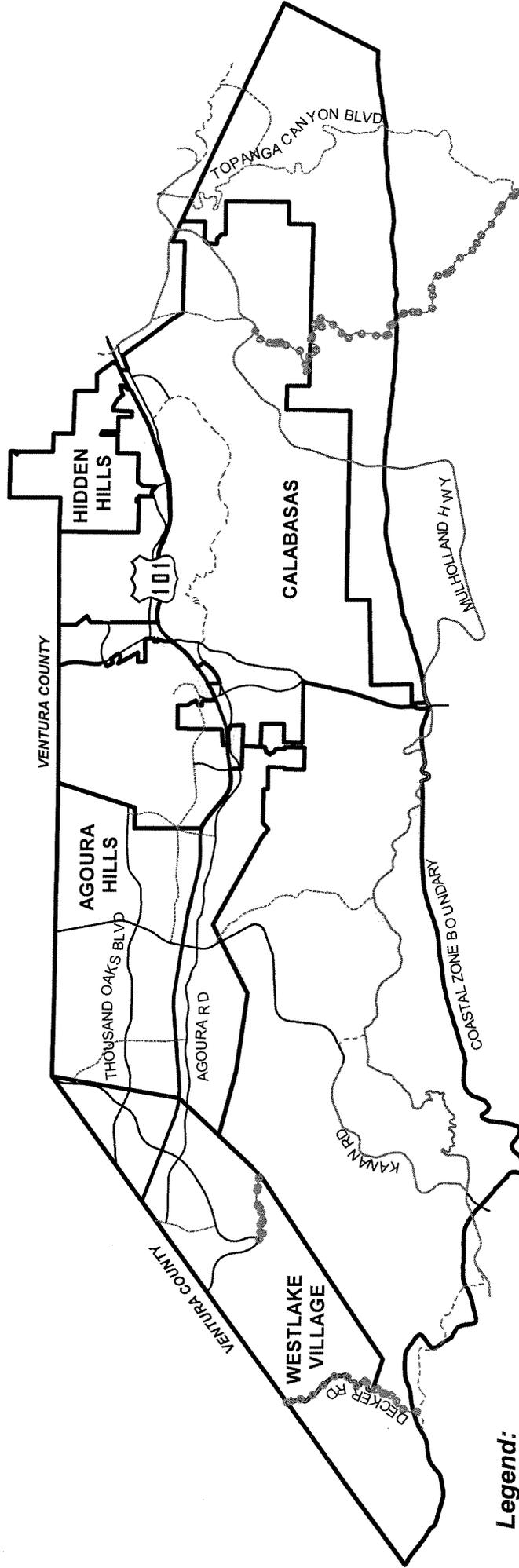
*Policies:*

- VII-20 Support the responsible expansion of public transit serving the North Area Plan's communities, including connections between major destinations within the communities and the Los Angeles metropolitan area.
- VII-21 Require the provision of bus turnouts in new development and on existing roadways as acquisition and improvement activities occur when requested to do so by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority; cooperate with adjacent jurisdictions to develop/implement this and other public transit-friendly design features into new subdivisions and other discretionary project applications .
- VII-22 Develop, and as part of new non-residential development, require the provision of priority park-and-ride lots and parking facilities for public transit vehicles, bicycles, and motorcycles to encourage these modes of transportation.
- VII-23 Encourage public transit service and staging areas--including park-and ride lots, both within the region and from metropolitan Los Angeles to the area's major employment centers and parks.

- VII-24 Promote bicycle use by requiring establishment of secure and adequate areas for the parking and storage of bicycles, showers, lockers, and other facilities at major employment and recreation destinations.
- VII-25 Develop and maintain a comprehensive system of bicycle routes within the planning area, as depicted on Map 7 ~ '*Ventura Freeway Corridor Bikeway Plan*' (located at the end of this chapter), and provide appropriate support facilities for bicycle riders; incorporate bike lanes and/or bike use signage into local road designs wherever feasible.
- VII-26 Pursue the expansion of dial-a-ride services to include shuttle services for major employment centers.
- VII-27 Promote the establishment of Transportation Demand Management programs in major employment-generating developments.
- VII-28 Facilitate, and where feasible, require workplace alternatives such as teleconferencing and telecommuting centers, facilitating the ability of residents to work at or closer to home.

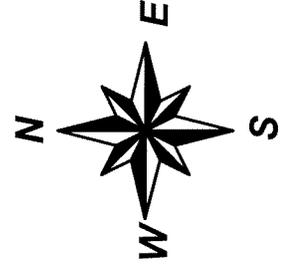


# Map 5 Santa Monica Mountains North Area Highway Plan Policy

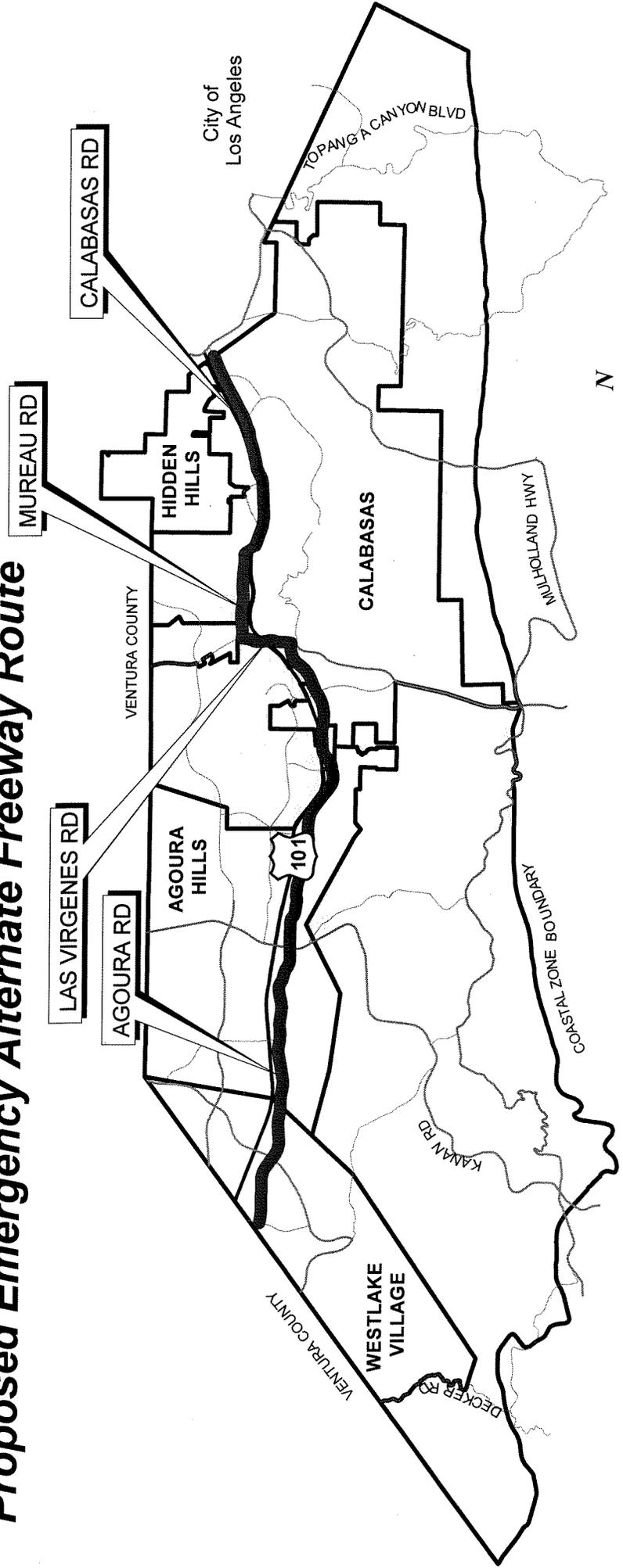


## Legend:

	Highway Plan
	Major Highways
	Secondary Highways
	Limited Secondary Highways
	Parkways
	Arterials
	Freeway
	Incorporated Cities
	Los Angeles County Unincorporated Areas

