

## 3.16 PARKS AND RECREATION

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parks and open space are important land use components in an urban environment, providing both visual relief from the built environment and contributing to residents' quality of life through aesthetic, recreational, and social value. The County's Planning Area consists of unincorporated land outside of the City's boundaries and adopted Sphere of Influence (SOI) but within the One Valley One Vision (OVOV) Planning Area boundaries. The City's Planning Area consists of its incorporated boundaries and adopted SOI. Both the County and the City Planning Areas comprise the OVOV Planning Area. The County's Planning Area currently has 1,355 acres of parkland through a combination of neighborhood, community, and regional parks. Additionally, the County's Planning Area has 6,395 acres of open space.

A parkland standard is the ratio upon which dedications and/or development fees can be based; it creates an obligation to fund improvements that achieve the standard throughout the County. The Quimby Act, established by state law, requires that every county and city meet the standard of 3 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. The County's proposed Area Plan requires the County meet a goal of 5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, which is allowed if a city or county adopts a General Plan with the seven required elements (Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise, and Safety); the proposed Area Plan includes all seven elements. The highest standard allowed under the Quimby Act is 5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents.

Currently, the Quimby Act, which standardizes cities and counties to meet 3 acres per 1,000 people, would require the County's Planning Area to meet the goal of 225.0 acres of parkland. The County's Planning Area has 18.0 acres of local parkland per 1,000 residents, a surplus of 980 acres for purposes of meeting the goal of 5 acres per 1,000 residents. With buildout of the proposed Area Plan, the County's Planning Area parkland would need a total of 711 acres to reach the Quimby Act requirement and would need 1,185.5 acres of parkland for the Area Plan criterion. The existing and planned parkland would total 1,517.7 acres at buildout; the amount of parkland would be in a surplus for the Quimby Act standard and the Area Plan Standard. The amount of parkland would total 6.39 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents.

### EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Santa Clarita Valley is an irregularly shaped area draining a watershed of approximately 500 square miles. Its boundaries are defined by significant mountain ridges of varying heights. Major ridgelines of the San Gabriel and Santa Susana Mountains form the Valley boundary to the south, east, and west,

separating the area from the San Fernando Valley and metropolitan communities of the Los Angeles Basin to the South. Ridgelines of the Sierra Pelona Mountains define the Valley's northern reach. The physical characteristics of the OVOV Planning Area, in conjunction with the large amount of undeveloped land, afford Valley residents and visitors a wide array of open space that provide plentiful passive and active recreational opportunities. For purposes of this Parks and Recreation section, the definition for active and passive parkland is as follows:

- Active recreation requires the use of organized play areas such as softball, baseball, football, and soccer fields; volleyball, tennis, and basketball courts, swimming, and various forms of children's play equipment.
- Passive recreation typically does not require the use of organized play areas and are often irregular in shape and include open space areas, "pocket" parks, trails, and other unimproved lands. Passive recreation includes activities such as picnicking, and water sports such as fishing, rowing, and canoeing.

## Existing Parks

The Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation currently operates 16 developed parks in the County's Planning Area, comprising 10,396 acres. The County's Planning Area parklands are shown on **Figure 3.16-1, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Resources**, and listed in **Table 3.16-1, Existing Parklands in the County's Planning Area**. As required by the Quimby Act (3 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents) the amount of parkland required would be 225.0 acres. The goal set by the Area Plan (5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents) would be 375 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. As determined using the existing amount of parkland (1,355 acres), the ratio of parkland to residents would be 18.0 acres per 1,000 residents.

There are five types of parks<sup>1</sup> identified by the County of Los Angeles within the County's Planning Area:

- Open Space Nodes
- Pocket parks
- Neighborhood Parks
- Community Parks
- Regional Parks

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<sup>1</sup> County of Los Angeles. Chapter 6, "Conservation and Open Space Element." *Draft General Plan*. (2009).

