Los Angeles County
Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead

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Director

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TO: Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Chair
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Director

RESPONSE TO BOARD MOTION REGARDING IMPLEMENTATION OF OAK WOODLANDS CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN (AUGUST 23, 2011, ITEM NO. 17)

Background

According to the California Oak Woodlands Conservation Act (AB 242), Los Angeles County (County) is required to develop an Oak Woodlands Conservation Management Plan (Plan) in order to qualify for funding to preserve oak woodlands through the State of California's Oak Woodlands Conservation Fund (Fund). Accordingly, the County Board of Supervisors (Board) adopted Motion 95-C on October 7, 2008, which directed the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains (RCD) to develop such a plan. The RCD assembled a group known as the Oak Woodlands Habitat Conservation Strategic Alliance (Alliance), consisting of biologists, arborists, environmentalists, foresters, planners, Building Industry Association (BIA) representatives, and academics. The Alliance, which undertook a significant and unprecedented collaborative effort, donated over 5,000 volunteer hours and completed the Plan in May 2011.

The Plan is divided into two parts. Part I of the Plan contains a voluntary oak woodlands conservation strategy that allows the County to qualify for funds distributed through the Fund. Part II of the Plan contains a comprehensive set of recommendations designed to assist the County in revising, expanding, and implementing policies and regulations to preserve oak woodlands.

On August 23, 2011, the Board adopted Part I of the Plan and instructed the Department of Regional Planning (DRP), the Forestry Division of the Fire Department (Fire), and other affected County departments to review the recommendations made in Part II of the Plan and report back to the Board within six months. Subsequently, DRP held meetings with the County Counsel, the Department of Public Works (DPW), and Fire to discuss the feasibility of these recommendations and possible methods of implementation. DRP requested time extensions to complete the report on March 5, 2012, April 2, 2012, May 31, 2012, and July 31, 2012 in order to complete these interagency discussions as well as additional discussions with the Alliance.

There are three identified focuses of the Plan. These are to prioritize the preservation of oak woodlands, to promote conservation by integrating oak woodlands into the development process in a sustainable manner, and to effectively mitigate the loss of oak woodlands. The Plan implements these objectives through a series of recommendations to revise and expand County plans, codes, and processes. These recommendations are categorized and outlined below:

- Alterations to the County's development and environmental review process;
- Revisions to the process by which County agencies address impacts to oak woodlands;
- Expansion of goals and policies contained in the County's General Plan;
- Changes to the County Zoning Code; and
- Long range implementation efforts.

In an effort to further summarize and categorize these recommendations, DRP created a matrix outlining each recommendation as it appears in the Plan, the responsible agency for each recommendation, strategies for addressing each recommendation, and an anticipated time frame for completion of each recommendation. While this report highlights some of these recommendations and strategies, the matrix provides more detailed information as to how each recommendation will be addressed (Attachment 1).

Development and Environmental Review Process

The first category of recommendations pertains to assessing impacts to oak woodlands in a cumulative and comprehensive manner, guidelines for evaluating the impacts associated with the loss of oak woodlands, and specific guidelines for the mitigation of the loss of oak woodlands.

In an effort to assist project applicants and DRP staff in assessing whether or not projects are located in an oak woodland, a Site Plan Review Application (Attachment 2) was developed. Moreover, the Plan contains a sample Environmental Questionnaire (Attachment 3) for applicants with projects that are located in oak woodlands, the intent of which is to more thoroughly address site conditions and potential adverse impacts to these resources. DRP will use these documents as a foundation to incorporate similar questions into our current project application materials, such as the environmental assessment information form, for projects requiring discretionary approval. These revised application materials shall be completed within nine months from the date of this report.

The Plan calls for an expansion of the County's Initial Study to specifically address impacts to oak woodlands. DRP has revised the Initial Study to include explicit language concerning oak woodlands. The revised Initial Study requires DRP staff to assess whether a development project requiring discretionary approval will "have a substantial adverse effect on any sensitive natural communities (e.g., riparian habitat, coastal sage scrub, oak woodlands, non-jurisdictional wetlands) identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by CDFG [California Department of Fish and Game] or USFWS [United States Fish and Wildlife Service]...." and/or whether it will "convert oak woodlands (as defined by the State, oak woodlands are oak stands with greater than 10% canopy cover with oaks at least 5 inch in diameter measured at 4.5 feet above mean natural grade) or otherwise contain oak or other unique native trees (junipers, joshuas, southern California black walnut, etc.)...." If projects are found to have adverse effects on and/or convert oak woodlands pursuant to the Initial Study; this would trigger a thorough review under the current California Environmental Quality Act review process, which includes an in-depth evaluation of current conditions on the site as well as impacts to oak woodlands.