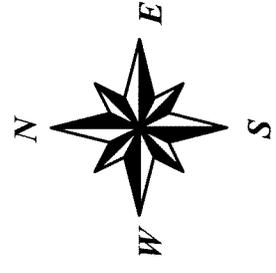


# Map 6 Ventura Freeway Corridor Proposed Emergency Alternate Freeway Route

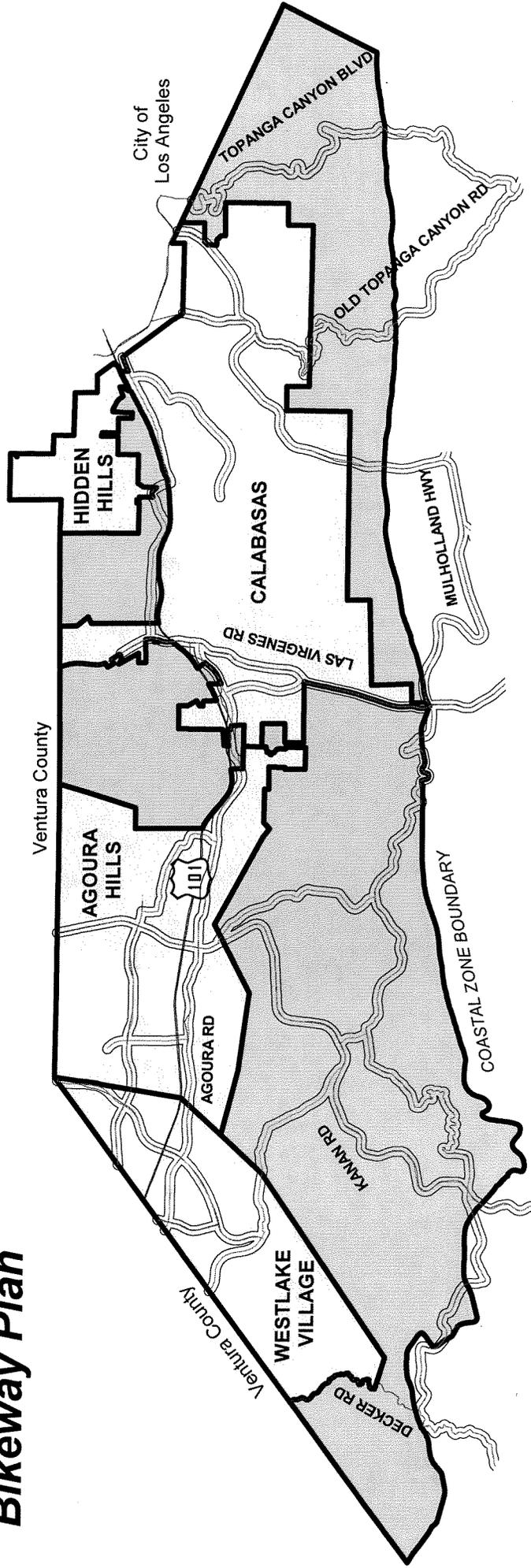


**Legend:**

-  Alternate Freeway Route
-  Major Arterials
-  Freeways
-  Incorporated Cities
-  Los Angeles County unincorporated Areas

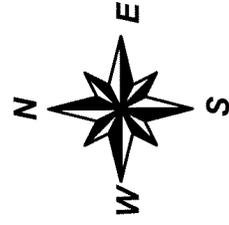


# Map 7 Ventura Freeway Corridor Bikeway Plan



**Legend:**

-  Major Arterials/Bikeway Routes
-  Ventura Freeway
-  Los Angeles County Unincorporated Areas
-  Incorporated Cities



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## VIII. PUBLIC FACILITIES ELEMENT

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### A. Introduction

Public services are an essential component in determining suitability for development. One of the primary concerns of businesses and residents is the level of services offered by a community – is there adequate water pressure, do local schools offer a quality education, etc.? Public schools in the region are a key component of local quality of life. Many existing residents specifically chose to live in this area because of the quality education provided by the Las Virgenes Unified School District. In addition, the formation of a local water agency for the region was an early indication of the desire of area residents to obtain local autonomy.

General Goal V of the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan calls for the efficient delivery of public services. However, the availability of water and sewer systems, as well as the capacity of public roads varies significantly throughout the North Area Plan's jurisdiction. The principal distinction in the general level of basic services is the community sewer system of the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District, which provides liquid waste disposal capacity for the urban/suburban development within the region. In contrast, the Topanga area in the eastern portion of the North Area Plan as well as much of the more remote areas are not served by a community sewer system.

Housing and non-residential development cause increases in the demand for municipal services. In general, development in outlying, mountainous areas is more costly to service than the same amount of development in an urban, infill location.

This element addresses the following municipal services:

- Water and sewer services,
- Public schools, and
- Coordination of land development with the provision of municipal services.

Additional services and facilities which are addressed by the North Area Plan include parks and recreation (Conservation and Open Space Element), Fire Protection (Safety and Noise Element), and Transportation (Circulation Element).

The Los Angeles County General Plan includes policies to coordinate land development with most major categories of municipal services. These policies are applied to proposals for new development, whose contribution to the cumulative demand for service capacity can be quantitatively estimated and appropriate mitigation measures, if any, identified and applied. Solid waste disposal demand is a good example of a development issue addressed by the County General Plan which would not be exacerbated by the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan, due to the Plan's reduction in potential buildout over the existing adopted plan. This and other countywide public facilities are not addressed here.

The quality of water, sewer, and school facilities and services can be impacted by the location and intensity of new development. In particular, the gross amount and location of development are significant factors. The two major service providers in the area – Las Virgenes Municipal Water District and Las Virgenes Unified School District – have expended significant effort preparing master facilities plans to ensure their ability to support such new development as might be

approved by area municipalities. These master plans were based on the adopted general plans of the County and the cities of Agoura Hills, Hidden Hills, and Westlake Village.<sup>4</sup>

During the development boom of the 1980s, several major plan amendments were approved in Los Angeles County – some of which are now within the cities of Agoura Hills and Calabasas – in response to development requests. These amendments resulted in substantial increases in permitted density beyond that originally contemplated by the Malibu/Santa Monica Mountains Interim Area Plan. As a result, both the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District and the Las Virgenes Unified School District had to revise their master plans on a development-by-development basis.

## **B. Guiding Principles**

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The guiding principle to ensure the provision of adequate services and facilities is:

***‘the provision of municipal facilities should support, rather than control, the location of planned land uses, consistent with environmental carrying capacities and the need to protect the unique character of existing communities.’***

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Until the passage of Proposition 13, most public facilities were constructed by public agencies as part of their capital improvements programming. As a result, these capital improvements programs were instrumental in directing the location and timing of development. With the passage of Proposition 13, responsibility for constructing capital facilities has largely passed to individual development projects. Because municipal facilities are now largely constructed on a project-by-project basis, predicting the timing and location of new development as part of agency master planning efforts is more difficult, but nevertheless critical.

While a lack of municipal facilities presents a constraint on new development, the presence of existing infrastructure does not justify development of land in a manner that is inconsistent with preserving significant environmental features--such as viewsheds and habitats, the unique character of existing communities, or public health and safety--including water quality impacts both in the North Area Plan’s jurisdiction as well as on downstream coastal resources--as outlined in the policies of this plan. Thus, while the lack of needed infrastructure and services is a negative in the development review process, the existence of essential services and facilities is another consideration to be balanced against environmental preservation.

New development must pay its own way, providing the facilities necessary to maintain adequate service levels without reducing the level of the increasing cost of the services and facilities provided to existing residents and businesses. This is a basic statement of equity, but has occasionally been unrealized when the exactions for services and facilities imposed on new development are insufficient to maintain or improve existing operations or there are unanticipated negative impacts from development, leaving the area with new problems.

Existing residents and businesses should not be asked to pay for infrastructure, facilities, or services which are designed for the benefit of new development, either in terms of service levels or cost. In the same vein, proposed development should not be asked to “fix” problems left behind by previous project approvals as a prerequisite for project approval. Although a proposed project should not be required to fix the problem created by existing development, it must not be permitted to make the problem worse.

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<sup>4</sup>Master plans for water, sewer, and schools were adopted by the two service agencies prior to the adoption of the Calabasas General Plan.

## C. Water and Sewer Services

The Las Virgenes Municipal Water District (LVMWD) supplies all potable and reclaimed water to the general region, with the exception of the area east of Old Topanga Canyon Road, which is served by the Los Angeles County Water Works District. Water, both potable and reclaimed, is distributed throughout the District by a network of underground water mains of varying sizes, with the central spine of the system generally paralleling the Ventura Freeway.

Although development in the area can be found in varied topography, such as valleys and steep hillsides, the LVMWD has few problems and constraints with delivering adequate water and water pressure to these areas. In some of the more remote areas and high elevations, extension of water facilities is possible, but would be extremely costly.

Water supply allocations to the LVMWD are received from the water wholesaler, the Metropolitan Water District. Supplies may vary, due largely to cyclical drought conditions. In approving new development, consideration should be given to the long-range assurance of water supply.