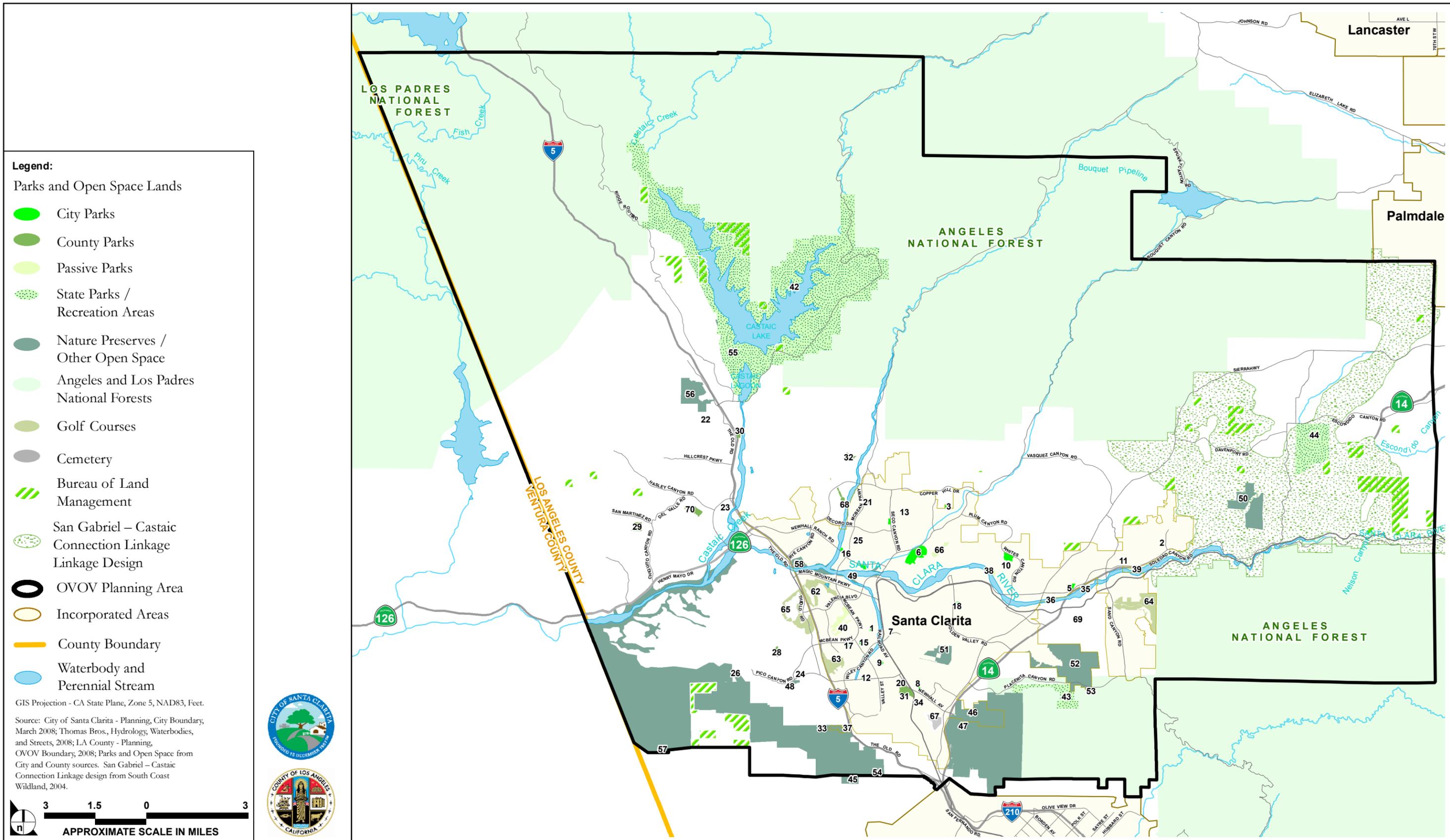


FIGURE 3.16-1

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Resources

**Table 3.16-1**  
**Existing Parklands in the County's Planning Area**

<b>County Parks</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Location (see Figure 3.15-1)</b>
Chesebrough County Park <sup>1</sup>	5.1	Neighborhood	21
David March (Plum Canyon)	12.9	Neighborhood	27
Del Valle Park	5.8	Neighborhood	22
Fair Oaks Park	6.0	Neighborhood	69
Hasley Canyon Park	5.4	Neighborhood	23
Jake Kuredjian Park	5.0	Neighborhood	24
Northbridge Park <sup>1</sup>	9.8	Neighborhood	25
Pico Canyon Park	18.0	Neighborhood	26
Tesoro Adobe Park	2.2	Neighborhood	32
West Creek County Park	15.4	Neighborhood	68
<b>Total Neighborhood Parks</b>	<b>85.6</b>		
Hasley Canyon Equestrian Park	16.0	Community	70
Richard Rioux Park	15.5	Community	28
<b>Total Community Parks</b>	<b>31.5</b>		
Castaic Sports Complex	51.0	Regional	30
Val Verde Park	57.6	Regional	29
William S. Hart Park <sup>1</sup>	224.3	Regional	31
Vasquez Rocks	905.0	Regional	44
<b>Total Regional Parks</b>	<b>1,237.9</b>		
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>1,355</b>		
<b>State Owned Parkland</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Type</b>	
Castaic Lake State Recreation Area	8,700.0	Regional	42
Placerita Canyon Nature Center	341.0	Regional	43
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>9,041.0</b>		

<b>County Parks</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Location (see Figure 3.15-1)</b>
<b>Open Space</b>	<b>Acres</b>		
Castaic Open Space	335	MRCA	55
Ed Davis Park	168	Regional with SMMC	33
Elsmere Canyon	400	SMMC	47
Mentryville	800	MRCA	48
Michael D. Antonovic Open Space	480	MRCA	54
Newhall High County Open Space	140	SMMC	57
Santa Clarita Woodlands (excludes Ed Davis Park)	3,832	SMMC	45
Wilson Canyon Ranch	240	MRCA	56
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>6,395</b>		
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,805.9<sup>3</sup></b>		

<sup>1</sup> These parks are located within City of Santa Clarita limits, but are maintained by the County of Los Angeles.

<sup>2</sup> City and Mountains and Recreation Conservation Authority

<sup>3</sup> This total does not include open space designated area within the OVOV Planning Area or the National Forest Land.

Source: City of Santa Clarita Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Services 2007; County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation 2007; Table CO-2, Draft Conservation and Open Space Element One Valley, One Vision, 2008.

### *Open Space Nodes*

Open space nodes are small pieces of open space that serve as public destination, connection, and community defining spaces. Nodes provide physical and visual breaks to the urban landscape and/or connect various spaces such as waterways, streets, trails, and greenways. Open space nodes are used as gathering and rest areas, and serve as opportunities for social, cultural, and community exchange. Examples of open space nodes include equestrian and hiking trailheads, bike rest stops and/or stations with lockers and repairs, neighborhood focal points, and passive amenities such as plazas, rest areas, playgrounds, landmarks, and public art installations.

### *Pocket Parks*

Pocket parks are small pieces of parkland that serve a residential or business area within a 0.25-mile radius. Pocket parks are often developed on urban infill sites in park-poor communities. In general, pocket parks serve a passive need and do not have on-site parking.

### *Neighborhood Parks*

Neighborhood parks typically provide active recreational areas with fields, courts, and/or some passive areas such as picnic areas. They vary in size from five to 10 acres and are intended to serve a population

up to 5,000 within a 0.5-mile radius. Generally, they are located centrally to the residential development served, and the service area for the neighborhood park should not be divided by natural or man-made barriers such as thoroughfares or irrigation or drainage canals. The County's Planning Area has eight neighborhood parks.

### ***Community Parks***

Community parks are at least 10 to 40 acres in size; located to serve several neighborhoods of approximately 20,000 people within a 2-mile radius. They can include both passive and active areas and may contain features such as gymnasiums, multi-purpose rooms, classrooms, and offices for recreation staff. Other facilities often found at community parks might include sports fields, sports courts, amphitheatres, group picnic areas, and off-street parking. Large special events such as concerts and festivals might also be held in community parks. The County's Planning Area has one community park.

### ***Regional Parks***

A regional park is a major park that offers recreation opportunities of such variety that it attracts people in the widest possible range of age and interests and generally serves the population living within a radius distance of approximately 1 hour's drive. Its size usually exceeds 40 acres, and offers unusual recreational attractions or a combination of two or more specialized facilities. Each of the attractions or facilities within the park is of major significance and together they offer both active and passive recreational opportunities. There are five County regional parks in the County's Planning Area.

Originally built in the 1920s, Val Verde Park provides a focal point for many community activities. The County has recently undertaken an expansion of Val Verde Park by purchasing a lot near the park entrance, and providing new football fields, basketball courts, tennis courts, restrooms, playground, and landscaping.

William S. Hart Park is the former home and ranch of William S. Hart, silent film cowboy star and director. The park includes a museum within a Spanish Colonial Revival style mansion, which contains original furnishings, a collection of western art, mementos of early Hollywood, and Native American artifacts. In addition, there is a furnished 1910 ranch house that is open for unguided tours.

### **Nature Reserves and Other Open Space**

In an innovative partnership, the County teamed with developer Newhall Land to preserve the 6,000 acres of the Newhall Ranch high country, located between the City of Santa Clarita limits and the Ventura

County line. The Newhall Ranch High Country Recreation and Conservation Joint Powers Agency was formed to maintain this open space land. On March 7, 2007, a property owner's donation of 400 acres in Elsmere Canyon to the Mountains and Recreation Conservation Authority for use as an open space preserve received final approval. Elsmere Canyon is a natural, riparian area that contains vital links between the Angeles National Forest, Placerita Canyon Nature Center, and Whitney Canyon for the wildlife corridor, connecting the San Gabriel, Santa Susana and Santa Monica mountains. The canyon contains waterfalls, rolling hills, riparian habitats, coastal sage and oak woodlands, and significant ecological, cultural, and historical treasures. Another 800 acres of the canyon are deemed in need of protection in the future.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Vasquez Rocks***

Vasquez Rocks County Park located in the community of Agua Dulce west and north of State Route (SR) 14, is an area of unique geologic formations that has been the site of hundreds of film shoots. Sculpted by earthquake activity along the Elkhorn fault, the rock formations were compressed, folded, and tilted up to a height of nearly 150 feet. Erosion has shaped the coarse-grained yellow sandstone into jutting and sweeping formations interspersed with shale and basalt layers. Vasquez Rocks are both a visual and historical landmark in the community.

