

SEA Boundary Requests  
Regional Planning Commission  
July 24, 2013

<b>Request ID</b>	<b>Related Requests</b>	<b>Requestor</b>	<b>Contact Name</b>
1		Los Angeles County Department Parks and Rec	Joan Rupert/Julie Yom
2		Los Angeles County Department Parks and Rec	Joan Rupert/Julie Yom
3		Los Angeles County Department Parks and Rec	Joan Rupert/Julie Yom
4		Los Angeles County Department Parks and Rec	Joan Rupert/Julie Yom
5		Los Angeles County Department Parks and Rec	Joan Rupert/Julie Yom
6		Los Angeles County Department Parks and Rec	Joan Rupert/Julie Yom
7		Keith Campeau	
8	#13, 28	SoCal Gas	Glenn La Fevers, Storage Operations Manager
9		Rose Hills Memorial Park and Cemetery	Jeff Nordschow
10	24	Request 10 is folded into Request 24	
11		Hanh Tran	
12		Cook Hill Properties	Susan Lindquist, Director of Community Development
13	#8, 28	Termo	Ralph Combs, Manager, Corporate Development The Termo Company
14	#28	Sierra Club	Joan Licari, Chair /Eric Johnson, Chair / Marcia Hanscom, Ballona Wetlands Restoration Committee / Terrie Brady, San Fernando Valley Group
15		Meridian Energy USA	Mark Stout, Director Project Development
16		Center for Biological Diversity	Ileene Anderson
17		Forest Lawn-Hollywood	George Mihilsten, Latham and Watkins

<b>Request ID</b>	<b>Related Requests</b>	<b>Requestor</b>	<b>Contact Name</b>
18		Forest Lawn- Covina Hills	
19		Sky Meadow Farms	Lisa K. Bell
20		Pardee Homes	Michael V. McGee, President and CEO
21		Poppy Reserve/Mojave Desert Interpretative Association	Margaret Rhyne
22		Tejon Ranch	Michael Josselyn, PhD, WRA Environmental Consultants
23		Tesoro del Valle	John E. Evans, Montalvo Ventures
24		Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority	Bob Henderson, Chairman / Lizette Longacre, Ecologist
25	#14, 34	Hills for Everyone	Claire Schlotterbeck, Executive Director
26		Aera Energy LLC	Jeffrey R. Plaisch, Project Manager
27		DRP Internal Review- not retained.	
28	#8, 13, 14	Chatsworth Nature Preserve	Carla Bollinger and Mark Osokow
29		Santa Paula Creek Mitigation Bank	Richard Lyons
30		California Native Plant Society	Betsey Landis, Conservation Committee
31	37	LAC DPW	Christopher Sheppard, Environmental Programs Division
32		Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County	Wendy Wert
33		Windsor Pacific LLC	Allen Hubsch
34	#14, 25	WILDLIFE CORRIDOR CONSERVATION AUTHORITY	Jessica Nguyen
35		Bolthouse Farms	Kimiko Lizardi
36		CalCIMA, Vulcan, Granite & Sespe Consulting	Angela Driscoll
37	#31	Sunshine Canyon Operators	Rob Sherman

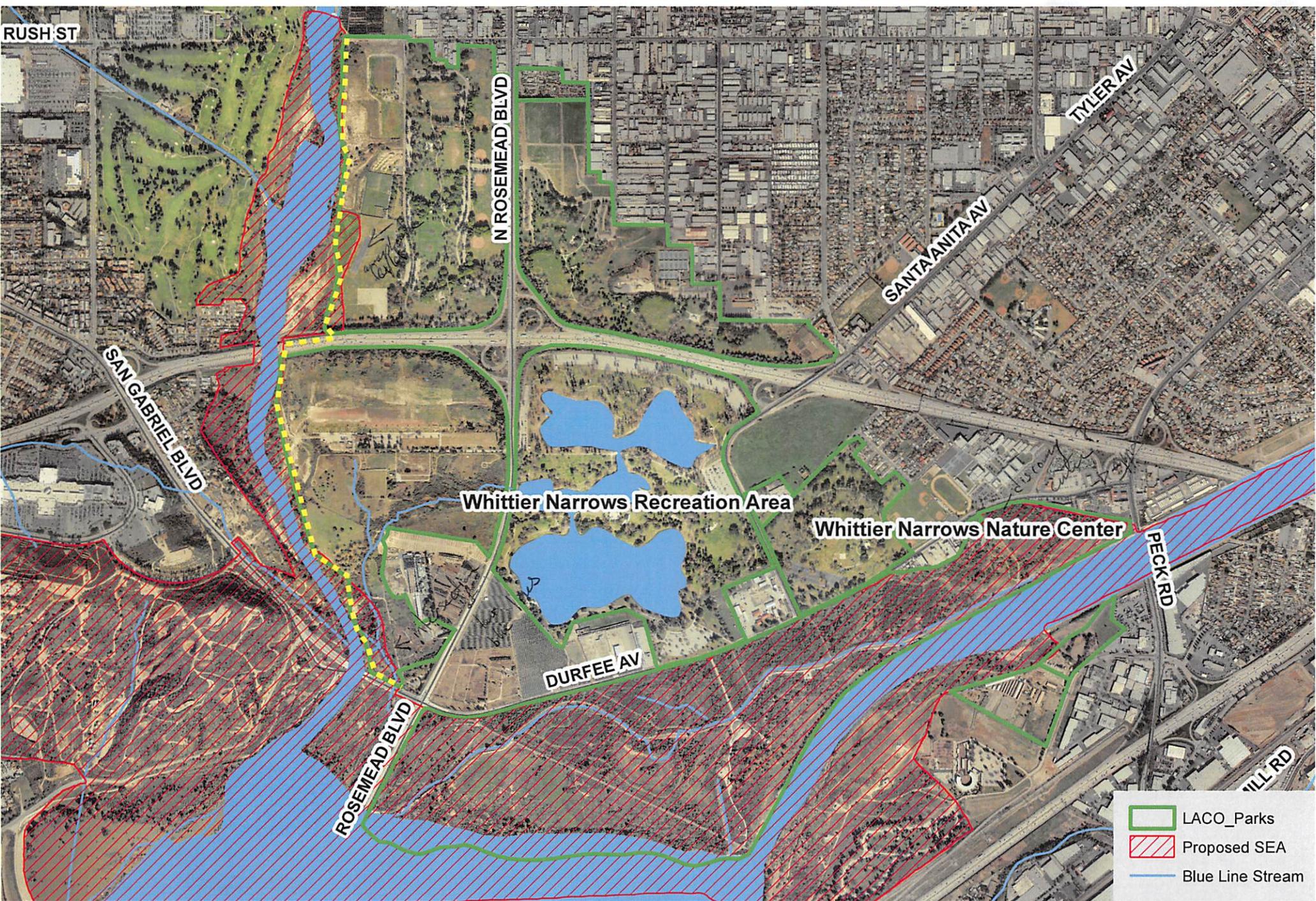
**1-6 : Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation**

FACILITY NAME	AGENCY	CONTRACTS/ REC. PERMIT	PROPOSED SEA	SEA BOUNDARY (Ok or Not Ok)	MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES					FUTURE CONSTRUCTION
					Mowing	Tree Trimming	Brush Clearance	Parking Lot Repair	Other (Please specify)	
<b>Marshall Canyon Golf Course</b>	Admin.	Golf	partially within	OK			X (Annually)			
<b>Mountain Meadows Golf Course</b>	Admin.	Golf	almost all within	OK	X (Daily)	X (Annually)	X (Annually)		Daily golf course maintenance including watering.	Rebuild several tee boxes
<b>Whittier Narrows Golf Course</b>	Admin.	Golf	partially within	OK	X (Monthly)	X (Annually)	X (Annually)			
<b>Castaic Sports Complex</b>	North		partially within (consider modifying boundary due to an existing berm)	Not OK- Eastern side of facility, where a berm exists						
<b>Jackie Robinson Park</b>	North		adjacent (0.23acre of undeveloped park area is included)	Ok	None	None	None	None	None	None
<b>Alpine Butte Wildlife Sanctuary</b>	Regional		all within	Okay	None	None	None	None	Residential Roadway grading - as needed	None
<b>Big Rock Creek Wildlife Sanctuary</b>	Regional		partially within	Okay	None	None	None	None	None	None

FACILITY NAME	AGENCY	CONTRACTS/ REC. PERMIT	PROPOSED SEA	SEA BOUNDARY (Ok or Not Ok)	MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES					FUTURE CONSTRUCTION
					Mowing	Tree Trimming	Brush Clearance	Parking Lot Repair	Other (Please specify)	
Bonelli Regional Park	Regional	RV Park; Hot Tubs; Equestrian Ctr	all within (except Raging Waters)	Not OK- All Playground, Picnic Area, Buildings and parking lots should be excluded	YES/Daily	YES/Daily	YES/Daily	YES/Daily	Irrigating, Plumbing and Electrical repairs/daily	Yes, SailBoat Cove Dock replacement
Castaic Lake Recreation Area	Regional		(spillway where water leaves lagoon and the beginning of the natural riverbed; no future development anticipated)	OK	None	None	None	None	None	None - however somewhere along the river between Castaic Lake & Castaic Sports Complex would be a great place for a trail.
Eaton Canyon Park/ Nature Center	Regional		all within	Ok	None	As needed in Picnic Areas, around Nature Center and along trail	Annually - Entrance roadway and common fences with residential structures	None	Annually and/or as needed - Trail maintenance and emergency service road grading	None
Marshall Canyon County Park	Regional	Equestrian Center; Campground (?); Tree Farm	all within	Ok						
Neenach Wildlife Preserve	Regional		all within	Okay	None	None	None	None	None	Identification sign
Phacelia Wildlife Sanctuary	Regional		all within	Okay	None	None	None	None	None	None

FACILITY NAME	AGENCY	CONTRACTS/ REC. PERMIT	PROPOSED SEA	SEA BOUNDARY (Ok or Not Ok)	MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES					FUTURE CONSTRUCTION
					Mowing	Tree Trimming	Brush Clearance	Parking Lot Repair	Other (Please specify)	
<b>Placerita Canyon Nature Center</b>	Regional		all within	Okay	None	As needed in Picnic Areas, around Nature Center and along trail	Annually - Entrance roadway, parking areas and along service roadways.	None	Annually and/or as needed Trail Maintenance	None
<b>Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area</b>	Regional	Ren Faire; Food Boat and Bait	all within	OK	T-Th	Light trimming/wee kly	Light clearance/monthly	Yes/ yearly	lake mediation/yearly	add third lane to main road
<b>Schabarum Regional Park</b>	Regional	Equestrian Ctr.	partially within	Ok						
<b>Vasquez Rocks Natural Area &amp; Nature Sanctuary</b>	Regional		almost all within	Okay	Annually - Asher field	As needed in Picnic Areas, around Nature Center and along trail	Annually - Asher field, around buildings and bridle path	As needed - grading of parking areas (no asphalt or concrete)	Annually and/or as needed Trail Maintenance - Monthly grading of interior dirt roads	None
<b>Walnut Creek Community Regional Park</b>	Regional		all within	Ok						
<b>Whittier Narrows Natural Area</b>	Regional		all within	Okay	Annually - 2 large raptor fields	As needed in Picnic Areas, around Nature Center and along trail	Annually - Raptor fields, fire serve roads and SCE (Edison) access roads	None	None	75 acres of habitat restoration River Discovery Center, new parking lot, outdoor classrooms, and wetland areas

FACILITY NAME	AGENCY	CONTRACTS/ REC. PERMIT	PROPOSED SEA	SEA BOUNDARY (Ok or Not Ok)	MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES					FUTURE CONSTRUCTION
					Mowing	Tree Trimming	Brush Clearance	Parking Lot Repair	Other (Please specify)	
Whittier Narrows Recreation Area	Regional	Remote Control Airplane Field (Rec. Permit)	partially within	Not OK- Use bike path as limit on the proposed SEA boundary.						
Bill Blevins Park	South		partially within	Not OK- part of the SEA is on turf, the boundary line should be moved back to the toe of the slope.						
Trailview Park	South		all within	OK						



- LACO\_Parks
- Proposed SEA
- Blue Line Stream

ate: 12/27/12  
 ap Prepared By: JY

erial: LAR-IAC3  
 arcells: Assessor 2010  
 WY's and Roads: Thomas Brothers (All rights reserved)

## Whittier Narrows Recreation Area

### Aerial Mapping: SEAs and Blue Line Streams

County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation

2,500

Feet



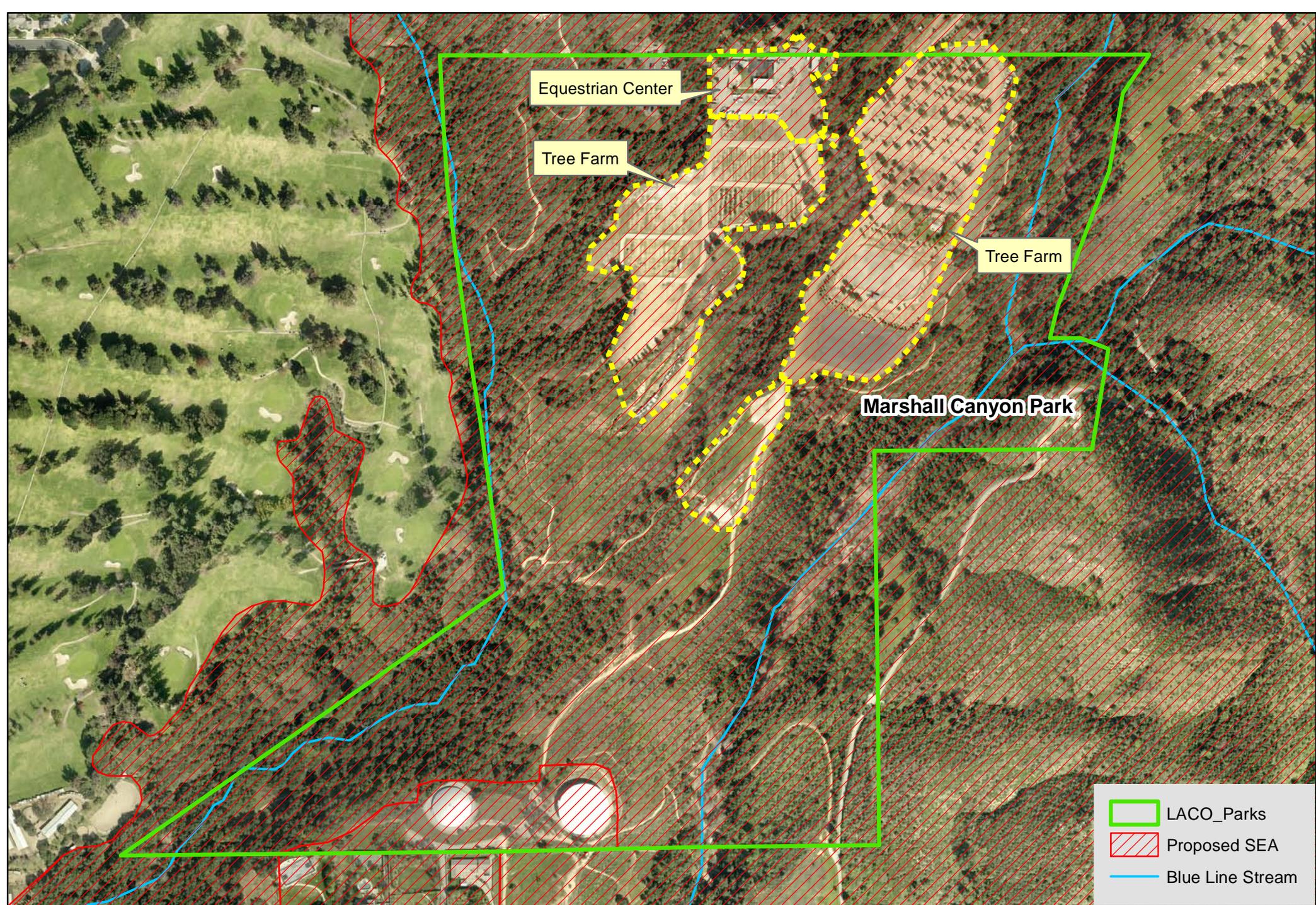


Date: 6/19/13  
 Map Prepared By: JY

Aerial: LAR-IAC3  
 Parcels: Assessor 2010  
 HWY's and Roads: Thomas Brothers (All rights reserved)

**Santa Fe Dam Recreation Area**  
**Aerial Mapping: SEAs and Blue Line Streams**  
 County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation

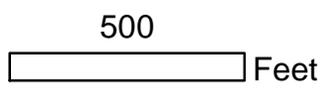


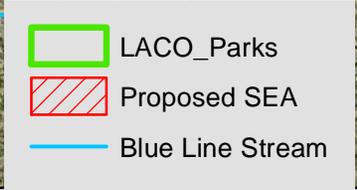


Date: 7/16/13  
 Map Prepared By: JY

Aerial: LAR-IAC3  
 Parcels: Assessor 2010  
 HWY's and Roads: Thomas Brothers (All rights reserved)

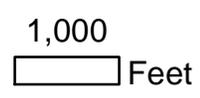
**Marshall Canyon County Park**  
**Aerial Mapping: SEAs and Blue Line Streams**  
 County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation

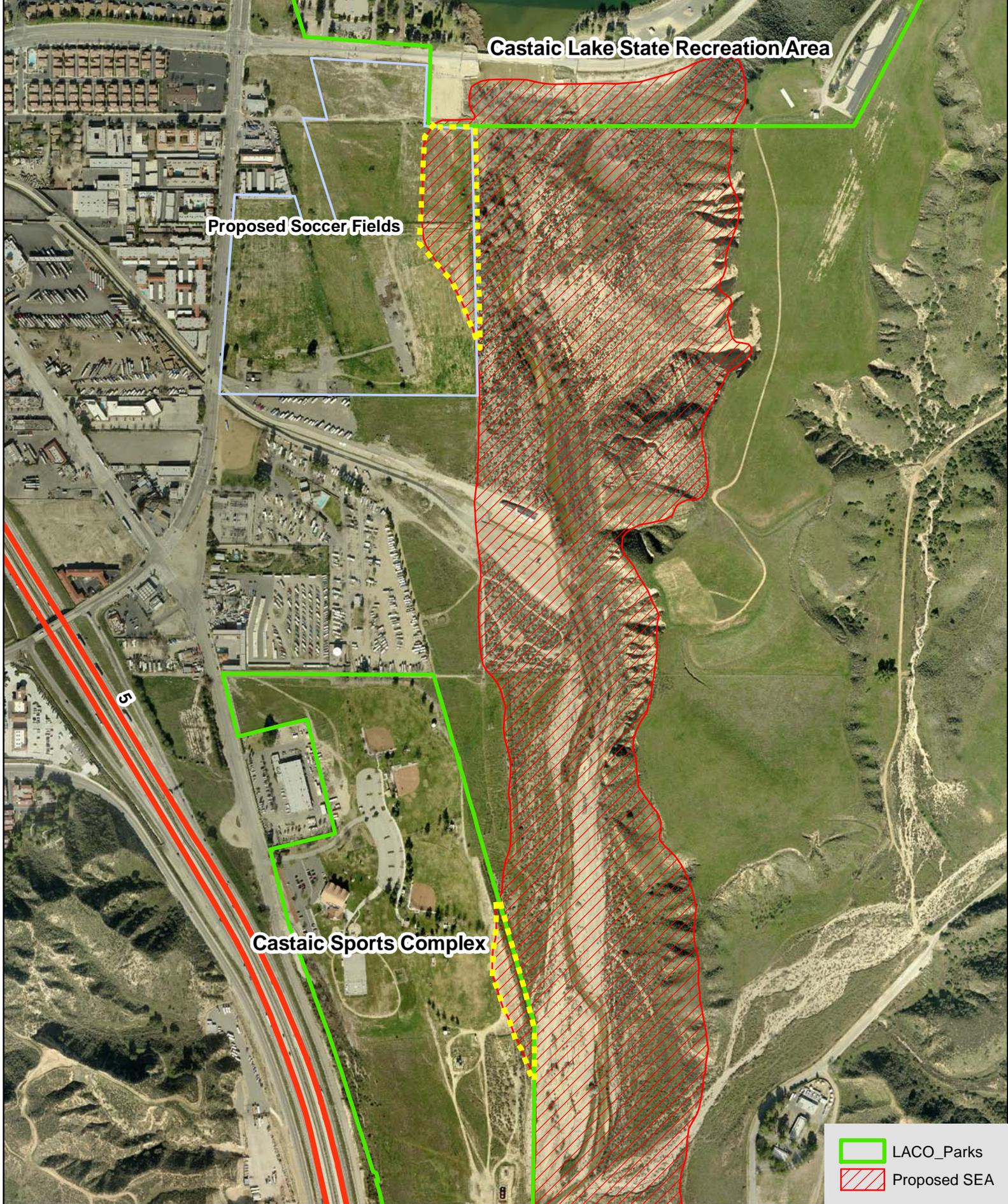




Date: 7/16/13  
 Map Prepared By: JY  
 Aerial: LAR-IAC3  
 Parcels: Assessor 2010  
 HWY's and Roads: Thomas Brothers (All rights reserved)

**Frank G. Bonelli Regional Park**  
**Aerial Mapping: SEAs and Blue Line Streams**  
 County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation





Date: 6/6/13  
 Map Prepared By: JY  
 Aerial: LAR-IAC3  
 Parcels: Assessor 2010

## Castaic Sports Complex & Castaic Lake State Recreation Area Aerial Mapping: SEAs

County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation 600 Feet



-  LACO\_Parks
-  Blue Line Stream
-  Proposed SEA

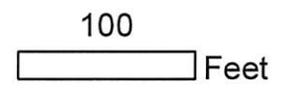
Date: 4/9/13  
Map Prepared By: JY

Aerial: LAR-IAC3  
Parcels: Assessor 2010  
HWY's and Roads: Thomas Brothers (All rights reserved)

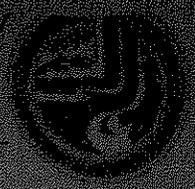
### Bill Blevins Park

## Aerial Mapping: SEAs and Blue Line Streams

County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation



## **7: Keith Campeau**



### REQUEST FOR MODIFICATION OF SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREAS

Information to help you fill up this form may be found on the Department of Regional Planning's website at: <http://planning.lacounty.gov/sea>

Please mark the appropriate box below with regards to the nature of your modification request:

- Inclusion in the Developed and Disturbed Areas Map
- Exclusion from the Developed and Disturbed Areas Map
- Inclusion in the Significant Ecological Areas
- Exclusion from the Significant Ecological Areas

#### Part I: General Information

Name of Requestor:	Keith Campeau
Name of property owner(s), if different from requestor:	Keith and Smriti CAMPEAU
Requestor's Mailing Address:	[REDACTED]
Requestor's Phone Number:	[REDACTED]
Requestor's Email Address:	[REDACTED]

#### Part II: Description of Area

Please describe in the space provided below the area being proposed for modification. You may attach additional pages if necessary. Please also attach a site map or aerial photo indicating the area proposed for modification if necessary. You may access information on the Department's GIS-NET through this link: <http://planning.lacounty.gov/gisnet3>.

Name of SEA:	Santa Clara River
Address or Nearest Major Cross Streets (if available):	Bootlegger Canyon
City or Community Name:	Acton (Ravenna)
Assessor's Parcel Numbers:	3209 013 010

Part III: Basis for Request for Modification

Please describe in the space provided below how the area being proposed for modification meets the listed criteria. Please answer items 2 and 3 only if requesting for inclusion in or exclusion from the SEA.

1. Is the area proposed for modification disturbed or developed with a structure or impermeable surface? As farmland? Estimate approximately how many acres are disturbed, developed or farmed.

Requestor's Description: (Please attach additional pages if necessary)

No; grading to subsoil only.

2. Does the area proposed for modification contain habitats of plant or animal species, biotic communities, vegetative associations, land features etc. that are expressly identified for protection by the existing/proposed SEA? (Please refer to the SEA Descriptions in the 2012 Draft General Plan, and the SEA Descriptions in the 1980 General Plan- available online at: <http://planning.lacounty.gov/sea/biological/>).

Requestor's Description: (Please attach additional pages if necessary)

No.

3. In addition to the answers given for Questions 1 and 2, the following factors will have bearing on the determination of whether or not to grant a request for modification:

- a. Regional habitat linkages / wildlife corridors
- b. Water sources and drainages
- c. Proximity to other development or dedicated natural open space
- d. Proximity to areas under a different jurisdiction

Considering the topics listed above as your guide, are there any characteristics on site or in the surrounding areas that would affect other parts of the SEA? Are there any additional factors that need to be considered?

Requestor's Description: (Please attach additional pages if necessary)

a. vast majority untouched, corridors intact.  
b. no water sources/drainage affected,  
c. adjacent already-developed movie ranches.  
d. not adjacent to other jurisdictions.

## **8: SoCal Gas**



**Los Angeles County**  
**Department of Regional Planning**  
*Planning for the Challenges Ahead*



## REQUEST FOR MODIFICATION OF SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREAS

Information to help you fill up this form may be found on the Department of Regional Planning's website at: <http://planning.lacounty.gov/sea>

Please mark the appropriate box below with regards to the nature of your modification request:

- Inclusion in the Developed and Disturbed Areas Map
- Exclusion from the Developed and Disturbed Areas Map
- Inclusion in the Significant Ecological Areas
- Exclusion from the Significant Ecological Areas

**Part I: General Information**

<b>Name of Requestor:</b> Glenn La Fevers, Storage Operations Manager, Aliso Canyon Natural Gas Storage Field
<b>Name of property owner(s), if different from requestor:</b> Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas)
<b>Requestor's Mailing Address:</b> 12801 Tampa Ave., Northridge, CA 91326
<b>Requestor's Phone Number:</b> (818) 700-3824
<b>Requestor's Email Address:</b> <a href="mailto:glafevers@semprautilities.com">glafevers@semprautilities.com</a>

**Part II: Description of Area**

Please describe in the space provided below the area being proposed for modification. You may attach additional pages if necessary. Please also attach a site map or aerial photo indicating the area proposed for modification if necessary. You may access information on the Department's GIS-NET through this link: <http://planning.lacounty.gov/gisnet3>.

<b>Name of SEA:</b> Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills
<b>Address or Nearest Major Cross Streets (if available):</b> 12801 Tampa Ave., Northridge, CA 91326
<b>City or Community Name:</b> Northridge
<b>Assessor's Parcel Numbers:</b> 2601-007-800, 2601-007-801, 2601-008-800, 2601-008-801, 2601-008-015, 2821-003-005, 2821-003-011, 2821-003-800, 2821-004-800, 2821-004-801, 2821-005-800, 2821-005-801, 2821-005-802, 2821-005-803, 2821-005-804, 2821-005-805, 2821-006-800, 2821-007-800, 2821-007-801, 2821-008-802, 2826-017-801, 2826-017-802, 2826-028-800, 2826-029-801, 2826-029-802, and 2826-029-803.

### Part III: Basis for Request for Modification

Please describe in the space provided below how the area being proposed for modification meets the listed criteria. Please answer Items 2 and 3 only if requesting for inclusion in or exclusion from the SEA.

**1. Is the area proposed for modification disturbed or developed with a structure or impermeable surface? As farmland? Estimate approximately how many acres are disturbed, developed or farmed.**

Requestor's Description: (Please attach additional pages if necessary)

Yes. Portions of the proposed SantaSusana Mountains and Simi Hills SEA lie within the property boundary of SoCalGas' Aliso Canyon Natural Gas Storage Field (Storage Field). The Storage Field sits on approximately 3,600 acres of land and has an inventory of approximately 165 billion cubic feet of natural gas.

Although it appears the County's intent was to exclude the Storage Field from the SEA boundary (e.g., "The SEA boundary travels west from Mission Point along the ridgeline above the Aliso Canyon Oil Field and turns south at the western edge of the Aliso Canyon Oil Field..." ref: 2012 SEA Description), as currently drawn, however, the SEA overlaps portions of the Storage Field both in the northwestern and northeastern corners of the property (refer to attached figure). SoCalGas respectfully requests that these overlaps be carved out of the SEA such that the entire Storage Field is excluded.

**2. Does the area proposed for modification contain habitats of plant or animal species, biotic communities, vegetative associations, land features etc. that are expressly identified for protection by the existing/proposed SEA?(Please refer to the SEA Descriptions in the 2012 Draft General Plan, and the SEA Descriptions in the 1980 General Plan- available online at: <http://planning.lacounty.gov/sea/biological>).**

Requestor's Description: (Please attach additional pages if necessary)

Yes, portions of the proposed excluded areas are comprised of coastal sage scrub and valley oak woodland habitat. However, should the County agree to exclude the overlapping areas, the SEA still would be expected to fully meet its designation criteria. Furthermore, expanding the excluded area to encompass the full Storage Field property would have little to no bearing on the SEA's long-term survival.

In addition, although portions of the Storage Field have been designated as critical habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*), the species has not been detected on the Storage Field (protocol surveys for this species were completed in 2006 and in 2010).

**3. In addition to the answers given for Questions 1 and 2, the following factors will have bearing on the determination of whether or not to grant a request for modification:**

- a. Regional habitat linkages / wildlife corridors
- b. Water sources and drainages
- c. Proximity to other development or dedicated natural open space
- d. Proximity to areas under a different jurisdiction

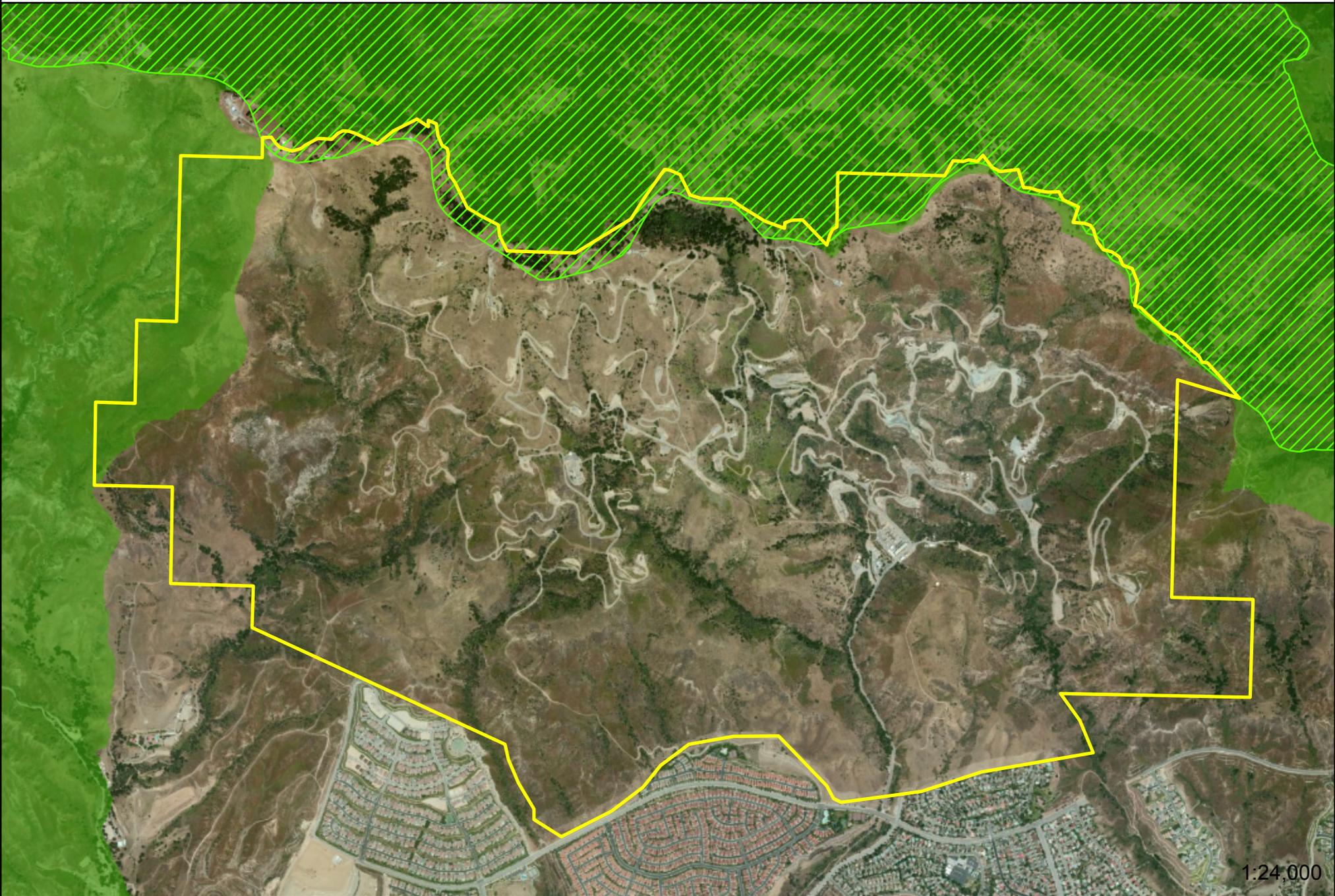
Considering the topics listed above as your guide, are there any characteristics on site or in the

**surrounding areas that would affect other parts of the SEA? Are there any additional factors that need to be considered?**

Requestor's Description: (Please attach additional pages if necessary)

**We believe the most important factor to consider is SoCalGas' ability to maintain, operate, inspect, and repair our facilities, and, if necessary, expand our operations within the Storage Field property, to ensure safe, reliable and efficient natural gas utility service to our customers. Any proposed designations on the Storage Field property that may hinder SoCalGas' ability to maintain and upgrade or enhance the natural gas infrastructure would be unacceptable.**

**Finally, the requested exclusions would have little to no bearing on any regional habitat linkages or wildlife corridors, water sources or drainages, dedicated natural open space, or other areas that fall under different jurisdictions. Rather, the requested exclusions would result in only minor modifications at the northwestern and northeastern fringes of the Storage Field property.**

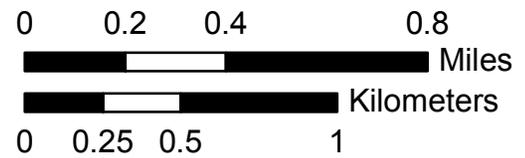


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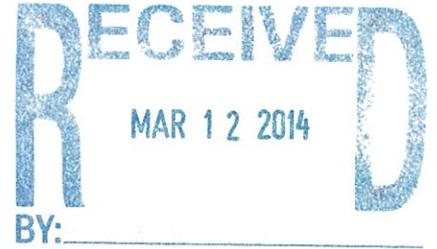
# Aliso Canyon Storage Field

## Legend

-  Active Storage Field Boundary
-  Current Significant Ecological Area
-  Proposed Significant Ecological Area



**9: Rose Hills Memorial Park and Cemetery**



March 11, 2014

Mr. Richard J. Bruckner  
Director  
Los Angeles County  
Department of Regional Planning  
320 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Mr. Bruckner:

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to come out to Rose Hills Memorial Park today. The Rose Hills family appreciates your continued support on our SEA designation exemption. We also look forward to hearing your interpretation of our Cemetery Permit 21-1 in a few weeks as we continue our plans to serve the communities' needs into the next 100 years. If we may be of any assistance regarding any matter related to our Memorial Park or our industry in general, please do not hesitate to contact my staff or me. Rose Hills looks forward to a continued positive partnership with your team over the many years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that appears to read "Patrick Monroe".

Patrick Monroe  
President



Los Angeles County  
Department of Regional Planning

*Planning for the Challenges Ahead*



Richard J. Bruckner  
Director

March 26, 2014

Patrick Monroe, President  
Rose Hills Memorial Park & Mortuary  
3888 Workman Mill Road  
Whittier, CA 90601

Dear Mr. Monroe:

**APPLICABILITY OF PROPOSED SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREAS  
PROGRAM TO ROSE HILLS MEMORIAL PARK**

I am writing to confirm our discussion on March 10, 2014, regarding the updated Significant Ecological Areas (SEA) Program and the effects, if any, on your existing cemetery use. Per our discussion, the draft SEA Ordinance includes a provision that exempts existing uses with valid permits from the provisions of the ordinance. Therefore, as the entire Rose Hills Memorial Park property is under a valid permit, we confirm that the existing use may continue as approved without being subject to the new SEA regulations.

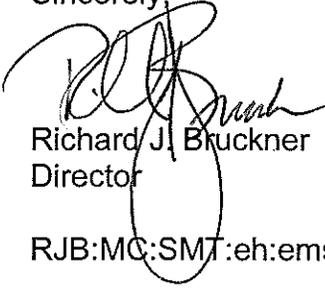
In addition, while undeveloped portions of your property are mapped within the proposed SEA to reflect existing valuable resources, these areas are also covered under the existing permit and new development; therefore, are not subject to the provisions of the new SEA Ordinance.

In conclusion, it is not the intent of the SEA Program, including the SEA boundary and the SEA Ordinance, to impact ongoing legally permitted uses. We appreciate the dialogue on this issue and the long-term partnership our Department has with Rose Hills Memorial Park.

Mr. Patrick Monroe  
March 26, 2014  
Page 2

If you have additional questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Ms. Susan Tae of my staff at [stae@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:stae@planning.lacounty.gov) or at (213) 974-6476 between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. J. Bruckner", written over a large, stylized circular flourish.

Richard J. Bruckner  
Director

RJB:MC:SMT:eh:ems

c: Supervisor Don Knabe (Julie Moore, Andrea Avila)

K\_AP\_032614\_L\_ROSEHILLS



Los Angeles County  
Department of Regional Planning

*Planning for the Challenges Ahead*



Richard J. Bruckner  
Director

December 23, 2013

TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman  
Fourth Supervisorial District

Attention: Julie Moore

FROM: Richard J. Bruckner  
Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "RJB", written over the printed name of Richard J. Bruckner.

**CORRESPONDENCE FROM PATRICK MONROE REGARDING PROPOSED  
PUENTE HILLS SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREA DESIGNATION**

My staff has reviewed the concerns of Mr. Patrick Monroe and have responded directly to him with our findings. Attached is a copy of our response. I trust this meets with your approval.

RJB:MC:MWG:ems

Attachment

K\_AP\_122613\_5DAY\_MONROW\_CVR



# Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

*Planning for the Challenges Ahead*



Richard J. Bruckner  
Director

December 24, 2013

Patrick Monroe, President  
Rose Hills Memorial Park & Mortuary  
Post Office Box 110  
Whittier, CA 90608

Dear Mr. Monroe:

## **PROPOSED PUENTE HILLS SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREA DESIGNATION**

I am in receipt of your recent letter to the Board of Supervisors (Board) Chairman Don Knabe regarding the proposed Puente Hills Significant Ecological Area (SEA) designation on a portion of the Rose Hills property. The Chairman has requested that the Department of Regional Planning (Department) respond to you directly, with a copy provided to his office.

The Puente Hills SEA was established when the Board adopted the Countywide General Plan (General Plan) in 1980. In 1999, the Board directed the Department to initiate an SEA Update Study as a component of the General Plan Update. The SEA Update Study recommended that the boundaries of the Puente Hills SEA, and many other SEAs throughout the County, be expanded pursuant to a series of six selection criteria.

A portion of the Rose Hills property has been included in the proposed Puente Hills SEA designation because the SEA Update Study determined that it met at least one of the six selection criteria. This portion, which is in the southeastern area of the property adjacent to the City of Whittier, appears to be a mostly undeveloped hillside and does not appear to be currently used for cemetery purposes. However, it appears to contain some infrastructure uses, such as water tanks, that support the cemetery.

The Department is proposing to revise Zoning Code regulations pertaining to SEAs (SEA Ordinance Update) concurrently with the General Plan Update. As noted in your letter, the County's need to ensure biodiversity within the region must be balanced against its need to protect cemetery lands that benefit and serve its residents. To that end, the proposed SEA Ordinance Update explicitly exempts any development authorized by an existing Cemetery Permit throughout the duration of the Cemetery Permit's grant term.

Mr. Patrick Monroe  
December 24, 2013  
Page 2

We would like to meet with your organization to review your existing Cemetery Permit and to discuss your long-term plans for the property, with the goal of ensuring that the proposed Puente Hills SEA designation does not impede future cemetery development. To set up this meeting, please contact Elaine Sainz at [esainz@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:esainz@planning.lacounty.gov) or (213) 974-6457 between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday.

I hope this information is useful to you. Additional information regarding the proposed Puente Hills SEA, including the SEA Update Study and the SEA Ordinance Update, may be found on the Department's Web Site at [planning.lacounty.gov/sea](http://planning.lacounty.gov/sea). If you have any questions, please contact Emma Howard at [ehoward@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:ehoward@planning.lacounty.gov) or (213) 974-6476 between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Bruckner  
Director

RJB:MC:MWG:ems

c: Chairman Don Knabe (Julie Moore)



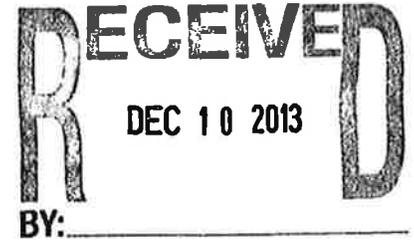
# BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

822 KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION / LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012  
Telephone (213) 974-4444 / FAX (213) 626-6941

November 27, 2013

**DON KNABE**  
CHAIRMAN PRO-TEM

Mr. Patrick Monroe  
President  
Rose Hills Memorial Park & Mortuary  
3888 Workman Mill Road  
Whittier, California 90608



Dear Patrick:

Just a quick note to thank you for your recent letter regarding concerns about a portion of the Rose Hills Memorial Park property being inappropriately included in a proposed Significant Ecological Area (SEA). This property is mentioned in the Draft 2035 General Plan/SEA Update Program that is currently being proposed by the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning.

I have referred your concerns to Richard Bruckner, the Director of Planning, and have asked him to review the matter. He will provide a written response to you and work with you and my office toward maintaining the exemption from the SEA for the Rose Hills Memorial Park property.

Thank you for sharing your concerns and for providing us with the opportunity to assist you. Should you have additional questions or concerns, please contact me or my planning deputy, Julie Moore, at (213) 974-4444.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Knabe".

DON KNABE  
Chairman Pro-Tem  
Supervisor, Fourth District  
County of Los Angeles

DK:di

c: Richard Bruckner, Director of Planning



NOV 20 2013

Mr. Don Knabe, Supervisor  
Fourth District  
County of Los Angeles  
822 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Supervisor Knabe,

As an active member of the community and an active stake holder in the Fourth District, Rose Hills Memorial Park has provided comprehensive, compassionate memorial care serving the greater Los Angeles community since 1914. In support of that mission, Rose Hills property encompasses 1,400 acres of land along the Whittier foothills designated for long-term cemetery purposes.

The Los Angeles County General Plan currently recognizes the Rose Hills property under an "open space" designation. However, as part of the current 2035 General Plan update process, it has come to our attention that the southern portion of the Rose Hills Memorial Park property has been proposed for addition to the Puente Hills Significant Ecological Area (SEA). Although we appreciate the County's continued effort to ensure biodiversity within the region, we also understand the County's long-term and continued commitment to the protection of cemetery lands that both benefit and serve the residents of Los Angeles County.

