



Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead



Amy J. Bodek, AICP
Director of Regional Planning

Dennis Slavin
Chief Deputy Director,
Regional Planning

REPORT TO THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE ISSUED:	September 24, 2020	
MEETING DATE:	October 7, 2020	AGENDA ITEM: 6
PROJECT NUMBER:	2017-003501-(3)	
PROJECT NAME:	Santa Monica Mountains North Area Update	
PLAN NUMBER(S):	Plan Amendment No. RPPL2017005966 Zone Change No. RPPL2020006033 Zoning Code Amendment No. RPPL2017005967 Environmental Assessment No. RPPL2017005970	
SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT:	3	
PROJECT LOCATION:	Santa Monica Mountains North Area	
PROJECT PLANNER:	Cameron Robertson, Regional Planner crobertson@planning.lacounty.gov	

RECOMMENDATION

The Department of Regional Planning staff (“Staff”) recommends the Regional Planning Commission (“RPC”) adopt the attached resolution (Exhibit A) recommending **APPROVAL** to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (“Board”) of the updates to the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan and Community Standards District, Plan Amendment No. RPPL2017005966, Zone Change No. RPPL2020006033, Zoning Code Amendment No. RPPL2017005967, and Environmental Assessment No. RPPL2017005970.

Staff recommends the following motion:

I MOVE THAT THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING AND RECOMMEND CERTIFICATION OF THE FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT ALONG WITH THE REQUIRED FINDINGS OF FACT, AND ADOPT THE MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM, ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NO. RPPL2017005970, FOR THE UPDATES TO THE SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS NORTH AREA PLAN AND COMMUNITY

STANDARDS DISTRICT UPDATE PURSUANT TO STATE AND LOCAL CEQA GUIDELINES.

I ALSO MOVE THAT THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION ADOPT THE ATTACHED RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING APPROVAL TO THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS FOR THE UPDATES TO THE SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS NORTH AREA PLAN AND COMMUNITY STANDARDS DISTRICT, PLAN AMENDMENT NO. RPPL2017005966, ZONE CHANGE NO. RPPL2020006033, AND ZONING CODE AMENDMENT NO. RPPL2017005967.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A. Project Scope

Plan Amendment No. RPPL2017005966 is a proposed amendment to the General Plan to update the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan (“Plan”) to revise and incorporate goals and policies for greater protection of biological habitats, closer alignment with the Santa Monica Mountains Local Coastal Program (“LCP”), support for the rural and semi-rural character of the Santa Monica Mountains North Area (“North Area”); and land use policy map changes to bring the Plan into compliance with the General Plan.

Zone Change No. RPPL2020006033 are proposed zone changes to 132 properties to reflect their acquisition, ownership, and use as open space.

Zoning Code Amendment No. RPPL2017005967 is a proposed amendment to Title 22 (Planning and Zoning) of the County Code to repeal and replace the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Community Standards District (“CSD”) with the CSD update to implement the goals and policies of the Plan update, including providing environmental resource protections and implementing development standards for land uses to protect environmental quality.

The goals of the Santa Monica Mountain North Area Plan update and Community Standards District update are:

- Closer alignment of policies and development standards with those in the Santa Monica Mountains LCP;
- Establishment of biological habitat categories to prioritize preservation;
- Protection of biodiversity, wildlife movement, riparian ecosystems, and scenic resources throughout the North Area;
- Support for open space conservation;
- Retention of rural and semi-rural character; and
- Support for preservation of recreational opportunities and experiences dependent upon the unique resources of the Santa Monica Mountains.

B. Project Background

The North Area of the Santa Monica Mountains in western Los Angeles County consists of 32.3 square miles of unincorporated land generally bounded by the Cities of Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, and Woodland Hills to the north, the City of Los Angeles to the east, the County of Ventura and the City of Westlake to the west, and the Santa Monica Mountains Coastal Zone (“Coastal Zone”) and City of Malibu to the south.

The North Area, with its recreational opportunities and its rural and semi-rural character creates a unique community for residents and serves as a popular destination for visitors. The area’s diverse topography, biotic habitats, and wildland-urban interface establish a character, sense of openness, and scenic experience that embody the landscape and communities of the North Area. Development throughout the North Area is typically concentrated in subdivisions or dotted along hillside roads. Many of the subdivisions in the North Area are considered antiquated, or were recorded prior to 1929 when the Subdivision Map Act was amended to afford local governments more control over development, and do not conform with current development standards.