The LVMWD is also responsible for wastewater treatment and disposal services within the North Area Plan's boundaries. Local feeders are maintained by the County's Sanitation Districts, and are connected to the LVMWD's main trunk lines. Wastewater is conveyed through LVMWD trunk lines to the Tapia Water Reclamation Facility where the sewage receives tertiary treatment.

With the location of the Tapia Water Reclamation Facility at the base of the Malibu Creek Watershed, most wastewater from the study area reaches the facility by means of natural gravity flow. According to the LVMWD, no foreseeable system constraints or deficiencies should occur.

Although a majority of the study area is connected to sewers, septic systems serve most of the rural hillside areas. Previous development within the hillside areas has been largely scattered, thus requiring the use of a septic systems as a practical matter. However, although many septic systems employ state-of-the-art technologies, numerous septic tank failures have been reported in older systems within the mountain areas, often causing environmental damage to surrounding and downstream riparian areas. For some areas not served by sewers, assessment districts have been established and fees are being assessed to residents on septic systems for the ultimate connection into the LVMWD trunk lines.

As new development occurs within these hillside areas, development may be clustered in order to preserve hillsides and open spaces. This clustering of new units will promote the preservation of hillside and open space areas, but may require extension of sewer lines because of the size of clustered lots. Because individual clusters will be widely separated, the per unit cost for providing local sewage collection facilities may increase for these developments due to the relatively long distances that sewer lines will need to be run to connect to the LVMWD's trunk sewer system.

### Water and Sewer Goals and Policies

#### *Goal VIII-1:*

***Adequate water supplies and water and sewage disposal systems to support existing and future planned land uses.***

#### *Policies:*

- VIII-1 Coordinate the land development review process with the LVMWD to ensure that adequate water supplies and adequate water and sewer infrastructure are available to support existing and planned development.
- VIII-2 Minimize consumption of new water supplies through active water conservation programs and the use of reclaimed water--on site, wherever possible.

- VIII-3 Encourage at least tertiary treatment of waste water, which will help to improve effluent quality, while expanding the potential uses for reclaimed water.
- VIII-4 Maximize the beneficial uses of reclaimed water and thereby reduce the need for exploiting domestic water supplies for purposes where potable water is not required.
- VIII-5 Require proposed development projects to gain approval of design and financial arrangements from the LVMWD (or Los Angeles County Water Works District) for the construction of water and sewer facilities prior to recordation of tract maps (or issuance of grading or building permits, if a tract map is not involved). Strictly enforce these conditions of approval.
- VIII-6 Require the use of reclaimed wastewater for golf courses, landscape irrigation, and other purposes, including the maintenance of public lands and fire breaks, where reclaimed water can be feasibly provided.
- VIII-7 Provide for the expansion of existing community sewer systems in areas of demonstrated need. The capacities of such systems shall be scaled to meet the level of anticipated growth consistent with the Land Use Policy Map.
- VIII-8 Prohibit the construction of small “package” wastewater treatment plants, except in those specific areas where this is the desired long-term wastewater management solution.
- VIII-9 In rural areas, avoid the build-out of clustered subdivisions where the cumulative effect of septic tanks will negatively impact the environment, either by stream pollution or by contributing to the potential failure of unstable soils.

## **D. Public Schools**

Schools are an important factor in the desirability of the Santa Monica Mountains North Plan area as a place in which to live. In fact, many existing residents specifically sought out a home within the boundaries of the Las Virgenes Unified School District due to its excellent educational programs. As the population of the area expands, there will be a need to expand school facilities. The ability of the County and the Las Virgenes Unified School District to coordinate land development with the need for additional schools is an important consideration in protecting the quality of life of both existing and future area residents.

The region is served by the Las Virgenes Unified School District, which maintains 13 schools within the district boundaries. District boundaries encompass all of the incorporated portions of the region, as well as most of the unincorporated lands within Los Angeles County, as well as unincorporated lands to the south of the planning area. A small area in the easterly portion of the North Area Plan is within the boundaries of the Los Angeles Unified School District.<sup>5</sup>

The most recent projections available for Las Virgenes Unified School District enrollments indicate that the District expects current enrollments to increase to 12,200 by fiscal year 2000-2001. To meet projected enrollment, the District prepared a capital improvements program outlining \$93.1 million in new facilities (1997 dollars).

The district’s Ten-Year Facilities Plan recognizes that state-mandated developer fees will be used, and that additional fees will be negotiated when necessary to resolve capacity problems that cannot be resolved by state mandated fees. Under current state law (Government Code 65995), the base

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<sup>5</sup>The Los Angeles Unified School District’s Topanga Elementary School is within the study area. However, since only limited new residential development is anticipated in the portion of the area within the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles Unified School District, discussion of school expansion will focus on the needs of the Las Virgenes Unified School District.

amount of state-mandated developer fees are \$2.05 per square foot for residential construction and \$0.35 per square foot for commercial or industrial construction.

The implementation of the state-wide class size reduction program in grades K-3 and grade 9 have had a dramatic negative impact on the District's ability to house students. Virtually overnight, the District lost twenty percent of its housing capacity by virtue of the fact that classrooms that once accommodated thirty to thirty-five students were now restricted to only twenty students. While the program has been a great success with parents and has been educationally beneficial to students, it has created a critical shortage of classroom space which has been exacerbated by the slow but steady growth in district enrollment over the past five years. This need, coupled with the aging of the existing school facilities, set the stage for passage of Measure R in 1997--a 93 million dollar facility bond. The community supported the bond with an overwhelming 80 percent plurality. The bond will fund not only major repairs and renovations but the construction of a new middle school and minimally two elementary schools to address the current overcrowding and future growth needs as new housing units are completed within the District.

### **Public School Goals and Policies**

*Goal VIII-2:*

#### ***Adequate public school facilities to meet planned growth.***

*Policies:*

VIII-10 Require development projects to pay the maximum school impact fees permitted by law.

VIII-11 Maintain a flexible policy toward school impact mitigation, accepting dedication of land, construction of facilities, of payment of fees to acquire and develop new school sites, as determined appropriate by the Las Virgenes Unified School District.

VIII-12 Cooperate with the Las Virgenes Unified School District:

- to encourage the state legislature to maintain, and amend as necessary, legislation capable of financing the construction of new schools needed for a growing population;
- to identify the impacts of population and demographic changes, which may affect the need for new schools, may lead to school closures, may require the re-opening of closed schools or may lead to the decision that existing school sites be preserved for meeting future needs; and
- to provide cooperative educational services to all kindergarten, elementary school, middle school, high school-aged, and adult residents.

VIII-13 Cooperate with the Las Virgenes Unified School District to reduce the cost of new school construction through cooperative agreements for the development of joint use school/park sites, joint school/community facilities, and joint school/library facilities.

VIII-14 Support the joint use of school/park sites, and where the law permits, use a portion of local park funds to purchase and construct the recreational portions of these joint site.

VIII-15 New school construction shall comply with the water quality, landscaping and circulation requirements of the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan.



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## IX. IMPLEMENTATION

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### A. Introduction

Previous chapters of the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan defined the principles and policies which will guide future decisions related to land use and development, environmental management, transportation, and the provision of public services and facilities within the unincorporated area. Inherent in so many of the development and land use activities in this environmentally sensitive region of the State is the need to both consider the impacts on, and have the cooperation of, adjacent jurisdictions and agencies. The Santa Monica Mountains and the surrounding affected lands, as well as the Pacific Ocean, must be managed as an integrated unit to both protect the environment as well as to provide public access to this resource.

This chapter describes the critical actions needed to implement the North Area Plan, especially with respect to intergovernmental coordination, maintaining updated plans, and the gathering of vital information to ensure informed future decision-making within the region by area residents, planners, service providers and elected officials. Whether the following implementation activities are the sole responsibility of the County or require the cooperative assistance of other agencies, their impacts will benefit the entire mountains region.



### B. Actions to be Undertaken by Los Angeles County

1. **North Area Plan Update.** Periodically review and where appropriate amend the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan, as part of the Los Angeles County General Plan. Refer all North Area Plan amendments, whether initiated by private developers or by the County, to the Ventura Freeway Corridor Policy Committee for review and comment as to the consistency of the proposed amendment with the principles, goals and policies of the Corridor Plan.  
(Department of Regional Planning)
2. **Open Space Amendments.** The following events related to the acquisition or dedication of open space will trigger the need for amendments to the applicable parcels under the North Area Plan; such amendments will be processed as frequently as needed to keep the plan current:
  - public parkland acquisitions by the U.S. National Park Service for inclusion in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, and any parkland acquisitions by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation or any other public open space agency;

- the final approval and recordation of a land division that sets aside deed-restricted open space; and
- lands acquired by the Santa Monica Mountain Conservancy to be held for preservation of natural areas.