As you may recall, Rose Hills was purposefully not included in the original 1980 SEA designated areas in recognition of the importance of the Rose Hills' mission to serve the community. The County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning letter memorializing that action is enclosed for your reference. Consistent with the County's prior assistance with protecting our commitment to the long-term use of this land for cemetery purposes, we again ask that all Rose Hills Memorial Park lands be removed from consideration for inclusion in the 2035 and future General Plan SEA updates.

We appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

Patrick Monroe  
President

cc: Julie Moore, Deputy  
cc: Andrea Avila, Deputy  
cc: Jeff Nordschow, Rose Hills

Enclosure: County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning Letter dated March 13, 1979

NORMAN MURDOCH  
Planning Director  
THEODORE B. HOWARD  
Acting Chief Deputy  
ROBERT W. CHAVE  
Deputy Director  
FREDERICK W. JACKSON  
Administrative Deputy

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL PLANNING

320 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, California 90012  
Telephone: 874-8401

COMMISSIONERS  
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CAROLYN LLEWELLYN  
BETTY MALCOMB  
Secretary to the Commission

March 13, 1979

Mr. R. L. McNitt, Jr., President  
Rose Hills Memorial Park  
3900 South Workman Mill Road  
Whittier, CA 90601

Dear Mr. McNitt:

RE: ROSE HILLS MEMORIAL PARK -- GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION

On February 28, 1979 the Regional Planning Commission reviewed your request to have the SEA #44 designation removed from Rose Hills Memorial Park property. Based upon your letter, reaffirming a commitment to the long-term use of this land for cemetery purposes, the Commission directed the staff to remove the SEA designation. Consequently, the entire Rose Hills ownership will be depicted as "open space" on the appropriate Proposed General Plan policy maps, and the SEA designation will be deleted.

I trust that the Commission's action resolves this matter to your satisfaction. Thank you for participating in the General Plan program.

Very truly yours,

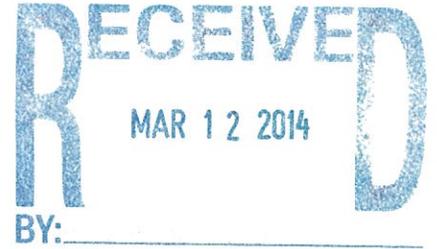
DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL PLANNING



Norman Murdoch, Planning Director

NM:GM:lj

cc: Supervisor Schabarum  
Latham and Watkins



March 11, 2014

Mr. Richard J. Bruckner  
Director  
Los Angeles County  
Department of Regional Planning  
320 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Mr. Bruckner:

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to come out to Rose Hills Memorial Park today. The Rose Hills family appreciates your continued support on our SEA designation exemption. We also look forward to hearing your interpretation of our Cemetery Permit 21-1 in a few weeks as we continue our plans to serve the communities' needs into the next 100 years. If we may be of any assistance regarding any matter related to our Memorial Park or our industry in general, please do not hesitate to contact my staff or me. Rose Hills looks forward to a continued positive partnership with your team over the many years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that appears to read "Patrick Monroe".

Patrick Monroe  
President



# Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

*Planning for the Challenges Ahead*



Richard J. Bruckner  
Director

March 26, 2014

Patrick Monroe, President  
Rose Hills Memorial Park & Mortuary  
3888 Workman Mill Road  
Whittier, CA 90601

Dear Mr. Monroe:

## **APPLICABILITY OF PROPOSED SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREAS PROGRAM TO ROSE HILLS MEMORIAL PARK**

I am writing to confirm our discussion on March 10, 2014, regarding the updated Significant Ecological Areas (SEA) Program and the effects, if any, on your existing cemetery use. Per our discussion, the draft SEA Ordinance includes a provision that exempts existing uses with valid permits from the provisions of the ordinance. Therefore, as the entire Rose Hills Memorial Park property is under a valid permit, we confirm that the existing use may continue as approved without being subject to the new SEA regulations.

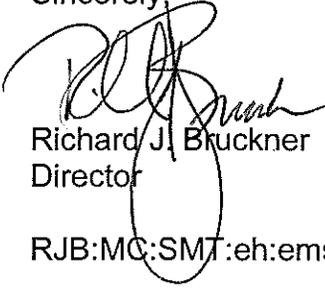
In addition, while undeveloped portions of your property are mapped within the proposed SEA to reflect existing valuable resources, these areas are also covered under the existing permit and new development; therefore, are not subject to the provisions of the new SEA Ordinance.

In conclusion, it is not the intent of the SEA Program, including the SEA boundary and the SEA Ordinance, to impact ongoing legally permitted uses. We appreciate the dialogue on this issue and the long-term partnership our Department has with Rose Hills Memorial Park.

Mr. Patrick Monroe  
March 26, 2014  
Page 2

If you have additional questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Ms. Susan Tae of my staff at [stae@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:stae@planning.lacounty.gov) or at (213) 974-6476 between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Bruckner", written over a large, light-colored circular stamp or watermark.

Richard J. Bruckner  
Director

RJB:MC:SMT:eh:ems

c: Supervisor Don Knabe (Julie Moore, Andrea Avila)

K\_AP\_032614\_L\_ROSEHILLS

**11: Hanh Tran**

## **12: Cook Hill Properties**



Norman E. Witt, Jr. AICP  
Senior Vice President

April 1, 2013

Ms. Emma Howard  
Regional Planner, Community Studies North  
LA County Department of Regional Planning  
320 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Via Email: [ehoward@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:ehoward@planning.lacounty.gov)

**Re: Comment to Draft Significant Ecological Areas Ordinance dated December 20, 2012**

Dear Ms. Howard:

Cook Hill Properties, LLC (CHP) wishes to submit comments on the 3<sup>rd</sup> draft of the Significant Ecological Area (SEA) ordinance that was released on December 31, 2012 ("Draft Ordinance").

CHP represents various landowners in Los Angeles County, and to our knowledge, none of those owners were notified that their properties may be affected by the SEA expansion and the Draft Ordinance. The Ordinance, if adopted, will obviously affect future land development, as well as agriculture other businesses, agricultural and other individual land owners.

The Draft Ordinance creates a fundamental shift in land development policy in Los Angeles County. Under current practices, proposed projects are designed, and then analyzed to achieve a balance under CEQA and the existing ordinance by identifying and mitigating environmental impacts. Even the Conservation and Natural Resources Element of the County's draft General Plan (2012) acknowledges that "[t]he General Plan goals and policies are intended to ensure that privately-held lands within the SEAs retain the right of reasonable use, while avoiding activities and developments that are incompatible with the long-term survival of the SEAs." Without a thorough environmental review based on all available science, we do not believe it is appropriate to amend the SEA at this time.

The SEA ordinance and SEATAC as an advisory body should not unnecessarily complicate and duplicate regulatory processes of other state and federal agencies such as California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service or the Regional Water Quality Control Boards. The proposed Draft Ordinance dramatically expands the scope of issues and topics addressed by the current SEA Program, without regard to other regulatory programs that may exist. As a result, many elements of the proposal are fundamentally duplicative of and more importantly, in some cases conflict with the regulations of other resource agencies. Not only will this will create redundancy, but also complications for

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13 Corporate Plaza Drive, Suite 206, Newport Beach, CA 92660-7919  
Tel 949.760.6600 • Fax 949.219.0813  
[www.cook-hill.com](http://www.cook-hill.com)

Ms. Emma Howard  
L.A. County Regional Planning  
April 1, 2013  
Page 2

individual projects. Since the inception of the County's SEA Program, state and federal agencies have passed new regulations to protect threatened and endangered species; these rules have widely expanded the amount of land designated as critical habitat. The County proposal goes far beyond this already wide scope and further constrains future development. It also uses other land development constraints, such as floodplains, fire zones, or hillsides as the basis for SEA expansion, adding excessive and unreasonable regulation to lands where development is already heavily constrained.

Finally, in order for the public to adequately comment on the Draft Ordinance, Staff should provide "SEA Developed and Disturbed Areas Map" and the "SEA Habitat Linkages and Wildlife Corridors Map". When these Maps are available, CHP and the public will be able to more adequately comment on the Draft Ordinance.

The County must provide for future housing and economic development. We ask for additional study and request flexibility in the proposed plans and ordinances to allow for such development. Hearings or adoption of the Draft Ordinance is premature at this time. Once the public has had an opportunity to review the maps referenced above in conjunction with the Draft Ordinance, we request a public workshop to present testimony and engage in further dialogue with Staff.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Ordinance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Norman E. Witt, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Norman E. Witt, Jr.  
Senior Vice President

**San Gabriel**

**Rosemead**

**El Monte**

**South San Gabriel**

**South El Monte**

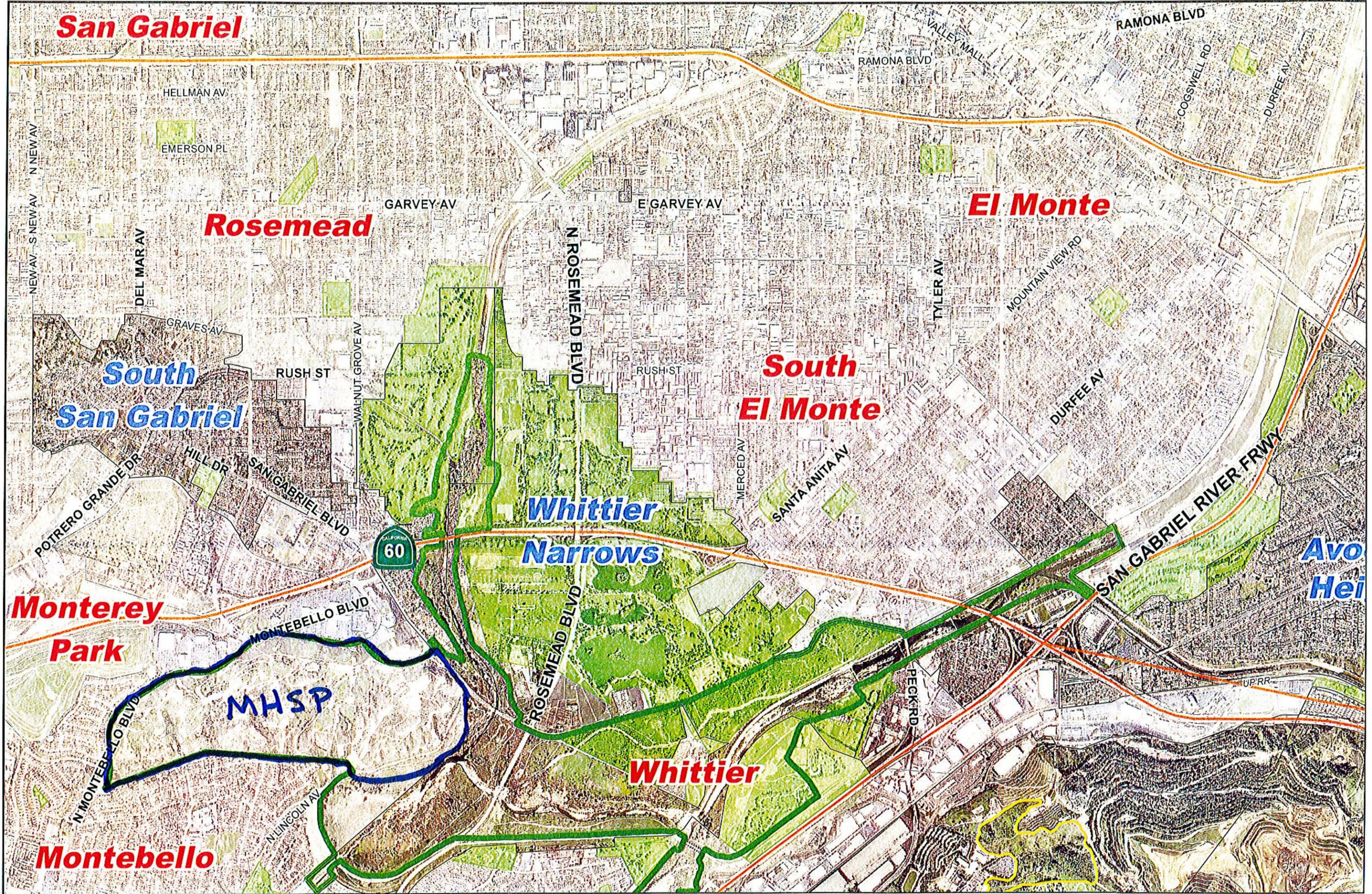
**Whittier Narrows**

**Monterey Park**

**MHSP**

**Whittier**

**Montebello**



**San Gabriel**

**Rosemead**

**El Monte**

**South San Gabriel**

**South El Monte**

**Whittier Narrows**

**Monterey Park**

**Avo Hei**

**Whittier**

**Montebello**





Norman E. Witt, Jr. AICP  
Senior Vice President

April 7, 2014

Ms. Emma Howard  
Regional Planner, Community Studies North  
Room 1354  
LA County Department of Regional Planning  
320 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**Re: APN 5271-001-030, 047, 048, 049; APN 5271-020-028,029, 030, 072, 073, 074 and 075:  
Comment to Draft 5 Significant Ecological Areas Ordinance released March 25, 2014 and  
Request of Boundary Change to Eliminate Site from Puente Hills Significant Ecological  
Areas (SEA) Map**

Dear Ms. Howard,

Cook Hill Properties, LLC (CHP) wishes to submit comments to the 5<sup>th</sup> draft of the Significant Ecological Area (SEA) Ordinance in addition to those we submitted in our letter dated April 1, 2013 (attached).

In addition to the comments submitted on April 1, 2013, we are writing to request the elimination of the Montebello Hills Specific Plan property as described above from within the Puente Hills SEA boundary.

The 488 acre property, located in the incorporated City of Montebello, is identified as the Montebello Hills Specific Plan (MHSP) area and is currently the subject of a General Plan Amendment 3-07, Zone Change 3-07, Specific Plan 1-07 and Tentative Tract Map 74020. The City completed its first Draft EIR in 2009 and a Recirculated Draft EIR is anticipated to be released in the summer of 2014. The MHSP area property received a Biological Opinion in April 2009 from the US Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service authorizing the development of 1,200 residential units, a neighborhood park, recreation center, multi-use trail system and associated infrastructure on approximately 234 acres. In conjunction with the project proposal, approximately 314 acres will be preserved in permanent open space with approximately 260.6 acres reserved for the creation and long term management of the Montebello Hills Habitat Reserve.

Please see the attached aerial map taken from the County SEA website. Note the MHSP area property is the area located west of the Whittier Narrows and Whittier Dam; south of the Shops at Montebello, Montebello Town Center and the Costco site; and north of the existing La Merced Neighborhood. The property is also referenced in the Puente Hills SEA description from the

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Draft General Plan 2035: Technical Appendix E, first paragraph, which mentions the undeveloped portions of the Montebello Hills, the oil field and transmission lines. Since the early 1900s, the MHSP area property has been an active oil field. The highly disturbed property has been modified for oil and gas production activities over the last 96 years or so. As the map shows, these areas are extensively traversed by roadways or contain oil and gas production facilities (e.g. well pads, pipelines, equipment, etc.) At present, all portions of the field are being accessed as part of the ongoing operations. Approximately 132.7 acres of roads and pads have been created at the site over the past 96 years. These roads and pads are used on a regular basis for drilling and production operations. Development of the site will facilitate the creation and preservation of the 260.6 acre habitat reserve, as described above.

The MHSP was designed to incorporate Smart Growth strategies, and anticipated the approval of the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 (SB375). The site is considered by Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) to be an infill site, and as such meets many of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) Guiding Policies and Goals.

By the reclamation of this industrial brown field, the MHSP project will also assist the City of Montebello in meeting their regional housing needs. SCAG has projected that at least an additional 1,066 units are needed to fulfill future housing needs in the City of Montebello. The MHSP, as proposed, will enhance the quality of life for the region by maximizing the use of this in fill land resource in order to assure the availability of a wide variety of energy efficient, market rate, safe, decent housing, while creating a suitable living environment, and expanding economic opportunities for the community.

The MHSP is positioned along Montebello Bus Lines' major local service, Line 20, which runs at high frequencies adjacent to the MHSP area and is also within walking distance of the Taylor Ranch Express (Express 341) to downtown Los Angeles.

As proposed to the City of Montebello, and federally permitted, the MHSP balances development and habitat preservation, meeting federal, state and regional goals. Therefore, the inclusion of the MHSP area within the Puente Hills SEA is unnecessary and, in fact, contrary to federal, state and regional goals.

#### Specific Comments on the Draft 5 SEA Ordinance

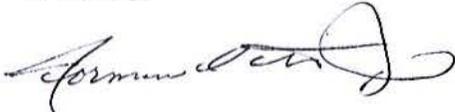
1. The Puente Hills SEA description states that other "local jurisdictions have also been included within the SEA in order to delineate the boundaries of functioning habitat units." The Ordinance and the SEA description should make it clear that it does not apply to areas within the jurisdiction of a city. The MHSP area is within the jurisdiction of the City of Montebello and is not within the County's jurisdiction. The ordinance should also clarify that where a project is within an incorporated City, the County will not apply the SEA ordinance for any required County permits solely related to connections to County facilities.

2. On August 6, 2013, Ms. Susan Lindquist of CHP spoke with Ms. Emma Howard regarding the SEA. Ms. Howard indicated that land may be exempt from the SEA if it contains man-made disturbances, such as rigs, roads, parking lots, structures and similar improvements. Although the MHSP is within the incorporated City of Montebello, and therefore, the SEA ordinance does not apply, to ensure there is no confusion in the future about the applicability of the SEA, we hereby request that the MHSP be excluded from the SEA.
3. The ordinance is based on out-of-date information. For example, the Puente Hills SEA description from Technical Appendix E does not reference numerous more recent biological information and CEQA and NEPA environmental documents. One example is the City of Montebello 2009 DEIR for the Montebello Hills Specific Plan. Other examples include the Tehachapi Renewable Transmission Project (TRTP) EIR/EIS and the Discovery Center EIR. By relying on outdated information, the Ordinance does not meet CEQA's informational purposes.
4. The Puente Hills SEA description treats different areas inconsistently. For example, under "General Boundary and Resources Description," third paragraph, it states that it is "intended that the SEA encompass only natural areas of the basin and portions of the San Gabriel River and Rio Hondo." Further, "manicured areas of the County Recreation Area on the east side of Rio Hondo are not included." As explained above, the MHSP area has been operated as an oil field for almost 100 years and is substantially disturbed. The Ordinance and the underlying support information in the Draft General Plan should be revised to clarify that it does not encompass the oil field.
5. In the Puente Hills SEA "Critical Analysis of the Puente Hills SEA" the County states that the populations of the gnatcatcher at the Montebello Hills "is probably one of the largest single populations in the U.S." This statement is misleading as it uses a colloquial definition of the word "population" to describe a complex scientific term used to describe and evaluate groups of individuals. In population ecology, a "population" is defined by specific variables that describe the dynamics of birth rates, death rates, immigration, and emigration. Under these more precise terms the Montebello Hills supports a "deme" or regionally defined aggregation of individuals. The Montebello Hills would be considered a more average-sized deme or subpopulation for the gnatcatcher across this species range. Whereas, the Montebello Hills provides a regionally important gnatcatcher resource in this portion of Los Angeles County there are many well-documented gnatcatcher populations and metapopulations in San Diego County, Orange County, and Riverside County that support double or triple the overall individuals and include an aerial extent that are orders of magnitude larger.

Ms. Emma Howard  
LA County Department of Regional Planning  
Page 4  
April 7, 2014

Finally, while the MHSP area should be excluded from the Puente Hills SEA, CHP supports the good intentions of the proposed Significant Ecological Areas Ordinance. CHP is pleased to note that when the MHSP is implemented, many goals of the ordinance, as well as SB375, will be met.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Norman E. Witt, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Norman E. Witt, Jr.  
Senior Vice President

*Attachments*

## **13: The Termo Company**

**From:** [Klecha, Anthony](#)  
**To:** [Emma Howard](#); [Susan Tae](#)  
**Cc:** [La Fevers, Glenn](#); [Lindgreen, Erik](#); [Munsey, Joseph](#); [Meza, David](#)  
**Subject:** Proposed SEA Designation at SoCalGas" Aliso Canyon Storage Field  
**Date:** Wednesday, May 21, 2014 4:14:40 PM  
**Attachments:** [Aliso Canyon Figure 1.pdf](#)  
[Aliso Canyon Figure 2.pdf](#)  
**Importance:** High

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Hi Emma & Susan,

Thank you again for taking the time this morning to meet with us to discuss the proposed SEA. It's an important issue for us and we appreciate your time and feedback. We understand that the proposed SEA boundaries will be presented to the Regional Planning Commission on June 25.

Restating what we conveyed during the meeting, it is critical that SoCalGas maintain its ability to operate, repair, upgrade, and expand, where necessary, our facilities within our property boundary (depicted as the yellow line on Figure 1). SoCalGas delivers safe, reliable natural gas to 20.9 million consumers throughout Central and Southern California, and it's vital that this service be maintained under safe and secure conditions. Should the SEA be approved as proposed, not only might SoCalGas experience unnecessary delays and added or duplicative restrictions associated with new SEA rules, but we may encounter a substantial increase in trespassers onsite. In our experience, SEAs and similar public designations on private property, especially in "perceived" undeveloped areas, have a tendency to encourage hikers and bikers, and other trespassers, which in-turn, can create hazardous conditions onsite. Excluding the facility property now from the proposed SEA designation would alleviate or minimize these concerns. Also important, but not as critical as the facility property boundary, would be for the County to expand the excluded area to include SoCalGas' recent mineral and storage rights acquisitions along the western boundary (depicted as the hatched lines in Figure 2) as this area may undergo certain natural gas developments in the near future.

Furthermore, please be mindful that new land use designations over our Aliso Canyon facility may not be relevant in any event to the extent the SEA conflicts with applicable state laws and regulations, including the California Public Utilities Commission, which has general oversight over public utilities like SoCalGas.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or need additional information.

-Tony

**Anthony A. Klecha**

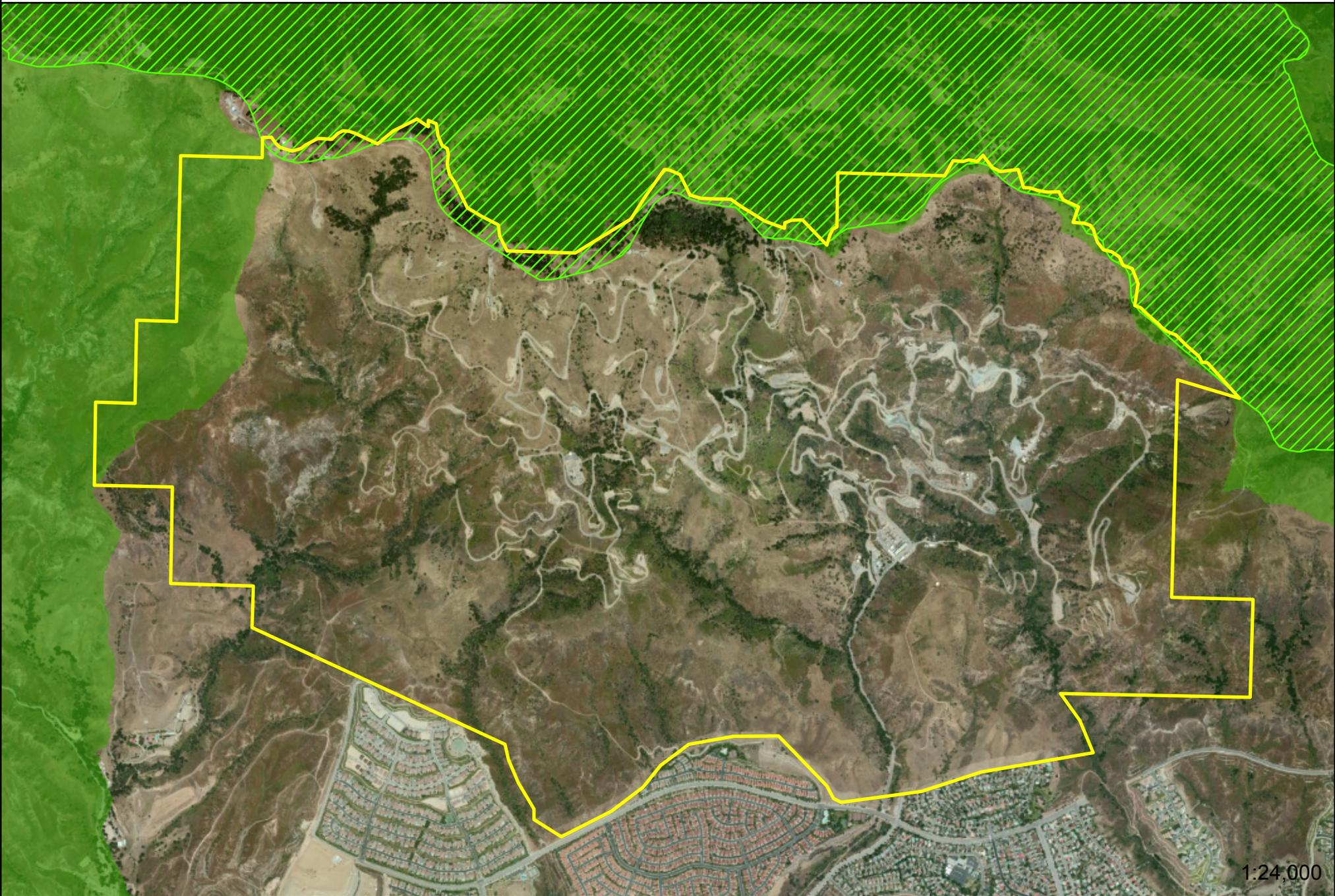
*Principal Environmental Specialist*

Southern California Gas Co.

Office: (213) 244-4339

Cell: (213) 393-0568

[aklecha@semprautilities.com](mailto:aklecha@semprautilities.com)

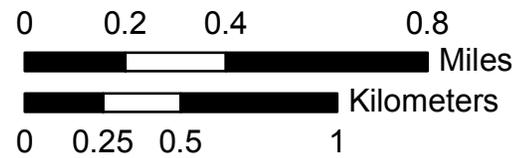


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# Aliso Canyon Storage Field

## Legend

-  Active Storage Field Boundary
-  Current Significant Ecological Area
-  Proposed Significant Ecological Area



## **14: Sierra Club**

3435 Wilshire Boulevard  
Suite 660  
Los Angeles, CA 90010-1904



(213) 387-4287 phone  
(213) 387-5383 fax  
www.angeles.sierraclub.org

## Angeles Chapter

April 1, 2013

Emma Howard  
Regional Planning Department  
320 W. Temple Street, Room 1354  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
ehoward@planning.lacounty.gov

### **RE: Comments on Draft Significant Ecological Area (SEA) Ordinance and Proposed SEAs**

The Sierra Club is committed to maintaining the world's remaining natural ecosystems, and, where feasible, to the restoration and rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems. Wildlife, plants, and their ecosystems have value in their own right, as well as value to humans and to the health of the biosphere.

The following comments are submitted on behalf of the Sierra Club Angeles Chapter.

### **Draft Significant Ecological Area Ordinance – December 20, 2012**

#### **22.52.2640 Development Standards**

##### **C. 1. - Wildlife Impermeable Fencing**

A project should not be able to isolate a population from connectivity. There should be requirements that the project proponent incorporated wildlife permeable fencing into enough of

##### **F. - Streets and Highways**

Wherever wildlife could be impacted by newly added traffic, the speed limit should be lowered and wildlife crossing signs should be installed.

##### **I. - Wildlife Corridors**

Wildlife corridors should not be narrowed at any point to less than 300 feet.

#### **22.52.2670 – SEA Conditional Use Permit Review**

##### **C. SEA CUP Criteria - d.**

Impermeable permanent hardscaping of an acre or more should also be permitted in an SEA.

## **Proposed SEA 4 – Ballona Wetlands**

### **Area A of the Ballona Wetlands:**

Sierra Club is grateful that the County has always understood and honored the ecological values of Area A of the Ballona Wetlands, an area bounded by Fiji Way to the north, the County Bike Path to the west, Ballona Creek to the south and Lincoln Blvd. to the east. Significant ecological values includes this area being a location where the sensitive White-tailed Kite, one of California's most protected species, hunts and where Great Blue Heron adults gather nesting materials and rest (loaf) and Great Blue Heron juvenile birds learn to hunt on their own. A survey coordinated by the Los Angeles County Natural History Museum in the 1980s found that – in spite of significant soil disturbance and movement of marsh soils from the adjacent marina area having been constructed in the 1960s and 1970s – this area was resident home to more than 100 native ant and ant-like species, which is remarkable on the edge of such a highly developed urban region. These insects, as well as many others are part of what holds together the ecosystem. In addition, Area A includes important rare populations of native Alkali Barley, Lewis' Primrose and other coastal species which are becoming increasingly more rare.

Following are recommendations of additional areas that are part of the Greater Ballona Wetlands Ecosystem. The wetland and lagoon habitat areas are part of what the National Audubon Society calls the Ballona Valley, which they have designated as an "Important Bird Area." More than 200 bird species have been documented in this region.

### **Additional State Lands to be Added to SEA list:**

In addition to Area A of the Ballona Wetlands areas now owned by the State of California, Sierra Club asks that Area B, Area C and the Ballona Creek estuary channel – which include the entirety of the state-owned lands at the Ballona Wetlands, including the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve, all be added to the SEA.

At the time that Area A was designated as SEA, it was common practice, we are told, to only include natural areas that were exclusively in county unincorporated areas. We understand that this is not the case today, and we ask – for the reason that these adjacent lands are equal in value to Area A in terms of exhibiting and retaining SEA qualities – that these areas all be added to the new SEA designations.

*AREA B & Ballona Creek Estuary Channel* - Area B includes the historical Centinela Creek slough channel, as well as nesting Belding's Savannah Sparrow, which is on the state endangered species list, and also hosts nesting Least Bell's Vireo, which is on the federal and state endangered species list. Also documented on site in Area B are the federally listed El Segundo Blue Butterfly and the Orcutt's Yellow Pincushion, a coastal wildflower species which was elevated to increased imperiled status by the state of California botanist during the last few years. Additionally, dozens and dozens of bird species have been documented here – everything from migratory song birds to water birds and shorebirds. Black-bellied Plover – anywhere from 1,200 to 2,000 winter in the salt panne and along the Ballona Creek estuary each winter. Migratory Monarch Butterflies inhabit the Eucalyptus Grove each year on the southern edge of Area A. Area B also includes numerous endemic plant species and several small mammals of the Los Angeles coast that are gone from other locations – such as the South Coast Marsh Vole.

Area C – Area C is home to a significant population of the rare Lewis’ Primrose. As well, the endangered California Gnatcatcher has been documented on site. In addition, numerous other birds use this area for foraging and shelter. White-tailed Kite, Loggerhead Shrike, Great Blue Heron and others are included. The site includes a historical tributary from the Los Angeles River from old maps of the area.

**Additional City of LA-owned Lands to be Added to SEA List:**

In addition to the state-owned lands, Sierra Club also requests that the following City of Los Angeles-owned lands be designated as Significant Ecological Areas (SEA):

Del Rey Lagoon – Once part of a 3-mile long lagoon system that was set back from the sea by a stretch of dunes, this lagoon at the southern end of the system is subject to full tidal influence and is a rich feeding and resting ground for migrating birds, as well as for resident species. Belted Kingfisher, American Wigeon, Long-billed Dowitcher, Snowy Egret, Great Egret, American Coot, Burrowing Owl, Bufflehead Duck and California Ground Squirrel are among the species that use this lagoon wetlands ecosystem.

Ballona Lagoon Marine Preserve – Across the Marina entrance channel from Del Rey Lagoon, this is the middle part of the once 3-mile long lagoon system and it is a shorebird haven, with numerous sandpipers like Marbled Godwit, Willet and Long-billed Curlew coming to this part of Los Angeles for the winter. In addition, a newly-fenced off sanctuary for the Orcutt’s Yellow Pincushion offers a glimpse of the nature of the historical sandy dune areas that once graced the edges of what was called Ballona Lagoon and Ballona Lake on historical maps.

Grand Canal Lagoon – This northern section of the historical Ballona Lagoon is part of what inspired Abbot Kinney to construct nearby Venice Canals and call them Venice of America. Meanwhile, this is the more natural-featured system, hosting a healthy population of Fiddler Crab and now – after a successful recovery and beginning restoration effort by the City of LA and Ballona Institute – ¼ of this lagoon area is on its way to again hosting native butterfly populations, as well as serving as feeding grounds for Snowy Egret, Great Blue Heron, Belted Kingfisher, and numerous other water birds, waterfowl and shorebirds.

California Least Tern Preserve – Traveling to Los Angeles every April from Guatemala and southern Mexico, the endangered California Least Tern nests on the Los Angeles/Venice Beach just to the north of the Marina del Rey boat entrance. These small graceful birds feed themselves and find food for their young - after hatching - in the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve, as well as Ballona Lagoon Marine Preserve, Del Rey Lagoon and Grand Canal Lagoon. By mid-August, usually these birds are flying on their way south for the winter, but the next generations come back every year to the place where they were born – here on the Los Angeles coast.

Playa del Rey Sand Dunes – Sometimes called the Airport Dunes or the El Segundo Dunes, these sand dunes created once by the mighty flow of the Los Angeles River and the convergence at Playa del Rey of this river along with several other streams, are known to locals as the Playa del Rey Sand Dunes. Most famous for a tiny butterfly that feeds on a special variety of coast buckwheat, the El Segundo Blue Butterfly, which is on the federal endangered species list, these dunes are bit a remnant of a significant sand dune complex that once went southward all the way through the south bay beach cities. Actually,

the sand dunes are still there, but they are paved over and built on, so these dunes offer a glimpse into our historical ecology and natural history. Restoration efforts have assisted a partial recovery of the endangered butterfly and have brought recognition to other species of plants and animals that are in need of protection at this site. Once partially covered by houses, but returning to their natural condition more and more, these dunes are a natural treasure on the Los Angeles coast.

*Toes Beach Dunes* – The last remnant foredune on a Los Angeles beach that is wild and natural, this small sand dune includes a rare dune beetle, as well as a magenta sand verbena that is rare. Bird species from Del Rey Lagoon are often seen foraging or resting in these dune areas.

*Westchester Parkway Dunes* – Sandy dune swales and pocket wetlands are part of this interesting sand dune area that is north of LAX and has been recovering as natural habitat since homes were removed from the area due to LAX. Bird observations include White-tailed Kite, Loggerhead Shrike, Red-Shouldered Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk and Great Blue Heron.

### **Additional Thoughts:**

*COUNTY RARE SPECIES PROTECTION:* While we appreciate any effort to make SEA designations for the areas listed above, we also acknowledge the limits such a designation might have and, therefore, also offer the suggestion of consideration of local/county endangered species designations, which are being supported by the California Native Plant Society in various regions, including Santa Cruz and Ventura Counties.

*NESTING WATER BIRDS:* In addition, several birds that are now resident in the Ballona Valley and forage/find shelter in the areas mentioned above, are now nesting in the county-owned Marina del Rey areas. These include Great Blue Heron, Snowy Egret, Great Egret and Black-crowned Night Heron. Since there are tree situations in flux in the marina with all of the current emphasis on redevelopment there, we would advocate that the trees where these birds nest somehow be included in an SEA designation since a part of their life cycles – an important part: reproduction – necessitates the protection of those nesting trees.

Our Sierra Club Ballona Wetlands Restoration Committee leadership is available to answer more of your questions or provide you with a site visit to any of these locations for a better understanding of the areas. Contact Marcia Hanscom at: [wetlandact@earthlink.net](mailto:wetlandact@earthlink.net) (310) 877-2634 (mobile)

Besides Sierra Club Ballona Wetlands Restoration Committee, the Airport Marina Group is supportive of these additional comments for the SEA designations.

### **SEAs in the San Gabriel Valley area:**

The proposed Puente Hills SEA in the western section of the Puente Hills, includes portions of the Montebello Hills, Whittier Narrows, Sycamore Canyon and Turnbull Canyon. Nearby is the proposed Rio Hondo SEA. To the north is the San Gabriel SEA, including the mouths of major canyons above Azusa, Duarte, Monrovia, Arcadia and Sierra Madre (San Gabriel, Sawpit, and Santa Anita Canyons) that

flow from the mountains. Also in this area at the margins of the San Gabriel Mountains is the San Dimas/San Antonio Wash SEA. In the eastern area of the Valley is the East San Gabriel SEA. We applaud the protection afforded by inclusion of these areas in proposed new or expanded SEAs.

However, we believe the SEAs discussed below be modified to increase development of connectivity of wildlife corridors extending from the Cleveland National Forest through the Puente-Chino Hills to the Montebello Hills and northward into the San Gabriel Mountains and the proposed San Gabriel Canyon and San Dimas SEAs. We believe the area of the Puente Hills SEA should be increased by including the disposal portions of the Puente Hills Landfill and combining the Rio Hondo SEA to the Puente Hills SEA. In addition we believe the channels and open space along the San Gabriel River be added to an SEA unit to connect the Puente Chino Hills with the San Gabriel Mountains along sediment lined channels.

### **East San Gabriel Valley SEA – Proposed SEA 6**

We support the inclusion of most open spaces in the area of the proposed East San Gabriel Valley as indicated on the maps provided of this SEA. We also suggest inclusion of the open space north of Puddingstone Drive and south of Lantana Drive and west of the De Anza Drive region.

San Dimas Canyon/San Antonio Wash SEA

We support the inclusion of the open space area north of Claremont between the eastern area of the SEA, Miller Ranch Rd. and the Northeast La Verne portion of the SEA. It appears this area at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains is open space and is not included in the SEA. This area would add connectivity between the eastern portion of the proposed SEA and the area of Northeast La Verne

### **Puente Hills SEA Update - Proposed SEA 15**

#### **Proposed SEA map east of Harbor/Fullerton and north of the County line**

It is stated in the Proposed Technical Appendix E for the proposed SEA boundary east of Harbor/Fullerton: “The southern boundary includes the canyon, but excludes the hills and grasslands of the oil field that are on the ridgeline and south of the canyon.” But the exclusion of this property south of the canyon should be changed. The current boundaries allow for only a single narrow canyon for wildlife movement, bordered on the north side by a housing development. This ignores evidence of wildlife movement in all parts of the Aera property, and not just the Drainage 26 canyon, as detailed in the June 2005 Conservation Biology Institute Study on “Maintaining Ecological Connectivity Across the ‘Missing Middle’ of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor” by Wayne Spencer. This study further states that, ...long, narrow gauntlets of ‘move-through’ habitat will not ensure continued functionality of the corridor system, which depends on retaining the large blocks of live-in habitat in the Missing Middle.” [Spencer page 26]

Another part of Technical Appendix E states, “It should be noted that the SEA includes areas disturbed and developed for rural residential and *oil extraction*.” [Emphasis added] Therefore, the fact that the excluded area has been used for oil extraction should not preclude it from being added to the SEA boundaries.

The following paragraph states, “While such areas do not represent key regional habitats, they have been recommended for inclusion in the SEA in order to recognize the importance of the wildlife corridor function of the SEA...” This area’s importance for animal movement, as noted above, fits into this description and speaks to its inclusion in the SEA.

At a minimum, this area should be designated as an Ecological Transition Area (ETA). The DRAFT SEA Ordinance identifies an ETA as, “...any portion of a lot or parcel of land within an SEA where the natural ecological features or systems have been degraded as a result of past or on-going land use activities but are deemed functionally integral to the SEA or support important plant or animal populations.” This area’s importance for wildlife movement has been documented.

Therefore the southern boundary of the SEA east of Harbor/Fullerton should extend all the way to the County line.

### **Changes to Criteria Analysis**

There are two different versions of the Criteria Analysis on the County Webpage. Most importantly, one version has the status of the Core Population (A) and Extreme Biotic Resources (E) criteria changed to “Unmet.” If in fact these criteria have been changed to unmet on the latest draft, this is unacceptable and not supported by the facts.

For Criterion A on whether the conditions of habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species have been met, we will quote from the justification for this Criterion in Draft Technical Appendix E:

The population of the California gnatcatcher at the Montebello Hills is probably one of the largest single populations in the U.S. Pairs occur throughout the County portion of the Puente Hills, especially in Sycamore Canyon and Arroyo San Miguel. The coastal cactus wren has significant populations in the Puente Hills, occurring in the Montebello Hills, Sycamore Canyon, Rose Hills, Hellman Park in Whittier, and through Hacienda Heights into Rowland Heights. Several CNPS-Rare plants occur in the Puente Hills, including both Plummer’s and Weed’s mariposa-lilies.

This is obviously an important part of the justification for the SEA. But yet, in a different Criteria Analysis on the same page on the County’s website as the above Criteria Analysis, these justifications are discounted and the criterion is listed as not met.

This same issue occurs again for Criterion E, which refers to the conditions of biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community.

Again, we will let the County's own words speak for this criterion in Draft Technical Appendix E:

The Puente Hills represent the clear northern edge of the Peninsular Ranges. For this reason, taxa such as red diamond rattlesnake, occur here at the edge of their range, where they co-occur with the more widespread Pacific rattlesnake. Several bird species extend west through the Puente Hills into the Los Angeles Basin and the Whittier Hills (Oak Titmouse, Grasshopper Sparrow). These species are absent from the floor of the Los Angeles Basin. The Whittier Narrows Nature Center provides the public with extensive information and opportunities for field study of the Whittier Narrows natural environment.

Again, the justification of the other Criteria Analysis has discounted these resources and the criterion is listed as not met.

Which Criteria Analysis is the real Draft recommendation? If the Criteria Analysis that lists two Criteria (A and E) as unmet is the actual draft, then this is unacceptable. The County's own analysis speaks to the importance of the resources within the SEA and the Final Criteria Analysis should show all criteria having a status of "Met." To not do so would diminish the importance of the Puente Hills SEA.

## **Western portion of the proposed Puente Hills SEA (Proposed SEA 15) and the Rio Hondo SEA (Proposed SEA 16)**

On October 31, 2013 the Puente Hills Landfill will be permanently closed to be managed in the future by public agencies as open space. Although this land is currently disturbed, plans are being discussed to restore native vegetation and keep the disposal region as open space devoted to low impact recreation such as hiking, bicycling, equestrian activities, and nature study. The area is located adjacent to the lands managed by the Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority that are already included in the Puente Hills SEA (PHSEA). These areas are in public ownership and will remain as open space; we believe the disposal area should be added to the Puente Hills SEA to expand contiguous habitat in the wildlife corridor in the western Puente Hills.

The proposed Rio Hondo SEA bounds the Puente Hills SEA on the southwest. Adding the disposal areas of the landfill to the Puente Hills SEA would develop a more complete connection of the PHSEA to the Rio Hondo SEA. The entire area could be united into a single SEA.

### **CALIFORNIA BUCKEYE GROVE**

Located in Oak Canyon in Hacienda Heights, there exists a significant grove of California buckeye (*Aesculus Californica*) trees outside the boundary of the Puente Hills SEA. The majority of these trees (60-80 in number) are located in two small side canyons to Oak Canyon that drain from Edgeridge Avenue near its junction with Horticultural Drive to cross Tamarix Avenue near its junction with Oak Canyon Road. These trees fill these two north-facing drainages and are most prominent in early May when they are covered with white flower spikes. Many trees are also located in Oak Canyon directly

downstream from this stream junction, and a single tree is located in the drainage channel along Turnbull Canyon Road immediately south of its junction with Orange Grove Avenue.