The majority of the North Area is part of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, which is one of just 18 designated areas across the United States in the National Park System. The National Recreation Area includes both public and private lands, and the successful management of this significant regional asset depends on private and public collaboration with a common goal of natural resource preservation. Park lands cover approximately 38 percent of the planning area. Over 6,100 acres of publicly accessible open space within the North Area—including several federal park sites, Malibu Creek State Park, and open space managed by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.

The North Area is also subject to considerable natural hazards. Much of the terrain in the North Area is sloped, with a substantial portion of land having slopes greater than 25 percent. The area is subject to widespread slope instability due to topography and geology, particularly during rainstorms and after fire events. The North Area is entirely within the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, the most urgent classification for wildfire safety purposes. The Santa Monica Mountains are frequently struck by wildfires, which threaten the safety of people living along the Mountains’ winding, narrow roads, and which are often in very isolated locations. Wildfire threats combined with limited road access pose dangers for area residents.

The North Area is the portion of the unincorporated Santa Monica Mountains area located north of the Santa Monica Mountains Coastal Zone (“Coastal Zone”). Development in the North Area is regulated by the Plan and CSD, whereas the Coastal Zone is regulated by the Santa Monica Mountains LCP and Local Implementation Plan (“LIP”), which are equivalent to state-level regulatory documents and require certification by the California Coastal Commission (“Coastal Commission”). Although part of the same planning area,

as defined by the General Plan planning areas framework, there are differences between the development regulations for the North Area and the Coastal Zone.

The Board of Supervisors ("Board") approved a motion in April 2016 instructing the Department of Regional Planning ("Department") to prepare an update to the Plan and CSD. The motion directed the Department to ensure consistency with the Santa Monica Mountains LCP, to implement North Area Plan policies in the CSD, seek to address current community concerns, strengthen environmental protections, and preserve the local rural and semi-rural context. In August 2020, the Board approved a motion instructing the Department to evaluate the appropriateness of large group homes in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones and consider steps to limit the use in the Plan update.

The Plan was originally adopted by the Board in October 2000 as a component of the General Plan. The CSD was adopted in 2001 as a component of Title 22 (Planning and Zoning) of the County Code and went into effect September 2002. The CSD has been amended five times since adoption: the Grading and Significant Ridgeline CSD amendment in 2005; the Commercial Zoning CSD amendment in 2007; the Fences, Walls, and Landscaping CSD amendment in 2010; the Vineyard CSD amendment in 2015; and the Ban on New Outdoor Dance Pavilions CSD amendment in 2019.

With the certification of the LCP in 2015, comprehensive revisions to the Plan and CSD were needed to ensure that land use regulations and environmental protections are applied consistently and efficiently across these two similar areas within the same mountain range. Moreover, many Plan policies had not been implemented by the CSD, including development standards for signs, noise, vegetation management, and water resources protection.

The Plan update addresses community concerns that have developed over time, and strengthens existing policies to ensure the continued protection of environmental and recreational resources and the region's rural and semi-rural character. Corresponding changes to the CSD are proposed to implement the Plan update.

C. Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan

The Plan update refines the policies of the General Plan for the North Area by providing focused protections for biological resources, such as native trees and sensitive habitats; aligning numerous development goals and policies with the LCP; encouraging uses consistent with the recreational nature of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area; and, providing support for rural and semi-rural communities through the preservation and expansion of open space, scenic resources, and access to recreational opportunities. The Plan update provides the following new and modified sections:

1. Introduction
 - i. Vision Statement – This new section acknowledges current conditions and future goals.

- ii. Native American Heritage Commission – This new section describes the consultation process for the purpose of preserving, or mitigating impacts to, cultural places located in the North Area.
- 2. Conservation and Natural Resources Element
 - i. Biological Resources – This section is updated to establish habitat categories of S1, S2, S3, and S4, indicating levels of sensitivity for protection.
 - ii. Tree Protections – This new section provides protections for native trees and trees with historic or cultural value.
 - iii. Cultural Resources, Tribal Cultural Resources, and Paleontological Resources – This new section provides guidance for preserving and protecting archaeological, paleontological, and historical cultural resources.
- 3. Safety and Noise Element
 - i. Noise – This section is updated to further protect the quiet, rural setting of the area and address noise from event facilities.
 - ii. Fire Hazards – This section is updated for additional fire risk mitigation, including undergrounding utilities, discouraging development in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones, and considering climate change when building in the wildland-urban interface.
- 4. Land Use Element
 - i. Livestock/Animals as Pets – This new section provides guidance for the keeping of animals and livestock in a compatible manner with environmental and wildlife protection.
 - ii. Agricultural Land Use – This new section provides policies for water conservation and low-impact practices.
 - iii. Equestrian Uses – This new section supports existing uses, while protecting water resources and habitats.
 - iv. Event Facilities – This new section addresses impacts due to increased traffic, noise, and visitorship.
- 5. Mobility Element
 - i. Balancing and Managing Roadway Capacity with Environmental Protection – This section is updated to limit roadway expansion in sensitive environmental areas and rural communities, to implement best management practices (“BMPs”), and help alleviate traffic congestion.
 - ii. Transportation Alternatives – This section is updated to discuss appropriate alternative transportation methods, including park-and-ride, bus routes and improved bike lane systems.
- 6. Public Services and Facilities Element
 - i. Fire and Paramedic Services. – This new section encourages clustered development to ensure adequate access and response times for fire and paramedic services.
 - ii. Law Enforcement Services – This new section provides policies for adequate law enforcement services to meet local needs.
 - iii. Solid Waste Services – This new section provides policies for adequate solid waste service.

Land Use Policy Map Updates

The Plan update changes land use designations for certain properties in order to make them consistent with the General Plan Land Use Legend. The Plan update changes the Mountain Lands (N20, N10, N5) and Rural Residential (N2, N1) designation to the General Plan equivalent designation of Rural Land (RL20, RL10, RL5, RL2, RL1). The Plan update changes the Residential (U2, U4, U8) designation to the General Plan equivalent of Residential (H2, H5). A total of one parcel will be re-designated H5 from U8, and 352 parcels will be re-designated H2 from H4.

The Plan update changes the land use designation for 67 parcels from Commercial Recreation (CR) and Commercial (C) to Rural Commercial (CR) for consistency with the General Plan. No intensification of use will result from the proposed land use changes.

The Plan update also changes the land use designation for 132 parcels to Conservation (OS-C) or Parks and Recreation (OS-PR) to reflect their acquisition, ownership, and use as preserved open space or parks. These parcels are currently owned or managed by the following public agencies and organizations: National Park Service, California State Parks, County of Los Angeles, Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, Mountains Restoration Trust, and Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. The proposed changes to these parcels would bring the land use designation into conformance with the General Plan and more accurately reflect their existing and future uses.

D. Zone Changes

The Plan identifies 199 parcels for land use policy map changes. Parcels (132) re-designated to OS-C or OS-PR are proposed to be re-zoned from their current zoning to Open Space (O-S) for consistency with the land use re-designation. Parcels (67) re-designated to Commercial (C) or Rural Commercial (CR) will retain their current zoning.

E. Santa Monica Mountains North Area Community Standards District

The CSD implements the goals and policies of the Plan to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the community and the natural environment. The CSD serves as a regulatory framework that implements the updated goals and policies in the Plan through development standards and procedures.

The CSD update better aligns biological and environmental resource protections with the Santa Monica Mountains LCP, addresses current community concerns, and preserves the local rural and semi-rural character through clear and enforceable development standards.

Biological Resources

The Plan update categorizes biological habitats to prioritize preservation of biological resources. The habitats are assigned tiered categories of S1, S2, S3, or S4. S1 represents the most sensitive and rare habitats, while S4 represents disturbed areas most

appropriate for development. Each category defines habitat sensitivity and provides recommendations on the allowable uses within each category.

These habitat categories help direct development to the most appropriate areas, while preserving and protecting the most sensitive resources. The mapping of these categories helps landowners to understand the requirements for development in the North Area.

In alignment with the LCP, the CSD implements a biological inventory requirement for development applications. For projects requiring ministerial review and that are within S2 and S3 habitats, a lower-level biological review, or Biological Inventory, is required. For all projects in S1 habitat, projects requiring discretionary review in S2 and S3, and any ministerial review projects that the Director has determined to require further review of biological resources, a higher-level biological review, or Biological Assessment, is required. The Biological Assessment requires a more comprehensive report of biological resources, including a biota report.

The CSD update includes development standards, such as development siting requirements relative to the location of biological resources; prohibition of development in wetlands and streams with limited exceptions; scaled building site area ("BSA") maximum based on parcel size with an ultimate limit of 15,000 square feet; fencing and wall restrictions to allow movement of wildlife; habitat restoration guidelines; and mitigation ratios relative to the habitat category impacted.