Such lands will be re-designated to one of the four *Open Space* categories discussed in the Land Use Policy Map legend.  
(Department of Regional Planning)

3. **Zoning Consistency Program.** Undertake a zoning consistency program for the North Area Plan, to conform the existing zoning of all parcels, as appropriate, to the revised land use designations of the Land Use Policy Map. Include in this program 1) a review of horse boarding regulations to ensure that they are not overly restrictive on those who board a few horses in their own backyards and 2) a review of recreational and visitor-serving regulations to ensure that they are compatible with the policies of this Plan.  
(Department of Regional Planning)

4. **Technical Studies.**

- a. **Regional Traffic Model Update.** On an biennial basis, update the traffic model used in the preparation of the Ventura Freeway Corridor Plan, based on updated land use information and traffic counts on regional arterial highways. Based on this update, provide area municipalities with an analysis of the ability of the region's planned roadway system to support planned land use development. Cooperation from each jurisdiction in providing periodic traffic counts to the County will be needed to maintain an up-to-date traffic model.  
(Department of Public Works)

- b. **Significant Ecological Areas Study.** Conduct a comprehensive restudy of Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs) within the unincorporated areas of the region, focusing on status of vegetative resources and noting any changed circumstances that may lead to boundary changes. Use the existing biota and vegetative mapping prepared as part of the Ventura Freeway Corridor Plan. Work with the National Park Service and other agencies such as the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to provide updated mapping of resources for the SEA program. Share the results of the study with the Policy Committee for review and possible inclusion in amendments to city general plans within the region.  
(Department of Regional Planning)

- c. **Existing Land Use Inventory.** On an annual basis, update the existing land use map that was prepared for the Ventura Freeway Corridor Plan, using data provided by the region's cities; maintain inventory in an Arc/Info compatible GIS database.  
(Department of Regional Planning)

- d. **Hillside Development Regulations.** Develop or refine standards within existing codes, ordinances and regulations that reflect the policies of this North Area Plan for development on hillsides and ridgelines within the Plan area.  
(Department of Regional Planning; Department of Public Works)

5. **Regional Interagency Trails Management Plan.** The large number of public land owners throughout this portion of the county and the importance of a connected system of riding and hiking trails throughout this area suggests that the effort become an established multi-jurisdiction function. An update of the County Trails Map for the Plan Area should be prepared, based on the recommendations of the SMMART report and on public input from recreational interests and residents of the area. The County has committed to maintain a digitized map of all government agency-recognized trails. Information to provide refinement

to this map would be the responsibility of each government agency. Such a system-wide trails map would improve the likelihood that adequate trails easements are obtained as land is approved for development or dedicated as open space.  
(County Parks and Recreation; Department of Regional Planning)

6. **Community Standards District.** Adoption of a Community Standards District or other effective adopted policies and procedures to include the following:

**Scenic View Protection Ordinances** — Prepare and adopt a viewshed ordinance--to include performance standards for building design--for the protection of selected scenic vistas within the Santa Monica Mountains.

**Vegetation/Fuel Modification Standards** — Development of a Mountains-wide standard, with input from other agencies such as the County Fire Department, Coastal Commission, State Parks, National Park Service and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. Issues include the requirement for vegetation clearance beyond property ownership lines and the regulation of development design to reduce the level of needed vegetation clearance; it has been suggested that a vegetation clearance easement program be established that could be a part of this overall effort.

**Wildlife Corridor Protection** — Establishment of development standards such as required clustering of structures and improvements, limits on fencing locations and materials, and limits on lighting in identified wildlife corridors.  
(Department of Regional Planning)

7. **Coordination with Local Coastal Plan Update.** Planning in the unincorporated area to the south of the North Area Plan is controlled in large by the Local Coastal Plan. Staff will coordinate the information of the two planning programs to help ensure consistency between them. Staff will report to the Regional Planning Commission if there is a need for modifications to the adopted Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan, based on this coordination.  
(Department of Regional Planning)

## **C. Joint Actions to be Undertaken by Local Governments and Service Providers in the Ventura Freeway Corridor**

1. **Use of the Ventura Freeway Corridor Plan.**

- a) Acknowledge the Ventura Freeway Corridor Plan as a statement of common vision for the future of the region, and as an expression of joint aspirations and regional policy among local cities, the County, and participating public service agencies; and
- b) Use the Corridor Plan as a guide in revising local plans for the purpose of achieving consistency of policy approach.

2. **Policy Committee.** Create a permanent Ventura Freeway Corridor Policy Committee composed of representatives appointed by the following: County of Los Angeles, cities of Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, and Westlake Village, the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District, the Las Virgenes Unified School District, and the National Park Service. Vest in this committee the following responsibilities:

- a) **Update of General Plans.** Maintain the region-wide components of the Corridor Plan as an up-to-date reflection of policy for the region; incorporate emerging issues which need to be addressed on a regional basis. The County will utilize this information to ensure that the North Area Plan is periodically updated to reflect new information and current situations.

- b) **Policy Forum.** Provide a forum for reviewing and commenting on discretionary project proposals or issues within the region where there are cross-jurisdictional impacts and/or significant policy implications;
  - c) **Oversight Role.** Review and comment on proposed amendments to general plans, service provider master plans, and park and resource management plans;
  - c) **Regional Coordination.** Review and comment on regional plans and policies proposed by the Southern California Association of Governments, the South Coast Air Quality Management District, the Regional Water Quality Control Board, and other regional policy boards that have jurisdiction in the region;
  - d) **Traffic Modeling.** Oversee the use of the traffic model prepared for the Ventura Freeway Corridor Plan as the basis for traffic studies on individual development projects, compliance with the County Congestion Management Plan requirements, and for future comprehensive updates of community general plans. Since this model has been designed to cover the entire Los Angeles County area of the Santa Monica Mountains west of the City of Los Angeles, efforts should be made to include the Coastal Zone portion--including the City of Malibu-- in this program.
  - e) **Dispute Resolution.** Assist in the resolution of disagreements and disputes between participating agencies on planning issues, including the interpretation and implementation of general plans; and
3. **Financial and Staff Support.** The implementation of the above two programs is dependent upon the mutual commitment of all participating agencies to provide financial and professional support at a level sufficient to properly staff the Policy Committee and maintain an up-to-date Corridor Plan
4. **Development Monitoring.** Establish an interagency areawide development monitoring program to track the status of development projects from initial application through construction as well as to maintain and monitor planning resource information. Features of this program would include:
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS), maintained by Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, Las Virgenes Municipal Water District and National Park Service would provide the operating systems for the monitoring program.
  - Information on development and building permit applications--such as type of project, number of units and status of case approval--should be provided by Los Angeles County and the cities of Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills and Westlake Village on a quarterly basis. Input from other resource agencies, including the National Park Service, State Parks, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, would be used to supplement and expand the program's features over time.
  - Los Angeles County's GIS would be used to measure and evaluate potential impacts of proposed development within the unincorporated area. It is intended that other measurable factors that would impact or influence development and activities in the region--such as surface and groundwater quality--would be added to this service, as resources are available.
  - Las Virgenes Municipal Water District's GIS would maintain an inventory of proposed residential, commercial, industrial and institutional uses, including project type, size and status. It would also be used to facilitate provision of municipal services within their service area.
  - National Park Service's GIS would be used to evaluate proposed projects/activities throughout the area for their potential impacts on park lands, habitat linkages, other natural resources and recreation.

Sharing of information would facilitate the planning and implementation programs of all agencies; examples include the tracking of infrastructure capacities, requirements for open space/park land dedications (both public and private) and multi-jurisdictional mapping. Should such a system also be established for the Malibu Local Implementation Program, the two components should be combined as one, covering the entire Santa Monica Mountains area within Los Angeles County west of the City of Los Angeles.

