



Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead



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Director

NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

DATE: August 1, 2018

PROJECT TITLE: Environmental Impact Report for the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan and Community Standards District Update

PROJECT LOCATION: The Santa Monica Mountains North Area includes 33 square miles of unincorporated Los Angeles County lands from the US 101 freeway corridor south to the coastal zone boundary. The North Area includes portions of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area administered by the National Park Service, California State Park lands, and other protected areas.

The County of Los Angeles, Department of Regional Planning (“County”), as the lead agency pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”), intends to prepare a Program Environmental Impact Report (“EIR”) for updates to the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan and North Area Community Standards District. The County has prepared this Notice of Preparation (“NOP”) to provide responsible agencies, trustee agencies, and other interested parties with information describing these updates (project), provide notice that an EIR will be prepared, identify the project’s potential environmental effects, and **to solicit your input on the scope and content of the EIR.**

PROJECT LOCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The Santa Monica Mountains (SMM) North Area is in the western portion of Los Angeles County and includes privately-owned and publicly-owned lands. The project area encompasses 30-square miles of unincorporated lands generally bounded by Ventura County and the City of Westlake Village to the west, Ventura County and local cities in Los Angeles County to the north, the City of Los Angeles to the east, and the coastal zone portion of the Santa Monica Mountains to the south (see figure). The US 101 Freeway is the major transportation corridor that provides regional access to the North Area.

The SMM North Area generally consists of five varying land types: urbanized areas, rural residential, ranches, vineyards, and open space. This planning area supports large blocks of undisturbed open space separating urban development along the US 101 Freeway from protected open space in the Santa Monica Mountains. Approximately 35 percent of the North Area consists of conservation and park lands.

The mountainous topography and limited road system has shaped development in the North Area. Many of the residential communities occur in or near park lands or natural areas supporting biological resources. The project area supports a wide variety of sensitive plants and wildlife, unique geologic features, important wildlife linkages, and aquatic features. Several state and federally listed species, as well as numerous California Species of Special Concern and rare plants, are in the North Area.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The County is proposing comprehensive updates to the policies of the SMM North Area Plan (“SMMNAP”) and to development standards in the SMM North Area Community Standards District (“CSD”). The SMMNAP is a component of the County’s General Plan with focused objectives and policies for the SMM North Area. The CSD implements the policies of the SMMNAP and includes development standards that

are specific to the North Area. The updates are proposed to address concerns that have developed since the adoption of the SMMNAP in 2000, to strengthen existing environmental resources policies, and to identify policies and standards that continue to support the community's rural and semirural lifestyle. In addition, the County is updating the SMMNAP and CSD to be in alignment on many of the environmental protection policies in the recently certified Santa Monica Mountains Local Coastal Program ("LCP"). Land use regulations and environmental protections in the coastal zone and in the SMM North Area should be consistent for these two areas within the Santa Monica Mountains. Lastly, some of the SMMNAP policies adopted in 2000 have not been implemented in the North Area CSD, including development standards for signs, vegetation management, and water resources protections; these issues will be addressed in the proposed updates.

Proposed Policies and Development Standards

The County conducted public meetings with community members and met with the equestrian community to receive input on issues to be addressed in the SMMNAP-CSD Update. Based on the input received, the County identified the following key areas that will be addressed in the update.

Habitat Protection

- Adopt habitat protection categories and policies/development standards to protect sensitive biological resources, but allow for continued development within the North Area. The County conducted a biological assessment of the SMM North Area to document the key biological resources and establish habitat categories for resource protection. These categories are summarized below:
 - **S1** = rare/very sensitive habitat, development limited to resource dependent development only
 - **S2** = sensitive habitat, development must avoid and minimize impacts to habitat
 - **S3** = disturbed habitat, development less restricted
 - **S4** = previously developed land, development permitted

Equestrian Standards

- Allow small horse boarding by right in A-1 zones
- Require best management practices (BMPs) such as runoff diversion, waste management and wrapping oak tree trunks
- Require vested legally-established equestrian facilities to comply with BMPs