Tree Protections

The existing CSD does not include enforceable protections for biological resources, habitats, or trees other than through the countywide oak tree provisions (Chapter 22.174 of Title 22 [Planning and Zoning] of the County Code). The proposed CSD update establishes tree protections, such as permits and development standards to protect native, Heritage, and Historic trees. The Protected Tree list in the CSD update provides protections for a total of 31 species of native trees, which has been expanded to include 26 new types of native trees beyond the four types of oak trees currently protected. In addition, native trees with a trunk diameter greater than 36 inches are protected as Heritage Trees, and trees that have been determined to have historic or cultural value can be protected as Historic Trees under the CSD. Permit procedures and mitigation ratios for impacts to protected trees have been added to ensure greater protection and conservation of native and significant trees in the North Area.

Grading

Although part of the same Santa Monica Mountains Planning Area under the General Plan, there are significant differences in development standards for development within the Coastal Zone and the North Area. Projects in the Coastal Zone are required to obtain a discretionary permit for projects proposing over 50 cubic yards in grading, whereas projects in the North Area can grade up to 5,000 cubic yards before having to obtain a discretionary permit.

To bring development standards in closer alignment with the LCP, while still providing for some additional development allowances, the CSD update requires that a discretionary Conditional Use Permit (“CUP”) be obtained for grading beyond 500 cubic yards.

Scenic Resource Areas

To provide additional protections for scenic resources in the North Area beyond the existing significant ridgeline standards, the CSD update includes development standards for scenic resources areas for scenic elements and scenic routes. In addition, the CSD update includes new development standards for significant ridgeline protection, including an 18-foot height limit within scenic resource areas and near significant ridgelines, restrictions on development on or around important natural landmarks, and the installation of story poles as part of project review.

Equestrian Uses

In the rural and semi-rural communities of the North Area, equestrian uses are popular for recreational and commercial purposes. To support these equestrian uses while protecting environmental health, the CSD update establishes development standards, such as minimum lot sizes, BMPs for runoff diversion and waste management, and requirements for equestrian facilities, including large and small horse boarding. Small horse boarding is permitted by-right (up to 20 horses) in A-1, A-2, and R-R zones. Large horse boarding is permitted by-right as a primary use and can include commercial training, riding, or courses in horsemanship in A-2 and R-R zones; and with a CUP in A-1.

Event Facilities

Since the adoption of the CSD in 2001, issues have arisen within several communities in the North Area regarding the operation of event facilities. Uses not previously anticipated in the CSD have been established, and increased patronage of these event locations, some of which are located on dead-end rural canyon roads, have resulted in associated noise, lighting, traffic, parking and access impacts for existing residents.

To address concerns raised by community members, the Ban on New Outdoor Dance Pavilions Ordinance in the Santa Monica Mountains North Area CSD was adopted in 2019 to disallow outdoor dance pavilions to be used as event facilities. The CSD update includes the ban on outdoor dance pavilions as event venues, and these uses must obtain a CUP within three years to continue operations.

The CSD update provides standards for event facilities regarding acceptable noise levels, hours of operation, number of attendees, parking and circulation issues, nighttime lighting, and emergency evacuation planning to address the potential incompatibility of these land uses with primarily residential areas. Event facilities, as a defined land use, can have a maximum occupancy of 200 persons, including staff, or as directed by the CUP; shall be located no closer than 2,000 feet to another event facility; must adhere to strict operating conditions for noise, lighting and operating hours, and must provide a parking and transportation plan that demonstrates minimization of impacts to residents and habitats, and ensures emergency access.

Livestock and Animals

To address ongoing concerns regarding mountain lion protections, the CSD update provides clarifications on animal keeping and enclosures. Enclosures must be provided for animals, such as pets and livestock. By keeping pets and livestock secured, owners of such animals will not seek to kill mountain lions, which prey on such animals. In addition, the CSD update prohibits menageries and the keeping of wild animals as uses within the North Area.

Noise

The CSD update sets the following allowable noise levels for the North Area and Topanga Canyon:

Outdoor amplified sound shall be prohibited between the hours of 8:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. within the North Area. In addition, the daytime exterior noise level shall not exceed 43 dBA at a L90 measurement in any hour from 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m., and the nighttime exterior noise level shall not exceed 38 dBA at a L90 measurement in any hour from 8:00 p.m. until 8:00 a.m. In the Topanga Area, which has a higher ambient noise level, an additional 5 dBA are allowed during the same times.