## D. Public Educational Tools

1. **Preparation of Development Regulations and Permits Guide.** While individual governmental agencies responsible for granting entitlements and issuing permits often offer printed instruction materials (now often on web pages as well) on meeting their own requirements, a single “master” guide covering the range of both required permits/regulations as well as conscientious and suitable design considerations for mountain development is needed. The Policy Committee (see C 2 above) would provide a forum for input and review of such a manual, which could be made available for distribution by all government and development-related agencies working in the area. It is anticipated that the manual would include the following types of information:
  - ▶ Requirements for compliance with general plan and zoning designations, including information on filing/processing project applications, environmental clearances, etc.
  - ▶ Subdivision Ordinance design requirements (lot design, access, trail easements, etc.).
  - ▶ Building and Safety Code construction standards.
  - ▶ Infrastructure purveyors and basic requirements for installation or payment of fees (water/sewer services, schools, parks, libraries, electric, gas, telephone, etc.)
  - ▶ Standards/requirements for fire safety and police access in mountainous, remote areas.
  - ▶ Drainage and erosion design controls and mitigation requirements for any activity requiring slope modification.
  - ▶ Basic design standards for on-site sewage disposal systems.
  - ▶ View-protection and architectural design standards for development in the mountains.
  - ▶ Special permits that may be required for streambed alterations (e.g. State Fish and Game, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers).
  - ▶ List of local agencies and interest groups that may wish to provide input on discretionary actions (zone changes, subdivisions, oak tree permits, etc.) or that may provide constructive information to consider in project design.

Included for each of the above items will be information on how to contact the relevant agencies; web page addresses will be provided where they are available, and this entire manual will be made available through the County’s web system.  
(Department of Regional Planning)

2. **Public Education Workshops.** As new types of regulations affecting the use of land within the planning area--such as the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan--are established, and existing regulations are modified, one of the most effective means of ensuring their compliance is through education. Workshops are an efficient way to bring various regulating agencies together to discuss their programs with the community. Such gatherings can be used not only to inform the public--including residents, developers and realtors--of the regulations on the use of land within the planning area, but also to provide feedback as to the effectiveness of existing controls in achieving desired results and in identifying new problems that may be developing. The County can facilitate this type of forum, with participation by other governmental and regulatory agencies. Other communications means--such as the use of the County’s web page--shall also be pursued.  
(Department of Regional Planning; Department of Public Works)
3. **Comprehensive Emergency Evacuation Plan.** The Santa Monica Mountains pose a serious threat to human and animal life in the event of wildfire. Access routes are limited through much of the area; many roads have no dependable outlet or are undersized to accommodate both fire-fighting access in one direction and evacuation of passenger

vehicles and animal trailers in the other. Opportunities exist, however, to provide connections to maintained fire roads that could be used in emergencies and to provide additional through connections where environmental resources permit. Agencies and jurisdictions with regulation of responsible for all forms of vehicle circulation routes throughout the Santa Monica Mountains would serve themselves and the public well by preparing a comprehensive, cross-jurisdictional plan for emergency evacuation. Once such a plan is available, awareness programs should be pursued to educate the public as to the location of such routes.

(Department of Regional Planning; County Fire Department)



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## GLOSSARY

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### **ACTIVE RECREATION**

Moderate to high intensity structured recreational use, in many cases requiring some modification of natural land forms and the provision of service facilities (parking areas, restrooms, visitor centers, etc.). Typical activities include individual and team sports.

### **AREA, NET**

The portion of a site that can actually be built upon. The following generally are not included in the net acreage of a site: public or private road rights-of-way, public open space, and flood ways.

### **BUFFER ZONE**

An area of land separating two distinct land uses that acts to soften or mitigate the effects of one land use on the other. Where a commercial district abuts a residential district, for example, additional use, yard, or height restrictions may be imposed to protect residential properties. The terms may also be used to describe any zone that separates two different zones such as a multi-family housing zone between single-family housing and commercial uses.

### **CHANNELIZATION**

The straightening and deepening of streams to permit water to move faster, reducing the area subject to flooding. Channelization, particularly concrete channels, may impair or destroy the stream's natural functions.

### **CHUMASH**

The name for the Native American Indians of the area.

### **CLASS I LANDFILLS**

Landfills which will accept non-radioactive, hazardous solid and liquid wastes.

### **CLUSTERED DEVELOPMENT**

Development in which two or more dwelling units are placed on smaller lots, or are attached, generally for the purpose of preserving open space in a natural state or avoiding natural hazards. The resulting vacant area would typically be established as permanent open space, dedicated to a public agency which has the authority to manage, preserve or enhance park and open space lands.

### **CNEL**

Community Noise Equivalent Level; A 24-hour energy equivalent level derived from a variety of single noise events, with weighting factors of 5 and 10 dBA applied to the evening (7 PM to 10 PM) and nighttime (10 PM to 7 AM) periods, respectively, to allow for the greater sensitivity to noise during these hours.

### **COMMUNITY SEWER**

A trunk line system and treatment facility designed to collect and treat community sewage.

### **CORRIDOR**

A travel route that is used by large volumes of movement. Also, within this document, if capitalized and used in the phrase Ventura Freeway Corridor, see the definition of "region" in this glossary.

### **COUNTY HIGHWAY PLAN**

A highway system plan for Los Angeles County, first adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 1940, and continually modified and updated in order to reserve right-of-way for future highway construction.

**CRAFTSMAN'S CORNER**

A commercial district within the unincorporated area located in the vicinity of Craftsman Road immediately north of the the Ventura Freeway and south of the city of Hidden Hills at the Parkway Calabasas off-ramp.

**dB**

Decibel; a unit used to express the relative intensity of a sound as it is heard by the human ear.

**dBA**

The "A-weighted" scale for measuring sound in decibels; weights or reduces the effects of low and high frequencies in order to simulate human hearing. Every increase of 10 dBA doubles the perceived loudness though the noise is actually ten times more intense.

**DENSITY**

Average number of housing units per unit of land acre, often measured in housing units per acre.

$$\text{Density} = \frac{\text{Total housing units}}{\text{Total acres}}$$

**DENSITY BONUS**

The allocation of development rights that allows a parcel to accommodate additional square footage or additional residential units beyond the maximum for which the parcel is zoned. Under Government Code Section 65915, a housing development that provides 20 percent of its units for lower income households, or ten percent of its units for very low-income households, or 50 percent of its units for seniors, is entitled to a density bonus and other concessions.

**DOMESTIC/POTABLE WATER SYSTEM**

The system for the collection, treatment, storage and distribution of potable water from the source of supply to the consumer.

**DUAL WATER SYSTEMS**

Local water systems which utilize reclaimed waste water for outside domestic uses such as landscape irrigation.

**EASEMENT**

A method of acquiring partial use rights of land with no transfer of fee title.

**ECOSYSTEM**

A system made up of a community of animals, plants, and bacteria and the physical and chemical environment with which it is interrelated.

**EFFLUENT**

A discharge of pollutants into the environment, partially or completely treated or in its natural state. Generally used in regard to sewage discharges into waters.

**ENDANGERED, THREATENED AND RARE SPECIES**

Endangered species are identified by the state and federal government as any species which is in danger of extinction due to one or more causes. Threatened species are those which are likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future. A rare species is defined as any species that, although not presently threatened with extinction, is in such small numbers that it may be endangered if its environment worsens.

**ENVIRONMENT**

The aggregate of all the external conditions and influences affecting the life and development of an organism.

**ENVIRONMENTAL THRESHOLD CARRYING CAPACITY**

An environmental standard necessary to maintain a significant scenic, recreational, educational, scientific or natural value of the region or to maintain public health and safety within the region. Such standards shall include but not be limited to standards for air quality, water quality, soil conservation, vegetation preservation and noise.

**FAULT**

A plane of breakage in rock or soil, along which significant offsetting of the two sides of the plane have taken place.

**FAULT, ACTIVE**

A fault which has exhibited surface displacement within Holocene time (approximately the past 11,000 years).

**FAULT, POTENTIALLY ACTIVE**

A fault which shows evidence of surface displacement during Quaternary time (the last 2 million years).

**FAULT ZONE**

A delineated area assumed to be underlain by active or potentially active faults rifts. Proposed development within such areas may require detailed geologic investigation and specialized seismic design and construction.

**FLOOD PLAIN/ FLOOD HAZARD AREA**

The relatively level land area on either side of the banks of a stream regularly subject to flooding. That part of the flood plain subject to a one percent chance of flooding in any given year is designated as an "area of special flood hazard" by the Federal Insurance Administration.

**FLOODWAY**

The channel of a river or other watercourse and the adjacent land areas that must be reserved in order to discharge the "base flood" without cumulatively increasing the water surface elevation more than one foot.

**FLOOR AREA RATIO (FAR)**

The gross floor area permitted on a site divided by the total net area of the site, expressed in decimals to one or two places. For example, on a site with 10,000 net sq. ft. of land area, a Floor Area Ratio of 0.5 will allow a maximum of 5,000 gross sq. ft. of building floor area to be built. On the same site, an FAR of 0.3 would allow only 3,000 sq. ft. FARs are applied on a parcel-by-parcel basis.