Since these trees are undocumented south of the Tehachapi Mountains, this population could potentially have sprung from one or two seeds planted by a homeowner living in one of the isolated homes along Edgeridge Drive. Two facts dispute this. First, the hillsides are extremely rugged and covered with dense chaparral vegetation and the trees are not located on any of the small landscaped yards associated with the few homes in this area. Second, several buckeyes are located in Oak Canyon upstream of this confluence as well as in slopes not directly associated with this population. Two buckeyes have been observed on north-facing slopes in Turnbull Canyon as well, although these two trees do not appear to have survived a brush fire that occurred in this canyon a few years ago.

This scattered distribution might suggest that these trees may be a remnant population from a time when different climatic conditions allowed them to be distributed more widely than they currently are. In any case, further evaluation by a biologist, including possible genetic testing to ascertain their ancestry, would seem to be in order. If it is determined that they are the isolated remainders of a once more robust population, we believe they should be noted and included within the SEA designation.

We also believe the currently undeveloped open space between the landfill and the Community of Hacienda Heights on the east be included in the Puente Hills SEA. Habitat there is typical of other areas within the Puente Hills SEA and would serve as an areal extension of the wildlife corridor. In the region of Schabarum Regional Park, some privately held open space still exists in Pacific Heights. This area should also be included in the Puente Hills SEA.

The California Gnatcatcher is listed by the Fish and Wildlife Service as threatened. Areas designated as Critical Habitat for the California Gnatcatcher are present in both the Puente and Montebello Hills. “Core populations” (areas with 30 or more pairs) exist in both the Puente Hills and the Montebello Hills. The species has also been observed in the Whittier Narrows. The unification of the disposal areas of the Puente Hills Landfill, the Rio Hondo SEA and the area between Hacienda Heights and the disposal area would enhance the expansion opportunities for this species.

Another addition to this SEA should be the open areas along the Rio Hondo should be included in the Puente Hills SEA.

### **San Gabriel Canyon SEA – Proposed SEA 19**

The National Park Service is presently conducting a “special resource study” of portions of the San Gabriel River watershed and the San Gabriel Mountains as a prelude to consideration of a National Recreational Area. Alternatives in this study include the channels of the San Gabriel River and the Rio Hondo as open space that can serve as avenues of wildlife movement between the San Gabriel Mountains and the Puente Chino Hills, Montebello Hills and Whittier Narrows. The San Gabriel River Master Plan also provides a comprehensive vision of these areas as a corridor that integrates the multiple goals of enhancing habitat, recreation and open space, while maintaining and enhancing flood protection, water supply and water quality.

The San Gabriel Canyon SEA includes large sections of the San Gabriel Mountains and foothills. It also includes areas along the San Gabriel River from the Canyon mouth to the Santa Fe dam.

We strongly support the inclusion of the streambeds and open space adjacent river channel of the San Gabriel River between the Santa Fe Dam region south to the Whittier Narrows. In addition, we propose the inclusion of the Duck Farm project into this SEA.

### **Santa Susana Mountains/Simi Hills SEA – Proposed SEA 23**

The map of the proposed SEA of the Santa Susana Mountains/Simi Hills appears to include Oat Mountain or only land north of Oat Mountain. The land south of Oat Mountain along Browns Canyon Road, should also be included in this SEA since it has been habitat to native flora and fauna and has many native trees such as Sycamore. It is part of the wildlife corridor. Much of the valley floor should be protected as well as the steep slopes in order to facilitate wildlife migration.

### **Tujunga Valley/Hansen Dam SEA – Proposed SEA 25**

The Big Tujunga Wash is one of the few places where this flower Slender Horned Spineflower has the conditions it needs for germination namely periods of flood followed by periods of drought.

We respectfully submit these comments,

Joan Licari, Chair  
San Gabriel Valley Task Force  
Angeles Chapter of Sierra Club

Marcia Hanscom  
Ballona Wetlands Restoration Committee  
Angeles Chapter of Sierra Club

Eric Johnson, Chair  
Save the Puente-Chino Hills Task Force  
Angeles Chapter of Sierra Club

Terrie Brady  
San Fernando Valley Group  
Angeles Chapter of Sierra Club

## **15: Meridian Energy USA**



meridian

December 21, 2012

Thuy Hua, AICP  
Department of Regional Planning  
Antelope Valley Plan and General Plan Update Team  
320 W. Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Los Angeles County General Plan Update 2035

Dear Ms. Hua:

Meridian Energy USA, Inc. holds an option to purchase approximately 2,000 acres within the Antelope Valley Area Plan study area. These optioned lands, herein referred to as the “Study Area,” are located along East Palmdale Boulevard at 240<sup>th</sup> Street East, County of Los Angeles, California (see **Figure 1**). The Study Area consists entirely of center-pivot irrigated cropland, disturbed adjacent areas, access roads, and existing solar generating units and infrastructure. As shown on **Figure 1**, a large portion of the Study Area lies within a region currently designated by the County of Los Angeles as a Significant Ecological Area (SEA), the “Existing Desert Montane Transect SEA”, which is part of the Antelope Valley SEA. As part of the Los Angeles County General Plan Update 2035, a proposed modified boundary for the Proposed Desert Montane Transect SEA would reduce the amount of the Study Area located within the Proposed Desert Montane Transect SEA, but would still include a smaller portion of the Study Area within its boundary. This smaller portion is proposed by the County to be re-designated as an Ecological Transition Area (ETA) of the Desert Montane Transect SEA.

According to the Los Angeles County General Plan Update 2035 Revised Draft, the County of Los Angeles has designated the Antelope Valley SEA because it meets the following designation SEA criteria: A) habitat for core populations of endangered and threatened plant and animal species; B) on a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant of animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution; C) within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution; D) habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County; E) biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/ geographical limitations, or represent unusual variation in a population or community; and F) areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of original natural biotic communities in the County.

Meridian Energy has completed a reconnaissance level biological survey of the Study Area in the spring of 2012. Based upon field and desktop review of the Study Area, including analysis of historic aerial photographs, Meridian Energy supports the County of Los Angeles in the proposed modification that would reduce the amount of the Study Area that would lie within boundaries of the Desert Montane Transect SEA. The areas that are proposed for removal

from the designation are used as active agricultural lands and do meet SEA designation criteria as defined by the General Plan Update 2035.

Furthermore, conclusions of reconnaissance level surveys indicate no difference between the portion of the Study Area that is proposed to be designated as an ETA of the Desert Montane Transect SEA and the area that is to be removed entirely from designation as both areas currently function as active agricultural lands.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comment on the County of Los Angeles General Plan Update 2035. We look forward to working with the County of Los Angeles in the future. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or would like to further discuss.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Stout". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mark Stout  
Director, Project Development  
o/925-474-4107  
m.stout@meridianenergyusa.com

CC: Chris Rutledge, ARCADIS U.S., Inc.

Attachment:

- 1) Figure 1 – Map of Study Area

## **16: Center for Biological Diversity**



*protecting and restoring natural ecosystems and imperiled species through  
science, education, policy, and environmental law*

***submitted via email and USPS***

8/1/2012

Emma Howard  
Regional Planning Department  
Room 1354  
320 W. Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
[ehoward@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:ehoward@planning.lacounty.gov)

**RE: Comments on the Draft Significant Ecological Areas Ordinance Summary Draft June 2012 and Other SEA Related Issues**

Dear Ms. Howard,

On behalf of the Center for Biological Diversity's (Center) 378,000 staff, members and supporters we submit the following comments on the Significant Ecological Areas (SEA) Ordinance Summary Draft dated June 2012 and also address some other SEA related issues. The Center is a national, nonprofit organization whose mission is to protect and restore endangered species and their habitats through science, policy, education, advocacy, and environmental law. Many of the Center's members and supporters reside in Los Angeles County and have a keen interest in retaining the incredible biological diversity that remains in Los Angeles County. The Center's members and staff regularly visit publicly accessible lands within the SEAs for purposes of research, photography, hiking, enjoyment of these rare areas and other recreational, scientific, and educational activities.

We support the update of the identification of SEAs and the ordinance to better protect the rare and endangered species that call Los Angeles County home, and we offer the following comments on the Draft SEA Ordinance dated June 2012 as follows:

**B. Definitions**

4. Ground Disturbance/ Development Activity – these activities may warrant separate definitions based ground disturbance, for example - vegetation clearance - not necessarily being associated with a development activity. Regardless clear descriptions of the activities that are included in these definitions now will minimize confusion and interpretation later.
5. Minor Modifications – it is unclear if these apply to projects within SEAs or Ecological Transition Areas (ETA) or both. Additionally, the County needs to carefully consider the resources that are proposed to be conserved within the SEA/ETA and the compatibility of “exempted” activities. For example, cell phone towers may not be appropriate in SEA/ETAs that

are established to conserve avian species, as towers in general are known to cause bird mortality.<sup>1</sup>

### **C. Applicability**

8.(c). We suggest that habitat restoration activities that enhance habitat within the SEA/ETA also be considered for a streamlined SEA permit, based on the benefits that such activities will provide the biological resources identified within the SEA/ETA.

### **D. Development Standards For Permit Exempt Uses in SEAs.**

1. Development standards need to be clearly identified. For example,

- “minimal tree removal” needs to be clearly defined.
- For fuel modification, “valuable habitat areas” needs to be clearly defined.
- “avoid development that impacts water resources” appears to still allow the potential for impacting water resources. A clearer statement such as “Water resources not impacted by development” clarifies our reading of the County’s intent of this permit exemption criterion.

Regarding the second to the last bullet in this section:

- “Identified sensitive resources- mapped by LA County (standards forthcoming, may include identified core habitat or habitat linkage areas)” we suggest clarifying that these areas not be impacted by development in order to get an exemption

Regarding the last bullet in this section: “Inspection of property by staff biologist for sensitive resources.” It is unclear to us what the County’s goal is. If the County’s staff biologist (do you in fact intend the County’s biologist?) goes to the site and finds no sensitive resources (expert opinion?), then the project is exempt? Clearly it is not just the on-site resources, but how the project affects the conservation values for which the SEA/ETA was established.

2. Minor Modifications – no comments at this time, other than the above issues.

3. Previously approved CUP locations – Biological resource issues change over time (example new species listed for endangered species act protections), so relying upon a single criterion of that the “use of the property is determined to be fundamentally the same as that of the expired conditional use permit” should not be the only criterion that exempts previously approved CUP locations.

**E. SEA Conditional Use Permit** – While we are not opposed to having a tiered approach as the County is proposing for SEA review, the “Hearing Officer” must have a strong biological background in order to be qualified to evaluate the level of impacts associated with a project.

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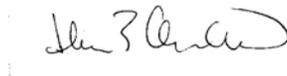
<sup>1</sup> <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=flap>

### ***Other SEA Issues***

In our quick review of the proposed SEAs we strongly suggest that the County include *all habitat* including but not limited to federally designated critical habitat for federally and state listed endangered species. Including habitat for these species that are teetering on the brink of extinction identifies areas in the County that are crucial to the goals of the SEAs – “to ensure that development activities in these areas do not unduly compromise the underlying ecological systems of the County in such a manner that would threaten the future existence of these systems” (DSEA Ordinance at pg. 3). It also flags areas that will be challenging for development due to the presence of state and federally protected species. To be clear these are not the only areas that need to be included in the SEAs, but rather the SEAs should definitely include these types of areas. For example, known habitat for the San Fernando Valley spineflower (*Chorizanthe parryi* var. *fernandina*)<sup>2</sup> is not included in the proposed SEAs. The County should carefully review the proposed SEAs to make sure that they include habitat for federally and state-listed rare, threatened and endangered species.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these issues. Please keep me informed of issues related to this process at the contact information above.

Respectfully submitted,



Heene Anderson  
Biologist  
Center for Biological Diversity.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/cnddb/pdfs/TEPlants.pdf](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/biogeodata/cnddb/pdfs/TEPlants.pdf)

## **17: Forest Lawn-Hollywood**

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Milan	

VIA EMAIL AND MAIL

August 1, 2012

Mr. Richard J. Bruckner, Director  
County of Los Angeles  
Department of Regional Planning  
320 W. Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Proposed Griffith Park Significant Ecological Area; Forest Lawn  
Memorial-Park - Hollywood Hills

Dear Mr. Bruckner:

This letter is submitted on behalf of the Forest Lawn Memorial-Park Association (“Forest Lawn”) with regard to the recently proposed Significant Ecological Area (“SEA”) designation for the Griffith Park SEA. The proposed SEA designation includes portions of the Forest Lawn Memorial Park property owned by Forest Lawn in the City of Los Angeles. The cemetery was approved by the City in 1940’s and has been operated for the benefit of the community for over 60 years. The cemetery is operated in accordance with permits and other approvals issued by the City and various regulatory agencies including the Army Corps of Engineers and the California Department of Fish and Game.

In addition, Forest Lawn has just completed a multi-year process to entitle the cemetery for the next 50 years. This included a full Environmental Impact Report which was certified by the City. The SEA designation to portions of the Memorial Park is inconsistent with the complex entitlement process established for cemeteries. The SEA designation may disrupt the implementation of plans previously approved by imposing duplicative and incompatible permit procedures and requirements on the construction and operation of the cemetery.

Given the long-standing approval of the cemetery by the City and the measures implemented by Forest Lawn to protect and restore the natural resources, we request that the SEA designation exclude the Forest Lawn property and that the proposed SEA ordinance amendment include an exemption for cemeteries. We would appreciate an opportunity to meet

LATHAM & WATKINS<sup>LLP</sup>

with you to discuss the impact of the proposed SEA designation on the operation of the cemetery. If you have any question, please give me a call.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G. Muhlsten", is written over the typed name.

George J. Muhlsten  
of LATHAM & WATKINS LLP

cc: Emma Howard, Department of Regional Planning  
Susan Rule Sandler, Esq.  
Mr. Clint Granath  
Mr. Dennis Madison



# Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

*Planning for the Challenges Ahead*



Richard J. Bruckner  
Director

August 23, 2012

George J. Mhlsten, Esq.  
Latham & Watkins LLP  
355 S. Grand Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90071

Dear Mr. Mhlsten:

## **PROPOSED GRIFFITH PARK SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREA**

I am in receipt of your recent letter regarding the proposed Griffith Park Significant Ecological Area (SEA) designation, the proposed SEA ordinance revision, and potential impacts to the Forest Lawn Memorial Park Hollywood Hills (Forest Lawn) property in the City of Los Angeles. In your letter, you requested that the proposed SEA designation exclude the Forest Lawn property and that the proposed SEA ordinance revision include an exemption for cemeteries.

A portion of the Forest Lawn property is located within the boundary of the existing Griffith Park SEA. The existing Griffith Park SEA was established when the Board of Supervisors adopted the County General Plan on November 25, 1980. The proposed Griffith Park SEA represents a refinement of the boundary of the existing Griffith Park SEA. We have reviewed the proposed boundary and it appears that it encompasses less of the Forest Lawn property than the existing boundary. Please refer to the attached maps.

There are several existing and proposed SEA designations that fall within incorporated cities, such as the City of Los Angeles. As indicated on our SEA Web Page (<http://planning.lacounty.gov/sea>):

"Proposed SEAs are depicted within cities to show the extent of biological resources within an ecological system. However, the County has no land use jurisdiction within cities, therefore, the SEA designations do not apply within city boundaries, nor do County regulations. Cities have their own General Plans and environmental preservation programs unrelated to the County. It is up to each individual city to decide how they will conserve the natural resources within their boundaries."

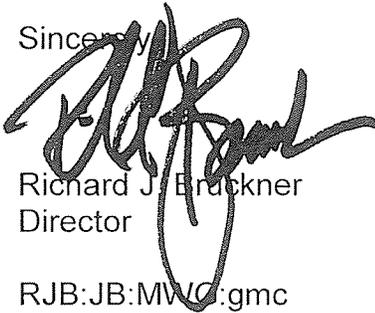
Accordingly, since the Forest Lawn property is located within the City of Los Angeles, the County has no authority to regulate any development activity on the property and the proposed SEA ordinance revision is inapplicable to the property.

George J. Mhlsten, Esq.  
August 23, 2012  
Page 2

In conclusion, the proposed Griffith Park SEA designation and the proposed SEA ordinance will not disrupt the implementation of plans previously approved by the City of Los Angeles, as the County has no land use authority over the Forest Lawn property.

If you have additional questions, or would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Mitch Glaser at [mglaser@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:mglaser@planning.lacounty.gov) or (213) 974-6476 between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Our offices are closed on Fridays.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard J. Bruckner", is written over the typed name and title.

Richard J. Bruckner  
Director

RJB:JB:MWG:gmc

Attachments





## **18: Forest Lawn- Covina Hills**



ATTORNEYS AT LAW

777 S. Figueroa Street  
34th Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90017  
T 213.612.7800  
F 213.612.7801

Lloyd W. Pellman  
D 213.612.7802  
lpellman@nossaman.com

Refer To File #: 060164-0007

July 31, 2012

Mr. Richard J. Bruckner, Director  
County of Los Angeles  
Department of Regional Planning  
320 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**Re: Proposed East San Gabriel Valley Significant Ecological Area  
Designation; Forest Lawn Memorial-Park - Covina Hills**

Dear Mr. Bruckner:

This letter is submitted on behalf of the Forest Lawn Memorial-Park Association ("Forest Lawn") with regard to the recently proposed Significant Ecological Area ("SEA") designation for the East San Gabriel Valley. The proposed SEA designation includes a portion of the Covina Hills cemetery owned by Forest Lawn in unincorporated Los Angeles County. The cemetery was approved by the County of Los Angeles in 1963 and was re-approved by the County on July 9, 2012 pursuant to the County's Cemetery Grading Plan Review and Permit Protocol ("Permit Protocol"). Your department approved the Revised Exhibit "A" May 24, 2012. The cemetery is operated in accordance with permits and other approvals issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Department of Fish and Game, the California Regional Water Quality Control Board Los Angeles Region, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

In accordance with the approvals from the above agencies, Forest Lawn has implemented significant off-site and on-site measures to protect and restore wildlife habitat – including granting conservation easements covering 78 acres of the cemetery to the California Department of Fish and Game, and the acquisition and preservation, of natural habitat in the Puente Hills and the restoration of other on-site and off-site areas as wildlife habitat. Given the long-standing approval of the cemetery by the County, and the measures implemented by the Forest Lawn to protect and restore the natural resources, we request that the SEA designation exclude the Forest Lawn property.

The SEA designation to the cemetery is inconsistent with the complex entitlement process established by the County for cemeteries reflected in the Permit Protocol. The SEA designation will disrupt the implementation of plans previously approved by the County by imposing duplicative and incompatible permit procedures and requirements on the construction and operation of the cemetery. The proposed

SEA designation will also disrupt an ongoing recycled water project by Forest Lawn and Cal Poly Pomona to reduce use of potable water.

We request that the Forest Lawn cemetery be excluded from the SEA designation and that the proposed SEA ordinance amendment include an exemption for cemeteries that are approved by the County pursuant to the Permit Protocol. We provide additional detail below on the prior approvals of the Covina Hills cemetery by the County and by the state and federal environmental agencies.

### **County Land Use Approvals.**

On October 10, 1963 the County of Los Angeles granted to the Forest Lawn Memorial-Parks Association Cemetery Permit Case No. 30-(1) ("Cemetery Permit") with regard to the development of the cemetery. On October 19, 1967 the County of Los Angeles granted Zone Exception Case No. 8576-(1) ("Zone Exception") with regard to the cemetery.

In 2002, the County of Los Angeles adopted the "Cemetery Grading Plan Review and Permit Protocol" ("Permit Protocol") as an appendix of the County Building Code Manual. The Permit Protocol describes the requirements applicable to issuance of a master grading permit and a master landscape permit for cemeteries.

The County previously approved an Exhibit "A" with regard to the Original Approvals for the Covina Hills cemetery. On December 27, 2009, the County approved a "Revised Exhibit 'A'" with regard to the approval of certain interim improvements at the cemetery. In 2012 the County approved a revised Exhibit "A" to reflect changes to the grading plan and revisions to the boundaries of the conservation easement granted to the Department of Fish and Game to implement approvals of the cemetery project by state and federal environmental protection agencies. The County has also issued grading permits to Forest Lawn.

These approvals from the state and federal environmental agencies committed Forest Lawn to restrictions on development at the cemetery, the preservation and restoration of habitat areas at Covina Hills, and the acquisition and preservation of hundreds of acres of native habitat in the Puente Hills. Forest Lawn has acted in reliance on the approvals by the County and the environmental agencies and has made a significant financial commitment to the protection of natural resources.

### **Environmental Agency Approvals.**

In 2001, Forest Lawn initiated discussions with several state and federal environmental agencies regarding the development of the cemetery in accordance with the County land use approvals. In 2002, Forest Lawn obtained approvals to operate the cemetery from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of Fish and Game, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the California Regional Water Quality Control Board Los Angeles Region. The approvals included the following:

- A biological opinion and incidental take permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service pursuant to the federal Endangered Species Act;
- A streambed alteration agreement with the California Department of Fish and Game pursuant to California Fish and Game Code section 1602;
- A federal Clean Water Act section 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; and
- Water quality approvals from the Regional Water Quality Control Board pursuant to section 401 of the federal Clean Water Act and the California Porter-Cologne Act.

The above approvals contained over 110 compliance conditions and required Forest Lawn to implement a number of measures to protect and restore wildlife habitat on Forest Lawn's property and to acquire, protect and restore other wildlife habitat in the Puente Hills. These measures included the following:

- Contribute necessary funds to assist the Puente Hills Landfill Native Habitat Preservation Authority in the purchase and permanent protection of 957 acres in Puente Hills;
- Creation and restoration of 15 acres of coastal sage scrub suitable for breeding of California gnatcatchers at the former Unocal property in Hacienda Heights and managed as preserve by the Puente Hills Authority;
- Creation and restoration of 1.8 acres of riparian woodland habitat on the former Unocal property in Hacienda Heights;
- Creation of 1.04 acres of federally jurisdictional "waters" onsite at the Covina Hills cemetery;
- Modification of the development plans at the cemetery to avoid the disturbance of wildlife habitat on the cemetery;
- Granting of conservation easements covering 78 acres as the cemetery to the California Department of Fish and Game;
- Implementation of a plan to phase development of the cemetery over 15 years to allow an opportunity for the gnatcatchers and other native species to occupy the restored habitat areas a Puente Hills;
- Implementation of a five year trapping program for the non-native cow birds to reduce cow bird nest parasitism on gnatcatchers and other native songbirds.

Forest Lawn has implemented the above measures faithfully. The Rose Hills Foundation property has been acquired and protected from development. The former

Unocal property has been restored to coastal sage scrub and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that Forest Lawn has complied with the restoration requirements. The creation and restoration of 1.04 acres of federally jurisdictional "waters" onsite and 1.8 acres of riparian woodland habitat offsite have been formally approved by the Army Corps of Engineers and California Fish & Game Department respectively.

In reliance on the approvals, Forest Lawn agreed to material restrictions on the use of the cemetery including permanent protection of habitat areas previously approved for cemetery uses, restoration of portions of cemetery to native habitat, and phasing of the development of the cemetery.

There is no doubt that Forest Lawn's implementation of the above-described conservation measures have already served the purposes of the draft ordinance by conserving the biological resources on the property and in the Puente Hills. Given the special requirements of the Permit Protocol and the unique nature and function of cemeteries, it would be appropriate to provide an eighth exemption under proposed Los Angeles County Code Section 22.56.215C to recognize that cemeteries approved pursuant to the Permit Protocol are not subject to the SEA ordinance.

We would appreciate an opportunity to meet with you to discuss Forest Lawn's commitments to the protection of wildlife habitat, and the impact of the proposed SEA designation on the operation of the cemetery and the development of the recycled water program with Cal Poly Pomona.

Very truly yours,



Lloyd W. Pellman  
of Nossaman LLP

LWP/vcd

cc: Lawrence L. Hafetz, Assistant County Counsel  
Elaine Lamke, Principal Deputy County Counsel  
Emma Howard, Department of Regional Planning  
Susan Rule Sandler, Esq.  
Clint Granath  
Robert D. Thornton, Esq.

**From:** [Dennis Madison](#)  
**To:** [Emma Howard](#)  
**Subject:** Forest Lawn Covina - Recycled Water Project  
**Date:** Tuesday, September 18, 2012 1:03:27 PM

---

Hello Emma, thanks for your recent voice mail. I left a message for you this AM, below is what I was able to get from our engineering dept.

- 1) The recycled water project at Covina Hills is governed by conditions in the easement granted to the California Fish & Game Dept, and Right of Entry agreements with the City of Walnut, and Cal Poly Pomona.
- 2) All the area used to install the recycled water pipeline and connect it to our tanks must be restored to its native state per the CDFG easement language. We have an CDFG approved habitat restoration plan that will be implemented after the work is completed.
- 3) Known county permits for the recycled water work include an electrical permit to extend power from FL to the new pump station on Cal Poly property, and Dept of Public Health cross connection permits/inspections. Additionally Cal Poly needs to approve our pump station plans.
- 4) After the recycled water system is completed and approved, 8.5 acres of native habitat will be given to Cal Poly to increase the size of their Voorhis Ecological preserve.
- 5) Later on in the cemetery build out, county permits will be needed for infrastructure as illustrated on the County Regional Planning Revised Exhibit A for the site. Future county permits will include additional cross connection inspections, structural and electrical permits for additional pump stations, reservoirs, and planned garden property and wall crypt structures.

Please let me know if the above answers your questions about the project. Let me know if you need any exhibits related to the recycled water footprint, or the revised exhibit A.

Thanks again for all your help.

Dennis Madison  
323-340-4690

## **19: Sky Meadow Farms**



Los Angeles County  
Department of Regional Planning

*Planning for the Challenges Ahead*



Richard J. Bruckner  
Director

November 5, 2012

TO: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich  
Fifth Supervisorial District

Attention: Norm Hickling  
Edel Vizcarra

FROM: Richard J. Bruckner  
Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RJB', written over the printed name of the sender.

**CORRESPONDENCE FROM LISA K. BELL REGARDING SKY MEADOW FARMS**

Attached is a copy of our response to Ms. Lisa K. Bell regarding Sky Meadow Farms. I trust this meets with your approval.

RJB:JS:MWG:lm

Attachment



# Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

*Planning for the Challenges Ahead*



Richard J. Bruckner  
Director

November 5, 2012

Ms. Lisa K. Bell, Co-Trustee  
Bell Family Trust  
1519 Solana Drive  
Belmont, CA 94002

Dear Ms. Bell:

## **SKY MEADOW FARMS**

This is in response to your recent letter dated September 26, 2012, to the Board of Supervisors regarding the proposed land use and zoning designations for the Sky Meadow Farms property in the unincorporated community of Leona Valley. These changes are related to the Antelope Valley Area Plan Update (Area Plan Update). Supervisor Antonovich has requested that the Department of Regional Planning (Department) respond to you directly with a copy to his office.

Department staff met your father when the initiation of the Area Plan Update was announced at the Three Points Town Council meeting on September 8, 2007, and is very sorry to hear that he has been stricken with Alzheimer's disease. Although your father has been included in the contact list for this project over the last several years, given the circumstances it is understandable that you were unaware of this project and Department staff will add you to the contact list from this point forward.

The current land use designation for the Sky Meadow Farms property (Assessor Parcel Numbers 3215-003-010, 3215-003-011, 3215-004-016, and 3215-004-017) is Non-Urban 1 (N1), with a maximum residential density of one unit per two acres. The current zoning designation for the property is A-2-2 (Heavy Agricultural, two acre minimum lot size). The proposed land use designations for the property are Rural Land 20 (RL20), with a maximum residential density of one unit per 20 acres, and Rural Land 40 (RL40), with a maximum residential density of one unit per 40 acres. The proposed zoning designation for the property is A-2-2.5 (Heavy Agricultural, two and one half acre minimum lot size). The increase in the minimum lot size is related to the proposed update of the Leona Valley Community Standards District, which specifies a two and one half acre minimum lot size for any lot within a new subdivision. Under this proposal,

Lisa K. Bell  
November 5, 2012  
Page 2

a new subdivision would need to comply with both the maximum residential density and the minimum lot size.

The Area Plan Update identifies the property as a "Rural Preserve Area," which is described as an area that is "largely undeveloped and generally not served by existing infrastructure and public facilities." In Rural Preserve Areas, the proposed land use designations are based on a Hazard, Environmental, and Resource Constraint Model (Model). The entire property is located in a proposed Significant Ecological Area (SEA) and the Model classifies an SEA as a Class II Special Management Area. A portion of the property is also located within an active fault trace (the San Andreas Fault) and the Model classifies an active fault trace as a Class III Special Management Area. Class II Special Management Areas have a proposed land use designation of RL20, while Class III Special Management Areas have a proposed land use designation of RL40.

The Department's position is that the current N1 land use designation does not account for the aforementioned constraints and the proposed, lower density RL20 and RL40 land use designations more accurately reflect these constraints and the development potential of the property. SEAs are ecologically important land and water systems that support valuable habitat for plants and animals and lower density development will have fewer potential impacts on this habitat. Active fault traces, such as the San Andreas Fault, represent a significant safety risk and lower density development will ensure a lower risk for people and property when future earthquakes occur. In addition, the Department believes that the proposed land use designations reflect the desire of the Leona Valley community to retain a rural, low density environment and to protect its natural resources, such as SEAs.

Your letter requests a proposed land use designation of RL20 for the entire property. The Department feels it is appropriate to apply the Model equitably and consistently across all Rural Preserve Areas. Therefore, the Department feels it would not be appropriate to remove the proposed RL40 land use designation for your property when other similarly situated properties, such as other properties in Rural Preserve Areas along the San Andreas Fault, have the proposed RL40 land use designation.

The Area Plan Update is only a proposal at this time and development of your property may occur in accordance with the current land use and zoning designations until such time that the Area Plan Update is adopted. Public hearings before the Regional Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors will begin after an Environmental Impact Report is released in 2013. These hearings will provide an opportunity for you to request changes to the Area Plan Update, such as the changes mentioned in your letter. You will be notified when the public hearings begin.

Lisa K. Bell  
November 5, 2012  
Page 3

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Thuy Hua at [thua@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:thua@planning.lacounty.gov) or (213) 974-6476 between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Our offices are closed on Fridays.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RJB', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Richard J. Bruckner  
Director

RJB:JS.MWG:lm

c: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich (Norm Hickling, Edel Vizcarra)

## **20: Pardee Homes**

August 1, 2012

Ms. Emma Howard, Regional Planner, Community Studies North  
County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning  
320 W. Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

VIA EMAIL: [ehoward@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:ehoward@planning.lacounty.gov)

**Subject: Comments on Summary Draft Significant Ecological Area Ordinance**

Dear Ms Howard:

On behalf of Pardee Homes, a Los Angeles County based homebuilder and land developer for over 90 years, thank you for the opportunity to comment upon the June 2012 Summary Draft Significant Ecological Area (SEA) Ordinance. We have been fortunate to have planned and developed several communities in the County and continue to do so as one of the partners in the proposed Centennial development on Tejon Ranch.

If the County intends to expand the SEA program, it should make a clear distinction between property that has been the subject of intensive biological investigation through the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) or Endangered Species Act processes, and those that have not. There is a vast difference between property identified as being of potential ecological significance through aerial photographs, vegetation mapping and terrain, and property that has been studied in detail on the ground by biologists, ecologists and other scientists. The County should use the more detailed and scientifically superior information whenever available for the SEA Program.

Pardee Homes opposes what appears to be a broad brush expansion of the SEA boundaries and imposition of a new requirement on property owners to prove their innocence through a lengthy and costly regulatory process. The Draft Ordinance imposes an "Initial Project Appraisal," a technical advisory committee review, documentation of "measures to protect biological and ecological resources," and a "SEA Conditional Use Permit Burden of Proof" on each landowner.

The County, in effect, is proposing far more restrictive requirements on property owners than the state and federal governments do through their respective Endangered Species Acts and their wetlands protection regulations. Pardee Homes has a long and successful history of working with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Department of Fish and Game and the US Army Corps of Engineers on large scale multispecies habitat protection and wetlands mitigation programs. We support the scientific identification of critical habitat for endangered species, investigation and identification of cooperative efforts with landowners to do large scale multispecies habitat programs, such as Habitat Conservation Plans (HCP) and Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCP). In those programs, biologists specifically identify the location of habitat and species first, and then the landowners and agencies work cooperatively to determine appropriate opportunities for protection.

It is very important that the SEA Ordinance not impose duplicative or conflicting requirements on land that has already been thoroughly studied and analyzed for ecological significance through the General Plan Amendment and CEQA processes, such as the Centennial project. The SEA Ordinance should acknowledge that land that has been analyzed for ecological impacts and incorporates design features to protect and/or mitigate environmental impacts does not require any additional SEA compliance.

Ms. Emma Howard  
August 1, 2012  
Page Two

In summary, Pardee Homes opposes a broad expansion of the SEA program boundaries without specific identification of ecological resources on a parcel-by-parcel basis that includes written notification to each landowner. It should be the County's responsibility to prove a property's ecological significance, not a landowner's obligation to identify, apply for, and mitigate a general SEA designation. Finally, the SEA Ordinance should not require duplication of analyses or mitigation for property where environmental, ESA, and ecological impacts have already been studied and addressed through the CEQA process.

We appreciate your attention to our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael V. McGee". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Michael V. McGee

MVM/cr

## **21: Poppy Reserve/Mojave Desert Interpretative Association**

Margaret Rhyne  
Poppy Reserve/ Mojave Desert Interpretive Association  
P.O. Box 1408  
Lancaster, California 93534  
m.rhyne@verizon.net

July 30, 2012

Ms. Emma Howard, Planner  
Los Angeles County Regional Planning  
Community Studies North Section  
Department of Regional Planning  
320 W. Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**June 2010 SEA Ordinance Summary Draft  
SEA Ordinance Change Comparison Chart 2012**

Dear Ms. Howard,

We are greatly concerned that proposed changes to SEA Ordinances will undermine the mission of our organization to ensure the preservation for future generations of the biological treasures of the Western Antelope Valley. Our non-profit, the Poppy Reserve/ Mojave Desert Interpretive Association, was founded 30 years ago by area citizens dedicated to promoting and preserving important natural habitats of the Antelope Valley. Those protected areas now include the Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve and Arthur B. Ripley Desert Woodland as well as three other Mojave Desert California State Parks.

We urge that all changes to SEA regulations maintain and/or strengthen oversight of biologically important areas within SEAs, particularly areas of preserved habitat already protected by public and private entities in the Western Antelope Valley. These areas include the Poppy Reserve and Ripley Desert Woodland; the L.A. County Desert Pines Sanctuary; and protected lands held by conservancies north of the Poppy Reserve (the Desert Mountain Conservancy, the Archeological Conservancy and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy). These are the only existing areas that form contiguous blocks of protected habitat in SEA 57 or the proposed SEA 21. Due to edge effects, the biological resources of these areas are critically vulnerable to degradation from proposed adjacent development.

Language included in the draft documents released in June concerning proposed revisions of SEA Ordinances heightens our concerns for the future protection of these areas as these changes seem to indicate a lessening rather than strengthening of

oversight. Specifically, we object to the change indicated on page 5 of the "Draft Significant Ecological Areas Ordinance Summary Draft June 2012." This change lists the following as "exempted" from permit standards and therefore from SEATAC review:

"1. Any ground disturbance/ development activity where the entire footprint of the ground disturbance/ development activity, including associated infrastructure, grading and fuel modification areas, is located outside of the Significant Ecological Area or Ecological Transition Area. "

This change would prevent SEATAC assessment of potential impacts by proposed development adjacent to protected habitat areas such as the Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve and Ripley Desert Woodland. Both of these parks are included in existing SEAs but the borders of these SEAs do not extend significantly beyond the existing borders of these state parks. Even with the approval of the proposed extension of SEAs in the Antelope Valley, these state parks will remain vulnerable along most of their borders. Therefore, SEATAC review and assessment of the impacts of development adjacent to these important biological preserves remains imperative. As citizens of Los Angeles County who love the remaining wild places in the Antelope Valley, known worldwide for springtime carpets of increasingly rare native wildflowers, we rely on the scientific expertise of the Significant Ecological Areas Technical Advisory Committee to help us preserve these treasures for future generations. Without the ability of the Committee to comment on proposed adjacent development, that preservation will be jeopardized.

Also of concern are changes indicated in the "SEA Ordinance Change Comparison Chart" of June 12. Items 2 - 6 on pages 12-13 indicate that many crucial existing SEATAC requirements for a "Complete Conditional Use Permit" will be deleted. These deletions include: a "complete record of recommendations made by the Significant Ecological Area Technical Advisory Committee during its review of the Initial Project Appraisal; a final project appraisal document; a biological constraints analysis; a biota report; and written analysis detailing compliance with development standards." This appears to be a significant change that would impact the ability of SEATAC to comment on proposed development potentially damaging to the biological resources of SEAs. If we are interpreting this chart correctly, this is alarming. We urge further clarification concerning these provisions evidently proposed for deletion.

A proposed change to the overall SEA program that we support is the creation of SEA 21. This SEA will help to protect biological resources on Portal Ridge and connect this important biologically rich and diverse area to the Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve. This is a vital step in maintaining connectivity between the Reserve, Portal Ridge and the Angeles Forest, a step crucial in preventing the Poppy Reserve from becoming a biological island. We strongly support the creation of this new SEA.

Unfortunately, the creation of this new SEA will not lessen the need to protect the ability of SEATAC to review development adjacent to existing preserved habitats. This is particularly important as fragmentation of Joshua Tree/ Juniper Woodland SEAs (currently SEA 60, proposed as SEA 11) which includes Ripley Desert Woodland, will still exist under the new plan. In addition, we are concerned that the Poppy Reserve and conservancy land on Fairmont Butte will still be exposed to edge effects as they would form a small "peninsula" of SEA 21 jutting into areas that are not designated as SEAs or ETAs and therefore without any SEATAC oversight if proposed ordinance revisions are adopted.

In conclusion, we would like to again state that it is crucial that SEATAC be able to comment on development adjacent to the Poppy Reserve, Ripley Desert Woodland, and land north of the Poppy Reserve held by the three different conservancies as these areas compose the largest parcels of contiguous blocks of protected natural habitat within both the existing SEA 57 and proposed SEA 21.

We would like to complement Los Angeles County on the very valuable contributions that Significant Ecological Area Technical Advisory Committee makes to the protection of county biological treasures particularly in the sometimes overlooked Western Antelope Valley. We support the proposed creation of SEAs 11 and 21 and we urge the county to continue the SEATAC program guided by an ordinance which will strengthen oversight of existing protected natural habitats within SEAs. Thank you for considering our comments.

Margaret Rhyne  
President, Poppy Reserve/ Mojave Desert Interpretive Association (prmdia.org)  
m.rhyne@verizon.net

**22: Tejon Ranch**



July 31, 2012

Emma Howard  
Regional Planning Department  
Room 1354  
320 W. Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Comment on the proposed expansion of the San Andreas SEA at Tejon Ranch

Dear Ms. Howard:

I am writing this letter to comment on the proposed boundary expansion of the San Andreas SEA with particular reference to the Tejon Ranch. I worked as a consultant to the Trust for Public Land to undertake a study to identify the best biological resources for inclusion within a major conservation area on the Ranch. I have also worked for the Centennial project as a scientific advisor on biological conservation and management. My letter is based on nine years of direct experience on the Ranch and in adjoining areas of Los Angeles County-including numerous field visits, participation in studies, and working with scientists who have conducted detailed studies of these areas. I believe that the proposed SEA expansion on Tejon Ranch should be withdrawn for the following four reasons:

My first point is that the portion of the Tejon Ranch proposed for inclusion within the expanded SEA does not meet the criteria used in designation of SEAs. The proposed expansion on Tejon Ranch occurs within agricultural lands used for cattle grazing for over the past 150 years. It is a well know fact that long-term grazing removes the native scrub community resulting in land being dominated by non-native grasslands and that these lands would quickly revert to scrub dominated areas once grazing was removed. Native grasses are present in isolated areas on Tejon Ranch; however, their abundance is overshadowed by non-native annual grasses and forbs. In some years, these areas do exhibit spring time wildflower displays; however, they are not significantly outstanding compared to other areas in the Antelope Valley such as the Antelope Valley Poppy Reserve SNR. The recently updated description of the San Andreas SEA (dated 6/18/12) on the County's website lists the criteria used to select the areas to be designated within the San Andreas SEA; however, it does not list grasslands of any type as a basis for selection of the SEA. This is consistent with the findings for the current SEAs in this area (58 and 59) which were established by the 1980 General Plan and were based solely on the presence of foothill woodlands and great basin sagebrush scrub. Neither native grasslands nor grasslands of any type were identified as a basis for designating these two existing SEAs. Again, in the 2000 update study's proposed San Andreas Rift Zone SEA, the western half of the Centennial site on Tejon Ranch was proposed for inclusion in the new SEA, not on the basis of grassland resources but rather on the confluence of major geographical areas and potential presence of rare relic stands of Great Basin sage brush scrub (which is not found on the Centennial site). While grasslands were discussed in general in the 2000 update, they are not listed under the criteria for the selection process. In the most recent iteration of the criteria as of June 2012, no grasslands of any type were discussed within the SEA criteria as a basis for the proposed expansion of the SEA at Tejon Ranch, suggesting that this resource does not rise to the level of significance to be included in the selection criteria. In fact, none of the criteria expressed on the County's web site apply to the proposed expansion of the SEA at Tejon Ranch.

My second point is that the grazing land on Tejon Ranch that is being proposed for inclusion in the County's expanded SEA is not a rare habitat within the County. According to recent CALVEG mapping data (2002-2003), the extent of annual grassland and forb community in Los Angeles County is approximately 108,000 acres with additional non-native/ornamental grasslands of 24,000 acres. The CALVEG map shows extensive areas of grassland habitat in the Angeles National Forest, the Santa Monica Mountains, the foothills between Palmdale and Lebec, and southeastern Los Angeles County. It is not true that grasslands are limited to the northwestern portion of the County; nor that Tejon Ranch is the only area of extensive pasture grassland habitat.

When detailed site mapping is done, the extent of grassland habitats within the County becomes more apparent. For example, the National Park Service mapped grasslands in the Santa Monica National Recreation Area and determined that 3.7% of the area (approximately 5,700 acres) contained both native and non-native grasslands. As part of the EIR/EIS for the Newhall Ranch, approximately 2,200 acres or 16% of the area was found to contain grassland habitats with annual forbs.

Based on state wide vegetation maps, the amount of grassland within the State of California is estimated at 11 million acres or approximately 11% of the State land area. Many counties, such as Kern County with 1.3 million acres of grassland, have extensive grassland resources. Within the Tejon Ranch adjacent to the Antelope Valley (including both Los Angeles and Kern County) the extent of grasslands exceeds 70,000 acres. The Tejon Ranch Conservancy is committed to manage and improve the quality of these pasture grasslands as is the Centennial project which proposes to protect over 14,300 acres of current pasture lands within conservation lands totalling 26,900 acres and manage them for grassland habitat values in perpetuity.