Expanded Tree Protections

- Require a Protected Tree Permit to remove or encroach on a native tree species
- Establish Heritage Tree Protections that allow species that add value to the landscape or ecosystem to be registered and afforded the same protections as smaller native trees (trunk size more than 36 inches in diameter)
- Establish a Historic Tree policy/standard to address trees that are culturally or historically significant to the area or on a list of Historic Places
- Add policy/standard for protection of nesting birds that covers tree removal and/or construction near trees during bird nesting season, also add requirements during non-bird nesting season

Special Events (including dance pavilions)

- Add regulations that address noise, traffic, lighting, emergency evacuation, and breakdown and setup times
- Define and add Special events as a use allowed in specific zones as either a primary or accessory use
- Explore need for new ambient noise level for the North Area in coordination with County Public Health Department

Short-Term Rentals

- Establish policy/standard for prohibiting rental of rooms for less than 30-day stays to discourage home-sharing and “Airbnb”-type uses

Other Policies and Standards

- Add application review procedures including need for biological studies if development is in an area with sensitive biological resources
- Add policies/development standards for scenic resource areas, scenic routes, visual resources, significant ridgelines, outdoor lighting and grading, as examples.

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT

The County has determined that an EIR will be required to satisfy environmental review for the proposed project. Therefore, as allowed under CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(d), the County has not prepared an Initial Study and will instead begin work directly on the EIR. The EIR will focus on the potentially significant effects of the project, discuss any effects found not to be significant (CEQA Guidelines Section 15128) and will assess the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts, as well as growth-inducing effects. The EIR will include an evaluation of the following environmental issues:

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|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ■ Aesthetics | ■ Noise |
| ■ Air Quality | ■ Population and Housing |
| ■ Cultural Resources | ■ Public Services |
| ■ Geology and Soils | ■ Recreation |
| ■ Greenhouse Gas Emissions | ■ Transportation and Traffic |
| ■ Hazards and Hazardous Materials | ■ Tribal Cultural Resources |
| ■ Hydrology/Water Quality | ■ Utilities and Service Systems |
| ■ Land Use and Planning | |

PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD

The scoping comment period for the NOP begins on Wednesday August 1, 2018 and ends on Friday August 31, 2018. Please submit all written comment letters no later than 5 pm on August 31, 2018.

Please send by mail to the following address:

Anita D. Gutierrez, MPL, AICP | Supervising Regional Planner
Community Studies West Section
Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning
320 W. Temple Street, 13th Floor | Los Angeles, CA 90012

For email submittal of your comment letter, send to: smnortharea@planning.lacounty.gov

Any comments provided should identify specific topics of environmental concern and your reason for suggesting the study of these topics in the EIR. ***All written comment letters/emails will be included in an appendix in the Draft EIR and the contents considered in the preparation of the EIR.***

PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

The County will conduct a public scoping meeting to solicit oral and written comments from interested parties on the scope and content of the EIR. All interested parties are invited to attend the scoping meeting to assist in identifying issues to be addressed in the EIR.