The Plan also suggests the establishment of a threshold of significance for impacts to oak woodlands, the preparation of a cumulative impact analysis when the loss of oak woodlands is deemed necessary, and a requirement that developers consider the protection of oak woodlands early in the scoping process and evaluate alternative designs that would avoid impacts to oak woodlands. While DRP accounts for these impacts on a case-by-case basis when it reviews each discretionary development project, it does not currently have a formalized process that addresses these recommendations. Using the Plan as a foundation, DRP will create a guidance document to formalize, expand, and standardize this process. The guidance document

will be utilized by all planners when reviewing discretionary development projects and will consist of four parts intended to outline the various phases of processing projects located in oak woodlands in order to best achieve the Plan's stated goal of no net loss of oak woodlands. These parts are as follows:

- Part One will outline how applicants determine if their project is located in an oak woodland;
- Part Two will outline how planners process projects located in oak woodlands;
- Part Three will summarize mitigation strategies in cases where oak woodlands are impacted, damaged, or taken; and
- Part Four will outline guidelines for post-mitigation monitoring.

This guidance document will be created through a collaborative effort between DRP, County Counsel, Fire, DPW, other relevant County departments, members of the Alliance, and members of the development community and will use the Plan as an outline for how these processes can best achieve the goal of no net loss of oak woodlands. This document will be made publicly available through the DRP website to educate members of the public, as well as developers as to what to expect from these processes and ensure transparency. DRP anticipates that this task will be completed within nine months of the date of this report.

The Plan comprehensively addresses mitigation for impacts to oak woodlands and ranks mitigation alternatives. The Plan recommends that, in cases where oak woodlands will be removed or degraded by a proposed development project, mitigation strategies be ranked in the following order:

- Redesigning the proposed development project to avoid impacts;
- Acquiring oak woodland habitat at a ratio of two to one and placing such habitat into a conservation easement or public ownership;
- Restoration of degraded oak woodlands; and
- Replacement of lost or converted oak woodlands.

The Plan further distinguishes on-site restoration from off-site restoration and states that on-site restoration is less preferable than off-site restoration and shall replace lost canopy area at a ratio of at least two to one. The Plan characterizes off-site restoration to include:

- Acquiring off-site conservation easements or public ownership for oak woodland habitat;
- Contributing to the County's Oak Forests Special Fund at a minimum two to one ratio;

- Replacement planting at a location identified in the Plan's Oak Woodlands Conservation Map at a minimum ratio of two to one, coupled with monitoring for at least seven years; and
- Restoring moderately or severely degraded oak woodlands in the same geographic area at a minimum ratio of two to one.

The Plan also outlines the need for comprehensive monitoring when on-site or off-site replacement planting is implemented and calls for a minimum of seven years of monitoring after the replacement of the oak woodlands.

DRP considers the best and most feasible mitigation alternatives on a case-by-case basis when reviewing a development project requiring discretionary approval, but it does not have a formal documented process for the prioritization of mitigation strategies. As previously discussed, DRP will detail this process in Part Three of the guidance document, which will be made publicly available. This document will clearly outline the range of mitigation options using the recommendations from the Plan, such as those mentioned above, as guidelines. DRP will work with Fire to complete this document and outline guidelines for monitoring. Fire currently monitors replacement oak woodlands for two to five years, but will begin monitoring replacement oaks for seven years, as recommended by the Plan. The additional monitoring will be handled through existing staff, but Fire will evaluate the need for additional staff positions and may request additional staff positions in future budget cycles.

Furthermore, DRP will use the completed guidance document to create additional materials, such as a brochure or pamphlet, for potential developers that outline the manner in which projects located in oak woodlands are processed, as well as what mitigation strategies can be expected. DRP anticipates that this task will be completed within one year of the date of this report.

The County's Oak Forests Special Fund is currently maintained by the Department of Parks and Recreation. However, to date, it has been difficult to monitor the dispersal, timing, and application of these funds. Because Fire, in conjunction with DRP, makes recommendations as to when it is appropriate for project applicants to pay into this fund as a mitigation strategy, as well as where and how to disperse these funds, it would be more efficient for either DRP or Fire to be the administering entity of these funds. Therefore, DRP, in conjunction with Fire, will consider assuming administration of these funds in order to ensure a more transparent and cohesive process that concentrates resources into fewer County agencies and, therefore, increases effectiveness and dissemination of information.

County Agencies

The County Code does not currently require Oak Tree Permits for routine maintenance operations along the roadway network. Oak tree maintenance typically involves the trimming or removal of oak trees that are creating or may create hazards along the roadway. When performing this maintenance, DPW utilizes staff arborists and works closely with Fire to ensure that the impacts to oak trees are minimized. DPW also works with DRP to ensure that all maintenance activities are in compliance with the County Code where applicable. Due to the large volume of oak trees maintained annually, it would not be feasible nor cost effective to require a formalized Oak Tree Permit for this work.

County construction projects are subject to the County's Oak Tree Ordinance and may require an Oak Tree Permit. In addition, when designing and implementing public works improvements, DPW currently addresses potential impacts to oak woodlands on a case-by-case basis. In many cases, there are arborists on staff that consult with Fire staff, when appropriate, on the best way to conserve oak trees and woodlands. DPW strives to conserve oak woodlands through these efforts.