My third point is that the County's analysis of wildlife corridors (as posted on its web site) is unsubstantiated. No reference is given to how the County evaluated these corridors; however, extensive analysis was undertaken during the Tejon Ranch conservation planning and was also specifically analyzed for the Centennial project on Tejon Ranch. Wildlife corridors were identified to the north and west of the Centennial project at the base of the Tehachapi Mountains and no regional wildlife corridors were determined to be present within the Centennial project. The proposed expansion of the SEA on Tejon Ranch is therefore not related to any regional wildlife movement corridor.

My final point is that during the conservation planning that eventually led to the Tejon Ranch Conservation and Land Use Agreement, which permanently preserves 240,000 acres of the 270,000 acre Ranch (or 90%), extensive consideration was given to the Centennial site and its conservation potential. During that entire process which extended from 2003 to 2008, a wide range of factors were considered including presence of rare plant communities, presence of special status wildlife, and wildlife movement corridors. Extensive data sets were reviewed, consultations were held with expert independent scientists under the auspices of the Audubon California, Endangered Habitats League, Natural Resources Defense Council, Planning and Conservation League, and Sierra Club, and meetings held with agency representatives. The historic agreement resulted in the establishment of the Tejon Ranch Conservancy to preserve and manage 240,000 acres of the highest quality lands on Tejon Ranch. I was present on all of the site visits and in meetings held with the various interested parties. At no time did the area of the proposed SEA expansion on Tejon Ranch rise to the level of significance to be included within the Conserved Lands. Other portions of the 270,000 acre Ranch were determined to be much more conducive to protecting sensitive resources, including native and non-native grasslands; to providing habitat for sensitive wildlife, and as significant links for wildlife movement. The Centennial site on Tejon Ranch was deemed more suitable for development.

In summary, the County designation process for the expanded San Andreas SEA on Tejon Ranch does not meet the County's criteria; is based on a limited regional perspective on grassland resources; is not within any regional wildlife corridor; and includes an area that, during an extensive site review undertaken by experts, agencies, and environmental groups did not reach the stature necessary to be included in the largest conservation land acquisition in the State of California. For these reasons, I believe that the proposed SEA expansion on Tejon Ranch should be withdrawn.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Josselyn", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Josselyn, PhD  
Principal

CC: Richard Bruckner, Director of Planning

## **23: Tesoro del Valle**



8/1/12  
**Montalvo**  
V E N Emma Howard

3600 Birch Street, Suite 220 | Newport Beach, CA 92660  
p: 949.863.9099 | f: 949.863.9010 | www.montalvoventures.com

Regional Planning Department  
Room 1354  
320 West Temple St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: June 2012 SEA Ordinance Draft

Emma,

Thank you for providing me with a copy of the 2012 SEA Ordinance Draft to review and comment on. My concern after reviewing the document is that the proposed expansion of the prior SEA boundary line for our project, Tesoro del Valle, is in conflict with the defined objective of the present SEA #19 and in non-compliance with our current approval entitlements and environmental review.

Specifically, for the following reasons we request the County not to change the existing SEA #19 boundary line on the Tesoro del Valle.

**Project Property:**

- Not in compliance with the active vesting tentative tract map #51644, certified EIR, Seatac review, and environmental approvals / permits;
- Encroachment into the existing and planned development areas, such as two residential lots in planning area D; and
- Not in alignment with the Floodplain and related resource area in the SFC Creek, the defined area to protect the migration path of the unarmored threespine stickleback fish, and extends into the high land area outside of the water course and habitat for migration.

We appreciate this opportunity to comment on the draft and we are available to further explain our position in requesting the SEA # 19 boundary line not to be changed on our property.

Sincerely,

John E, Evans  
Representing  
Montalvo Properties LLC

**24: Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority**



# **Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority**

Endowment Provided by the Puente Hills Landfill

February 3, 2014

County of Los Angeles  
Department of Regional Planning  
Attn: Emma Howard  
Regional Planning Department  
Room 1354  
320 W. Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**Comments on the Draft Significant Ecological Area Ordinance dated December 5, 2013  
Comments on the Preliminary Draft Significant Ecological Area Program Guide dated 2013  
Comments on the SEA Developed Area and SEA Boundary maps**

Dear Ms. Howard:

The Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority (Habitat Authority) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Draft Significant Ecological Area (SEA) Ordinance (dated December 5, 2013). The Habitat Authority is a joint powers authority established pursuant to California Government Code Section 6500 *et seq.* with a Board of Directors consisting of the City of Whittier, County of Los Angeles, Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County, and the Hacienda Heights Improvement Association. According to its mission, the Habitat Authority is dedicated to the acquisition, restoration, and management of open space in the Puente Hills for preservation of the land in perpetuity, with the primary purpose to protect the biological diversity. Additionally, the agency endeavors to provide opportunities for outdoor education and low-impact recreation. The Habitat Authority owns and or manages over 3,800 acres which lie within the Cities of Whittier and La Habra Heights, as well as in the County unincorporated areas of the Puente Hills known as Hacienda Heights and Rowland Heights.

The Habitat Authority thanks and acknowledges the Department of Regional Planning for the incorporation of certain comments on the previous SEA Ordinance Summary Draft dated June 2012, and December 20, 2012. These comments included suggested language for development standards within SEAs, such as exclusion of invasive plants, fencing to promote wildlife movement, and avoidance of habitat impacts from fuel modification. However, certain comments were not addressed in the current Draft Ordinance and are included below for reference, along with additional comments.



## **SEA ORDINANCE**

### **Section 2 - 22.08.190**

The definition of an SEA has been removed and now states that an SEA “means: any portion of a lot or parcel of land identified as a Significant Ecological Area on the Significant Ecological Areas and Coastal Resource Areas Policy Map of the General Plan”. The latest draft (Jan 2014) of the General Plan describes an SEA but it is difficult to locate under Appendix E (not in Appendix C like Section 22.52.2905 subsection “O” of the Ordinance mentions). To alleviate any misunderstandings as to what constitutes an SEA and to make the definition easy to find and understand, please consider adding the definition of an SEA to section 22.52.2905 of the SEA Ordinance.

### **Section 22.52.2905 – Definitions**

Definition A. “Connectivity Area” and Definition B. “Constriction Area” – Both definitions include the phrases “large undisturbed areas”. Please define what constitutes “large” since this can be interpreted in varying ways.

The definition of “Ecological Transition Area” has been removed and is no longer mentioned in the SEA Ordinance. It is referenced once in the General Plan on page 382. If this term is no longer used, please be sure it is removed from all documents. However, if it is still being used, add the definition back into this section.

Definition O. “SEA Description” – This definition states that “SEA Description means the description of species populations and SEA Habitat Types within each SEA provided in the General Plan (Appendix C)”. However, the description seems to be located in Appendix E. Please double check the location of the “SEA Description”. There is a good description of an SEA in the *Preliminary Draft Significant Ecological Areas Program Guide* that could be used.

Definition P. “SEA Development Map” – According to this definition, the development map also depicts Habitat Preservation Areas and other Natural Open Space Areas. However, only the red proposed- developed areas are showing up on the GIS-NET3 “SEA Proposed-Developed Areas” layer. If Natural Open Space areas are to show up, then the Puente Hills Preserve should be highlighted.

Based on the comment under Section 2 (22.08.190), please consider adding a general definition of an SEA to this section of the SEA Ordinance.

It is suggested to add a definition of “Site plan review” since SEA conditional permits A and B are described.

### **Section 22.52.2910 - Applicability**

Subsection C.1. We understand that projects outside of SEAs are not subject to this Ordinance, however, please consider that for projects immediately adjacent to SEAs that they be reviewed by the County Biologist for compatibility. Just as the Fire Department, Parks, and other County departments review projects prior to approval, so to would the County Biologist in these instances, and would check the project for compatibility issues associated with noise, lighting, runoff, etc.

Subsection C.2 and C.3. We recommend that this standard also consider any cumulative effects from other nearby projects that may have not been approved when the original permit was approved but which could now have a cumulatively negative impact on biological resources within the SEA.

Subsection C.6. It is recommended that the SEA Ordinance apply to new projects undertaken by public utilities that may directly or indirectly (such as lighting for a new tower on top of an existing structure or adding height beyond 200 feet to an existing structure) affect habitat.

Subsection C.7. The exemption from the SEA Ordinance noted in Subsection C.7. is for “any of the following activities required, requested, authorized or permitted by a governmental agency: (a) Removal or thinning of vegetation for fire safety or in response to an emergency; and (b) Hazard management activities in response to an emergency or other public safety concerns.” We suggest that activities involving removal of non-native vegetation (including by herbicide) and habitat restoration (including, but not limited to, seeding, planting of container plants, and irrigation) also be exempted activities by open space management government agencies. We also suggest exemption of government agency activities such as scientific studies, erosion control, and construction, maintenance or demolition of trails, structures or facilities necessary for open space management activities.

#### **Section 22.52.2915–Permitted Uses**

Subsection A.2 This subsection allows for uses or projects located within developed areas identified in the SEA Development Map. However, based upon a review of the Proposed Developed Areas available through the Department’s GIS-NET3, many of these mapped areas in the proposed Puente Hills SEA appear to be incorrect. Some existing fuel modification zones are mapped, and others are missing. Since fuel modification practices are exempt activities, please remove from the map all fuel modification areas that are identified as developed that are on Habitat Authority properties. Since the Habitat Authority will not be allowing expansion of development activities within fuel modification zones on lands managed/owned, this layer on the map needs to be adjusted. See attached comments. In addition, the Authority’s and County’s trails are not identified as developed. The Habitat Authority would be happy to share its trails GIS layer, and to work with the Department to create an accurate map of the developed areas and trails.

Subsection A.4 and A.5 This allows for expired projects that are deemed fundamentally similar to the previous authorization and for modifications to previously approved projects. We suggest that these projects prohibit the removal of any native habitat that may have developed or recovered on or adjacent to the site, and consider protection of any sensitive species or important wildlife movement corridors that may have since been identified. In addition, we recommend that this standard also consider any cumulative effects from other nearby projects that may have not been approved when the original permit was approved but which could now have a cumulatively negative impact on biological resources within the SEA.

Subsection A.6 This allows for activities conducted by governmental agencies to improve the quality of biological resources in an SEA, including non-native vegetation removal programs, native habitat restoration programs, and construction of wildlife under and overpasses for habitat linkages and wildlife corridors. It was requested earlier in this letter and in previous letters that such activities be exempt and we still make that recommendation, as they are conducted for the sole benefit of

habitat improvement and generally have very minor impacts. However, if they remain as Permitted Uses requiring Site Plan Review, it is our understanding that such review would only apply to new or existing programs, and would not be required for every individual project, some of which are quite small and isolated. For example, the Habitat Authority has an existing Resource Management Plan (RMP) which includes non-native vegetation removal and habitat restoration programs; it is our understanding that the RMP could be submitted for Site Plan Review and approval, and that any subsequent activities consistent with that RMP would be permitted without individual site plan review. This would include, that activities such as scientific studies, erosion control, and construction, maintenance or demolition of trails, structures or facilities necessary for open space management activities be exempt as requested earlier in this letter and in previous letters; If these activities are not exempt then the intent of the Ordinance may be defeated by the abundance of County staff resources necessary to follow up and make site visits that would be required per this proposed Ordinance due to the many activities of governmental land management agencies county-wide. These activities described above are integral to the management of biological resources, and often have minor impacts compared to other permitted uses such as single-family residences. The requirement for open space management activities (such as non-native vegetation removal or demolition of trails) to undergo a Site Review or Conditional Use Permit process would needlessly cost the County, and land management agencies (which are already struggling with limited resources) additional unanticipated funds which could be used for actual improvement of biological resources and would unnecessarily delay safety, maintenance, and educational management actions on properties enjoyed daily by the public. Please also consider indicating in the ordinance that the Site Plan approval has no term limits.

Subsection C. Surface mining can severely erode the soil, reduce soil fertility, and contribute toward air pollution as well as impact water quality, native vegetation and wildlife. Due to these environmental impacts of surface mining and the irreplaceable biological resources in SEAs, please consider not allowing surface mining activities in SEAs. If surface mining is allowed, please consider limiting the amount and types of surface mining activities that will be considered by the County, describe the means for environmental review, limitations and mitigation.

### **Section 22.52.2925 - Development Standards**

This section lists the development standards non-exempt activities would need to adhere to when conducted within SEAs.

Subsection A.1. This subsection states that “Landscaped area within an SEA shall not include invasive species listed in the Invasive Species List of the SEA Design Manual.” Please consider the following revised language (new text in **bold**): “Landscaped areas within an SEA shall not include invasive species listed in the Invasive Species List provided in the SEA Program Guide **or has a California Invasive Plant Council inventory rating of high or moderate.**”

Subsection A.2. This subsection notes that “all outdoor lighting shall comply with the standards in Part 9 of Chapter 22.44”, which refers to the Rural Outdoor Lighting District. Please add clarifying language indicating that these lighting standards shall apply even if the SEA is not located within the Rural Outdoor Lighting District.

Subsection A.6. This subsection notes that new development may not narrow Connectivity Areas to a width of less than 1,000 feet at any point. Please provide a justification for the minimum width of 1,000 feet.

Subsection A.7. Similarly, new development may not narrow Constriction Areas to a width of less than 200 feet at any point. Please provide a justification for the minimum width of 200 feet.

December 20, 2012 draft Subsection J. This section included requirements for activities that may affect special status species and was excluded from the current draft. Please consider adding the information in Subsection J of the Dec. 20, 2012 draft back into the Ordinance. Also consider the following revised language for clarification (new text in **bold**, deleted text in ~~strikeout~~): “When any ground disturbance, use, or project may encroach upon a **an individual of or habitat for** a ~~likely to occur~~ species of special status identified in the SEA’s Description in the General Plan and/or discovered during the biologist site visit required by Section 22.52.2650.B.1, such ground disturbance, use or project shall not impact an area of exceeding ~~50~~**10** percent of the habitat area for the species of special status on the lot or parcel of land.” Changes in the first part of the sentence are suggested to clarify that encroachments could occur to individuals or habitat, and that special status species other than those identified in the SEA’s Description could be discovered by the biologist. The change in the last part of the sentence, from 50 to 10 percent, represents a more conservative approach and would reduce the threshold for requiring a Conditional Use Permit. Depending on the species or size of the parcel, removal of half of the habitat for a special status species could threaten the viability of a population on that parcel or even within the SEA, and should require additional analysis.

Subsection A.9. This section appears to be missing. The Ordinance goes from Subsection A.8 to A.10.

Subsection A.11c. table. In the table, the setback requirement for “vernal pools, and playas” is 150 feet. To protect the watershed and uplands that provide habitat for amphibians, reptiles and vernal pool plant pollinators, consider increasing the buffer distance to 250 feet as this is the standard setback distance to protect vernal pool species per the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Finally, we suggest adding an additional standard, which would require that structures be clustered as close as possible to other existing structures and be located as close as possible to existing roads in an effort to reduce fragmentation and edge effects.

### **Section 22.52.2930 – Conditional Uses**

Subsection C. This subsection states that “Any development that is otherwise permitted by Section 22.52.2915.A but would occur at the site of the habitat for an undiscovered or previously thought extinct species, as discovered during the biologist site visit required by Section 22.52.2920.A.2.” Please consider the following revised language (new text in **bold**): “Any development that is otherwise permitted by Section 22.52.2915.A but would occur at the site of the habitat for an **observed species of special status** or an undiscovered or previously thought extinct species, as discovered during the biologist site visit required by Section 22.52.2920.A.2...” The proposed language was previously included in the December 20, 2012 draft of the SEA Ordinance.

### **Section 22.52.2935 –Conditional Uses – Application Procedures**

Subsection C. It states that during the biological site visit, “Such site visit shall include identification and delineation of SEA Habitat Types, tree species listed in the SEA Program Guide and Water Resources.” Please consider the following revised language (new text in **bold**): “Such site visit shall include identification and delineation of SEA Habitat Types, tree species listed in the SEA Program Guide, Water Resources, and special status species.”

Subsection D.1.a. This lists criteria for projects within SEAs that will require a Type B CUP (for higher impact projects, requiring more open space mitigation and review by the SEA Technical Advisory Committee [SEATAC]) instead of a Type A CUP (for lower impact projects). The criterion under (a) is that “the proposed development may create an isolated area of natural habit.” Assuming “natural habit” is a typo, please change to “natural habitat”. Under ii for the definition of “isolated” please explain how and why the determination of “...is not contiguous to at least 30% of the perimeter” was developed.

### **Section 22.52.2940 –Conditional Uses – Conditions of Approval**

Subsection B.1.c.i. This describes open space requirements for Type A CUP conditions of approval, and gives preference to open space preserved on the same lot or parcel as the impact. This preference may not always result in the highest conservation value, especially if the resulting open space is small or isolated. Rather, preference should be given to preserving open space that is contiguous with other preserved lands, or to areas that will create or strengthen a habitat linkage or wildlife corridor. This type of strategic conservation will promote the viability of SEAs more than a piecemeal approach.

Subsection B.2.a. States that no improvements shall be allowed except for any applicable provisions in Section 22.56.215. However, this section refers to the existing Hillside Management and Significant Ecological Areas, and this section does not mention improvements that may be allowed in open space areas within SEAs. Any improvements allowed in required open space areas should be specified in this subsection, and should include (as appropriate) trails, signage, fencing, non-native vegetation removal, habitat restoration, and improvements associated with biological resource monitoring, research and management.

Subsections B.3.a. This section related to subdivision developments. This sections states that required Natural Open Space areas within the subdivision will be recorded on the final map as a “fee lot” or as an Open Space – Restricted Use Area. Please define “fee lot”. It is also stated that required Natural Open Space areas will be recorded in the office of the County Recorder on a covenant and agreement. We recommend that required Natural Open Space be recorded as a conservation easement to protect the space in perpetuity.

Subsection B.3.b. This section relates to development that is not a subdivision. It is stated that required Natural Open Space areas will be recorded in the office of the County Recorder on a covenant and agreement. We recommend that required Natural Open Space be recorded as a conservation easement to protect the space in perpetuity.

Subsection B.4 c. In discussing the management of the dedicated open spaces, this section states that if a governmental agency or non-profit land conservation organization is not dedicated to the

management of open space, then “a maintenance agreement shall be established to hold and manage the Natural Open Space under a mandate to protect it in perpetuity.” However, it doesn’t state who the land manager would be. Please exclude Homeowners associations from managing these open space areas since they often lack the staff or expertise to manage the biological resources as necessary for SEA maintenance. In addition, along with the dedication, funds should be provided that are sufficient for land management in perpetuity.

#### **22.52.2945 - Conditional uses – Review and Hearing Procedures**

Subsection A. This states that a Type A CUP will be considered by a Hearing Officer, whereas a Type B CUP will be reviewed by SEATAC and considered by the Regional Planning Commission. Regarding Type A CUP considerations by Hearing Officers, it is our understanding that a Department staff biologist will have already reviewed the submission and made recommendations. Please clarify if this understanding is not correct

Subsection C.3. This subsection lists the Findings required for the Hearing Officer or Regional Planning Commission to issue an SEA CUP. Subsection H.3 requires that a project cannot result in the loss of SEA viability, which is defined as (a) bisecting the SEA, (b) closing of a connectivity or constriction, (c) removing habitat characteristic of the SEA, (d) removing the only known location of an SEA species, or (e) removing the only known location of a new or rediscovered species. Items b, d and e provide a very high threshold for determining the loss of SEA viability. For example, the substantial narrowing of a connectivity area, not just the closing of the constriction, could result in SEA viability loss. Or the removal of key habitats or populations of certain species could, not just the removal of the only known locations of that species, could also result in SEA viability loss. These SEA viability thresholds should be revised to be less limiting.

#### **Appendix for Park 28**

Please clarify what classification system is being used for the determination of Habitat Type.

SEA 8. Puente Hills SEA. By using the eight Habitat Types listed in the Ordinance, numerous critical habitat types will not be considered, such as native grasslands and mulefat scrub. The Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority has an adopted Resource Management Plan (2007) which describes the vegetation communities within the Puente Hills Preserve (Section 3.0). The RMP can be found at [www.habitatauthority.org](http://www.habitatauthority.org). It is recommended to use those classifications of vegetation communities.

#### **PRELIMINARY DRAFT SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREAS PROGRAM GUIDE**

**III. Exemptions.** The SEA Ordinance exempts safety activities in response to an emergency and uses in areas regulated by Local Coastal Plans. As commented on in the SEA Ordinance section 22.52.2910 subsection C.7, we suggest that activities involving removal of non-native vegetation (including by herbicide) and habitat restoration (including, but not limited to, seeding, planting of container plants, and irrigation) also be exempted activities by open space management government agencies. We also suggest exemption of government agency activities such as scientific studies, erosion control, and construction, maintenance or demolition of trails, structures or facilities necessary for open space management activities.

**IV. Development Standards.** This section was not available at the time of review. The Habitat Authority looks forward to commenting on this section when it is available.

Streets and Highways. There is good detailed information about the types of wildlife crossings. The Program Guide currently lists 5 recommendations to consider when designing new streets or highways. Please consider stating that these recommendations should be considered when retrofitting streets and highways as well. In addition, please consider adding the following 6<sup>th</sup> recommendation in bold: **New or improved roads in SEAs, especially those adjacent to open space, should consider wildlife crossing structures.** It is most cost effective to design and install these structures while the new roads are being built or existing roads are being improved.

**V. General Recommendations.** This section was not available at the time of review. The Habitat Authority looks forward to commenting on this section when it is available.

**VI. SEA Specific Recommendations.** This section was not available at the time of review. The Habitat Authority looks forward to commenting on this section when it is available.

**VII. Biological Reports Requirements.**

New section. Please consider adding a section on *Preparer's Qualifications and Certifications* that must be included in the SEA Site Assessment Report (SSAR) and SEA Site Impacts Report (SSIR).

SEA Site Assessment Report Sections 2 and 3. Please consider adding additional information required in those sections. San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Building has detailed *Guidelines for Biological Resources Assessments (December 2009)* that could be used as a model; especially the sections on Biological Survey Process, Appendix A sections E, F, and H as well as Appendix B. This Guide can be found at [http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Assets/PL/environmental/environmentalresources/Guidelines\\_Bio.pdf](http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Assets/PL/environmental/environmentalresources/Guidelines_Bio.pdf)

SEA Site Impacts Report Section 3, 4 and 5. Please consider adding additional information required in those sections. San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Building has detailed *Guidelines for Biological Resources Assessments (December 2009)* that could be used as a model; especially in Appendix A section G. This Guide can be found at [http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Assets/PL/environmental/environmentalresources/Guidelines\\_Bio.pdf](http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Assets/PL/environmental/environmentalresources/Guidelines_Bio.pdf)

**VIII. Invasive Species List.**

Please indicate the source for the list of invasive plant species and add that plants given a California Invasive Plant Council inventory rating of high or moderate shall not be planted.

**GIS-NET3 MAPS**

**SEA Proposed-DRAFT- layer**

Please amend the proposed SEA boundary as described on the attached maps.

**SEA Proposed-Developed Areas- layer**

Please amend the developed area polygons as described on the attached maps.

Howard

Page 9

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. We look forward to reviewing the still to come sections of the Program Guide as soon as they are made available. Feel free to contact me or Lizette Longacre, Ecologist, at (562) 945-9003 for further discussion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bob Henderson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Bob Henderson

Chairman

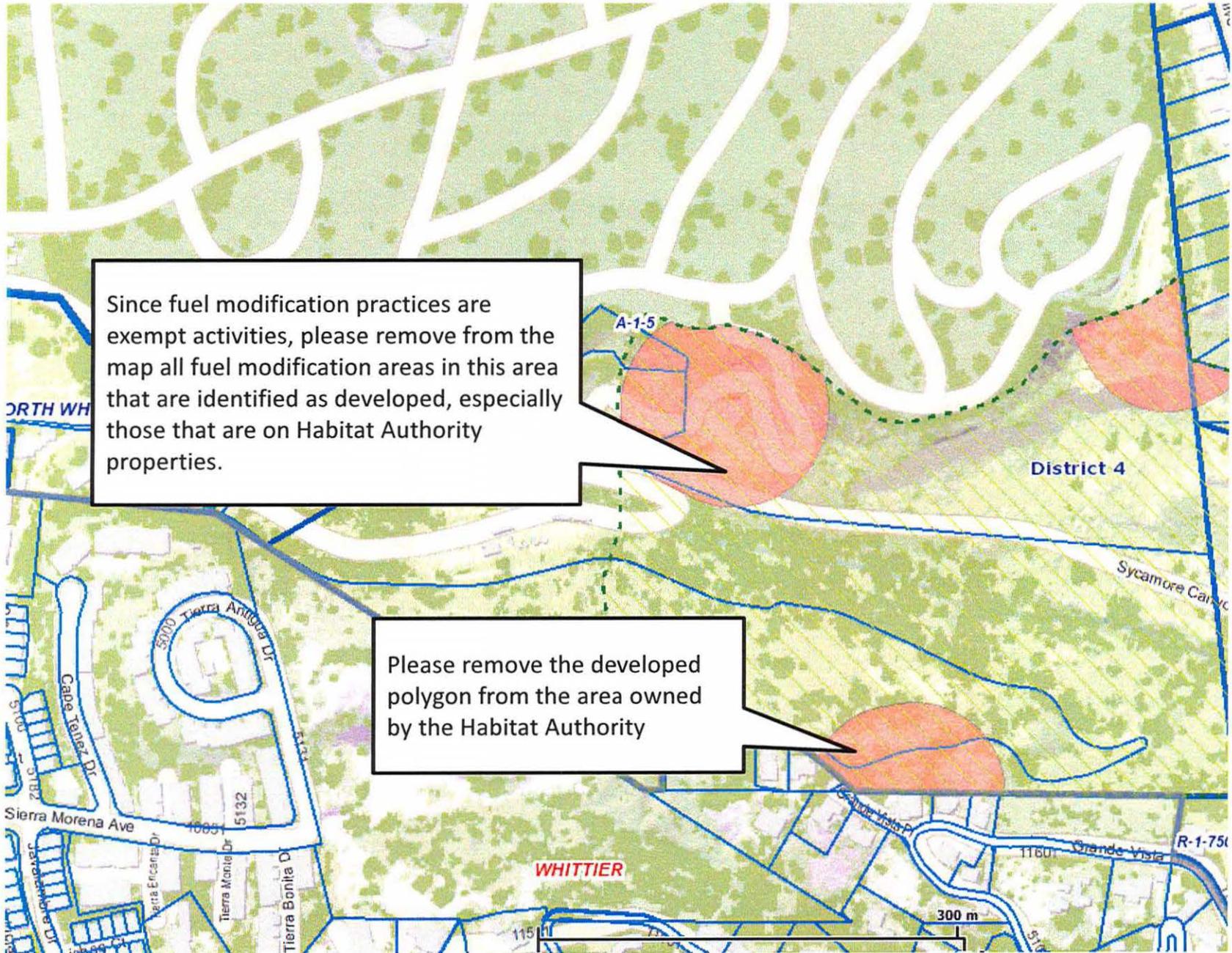
cc: Board of Directors  
Citizens Technical Advisory Committee  
Mitch Glaser, Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

Attached:  
Comments on SEA maps

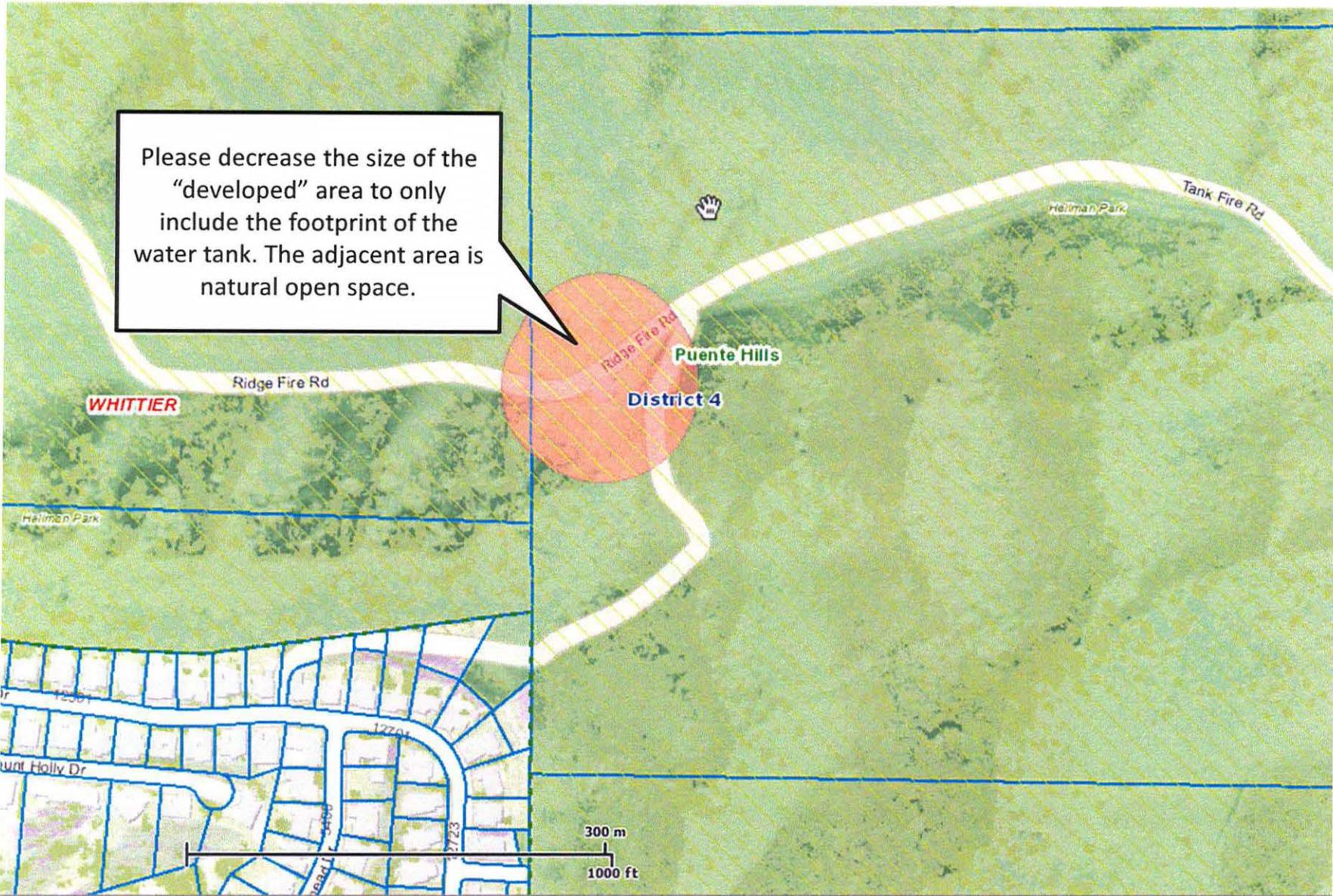
## **Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority**

### **Comments on SEA Developed Area and SEA Boundary maps**

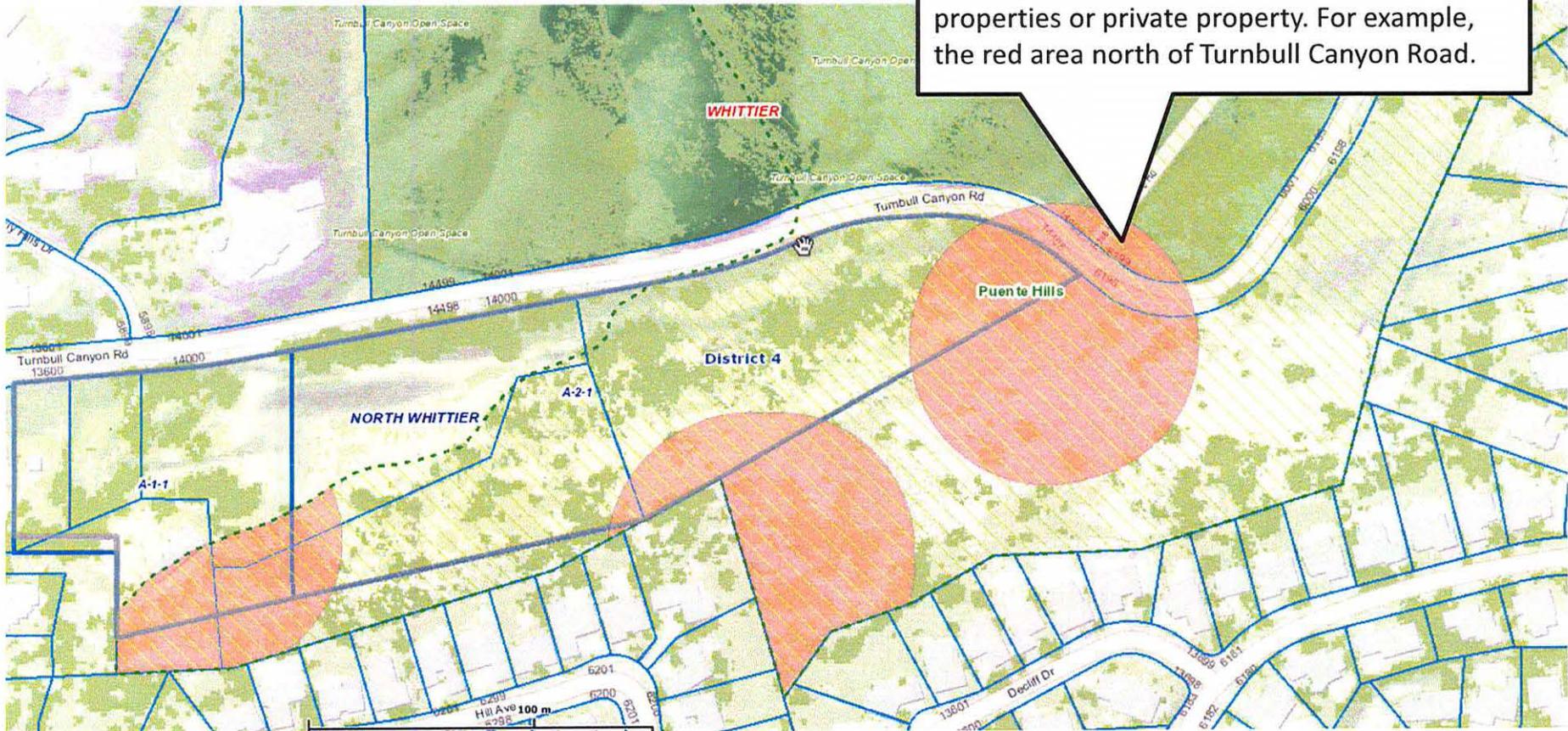
**Global comment: Since according to section 22.52.2910 C7a of the SEA Ordinance fuel modification practices are exempt, please remove all developed area bubbles intended to identify fuel modification practices from the map for Habitat Authority owned or managed properties and all private properties. Identifying fuel modification areas as developed areas exposes them to future developments which counteracts the purpose of preserving the surrounding open space from impacts by future additional fuel modification requirements or other impacts from future developments.**

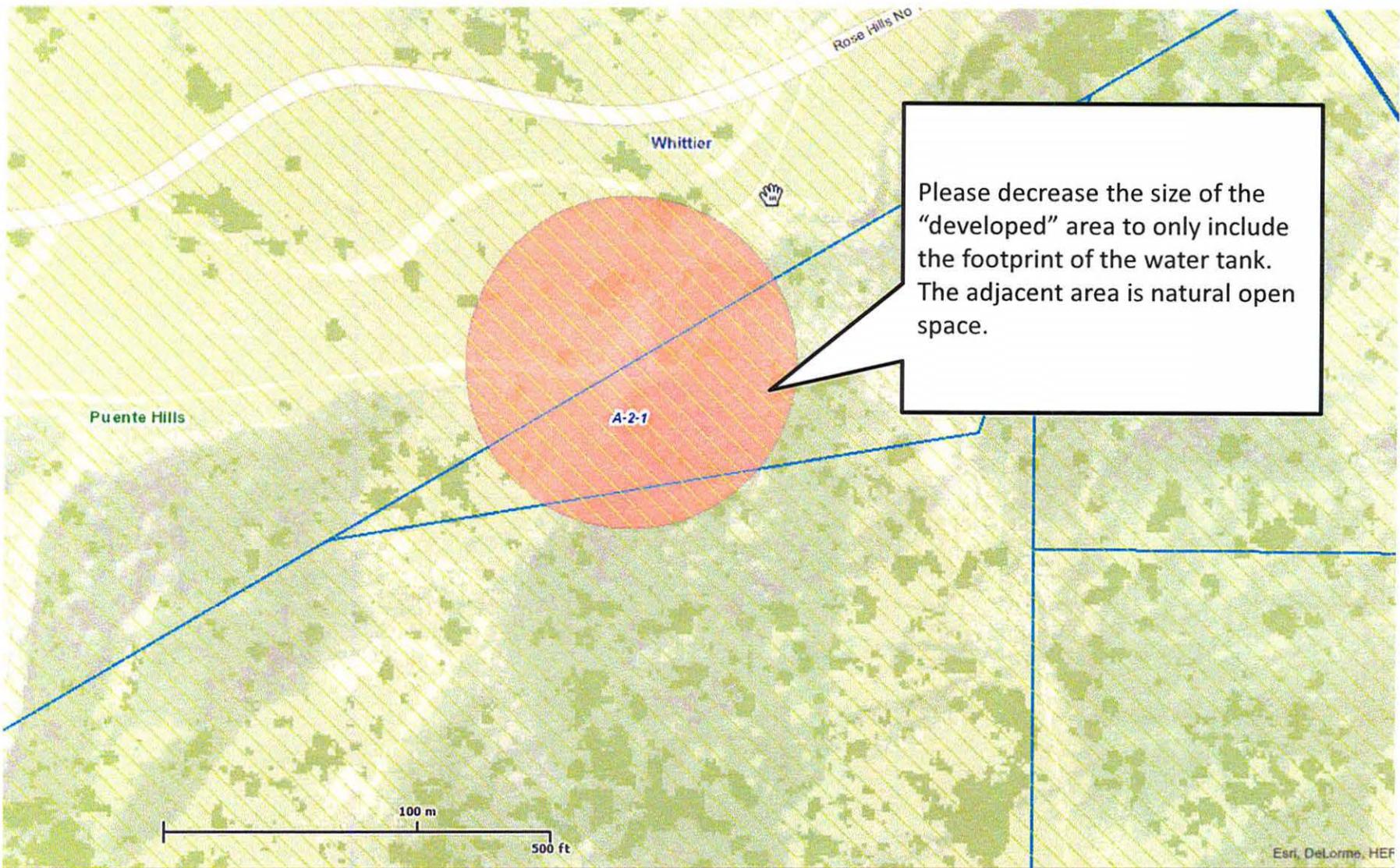


Please decrease the size of the "developed" area to only include the footprint of the water tank. The adjacent area is natural open space.



Since fuel modification practices are exempt activities, please remove from the map all fuel modification areas that are identified as developed that are on Habitat Authority properties or private property. For example, the red area north of Turnbull Canyon Road.





Please decrease the size of the "developed" area to only include the footprint of the water tank. The adjacent area is natural open space.

Puente Hills

Whittier

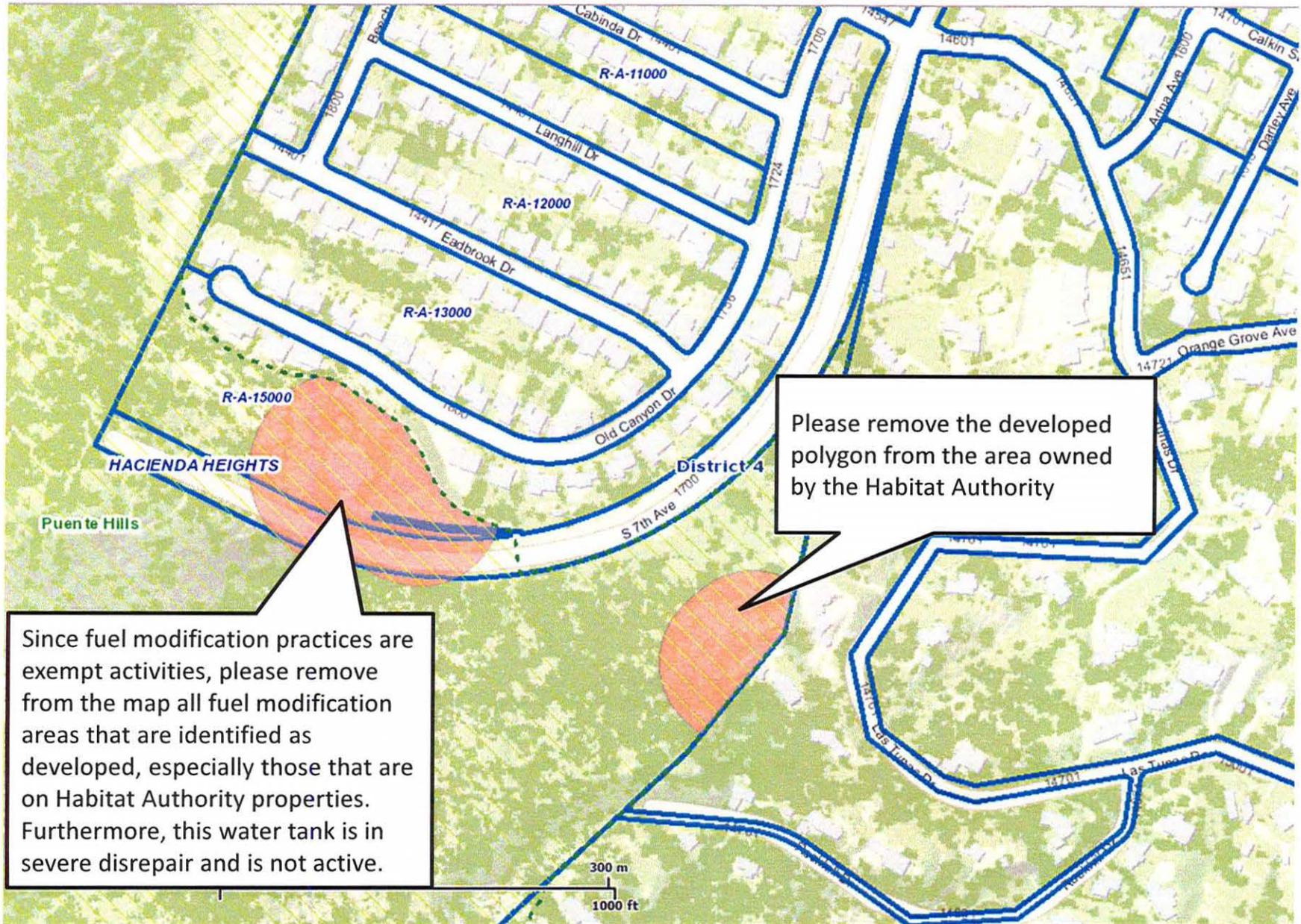
Rose Hills No.

