Los Angeles County
Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead

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Acting Director of Planning

April 7, 2009

TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: Jon Sanabria
Acting Director of Planning

SUBJECT: QUARTERLY STATUS REPORT ON BOARD MOTION REGARDING PROGRESS OF THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY OAK WOODLANDS CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN (October 7, 2008, Item 95-C)

On October 7, 2008 your Board requested appropriate County staff to participate in the California Oak Woodlands Conservation Program and instructed the Director of Planning to facilitate actions to assist the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains (Resource Conservation District) in its preparation of the Los Angeles County Oak Woodlands Conservation Management Plan (Oak Woodlands Plan). This second quarterly status report summarizes the progress of the Oak Woodlands Plan.

Since the last quarterly report on the progress of the Oak Woodlands Plan was delivered to your Board on January 7, 2009 the Los Angeles County Oak Woodlands Conservation Strategic Alliance (Strategic Alliance) has added a member of the Building Industry Alliance (BIA). This BIA representative is Mr. Fred MacMurdo.

The Strategic Alliance has identified goals for the Oak Woodlands Plan including:

- Develop a vision of what oak woodlands in Los Angeles County will look like in 50 years;
- Provide a pragmatic, economically equitable and defensible framework to guide the protection and restoration of oak woodlands within the county; and
- Integrate oak woodland ecological values into planning processes.

A grant application for funding to prepare the Oak Woodlands Plan was submitted to the California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) in November 2008 with a support letter from your Board that included a commitment of $50,000 in direct funding. Due to the State of California budget crisis, the February 2009 meeting of the WCB to consider the grant application was cancelled, the May 2009 is likely to be cancelled and the next scheduled meeting is not until August 2009. Furthermore, it is unknown if when the WCB does again meet if it will approve new projects like the Oak Woodlands Plan grant application. This setback has not dampened the commitment of the Strategic Alliance to prepare the Oak Woodlands Plan and its membership has moved forward assertively with its work program, strategically using the $50,000 provided by your Board.

Central issues in the development of the Oak Woodlands Plan include a viable definition of oak woodlands and methods for determining the economic value of oak woodlands. The Strategic Alliance has scheduled four workshops to convene experts to consider these issues. On March 5, 2009, on behalf of the Strategic Alliance, the Western Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture conducted an all-day workshop of 139 participants to consider the definition of oak woodlands. A firm definition for the purpose of the Oak Woodlands Plan was not finalized, however, there was consensus on elements that must be considered in a final definition, including:

- Emphasis on oak species native to California;
- Presence of oak associated plants and animals; and
- An oak woodland can be comprised of as few as one to two trees.

Working definitions of oak woodlands that emerged from the March 5 meeting include:

- A grouping of oaks growing in a continuous pattern along with companion woody plants and grasses capable of supporting wildlife normally associated with the local area and capable of vigorous performance without human interference.
- An area of undeveloped land, which has been and is mostly populated by California native oak and oak associated plants.
- An oak woodland is part of a natural system, anchored by oaks, a water source, associated understory habitat (chaparral, grasslands, riparian zones), soil structure and all animal (humans included) species it supports. It is a regenerative micro ecosystem.

The workshops to assess methods for determining the economic value of oak woodlands are very important to the development of the Oak Woodlands Plan because it will be necessary to have a sound, equitable means for placing a monetary value on oak woodlands for their conservation. Economic workshops were conducted on March 12, 2009 and April 2, 2009 and the final one is scheduled for May 7, 2009. Paneled by

economic experts from the academy and industry these workshops consider the role of transactional, service, and institutional values in the conservation of oak woodlands. The Strategic Alliance will synthesize the outcomes from the economic workshops into a draft section on valuing oak woodlands for inclusion in the Oak Woodlands Plan.

The commitment of the Strategic Alliance to prepare an Oak Woodlands Plan is strong and is benefiting from the $50,000 provided by your Board. Although the Strategic Alliance was expecting the matching funds that would have come from the WCB grant application, it anticipates that it can produce the following deliverables under the current financial circumstances:

- Draft Oak Woodlands Plan complete by June 2009
- Conduct eight community meetings in summer/fall 2009
- Revised Draft Oak Woodlands Plan for County review in winter 2010

The next quarterly report on the progress of the Oak Woodlands Plan will be delivered July 7, 2009.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me or Mark Herwick of my staff at (213) 974-6427 or by email at mherwick@planning.lacounty.gov. Our office hours are 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday. We are closed on Fridays.

JS:RCH:MSH

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