DPW will formally document its design and project development review and conservation processes in a guidance document, similar to that mentioned in the previous section, which would be utilized by DPW staff when maintaining roadways and designing and implementing public works improvements. The guidance document will be developed to meet the intent of the Plan, and will utilize the Plan's guidelines and best management practices. DPW will develop this guidance document in collaboration with its arborists, Fire, DRP, and members of the Alliance. DPW and DRP anticipate that this task will be completed within nine months of the date of this report.

General Plan

The Plan recommends that the following goal be incorporated into the Los Angeles County General Plan:

- "Oak woodlands are preserved and restored so that they are conserved in perpetuity with no net loss of existing woodlands."

The County's most recent Draft General Plan, which was released in May 2012, contains the following policies:

- Policy C/NR 3.4: Preserve and sustainably manage the County's forests and woodlands; and

- Policy C/NR 3.10: Require that development mitigate 'in-kind' for unavoidable impacts on biologically sensitive areas within the County and permanently preserve mitigation sites.

In order to specifically address the recommendation of the Plan, DRP revised the most recent Draft General Plan to include the following goal:

- Goal C/NR4: Preserved and restored oak woodlands that are conserved in perpetuity with no net loss of existing oak woodlands.

This goal is supported by the following policy in the most recent Draft General Plan:

- Policy C/NR 4.1: Conserve and sustainably manage the County's oak woodlands.

In addition to this language, DRP will create an Oak Woodlands Conservation Management Plan Implementation Program (Implementation Program) within the Draft General Plan. This Implementation Program will include the completion of the aforementioned guidance documents that will be developed for use by DRP and DPW, as well as the development of a process for documenting "volunteer oaks" through the Zoning Ordinance Update Program (ZOUP). The Implementation Program will also encompass accounting for oak woodlands' carbon sequestration impacts in the County's Climate Action Plan (CAP), and working with the Los Angeles Region Imagery Acquisition Consortium (LAR-IAC) to lobby for the inclusion of infrared imagery acquisition that will help document existing oak woodlands. The components of this Implementation Program are further discussed in subsequent sections.

The Plan also recommends that DRP account for the carbon sequestration impacts associated with oak woodland conversion or preservation in the CAP. The Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan, which was approved by the Regional Planning Commission and is currently awaiting Board adoption, calls for DRP to develop a CAP within 18 months after the General Plan Update is adopted by the Board. The General Plan Update includes similar language in its Implementation Program. Accordingly, DRP has been working with the Internal Services Department on the CAP effort for the unincorporated areas and has asked the consultant currently collaborating on the project, ICF International, to include the loss of sequestered carbon from oak woodland conversion into the emissions inventory and to draft reduction measures addressing the conservation of oak woodlands.

Zoning Code

The Plan calls for a comprehensive review of the County's Oak Tree Ordinance, which would include an evaluation of methods for providing oak woodland expansion credits, quantifying volunteer oaks, and processing development projects in areas where oak woodlands are present.

A comprehensive review of the County's Oak Tree Ordinance, or the development of a new Oak Woodlands Ordinance, is not possible at this time given resource constraints. However, DRP will examine the feasibility of this recommendation when it begins ZOUP, which is anticipated to commence in approximately one year. In addition, as part of the General Plan Update effort, the County's Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs) are being expanded and the SEA Ordinance is currently being revised. A portion of oak woodlands and "potential oak woodlands," as classified in the Plan's Oak Woodlands Conservation Map, fall within the expanded SEA boundaries. The revised SEA Ordinance will apply within these expanded boundaries and will require more rigorous review of development projects to address potential impacts to ecological resources, including oak woodlands. In an effort to specifically account for oak woodlands in the revised SEA Ordinance, DRP will circulate drafts to the Alliance for comment as to how best to account for these specific habitats in the new regulations.

The Plan recommends that oaks added by a property owner, or "volunteer" oaks, should be allowed to be removed without penalty, permitting costs, or mitigation requirements. Pending a more comprehensive documentation of the status of current oak woodlands, DRP will examine including this recommendation within the scope of ZOUP. We anticipate that DRP will commence work on ZOUP in approximately one year.

Long Range Implementation

The Plan also makes recommendations for long range strategies geared toward the protection of oak woodlands. A major component of these recommendations involves the comprehensive documentation of the current status and range of oak woodlands in the unincorporated areas of the County. While the Plan provides a map of oak woodlands in the State of California's CALVEG dataset and "potential oak woodlands," DRP requires a more detailed and up-to-date data set in order to accurately document the status of current oak woodlands. Therefore, DRP's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Section will work with the LAR-IAC Program Manager to lobby for the inclusion of infrared imagery acquisition in their next project, LAR-IAC4, which is slated for 2013 or 2014 (with future projects on a two or three year update cycle). As part of LAR-IAC4, remote sensing techniques could be used to identify the location of oak trees and/or oak woodlands to create an authoritative GIS layer that stakeholders can consult to find existing oak woodlands. This analysis may require additional funding. In the

meantime, the CALVEG data set and the Plan's Oak Woodlands Conservation Map will be made available on the DRP website for both County staff and members of the public.