**GROUNDWATER**

Water found underground in porous rock strata and soils.

**GROUNDWATER RECHARGE**

Return of water to the aquifer or natural underground storage.

**HABITAT**

The natural abode or locality of a plant or animal.

**HABITAT LINKAGE**

Areas of land and/or water that provide a substantial degree of connectivity between core habitat areas, and feature substantial natural habitat in order to promote genetic flow and continuous recolonization of habitats by all plant and animal species within an ecosystem, or between ecosystems. Habitat linkages typically are much wider than wildlife corridors. All habitat linkages serve as wildlife corridors, but wildlife corridors do not always serve as habitat linkages.

**HIGH OCCUPANCY VEHICLE LANE (HOV)**

A highway lane designated for use by motor vehicle occupied by three or more persons only.

**HIGHWAY**

A roadway designated by the County as a highway in the County Highway Plan as adopted by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. The right-of-way of such a highway is reserved by County Ordinance.

**HILLSIDE MANAGEMENT AREAS**

Hilly and mountainous areas with average slopes above 15 percent. Instituted to preserve the natural and scenic character of the area and to minimize the danger to life and property caused by fire and flood hazards, water pollution, soil erosion, and land slippage.

**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

All sites, features, burial grounds, examples of rock art structures, ruins, artifacts, remains, chemical traces and other data pertaining to or derived from the activities and presence of pre-existing and/or extinct population at a locality, whether above, on or below the surface of land or water.

**HOUSEHOLD**

All persons occupying a dwelling unit.

**HOUSING UNIT OR UNITS**

The place of permanent or customary and usual abode of a person, including a single-family dwelling, a single unit in a two-family dwelling, multi-family or multi-purpose dwelling, a unit of a condominium or cooperative housing project, a non-housekeeping unit, a mobile home, or any other residential unit which either is considered to be real property under State law or cannot be moved without substantial damage or unreasonable cost.

**INFILL**

The development of bi-passed vacant or agricultural land within an established urban area.

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

Basic utilities and facilities necessary for development, such as water, electricity, sewers, streets and highways.

**LAND CAPABILITY**

The capacity of the land to sustain development taking into account all natural factors which may constrain development.

**LANDFORM GRADING**

A method of contour grading which creates manufactured slopes that have curves and varying slope ratios in the horizontal and vertical planes, and are thus designed to simulate the appearance of surrounding natural terrain.

**LAND SUITABILITY**

The appropriateness of land for development taking into account land capability, compatibility of development with available services system capacities both local and regional, such as road, water and sewer systems.

**LANDSLIDES**

Downhill movement of masses of earth material under force of gravity.

**LARGE FAMILY**

A household of five or more persons related by birth and/or marriage.

**LIQUEFACTION**

The transformation of loose, wet soil from a solid to a liquid state, often as a result of ground shaking during an earthquake

**LISTED SPECIES**

Animal or plant species that are listed as threatened or endangered under the State and Federal Endangered Species Act.

**LOWER-INCOME HOUSEHOLD**

A household, with adjustments for household size, whose income falls below 80 percent of the median household income of the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) of the County of Los Angeles.

**MOBILE HOME**

A domicile transportable in one or more sections, designed and equipped to contain not more than two dwelling units, to be used with or without a permanent foundation system.

**MULTI -MODAL TRANSPORTATION**

A transportation system comprising more than one modal network to provide the user with a reasonable choice.

**MULTIPLE (MULTI) FAMILY HOUSING UNIT (ATTACHED HOUSING UNIT)**

A housing unit contained in a structure having more than one housing unit.

**NOISE**

Unwanted sound known to have several adverse effects on people, including hearing loss, speech interference, sleep interference, physiological responses, and annoyance. Based on these known adverse effects of noise, the federal government and the State of California have established criteria to protect public health and safety and to prevent disruption of certain human activities.

**NOISE SENSITIVE LANDS AND USES**

Those areas--such as mountain parklands, wildlife corridors or nature centers--or land uses--such as low density residential--where noise above a certain level would have adverse effects on humans, as well as on wildlife that may be sensitive to human noises. Such noises may be continuous--such as freeways or airports--or intermittent--such as firearm shooting ranges or temporary construction noise. The County Health Code maintains standards for permissible noise impacts on various land uses.

**OPEN SPACE**

In the context of the North Area Plan, the term open space generally refers to the natural open landscape, recreational, agricultural or landscaped area, such as parks and golf courses.

**ORDINANCE**

A general term for local laws which regulate and sets standards for land development.

**PASSIVE RECREATION**

Recreational activity, usually unstructured, requiring little use of physical facilities. Includes such activities as hiking and horseback riding. Does not include activities/facilities such as baseball diamonds and soccer fields.

**PLANNING AREA**

Within this document, the jurisdiction of the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan--the unincorporated area of Los Angeles County west of the City of Los Angeles and north of the California Coastal Zone boundary.

**POTABLE WATER**

Water fit to drink; drinkable.

**PRIMARY WATER TREATMENT**

The first stage in waste water treatment in which substantially all floating or settleable solids are mechanically removed by screening and sedimentation.

**QUIMBY ACT**

State enabling legislation which allows local government to require the dedication of land or the payment of in-lieu fees for parks or recreational purposes as a condition of subdivision approval

**RECLAIMED WATER SYSTEM**

A system of pipelines, pumps and storage basins for the storage and distribution of reclaimed wastewater.

**REGION**

Within this document, the unincorporated planning area and the cities of Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills and Westlake Village--unless the word is modified to imply a broader area. Also, synonymous with the Ventura Freeway Corridor.

**RESOURCE**

Any material, structure, process or condition considered to have value. It may be man-made or natural, such as water, land, air, climate, minerals, structures or facilities.

**RIDGELINE**

A line connecting the highest points along a ridge and separating drainage basins or small-scale drainage systems from one another.

**RIPARIAN HABITAT**

The natural environment of animals or plants on or near the banks of lakes, rivers and streams.

**RUNOFF**

The portion of rainfall or irrigation water that flows across ground surface and eventually is returned to streams. Runoff can pick up pollutants and debris from the air or the land and carry them to the receiving waters.

**RURAL**

A way of life characterized by living in a non-urban or agricultural environment at low densities without typical urban services. Equestrian and agrarian activities are often appropriate in such areas. Urban services and facilities not normally found in rural areas include curbs, gutters and sidewalks; street lighting, landscaping and traffic signalization; mass public transit; and commercial facilities dependent on large consumer volumes such as regional shopping centers.

**SANITARY LANDFILL**

A site for the disposal of solid waste using sanitary landfill techniques.

**SCENIC CORRIDOR**

The visible land area from a highway right-of-way where scenic design standards are applied.

**SCENIC HIGHWAY, OFFICIALLY DESIGNATED**

A state or county route whose scenic corridor protection program has been approved by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), shown on official publications and posted with official poppy signs.

**SCENIC HIGHWAY/ROUTE**

A road which, in addition to its transportation function, provides opportunities for enjoyment of natural and manmade scenic resources where esthetic values are protected and enhanced.

**SCENIC QUALITY**

The total impression made by components of a natural or manmade landscape which provide an attractive and memorable visual experience to the viewer; includes natural land forms, water features, rock outcroppings, trees and other vegetation and human settlements, buildings, and structures of interest.

**SECONDARY TREATMENT**

Waste water treatment, beyond the primary stage, in which bacteria consume the organic parts of waste. This biochemical action is accomplished by use of trickling filters or the activated sludge process. Effective secondary treatment removes virtually all floating and settle-able solids and approximately 90 percent of both Biochemical Oxygen Demands (BOD's) and suspended solids. Customarily, disinfection by chlorination is the final stage of the secondary treatment process.

**SEISMIC ACTIVITY**

Relates to the general level of earthquake activity in an area.

**SEPTIC TANK**

An underground tank used for the deposition of domestic wastes. Bacteria in the wastes decompose the organic matter, and the sludge settles to the bottom. The effluent flows through drains into the ground. Sludge is pumped out at regular intervals.

**SEWAGE**

The total of organic waste and waste water generated by residential and commercial establishments.

**SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEM**

Any method used to process sewage, including components of a central treatment plant as well as any type of on-site system such as a package treatment plant or septic system which may or may not include a leach field.

**SEWAGE TREATMENT**

See primary treatment and secondary treatment.