A-2-1

100 m

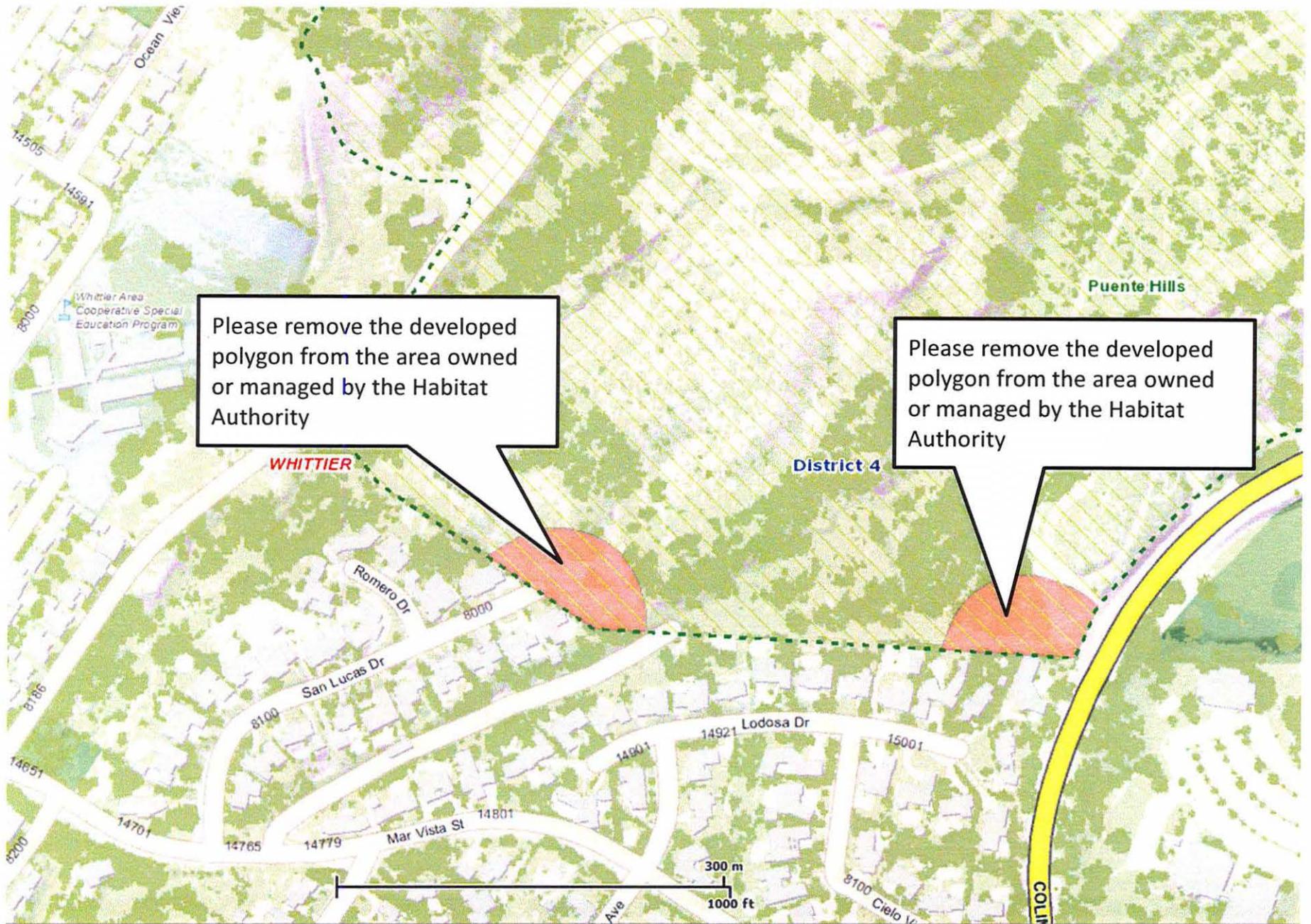
500 ft

Esri, DeLorme, HEF

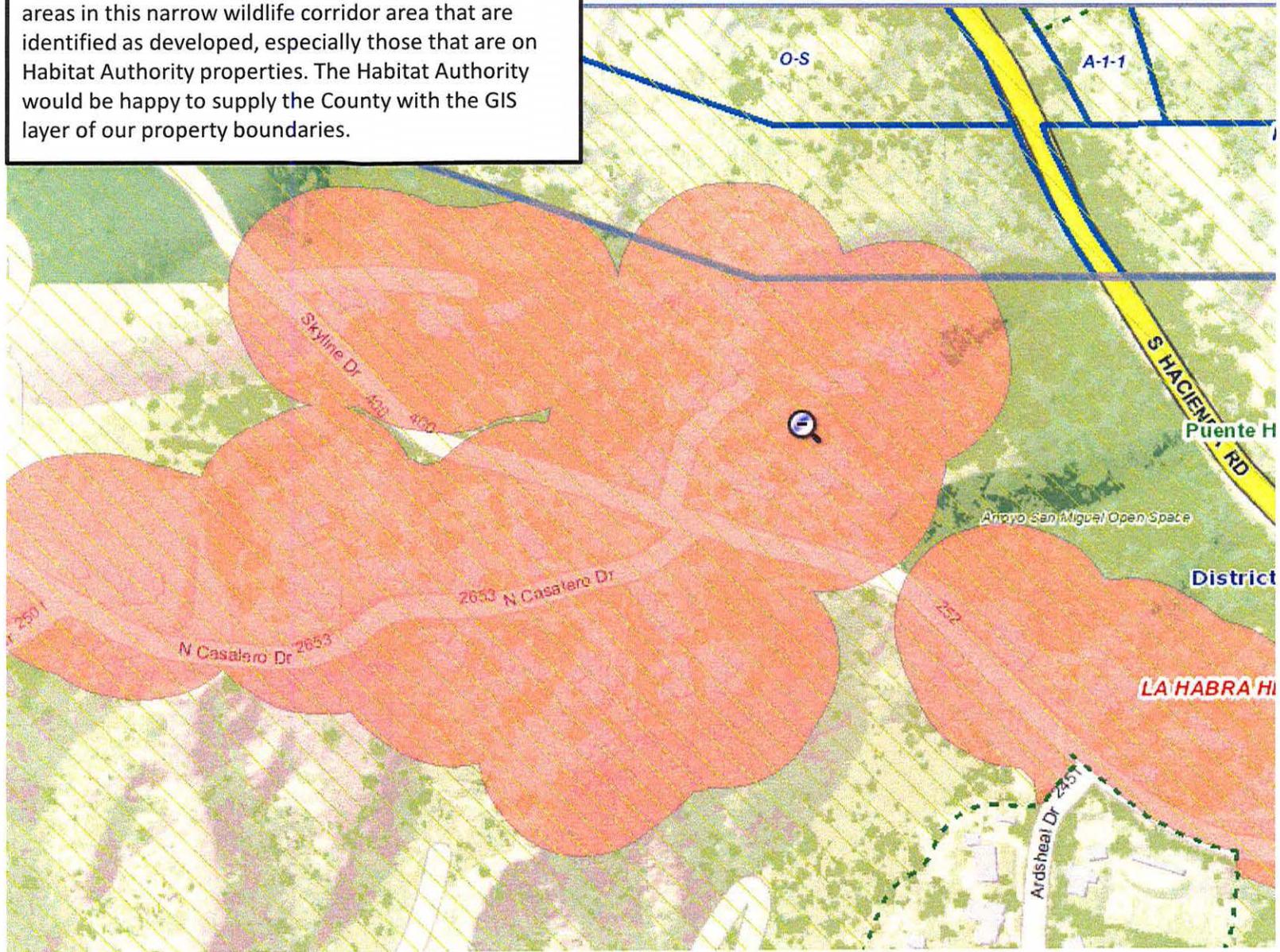


Please remove the developed polygon from the area owned by the Habitat Authority

Since fuel modification practices are exempt activities, please remove from the map all fuel modification areas that are identified as developed, especially those that are on Habitat Authority properties. Furthermore, this water tank is in severe disrepair and is not active.

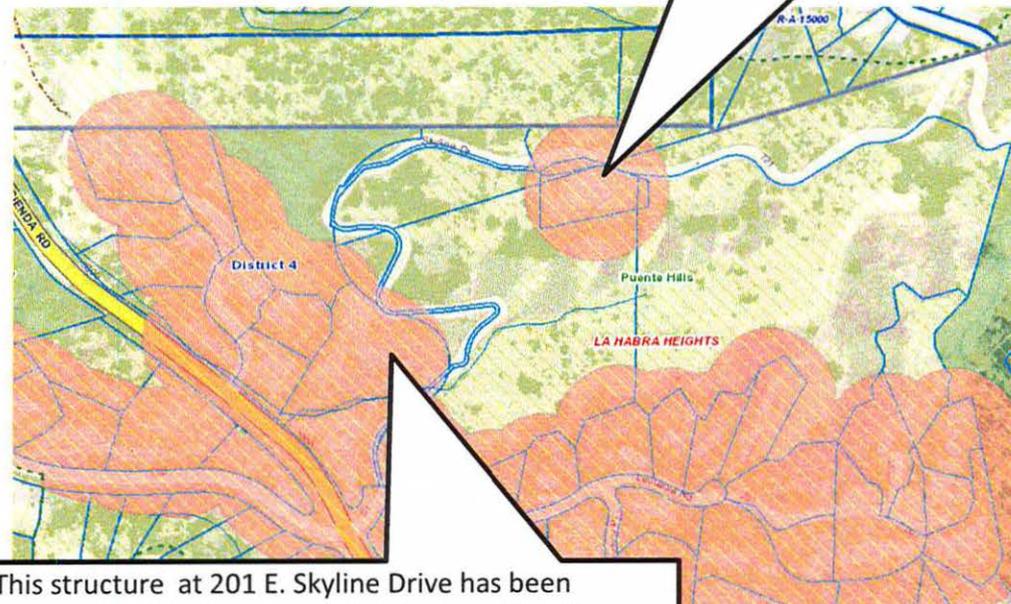


Since fuel modification practices are exempt activities, please remove from the map all fuel modification areas in this narrow wildlife corridor area that are identified as developed, especially those that are on Habitat Authority properties. The Habitat Authority would be happy to supply the County with the GIS layer of our property boundaries.



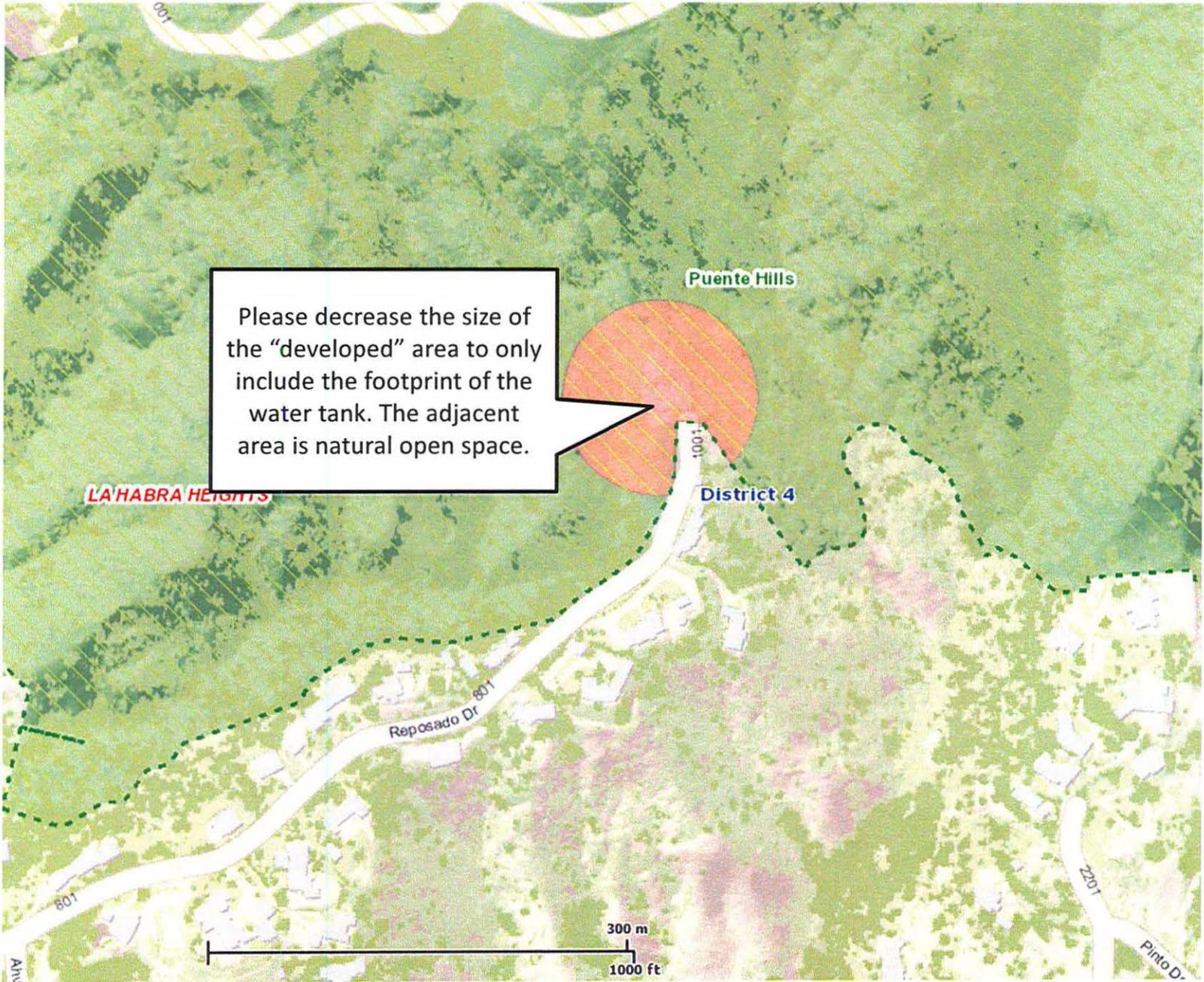
Since fuel modification practices are exempt activities, please remove from the map all fuel modification areas in this narrow wildlife corridor area that are identified as developed, especially those that are on Habitat Authority properties. The Habitat Authority would be happy to supply the County with the GIS layer of our property boundaries.

Please reduce the developed area on this map to only include the footprint of the water tank.



This structure at 201 E. Skyline Drive has been removed and no longer requires fuel modification as it is owned by the Habitat Authority. Please take this out of the developed area polygon.

La Habra Heights, Skyline Dr. and Hacienda Rd area



Please decrease the size of the "developed" area to only include the footprint of the water tank. The adjacent area is natural open space.

Puente Hills

LA HABRA HEIGHTS

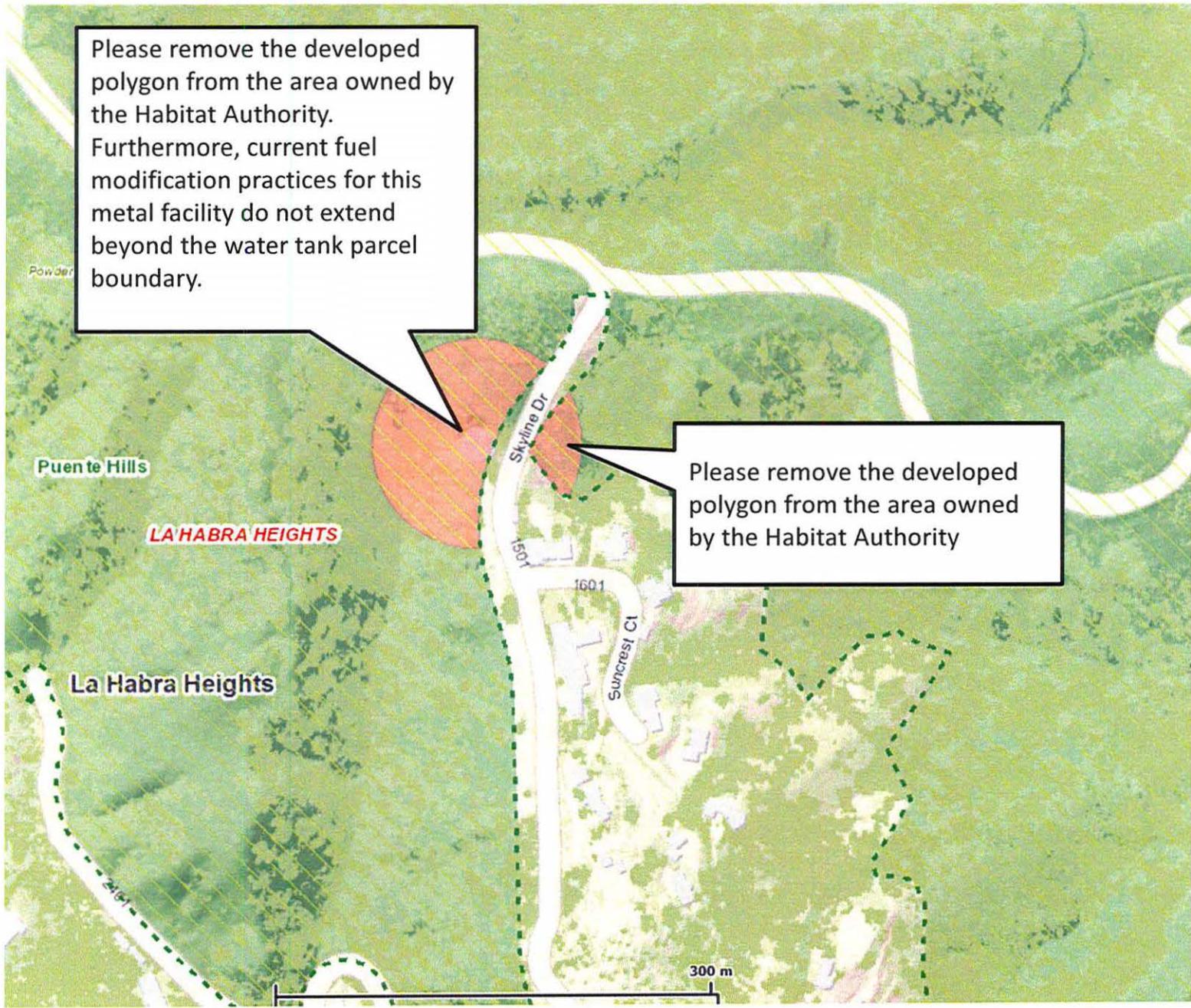
District 4

Reposado Dr

Pinto Dr

300 m

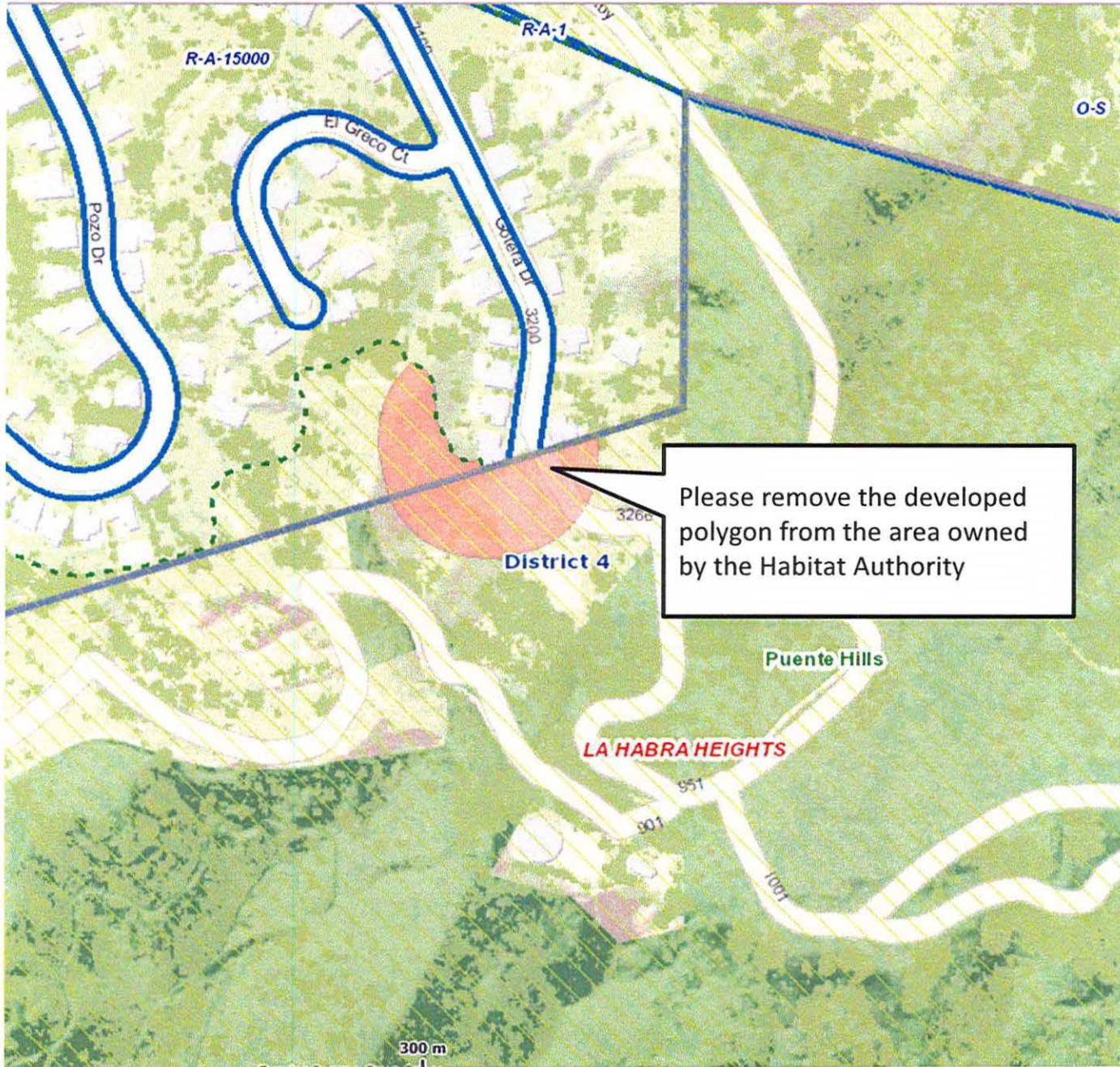
1000 ft



Please remove the developed polygon from the area owned by the Habitat Authority. Furthermore, current fuel modification practices for this metal facility do not extend beyond the water tank parcel boundary.

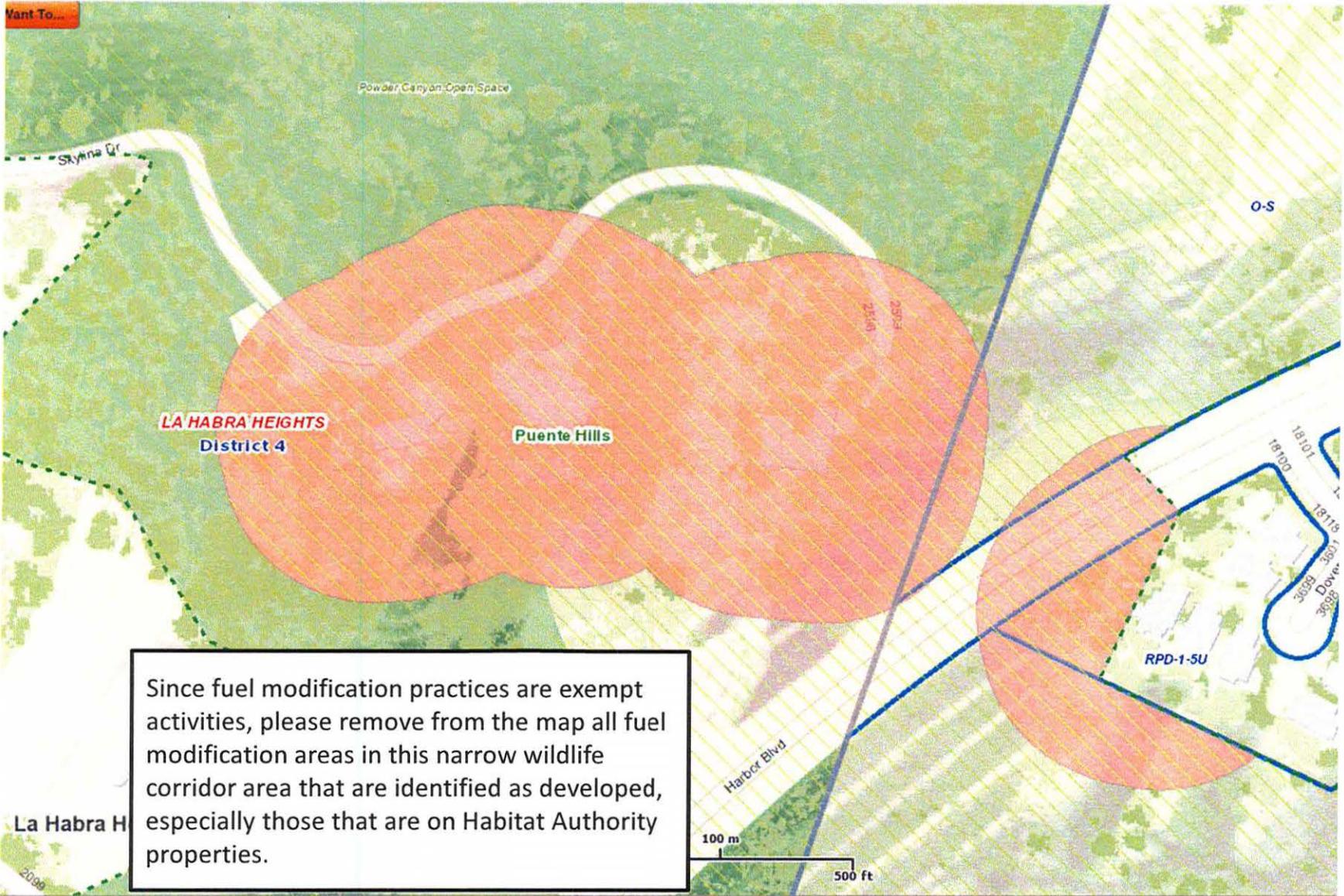
Please remove the developed polygon from the area owned by the Habitat Authority

300 m



Please remove the developed polygon from the area owned by the Habitat Authority

Want To...



Since fuel modification practices are exempt activities, please remove from the map all fuel modification areas in this narrow wildlife corridor area that are identified as developed, especially those that are on Habitat Authority properties.

Whittier

Puente Hills

The boundary of the SEA at this location is questionable as it touches 16199 Aurora Crest, an existing home.

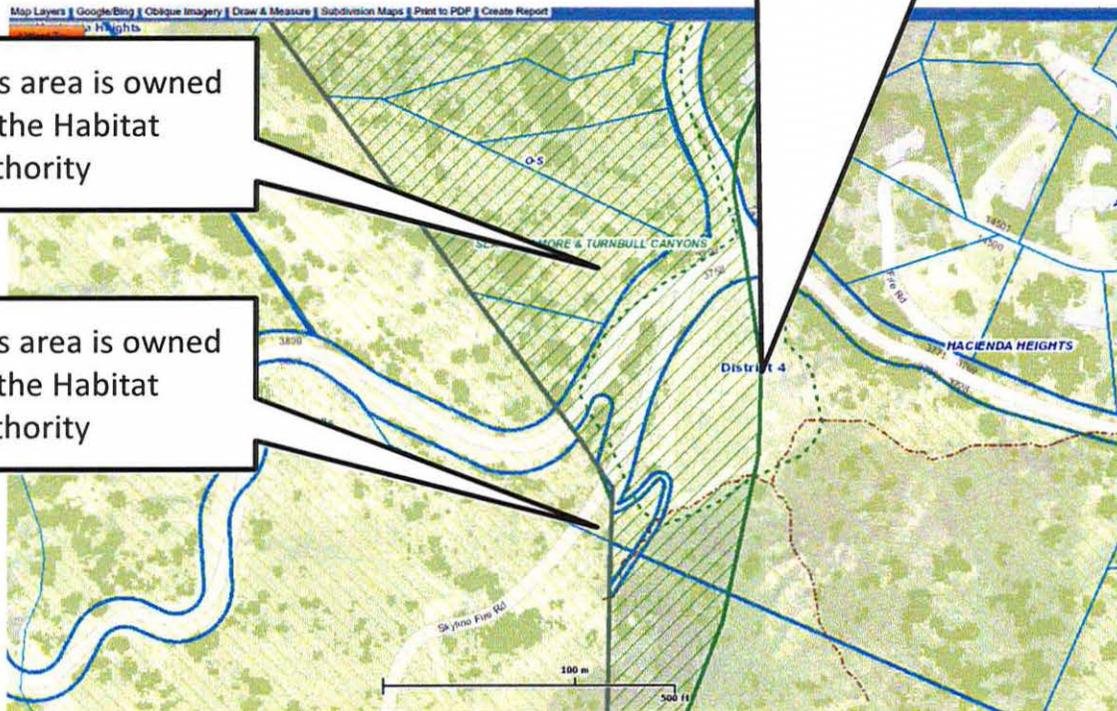


300 m  
1000 ft

Please add this area back into the designated SEA as any future development here would most likely require fuel modification clearance on Habitat Authority property and which subsequent permission for such clearance would be denied by the Habitat Authority.

This area is owned by the Habitat Authority

This area is owned by the Habitat Authority



Hacienda Heights, Turnbull Canyon Road area

## **25: Hills for Everyone**

# HILLS FOR EVERYONE

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Southern California comes  
together at the Puente - Chino Hills



Los Angeles County  
Orange County  
Riverside County  
San Bernardino County

Monday, February 3, 2014

Via email and Postal Service

County of Los Angeles  
Department of Regional Planning  
Attn: Emma Howard  
Regional Planning Department  
Room 1354  
320 W. Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
[ehoward@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:ehoward@planning.lacounty.gov)

Re: Comments on the Draft Significant Ecological Area maps

Dear Ms. Howard:

Hills For Everyone (HFE) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Draft Significant Ecological Area (SEA) map. HFE is a non-profit organization that strives to protect, preserve, and restore the environmental resources and natural environs of the Puente-Chino Hills and surrounding areas for the enjoyment of current and succeeding generations, and is closely following the County's processing of the proposed changes to the SEA map.

HFE is disappointed to see the exclusion of land on the south western portion of the Aera property. Instead we support retaining the entire AERA property into a SEA as described on pages 2 to 6 in the attached letter from the Habitat Authority dated 8/29/07.

Thank you,

*Claire Schlotterbeck*

Claire Schlotterbeck  
Executive Director

Exhibit 1: 8/29/2007 Habitat Authority letter



Puente Hills Landfill  
Native Habitat Preservation Authority

August 29, 2007

County of Los Angeles  
Department of Regional Planning  
General Plan Development Section  
Attn: Mark Herwick, General Plan Section Head  
320 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**Comments on Draft Los Angeles County General Plan**

Dear Mr. Herwick:

The Puente Hills Landfill Native Habitat Preservation Authority (Habitat Authority) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft General Plan.

The Habitat Authority is a joint powers authority established pursuant to California Government Code Section 6500 *et seq.* with a Board of Directors consisting of the City of Whittier, County of Los Angeles, Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County, and the Hacienda Heights Improvement Association. According to our mission, the Habitat Authority is dedicated to the acquisition, restoration, and management of open space in the Puente Hills for preservation of the land in perpetuity, with the primary purpose to protect the biological diversity. Additionally, the agency will endeavor to provide opportunities for outdoor education and low-impact recreation. The Habitat Authority's jurisdiction extends within eastern Los Angeles County approximately from the intersection of the 605 and 60 Freeways in the west to Harbor Boulevard in the east. The Habitat Authority owns and or manages 3,860 acres which lie within the Cities of Whittier and La Habra Heights as well as in the County unincorporated area of the Puente Hills known as Hacienda Heights and Rowland Heights.

**Proposed Puente Hills Significant Ecological Area (SEA) Delineation:**

The Habitat Authority supports in concept the proposed expansion of the Puente-Chino Hills Significant Ecological Area (SEA), and we support our properties being included within the SEA. The County's efforts to propose protection of wildlife habitat as a part of the land use element in the general plan are commendable. In order to maintain the integrity of the scientific work conducted, we recommend that the boundaries of the SEAs proposed by County consultants (PCR 2000) not be reduced even outside of the unincorporated area without further scientific evidence to support that change. In addition, there are several areas for which the biological evidence supports their inclusion within this SEA.



The open space of the Puente Hills between Harbor Blvd. and State Route 57 has been previously shown to be of great conservation concern to the entire Puente-Chino Hills corridor, both for its value in linking the west and east corridor (cite: Missing Middle) as well as because of its intrinsic value in supporting significant populations of sensitive animal species.

The current boundaries of the proposed Puente Hills Significant Ecological Area purport to encompass the significant open space of this portion of the hills, but as currently drawn, they omit a critically-important portion of the open space in unincorporated Los Angeles County: the southwestern corner of the Aera project area, which extends east from Harbor Blvd.

An aerial photo of the area in question is in Figure 1. This shows well the mosaic of habitat dominated by extensive, intact grassland (native/non-native mix), which appears tan in color. Southern California black walnut woodland (dark green) and coastal sage scrub (gray-green, lower right) comprise the other two main habitat types.

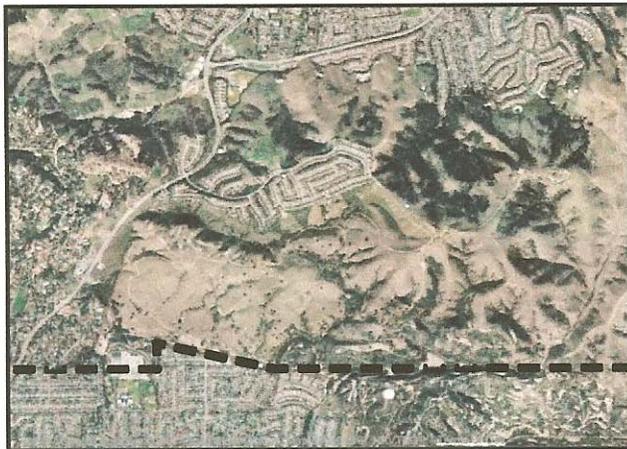


Figure 1. "Aera" region of Puente Hills.

The proposed boundaries of the SEA are reproduced in Figure 2 (in green). This configuration clearly excludes the entire southwestern corner of the Aera project area (lower left), which is marked with a red arrow in Figure 3.

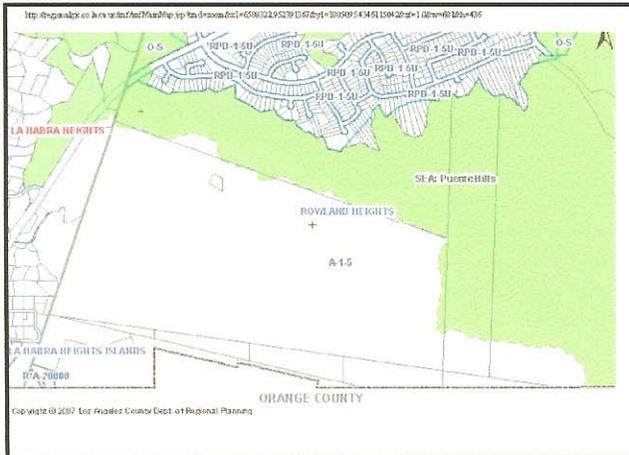


Figure 2. Map of Aera project portion of Puente Hills SEA, from Los Angeles Co. General Plan update.



Figure 3. Red arrow denotes "missing corner" of Aera project area, a region of high-quality habitat currently excluded from coverage. Blue lines show proposed boundaries of SEA

The decision to omit this area from the SEA is puzzling, especially because it exhibits features consistent with the rest of the SEA, and even supports species that are extremely localized and declining region-wide, which are presumably of great conservation concern.

Though the wording of the Los Angeles County General Plan update regarding SEAs is vague ("Conservation and Open Space" section, p. 118), a more detailed definition was provided by PCR (2000), listing six main criteria, of which the Puente Hills met four.

The criteria which it met are also satisfied by the inclusion of the omitted Aera project site, namely:

- Biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution (both a, regional and b, county-wide).

- Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting or migrating grounds and is limited in availability.
- Areas that would provide for preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities of Los Angeles.

The breeding bird species of the Puente-Chino Hills were treated by Cooper (2000), who identified three key areas most important for bird conservation in the range; two of these are located in the southwestern Aera region, *including in the portion excluded by the current boundaries*. These include the extensive grassland between Harbor Blvd. and State Route 57, and the coastal sage scrub of north Brea/west Yorba Linda.

The extensive grassland of the Aera site is unique in the Puente Hills; no other comparably large grassland remains in the Los Angeles Basin. Therefore, it is extremely important for grassland obligate species such as White-tailed Kite, Grasshopper Sparrow, and others. Despite the admixture of non-native grasses in the system, this habitat is very robust, and supports countless patches of native species, even where grazed.

The coastal sage scrub along the southeastern corner of the Aera site is an extension of what is arguably the highest-quality stand of this habitat in the entire Puente-Chino Hills, that along the northern border of the City of Brea (Orange Co.). This habitat, which also includes extensive Cactus Scrub, was found to support a robust population of the Federally-threatened California Gnatcatcher, among many other sensitive species (see below).

Southern California black walnut woodland, considered a sensitive natural community and wholly restricted to the hills surrounding the Los Angeles Basin, is probably best developed in the eastern Puente Hills (LSA 2007), including the Aera property. Prior to grazing, this habitat was probably more extensive in the "missing" Aera piece.

In a review of the status of sensitive nesting bird species of the hills (Cooper 2000:230-232) identified 18 species considered regionally-declining and at high risk of local extinction along the Puente-Chino Hills Corridor. Most of these are found within this Aera portion of the hills, including some that reach their maximum abundance in Los Angeles County here.

Notable among these are the following species:

**Northern red diamond rattlesnake *Crotalus ruber ruber***  
**California Reptile Species of Special Concern**

This animal reaches the northern global extent of its range in south-facing slopes of the Whittier Hills (Haas et al. 2002), and the Aera site presumably supports this taxon, as it occurs just to the east above Yorba Linda (pers. obs.).

**White-tailed Kite *Elanus leucurus***  
**California Bird Species of Special Concern**

Kites, presumably breeding locally, were a common site during spring/summer surveys in this area in the late 1990s; this species is effectively at the northern edge of its range in the Puente-Chino Hills in the Harbor Blvd. area, with perhaps a single pair to the west (in Powder Cyn.).

**Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos***  
**California Bird Species of Special Concern**

The only Golden Eagles observed perched in the Puente-Chino Hills during breeding surveys in 1997-98 were an adult and a juvenile observed in the Aera site, just off the eastern border of the omitted piece. These birds were detected on 24 May 1997, and presumably were the same birds that have been documented nesting near Chino Hills State Park to the east.

**Loggerhead Shrike *Lanius ludovicianus***  
**California Bird Species of Special Concern**

The Aera property may represent the last hope for breeding shrikes in the Los Angeles Basin; a recent survey (2005) conducted by the Los Angeles Co. Museum of Natural History (which did not include the Puente Hills) found no breeding pairs, yet two were on the Aera property on 31 May 1997 (Cooper, unpubl. data), suggesting breeding at least then. The habitat - rolling hills with grassland - is ideal for this species.

**California Gnatcatcher *Poliophtila californica californica***  
**Federally Threatened**

The largest population of this taxon in the Puente-Chino Hills is in the band of scrub from just east of Harbor Blvd. (incl. the Aera site missing from the proposed SEA), east into Yorba Linda in Orange Co. (visible in gray-green at the lower left of Fig. 3). Several dozen acres of this habitat appears to have been left out of the SEA. This population is presumably the source population for subpopulations farther west along the hills, including several pairs along Arroyo San Miguel (vic. Colima Rd.). Further degradation of the open space between these two groups could have detrimental effects on both populations.

**Southern California Rufous-crowned Sparrow *Aimophila ruficeps canescens***  
**California Bird Species of Special Concern**  
Very common throughout site (and throughout hills).

**Bell's Sage Sparrow *Amphispiza belli belli***  
**California Bird Species of Special Concern**

This California-Baja endemic is known in the Puente Hills only from a single (juvenile) individual observed along the eastern edge of the missing Aera corner on 24 May 1997 (Cooper, unpubl. data). This species is strongly tied to undisturbed coastal sage scrub and Chamise chaparral in our area, and, like the Loggerhead Shrike, may be extremely dependent upon this habitat on the Aera site for its persistence in the Los Angeles area. The nearest Los Angeles County populations are vic. Claremont, along the foothills of the San Gabriel Mtns. (possibly extirpated) and at Castro Peak in the western Santa Monica Mtns.

**Western Grasshopper Sparrow *Ammodramus savannarum perpallidus*** **California Bird Species of Special Concern**

Known from just a handful of areas in the Puente Hills, this range is arguably the most important site for this species in Los Angeles County. The largest population in the hills by far is located in the grassland between Harbor Blvd. and the 57 Fwy. (20+ birds in 1997, D. Cooper unpubl. data). They would be expected to occur in grassland on the southwestern corner as well. Just west of here, a breeding colony of this species was also present (<5 pr.) in the southeastern portion of Powder Canyon along the Schabarum Trail, and on a grassy ridge just south of Turnbull Canyon. (Skyline Trail).

A major study (Resource Management Plan, Puente Hills Landfill Native Habitat Authority, LSA and Associates 2007) compiled much of the pertinent information on the sensitive wildlife and plants of the Puente Hills within the Habitat Authority's jurisdiction. Notably absent from the proposed boundaries of the SEA is the entire extent of "Core habitat" which was delineated by the Habitat Authority within its Resource Management Plan located west of Colima Rd. This large parcel, now managed by the Habitat Authority, is contiguous to habitat known to support some of the most imperiled species of the Puente Hills, including the federally-threatened California Gnatcatcher and such California species of special concern as coastal populations of the Cactus Wren *Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*, the latter having suffered widespread extirpations in recent years. These areas should be included within the SEA.

Also, please consider for inclusion other biologically rich lands owned or managed by the Habitat Authority at the top of the Turnbull Canyon watershed. There are several other parcels adjacent to Habitat Authority properties in this area that warrant inclusion into the SEA due to habitat importance (Figure 4). This is an area that was found to support several rare plants, including Plummer's Mariposa-Lily *Calochortus plummerae* and the western spadefoot *Spea hammondi* (described in the RMP). However, the proposed SEA would actually reduce the coverage of this important upper watershed zone. In this case, we recommend that at the least, the existing SEA boundary remain in place.

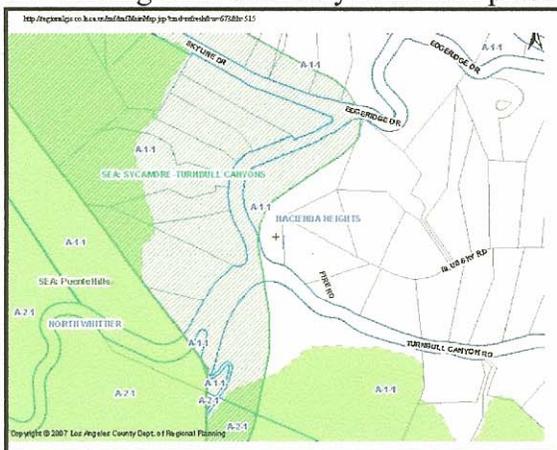


Figure 4. Hacienda Heights Area, showing pale green shaded area formerly included in the Puente Hills SEA.

While in general, the Habitat Authority welcomes the SEA designation over its properties, please consider deletion of the developed area of Sycamore Canyon from the proposed SEA designation. The Habitat Authority is considering installing a small office in between two

existing buildings at this location where there would no impacts to the native landscape or environment. This physical presence would enable us to better manage this and other sensitive habitat areas in the western Puente Hills.

Habitat Authority would welcome the opportunity to meet with County staff to discuss any of these matters in further detail.