Additional recommendations include the development of a public outreach campaign educating stakeholders on all aspects of oak woodlands preservation, management, and restoration. The Santa Monica Mountains Fire Safe Alliance is an existing group consisting of various stakeholders including cities, water districts, County agencies, and resource groups whose goal is to educate the public and potential developers on fire safety practices and development alternatives. Fire could potentially use this group as a model for a new group, to be comprised of similar parties including DRP, Fire, DPW, and members of the Alliance, whose purpose would be to educate the public concerning oak woodlands and act as a clearinghouse of information for developers seeking to initiate projects in areas containing oak woodlands. In developing the guidance documents discussed in earlier sections, a working group comprised of parties, including DRP, Fire, DPW, and members of the Alliance will be convened in order to complete these documents. As such, points of contact for these groups can be easily established, and the working group could evolve into the public outreach and education group recommended by the Plan. DRP expects that this group will be convened within one year of the date of this report.

The Plan also advocates for more communication and partnership amongst all parties involved in administration of the County's Oak Tree Ordinance, as well as establishing new partnerships with relevant stakeholders, to ensure dissemination of information. DRP will continue to develop and enhance these types of working relationships. Specifically, DRP will continue to engage the Alliance in its efforts to address the recommendations in the Plan, specifically in the development of the guidance documents. DRP and DPW will develop an outline of the guidance documents and intends to meet with Alliance members early next year to solicit feedback.

In order to efficiently disseminate information regarding the Plan, DRP will create a Plan webpage on its website. This webpage will act as a clearinghouse for information pertaining to the Plan, DRP's efforts to address recommendations made in the Plan, and information for applicants with proposed projects potentially located in oak woodlands. The webpage will contain the Plan; the CALVEG data layer and the Plan's Oak Woodlands Conservation Map; the guidance documents upon their completion; the additional materials intended for potential developers upon their completion; links to the General Plan policy language pertaining to oak woodlands; the new Initial Study and expanded Environmental Questionnaire; updates on the progress of the formation of the aforementioned public education and clearinghouse group; and any other relevant information pertaining to DRP's efforts to address the Plan's goal of no net loss of oak woodlands.

In an effort to monitor the progress made toward implementing the recommendations made in the Plan, DRP will place a provision for a biannual review of this progress in the General Plan Implementation Program described above. This will entail a biannual report to the Board detailing efforts made by DRP, DPW, and Fire to address the recommendations.

Conclusion

The Plan, with a goal of preserving and restoring oak woodlands in the County so that they are conserved in perpetuity with no net loss of oak woodlands, was completed through over 5,000 hours of dedicated volunteer work and significant staff time from DRP, DPW, Fire, and other departments. This Plan represents an unprecedented collaborative effort between numerous stakeholders and the County and contains invaluable information and recommendations as to how best to achieve the goal of no net loss of oak woodlands. Although many of the recommendations made in the Plan are currently being implemented on a case-by-case, informal basis, the process needs to be documented in a transparent manner that affords both County staff and members of the public a more formal approach to the conservation of oak woodlands. Moreover, the wealth of information and comprehensive and thoughtful recommendations made in the Plan should be utilized to expand and clarify this process. As such, DRP and DPW will create guidance documents, using the Plan as a foundation, that will formalize their approaches to oak woodlands conservation, mitigation, and monitoring. These will take an additional nine months to complete. A supplemental document for potential developers will also be created. This will take an additional year to complete.

Fire will be charged with the additional monitoring standards for oak woodlands mitigation projects outlined in the Plan. The additional monitoring will be handled through existing staff, but Fire will evaluate the need for additional staff positions and may request additional staff positions in future budget cycles. Fire will also create a new working group that will act as a clearinghouse of information for members of the public and developers seeking to initiate projects in areas containing oak woodlands. This group will take approximately one year to convene. Fire, in conjunction with DRP, will also consider assuming administration of the Oak Forests Special Fund.

DRP is accounting for oak woodlands in its updated Initial Study, the General Plan Update, and the CAP. Moreover, the DRP's GIS Section will work with LAR-IAC and lobby for the inclusion of infrared imagery acquisition in their next project, and, in the meantime, will make the CALVEG data set and the "potential oak woodlands" map publicly available.

A comprehensive review of the Oak Tree Ordinance, or development of a new Oak Woodlands Ordinance, is not possible at this time due to resource constraints. However, DRP will examine the feasibility of this recommendation when it begins the ZOUP process, which is anticipated to commence in approximately one year. In addition, DRP is in the process of expanding the County's SEAs and revising the SEA Ordinance. A portion of oak woodlands and "potential oak woodlands" fall within the expanded SEA boundaries and, thus, the revised SEA Ordinance will add an additional layer of review for projects in these areas. DRP will also examine including streamlined removal of "volunteer oaks" within the scope of its ZOUP project, which will commence in approximately one year. DRP will create a webpage on the main DRP website, which will act as a clearinghouse for information pertaining to the Plan.