Transfer of Development Credits (TDC)

To align with the LCP and to ensure no net increase in the number of buildable lots in the North Area, the CSD update implements a Transfer of Development Credit (TDC) program that requires the retirement of a qualifying lot for each new lot or legalized lot created through a land division.

For each new lot created or legalized, an existing qualifying lot(s) must be retired. To generate a development credit, development potential must be permanently and irrevocably extinguished on all qualifying lots or parcels for each credit. The applicant may purchase qualifying lots or parcels outright, or acquire the right to extinguish the development potential.

The CSD update provides incentives to encourage voluntary retirement of development rights on a parcel and dedication of easements for open space. The TDC program will help minimize the impact of development on infrastructure and the environment within the North Area.

Building Site Area

To align with the LCP and to preserve habitat in the North Area, the CSD update provides development standards limiting the total amount of BSA that can be developed, including the building pad and all graded slopes, structures, decks, patios, impervious surfaces, and parking areas. Parcels less than one acre are allowed a BSA of 10,000 square feet or 25% of parcel size, whichever is smaller. Parcels are allowed an additional 250 square feet for each acre of parcel size above one acre, up to a maximum BSA of 15,000 square feet. Parcels fully within S1 Habitat are allowed a maximum BSA of 7,500 square feet.

The CSD provides exceptions for BSA, including the first 300 feet of driveway (20 feet wide), driveway or turnaround space required by Fire Department, and fuel modification area required by the County Fire Department. Approved animal containment facilities may extend beyond the limits of the approved BSA.

Vineyards

Following a dramatic increase in vineyard development in 2014, the Vineyard Ordinance was adopted as part of the CSD and became effective on January 7, 2016. The Vineyard Ordinance requires that all existing legally-established vineyards must prove compliance with the required development standards, or obtain a permit by January 7, 2021. For all new vineyards, the CSD update reduces the minimum size to be considered a vineyard to include all grapes grown for personal or commercial use, and includes standards for integrated pest management and BMPs for environmental protection.

Residential Uses Serving Seven or More Persons

In response to the August 2020 Board motion to evaluate the appropriateness of residential uses serving seven or more persons in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones and Hillside Management Areas, standards are provided as part of the CSD update requiring residential uses serving seven or more persons to have two distinct means of vehicular access to a highway. Vehicular access must meet public safety standards approved by Public Works and must be at least 24 feet wide to accommodate emergency ingress and egress. This will ensure that residential uses serving seven or more persons are sited in areas that minimize risk to its occupants and surrounding existing residents during emergency situations that necessitate evacuation.

Rebuilding After Disaster

Following the destructive wildfires of 2018, the Woolsey Fire Disaster Recovery Urgency Ordinance was adopted. In order to provide clear standards for the rebuilding process after disaster and to replace the Urgency Ordinance upon its expiration in 2022, standards are provided as part of the CSD update to ease development restrictions and allow for disaster recovery, including temporary housing, reconstruction, and permitting for properties that suffer irreparable damage due to natural disaster.

The CSD utilizes the current rebuilding standards by facilitating the establishment of temporary housing and rebuilding of damaged structures destroyed by disaster by allowing like-for-like replacement of legally established structures, but also establishes protections for scenic resources in the North Area by requiring that structures located within the significant ridgeline protection area cannot be expanded, can only be constructed as a like-for-like replacement, and cannot encroach further into the protected zone of the significant ridgeline.

GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY

The General Plan is a countywide land use policy document that guides the long-term physical development and conservation of the unincorporated areas. The General Plan organizes the County into 11 Planning Areas to provide for the development of regional

plans that respond to the needs of communities through the General Plan Implementation Program and Planning Areas Framework.

Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan

The Plan update is consistent with and supportive of the goals and policies of the General Plan, including the Land Use Element, the Conservation and Natural Resources Element, the Safety Element, and the Parks and Recreation Element, by implementing goals and policies to preserve environmental and biological resources, support the provision of open space and access, and direct development away from areas with high risk of fire and other natural disasters. These goals are consistent with the following General Plan goals and policies:

General Plan Goal S 3: *An effective regulatory system that prevents or minimizes personal injury, loss of life, and property damage due to fire hazards.*

- Fire hazards policies 3.1 through 3.10.