**Proposed Puente Hills SEA Description:**

In addition, please note the following changes to the current description for the Puente Hills SEA.

On Page 1 of the Puente Hills Description– Paragraph 4- Please note that there are key regional habitats represented in the Puente Hills such as southern California black walnut woodland.

Page 2, Paragraph 1- Oak woodland is prevalent in the Hacienda Hills as well.

Paragraph 2 - Oak Riparian woodland is not extensive in Powder Canyon. Powder Canyon is a mostly arid drainage that does not have the riparian elements of many other drainages in the hills. The classic oak-willow-sycamore canopy and the dense, herbaceous understory typical of this habitat is absent from most of Powder Canyon.

Paragraph 4 – Please reevaluate the description of willow scrub. It is our understanding that willow scrub has dense understory, composed of Mulefat and Sandbar Willow *Salix exigua*.

Paragraph 5 – Please replace the word "robust" with "high in stature," "high, evergreen" or something else - most habitats have robust species, even non-native grassland.

The western limit of "mixed chaparral" in the Puente Hills extends to about Powder Canyon, and is dominated by the species listed, as well as by Scrub Oak (*Q. berberidifolia*), with subdominants of Chamise, *Cercocarpus*, and *Ceanothus*; Laurel Sumac is uncommon. The chaparral-like habitat prevalent west of Powder Canyon is better termed "sumac scrub", and is dominated by the species listed in the paragraph 5 of page 2; Laurel Sumac, for example, is common and dominant in sumac scrub

Page 2, Paragraph 5 (continued on page 3) - Mixed Chaparral is widespread in the eastern Puente Hills, and Sumac Scrub is widespread in the western Puente Hills - I would not single out individual drainages (Sycamore Canyon, etc.) here.

Page 3, Paragraph 1 - Coastal sage scrub is very robust. Maybe write "short in stature" to distinguish it from chaparral. Please note that cactus scrub forms a very important subunit of coastal sage scrub, and is extensive on southerly and westerly slopes, including Sycamore Canyon, Hellman Park, and the entire La Habra Heights area. These patches represent some of the best examples of cactus scrub in the entire county, and should be noted as such.

Paragraph 2 - Non-native grassland is extensive in three important areas of the Puente Hills; along the Skyline Trail south of Turnbull Canyon, vic. Powder Canyon, and south of Rowland

Heights ("Aera" property). This habitat supports a variety of sensitive plant and animal species (e.g., Catalina Mariposa-Lily *Calochortus catalinae*, Grasshopper Sparrow, Western Spadefoot), and is not degraded as portrayed here.

Paragraph 3 - Freshwater marsh is restricted to the San Bernardino County portion of upper Tonner Canyon, both north and south of Grand Ave. (easily visible from road); no actual freshwater marsh habitat exists within this SEA in Los Angeles Co., though there is substantial freshwater marsh to the west, within Whittier Narrows.

Paragraph 5 - Invertebrates were investigated by LSA (2005), who documented several scarce butterflies, including California Dogface *Colias eurydice*, Western Tailed-Blue *Everes amyntula*, and Mormon *Apodemia mormo* and Fatal *Calephelis nemesi* Metalmarks. These are scattered throughout the hills.

The herpetofauna of this SEA was investigated by Haas et al. (2002) and LSA (2005), who found the hills to support several locally-rare and/or sensitive species, including Western Spadefoot (one recent record vic. Skyline Trail south of Hacienda Hts.), Arboreal Salamander *Aneides lugubris* (Whittier Hills, Powder Cyn.), two species of slender-salamander (*B. nigriventris* and *B. major*; widespread), Coastal Western Whiptail *Cnemidophorus tigris* (widespread), Red Diamondback Rattlesnake *Crotalus ruber* (localized), and Western Blind Snake *Leptotyphlops humilis* (Powder Cyn.).

Page 4, Paragraph 1 - Sensitive mammals (LSA 2005) include the Desert Woodrat *Neotoma lepida* and habitat specialists like the Cactus Mouse *Peromyscus eremicus* (Whittier Hills) and the Western Gray Squirrel *Sciurus griseus* (Powder Cyn.).

The Puente Hills is extremely important for bats, and 11 species were documented here during a recent study (Remington 2006), including such sensitive species as Yuma myotis *Myotis ymanensis*, western red bat *Lasiurus blossevillii*, western yellow bat *Lasiurus xanthinus*, hoary bat *Lasiurus cinereus*, pallid bat *Antrozous pallidus*, pocketed free-tailed bat *Nyctinomops femorosaccus* and western mastiff bat *Eumops perotis*.

Page 4 – Paragraph 2 –The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (a joint powers of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy) working with the Wildlife Corridor Conservation Authority commissioned the study of wildlife movement in Puente Hills.

Page 5 - A major study (LSA 2007) compiled much of the pertinent information on the sensitive wildlife and plants of the Puente Hills within the Habitat Authority's jurisdiction. The federally Threatened California Gnatcatcher occurs in at least two areas of the hills, vic. Arroyo San Miguel east of Colima Dr. and a smaller, possibly irregular population along Sycamore Canyon in the western Puente Hills. These represent some of the last locales for this bird in the Los Angeles Basin, and some of the farthest-north individuals of the species.

This range is notable as holding among the last known populations in the Los Angeles area for several taxa that are considered California Species of Special Concern and/or that are nearly extinct locally, and through recent biological monitoring, we are discovering additional

protected species every year, including the federally Endangered Least Bell's Vireo, detected in 2005 and 2007 and possibly rare summer resident. It is not a coincidence that many of these species are grassland or coastal scrub specialists; these habitats have been virtually eliminated in the Los Angeles Basin, but persists in a reasonably intact state in the Puente-Chino Hills (Cooper 2000).

**Proposed SEA Ordinance:**

From time to time the Habitat Authority will propose improvements to the open space such as low impact recreational trailheads, trails, wildlife road underpasses, or fences to limit illegal off-road activity on protected preserve areas. Our intentions with these and similar projects are to design them around the existing biological resources to ensure the resources will continue to function and even flourish. We recommend that open space management activities of this nature be considered as compatible and appropriate within a SEA. More specifically, we recommend that language be added into the SEA Ordinance allowing public land preservation agencies with adopted management plans to carry out all activities that contribute the mission of their agency.

**Circulation:**

In regards to Figure 4.6, Adopted and Proposed Scenic Corridors, we support the existing candidacy of Colima Rd., Hacienda Rd., Harbor Blvd., and the 57 Freeway as scenic corridors. In addition, we support adding Turnbull Canyon Rd., as a proposed scenic corridor.

**Conservation & Open Space Element:**

We commend the County for its efforts in protecting the last remaining open space areas in the Los Angeles Basin. In regards to Figure 5.1, Open Space, we will support the inclusion of the unincorporated Authority owned/managed lands to be designated as Other Park and Conservancy Land. Currently some of the unincorporated properties we own/manage are indicated as such, but not all of them. Please contact the Habitat Authority staff for a map of Habitat Authority owned/managed lands in GIS at your convenience.

In regards to Figure 5.2, Trail Network, missing is the existing Los Angeles County Schabarum Trail through the Puente Hills. Please include this trail and its connector trails, as well as adopted trails of the Habitat Authority which can be designated as Existing Official Trails on Public Lands Trail Network. Please contact the Habitat Authority staff for a map of these trails in GIS at your convenience.

In regards to the Biological Resources: Urban-Wildland Interface (page 123), we recommend that its definition include the following italicized language "...where the edge of the forest *and other publicly owned open space* lands meet development..." The Habitat Authority's adopted Resource Management Plan addresses urban edge issues, and we also have produced a DVD regarding urban edge issues, both intended to protect the Puente Hills' biotic, watershed, aesthetic and recreational resources. Edge issues are not unique to the forest.

**Safety:**

On page 164, please add to Goal S-2: Coordination with other public agency emergency planning and response activities.

Furthermore, the General Plan should address the issue of compatibility of roadways with wildlife in the Circulation and Conservation and Open Space Elements, not exclusively in the section dealing with Significant Ecological Areas. Issues to address include the restriction of wildlife movement, the increase in wildlife mortality with roadways, and the threat of public safety with vehicular-wildlife collisions. The draft General Plan should include measures such as wildlife underpasses, overpasses, fencing, or signage to address these conditions during the continued operation of existing roadways, for new roadway development, and for other development that would significantly increase traffic on roadways, near natural and wildland areas.

Please add us to the mailing list for the draft General Plan and all associated documents when they are made available for public review. Thank you for your consideration of our comments. Again, we would like to meet with County staff to further discuss these issues at your convenience. Feel free to contact me or Andrea Gullo, Executive Director, at (562) 945-9003 for further discussion.

Sincerely,



Bob Henderson  
Chairman

cc: Board of Directors  
Citizens Technical Advisory Committee

Sources Cited:

Cooper, D.S. 2000. Breeding landbirds of a highly-threatened open space: The Puente-Chino Hills, California. *Western Birds* 31(4):213-234.

Haas, C.D., A.R. Backlin, C. Rochester, and R.N. Fisher. 2002. Monitoring reptiles and amphibians at longterm biodiversity monitoring stations: The Puente-Chino Hills. USGS Western Ecology Research Center. Final report. Sacramento, California.

LSA Associates, Inc. 2005. Dragonfly, Butterfly, and Vertebrate Species Matrix for the Puente Hills Landfill Native Habitat Preservation Authority Lands, Results of Multispecies Surveys and Pitfall Trapping, Irvine, California.

LSA Associates, Inc. 2007. (Draft) resource management plan. Puente Hills Landfill Native Habitat Preservation Authority. (May 2007) July 2007. Irvine, California.

PCR Services Corporation (with Frank Hovore & Associates and FORMA Systems). 2000. Biological resources assessment of the proposed Puente Hills Significant Ecological Area. November 2000. Irvine, California.

Remington, S. 2006. Bat surveys of the Puente Hills. Final report. Costa Mesa, California. July 2006.

**26: Aera Energy LLC**

## AERA PROPERTY WITHIN SEA 15

This letter is in response to DRP's invitation for Aera to set forth the specific reasons why the SEA boundary should be reconsidered in relation to the AMPC property. This invitation was in the context of Aera's consistent assertion that the AMPC property does not for the most part represent the type of high quality, undisturbed habitat that the SEA program is intended to protect. A development application for the AMPC property has been pending with DRP since 2002, and the Biota Report was reviewed by SEATAC in 2006 - 2007. Aera has been assured by DRP that the AMPC project will be processed under the SEA rules and boundaries that were applicable at the time of the application date. Nevertheless, Aera has continued to comment on the SEA Draft Ordinance that is being considered as part of the County General Plan Update, and particularly the proposed expansion of the SEA boundary to encompass an additional 947 acres of the AMPC property.

### Introduction

The proposed SEA program stands on 3 pillars: The designation of SEA lands, the description of SEA resources, and the provisions of the SEA Draft Ordinance. While this letter is primarily concerned with the designation of SEA lands in accordance with the SEA description, these three aspects are inextricably linked, and the discussion of one will necessarily touch on aspects of the other two.

The stated goal of the ordinance is to "Prevent impacts to biological resources which would compromise the conservation of the County's biological diversity by affecting either the size or the connectivity of an SEA such that species populations of significance, as described within that SEA's description within the General Plan, become unsustainable." While the Draft Ordinance states that it is not intended to preclude development within the SEA's, it is clear to Aera that most larger-scale building projects could be rendered economically or logistically infeasible once the provisions of the Draft Ordinance are applied. This is due in large measure to the extraordinary degree to which the Draft Ordinance dictates a "no surface disturbance" outcome based on the SEA description. Imposition of such sweeping restrictions may be appropriate for acreage that truly represents "unique", "excellent", or "some of the best" examples of undisturbed native habitats as they are characterized in the description of SEA resources. As detailed below, Aera does not believe the SEA designation should apply to the disturbed and impaired resources that are found in most areas of the AMPC property.

Unfortunately, the SEA description suggests that poor quality, low functioning acreage should also be preserved in place as if it is ecologically sensitive. This concept is introduced by the assertion in the SEA description that "the entire mosaic of all the vegetation communities within the SEA and connected areas constitutes a functional ecosystem for a wide variety of wildlife species". By offering preservation of existing conditions as the only avenue available, the Draft Ordinance reinforces the suggestion that existing conditions are ideal to achieve the species diversity, connectivity, and sustainability that is the goal of the SEA program. This misunderstanding may explain the proposed SEA expansion onto some of the most degraded portions of the AMPC property.

As described below, habitats on much of the AMPC property are degraded and impaired, and are not contributing significantly to biological diversity or sustainability. Left in their present condition, these habitats will not restore themselves to biological vitality. Restoration and active management will be necessary to restore sustainable biological function.

### Setting

As it exists today, SEA 15 was established to ensure that California Walnut Woodlands are given appropriate consideration as properties are proposed for development. The existing SEA comprises about 6,450 acres and does not address wildlife connectivity at all. The proposed expansion would approximately double SEA 15 to take in about 13,820 acres. With respect to the Walnuts, the original designation encompassed about 1,400 acres of Aera's property, based on review of 1985-vintage aerial photography. Subsequent on-the-ground surveys revealed that only about 300 acres of that area (21%) actually met the minimum threshold for walnut woodland.

The SEA designation encompasses about 1,400 acres (53%) of the 2,614 acres of Aera's property within Los Angeles County. Another 947 acres (37%) of Aera's property is proposed to be included in the SEA expansion. Thus, if the expansion is approved, 90% of Aera's Los Angeles County holding will be designated as Significant Ecological Area.

The Aera property has continuously hosted cattle grazing and oil operations for more than 100 years. Both of these activities provide economic return on the property, and the grazing use also reduces the fuel load on the property, protecting natural and man-made resources, on- and off-site, from wildfires. Over the years, however, these activities have also significantly affected the biological resources onsite.

The quality of biological resources within the SEA on Aera's property is best understood by considering the property in three separate zones: Area "A" comprising 323 acres east of the SR-57 freeway, Area "B" comprising 1093 Acres of existing SEA designation west of the freeway, and Area "C" being the 929 acres further west to Harbor proposed to be included in the SEA expansion (See Exhibit "A", attached). The following table shows the vegetation types and acreages within each of these areas:

Vegetation Type	Area "C"*		Area "B"		Area "A"*	
	Acreage	Percent	Acreage	Percent	Acreage	Percent
Developed/Disturbed	96	10.3%	33	3.0%	9	2.8%
Annual NNG	556	59.8%	406	37.1%	81	25.1%
CSS	70	7.5%	15	1.4%	0	0.0%
Chaparral	45	4.8%	195	17.8%	41	12.7%
Coast Live Oak	36	3.9%	174	15.9%	148	45.8%
Walnut Woodland	99	10.7%	263	24.1%	37	11.5%
Other Woodland	17	1.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Riparian	10	1.1%	7	0.6%	7	2.2%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>929</b>		<b>1093</b>		<b>323</b>	

\*Note: 18 acres of SEA Proposed Expansion are located in Area "A" east of the SR- 57 Freeway

This table shows that the proposed 929-acre SEA expansion within Area "C" is comprised overwhelmingly (70%) of non-native grassland ("NNG") and developed/disturbed acreage. Area C does have some locations with oak and walnut woodland, and these are localized generally on north-facing slopes. Area "C" contains more coastal Sage Scrub (CSS) than the other areas but the habitat value of the NNG, CSS and the tree resources in this area is impaired by grazing, fragmentation and extensive encroachment by invasive species. These factors are discussed in more detail below.

Moving east, Area "B" has relatively less developed/disturbed and NNG acreage (40% of the 1,093-acre area) and very little CSS. A higher percentage of this area has tree resources (40%) and chaparral (18%) than the other areas. Similar to Area "C", these resources are impaired by grazing, fragmentation and extensive encroachment by invasive species.

Area "A", east of the SR-57 Freeway, clearly has the best tree resources on the AMPC property, covering 57% of the 323-acre area in larger, denser, and more homogeneous stands. The trees are affected to a lesser degree by the impairments found in Areas B & C.

In summary, while some areas encompassed within SEA 15 may include relatively undisturbed acreage, there is no area of AMPC that could accurately be described as "undisturbed". Biological resources across the entire property are affected to one degree or another by the cattle grazing and oil operations that have been ongoing for more than a century. In particular, the preponderance of acreage in Areas "B" and "C" in no way represents the type of quality habitats or abundant wildlife identified as Sensitive Biological Resources in General Plan Appendix "E".

#### SEA Criteria

There are six criteria set forth in the SEA description to establish the regional biological value of SEA 15. Of these six criteria, the AMPC property meets only two: the presence of plant communities, primarily walnut woodlands, which are restricted on a Countywide and Regional basis.

- ***Criterion A: The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.***

The Criteria Analysis indicates that this criterion is not met by SEA 15

- ***Criterion B: On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution***  
This criterion specifies walnut woodland, oak riparian, southern willow scrub, freshwater marsh and coastal sage scrub. Each of these plant communities is addressed in relation to the AMPC property in the comments on Characteristic Plant Communities below.

- ***Criterion C: Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution***  
This criterion is identical to Criterion B, as it applies to Los Angeles County rather than a regional scale.

- **Criterion D: Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in Los Angeles County**

While this criterion is considered to be met by SEA 15, onsite field studies going back to 1994 conclusively demonstrate the AMPC property does not host concentrations of wildlife, but instead exhibits unusually low biologic function over most of its extent.

- **Criterion E: Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or represent an unusual variation in population or community.**

The Criteria Analysis indicates that this criterion is not met by SEA 15

- **Criterion F: Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in Los Angeles County**

While this criterion is considered to be met by SEA 15 as a whole, there is no area of the AMPC property that could accurately be described as “undisturbed”. Biological resources across the entire property are affected to one degree or another by the cattle grazing and oil operations that have been ongoing for more than a century. Onsite surveys show that the walnut woodlands onsite do not exhibit natural sustainability.

#### **PUENTE HILLS SEA 15 DESCRIPTION OF RESOURCES (EXCERPTED FROM GENERAL PLAN TECHNICAL APPENDIX E)**

Appendix “E” of the Los Angeles General Plan Update (May, 2012 draft) describes plant types and communities within each SEA and forms the basis for designating areas containing Sensitive Biological Resources within the SEA. The SEA 15 description begins with a General Boundary and Resources Description of entire 13,820-acre SEA, then goes on to describe specific vegetation and wildlife resources and the areas in which they are found within the SEA. The following sections excerpt text from the resource descriptions found on pages 177 – 188 of Appendix E, and compares and contrasts those descriptions with the resources and conditions found to be present on the AMPC Property. References are made to the **Biota Report** reviewed by SEATAC in 2006, and to the **Oak and Walnut Woodland Management Plan** that was included as Appendix “D” to the Biota report.

#### **GENERAL BOUNDARY AND RESOURCES DESCRIPTION**

**SEA Text:** *“(A) wildlife passage tunnel under Harbor Boulevard... was constructed by the Puente Hills Landfill Natural Habitat Preservation Authority, and its mud floor has many track prints that attest to frequent use by deer and other animals. The tunnel has the ridgeline area on its west side (with scattered residences), and on the east side are a deep canyon with fine riparian oak woodland, hills with scattered oil wells, walnut woodland, and grasslands.”*

The eastern end of the Harbor Blvd. wildlife tunnel is located at the western boundary of the AMPC property. Completed in 2006, this tunnel exits into a steep, deep canyon on the AMPC Property that extends up the canyon to the east for approximately 1 mile, averaging 860 feet wide from rim to rim,

and 150 feet deep. Approximately 20 feet in diameter, the tunnel represents a key link, and also the limiting factor, for wildlife connectivity crossing Harbor Blvd. The canyon is part of the proposed expansion of SEA 15 in recognition of the connectivity function. Aera agrees that this canyon represents a critical connection for wildlife movement and worked closely with Los Angeles County Public Works, the Puente Hills Habitat Authority, and other stakeholders to support construction of the wildlife tunnel. Aera proposes to preserve the canyon in its present condition.

Data collected since the construction of the tunnel suggest that it is used regularly by coyotes and mule deer with occasional use by bobcat. Maintenance of genetic diversity for the local bobcat population requires successful immigration by bobcats once per generation (or approximately once every three years). Any land use plan would have to prioritize the preservation of this linkage, as planning for the Aera Master Planned Community does. Using established principles for wildlife movement, the AMPC land use plan ensures that species such as the bobcat can easily traverse the corridor. The open space set-aside also provides substantial live-in habitat for bobcats and other species.

The text is completely in error in reporting "fine riparian oak woodland" in the canyon on the east end of the tunnel. This error is emblematic of the lack of scientific rigor in the studies underpinning the designation of SEA lands. There is no oak woodland in the canyon; rather, a stand of walnuts occupies the north-facing slope of the canyon. The riparian habitat that occurs in the floor of the canyon is a mix of mulefat scrub and willow scrub that exhibits high levels of disturbance due to ongoing cattle grazing and the presence of non-native blue-gum eucalyptus which are common or locally dominant in portions of the canyon. It should also be noted that the riparian vegetation associated with this canyon not a natural feature, but is fed almost exclusively by urban runoff from the Vantage Pointe neighborhood to the north. Historical aerial photography shows that the riparian species became established following completion of the Vantage Pointe tract.

***SEA Text: East of Fullerton Road, the gnatcatcher critical habitat differs from the SEA. Gnatcatcher critical habitat narrowly includes the Harbor Boulevard wildlife passage tunnel, goes on the south side of the Vantage Point exclusion area, and trends into Orange County on the eastern side of the oilfield that borders the Vantage Point development.***

This discussion refers to Gnatcatcher "critical habitat", a designation applied by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Specifically, the USFWS published a final rule designating critical habitat for the California gnatcatcher in 2007, designating about 1,125 acres of the AMPC property within Los Angeles County as Gnatcatcher critical habitat. This designation was made under the federal Endangered Species Act. Similar to the SEA work, it represents an effort to identify areas that could exhibit certain characteristics ("Primary Constituent Elements" or "PCE") that would promote the persistence of the gnatcatcher within the region. Because of the size of the mapping units, units designated as critical habitat often only contain limited areas that meet the USFWS definition of PCEs. This is the case on the AMPC property. Onsite field studies going back to 1994 conclusively demonstrate that CSS resources are found on only 3%-4% of the AMPC property, and are highly fragmented, generally in poor condition, and consistently support only 3 to 5 pairs of Gnatcatchers on the entire 2,935 acre site. This is compared with nearby sites containing large blocks of CSS, which support large gnatcatcher populations (see the Coastal Sage Scrub discussion, below).

***SEA Text (near the end of the Sensitive Biological Resources section): “Critical habitat areas, after extensive study by experts, are judged to be essential to conservation and maintenance of the species.”***

While the goal of Endangered Species Act is that habitat essential to the endangered species would be designated as Critical Habitat, no such claim was made by USFWS at the time that the Revised Designation of Critical Habitat for the Coastal California Gnatcatcher was published. To the contrary, the final, revised designation, published in the Federal Register on December 19, 2007, makes clear that it relied on sparse or incomplete data for large areas encompassed by the Critical Habitat designation. USFWS used the best information available at the time to remedy the most glaring inaccuracies before publishing the final rulemaking, however the designation of nearly 200,000 acres was necessarily imprecise. This imprecision is reflected on the AMPC property where, of the approximate 1,530 acres designated as Gnatcatcher Critical Habitat, only 105 acres have the primary constituent elements (PCE1) to be identified as Coastal Sage Scrub, and only about 25 acres is actually occupied by Gnatcatchers.

The suggestion that the Critical Habitat designation applies only to acreage is “essential” to species maintenance is also inconsistent with the Criteria Analysis for SEA 15, which acknowledges that habitat for core populations of Gnatcatchers is not found within SEA 15.

Gnatcatchers are, of course, a protected species – covered by well-established rules and protocols to protect them and their habitat, including the Section 9 of the federal Endangered Species Act and the Critical Habitat designation discussed in this section. As addressed in the discussion of Coastal Sage Scrub in the Vegetation section, numerous projects have demonstrated that habitat restoration associated with development projects has been highly successful in enhancing and creating high-functioning CSS habitat, which has in turn increased CAGN populations and contributed to the recovery of the species. In fact, the Critical Habitat final rulemaking points out in a footnote that “Restoration of degraded habitats can increase local population sizes and facilitate movement between populations (e.g., Miner et al. 1998)”. Because the Draft SEA Ordinance prescribes avoidance and preservation to the exclusion of mitigation or restoration, an SEA designation actually represents an impediment to doing this type of restoration.

The AMPC project envisions creation of an “archipelago” of high-quality CSS across the site within the wildlife corridor. This would increase the carrying capacity on the site and enhance connectivity for gnatcatchers, connecting the site to populations to the west and east. Aera has extensive experience in restoring and creating gnatcatcher habitat in the Vista del Verde project in Yorba Linda. That project entailed preserving, creating and restoring about 150 acres of CSS habitats that support about 25 pairs of gnatcatchers – the same population that existed on the VDV property before the project began.

#### **VEGETATION SECTION (INTRODUCTION):**

***SEA Text: “The SEA encompasses the remaining relatively undisturbed... examples of woodland, shrubland, grassland and wetland communities that once existed throughout the inland hills complex of the Los Angeles Basin. Included among these habitats are excellent examples of oak woodland, oak riparian forest, southern willow scrub and walnut woodland.***

***Intermixed with these are stands of mixed chaparral, coastal sage scrub and grasslands, which taken as a whole, form a valuable wildlife habitat unit of regional importance.”***

The Criteria Analysis acknowledges that no core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species are supported within the entire SEA. With respect to the AMPC property, there is no area that could accurately be described as “undisturbed”. The entire property has been used for cattle grazing and/or oil production for more than a century. Relative to undisturbed biological function, it is clear that the AMPC is highly disturbed over most of its areal extent. The disturbance is less evident east of the freeway, and most evident on the west side of the property but each sub-area of the AMPC Property exhibits much lower biologic function and value than would land in an undisturbed condition. The proposed SEA expansion in Area “C” of the AMPC property takes in some of the most highly degraded acreage on the AMPC property.

This high level of disturbance is clearly evidenced by low numbers of gnatcatchers and raptors, limited use special-status riparian species in Areas B and C; and extensive invasion of non-native species that includes senna, non-native grasses, and a variety of mustards, as well as substantial numbers of eucalyptus & pepper trees. Studies conducted by the project arborist also show essentially no recruitment of the next generation of oaks & walnuts, which will ultimately result in the loss of these habitats on the site.

***SEA Text: Interconnecting corridors for wildlife have a mixture of disturbed habitat areas, native vegetation, naturalized vegetation, and sparsely developed land. While such areas do not represent key regional habitats, they have been recommended for inclusion in the SEA in order to recognize the importance of the wildlife corridor function of the SEA to exchange genetic material between plant and animal populations throughout the Puente Hills, the Chino Hills, the Santa Ana Mountains, and the natural areas of other Peninsular Ranges of Southern and Baja California.***

This paragraph attempts to build a rationale for including biologically impaired, disturbed acreage in pursuit of the connectivity function. Habitat connectivity through the AMPC Property has been at the forefront of Aera’s thinking from the outset of our planning effort. The Biology community is unified in the opinion that connectivity must be maintained between the SR-57 freeway bridge (located in Orange County), across Aera’s property to the 20’ diameter Harbor Blvd. tunnel discussed above.

Extensive site-specific studies show that wildlife moves between these two points primarily through a central landscape linkage through the AMPC property (a/k/a the “crossover canyon”). These studies also show that the habitat quality and biologic function of the crossover canyon has been degraded by a century of oil operations and cattle grazing. Wildlife movement and connectivity through this area can be dramatically improved by enhancing and restoring high-functioning habitat within the crossover canyon corridor. Aera’s land use plan would extend this enhancement and restoration to include lands in Orange County, which is critical to the connectivity function but outside of Los Angeles County jurisdiction. The most notable opportunity in Orange County is the restoration of Berry Creek, which is presently dominated by oil facilities and invasive species, but could be restored as the centerpiece of a revitalized connectivity linkage. As already noted, restoration of CSS within the crossover canyon would result in significant expansion of the onsite CSS, in an area that is coincident with the USFWS area of Critical Habitat. Such restoration

provides an opportunity to increase in the carrying capacity for the gnatcatcher, while significantly enhancing connectivity to nearby properties east and west within the Critical Habitat unit.

In summary, expanding the SEA throughout Area C to promote connectivity unnecessarily burdens large land areas that have little or no connectivity function. Moreover, the draft ordinance's exclusive focus on preservation effectively freezes the biologic function of the actual corridor linkage in its current impaired condition, and does nothing to preserve or enhance the habitat linkage into Orange County. Finally, east/west connectivity crossing Harbor Boulevard is provided by a single 20' diameter tunnel under the road. No explanation has been provided regarding why it is necessary to preserve 947 additional acres of biologically impaired land to perform this connectivity function. To the contrary, Page 175-186 of the Biota Report contains a comprehensive, species by species analysis demonstrating that a restored Landscape Linkage through the crossover canyon will enhance connectivity for regional and local wildlife movement, and provide for the "live-in" habitat and genetic exchange requirements needed for long term sustainability without unnecessarily burdening adjoining acreage.

#### ***VEGETATION SECTION (DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERISTIC PLANT COMMUNITIES):***

***SEA Text: Eight major plant communities found within the Puente Hills SEA were listed in 2006: oak woodland, oak riparian forest, walnut woodland, southern willow scrub, chaparral, coastal sage scrub, freshwater marsh, and non-native grassland.***

This statement introduces a discussion of plant communities that are identified as characteristic of SEA 15. Two of the plant communities, chaparral and non-native grassland, are not included in the SEA Criteria. The description of these characteristic plant communities is important because the Draft Ordinance provides that loss of viability of an SEA is deemed to occur if a project may, among other things "result in removal of habitat that is characteristic of the SEA and described in the SEA's description". Thus, the Draft Ordinance can be interpreted to prohibit disturbance of any of these characteristic resources. The following section excerpts the resource descriptions from the SEA text, and compares and contrasts them with conditions found onsite within the AMPC Property. Photos attached as **Exhibit "C"** depict the qualitative distinctions between high-functioning, relatively undisturbed habitats and those found on the AMPC property.

#### ***Oak Woodland***

***SEA Text: A plant community dominated by species of the oak genus (Quercus). Within this SEA this species is the coast live oak (Quercus agrifolia var. agrifolia), which typically grows to heights of 20 to 40 feet and forms either closed or open tree canopies. Understory vegetation varies from grassland in areas subject to grazing to shrubs where topography is steeper and/or grazing has been relaxed. It may also intergrade with shrub communities. Within this SEA, oak woodland is scattered throughout many hillsides, drainages and broad valleys, it is most prevalent on north facing slopes and in drainage bottoms. Particularly large complexes of oak woodland are found in Powder Canyon, Brea Canyon, and Tonner Canyon.***

#### ***Oak Woodland on AMPC Property:***

Total of 358 Acres is reported on the AMPC property within LA County:

Area "A" = 148 Acres; Area "B" = 174 Acres Area "C" = 36 Acres

- Biota page 160 "The more substantial stands of oak woodlands are localized near the northeast regions of the project site on both sides of SR-57." (i.e. Area "C" and the Northeast portion of Area "B")
- Biota page 160 "Even the relatively higher density stands on site actually exhibit low oak density when compared to undisturbed oak woodlands."
- OWWMP pg 16 (2.3.3): "The site's oak woodlands, when viewed as habitat systems/natural communities, can best be described as disturbed and declining, with little or no tree recruitment indicative of a healthy, naturally regenerating woodland. The result is a decreasing rate of regeneration of oaks and the concomitant skewing of the oak population to older, less vigorous trees. Eventually, these less vigorous trees suffer declining productivity and the overall health of the woodlands declines..."
- Conclusion: While there are some fine-looking oak resources on the site, there is "virtually no seedling establishment and extremely low sapling presence in oak, walnut and mixed woodland types. Given the maturing age-classes of the existing woodlands, the lack of significant numbers of seedlings and saplings, and the long-term land use for this site (i.e. grazing), it is anticipated that the site's trees will, over time, be lost and not replaced through natural regeneration, threatening the long term sustainability of these ecosystems." (Dudek OWWMP pg S-3)

#### **Oak Riparian Forest:**

***SEA Text - A highly related community to oak woodland found in this SEA. This community is also dominated by coast live oak. The primary difference between oak woodland and oak riparian forest is the greater availability of water in riparian situations, which is expressed in a denser tree canopy and higher density of trees. There is also a greater number of hydrophytic (moister favoring) plant species in the understory. Typical riparian trees, such as western sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) and willow (*Salix spp.*), commonly occur as well. Oak riparian forest is best developed within the Sycamore Canyon, Turnbull Canyon, Powder Canyon, Brea Canyon, and Tonner Canyon drainages. It is also scattered in other drainages throughout the SEA.***

**Oak Riparian:** Total of 5.5 acres is reported on the AMPC property within LA County

- Oak Riparian habitats totaling 5.5 acres are found within approximately 30 acres of riparian areas scattered around the AMPC site. None of these sites, however, is large enough to contain an Oak Riparian "forest".
- See Southern Willow Scrub section for a discussion of the condition of riparian areas on the site.

Oak Riparian habitat falls under the jurisdiction of the California Fish and Game Code and any proposed impacts would be require permits from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife pursuant to Section 1602 of the Fish and Game Code. This provides an established body of regulation and agency oversight necessary to evaluate the resource and ensure regulatory compliance with respect to the limited occurrences of this resource on the AMPC property.

### Walnut Woodland

***SEA Text: Often intergrades with oak dominated woodlands or develops as a distinct community. This community is dominated by the Southern California black walnut (*Juglans californica*), which grows 10 to 30 feet high. More often than not, the Southern California black walnut grows in open stands; however, closed tree canopies are not uncommon. In similar fashion to oak woodlands its understory varies from grasses to shrubs. Thus, it forms stands ranging from savannahs to forests throughout the SEA. It is most common on the hillsides of Brea Canyon and Tonner Canyon, where it forms some of the best developed examples south of Ventura County in Southern California.***

#### Walnut Woodland on the AMPC property:

Total of 403 Acres is reported on the AMPC property within LA County

Area "A" = 37 Acres; Area "B"= 263 Acres Area "C" = 99 Acres

- Biota page 157 "...the walnut woodlands onsite, including areas within and outside of the SEA, and particularly areas west of the SR-57 (freeway), are not regenerating normally. (Quinn,1998)"
- Biota page 157 "...evaluation of walnut density conducted by Dudek confirmed that the Aera site exhibits much lower than average densities. The densities of walnut on the AMPC site ranged from approximately 12 trees per acre to 33 trees per acre. However, if these trees were in a natural undisturbed/un-grazed preservation area, seedlings and saplings would be expected to... result in a per-acre density more closely aligned with Keeley's estimates (of 160 walnuts per acre)"
- Biota page 158 "There is very little evidence of recent establishment and growth of young California black walnut trees anywhere on the (AMPC) site. There are few young trees or saplings. No seedlings were observed even though field studies were done in the period February through April, when natural germination of walnut seeds occurs" (Quinn 1998, page 6).
- Biota page 158 " The matrix of understory plants that grow beneath and between walnut trees on the site are annual grasses and forbs that originated in the Mediterranean Basin. These plants have become the weeds of rangelands, gardens and waste places throughout California, and have almost completely replaced the native perennial grasses..."
- Biota page 158 " The previous studies by MBA, Dr, Quinn, and Dudek concur that the walnut woodlands on the site, most notably areas west of SR-57 (freeway), are highly degraded and exhibit essentially no regeneration of the native walnuts. Under existing conditions that include grazing and oil field operations, walnut woodlands do not exhibit natural sustainability and will continue to decline"
- Biota page 174: "...restoration (of) the remaining woodlands are expected to exhibit an average 40 percent increase in oak and walnut density..."

### Southern Willow Scrub

***SEA Text : Well developed southern willow scrub communities are found along several major canyon bottoms in this SEA, particularly Brea Canyon and Tonner Canyon. Smaller patches of this community are also found scattered along smaller drainage and tributaries, as well as***

***at seeps and around artificially created impoundments used for livestock watering. This community is dominated by species of Salix, which form nearly monotypic stands, due to their dense growth. These stands generally reach 10 to 20 feet in height with little understory vegetation.***

**Southern Willow Scrub:** Total of 20 acres is reported on the AMPC property within LA County.

- Biota pg 162: Southern willow Scrub occurs on AMPC predominantly at two locations: Upper Brea Creek in Area "A" and Coyote Creek in Area "C". Each of these riparian habitats is fed primarily by urban runoff from adjoining development in Diamond Bar and Rowland heights (Vantage Pointe), respectively. Historical aerials suggest that the SWS habitat became established following the completion of the adjoining projects.
- With the possible exception of a 2-lane bridge spanning Upper Brea Creek, both of these locations are slated to be set aside as open space in the AMPC land use plan.
- Biota page 161 "The existing riparian habitat is heavily degraded by cattle grazing and oil operations. Compaction by cattle reduces the porosity of streambeds thus reducing recharge and increasing erosion. In particular, Upper Brea Creek is severely incised."
- Biota page 162: The presence of two bird species, Willow Flycatcher and Least Bell's Vireo, are strongly correlated with the quality and maturity of riparian habitat. Onsite surveys over many years have resulted in only one sighting each of Vireo and Flycatcher, which corroborates the generally poor quality of the AMPC riparian habitat. Note that the Vireo was sighted in one survey following the Biota Report, and was not seen in subsequent surveys.
- As discussed in the "oak riparian" section, riparian oak habitats are protected under Section 1602 of the Fish and Game Code.

### **Mixed Chaparral**

***SEA Text: A shrub community composed of robust species. Within this SEA, these species include laurel sumac (Malosma laurina), toyon (Heteromeles arbutifolia), lemonadeberry (Rhus integrifolia), and western blue-elderberry (Sambucus nigra var. caerulea). These and other shrub species form dense vegetation covers that grow 5 to 10 feet in height. The development of chaparral is most pronounced and extensive within Sycamore Canyon, Turnbull Canyon, Brea Canyon and Tonner Canyon.***

**Mixed Chaparral:** Total of 302 Acres is reported on the AMPC property within LA County  
Area "A" = 41 Acres; Area "B"= 195 Acres Area "C" = 45 Acres

- Chaparral is the most common and extensive vegetation type in California. It is not locally or regionally rare, sensitive, threatened, or critical to the survival of any other species. It is also not included as a plant community of concern within the SEA Criteria Analysis.
- As noted by Dr. Ted Hanes, one of the foremost experts in California chaparral:  
*Chaparral is the most extensive vegetation type in California covering about 3.5 million ha [8.5 million acres] or one-twentieth of the state (Weislander and Gleason 1954). It ranges from 250 km below the Baja California border of Mexico, northward into southern Oregon, from coastal bluffs to high montane elevation, and down the interior flanks of mountains to desert margins, and is*

*the dominant vegetation type on the coastal islands of southern and Baja California.*<sup>1</sup>

The chaparral on the AMPC site is, like the other communities, highly disturbed and also consists of very common species, referenced in the SEA text above. Given the prevalence of Chaparral both locally and regionally, it is surprising that this vegetation community would be called out for protection under the restrictive standards of the Draft Ordinance.

### **Coastal Sage Scrub**

***SEA Text: A shrubland community that exhibits less robust structure. This plant community is dominated by California sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), California brittle bush (*Encelia californica*), white sage (*Salvia apiana*), black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), and California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*). Coastal sage scrub also forms dense stands, which grow three to four feet in height. Within this SEA, it is generally found in scattered patches, which are highly integrated with mixed chaparral, including areas used for oil extraction where coastal sage scrub persists***

**Coastal Sage Scrub ("CSS"):** Total of 95 acres is reported on the AMPC property within LA County (17 acres occupied)

Area "A" = 0 Acres; Area "B" = 15 Acres Area "C" = 70 Acres

Even more than the other habitat communities discussed here, the quality and vitality of CSS is indicated by the bird species that depends on it – the federally listed threatened California Gnatcatcher (CAGN). And like the other habitats found on the AMPC property, this indicator demonstrates that the CSS is in very poor condition – fragmented and degraded by non-native invasive species. Surveys conducted since 1994 show on average that the site consistently supports only 3 to 5 pairs of CAGN on this 2,935 acre property. As shown on the attached **Exhibit "B"** (submitted as figure 2-21 of the Biota Report), this occupancy compares extremely unfavorably with adjoining and nearby properties. In particular, three nearby properties, Tonner Hills, East Coyote Hills, and Vista Del Verde, have much larger CAGN populations on smaller acreages as a result of enhancing, restoring, and in some cases, re-creating CSS habitats as part of larger development projects. This has contributed not just to the survival, but the recovery of local CAGN populations.

The Tonner Hills/Blackstone project created and restored approximately 150 acres of CSS over the past 10 years, and has seen gnatcatcher occupation of the site increase from 16 to about 22 reported occurrences following restoration. More dramatically, habitat restoration performed as part of the East Coyote Hills project increased CAGN populations more than 3-fold, from 10 pairs to more than 30 pairs of gnatcatchers, over the course of 5 years. The Vista del Verde project began with 25 pairs of gnatcatchers onsite and, after preserving, creating and restoring about 150 acres of CSS habitats, the project had achieved that same CAGN population in the post-development condition before the 2008 Freeway Complex fire knocked down those populations. Nevertheless,

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<sup>1</sup> Hanes, Ted. 1988. "California Chaparral" in Michael Barbour and Jack Major (Eds.): *Terrestrial Vegetation of California*, California Native Plant Society Special Publication Number 9, pp. 417-469.

approximately 75 acres of CSS internal to the project was shielded from the fire by an intervening wet zone, and provided refuge for CAGN to maintain a foothold in the area. CAGN populations are recovering as affected CSS habitat re-establishes within the affected areas.

As discussed with respect to Critical Habitat designation above, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service administers Section 9 of the Endangered Species Act, which protects both the Gnatcatcher and its habitat. USFWS is charged with ensuring that any activity will not result in jeopardy to the species or adverse results to the CSS habitat it depends on. USFWS has been highly effective in carrying out this mission, ensuring long-term survival and recovery of CAGN locally and regionally. The Draft Ordinance is not necessary to protect CSS resources, and SEA designation in fact represents an impediment to doing the type of restoration discussed above.

### **Non-Native Grassland**

***SEA Text: Dominated by non-native annual grasses and forbs. These opportunistically growing species include brome grasses, wild oats and mustards. This community became established as a result of livestock grazing, whereby native vegetation is removed (sometimes by mechanical means) and replaced by more opportunistic species. Non-native grassland is found throughout all areas of this SEA.***

**Non Native Grassland:** Total of 1,220 acres is reported on the AMPC property within LA County Area "A" = 81 Acres; Area "B"= 406 Acres Area "C" = 556 Acres

- Biota Pg 150: The habitat quality of grassland is closely associated with the number and type of raptors that use it for foraging. Onsite surveying done over the course of nearly 20 years consistently shows low levels of raptor use on the AMPC grasslands over hundreds of collective days spent in the field by biologists, This low level of usage is a clear indicator of poor-quality NNG habitat.
- Biota Page 164: "Conversion of scrub and perennial grassland habitats to annual grasslands has impacted important ecological functions... result(ing) in increased erosion... and increased stormwater runoff due to the loss of infiltration-enhancing functions of native grasslands."
- Non-native grassland is not included as a plant community of concern within the SEA Criteria Analysis.