In an effort to monitor the progress made toward implementing the recommendations made in the Plan, DRP will place a provision for a biannual review of this progress in its General Plan Implementation Program. This will entail a biannual report to the Board detailing efforts made by DRP, DPW, and Fire to address the recommendations. In conclusion, DRP, DPW, and Fire recognize the importance of preserving oak woodlands in the County and are addressing the recommendations made in the Plan in a comprehensive and efficient manner.

RJB:JS:MWG:BM:lm

Attachments

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
Chief Executive Office (Rita Robinson, Anthony Baker)
County Counsel
Fire
Public Works

CEQA Recommendations							
Recommendation		**Responsible Agency**		**How will this be addressed**			**Timeline**
•Establish a comprehensive threshold of significance for impacts to oak woodlands that considers the ecological function of the woodland habitat at several spatial levels including landscape, woodland, stand, and individual tree. Furthermore, establish a method for evaluating the magnitude of these impacts. •If a project is located in Potential Oak Woodlands Conservation Areas (as designated by the OWCMP), then the applicant must complete an expanded Environmental Questionnaire. See Appendix 1 for example of expanded Environmental Questionnaire. •When the loss of oak woodlands is deemed necessary, prepare a detailed cumulative impact analysis that quantifies 1) the ecosystem service functions lost and their values to the community, 2) the costs of replacing those ecosystem functions with suitable infrastructure, and 3) the biological impacts directly related to the cumulative reduction of oak woodland resources in LA County. •Implement on-site mitigation for the loss of oak woodlands only when circumstances allow for 1) potential long-term sustainability of the replacement plantings, 2) expansion/connection to adjacent oak woodlands, and/or 3) the on-site mitigation effort improves degraded oak woodlands.		Department of Regional Planning		Guidance Document			9 months
•When considering off-site mitigation measures for the loss of oak woodlands, priority should be given to restoring moderately or severely degraded oak woodlands by removing exotics and restoring appropriate plant diversity located nearby the impacted property, preferably within the same watershed or sub-drainage. If such a plan is developed for off-site habitat restoration, this mitigation strategy could take the place of paying fees into the County's Oak Forests Special Fund. •Establish clear criteria for when off-site mitigation is appropriate to ensure that the strategy is not abused. •Develop a comprehensive monitoring plan that provides sufficient detail in order for the County to determine the effectiveness of any required mitigations. A minimum of seven years post-implementation monitoring is recommended.							

•Land use changes within oak woodlands will be required to 1) characterize the baseline contribution provided by existing oak woodlands, 2) analyze how a proposed land use action would change this, either by enhancing oak woodland ecosystem or impairing it, 3) examine the proposed land use change within the context of the existing and identified restoration potential of local and regional oak woodlands (mapped zones) and 4) calculate the relative costs/benefits to the County. •Follow the process outlines in Table 9 - Restoration Planning Process when identifying a potential restoration site, developing and implementing a restoration strategy, establishing an adaptive monitoring plan, and providing for long-term maintenance needs. •Continue to require developers to consider the protection of oak woodlands early in the scoping process. •In the case of proposed developments that would remove/degrade oak woodlands, first priority shall be given to redesigning development to avoid impacts. Replacement of lost woodlands shall be a secondary mitigation alternative that is to be used only when the Regional Planning Commission determines that avoidance of impacts is not feasible. •If the proposed development cannot avoid removing/degrading oak woodlands, then second priority would be to a) acquire acres of oak woodland of equal or greater habitat quality at a ratio of 2:1 to be placed into a conservation easement or other deed restriction, or dedicated to the public trust and b) remove exotic invasives and restore degraded oak woodlands identified as potential restoration sites by the County. •Where oak woodlands need to be replaced, Oak Replacement Plans shall be prepared by a qualified professional. These plans should be reviewed prior to approval by designated experts such as County Foresters, SEATAC, or ERB. Furthermore, these plans should contain, at a minimum, the following elements: proven suitability of the site for oak woodlands, long term viability of that site as a conservation area, planting plans that are consistent with recognized standards such as those presented in the IHRMP publication, a mix of species and density of oaks similar to what would be found in a healthy oak woodland indigenous to the								