### ***Santa Clarita Woodlands State Park***

This 3,000-plus-acre state park is located west of I-5 and may be accessed via either Lyons Avenue or the Calgrove/The Old Road interchanges. The creation of this park involved a land transaction that included the City of Santa Clarita, Chevron, and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy as the primary participants. The transaction involved the donation of 851 acres of land historically owned by Chevron, with the Conservancy purchasing another 2,184 acres.

This state park includes the 145-acre Ed Davis/Towsley Canyon Park at 24255 The Old Road in Newhall, the 3-mile Pico Canyon Trail, the 2.4-mile Rice Canyon Trail, and the 3.8-mile East Canyon Trail. The facilities at Towsley Canyon Park include trails for hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian uses; picnic areas; the Sonia Thompson Nature Center; the Towsley Canyon Lodge available for daily or overnight use; and restroom facilities.

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<sup>2</sup> City of Santa Clarita, *General Plan*. "Draft Conservation and Open Space Element." (2009).

## School Recreational Facilities

School facilities provide additional land and facilities for recreational use on a limited basis through a joint-use agreement between the County and school districts. For example, the County has agreements with Castaic Union School District and Saugus Union School District. Formal agreements for general public use of school facilities have been entered into by several school districts for additional usable acres. In general, school recreational facilities are open to the public during non-school hours. Elementary schools provide adjunct recreation opportunities to surrounding neighborhoods during non-education hours. Junior high schools and high schools provide adjunct community-wide facilities for public use.<sup>3</sup>

## Improved Park and Open Space Facilities

Parks and open space in the County's Planning Area contain a variety of recreational facilities. There are areas available for organized sports, including soccer fields, baseball diamonds, tennis courts, volleyball courts, basketball courts, and a skateboard park. Additionally, benches, picnic tables, and barbecues are available for informal recreation activities. Children's play areas are located within many parks to provide recreational opportunities. In addition to recreational facilities located in parks, the County's Planning Area also includes facilities such as nature centers, Conservancy lands, and camping sites provided for by the County, state, and private entities.

The Santa Clarita Woodlands, located in Towsley Canyon, was acquired by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) and contains the Ed Davis Park. Placerita Canyon Nature Center is a designated Natural Area and operated by the County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation. The park encompasses oak woodland and chaparral on the north side of the San Gabriel Mountains southeast of the City of Santa Clarita. The Castaic Lake Water Agency (CLWA) owns the Water Conservatory Garden and Learning Center and makes the Center available to the public. The Center is a community project dedicated to increasing water education and awareness in the Santa Clarita Valley.

## Proposed Parks and Recreational Facilities

It is anticipated that future dedications of parkland will be made from new developments within the County's Planning Area.<sup>4</sup> These future dedications and the planned parks listed below would count towards meeting the required standard of 3 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents (Quimby Act) and the goal of the Area Plan standard of 5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. As of October 2007, 15 County

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<sup>3</sup> City of Santa Clarita. *Santa Clarita Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan*. (2009).

<sup>4</sup> OSAP 1-1.

maintained parks are proposed for the County's Planning Area, including nine neighborhood parks and six community parks. These parks are listed in **Table 3.16-2, Planned Park Lands**. Planned parks will add approximately 162.7 acres to the unincorporated County parkland inventory in the County's Planning Area.

**Table 3.16-2  
Planned Park Lands**

	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Classification</b>
Copper Creek Park	6.0	Neighborhood
Copperhill County Park	4.4	Neighborhood
Homestead	16.4	Community
Landmark (River Village)	9.7	Neighborhood
Legacy Village	20.4	Community
Mission Village	25.0	Community (20) Neighborhood (5)
Northlake County Park	15.0	Community
Pacific Crest Park	4.0	Community
Parkplace Park	13.9	Community
River Village County Park (2 sites)	20.9	Neighborhood
Sterling Gateway	7.1	Neighborhood
Summer Hill	4.9	Neighborhood
Whites Canyon	8.5	Neighborhood
Wickham Canyon	6.5	Neighborhood
<b>Total</b>	<b>162.7</b>	

*Source: City of Santa Clarita Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department 2007; County of LA Parks and Recreation Department 2007; Telephone communication, Larry Hensley, Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, February 5, 2009*

## Services

The County of Los Angeles maintains approximately 1,500 acres of parkland and related ancillary facilities within the OVOV Planning Area. The maintenance program consists of standard inspection and service of all buildings and parklands. Through their maintenance programs, each jurisdiction answers complaints regarding park facilities from the public. The complaints have ranged from graffiti removal to

facility and park repairs beyond normal service and maintenance. Facilities are designed to be as low maintenance and vandal-resistant as possible.

## **Recreation Programs**

The recreation and parks programs, usually run by private organizations (i.e., American Youth Soccer Association) are structured to meet the recreational interests of residents in the OVOV Planning Area. Adult and youth sports classes, day care, and after school programs, summer programs, special events, and aquatic programs are offered through the County Parks and Recreation Department. Cultural and recreational programs in the Santa Clarita Valley are conducted at many facilities, including neighborhood and community parks, the Senior Citizens Center, and local libraries.

## **Commercial Recreational Facilities**

Private facilities in the OVOV Planning Area include the Valencia Country Club and golf courses such as the Vista Valencia Golf Course, Robinson Ranch Golf Course, the TPC Golf Course, The Cascades, and The Greens. Six Flags Magic Mountain Amusement Park, Mountasia, and two paintball facilities are also located in the OVOV Planning Area. Other facilities, such as equestrian ranches and riding facilities are located in the County's Planning Area but serve all OVOV Planning Area residents.

## **Standards**

### *Parks*

The County uses a standard of 5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents as recommended by the Area Plan. The County also abides by the Quimby Act standard of requiring a minimum of 3 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents.<sup>5</sup> Local parkland includes special use, passive, neighborhood, and community parks. The existing ratio for the County's Planning Area is 19.8 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents.

## **State Parks and Recreation Areas**

There are two State Parks located within the OVOV Planning Area that are used by County residents: Castaic Lake Recreation Area and Placerita Canyon Natural Area. Castaic Lake and Placerita Canyon, which are state-owned parklands and operated by the County of Los Angeles Parks and Recreation Department, total approximately 9,041 acres.

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<sup>5</sup> California Government Code. Section 66477. "Quimby Act."

Angeles National Forest and Los Padres National Forest lands exist within and adjacent to the OVOV Planning Area. Some of the facilities in the national forests include hiking trails and campgrounds. Specifically, there are four trails located in the Angeles National Forest. Those include the Pacific Crest Trail, Fish Canyon Trail, Bear Canyon Trail and Gillette Mine Trail, all described in the **Trails** subsection, below.