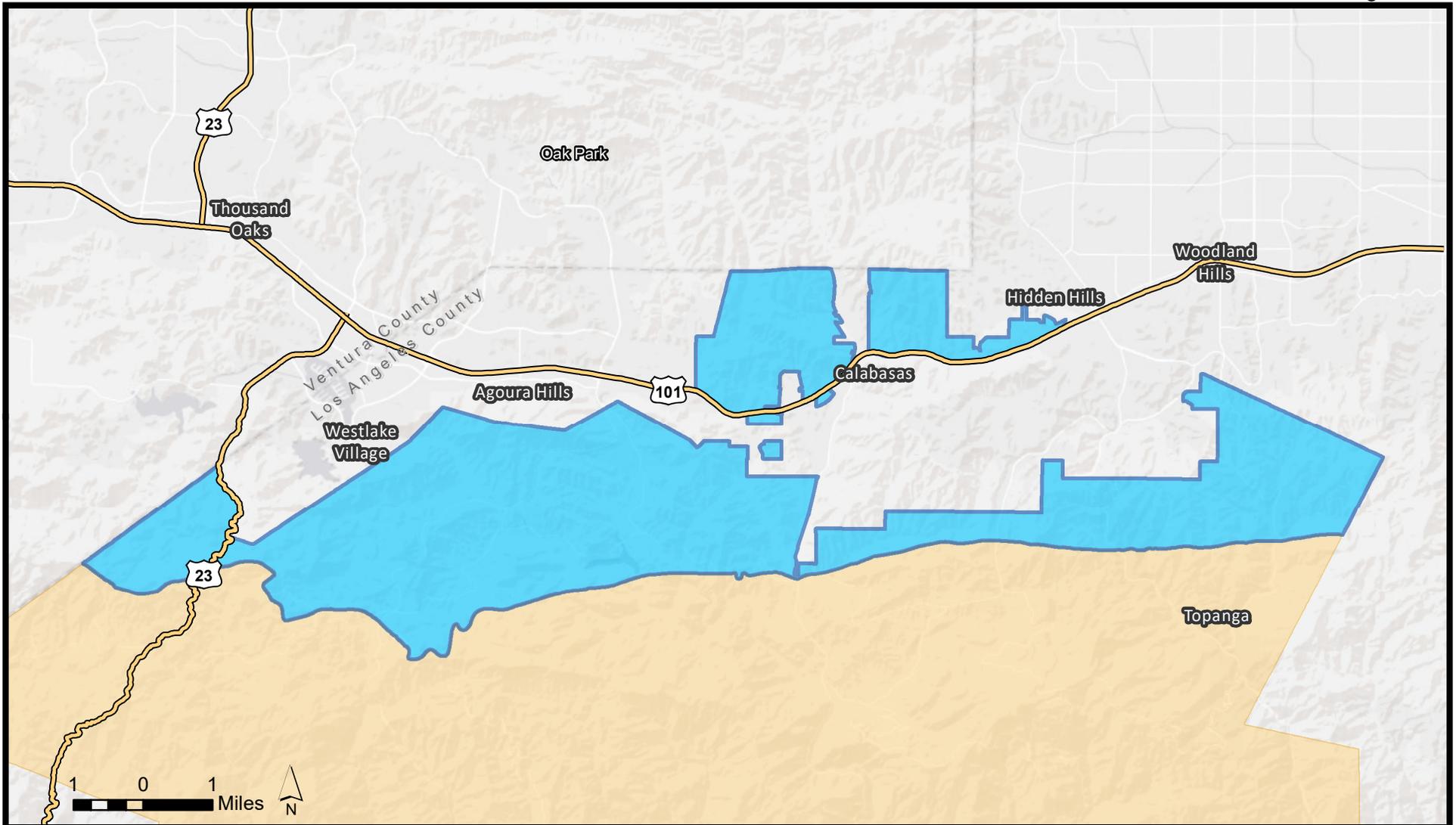
The scoping meeting will include a brief presentation of the proposed updates to the SMMNAP-CSD to be addressed in the EIR, a summary of the EIR process, and will provide attendees with an opportunity to provide input to the scope and content of the EIR. The scoping meeting will be held on August 21, 2018

from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. For the convenience of property owners and residents in the North Area, the scoping meeting will be held at:

Los Angeles County Field Office - Calabasas
26600 Agoura Road
Calabasas, California, 91302
(213) 974-6465

PROJECT WEBSITE

For more information and to stay informed on the progress of the EIR and updates to the SMMNAP and CSD, please visit the project website at: <http://planning.lacounty.gov/smmnap>



-  Santa Monica Mountains North Area
-  Santa Monica Mountains Coastal Zone

**Figure 1.
Project Location**

Sources: Aspen