•On-site replacement plantings for removal of oak woodland canopy shall only be considered as a last resort and must replace lost canopy area at a ratio of at least 2:1. Priority should be given to on-site retention of existing oak resources. Where such retention is no feasible, or the Regional Planning Commission determines that on-site restoration would not be the best method of ensuring the long-term health of the oak woodland, off-site locations mapped by the Los Angeles County OWCMP as Potential Oak Woodlands Conservation Areas should be given first priority for mitigation restoration. •Off-site restoration of oak woodlands may be accomplished by any one of the following: a) acquiring an off-site conservation easement for functional and proportional oak woodland of similar or higher quality; b) contributing to the Los Angeles County's Oak Forests Special Fund at a minimum ratio of 2:1 based on the space needed (acreage or parcel) to replace woodland removed. The contribution should include provisions for revegetation, maintenance, and monitoring and be based on actual purchase cost of identified parcels in mapped Potential Oak Woodlands Conservation Areas; c) replacement planting, together with maintenance and monitoring for seven years, at a location identified by the Los Angeles County OWCMP Potential Oak Woodlands Conservation Area maps at a minimum ratio of 2:1; and d) restoring moderately or severely degraded oak woodlands in the same geographic area identified for restoration by the Los Angeles County OWCMP at a minimum ration of 2:1. •Develop long term maintenance and monitoring guidelines needed to manage off-site mitigation areas or properties secured with County and State funds. •Develop a tracking system so that the effectiveness of off-site mitigation efforts, amount of oak woodlands preserved, and cumulative impacts to oak woodlands can be monitored over time.A3 •Restoration efforts should provide erosion control, planting of oak seedlings, establishment of appropriate fencing around plantings and important resource areas, planting of native perennial shrubs and grasses, and the control of non-native invasive weed species that may inhibit seedling establishment and survival. The County should partner with the California Native Plant Society and the National Arbor Day Foundation in the procurement of appropriate plant materials.							
Add questions concerning oak woodlands, such as requesting the details on the extent of the current canopy cover and number of trees, to the Initial Study Questionnaire completed by County planning staff during the initial phases of a discretionary project. See Appendix 1 for example of new Initial Study Questionnaire		Department of Regional Planning		Initial Study			Completed

Require developments undergoing CEQA review to develop and evaluate alternative designs that fully preserve and protect the resources		Department of Regional Planning		CEQA review process; also address in Guidance Document and pre-application counseling			Ongoing
General Plan Recommendations							
Recommendation		**Responsible Agency**					
Account for the carbon sequestration impacts associated with oak woodland conversion or preservation in the County's Climate Action Plan.		Department of Regional Planning		Climate Action Plan; also add questions to Initial Study if recommended by the Climate Action Plan upon completion			In process; 12-18 months
Incorporate the following goal into the General Plan: "Oak Woodlands are preserved and restored so that they are conserved in perpetuity with no net loss of existing woodlands."		Department of Regional Planning		General Plan Update			Completed
Code Recommendations							
Recommendation		**Responsible Agency**					

•Allow "volunteer" and "landscape" oaks (oaks added by property owners for enhancement/expansion of existing oak woodlands) to be removed without penalty, permitting cost, or mitigation requirements. •Allow documentation to be submitted that identifies oaks planted by property owners vs. original mature native trees and allows removal of planted ("volunteer") oaks without penalty •Undertake a comprehensive review of the County's Oak Tree Ordinance provisions in Title 22 of the County Code and consider: any Regional Planning Commission concerns, use of Oak Woodlands Conservation funds to purchase conservation easements, historic oak woodlands in urban areas, pruning standards and timing relating to nesting birds, and Department of Public Works and utility company infrastructure expansion. •Provide existing oak woodland expansion credits. More specifically, if a landowner preserves and protects oak woodlands and can prove that the oak woodland canopy cover on their parcel has expanded by more than 10% over time (5 years of continual ownership by the landowner), the that expansion will be evaluated and could be used to fulfill mitigation requirements for a limited expansion of the development footprint into the oak woodland. This process could be added to the County Oak Tree Ordinance and a review process established. •Define a suitable protected zone beyond the standard dripline buffer, where construction activities are prohibited.		Department of Regional Planning		Zoning Ordinance Update Program			To commence in 1 year
•Property owners with parcels mapped in either the historic, existing, or potential oak woodlands conservation areas identified in the OWCMP should develop an assessment of how their actions will impact the functions of oak woodlands using the following formula (or a formula evolving from the formula): Total Oak Woodland Value = Use Values + Non-Use Values + Ecosystem Function Values. •[All projects]* that require a discretionary permit, but that retain/avoid damaging all oak woodlands, should move through the planning approval process related to impacts to oaks "quickly and smoothly." •Developments that retain, avoid damaging, or enhance existing oak woodlands should move through the planning approval process related to oak impacts "quickly and smoothly." •Apply Best Management Practices identified in the Oak Tree Ordinance to oak woodlands.		Department of Regional Planning		Guidance Document			9 months