### ***Castaic Lake State and County Recreation Area***

The 8,700-acre Castaic Lake State Recreation Area is a multi-use park located in the unincorporated area of Castaic, and it includes 2,600 surface acres of water contained in an upper and lower reservoir system. Castaic Lake reservoir and surrounding land is owned by the state; however, the County leases the land and operates the upper lake, Castaic Lake Reservoir, and the lower lake, Castaic Lagoon. Facilities at the upper lake include major boat ramps and supporting facilities with fishing, boating, water and jet skiing, and parking for boats and trailers. Development around the 180-acre Castaic Lagoon includes major picnic areas for groups and families, swimming beaches, parking areas, non-motorized boat facilities, and general day-use recreation facilities, such as comfort stations.

### ***Placerita Canyon Natural Area***

Placerita Canyon Natural Area is located east of the Antelope Valley Freeway and is accessible from Placerita Canyon Road. It contains a nature center, picnic areas, overnight and day camping facilities, a children's play area, hiking trails, and an equestrian campground.

## **Federal Land**

Angeles National Forest and Los Padres National Forest lands exist within and adjacent to the OVOV Planning Area. Some of the facilities in the national forests include hiking trails and campgrounds.

### ***Angeles National Forest***

The Angeles National Forest covers 693,000 acres of land area in the San Gabriel Mountains, which constitutes approximately one quarter of the land located within Los Angeles County. The US Forest Service administers the National Forest, which is an agency of the US Department of Agriculture. The Angeles National Forest is supervised in districts. The Angeles National Forest offers a wide range of camping (with fees) and picnicking facilities. In addition, there are hundreds of miles of trails in the forest, some of which are located within and adjacent to the OVOV Planning Area (see **Trails** below). There are four reservoirs in the Angeles National Forest, including Castaic and Pyramid Lakes (5 miles

northeast and 18 miles north of the site, respectively) providing water skiing, fishing, sail boarding, canoeing, jet skiing, and swimming activities. The water reservoirs charge entrance fees, as well as boat launching, boat rental, and overnight camping fees. In addition to the identified recreational opportunities, the Angeles National Forest provides a home for an array of wildlife. There are four trails that exist within Angeles National Forest:

- Pacific Crest Trail
- Fish Canyon Trail
- Bear Canyon Trail
- Gillette Mine Trail (County Trail)

### ***Los Padres National Forest***

The nearly 2 million-acre Los Padres National Forest is located primarily in the northern section of Ventura County. However, a portion of the Los Padres National Forest crosses the Los Angeles/Ventura County line, 8 miles north of State Route 126 (SR-126). Various recreation facilities are provided in the Los Padres National Forest, including hiking, equestrian, and off-road vehicle trails, and camping areas (with fees) accessible by road and trail. There are 57 dispersed trail camps, 19 developed family campgrounds, and 1 developed group campground. Many miles of recreation roads are utilized by visitors as scenic drives and used by off-highway vehicles. The forest has inventoried 374 miles of trails, including 18 miles of the Gene-Marshall-Piedra Blanca National Recreation Trail, which begins at Reyes Creek Campground and ends at Lion Campground. Other areas found in the Forest include the approximately 9,500-acre Dick Smith Wilderness and the 53,000-acre Sespe Condor Sanctuary (both located in Ventura County).

### **Trails**

Various state trails comprise part of the trail system within the OVOV Planning Area, which are maintained and operated by the County and the City of Santa Clarita. Each jurisdiction bears responsibility for trail operation within its jurisdictional boundaries. The Santa Clarita Valley Trails Advisory Council (SCVTAC) worked on revisions to the Master Plan of the regional trail system with the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation. Working in partnership with the SMMC and Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC), the City and County have developed a system of parks, trails and preserve areas that form the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor. The Rim of the Valley encompasses the Santa Clara River Valley in addition to the San Fernando, La Crescenta, and Simi Valleys.

The Rim of the Valley Trail is proposed to be 200 miles in length and is located within the Rim of the Valley Corridor. The trail, as proposed, is located on both public and private land. Much of the trail has not been constructed and remains as a proposed trail. Currently, only 10 miles have been acquired in the Santa Susana Mountains in addition to the 47-mile Backbone Trail located in the Santa Monica Mountains. The regional trail corridor is intended to ultimately connect the Santa Clarita communities and County unincorporated areas with diverse recreational opportunities in both the OVOV Planning Area and the surrounding region. The trail system is accessible to equestrians, hikers, joggers, and bicyclists. In addition to providing both leisure and practical commuting opportunities, trails can also protect and preserve access to regional recreational assets such as rivers, mountain areas and national and state forest areas. For a more detailed discussion on the County's Bikeway Master Plan, please refer to the **Transportation and Circulation** section of this environmental impact report (EIR).

Additionally, the trails in the OVOV Planning Area are part of a larger National Scenic trail system, the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT), which spans 2,650 miles from Mexico to Canada. The PCT lies west of the Angeles Crest National Scenic Byway and descends to Highway 14 at Agua Dulce, traversing the Sierra Pelona, and continuing north across the San Andreas Fault Zone where it climbs out of the OVOV Planning Area to the Sierra Nevadas.

### ***State Trails***

Two of the larger trails in the system are described below, followed by a listing of other state trails.

#### **Pacific Crest Trail**

This segment of the Pacific Crest Trail is 160 miles located along the Sierra Pelona Mountain Range, providing views of the Antelope Valley, various terrain, vegetation wilderness, and the San Gabriel Mountains. Campgrounds, picnic areas, and staging areas are available and managed by the United States Forest Service.

#### **Santa Clara River Trail**

The Santa Clara River has been designated as a Significant Ecological Area (SEA) and portions have been preserved as open space to provide flood protection.<sup>6</sup> The State of California recently adopted the Santa Clara River as a State Recreation Trail Corridor. Its preservation has allowed for the development of a

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<sup>6</sup> SCGP, Parks and Recreation Element/Open Space and Conservation Element, June 25, 1991.

30-mile-long multi-use trail following the river’s banks from I-5, Valencia to Canyon Country, which is the backbone to the Valley’s larger trail system.

Other County/State trails:

- William S. Hart Park Trail 2.8 miles
- Gavin Canyon Trail 8.0 miles
- Pico Canyon Trail 9.0 miles
- Sand Canyon Trail 4.0 miles
- Castaic Creek Trail 5.0 miles
- Castaic Lake Trail 2.0 miles
- Bouquet Canyon Extension Trail (Proposed) 7.0 miles
- Santa Clarita River Trail (Proposed) 8.0 miles
- Cliffie Stone Trail 1.0 miles
- Bouquet Canyon Trail 9.0 miles
- Placerita Creek Trail 6.0 miles
- Acton Community Trail 22.0 miles
- Northside Connector Trail 6.5 miles
- Vasquez Loop Trail 17.3 miles
- Hasley Canyon Trail 3.4 miles
- Mint Canyon Trail 3.7 miles
- South Fork Trail – Class I  
(City of Santa Clarita Trail) 4.0 miles

***County-Operated Trails***

Los Angeles County Riding and Hiking Trail systems can be seen in **Figure 3.16-2, Master Plan of Trails**, include the following trails in the County’s Planning Area.