The Plan update discourages high density and high intensity development in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones, promotes the undergrounding of utilities, and encourages clustering of development to provide for more localized and effective fire protection measures.

General Plan Goal LU 3: *A development pattern that discourages sprawl, and protects and conserves areas with natural resources and SEAs.*

- Growth management policies LU 3.1 through 3.3

By establishing biological habitat categories, the Plan update effectively prioritizes important natural resources, open space, and habitat connectivity.

General Plan Goal LU 6: *Protected rural communities characterized by living in a non-urban or agricultural environment at low densities without typical urban services.*

- Rural character policies LU 6.1 through 6.3.

The Plan update provides direction for retaining the area's natural setting, rural and semi-rural character, and scenic features by prohibiting development in scenic resource areas, preserving open space, promoting equestrian uses, and directing new development away from important habitat.

General Plan Goal C/NR 1: *Open space areas that meet the diverse needs of Los Angeles County.*

- Open space preservation and conservation of natural areas policies C/NR 1.1 through 1.2,
- Open space acquisition policies C/NR 1.3 through 1.6.

The guiding principle under the Plan update's Conservation and Open Space Element is to prioritize resource protection over development. The Plan update designates lands

used for recreational uses as Open Space and promotes the protection and conservation of open space, recreational opportunities, and access for all.

Zone Changes

The land use policy and zone changes included in the Plan update are consistent with the General Plan Policy LU 2.12, which directs community-based plans and existing specific plans to be updated to reflect the General Plan Land Use Legend as part of a comprehensive area planning effort; as well as General Plan Policy LU 2.10 by ensuring consistency between land use policy and zoning.

Community Standards District

The CSD update implements the goals and policies of the Plan update to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the community and surrounding natural environment, which is consistent with and supportive of the goals and policies of the General Plan, including the Land Use Element, the Conservation and Natural Resources Element, the Noise Element, the Safety Element, and the Parks and Recreation Element. Specifically, the CSD development standards are consistent with the following General Plan goals and policies:

Goal C/NR 3: Permanent, sustainable preservation of genetically and physically diverse biological resources and ecological systems including: habitat linkages, forests, coastal zone, riparian habitats, streambeds, wetlands, woodlands, alpine habitat, chaparral, shrublands, and SEAs.

- Protection of biological resources policies C/NR 3.1 through 3.7.
- Site sensitive design policies C/NR 3.8 through 3.11.

Through implementation of biological habitat categories, the CSD effectively preserves important biological resources, ecological systems, landscapes, and habitat linkages.

Goal C/NR 4: Conserved and sustainably managed woodlands.

- Woodland preservation policy C/NR 4.1.

Expanded tree protections for native, Heritage, and Historic trees effectively conserves individual trees as well as woodlands through permitting, monitoring, and mitigation standards.

Goal C/NR 5: Protected and useable local surface water resources.

- Surface water protection policies C/NR 5.1 through 5.7.

The CSD update requires BMPs and low impact development standards to be implemented for a range of uses, including equestrian facilities, vineyards, and grading in order to manage runoff and irrigation, and to minimize the introduction of waste and pollutants into local surface water resources.

Goal C/NR 13: Protected visual and scenic resources.

- Scenic resource protection policies C/NR 13.1 through 13.7.

Protections for scenic resource areas including significant ridgelines, scenic routes, and scenic elements within the CSD update require that proposed development be sited and designed to protect public views and to minimize adverse impacts on scenic resources.

Goal N 1: The reduction of excessive noise impacts.

The CSD update establishes daytime and nighttime maximum noise thresholds for the North Area and for the Topanga Canyon subarea in order to protect sensitive receptors, such as wildlife and residential uses and to maintain compatibility of uses.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Staff determined that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) (Exhibit E – Final Environmental Impact Report) is necessary for the project. The EIR evaluated the Project's impact on 14 environmental issue areas. The assessment considered significance thresholds from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines in the development of the significance criteria. Three of these issue areas required mitigation measures to reduce the impacts to a less-than-significant level, while the remaining 11 issue areas were less than significant without mitigation, as listed below:

1. Aesthetics
2. Biological Resources
3. Greenhouse Gas Emissions
4. Energy
5. Hydrology and Water Resources
6. Land Use and Recreation
7. Noise
8. Population and Housing
9. Public Services, Utilities, and Services Systems
10. Transportation and Traffic
11. Wildland Fire and Hazards

The analysis in the EIR found that the implementation of the Plan update and CSD update would result in less than significant impacts for most environmental issue areas. The Plan update and CSD update incorporate both policies and development standards that address the protection of natural resources, such as biological and water resources and provide performance measures or thresholds for issues such as noise. For the following issue areas, the EIR found that there was a potential for significant impacts: Air Quality, Cultural and Tribal Resources, and Paleontological Resources. However, per CEQA, the EIR relies on the analysis and mitigation measures of the General Plan to reduce impacts for these issue areas. As identified in the DEIR, after implementation of the required mitigation measures, the Project would result in no significant and unavoidable impacts to the environment.