### **Freshwater Marsh**

***SEA Text: Small areas supporting freshwater marsh are found at scattered locations in the broader valleys along major drainages. This community may also exist at other locations in and around artificially created impoundments that are used to water livestock. Freshwater marsh requires perennially shallow water or saturated soils. Dominant plants are emergent species, including cattails and bulrushes***

Freshwater Marsh: Total of 0.5 acres is reported on the AMPC property within LA County. Any proposal affecting this habitat type will be subject to permitting requirements under Section 404 and 401 of the federal Clean Water Act, which are administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and California Regional Water Quality Control Board respectively. The Regional Water Quality Control Board also administers the applicable regulations of the California Porter-Cologne Act. Finally, Section 1602 of the California Fish and Game Code provides additional regulatory oversight by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. Taken together, this provides substantial regulatory oversight regarding the half-acre feature on the AMPC property.

### **WILDLIFE SECTION**

This section contains many generalized statements and suggestions that do not withstand scrutiny with respect to the AMPC property which, as described in the foregoing paragraphs, exhibits a generally low level of biologic function in comparison to the SEA 15 descriptions, undisturbed habitats, and nearby properties. While the AMPC property represents an important link in the wildlife movement through the Chino & Puente Hills, in its current condition it does not generally support robust populations of raptors, Gnatcatchers, Least Bell's Vireo, or any other species of concern. Raptor foraging onsite is not "abundant" and amphibians, while present onsite, are not found in "abundance". Two examples of unsupported, generalized statements follow, to wit:

***SEA Text: "...the mosaic of many community types provides for a high diversity of bird species. Several of these species may use this SEA as their only consistent occurrence in the southeastern portion of the County."***

This statement is in contrast with the Criteria Analysis for SEA 15, which states: "The proposed SEA... does not represent unusual variation in a population or community." No evidence is presented that SEA 15 supports a particularly high diversity of birds, or that they depend on some rare mosaic of SEA 15 habitat to thrive. Studies conducted since 1984 on the AMPC property indicate that this statement is certainly not applicable to the AMPC site.

***SEA Text: "Maintenance of biological diversity and population viability is accorded throughout the SEA and the chance of local species extinctions due to isolation is minimized."***

This sentence suggests that preserving the entire SEA in its present condition minimizes the chances of local species extinctions. No evidence is given to indicate which species, if any, are at risk of extinction within the SEA. Alternative actions such as active resource management might perform as well as or better than status quo preservation for a particular at-risk population. Such alternatives are given no consideration whatsoever in the SEA text or the Draft Ordinance.

***SEA Text: (Wildlife movement section) "Evidence of significant wildlife movement throughout the Puente Hills SEA has recently been documented in a two year carnivore study commissioned by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy as part of a multi-jurisdictional effort to establish a region wide wildlife movement linkage."***

This sentence apparently refers to the Haas & Crooks study published in 1999, which did not include the AMPC property. As summarized in the Biota Report (pg 108, 120), the Haas & Crooks study documented the presence of large- and medium-bodied mammals (primarily deer, bobcat, coyote,

fox, opossum, raccoon and skunk) using areas adjacent to the AMPC site. The study suggested that these species likely use the AMPC site in a similar manner, utilizing the Tonner Canyon/ SR-57 underpass and the Harbor Blvd. wildlife undercrossing as the eastern and western points of connection to the AMPC site. Subsequent studies of the AMPC property generally confirm this conclusion, and the AMPC project design provides more than 700 acres of preserved and restored open space to promote and enhance wildlife connectivity between preserves in Chino Hills to the east and Powder canyon to the west, as well as smaller open spaces adjoining the AMPC site.

### **SENSITIVE PLANT COMMUNITIES AND HABITATS**

***SEA Text:*** *“The SEA supports several habitat types considered sensitive by resource agencies. These are inventoried by California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) in the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) [2011]. The CNDDDB includes state and federally-listed endangered, threatened, and rare vascular plants, as well as several sensitive vertebrate species. These communities include Engelmann oak woodland, Southern California black walnut groves, chamise-white sage chaparral, holly leaf cherry chaparral, California brittle bush scrub, bush penstemon scrub, white sage scrub, Wright’s buckwheat patches, sawtooth golden bush scrub, and pickleweed mats, which occur throughout the SEA. These communities, or closely related designations, are considered high priority communities by the CDFG, which indicates that they are experiencing a decline throughout their range. The array and composition of these communities has been discussed in the Vegetation section.*

Of the vegetation communities listed in above, only the California brittle bush and California black walnut occur on the AMPC property. The walnut woodlands on the AMPC site are impaired as already noted. California brittle bush (also known as California encelia or coast sunflower) is not identified as a sensitive or special-status species by any resource agency. Brittle brush occurs on the AMPC site as scattered individual plants or small groups of a few individuals. There are no areas of sufficient size to be considered or mapped as brittle bush scrub. Although the SEA text suggests that a homogeneous community of this species might have biological significance, no such areas exist on the AMPC site.

### **Sensitive Plant Species**

***SEA Text:*** *The following special-status plant taxa have been reported or have the potential to occur within the SEA, based on known habitat requirements and geographic range information:*

- Nevin's barberry (*Berberis nevinii*) RPR 1B.1, SE, FE
- Round-leaved filaree (*California macrophylla*) RPR 1B.1
- Southern tarplant (*Centromadia parryi* ssp. *australis*) RPR 1B.1
- Peruvian dodder (*Cuscuta obtusiflora* var. *glandulosa*) RPR 2.2
- Many-stemmed dudleya (*Dudleya multicaulis*) RPR 1B.2
- Mesa horkelia (*Horkelia cuneata* ssp. *puberula*) RPR 1B.1
- Coulter's goldfields (*Lasthenia glabrata* ssp. *coulteri*) RPR 1B.1
- Chaparral ragwort (*Senecio aphanactis*) RPR 2.2
- San Bernardino aster (*Symphyotrichum defoliatum*) RPR 1B.2
- Prostrate vernal pool navarretia (*Navarretia prostrata*) RPR 1B.1

- Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*) RPR 1B.2
- **Intermediate mariposa lily** (*Calochortus weedii* var. *intermedius*) RPR 1B.2
- Vernal barley (*Hordeum intercedens*) RPR 3.2
- California Orcutt grass (*Orcuttia californica*) RPR 1B.1, SE, FE

With the sole exception of the intermediate mariposa lily (in **bold underline** above), the species on this list have not been found and are not likely to occur on the AMPC property. Specifically:

- Nevin's barberry occurs in alluvial scrub and in rocky canyons. No suitable habitat is present on the AMPC property.
- Round-leaved filaree and many-stemmed dudleya are typically clay endemics and no suitable habitat occurs on the AMPC property.
- Southern tarplant and Coulter's goldfields are endemic to alkaline soils such as saltmarshes and no suitable habitat occurs on the AMPC property.
- Peruvian dodder is not documented to exist in Orange or Los Angeles counties and has virtually no likelihood to occur within SEA 15. It is not found on the AMPC property.
- Mesa horkelia occurs on sands or gravels. It is not found on the AMPC property as no suitable conditions occur there.
- Chaparral ragwort is typically associated with alkali flat or rocky outcrops and no suitable conditions occur on the AMPC property.
- There are no nearby occurrences recorded for the San Bernardino aster. Because it occurs in disturbed areas, it has some potential for occurrence on the AMPC property. However it has not been observed on the site and is not expected.
- Prostrate vernal pool navarretia and California Orcutt grass are found in or near high-quality vernal pools which do not occur within the AMPC property.
- Vernal barley occurs in vernal pools and also on heavy clay soils, neither of which is found on the AMPC property, so there is no occurrence of this species.
- The nearest occurrence of Plummer's mariposa lily is in Claremont and Glendora. This species is not found nor expected to occur on the AMPC property.
- A few individuals of the **intermediate mariposa lily** occur on the AMPC property, in Area A, east of the 57 Freeway.

### Sensitive Animal Species

**The following special-status animal species are reported or are likely to be present within the SEA based on habitat requirements and known range attributes:**

- **Western spadefoot** (*Spea hammondi*) BLMS, SSC
- Coastal whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris stejnegeri*) CDFG Special Animals List
- Rosy boa (*Charina trivirgata*) BLMS, FSS
- **Western pond turtle** (*Emys marmorata*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*) BLMS, FSS, SSC
- Coast patch-nosed snake (*Salvadora hexalepis virgulata*) SSC
- **Cooper's hawk** (*Accipiter cooperii*) CDFG Watch List
- Tricolored blackbird (*Agelaius tricolor*) BCC, BLMS, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC

- **Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow** (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*) CDFG Watch List
- Long-eared owl (*Asio otus*) SSC, LAA
- Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) BCC, BLMS, SSC
- **Ferruginous hawk** (*Buteo regalis*) BCC, BLMS, CDFG Watch List, AWL, LAA
- **Coastal cactus wren** (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus sandiegensis*) BCC, FSS, SSC
- Western yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus occidentalis*) FC, BCC, FSS, SE
- White-tailed kite (*Elanus leucurus*) CDFG Fully Protected
- Southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) FE, FSS, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) CDFG Watch List
- **Yellow-breasted chat** (*Icteria virens*) SSC
- Belding's savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi*) SE
- **Coastal California gnatcatcher** (*Poliophtila californica californica*) FT, SSC, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Bank swallow (*Riparia riparia*) ST
- **Least Bell's vireo** (*Vireo bellii pusillus*) FE, BCC, SE, USBC, AWL, ABC
- Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) FSS, BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Mexican long-tongued bat (*Choeronycteris mexicana*) SSC, WBWG High
- Western mastiff bat (*Eumops perotis californicus*) BLMS, SSC, WBWG High
- Silver-haired bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*) WBWG Medium
- Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*) WBWG Medium
- Western yellow bat (*Lasiurus xanthinus*) WBWG High
- San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus bennettii*) SSC
- Yuma myotis (*Myotis yumaensis*) BLMS, WBWG Low-Medium
- Pocketed free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops femorosaccus*) SSC, WBWG Medium
- Big free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops macrotis*) SSC, WBWG Medium-High
- American badger (*Taxidea taxus*) SSC

The animal species highlighted above (in **bold underline**) have been recorded on the AMPC site, and others discussed below have the potential to occur. Species omitted from the following discussion are neither known nor expected to occur on the AMPC property.

### **Western Spadefoot Toad**

The western spadefoot toad was identified in a single oil sump/containment area that ponds water during heavy rainfall years. This feature is artificial and exhibits limited conservation value. Given the single occurrence and the low quality of the habitat, the AMPC site does not exhibit measurable conservation value for this species. Nevertheless, the project proposes mitigation through relocation of the existing population to areas within project open space, which would ensure persistence of the species on the site. Under the current conditions of oil field operations, it is not likely that the species will persist on the site.

### **Coastal Whiptail**

Coastal whiptail exhibits some potential to occur within the CSS found onsite, however it has not been observed on the AMPC property since surveys began in 1994. This absence of this species is consistent with the fragmented, degraded condition of the CSS discussed herein. Onsite restoration of CSS habitat might attract a coastal whiptail population to the site and thus present an opportunity to arrest the decline of this species.

### **Western Pond Turtle**

The western pond turtle occurs in Area A, east of SR-57, within Brea Creek (also referred to "Crooked Creek"). The primary population is found toward the northern property boundary, near the point where a concrete drainage canal discharges urban runoff from the City of Diamond Bar. This runoff comprises the primary water source feeding the creek. The pond turtle population could be affected by a potential road crossing associated with the AMPC project, however a well-planned location and design will likely be able to avoid significant impacts to the turtle population.

Construction of the potential road crossing would be regulated by the California Department of Fish & Wildlife under Section 1602 of the Fish and Game Code.

### **Cooper's Hawk**

The Cooper's hawk is documented to occur on the AMPC site. The Cooper's hawk is highly urban adapted and has been found to thrive in urban areas by hunting around neighborhood bird feeders. In recognition of this ability to adapt, the Cooper's hawk has been removed from the Species of Concern list and placed on CDFW's "watch list". The AMPC site offers no special importance for this highly urban-adapted species.

### **Southern California Rufous Crowned Sparrow**

The rufous crowned sparrow has been observed onsite on a few occasions and in limited numbers. It is associated with scrub habitat and so is not common onsite. Similar to the Cooper's hawk, this species has been removed from CDFW's Species of Concern list and placed on the less-significant "watch list". This is in recognition that the population size and distribution is greater than originally believed. Restoration and enhancement of CSS on the property would likely benefit this species.

### **Ferruginous Hawk**

This species occurs on the site as an occasional (probably rare) winter visitor. This species does not breed in southern California and is on CDFW's Watch List, rather than the more-significant Species of Concern list. Open space preservation associated with the project would still provide wintering foraging opportunities for this species and there would be no measurable benefit for this species by adding additional degraded areas to the SEA.

### **Coastal Cactus Wren**

Occurs on the site in limited numbers (five locations were recorded during protocol surveys in 2013). As with the CAGN, the cactus wren would substantially benefit from expansion and management of southern cactus scrub to increase both carrying capacity and connectivity.

### **White-Tailed Kite**

While this species has the potential to visit the AMPC site occasionally, it has never been documented onsite. The Biota Report notes at page 171 that: "White-tailed kites were not observed during extensive raptor surveys nor were they subject to opportunistic observations during hundreds of hours of additional survey efforts."

### **Yellow-Breasted Chat**

Has been recorded on one occasion, however recent surveys have not found this species to be present on the AMPC property. Suitable habitat for this species occurs in Coyote Creek upper Brea Creek, both of which will be preserved as open space.

### **California Gnatcatcher**

This species has been addressed above.

### **Least Bell's Vireo**

Least Bell's vireo was detected during focused surveys conducted in 2007, when two individual males were observed in an unlined channel located between the 57 Freeway and Brea Canyon Road. Pairs were not confirmed. Subsequent surveys conducted in 2010 and 2013 did not detect LBV at the 2007 location or anywhere else on the AMPC site. The highest quality habitat for LBV occurs on the site within portions of Coyote Creek, upper Brea Creek, and in Lower Berry Creek, all of which will be preserved or enhanced as project open space.

In summary, many of the documented occurrences of special status animal species on the AMPC property represent species (e.g. Coopers hawk, rufous crowned sparrow) that are not particularly rare to the region. Other species (western spadefoot toad, ferruginous hawk, yellow breasted chat, vireo) were single or very occasional observations and/or occurrences limited to a single location. The overall habitat quality for such species is degraded to the extent that the AMPC site does not measurably contribute to the long-term conservation of the species either locally or regionally. In cases where certain populations (pond turtles, cactus wren, gnatcatchers) represent valuable and sustainable populations, the project's impacts have been minimized or avoided, with mitigation and conservation incorporated into the project design to ensure long-term persistence.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, Aera strongly disagrees that most areas of the AMPC property support the kind of high-functioning biological resources that are described as being characteristic of SEA 15. The oak and walnut tree resources in Area "A" east of the 57 freeway approach this description, but they are at risk due to the lack of recruitment for the next generation of trees. These trees occupy only a small fraction of the 2,347 acres proposed to be included in SEA 15, and they are largely preserved in the AMPC land use plan. In particular, much of the 947-acre area proposed to be added in the SEA expansion is some of the most biologically degraded acreage on the site. For the majority of the AMPC property, onsite studies document low-quality, degraded habitats that could serve larger, healthier, and more diverse wildlife populations if they were properly restored and managed. Habitat restoration has a demonstrated record of success on neighboring properties and projects, including Aera's nearby Vista Del Verde project.

We recognize that Los Angeles County is required to periodically update the General Plan. We are also aware that the Department of Regional Planning does not have the resources to perform the comprehensive biological studies necessary to scientifically characterize every undeveloped parcel within the County's jurisdiction. We do ask that the Department review the comprehensive biology studies generated by Aera specific to the AMPC property and provide analysis as to the quality and accuracy of our findings.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

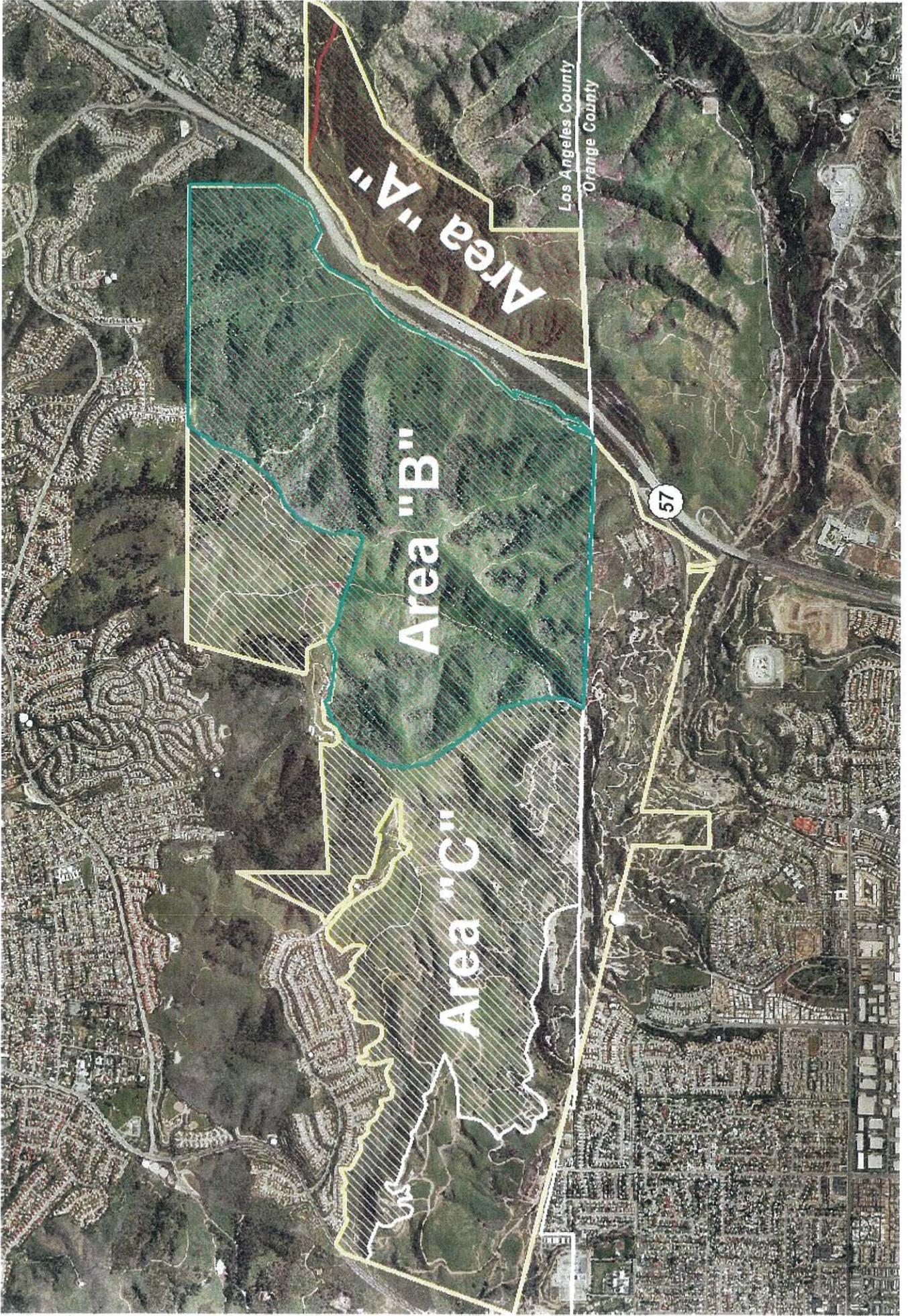
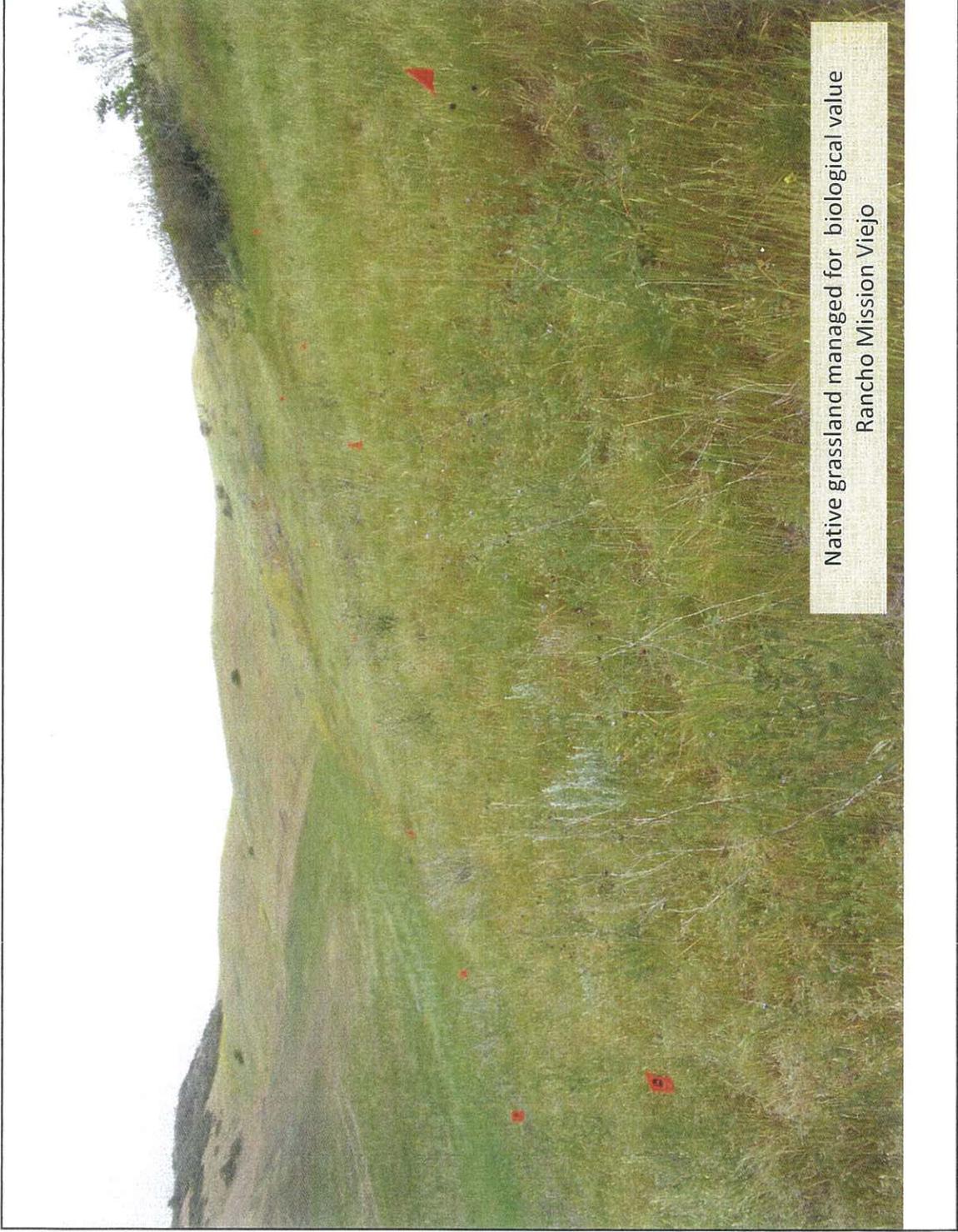


Exhibit A

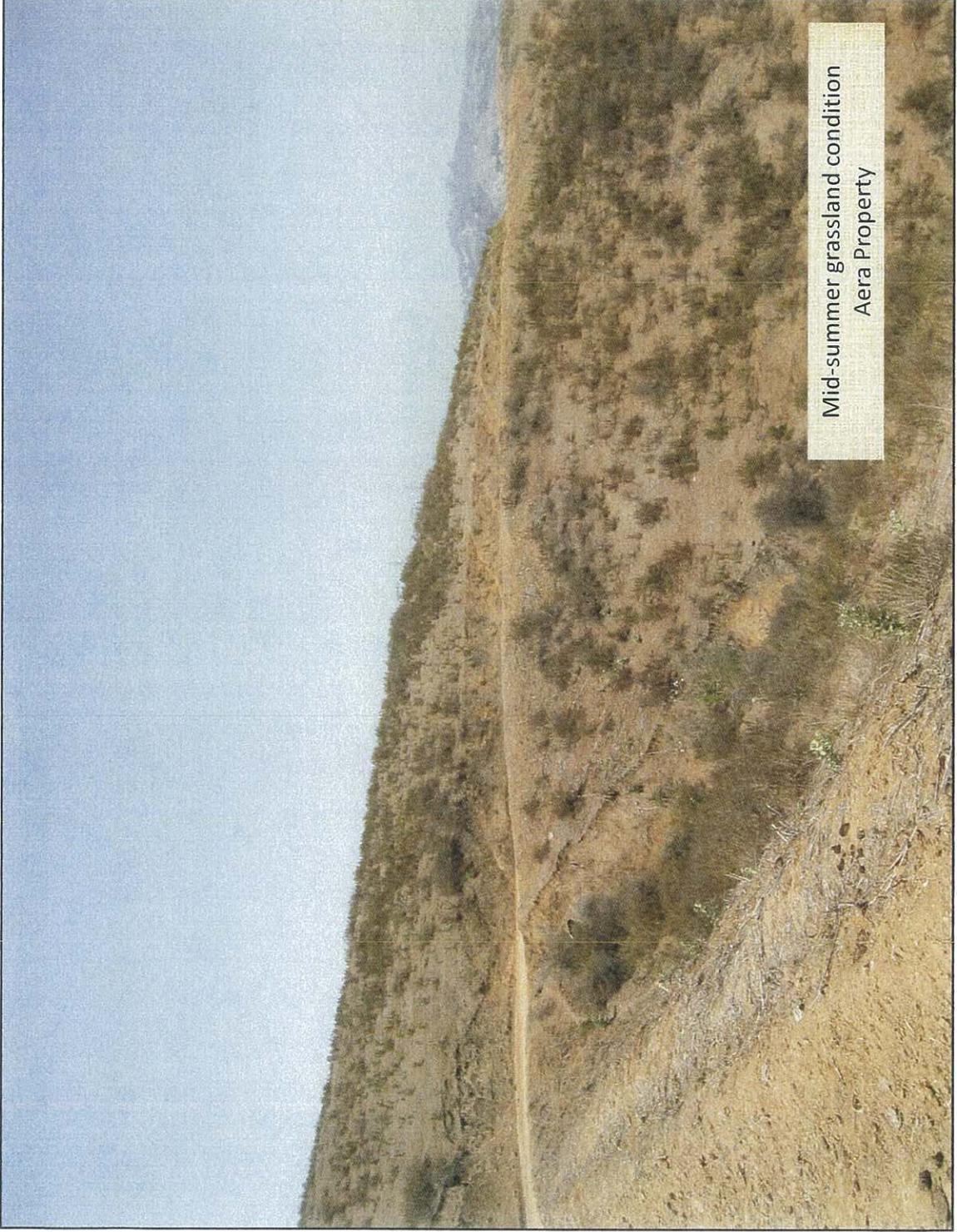


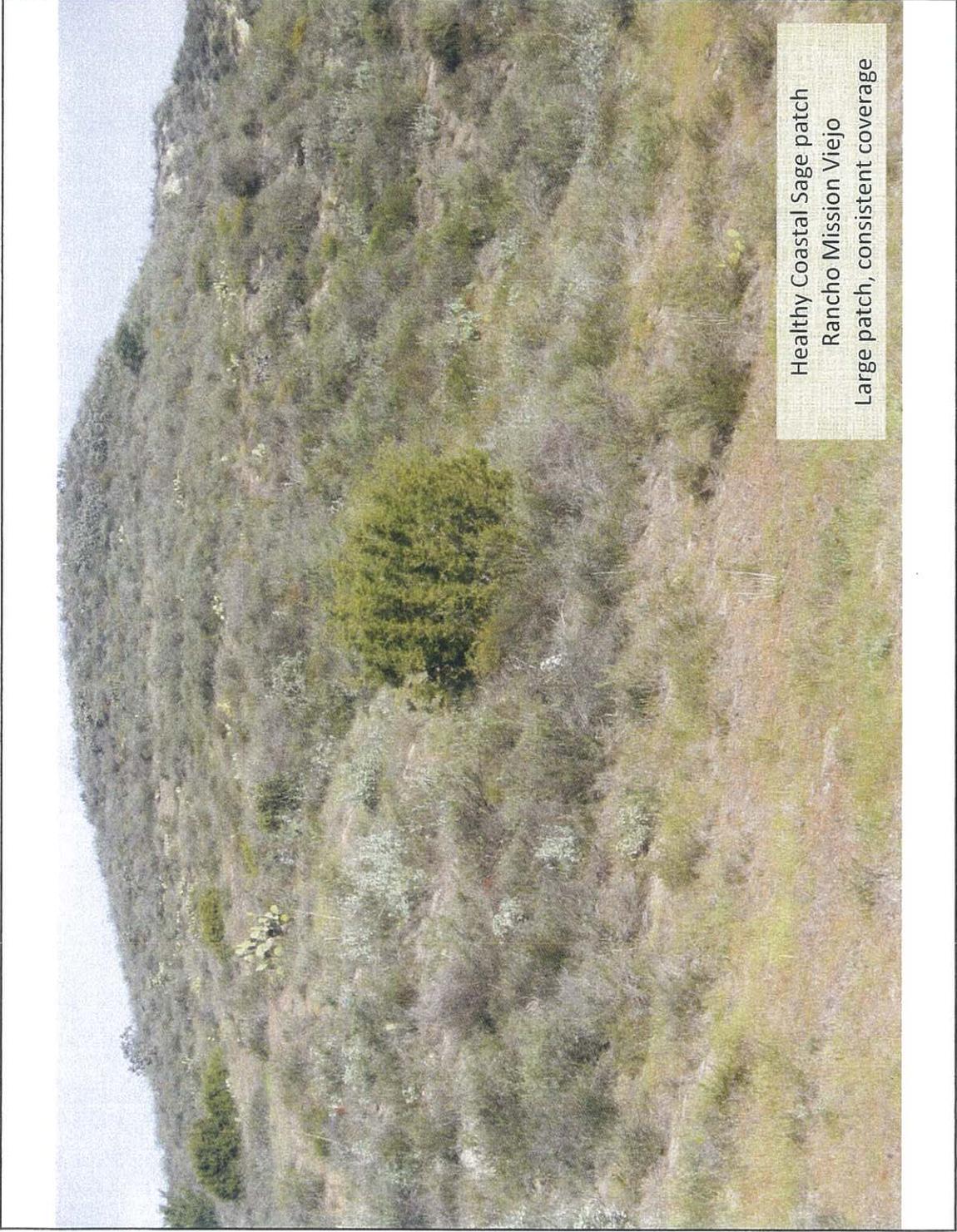
Figure 2-21  
 Area Master Planned Community  
 California Gnatcatcher Locations  
 within Surrounding Area

Source: USFWS Occurrence Database, December, 2004, 2001 Aerial, PCR Services Corporation, 2005.

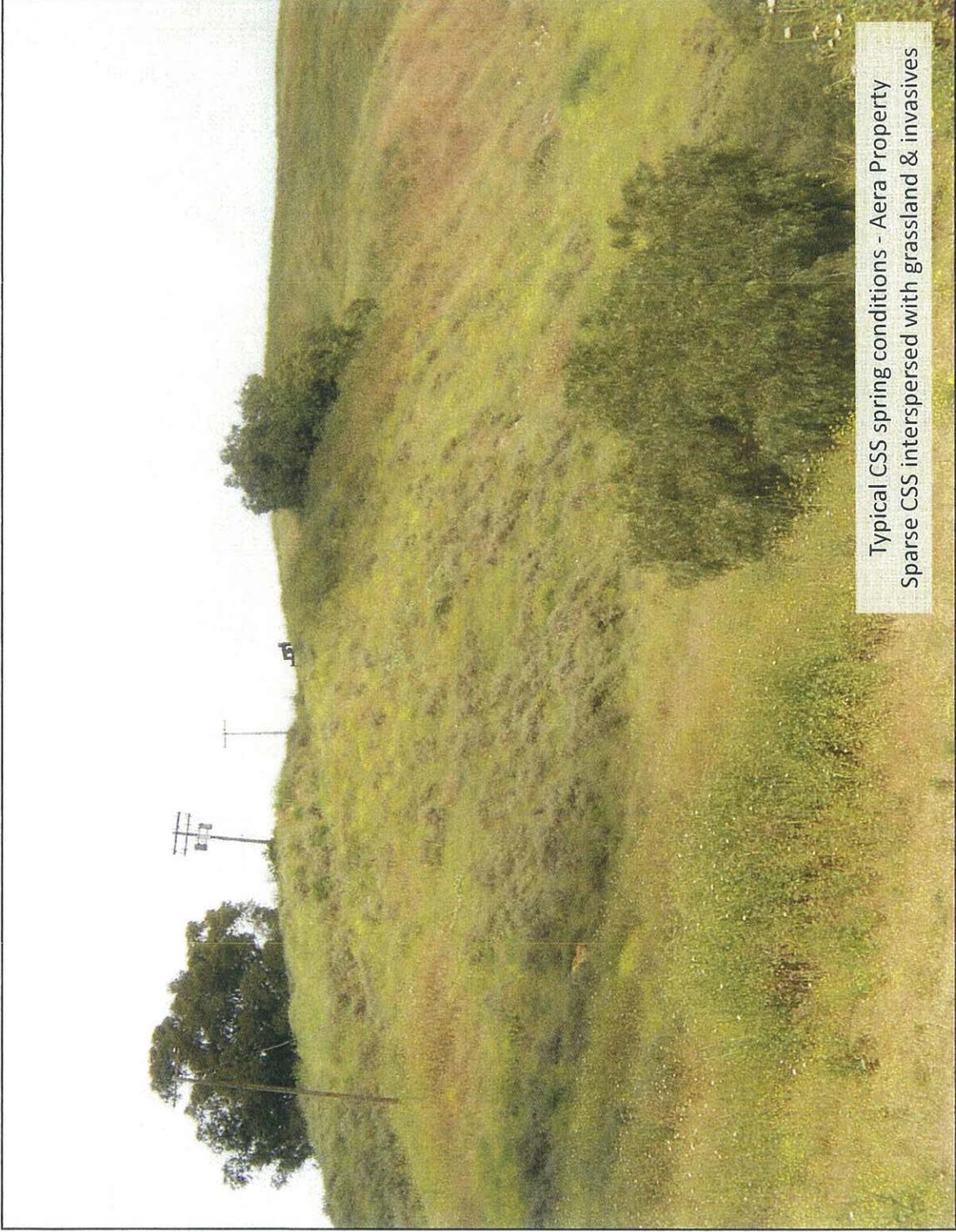


Native grassland managed for biological value  
Rancho Mission Viejo





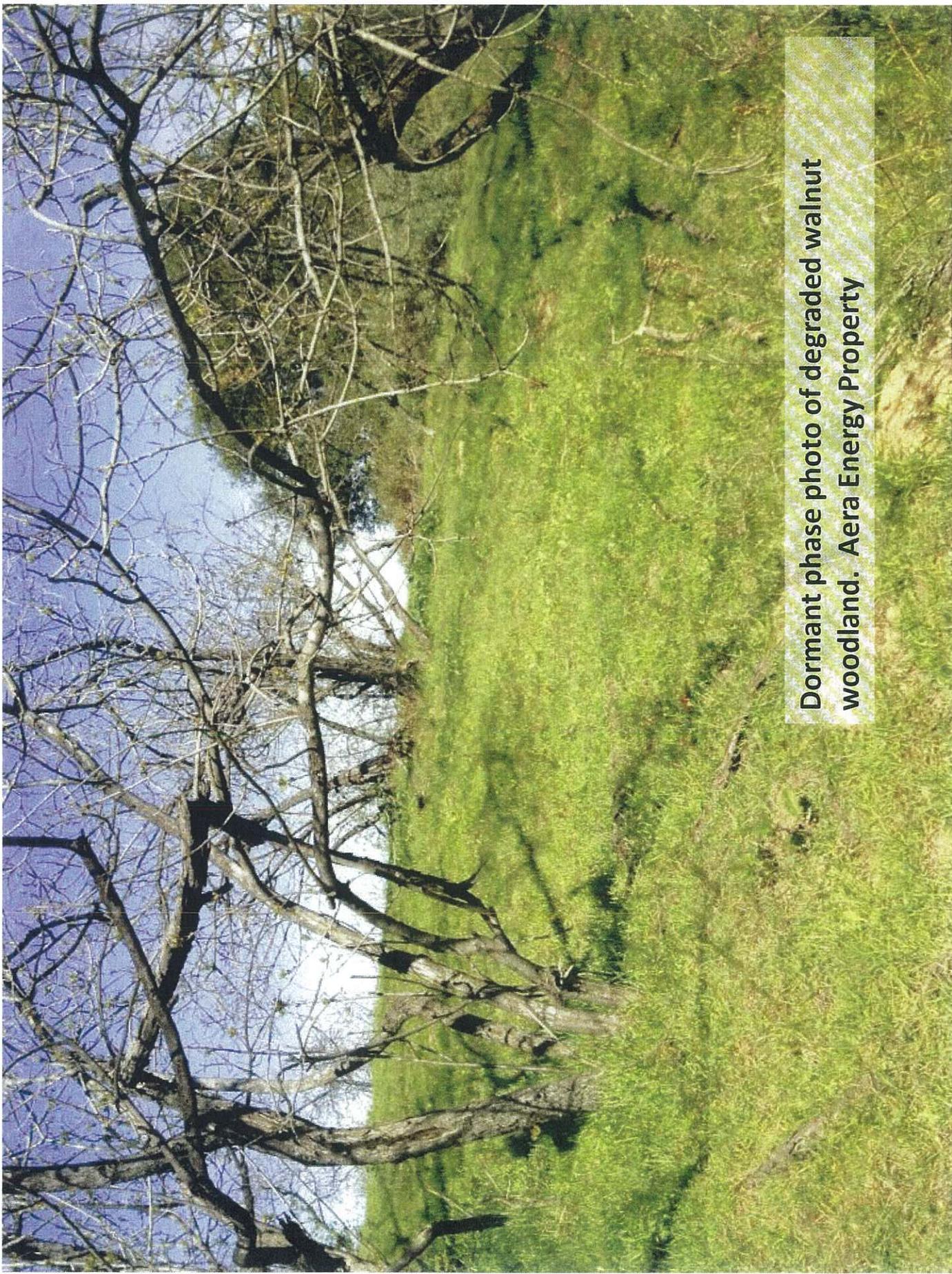
Healthy Coastal Sage patch  
Rancho Mission Viejo  
Large patch, consistent coverage