**Fish Canyon Trail (Forest Trail)**

The Fish Canyon Trail travels through the canyon along a year-round stream shaded by oak trees, sycamores, alders, and willows. The 6-mile trail passes through Castaic Lake County Regional Area and joins the Pacific Crest Trail. Campgrounds are available.

**Bear Canyon Trail (Forest Trail)**

Bear Canyon Trail crosses 5 miles of chaparral area over ridges and summits, through canyons, and eventually connects to the Pacific Crest Trail.

**Gillette Mine Trail (County Trail)**

The Gillette Mine Trail joins the Pacific Crest Trail after 1 mile of moderately difficult hiking through gold and silver mining ruins.

**Los Pinetos Trail (County Trail)**

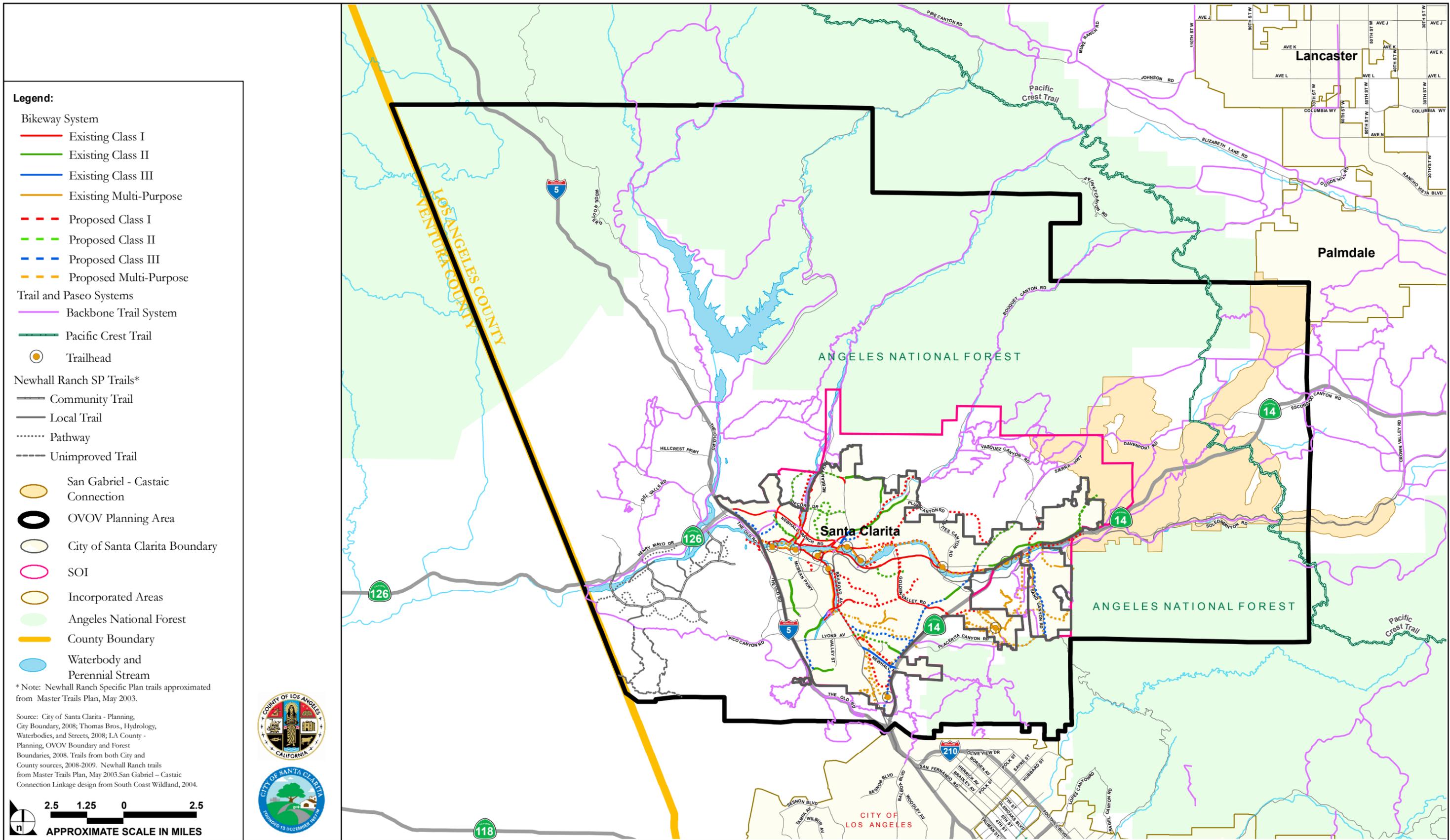
This is an equestrian trail with camping facilities available by reservation. The trail follows a flood control channel through 7 miles of natural area including Placerita Canyon State Park. The trail links to the Rim of the Valley State Trail from the proposed Placerita Canyon Trail.

**Wilson Canyon Channel Trail (County Trail)**

Two miles of moderately difficult hiking in the Angeles National Forest provides views of the San Fernando Valley and Placerita Canyon. This trail is a link to the Rim of the Valley State Trail via the Los Pinetos Trail.

**William S. Hart Park Trail (County Trail)**

This 2.5-mile nature trail winds through the park past the Hart Museum and designated points of interest including views of the OVOV Planning Area. Separate access is provided for equestrian use.



SOURCE: City of Santa Clarita, County of Los Angeles, Valleywide General Plan - August 2009

FIGURE 3.16-2

Master Plan of Trails

## REGULATORY SETTING

### State

#### *Quimby Act*

The Quimby Act<sup>7</sup> authorizes local agencies to establish an ordinance requiring new development to pay a fee or dedicate land for park and recreation facilities. Revenues generated through the Quimby Act cannot be used for the operation and maintenance of park facilities. To impose Quimby Act fees, the county or city must have a general plan or a specific plan that contains policies and standards for park facilities. Quimby Act fees must "bear a reasonable relationship" to the proposed subdivision. Counties and cities can use the Quimby Act fees only for developing new parks or rehabilitating parks that serve that subdivision.

The primary instrument for protecting and preserving parkland is the State Public Park Preservation Act.<sup>8</sup> Under the Public Resource Code, cities and counties may not acquire any real property that is in use as a public park for any non-park use unless compensation or land, or both, are provided to replace the parkland acquired. This provides no net loss of parkland and facilities.

As noted in the **Parks and Recreation** section of this EIR, the Quimby Act states that

*The dedication of land, or the payment of fees, or both, shall not exceed the proportionate amount necessary to provide three acres of park area per 1,000 persons residing within a subdivision, unless the amount of existing neighborhood and community park area, exceeds that limit, in which case the legislative body may adopt the calculated amount as a higher standard not to exceed five acres per 1,000 persons residing within a subdivision.*

This Quimby Act provision means that a county or city may have 3 acres of park space per 1,000 residents.<sup>9</sup>

### Local

#### *Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan (1984)*

The County adopted the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan in 1984 with a comprehensive update in 1990 to address specific planning issues within the Valley. The Area Plan contained a Scenic Highways Plan and

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<sup>7</sup> California Government Code, Section 66477. "Quimby Act."