Develop incentives to encourage developments to exceed the minimum preservation/restoration standards. Specifics include: density bonuses within smaller development footprints, transfer of development rights, permit streamlining, taxation advantages, dedications/donations of land, conservation easements, estate planning,		Department of Regional Planning		General Plan Update and SEA Program			12-18 months
Develop site-planning guidelines to assist planners/developers in integrating oak woodlands into project development. Encourage or require alternatives that preserve the oak woodland and still meet project objectives		Department of Regional Planning		Breakout from Guidance Document; address at pre-application meetings			12-18 months
The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, and all public and private utility companies, shall be required to adhere to policies/requirements of the Oak Tree Ordinance and those proposed by the Oak Woodlands Conservation Management Plan when developing projects to expand existing/develop new infrastructure. These projects should also avoid impacts and be conducted in the appropriate season.		Department of Public Works		Guidance Document for Department of Public Works			9 months
Amend appropriate parts of the County Code to add incentives for [all]* landowners that would encourage oak woodlands preservation including: transfer of development rights, development permit streamlining, density-controlled development (clustering), fuel modification, and brush clearing.		Department of Regional Planning		General Plan Update and SEA Update Program			1-3 years
Implementation Recommendations							
Recommendation		**Responsible Agency**					
•Document the current status of oak woodlands on multiple levels; from individual parcel to watershed level to regional context. •Make a GIS overlay showing designated oak woodlands areas available online for easy consultation		Department of Regional Planning		LAR-IAC4 (in the meantime, the potential oak woodlands layer and CALVEG layer will be available on the DRP website); Guidance Document			1-3 years

•Develop a clearly devised strategy for fuel modification within oak woodlands that prevents type-conversion from native to invasive exotics. This can be accomplished through the revisiting of two existing programs; the Brush Clearance Program and the Fuel Modification Program. •Develop fuel modification strategies for oak woodlands that reduces annual brush clearance costs, maximizes retention of native understory, and reduces type conversion to annual invasive species that provide flash fuels.		Forestry		Part of ongoing efforts			Ongoing
•Evaluate the effectiveness of the Los Angeles County Oak Woodlands Conservation Management Plan within 3 to 5 years following adoption and revise as necessary in accordance with FGC 1367(b) (4). •Create Oak Woodlands Conservation Management Plans similar to Habitat Conservation Management Plans to identify priority preservation areas, address long-term management issues, and focus restoration opportunities. •Develop performance criteria so that the effectiveness of the Plan in meeting County goals can be adequately characterized. •Consider having the Board of Supervisors appoint a county official as the oak tree woodlands manager to oversee implementation of the plan, track and evaluate effectiveness over time, and establish partnerships to further oak woodland conservation efforts in a collaborative way.		Department of Regional Planning		General Plan Update and General Plan Implementation Program for Oak Woodlands			Early 2013

•The County should conduct workshops, seminars, and other outreach activities about oak woodlands for the general public and developers •Coordinate information sharing to provide oak woodlands conservation information to various County departments including Regional Planning, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Fire •The County needs ongoing interaction and exchange with stakeholders. Encourage participation from all parties. •Establish ties to local colleges, universities, public, and private schools to facilitate educational outreach. Furthermore, establish partnerships with local agencies, non-profits, and community groups. •The County should create a stewardship program called Oak Guardians, similar to the Audubon California Landowner Stewardship Program, which works with private landowners to conserve, restore, and enhance oak woodlands habitat and associated wildlife in a manner compatible with existing land use patterns. •The County should work closely with the American Institute of Architects (AIA), the Building Industry Association (BIA), and the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) to discuss oak woodlands conservation, promote low impact or creative design development within oak woodlands, and identify new Best Management Practices. •Ensure long-term stewardship and management of oak woodlands.		Department of Regional Planning		Oak Woodlands Group			1 year
Make transparent the status and administration of the County's Oak Forests Special Fund. Develop guidelines for receiving and managing off-site mitigation funds. Provide clear direction and policy on when and where these funds should be used in order to purchase fee-title or conservation easements to protect oak woodlands in perpetuity.		Joint Effort b/t Forestry and Department of Regional Planning		Place Fund under purview of DRP or Forestry			9 months
•Work with local partners to establish a standard protocol for accepting, managing, and monitoring oak woodlands conservation easements. •Develop a program to conserve and enhance local oak genetic resources and make locally grown oak planting stock available. •Institute a County training program covering all aspects of oak woodlands preservation, management, and restoration including CEQA thresholds of significance.		Department of Regional Planning		Guidance Document			9 months

Work with Caltrans and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works to identify protection and enhancement opportunities along [roads]* traversing oak woodlands, such as Highway 2, Highway 27, Malibu Canyon/Las Virgenes Road, Mulholland Highway, and others.		Department of Public Works		Guidance Document for Department of Public Works			9 months
Develop and distribute guidelines to assist landowners and developers, utilizing Best Management Practices, to recognize alternatives to oak tree removal, root system compaction, fill placement near trunk bases, landscape irrigation, road construction, and other conflicts that may arise during construction.		Department of Regional Planning		Breakout from Guidance Document			12-18 months
The County should make use of existing available support documents for oak woodlands management to private landowners, such as through UC Extension and the Wildlife conservation Board.		Department of Regional Planning		Will be added to Webpage			9 months
* Indicates wording that varies slightly from that which appears in the actual Plan but that was agreed upon through discussions with the Alliance, DPW, and Fire							

