



Los Angeles County
Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead



Richard J. Bruckner
Director of Planning

February 11, 2010

TO: Wayne Rew, Chair
Pat Modugno, Vice Chair
Esther L. Valadez, Commissioner
Leslie G. Bellamy, Commissioner
Harold V. Helsley, Commissioner

FROM: Mitch Glaser, AICP, Supervising Regional Planner 
Countywide Studies Section

SUBJECT: FEBRUARY 24, 2010 -- AGENDA ITEM #6
PROJECT NO. R2007-01226-(5)
PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 2009-00006-(5)
ZONE CHANGE NO. 2009-00009-(5)
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CASE NO. 2009-00080-(5)
SANTA CLARITA VALLEY AREA PLAN UPDATE (ONE VALLEY ONE VISION)

SUMMARY

This staff report is a supplement to the staff reports submitted to your Commission on September 17, 2009 and November 10, 2009.

The County's Draft Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan (Draft Plan) and related Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) were released for public review on September 4, 2009. A 60 day formal comment period was provided for the DEIR, which was subsequently extended by your Commission for an additional 60 days. Your Commission held a public hearing on October 5, 2009 in Castaic and a continued public hearing on November 23, 2009 in Downtown Los Angeles. 42 individuals testified at these hearings, and staff has received 99 written comments to date. Staff has determined that the Draft Plan and DEIR must be revised and re-circulated in order to address the various issues and concerns that have been raised during the public review process. Staff is requesting a 6 month continuance, as staff anticipates that the Draft Plan and DEIR will have been revised and re-circulated by that time.

BACKGROUND

In 2000, the County and the City of Santa Clarita initiated "One Valley One Vision," a joint effort to update two separate documents, the County's Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan and the City's General Plan, with consistent goals, objectives, and policies for the

entire Santa Clarita Valley. This unique collaborative effort acknowledges the common needs and desires of Valley residents, regardless of whether they live within the City boundaries or in an unincorporated community. Please refer to the September 17, 2009 staff report for more background information, including a chronology of public outreach efforts, a description of the proposed Plan Amendment and proposed Zone Change, and an analysis of consistency with the currently adopted Countywide General Plan.

STAFF RESPONSE TO COMMENTS

As previously mentioned, 42 individuals testified at previous hearings, and staff has received 99 written comments to date. Staff has prepared a response to each of these comments, which is attached for your reference. The following is a summary of the comments received and staff's responses, grouped by subject area:

Proposed Land Use and Zoning Designations: The majority of the concerns expressed in verbal testimony and comment letters have been oriented towards the proposed land use and zoning designations for various parcels in the unincorporated Santa Clarita Valley. Numerous property owners have requested that your Commission re-evaluate the land use and zoning designations proposed by staff. At the October 5, 2009 public hearing, your Commission indicated that staff should provide guidance regarding these re-evaluation requests. The attached responses represent staff's attempt to provide guidance. Although staff recommends a limited number of minor revisions, generally staff feels that the proposed land use and zoning designations are appropriate, given the Draft Plan's suitability criteria. However, your Commission is able to direct staff to make additional revisions or to further investigate various requests. Staff will discuss the most frequently recurring land use comments at your February 24, 2010 continued public hearing.

Proposed Significant Ecological Area (SEA) Designations: Some property owners have requested that your Commission re-evaluate the expanded SEA designations proposed by staff. Generally, staff feels that the proposed SEA designations are appropriate, given the SEA suitability criteria, previous biological analysis, and previous input from the public and the Significant Ecological Area Technical Advisory Committee. However, staff will re-evaluate the SEA designations prior to the re-circulation of the Draft Plan and Draft EIR.

DEIR: Several concerns expressed in the verbal testimony and comment letters have been oriented towards the DEIR. Most notably, staff has received comment letters from the State Department of Justice (Attorney General's Office) and the National Resources Defense Council that identify significant issues. Staff is working with staff from Impact Sciences and the City of Santa Clarita to revise the DEIR and re-circulate it, with the expectation that the revision will address these issues and concerns. All DEIR comments will also be addressed in the Final EIR.

AB32 (Climate Change): The Attorney General's Office has also raised concerns regarding the policies in the Draft Plan, as that office feels that the policies do not adequately address the state mandates of AB32 (The California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006). Staff is working with staff from the City of Santa Clarita to review and re-evaluate the policies in the Draft Plan, using the model policies developed by the California Air Pollution Control Officers Association as a guide, and will make appropriate revisions to ensure consistency with the mandates of AB32.

Water Supply: As indicated in the November 10, 2009 staff report, the Castaic Lake Water Agency (CLWA) has raised concerns regarding water supply information in the DEIR. Specifically, CLWA has requested that the Water Section of the DEIR be updated with information from the State Department of Water Resource's 2010 State Water Project Delivery Reliability Report. As previously mentioned, the DEIR will be revised and re-circulated, and these revisions will include a revised Water Section.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff does not recommend that your Commission take any action at this time. The purpose of the February 24, 2010 continued public hearing is for your Commission to:

- Hear additional testimony from the public;
- Review staff's response to comments;
- Ask questions of staff;
- Direct staff to make changes to the Draft Plan and DEIR beyond those mentioned in this staff report and staff's response to comments; and
- Direct staff to investigate issues or to undertake other activities before revising and re-circulating the Draft Plan and DEIR.

Staff recommends that the public hearing be continued to 9 a.m. on Wednesday, August 25, 2010, at the Hall of Records in Downtown Los Angeles. As previously mentioned, staff anticipates that the Draft Plan and DEIR will have been revised and re-circulated by that time.

RECOMMENDED MOTION

I move that the Regional Planning Commission continue the hearing on Project No. R2007-01226-(5) to August 25, 2010.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at (213) 974-6476 or mglaser@planning.lacounty.gov.

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Attachments:

1. Comment Letters received since December 3, 2009
2. Staff Response to Public Hearing Comments
3. Staff Response to Written Comments