<sup>8</sup> County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation 1992

<sup>9</sup> California Government Code, Section 66477.

plans for Trails and Bikeways, along with goals and policies to promote preservation of open space and conservation of resources. Hillside development policies were included for areas with slopes of 25 percent or greater. The County has also adopted ordinances to regulate and protect natural resources, including native oak trees, water quality, significant ecological areas, and hillside development. In 2007 the County updated the Master Trails Plan for the Santa Clarita Valley, and has made numerous improvements to park and open space areas.

## *Los Angeles County Municipal Code*

### **Design and Standards**

The subdivider of a residential subdivision shall provide local park space to serve the subdivision, pay a fee in lieu of the provision of such park land in accordance with the provisions of Section 21.28.140, provide local park space containing less than the required obligation but developed with amenities equal in value to the park fee, or do a combination of the above in accordance with the requirements of the County Code. For purposes of this ordinance, “local park space” may include, but shall not be limited to: publicly or privately owned playgrounds, riding and hiking trails, tennis, basketball or other similar game-court areas, swimming pools, putting greens, athletic fields, picnic areas, and other types of natural or scenic areas as recommended by the director of parks and recreation for passive or active recreation.<sup>10</sup>

Upon ascertaining the local park space obligation to be fulfilled by the subdivider of a residential subdivision pursuant to Section 21.24.340, the advisory agency shall review the proposed subdivision, the park and recreational needs of the future inhabitants of the subdivision, and existing or potential neighboring park and recreational facilities to determine whether all or any portion of the local park space obligation should be satisfied by the provision of park space to serve the subdivision. If the advisory agency determines that park space should be provided, the advisory agency shall advise the subdivider of the design and location of such space.<sup>11</sup>

### **Dedications**

If all or any portion of the local park space obligation for a residential subdivision is not satisfied by the provision of local park space designated by the advisory agency pursuant to Section 21.24.350, the following park fees shall be paid as a condition precedent to final approval of the subdivision: (1) A base

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<sup>10</sup> County of Los Angeles. Municipal Code. Section 21.24.340, “Residential Subdivisions-Local Park Space Obligation-Formula.”

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., Section 21.24.350, “Residential Subdivision-Provision of local park sites.”

fee equal to the local park space obligation derived from the equation set forth in Section 21.24.340, less the amount of park space, if any, provided by the subdivider pursuant to Section 21.24.350, times the representative land value for the appropriate park planning area, established as in the municipal code.<sup>12</sup>

## THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The *State CEQA Guidelines* identifies certain criteria for determining whether any significant cultural resources will result with the implementation of the County Area Plan:

- Would the Area Plan increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated; and
- Does the Area Plan include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment.

## Impact Analysis

This impact analysis section evaluates the potential effects of the proposed Area Plan policies on existing parks and recreational facilities within the County's Planning Area using the *State CEQA Guidelines* thresholds of significance.

**Impact 3.15-1**                    **Would the Area Plan potentially increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated.**

### Parkland

Growth and development in the County's Planning Area would increase the demand for some of the existing parks and recreational facilities and would also require the construction of new parks and new recreational facilities. It is not anticipated that substantial physical deterioration of existing facilities would occur with implementation of the proposed Area Plan (**Policies CO 9.1.6, CO 9.1.14**). Per **Table 3.16-2**, the County has planned for a combination of community and neighborhood parkland totaling 162.7 acres, which would supplement the County's existing parkland summarized in **Table 3.16-1 (Policies CO 9.1.1 through CO 9.1.3, CO 9.1.13)**.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., Section 21.28.140, "Park fees required when-Computation and use."

The County would strive to achieve equitable distribution of park, recreational, and trail facilities to serve all areas of the County's Planning Area. The County would ensure that priority be given to locations that are not now adequately served and that new parklands include a diversity of parks. This would minimize overuse of existing facilities and their substantial physical deterioration with buildout of the proposed Area Plan, particularly if construction of these parklands is phased to meet the needs of residents (**Policies CO 9.1.9, CO 9.1.14**).

Park locations should also consider potential adverse impacts on adjacent development from noise, lights, flying balls, traffic, special events, and other operational activities and uses as well as impacts on public safety and welfare (**Policies CO 9.1.11 and CO 9.1.12**). Additionally, construction, development, and acquisition of new parkland should be conducted to make available easily accessible park and recreation facilities throughout the Valley (**Policy CO 9.1.8**) and to provide a wide variety of recreational programs geared to all ages and abilities, including passive, active, educational, and cultural programs (**Policy CO 9.1.15**).

In conformance with the Quimby Act, the County's park fee ordinance requires dedication or payment of in-lieu fees for a minimum of 3 acres of parkland for each 1,000 residents. The proposed Area Plan's Open Space and Conservation Element calls for parks to be provided at a ratio of 5 acres per 1000 residents (**Policy CO 9.1.1**). Total parkland consists of neighborhood, community, and regional parks.

The current amount of total parkland (**Policy CO 9.1.2**) is 1,355 acres as seen in **Table 3.16-1**. The current population of the County's Planning Area is 75,000.<sup>13</sup> As described above the standard for the Quimby Act would require 225.0 acres of parkland to meet the existing population needs. The standard of the Area Plan requires 375.0 acres of total parkland. Therefore, the existing County Planning Area has sufficient acreage to accommodate the unincorporated area populations. **Table 3.15-2** designates 162.7 acres in planned local parkland for the County' Planning Area.

The projected population for the County's Planning Area at buildout would be 237,387 residents. Based on population projections and the Quimby Act requirements for parkland acreage, there would need to be 711 acres of parkland for the Quimby Act and, 1,185.5 acres to satisfy the Area Plan criterion. The amount of existing parkland, 1,355 acres, combined with the planned parks, an additional 162.7 acres, would total 1,517.7 acres. Consequently, the amount of parkland would be in a surplus for the Quimby Act standard and the Area Plan standard, as seen in **Table 3.16-3, Parkland Acreage Goal and Quantities**.

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<sup>13</sup> One Valley One Vision, Land Use Element, 2009.

**Table 3.16-3  
Parkland Acreage Goal and Quantities**

<b>Population</b>	<b>Existing Parkland (Ac)</b>	<b>Quimby Act (3 acres per 1,000)</b>	<b>Surplus or Deficit (-)</b>	<b>Area Plan (5 acres per 1,000)</b>	<b>Surplus or Deficit (-)</b>
2007					
75,000	1,355 <sup>1</sup>	225.0	1,130	375.0	980
Buildout (2030)					
237,387	1,517.7 <sup>2</sup>	711.0	806.7	1,185.5	332.2

<sup>1</sup> Based on the total from **Table 3.16-1**.

<sup>2</sup> Based on total from **Tables 3.16-1 and 3.16-2**.