NOTIFICATION

Pursuant to Section 22.222.180 of the County Code, the Department published a public hearing notice in the local newspaper, *The Acorn*, on September 3, 2020. The Department posted the public hearing notice and materials on the Department's website and promoted it through social media. The Department was prepared to make copies of the public hearing notice and hearing materials available at the Topanga Library and Agoura Hills Library. However, the closure of libraries due to the Coronavirus pandemic prevented this courtesy public access practice.

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

A. County Department Comments and Recommendations

The Department consulted the following County departments during the development of the Plan, CSD, and EIR:

1. Public Health
2. Public Works
3. Parks and Recreation
4. Fire

Comments from Public Health included concerns regarding noise thresholds, fee recovery for monitoring and enforcing noise complaints, emergency response exemptions for helicopter landing uses, and whether an alternative landfill has been considered for the North Area.

Comments from Public Works included discussion of both FEMA and County Capital Flood floodplains in the EIR, establishing review procedures for revegetation or restoration work in watercourses and floodplains to minimize flood impacts, the allowed dates for earthmoving in regard to rainy seasons, the jurisdiction of Los Angeles County Public Works having discretion over feasibility for flood protection projects, and a recommendation to include the Habitat Sensitivity Ranking system in the required Biological Resource Assessment.

Public Works, Public Health, and Parks and Recreation provided letters recommending departmental clearance for the project.

B. Project Outreach and Engagement

In addition to numerous informal discussion with stakeholders including residents, property owners, facility operators, staff from adjacent cities, and staff from various open space management agencies, over the three-year update process, the Department conducted seven public outreach events to solicit public input as follows:

1. April 19, 2017: Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation meeting at King Gillette Ranch;
2. August 16, 2017: Community meeting at the Malibou Lake Mountain Club;

3. August 21, 2018: Public scoping meeting at the Los Angeles County Field Office in Calabasas;
4. October 25, 2018: Community meeting at the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District;
5. April 3, 2019: Community meeting at the Topanga Library;
6. September 19, 2019: Community meeting at the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District;
7. June 11, 2020: Public meeting on the Draft Environmental Impact Report conducted virtually via Zoom.

The Department sent a courtesy RPC public hearing notice (Exhibit F) by email to 509 stakeholders. The Department also noticed the RPC public hearing in the local newspaper, *The Acorn*, on September 3, 2020. The public hearing notice and materials were posted on the Department's website and promoted through social media. The Department was prepared to make copies of the public hearing notice and hearing materials available at the Topanga Library and Agoura Hills Library. However, the closure of libraries due to the Coronavirus pandemic prevented this courtesy public access practice.

In addition, tribes were consulted pursuant to Senate Bill 18 (requires involvement in land use planning) and Assembly Bill 52 (requires input on mitigation of potential impacts to tribal cultural resources) for this project.

C. Public Comments

A total of 185 comment letters and emails were received during the 30-day scoping and subsequent 45-day DEIR public comment periods. Nine regional and local agencies and twelve organizations submitted comments on the North Area Plan and CSD update.

Between the time the public hearing notification was issued and the time of report publication, staff received three emails requesting information on instructions for participation in the RPC public hearing, CSD applicability, and allowed construction times.

Report
Reviewed By: 
Thuy Hua, AICP, Supervising Regional Planner

Report
Approved By: 
Bianca Siegl, Deputy Director

LIST OF ATTACHED EXHIBITS	
EXHIBIT A	Draft Resolution of the Regional Planning Commission
EXHIBIT B	Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan – Public Hearing Draft
EXHIBIT C	Santa Monica Mountains North Area Community Standards District – Public Hearing Draft
EXHIBIT D	Proposed Land Use Designation and Zone Change Maps
EXHIBIT E	Final Environmental Impact Report
EXHIBIT F	Notice of Public Hearing