**SEWER**

Any pipe or conduit used to collect and carry away sewage or storm water runoff from the generating source to treatment plants or receiving streams. A sewer that conveys household and commercial sewage is called a sanitary sewer. If it transports runoff from rain or snow, it is called a storm sewer, in Southern California it is called a storm drain.

**SEWERAGE**

The entire system of sewage collection, treatment and disposal. Also applies to all effluent carried by sewers whether it is sanitary sewage, industrial wastes or storm runoff.

**SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREAS (SEA)**

Areas identified as having significant natural elements.

**SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREAS BUFFERS**

Areas adjacent to a SEA, which drain into the SEA and in which development may have significant impacts on the natural habitat of the SEA. The buffers are designed to add further protection of the biological resources in SEAs.

**SINGLE FAMILY HOUSING UNIT (DETACHED HOUSING UNIT)**

A housing unit contained in a structure separated from other structures and designed for only one household.

**SLOPE STABILITY**

The ability of a slope of soil or rock materials to resist moving downhill.

**SMALL LOT SUBDIVISION**

This term refers to, smaller lots in rural mountain areas many of which were subdivided in the 1920s and which often lack a basic physical infrastructure meeting current development standards. These lots are concentrated in the following areas:

Glenview, Monte Nido, Topanga Oaks, Malibu Bowl, Topanga Woods, El Nido, Old Post Office Tract, Malibu Lake, Fernwood, Malibu Mar Vista, Calabasas Highlands, Malibu Vista, Upper Old Topanga, Upper Latigo, Old Topanga, Vera Canyon, Las Flores Heights.

**SOUND**

Technically described in terms of loudness or amplitude (measured in decibels), frequency or pitch (measured in Hertz or cycles per second), and duration (measured in seconds or minutes). The standard unit of measurement of the loudness of sound is the decibel (dB).

**SPECIFIC PLAN**

A detailed document that specifically implements a general plan, usually—but not always—focused on a specific development project. Specific plans are legally required to detail regulations and programs to implement a general plan. These regulations and programs must include:

- the location and size of certain land uses and public facilities,
- streets and other transportation facilities,
- standards for land use densities, and public services,
- standards for water and other natural resources, and
- implementation of open spare lands.

**STORMWATER**

Rainwater, as collected in ground flows and streams. Often used to describe the increased elevation in stream flows following a rainstorm.

**SUBURBAN**

A way of life characterized by living in an area—often adjacent to urban development—that is noted for its low density, single-family neighborhoods with local-serving commercial uses. A full range of urban improvements and land uses is not available; high intensity commercial or business centers are examples of urban development not found in suburban areas.

**TERRAIN**

The physical features of a piece of land, including elevations and general geographic and vegetative composition of the site.

**TERTIARY TREATMENT**

Waste water treatment beyond the secondary or biological stage that includes removal of nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen, and a high percentage of suspended solids. Tertiary treatment, also known as advanced waste treatment, produces a high quality effluent.

**TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT (TDM)**

A strategy for reducing demand on the road system by reducing the number of vehicles using the roadways and/or increasing the number of persons per vehicle. TDM attempts to reduce the number of persons who drive alone on the roadway during the commute period and to increase the number in carpools, vanpools, buses and trains, walking, and biking. TDM can be an element of TSM (see below).

**TRANSPORTATION MODE**

Any form of transportation such as private motor vehicle, public transit, bus, van, bicycle, walking, marine or aviation.

**TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT (TSM)**

A comprehensive strategy developed to address the problems caused by additional development, increasing trips, and a shortfall in transportation capacity. Transportation Systems Management focuses on more efficiently utilizing existing highway and transit systems rather than expanding them. TSM measures are characterized by their low cost and quick implementation time frame, such as computerized traffic signals, metered freeway ramps, and one-way streets.

**TURNOUT**

A wider part of a road enabling vehicles to pass one another.

**URBAN**

A way of life characterized by living in an area where the intensively man-altered physical environment predominates over the natural. The urban physical environment includes: residential uses including multiple unit buildings, industry, trade services and professional occupations and the presence of collective or public service systems (see Rural).

**URBAN EXPANSION**

Geographic extension of urban levels of development and services into previously undeveloped or rural areas.

**URBAN FORM**

The physical arrangement of urban areas including the three-dimensional pattern of built and open spaces.

**URBAN RUNOFF**

In contrast with natural runoff (generally rainwater), an elevated level of water runoff--typically from rain or irrigation--that results from impervious surfaces such as streets, driveways, buildings, tennis courts, etc. associated with urban areas--but which may also occur anywhere man-made alterations to the natural ground surface has been made.

**VENTURA FREEWAY CORRIDOR**

An area along the Ventura Freeway that covers the four incorporated cities of Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, and Westlake Village and the unincorporated parts of Los Angeles County north of the Coastal Zone and west of the City of Los Angeles.

**VIEWSHED**

A field of view visible from a given location, such as a highway, parkland or hiking trail. The boundaries of a viewshed are often defined by the field of view to the nearest ridgeline. Viewsheds may include ridgelines, unique rock outcroppings, waterfalls, ocean views and various unusual land-forms.

**WASTE WATER**

Water carrying wastes from homes, businesses and industries that are a mixture of water and dissolved or suspended solids.

**WASTE WATER RENOVATION OR RECLAMATION**

The stabilization and removal of fine suspended solids, and the oxygenation of waste water for possible reuse.

**WATER POLLUTION**

The addition of sewage and industrial wastes of other harmful or objectionable material to water in concentrations or sufficient quantities to result in measurable degradation of water quality.

**WATER PURVEYORS**

Public or private water agencies or companies selling water to consumers.

**WATERSHED**

The area drained by river, stream, or creek. Six regional and subregional watersheds extend through the jurisdiction of the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan; these watersheds collect and ultimately convey runoff to the Pacific Ocean.

**WILDLIFE CORRIDOR**

A passageway connecting two or more core habitat areas in order to promote genetic flow and continuous recolonization of habitats by all plant and animal species within an ecosystem, or between ecosystems. A wildlife corridor is generally narrower in concept than a habitat linkage, and may or may not feature natural habitat.



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## APPENDIX A BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON BIOTA

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Vegetation is integral to many scenic, wildlife, and recreational amenities in the area, and also fulfills many functional roles related to cleansing of water and air, as well as slope stabilization. The focus of managing vegetative resources is to protect and maintain these and other attributes. The following general plant communities may be found within the Ventura study area:

- Riparian woodland,
- Riparian scrub,
- Sycamore-alder riparian woodland,
- Southern oak woodland,
- Valley oak woodland,
- California walnut woodland,
- Chaparral,
- Coastal sage scrub,
- Grasslands, and
- Barren, disturbed, ruderal, weedy, and reservoir.

Virtually any of these plant associations may be considered 'sensitive,' particularly if they 1) occur within a Los Angeles County Significant Ecological Area (SEA), 2) provide habitat for listed or otherwise sensitive species, or 3) function as part of an especially valuable wildlife habitat area (i.e., a wildlife movement corridor).<sup>6</sup>

Within the study area, Woodland communities are regulated by specific laws and ordinances. Specifically, all riparian communities and communities containing oak trees (*Quercus* spp.) are regulated by county or city policies and ordinances. There are additional federal and State regulations for riparian areas and other wetlands.

Coastal sage scrub is also considered a sensitive community based on 1) widespread awareness among the resource agencies, policy makers, and public that this community has undergone widespread losses in the past, and 2) the state's ongoing effort to create regionally important coastal sage scrub preserves under the Natural Communities Conservation Plan (NCCP).

### **Wildlife Resources**

The Santa Monica Mountains support a variety of wildlife species. The composition of the species present in a given area is dependent upon the plant community present, the availability of food and water, and, for some species, the time of the year.

Woodland habitats support a variety of bird species, including raptors such as barn owl and great horned owls, and Cooper's hawks. Flickers and woodpeckers use the larger trees in the oak woodland along with smaller passerines such as the Wilson's warbler, Hutton's vireo, black-headed

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<sup>6</sup>Sensitive species are those plants and animals occurring or potentially occurring in the study area that are endangered or rare, as those terms are defined by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and its Guidelines, or are otherwise of current local, regional or state concern. Plant communities and species are considered sensitive based on (1) federal, state, or local laws regulating their development; (2) limited distributions; and/or (3) the habitat requirements of sensitive plants or animals. For the purposes of CEQA analysis, plant communities are generally considered to be sensitive if they are of special value to the local ecosystem (e.g., water sources), or are regulated by local, state, or federal resource agencies.

grosbeak, hooded oriole, and Nashville warbler. Other animal species that use these habitats include amphibians such as western toads and Pacific tree frogs, reptiles such as Pacific slender salamanders and ensatina salamanders, and mammals such as dusky-footed woodrats and mule deer.