Regional parkland acres are abundant in the County's Planning Area. The deficiency in neighborhood and community park acreage in the County's Planning Area may be compensated by the planned development of neighborhood and community parks and by proximity to neighborhood and community parkland in the City of Santa Clarita. In addition, the County is in the process of acquiring tax defaulted property of 2 acres or more for future neighborhood parks as a response to this need,<sup>14</sup> although providing smaller-sized parks presents maintenance issues (**Policy CO 9.1.14**) for the County, which prefers larger parks so staff can be on site and can limit their travel over large distances. The regional nature of the OVOV Planning Area provides the opportunity for a partnership between the County and City of Santa Clarita in maintaining, acquiring, and developing parkland (**Policy CO 9.13**, **Policy CO 9.1.4**, and **Policy CO 9.1.6**).

### Open Space

The open space located within the County's Planning Area is listed in **Table 3.16-1** and totals approximately 6,395 acres. (**Policy CO 10.1.7**). The open space designation also identifies and reserves land for both natural and active open space uses including the identified cultural and historical resources in **Section 3.8, Cultural Resources (Policy CO 10.1.4)**.

The designation of open space areas around and within the County's Planning Area maximizes use of areas not ideally suitable for development, such as slopes that are generally greater than 25 percent, areas designated as 100-year floodplains along the Santa Clara River (**Policy CO 9.1.7**), and any areas identified within the County's Code that would potentially pose an adverse impact to the risk of injury, life, and

<sup>14</sup> County of Los Angeles, Updated Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan, 2009.

loss to people and structures (**Policy CO 10.1.5** and **Policy 10.1.6**). The open space acquisition plan would pursue the planned open space and planned park areas to ensure that the edges of the OVOV Planning Area are buffered by a greenbelt (**Policy CO 10.1.10**). As listed in **Table 3.16-1**, the partnering of conservation agencies with other entities to acquire and maintain additional open space, where appropriate, will continue (**Policy CO 10.1.11** and **Policy 10.1.12**).

### **Development Projects**

The County will ensure the inclusion of adequate open space within development projects. **Policies CO 10.2.1** through **CO 10.2.5** encourage provisions of vegetated open space on a development project site (**Policy CO 10.2.1**), encourage that open space provided within development projects be usable and accessible (**Policy CO 10.2.2**), create development with shared amenities and green spaces where feasible (**Policy CO 10.2.3**); incorporate site features such as significant trees, vegetation, terrain, or water features (**Policy CO 10.2.4**), and allow density transfers and density-controlled development (clustering) in accordance with the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance to encourage retention of open space (**Policy CO 10.2.5**), provided that all residential lots meet the minimum lot size requirements of Community Standards District, where applicable.

### ***Proposed Area Plan Policies***

The proposed Area Plan includes the following policies to reduce or minimize the effects of future growth on parks and recreational facilities. As specified in these policies, new development shall also meet the parkland requirements as established by the Quimby Act and County enabling ordinances. Implementation of the proposed Area Plan policies related to parks and recreational facilities would minimize the effects of growth and development.

- Policy CO 9.1.1:** Common park standards shall be developed and applied throughout the Santa Clarita Valley, consistent with community character objectives, with a goal of five acres of parkland per 1,000 population. (Guiding Principle #36.a.)
- Policy CO 9.1.2:** A range of parkland types, sizes, and uses shall be provided to accommodate recreational and leisure activities. (Guiding Principle #36.b)
- Policy CO 9.1.3:** Provide local and community parks within a reasonable distance of residential neighborhoods.

- Policy CO 9.1.4:** Explore and implement opportunities to share facilities with school districts, utility easements, flood control facilities, and other land uses, where feasible.
- Policy CO 9.1.6:** Continue to upgrade and expand existing facilities to enhance service to residents, including extension of hours through lighted facilities, where appropriate.
- Policy CO 9.1.7:** Establish appropriate segments of the Santa Clara River as a recreational focal point, encouraging a beneficial mix of passive and active recreational uses with natural ecosystems by providing buffers for sensitive habitat.
- Policy CO 9.1.8:** Make available easily accessible park and recreation facilities throughout the Santa Clarita Valley.
- Policy CO 9.1.9:** Ensure that new development projects provide a fair share towards park and recreational facilities, phased to meet needs of residents as dwelling units become occupied, pursuant to the Quimby Act (California Government Code Section 66477) and local ordinances as applicable.
- Policy CO 9.1.11:** Locate and design parks to address potential adverse impacts on adjacent development from noise, lights, flying balls, traffic, special events, and other operational activities and uses.
- Policy CO 9.1.12:** Establish minimum design standards for both public and private parks to provide for public safety and welfare through lighting, access, crime prevention through design, equipment, visibility, and other aspects of design.
- Policy CO 9.1.13:** Provide passive areas for natural habitat, meditation, bird-watching, and similar activities in parks, where feasible and appropriate, including meditation gardens, wildflower and butterfly gardens, botanic gardens, and similar features.
- Policy CO 9.1.14:** Ensure adequate park maintenance, and encourage programs for volunteers to assist in maintaining local parks, where feasible and appropriate.
- Policy CO 9.1.15:** Provide a wide variety of recreational programs geared to all ages and abilities, including passive, active, educational, and cultural programs.

- Policy CO 10.1.4:** Maintain and acquire, where appropriate, open space to preserve cultural and historical resources.
- Policy CO 10.1.5:** Maintain open space corridors along canyons and ridgelines as a way of delineating and defining communities and neighborhoods, providing residents with access to natural areas, and preserving scenic beauty.
- Policy CO 10.1.6:** Delineate open space uses within hazardous areas to protect public health and safety, which may include areas subject to seismic rupture, flooding, wildfires, or unsafe levels of noise or air pollution.
- Policy CO 10.1.7:** Acquire adequate open space for recreational uses, coordinating location and type of open space with master plans for trails and parks.
- Policy CO 10.1.10:** Support efforts by the City of Santa Clarita to ensure that the open space acquisition plan developed pursuant to the 2007 Open Space District formation conforms to the goals and objectives of the City's General Plan.
- Policy CO 10.1.11:** Partner with conservation agencies and other entities to acquire and maintain open space, combining funding and other resources for joint-use projects, where appropriate.
- Policy CO 10.1.12:** Identify, pursue, and ensure adequate funding sources to maintain open space areas.
- Policy CO 10.2.1:** Encourage provision of vegetated open space on a development project's site, which may include shallow wetlands and ponds, drought tolerant landscaping, and pedestrian hardscape that includes vegetated areas.
- Policy CO 10.2.2:** Encourage that open space provided within development projects be usable and accessible, rather than configured in unusable strips and left-over remnants, and that open space areas are designed to connect to each other and to adjacent open spaces, to the extent reasonable and practical.
- Policy CO 10.2.3:** Where feasible, integrate open space areas with neighboring uses and parcels, to create shared amenities and green spaces.

**Policy CO 10.2.4:** Seek opportunities to incorporate site features into the open space of a project design, which may include significant trees, vegetation, terrain, or water features, to provide thermal, acoustic, and aesthetic benefits.