PROPOSED NEW QUESTIONS FOR THE
L. A. COUNTY SITE PLAN REVIEW APPLICATION

Is the proposed project located within mapped County Oak Woodland Area Overlay? (Planner pulls up on-line map and looks with applicant based on property APN(s)) The online map of the overlay will be available to the public, too, on the Regional Planning & Fire/Forestry Dept websites)	Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe ☐
Is there more than one native oak of any size on the property or located within 200 feet of the protected zone of oaks on adjacent properties? (Planner reviews site and surrounding property photos provided by the applicant at the counter – photos will be required at this stage – and compares them to a photographic guide to oaks of L.A. County that they will have at the desk and/or online. Online version will also be available to public) – if photos are not available, and an on-line map does not illustrate otherwise (i.e., Google Earth or other easily-accessed program) the planner will check "Maybe"	Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe ☐
If the answer to either of these questions is YES or MAYBE, then the applicant would be asked to work with the planner to answer the following additional questions: (the average applicant would need some preliminary reports on the site conditions to help answer these questions…)	
What is the cover and number of trunks 5" or greater of all native oak tree species on the parcel(s)? NOTES: Cover = mapped canopy area x 10 For multiple-trunked trees, if one of the multiple stems is at least 5 inches, count that as one tree, not each of the stems over 5 inches. The extent of the woodland should be identified on a site plan or aerial photograph at a scale acceptable to the County Forester and should include any off-site oaks within a 200 foot radius of the property boundary. Off-site oaks may be separately identified by color code on the map.	Approximate # of Trees with at least 5" Trunks _____ Canopy cover area _____ ☐ ft^2 ☐ ac.

List any parcel(s) APN's that contain jurisdictional oak woodlands and calculate the overall acreage of parcel(s) that have oak woodlands.	APN: _____ _____ AC: _____
Does the oak woodland on this property or within 200 feet meet the state definition of oak woodland, having a "stand with greater than 10% canopy at present or historically" (CDFG)? For the purposes of this plan, we are using the County Oak Woodland Overlay Zone Map showing locations of known oak woodlands.	Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe ☐
Is the stand within 200 feet of another existing or potential oak woodland?	Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe ☐
To your knowledge, has the parcel burned? If so, describe when, extent, etc.	Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, when? _____
To your knowledge, has the site been grazed? If so, describe.	Yes ☐ No ☐ Description
To your knowledge, are there any special habitat areas or features including but not limited to drainages, seep, springs, etc.. If so, describe.	Yes ☐ No ☐ Description _____
What is the current zoning for the site?	Zone(s) _____
Is zoning or land use change that would impact the oak woodland being proposed?	Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe ☐

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE EXPANDED ZONING PERMITS APPLICATION IF THE PROJECT IS DEEMED TO BE IN AN OAK WOODLAND OVERLAY OR BUFFER AREA:

1. List any known locally rare or uncommon species or associations found on the property. (Refer to CDFG Special Animal and Plant lists, Rare Habitat Associations, etc.).
2. What native understory species or associations are present? Describe.
3. Is natural leaf litter layer present? What is average depth?
4. What non-native species are present? List species, extent and impacts.
5. What watershed is the project located within?
6. What is the site elevation, slope percent and aspect?
7. Describe surface soil characteristics. (sand, loam, clay, rock, etc.).
8. What is the designated NRCS erosion potential for the site? Are there any other NRCS listed site constraints (shrink-swell potential, percolation limitations, etc.).
9. Is this project located within a listed impaired water body?
10. Has the hydrologic regime or water source for the project site and surroundings been altered? Is so, describe.
11. Is the project site irrigated? Is so, describe.
12. Is this woodland within the viewshed of a private road, public lands/trails, public roads, scenic highway? (County, State and Federal Trail maps will be used for basis of analysis).
13. Describe any public use of the woodland (trails, birdwatching, etc.).
14. Describe any known historic or cultural significance of this oak woodland.

In addition, the following questions should be included in a Mitigated Negative Declaration (Oak Woodland Impacts) or Environmental Impact Report level of review.

1. Evaluate the existing carbon sequestration functions provided by the woodland in accordance with Air Resources Board forest conservation guidelines (ruling Oct 25, 2007).
2. The Forest Protocol established air quality criteria to be used to measure oak woodland biological emission for CEQA review: live biomass (including roots), standing dead tree

biomass, and wood lying on the ground. Questions to be answered include: (1) how much potential CO^2 sequestration over the next 100 years will be lost due to impacts to live native trees three (3) inches or greater dbh; (2) how much sequestered CO^2 will be released if the live trees, standing dead trees or woody debris are burned?

3. How much temperature moderation is currently provided by the existing oak woodland?
4. How much stormwater runoff is currently being contained or absorbed on site?
5. How does this oak woodland contribute to air quality by reducing pollutants?
6. What level of management is needed to attain or maintain sustainability?
7. What is the influence of surrounding land uses such as zoning changes, LUP changes, specific plans, etc.
8. Describe the current level of oak woodland sustainability and ecosystem function.
9. Describe potential for degradation.
10. How will the proposed project impact any of the above factors?