Coastal sage scrub, chaparral, and rock outcrops tend to support similar species, with such reptiles as western fence lizards, western whiptails, western rattlesnakes, and gopher snakes; birds such as towhees, sparrows, California thrashers, bushtits, and wrentits; and mammals such as bats, woodrats, mule deer, and bobcats.

Grassland habitats support mostly ground dwelling species, including reptiles such as horned lizards; birds such as blackbirds, brown-headed cowbirds (winter), horned larks, and mourning doves; and mammals such as black-tailed jackrabbits, Beechey ground squirrels, and Audubon cottontails. The golden eagle, red-tailed hawk, and northern harrier also forage over grasslands.

Ubiquitous animal species include the side-blotched lizard American crow, common raven, northern mockingbird, house finch, and coyote.

### **Habitat Linkages**

A biological issue of special concern in the Santa Monica Mountains area is the preservation of habitat connectivity and linkages. The National Park Service, California Department of Fish and Game, and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy have all expressed concerns about the adverse effects of urbanization, particularly the fragmentation of habitat areas.

In general terms, habitat connectivity and linkages are important for four main reasons. First, they allow wildlife movement through all habitat areas suitable for use by a species, even those areas that are not currently being used. Second, increased connectivity allows for recolonization of areas that were historically occupied, but from which the species has been pushed out. Third, connectivity promotes the exchange of genetic material to occur between populations, which is important in preserving genetic diversity within and between populations [*Impact Sciences, 1982b*]. Fourth, connectivity is critical for large ranging mammals such as the mountain lion, which require thousands of acres of habitat to survive.

Target species for identification of minimum habitat size should reflect the specific conservation objectives being addressed, and can vary considerably. Edelman (1990) evaluated the large and medium-sized predators. He evaluated the needs of badger, bobcat, mule deer, gray fox, long-tailed weasel, mountain lion, and coyote populations. The use of the larger species of mammals, particularly predatory species, is common because of the assumption that if sufficient high quality wildlife habitat, corridors, and linkages are provided for these species, other species will be adequately provided for. The reasoning is as follows:

- Large animals need more physical space, simply because of their size, breeding requirements and foraging demands. Territories for these species are large and, therefore, preserved habitat must be large.
- Large predators require a large prey base to maintain their populations. In order to protect large predators, smaller species that serve as prey and their habitat must also be protected.
- Predators such as coyote and bobcat have a varied prey base. Therefore, not only large populations of small prey species must be maintained, but a variety of these species and their different habitats must be maintained.

### ***Inter-Range Habitat Linkages***

Inter-range habitat linkages are connections and areas for movement between two mountain ranges. Intra-range habitat linkages are connections and areas for movement within a mountain

range. For both corridors, usable habitat must be present within the corridor and connected to major core areas.

Edelman (1990) indicated that linkages between the Simi Hills and Santa Monica Mountains should ultimately connect with Malibu Creek State Park, 'the most centrally located core habitat-area in the Santa Monica Mountain range.' He identified three potentially viable movement corridors between the Simi Hills and the Santa Monica Mountains, all of which are within the study area:

- Liberty Canyon
- Crummer Canyon
- Las Virgenes Creek/Ventura Freeway.

### ***Intra-Range Corridors***

Lieberstein (1989) analyzed the design and function of open space reserves in the Santa Monica Mountains, focusing on east/west, intra-range corridors between Topanga and Malibu Creek State Parks (located just south of the Ventura study area). Applying the principles of island biogeography, she concluded that the optimal reserve design between Topanga and Malibu Creek State Parks would consist of 'several [movement] corridors converging into a central hub... to encourage wildlife dispersal between the two parks (p.85).' Presumably, this conclusion applies to preserving movement opportunities throughout the Santa Monica Mountains.

Although previous development and land use patterns have made the establishment and preservation of viable *inter-range* corridors a more pressing issue than *intra-range* corridors, the documents reviewed for this assessment support a conclusion that key intra-range corridors must also be maintained within the Ventura Freeway study area. This is in order to maintain high biotic diversity within the area and the Santa Monica Mountains as a whole. However, it is important to note that inter-range linkages will serve little value unless intra-range connectivity is also protected.

Apart from the issues already discussed, the only intra-range wildlife connectivity issue of potential regional importance is east/west movement through upper Topanga Canyon, in the east corner of the study area. Presently, east/west movement through upper Topanga Canyon appears to be essentially unconstrained, although a number of roads and some development is present. Previous developments south of the area already appear to constrain movement, at least for wildlife species that prefer to move through relatively wide linkages of undeveloped habitat (e.g., mountain lions). Therefore, moving through upper Topanga Canyon may be the preferred corridor for such species when traveling long distances across the northern half of the Santa Monica Mountains.



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## APPENDIX B SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREAS

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### Los Angeles County Significant Ecological Areas

Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs) are areas that have been identified by the *Los Angeles County General Plan* as containing unique or unusual species assemblages, or areas of habitat that are rapidly declining in the Los Angeles County. The SEAs were established to protect a special or sometimes unique collection of habitats and species from loss due to encroachment and human disturbances. However, SEAs are not intended to function as isolated preservation areas. SEA Nos. 3A (Buffer), 3B (Buffer), 4, 6 and 12 are located within the planning area, and are indicated on the oversize vegetative communities map.

#### **SEA No. 3 - Zuma Canyon**

Zuma Canyon is one of the few perennial drainage courses in the Santa Monica Mountains that remains in a natural, undeveloped condition and is without paved road access, although there are some non-public dirt roads. It should be noted that only the buffer zones for this SEA are located within the region. The upper ridges are dry, and support chaparral, blending into coastal sage scrub on the lower, steeper, shaded slopes. The canyon bottom supports a rich riparian woodland community that is more extensive and less disturbed than riparian communities in neighboring canyons. This is due primarily to the presence of perennial flows in Zuma Canyon and the relative inaccessibility of the habitat to humans. The stream supports abundant wildlife populations, including amphibians and birds that are dependent on surface moisture, a very limited resource in all of Southern California. Deer and other large mammals utilize this as a water source, and mountain lions have been sighted in the canyon. Lyon's pentachaeta (*Pentachaeta 1yonii*), a federal and state listed endangered plant, occurs in the area.

#### **SEA No. 4 - Upper La Sierra Canyon**

Upper La Sierra Canyon contains an unusually rich and diverse stand of canyon flora including the Santa Monica Mountain Live-forever (*Dudleya cymosa marcesens*), a plant species federally listed endangered and a State-listed Rare plant. The Creek Dogwood (*Cornus glabrata*), which is found only at one other site in the County, is abundant. The Giant Chain Fern (*Woodwardia fimbriata*), which normally reaches heights of 6 to 7 feet, is 8 to 9 feet tall at this locality. This species is found only at four other localities in the Santa Monica Mountains, and nowhere else is it as easily accessible. The Humboldt lily (*Lilium humboldtii*) also reaches heights of 9 feet at this locality. Accompanying this unusual stand of canyon vegetation is a healthy riparian woodland community. Big-leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*) reach heights of 60 feet, surrounded by dense stands of coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and California-laurel (*Umbellularia californica*). This aggregation of uncommon species makes the area genuinely unique.

#### **SEA No. 6 - Las Virgenes**

This SEA is located in the hilly terrain west of Liberty Canyon. The Las Virgenes SEA contains a number of plant species that are more common throughout the interior areas of southern California, but are of limited distribution within the Santa Monica Mountains. The local area does not support any significant development, and the plant communities are relatively undisturbed. The surrounding vegetation consists of coastal sage scrub and chaparral.

**SEA No. 12 - Palo Comado Canyon**

This SEA was identified by Los Angeles County as one of the last substantial expanses of southern oak woodland savanna in the County. It is composed of 2,760 acres, and is divided into two distinct sections by the Ventura Freeway at Brents junction (Las Virgenes Creek). The northern portion of this SEA includes parts of Palo Comado and Cheseboro Canyons in the Simi Hills. These canyons include extensive grasslands, oak woodlands and oak savannah, with patches of coastal sage scrub.

South of the freeway, the Las Virgenes SEA includes McCoy Canyon (a tributary to Las Virgenes Creek) and a series of north-south trending canyons and hills. The vegetation in this section is similar to that in the north but includes some agricultural land (citrus, plums, and avocados), and the oak savannah is less extensive.



Coyote

Photo by David W. Johnson



**Credits**

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