**Policy CO 10.2.5:** Where appropriate, allow density transfers and density-controlled development (clustering) to encourage retention of open space, provided all residential lots meet the applicable minimum lot size requirements of a Community Standards Districts, where applicable

### ***Effectiveness of the Proposed Area Plan Policies***

The above policies will help ensure that the County's future residents would be provided with adequate parks and recreation facilities to meet the Quimby Act requirement of 3 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents and the Area Plan criterion of 5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. With the County's existing and planned parkland of 1,517.7 acres there would be a surplus of 806.7 acres of parkland for the Quimby Act requirement and a surplus of 332.2 acres for the Area Plan criterion. These policies require that new development, along with the guidance of the County, design, implement, and ensure that the potential future residents have adequate opportunities to be able to use the recreational facilities, parks, and trails. The incorporation of multi-use facilities, extended hours of operation, and joint-use between the County, City of Santa Clarita, and other agencies would ensure that County's future residents have adequate park space and adequate facilities. Additionally, policies require use of appropriate zoning tools to obtain adequate park and open land and require the County to identify and ensure adequate funding to maintain open space areas. With the acquisition of 200.1 acres of parkland over the buildout period, impacts on parks and recreational facilities would be less than significant, particularly if the acquisition for parks and recreation is coordinated with the County's growth and development.

### **Plan to Plan Analysis**

Buildout conditions under the existing Area Plan would require more parkland to meet the needs of the citizens of the County's Planning Area, per the Quimby Act. Under the existing Area Plan, the estimated number of residents in the County's Planning Area would be 270,000. Therefore, 810 acres of parks would be needed to satisfy the Quimby Act requirement of 3 acres per 1,000 residents. Under the proposed Area Plan, the estimated number of residents in the County's Planning Area would be 237,387. Therefore, 711 acres of parks would be needed to satisfy the Quimby Act requirement. Therefore, impacts on parks and recreation under the existing Area Plan would be greater than the proposed Area Plan.

**Impact 3.16-2 Does the Area Plan include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have a potential adverse physical effect on the environment.**

The demand on recreational facilities, such as sports fields and courts, will also increase with buildout of the proposed Area Plan. **Policy CO 9.1.5** promotes development of more playfields for youth sports activities, in conjunction with tournament facilities where needed. Optimizing opportunities to share facilities is provided in **Policy CO 9.1.4**. As the County Planning Area reaches buildout, there is an opportunity to meet the demand of recreational facilities within the planned parks. As projects are planned, their design will be refined in accordance with the anticipated demands on new athletic fields, community input, cost considerations, and the potential environmental impacts, at that time.

Depending upon the location and function of these new parks or trails, there is potential for park/trail construction or expansion to create adverse physical effects on the environment. The dedication of open space and the developer impact fees (i.e., the Quimby Act) would set aside funding to connect trails throughout the County Planning Area. These potential physical impacts on the environment would be mitigated on a project-by-project basis in order to meet the current guidelines.

**Figure 3.16-2, Master Plan of Trails** defines the current and proposed trail network locations within the OVOV Planning Area (**Policy CO 9.1.11, Policy 9.2.1, and Policy CO 9.2.6**). The County and City of Santa Clarita would work cooperatively with non-profit organizations to promote community involvement and to also enhance the community by encouraging volunteer work to adequately perform park maintenance (**Policy 9.1.14**).

The planned acquisition of natural open space would allow opportunities for residents of the County's Planning Area to bird watch or to enjoy potential botanical gardens (**Policy CO 9.1.13**). The Santa Clara River flows through the OVOV Planning Area, providing the opportunity to set aside additional open space for bikeways and trail development and for use as a passive recreational area (**Policies CO 9.1.7, 9.1.13, 9.2.3, 9.2.8**). This open space could incorporate trails that could connect with trails throughout the OVOV Planning Area and with state trails (**Policy CO 9.2.3 through Policy CO 9.2.7**). In conformance with State law, the implementation of the proposed Area Plan's Land Use Map and the policies in the Area Plan's proposed Open Space and Conservation Element would set aside areas for open space or public use (**Policy CO 10.1.15**) and that would ensure that development is consistent with the open space plan contained in that Element (**CO 10.1.16**). The designation of trails would be determined by the County, in cooperation with the state to implement the proposed Trails Master Plan (**Policy CO 9.2.8**).

Alternative energy projects in open space areas would be allowed if consistent with adjacent land uses (Policy 10.1.17).

***Proposed Area Plan Policies***

- Policy CO 9.1.5:** Promote development of more playfields for youth and adult sports activities, in conjunction with tournament facilities, where needed.
- Policy CO 9.2.1:** Plan for a continuous and unified multi-use trail network for a variety of users, to be developed with common standards, in order to unify Santa Clarita Valley communities and connect with regional and state trails such as the Pacific Crest Trail. (Guiding Principle #35)
- Policy CO 9.2.3:** Use the Santa Clara River as a major recreational focal point for development of an integrated system of bikeways and trails, while protecting sensitive ecological areas.
- Policy CO 9.2.4:** Ensure that new development projects provide trail connections to local and regional trail systems, where appropriate.
- Policy CO 9.2.5:** Promote the expansion of multi-use trails within rural areas of the Santa Clarita Valley.
- Policy CO 9.2.6:** Provide trails to scenic vistas and viewpoints.
- Policy CO 9.2.7:** Explore joint use opportunities to combine trail systems with utility easements, flood control facilities, open spaces, or other uses, where feasible.
- Policy CO 9.2.8:** Ensure that trails are designed to protect habitat, ecosystems, and water quality.
- Policy CO 10.1.15:** In conformance with State law, ensure that any action by which open space land is acquired or disposed of, restricted, or regulated, be consistent with the open space plan contained in this Element.
- Policy CO 10.1.16:** In conformance with State law, ensure that all development is consistent with the open space plan contained in this Element.
- Policy CO 10.1.17:** Allow alternative energy projects in areas designated for open space, where consistent with other uses and values.

### ***Effectiveness of the Proposed Area Plan***

The policies contained within the proposed Area Plan promote the development of adequate park space and recreational facilities for use by County residents through buildout of the Area Plan. The development and the connection of local, regional, and state trails would potentially give County residents multiple recreational options within the County's Planning Area. Implementation of the proposed policies would reduce potential impacts on park and recreational facilities provided adequate funding is available for the expansion of the park space and recreational facilities. With implementation of the above policies, potential impacts on parkland and recreational facilities would be less than significant and no mitigation would be required.

### **Plan to Plan Analysis**

Both the existing and proposed Area Plans require additional recreational opportunities throughout the community. As discussed above, the environmental impacts of any recreational facility is analyzed on a project-by project basis. Impacts for both Plans are similar.

### **MITIGATION FRAMEWORK**

No mitigations measures are required.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF IMPACT WITH MITIGATION FRAMEWORK**

Implementation of the policies contained within the proposed Area Plan would reduce potential impacts on parkland and recreational facilities and/or services to less than significant. Additionally, these policies promote the use of open space thereby enhancing the recreational opportunities within the County's Planning Area.