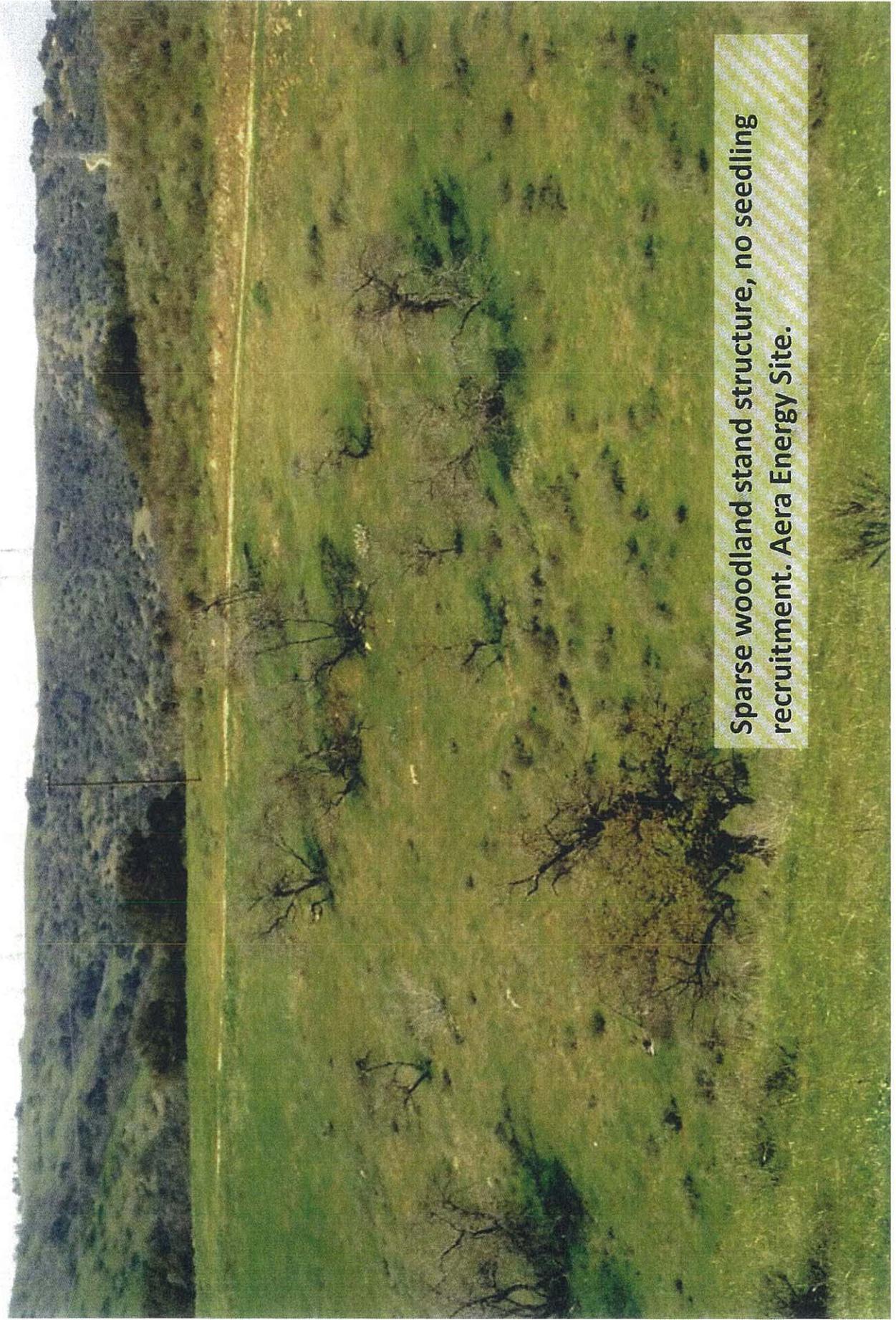




**Understory of healthy walnut woodland indicating density and existence of other species. Ungrazed Puente Hills site.**

**Dormant phase photo of degraded walnut woodland. Aera Energy Property**

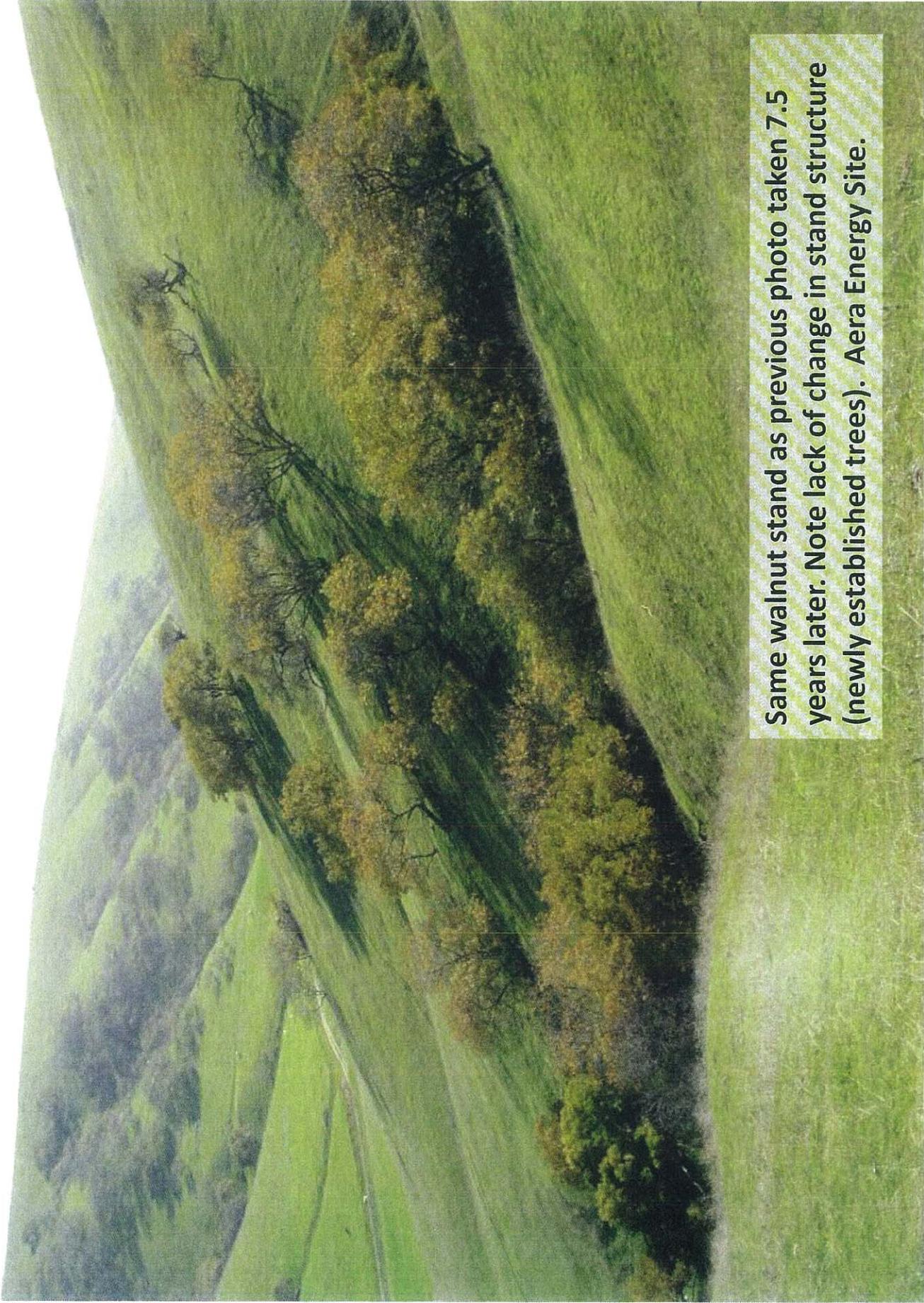




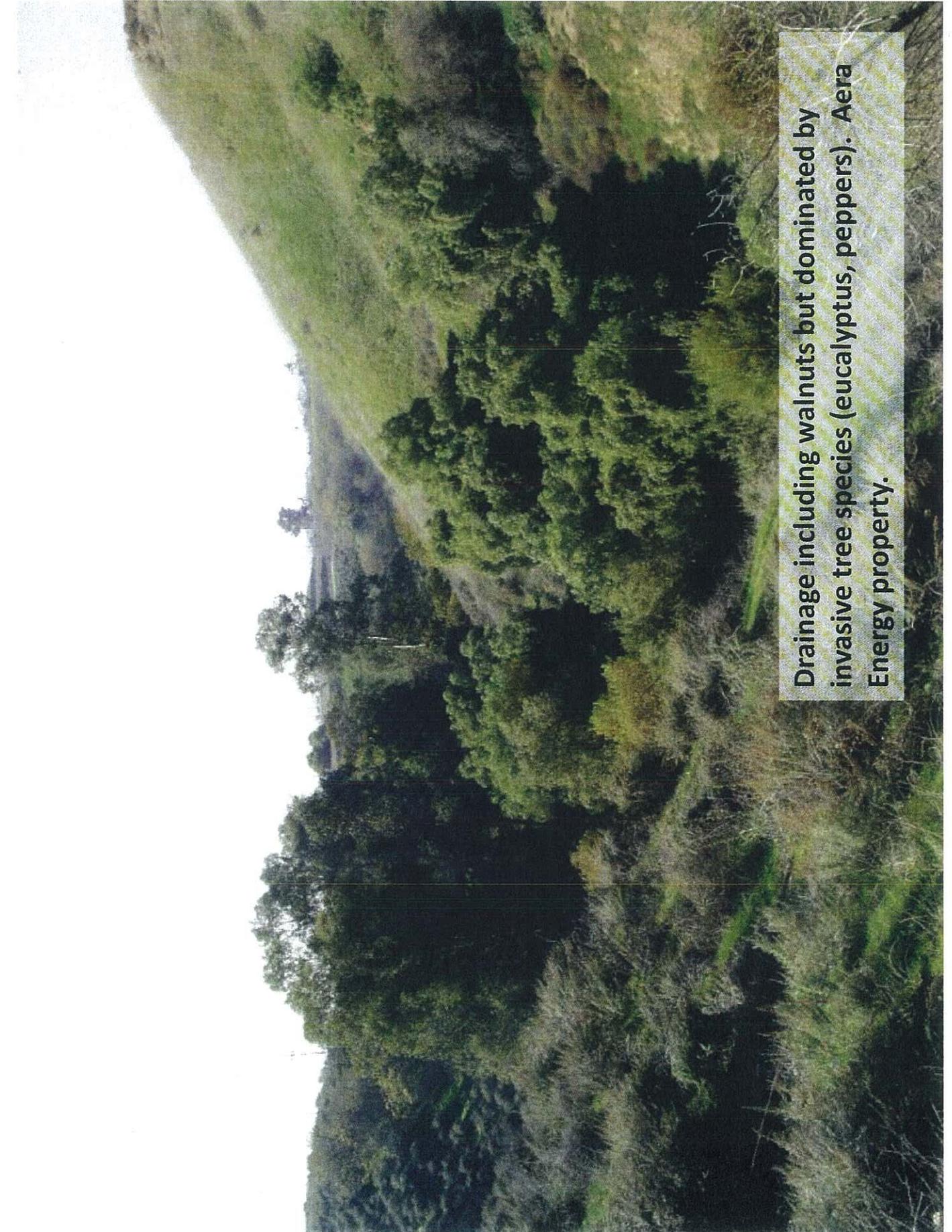
**Sparse woodland stand structure, no seedling recruitment. Aera Energy Site.**



**Walnut stand with significant grazing pressure and no seedling recruitment. Aera Energy Site.**



Same walnut stand as previous photo taken 7.5 years later. Note lack of change in stand structure (newly established trees). Aera Energy Site.



**Drainage including walnuts but dominated by  
invasive tree species (eucalyptus, peppers). Aera  
Energy property.**



April 1, 2013

County of Los Angeles  
Department of Regional Planning  
Attn: Emma Howard - Room 1354  
320 W. Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: COMMENTS TO DRAFT SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREAS ORDINANCE  
DRAFT DATED DECEMBER 20, 2012

Dear Ms Howard:

This letter is in response to the Draft Significant Ecological Area Ordinance released on December 20, 2012 (the "Draft Ordinance"). Aera Energy owns property that would be affected by the Draft Ordinance and SEA designation, and has a development application pending with the County for its property in the County (Project #02-109). As you know, the Aera Property is affected by SEA 15, and Aera has previously commented on the SEA update process by letters dated April 27, 2001 and August 29, 2007, which letters are attached for your reference. In summary, our prior comment letters detail Aera's position that the SEA should not be expanded on the Aera Property for the reason that the biological resources are substantially degraded from oil operations and grazing uses that date back more than 100 years and which are still being conducted on the property. The proposed SEA expansion within Aera Property does not represent the type of undisturbed natural areas that the SEA is intended to address. Therefore, Aera reiterates its objection to the County proposal to expand SEA 15 by adding about 950 acres to encompass approximately 90% of the 2,614 acres of the Aera Property within the jurisdiction of Los Angeles County. Aera's concerns are both with the Draft Ordinance itself as well as the proposed expansion of SEA 15 contemplated by the Draft Ordinance.

**1. The Studies Relied Upon by the County Are Not Sufficient or Adequate.**

As it pertains to the Aera Property, we are concerned that the Draft Ordinance would allow for the expansion of SEA 15 to include acreage with low biological function. This concern is amplified by the specifics of the Draft Ordinance, which appears to be predicated on the assumption that virtually every undeveloped acre within the SEA could be critical to sustaining biological diversity within the County, irrespective of whether any specific biologically important resources exist at a particular location. The studies being relied on by the County are not sufficient to support the conclusion that any disturbance within this vast area will make "biological diversity" unsustainable throughout the area. In spite of this deficit, the Draft Ordinance requires that projects within the SEA must be denied unless the applicant can demonstrate that the project "will not result in the loss of SEA viability". This combination of an unproven assumption plus shifting the burden of proof to applicants to disprove the assumption,

results in a classic fallacy of logic - one that will invariably result in project denials as applicants simply cannot prove the negative. This fact alone defeats the stated intention of the Draft Ordinance “not to preclude development within the SEA’s”, and requires the Draft Ordinance to be fundamentally re-framed.

**2. The “Characteristic Habitat” Concept Should Be Eliminated and Replaced with Established Regulatory Terms.**

Under the Draft Ordinance, loss of viability within a SEA is deemed to occur if the project may, among other things, result in “removal of habitat that is characteristic of the SEA and described in the SEA’s description” (Draft Ordinance page 26, 27). This “characteristic habitat” is not limited to “rare”, “endangered”, or “protected” species as these terms have been defined through application under other statutes (such as the state and federal Endangered Species Acts), organizations (e.g., California Native Plant Society lists) or agencies for which there is precedent with respect to their meaning and application in the biological community. We believe that the Draft Ordinance should be revised to use these more standard terms as opposed to reliance on an undefined, amorphous concept of “habitat that is characteristic of the SEA.”

The problems with reliance on such a vague, undefined term are manifested when applied to the Aera Property. For example, the SEA Description for SEA 15 includes an expansive definition of characteristic SEA resources, for example describing “disturbed habitats, native and naturalized vegetation” that “do not represent key habitats” but are nevertheless “important to the wildlife corridor function of the SEA”. Elsewhere, the description includes “stands of mixed chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and grasslands which, taken as a whole, form a valuable wildlife habitat unit of regional importance.” Disturbance of virtually any portion of a site could violate the “characteristic habitat” standard upon application of these overly-broad descriptions.

**3. The Draft Ordinance Should Include the Potential for Mitigation.**

A third concern with the Draft Ordinance is its refusal to allow for the concept of mitigation of potential impacts. Unlike CEQA, the Draft Ordinance does not provide a process for balancing impacts and mitigations to reduce impacts of “less than significant.” Instead, it specifies mandatory denial of projects that remove “characteristic habitat” regardless of whether the removal (1) resulted in a significant impact to begin with, let alone whether (2) the impact could be mitigated.

**4. The Concept of “Ground Disturbance” Must Be More Narrowly Defined and Applied.**

The broad application of the Draft Ordinance to “ground disturbance” (Page 4, Item E) encompasses nearly any imaginable activity within the SEA, other than those specifically exempted. At a minimum, there should be a provision providing a general exemption for “grandfathered” activities that have been historically or are being conducted on a property (such as resource extraction), or that need to be conducted to properly decommission such activities. In the case of the Aera Property, it appears that the Draft Ordinance could require a SEA CUP to continue the existing oil and grazing operations that have been conducted on the site for more

than a century, or to conduct soil remediation, cleanup and abandonment required by regulation following future oilfield closure. If these operations are required to be permitted as “development” under the Draft Ordinance, the CUP process could result in requirements for large areas of the Aera Property to be dedicated for open space in exchange for operations that are currently being conducted and may limit the ability to continue ongoing operations, modify those operations, or clean up and remediate those operations.

**5. There is No Biological Support for the 2:1 Open Space Dedication Requirement As Drafted.**

The Draft Ordinance fails to explain how the required dedication of at least 2 acres of open space for every acre of “development” (Draft Ordinance Page 21, Item 3) achieves the intended purpose of the Draft Ordinance to “prevent impacts to biological resources which would compromise the conservation of the County’s biological diversity”. Transferring title to property does not conserve or promote biological diversity, and there is no demonstrated biological rationale supporting such a specific ratio. Some sites may have little or no acreage with high quality wildlife habitat, so setting aside degraded acreage will not advance the stated purpose. Preserving, enhancing or restoring high-quality habitat areas may maintain and enhance biological diversity using less land area than the straight-forward 2:1 application contemplated under the Draft Ordinance. The existing biological functions, and the ability to improve such functions, must be considered on a site-specific basis, accounting for the specific ecology of the target species, in order to effectively conserve biological diversity and promote long-term persistence of target resources.

The SEA Description also makes statements to the effect that the SEA “contains relatively undisturbed examples” or “some of the best examples” of a habitat type, without describing where within an SEA such examples are located or how much of such habitat exists. The use of such a generalized approach within SEA’s comprising thousands of acres will inevitably result in areas with low resource values being treated identically with areas of high resource values.

By requiring the landowner to forfeit twice the area that is being proposed for development, and prohibiting any improvements to the forfeited acreage (Draft Ordinance Page 21, Item 4.a), the owner is denied the right to place facilities compatible with open space (e.g., fuel modification, water quality basins, restored slopes, or subsurface facilities) within areas on property to be designated as open space. The owner forfeits even the right to use his own acreage, or offer it for others to use, for habitat restoration or mitigation purposes. These activities are to be conducted exclusively by government agencies or non-profit land conservation organizations (Draft Ordinance Page 13, item 5). Absent a demonstration that these provisions are necessary to achieve the purposes of the Draft Ordinance with respect to site-specific conditions, these requirements may be construed as an impermissible regulation of private property and potentially support a takings claim.

Page 23 of the Draft Ordinance requires transfer of ownership and management of open space to a government entity, non-profit conservancy, or homeowners association, with a “mandate to protect it in perpetuity”. This creates an expectation, if not an obligation, on the part of the

property owner to provide funding for the restoration and long-term management of the transferred property. Given that a Type B CUP requires transfer of at least 2/3rds of a property, that the owner forfeits the right to conduct habitat mitigation or restoration on the transferred property, and that conservancies will not ordinarily accept property without an endowment, this will inevitably result in a huge financial obligation for the owner. These restrictions are extreme, unsupported, and would likely render many projects economically infeasible.

## **6. Conclusion.**

There are numerous problems with the Draft Ordinance that need to be addressed before it should be considered by the County. More detailed studies must be conducted to adequately support the conclusions and determinations that are being made under this Ordinance. A more thorough understanding of the Ordinance's impacts – both physical and economic – must be undertaken by the County, and a significant revision of the Draft Ordinance in terms of its defined terms and application must be performed.

The lack of adequate studies is most apparent when examined in the context of specific SEA designations. As applied to the Aera Property, the Draft Ordinance proposes the expansion of SEA 15 based on very thin science. The County supports expansion by relying on the SEA Update Study conducted in 2000 which claims to be based on “scientifically grounded concepts”, but without reference to current, more accurate on-the-ground biology surveys that would document the presence or absence of specific targeted resources on the lands that have been included.

As a landowner and resource producer, we believe that the Draft Ordinance is constructed in such a way that, other than exempted uses and existing disturbed and developed areas, it is hard to see how any new project could be approved within a SEA. The open space acreage dedication requirement that denies the landowner any beneficial use of the designated open space, in combination with the other provisions of the Draft Ordinance and provisions of other existing and proposed regulation, is likely to make most projects infeasible. In conclusion, we urge the County to not proceed with the Draft Ordinance or the SEA expansions until these deficiencies are corrected.

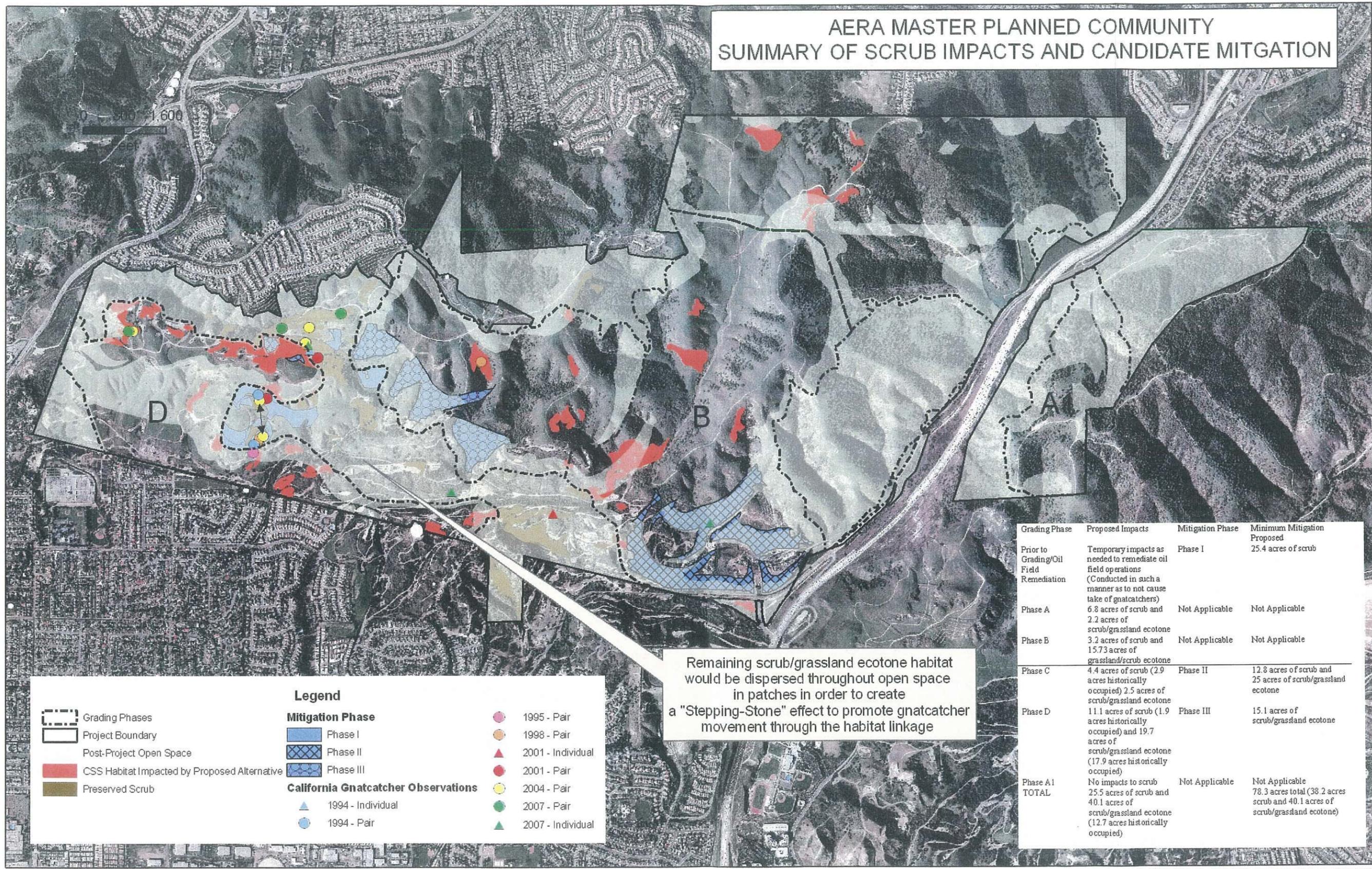
Very truly yours,  
**AERA ENERGY LLC**



Jeffrey R. Maisch  
Project Manager

Enclosure (prior 2 comment letters)  
CC: Supervisor Don Knabe

# AERA MASTER PLANNED COMMUNITY SUMMARY OF SCRUB IMPACTS AND CANDIDATE MITIGATION



Remaining scrub/grassland ecotone habitat would be dispersed throughout open space in patches in order to create a "Stepping-Stone" effect to promote gnatcatcher movement through the habitat linkage

**Legend**

- Grading Phases (dashed line)
- Project Boundary (solid line)
- Post-Project Open Space (white)
- CSS Habitat Impacted by Proposed Alternative (red)
- Preserved Scrub (brown)

**Mitigation Phase**

- Phase I (blue)
- Phase II (blue with cross-hatch)
- Phase III (blue with diagonal lines)

**California Gnatcatcher Observations**

- 1994 - Individual (blue triangle)
- 1994 - Pair (blue circle)
- 1995 - Pair (pink circle)
- 1998 - Pair (orange circle)
- 2001 - Individual (red triangle)
- 2001 - Pair (red circle)
- 2004 - Pair (yellow circle)
- 2007 - Pair (green circle)
- 2007 - Individual (green triangle)

Grading Phase	Proposed Impacts	Mitigation Phase	Minimum Mitigation Proposed
Prior to Grading/Oil Field Remediation	Temporary impacts as needed to remediate oil field operations (Conducted in such a manner as to not cause take of gnatcatchers)	Phase I	25.4 acres of scrub
Phase A	6.8 acres of scrub and 2.2 acres of scrub/grassland ecotone	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Phase B	3.2 acres of scrub and 15.73 acres of grassland/scrub ecotone	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Phase C	4.4 acres of scrub (2.9 acres historically occupied) 2.5 acres of scrub/grassland ecotone	Phase II	12.8 acres of scrub and 25 acres of scrub/grassland ecotone
Phase D	11.1 acres of scrub (1.9 acres historically occupied) and 19.7 acres of scrub/grassland ecotone (17.9 acres historically occupied)	Phase III	15.1 acres of scrub/grassland ecotone
Phase A1 TOTAL	No impacts to scrub 25.5 acres of scrub and 40.1 acres of scrub/grassland ecotone (12.7 acres historically occupied)	Not Applicable	Not Applicable 78.3 acres total (38.2 acres scrub and 40.1 acres of scrub/grassland ecotone)

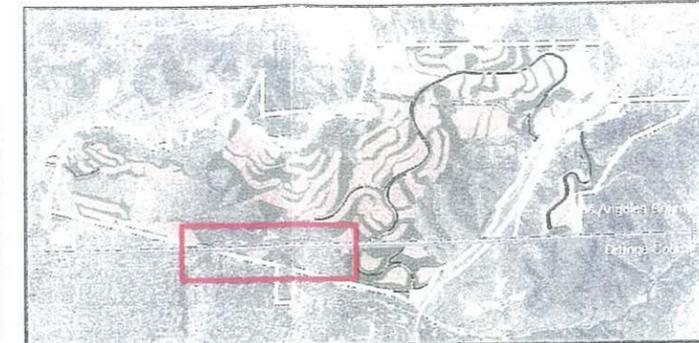
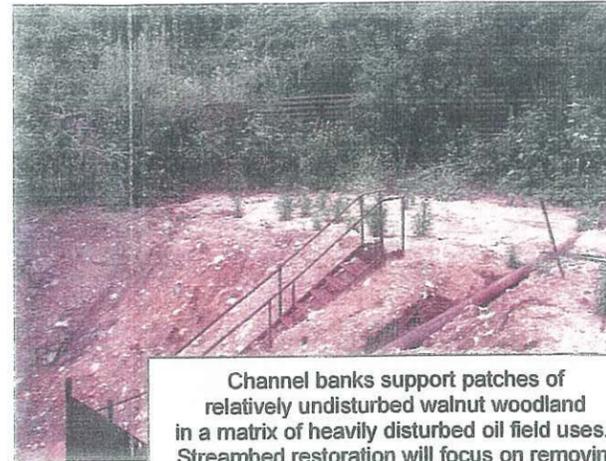
FIGURE ES-9

# LOWER BERRY CREEK HABITAT RESTORATION

Note the predominance of non-native poison hemlock on the channel bottom and the presence of invasive peppers throughout the woodland on the banks

 **Exotic Trees Targeted for Removal and Replacement**

Note the frequent road crossings that disrupt the natural hydrology of the creek. These features will be replaced with Rock riffle structures to control velocity, reduce down cutting but continue to provide aquatic habitat function

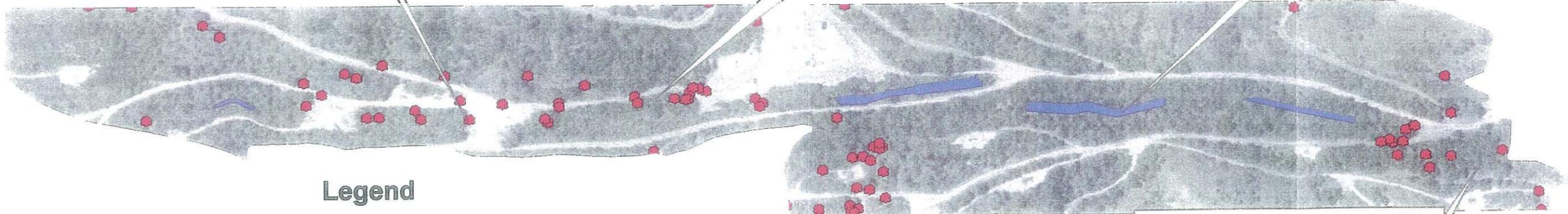


Banks often exhibit heavy disturbance from oil field activities.

Channel banks support patches of relatively undisturbed walnut woodland in a matrix of heavily disturbed oil field uses. Streambed restoration will focus on removing road crossings and revegetating disturbed banks with native walnut, oak and willow woodlands.

Southern Willow Scrub exhibits limited distribution through Lower Berry Creek and includes a high proportion of exotics including hemlock and giant reed.

EXISTING CONDITION



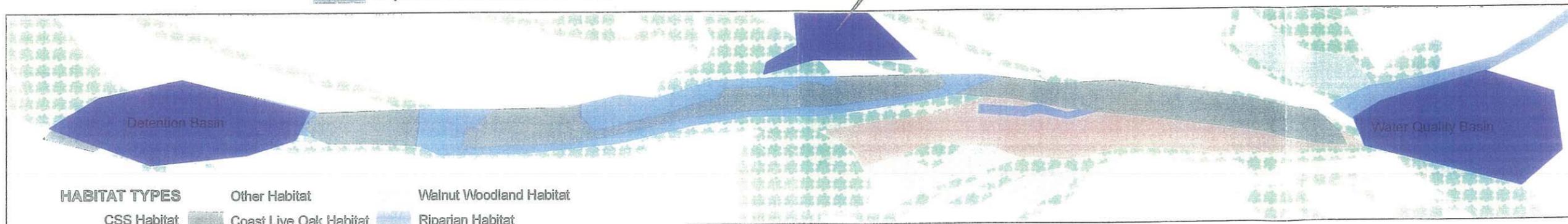
## Legend

-  Riparian Habitat Creation
-  Riparian Habitat Restoration

PROPOSED POST-PROJECT CONDITION

Proposed Water Quality Basin

Exotic trees including Peppers will be removed and replaced with native trees improving biodiversity and riparian function

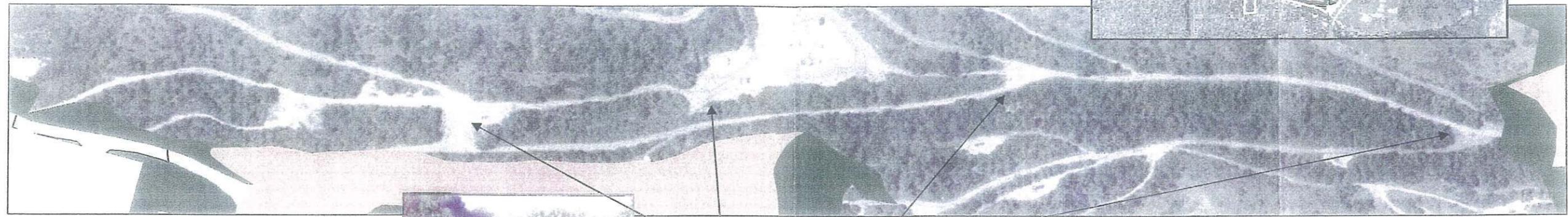
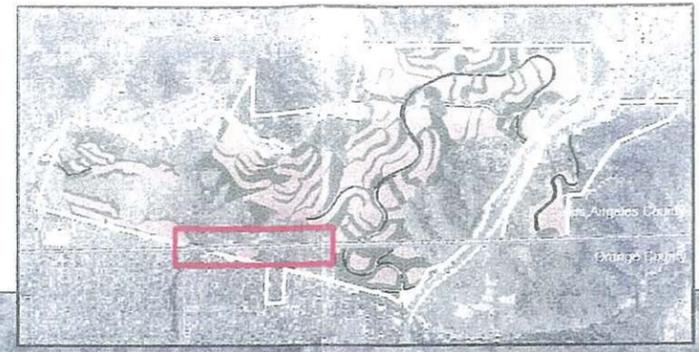


### HABITAT TYPES

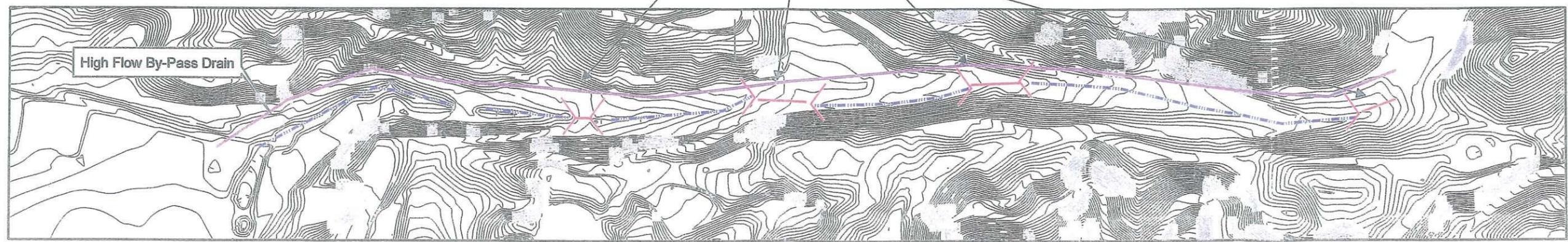
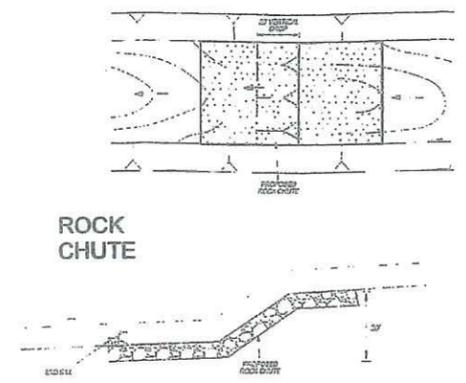
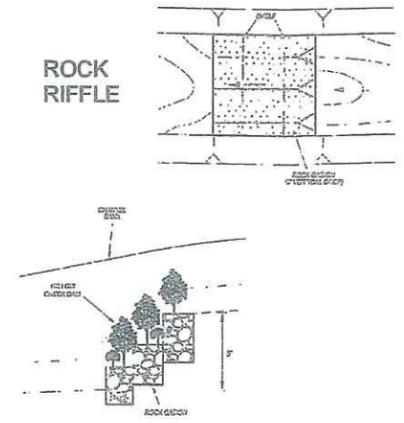
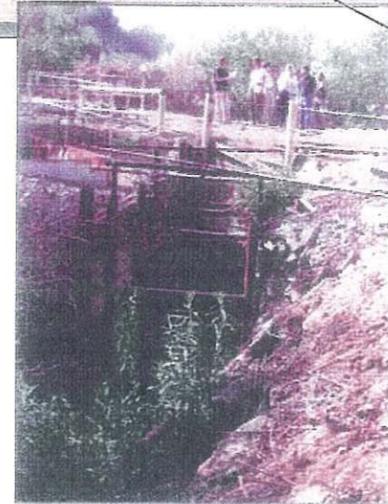
-  Other Habitat
-  CSS Habitat
-  Coast Live Oak Habitat
-  Riparian Habitat
-  Walnut Woodland Habitat
-  Disturbed Areas Available for Revegetation

# LOWER BERRY CREEK STREAM COURSE RESTORATION

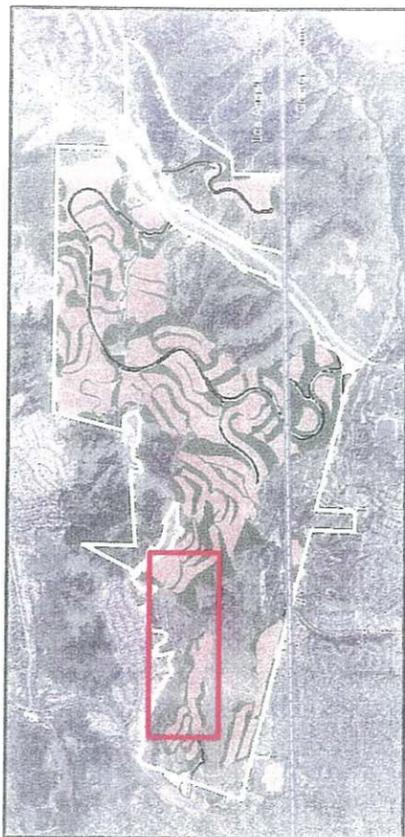
FIGURE ES-10



Note the frequent road crossings that disrupt the natural hydrology of the creek. These features will be replaced with Rock riffle structures to control velocity, reduce down cutting but continue to provide aquatic habitat function



# LANDSCAPE LINKAGE: COYOTE CREEK PRESERVATION AREA



Coyote Creek and Crossover Canyon are components of the landscape linkage between Powder Canyon to the north (through the Harbor Boulevard wildlife undercrossing) to Tonner Canyon to the South

**Exotic Trees Targeted for Removal and Replacement**

Coyote Creek Preserve includes perennial Coyote Creek which supports well developed southern willow scrub habitat

Upper Coyote Creek also provides a movement corridor to the Nike Ridgeline Preserve to the east

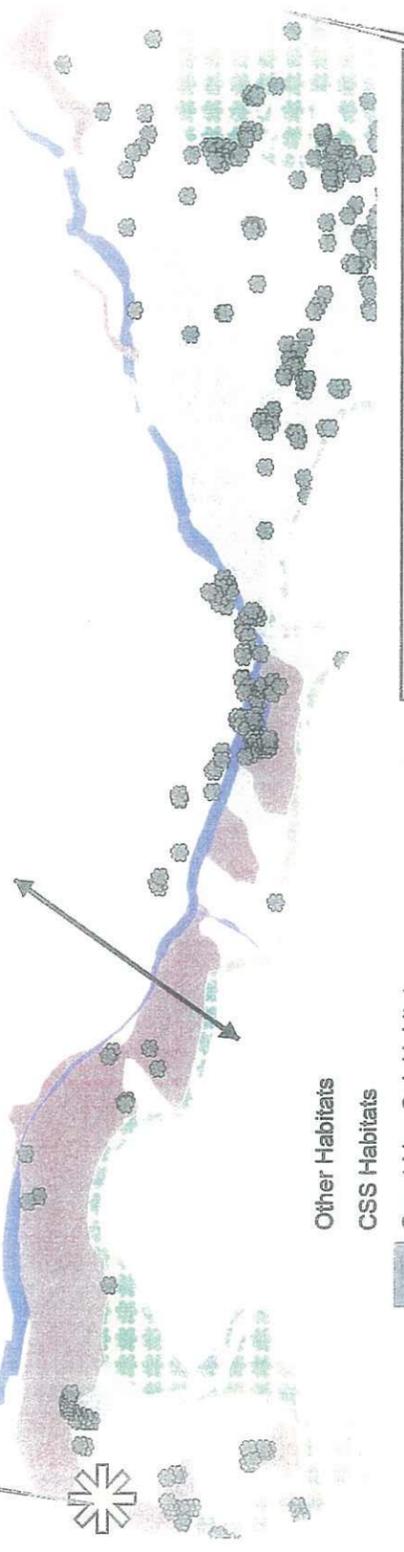


Harbor Boulevard Wildlife Undercrossing (18'x20'x160'); Built by Puente Hills Native Habitat Preservation Authority and County of Los Angeles

As true of all woodlands on-site, existing walnut woodland exhibits little evidence of recruitment as a result of heavy grazing. Exclusion of cattle and supplemental planting is expected to significantly increase function and quality of walnut woodlands on site.

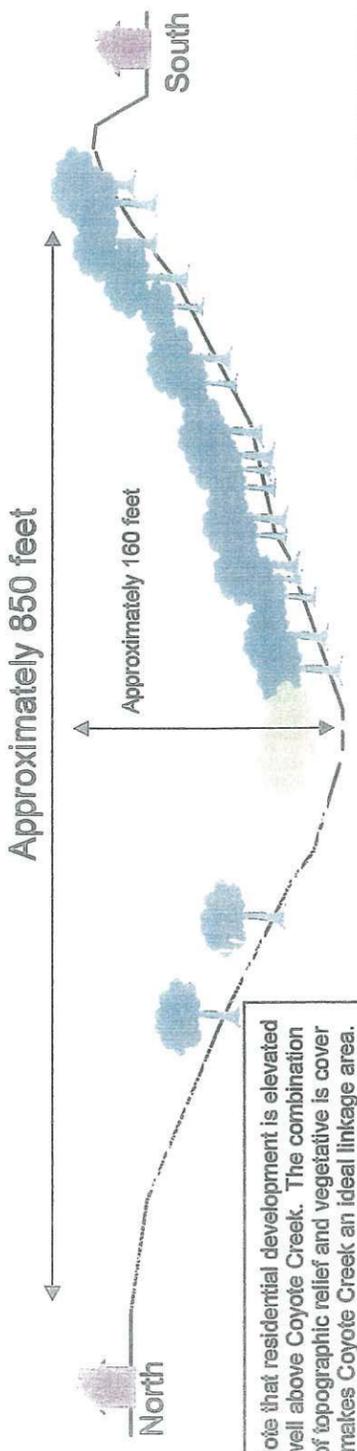
Harbor Boulevard Wildlife Undercrossing

See Cross Section Below



- Other Habitats
- CSS Habitats
  - Coast Live Oak Habitat
  - Walnut Woodland Habitat
  - Riparian Habitats
- Candidate native revegetation area
- Native Trees Replacing Exotics

Graded slopes will be revegetated with native species including oak, walnut, native bunchgrasses and coastal sage scrub. Not all slope aspects are favorable for all native communities, therefore plant palettes will vary based on location. For example, walnut and oak woodland will be concentrated on north and east facing slopes, while sage scrub will be placed on south and west facing slopes

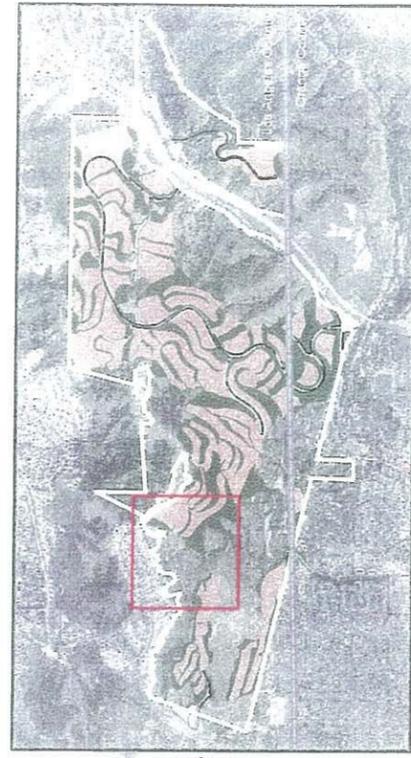


Note that residential development is elevated well above Coyote Creek. The combination of topographic relief and vegetative is cover makes Coyote Creek an ideal linkage area.

Note: Graphics Represent Conceptual Design, Final Design Will Be Provided Prior to Grading Impacts.

FIGURE ES-5

# CENTRAL LANDSCAPE LINKAGE: CROSSOVER CANYON



As noted in previous exhibits, the Crossover Canyon is a component of the landscape linkage between Powder Canyon to the north and Tonner Canyon to the south

**Exotic Trees Targeted for Removal and Replacement**

Removal of Invasive Peppers and replacement with walnuts and oak in combination with the revegetation of habitat within areas disturbed by oil field operations will substantially enhance the quality of live-in habitat and hence the biodiversity within the Landscape Linkage.

Restoration of coastal sage scrub within the Central Landscape Linkage concentrated near habitat consistently occupied by California gnatcatchers.

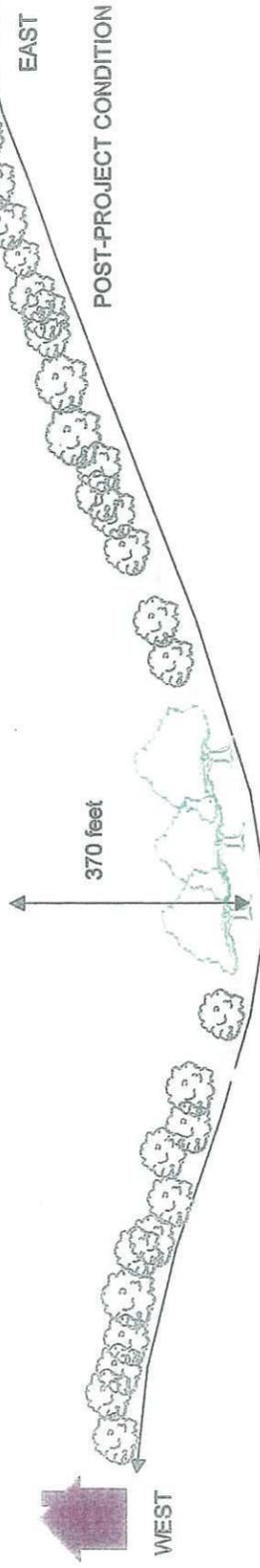
Coastal Sage Scrub Occupied by Coastal California Gnatcatchers

### Vegetation Types

- Candidate native revegetation areas
- Other Habitats
- CSS Habitats
  - Coast Live Oak Habitat
  - Walnut Woodland Habitat
  - Riparian Habitats
- Native Trees Replacing Exotics

Graded slopes adjacent to open space will be revegetated with native species including oak, walnut, native bunch grasses and native shrubs. In addition, sage scrub will be distributed in patches throughout the Landscape Linkage to provide "stepping-stone" habitat patches to enhance California gnatcatcher movement throughout the linkage area.

Approximately 1,600 feet

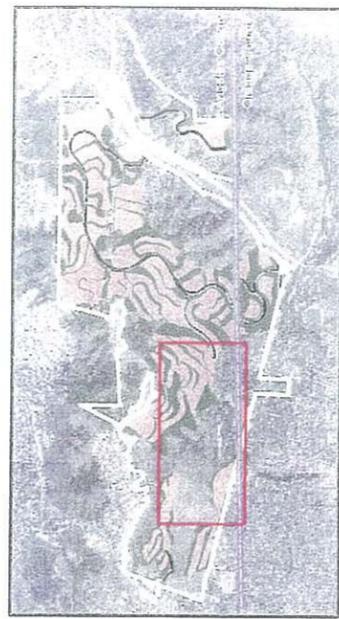


**NOTE: Graphics Represent Conceptual Design. Final Design Will Be Provided Prior to Grading Impacts**

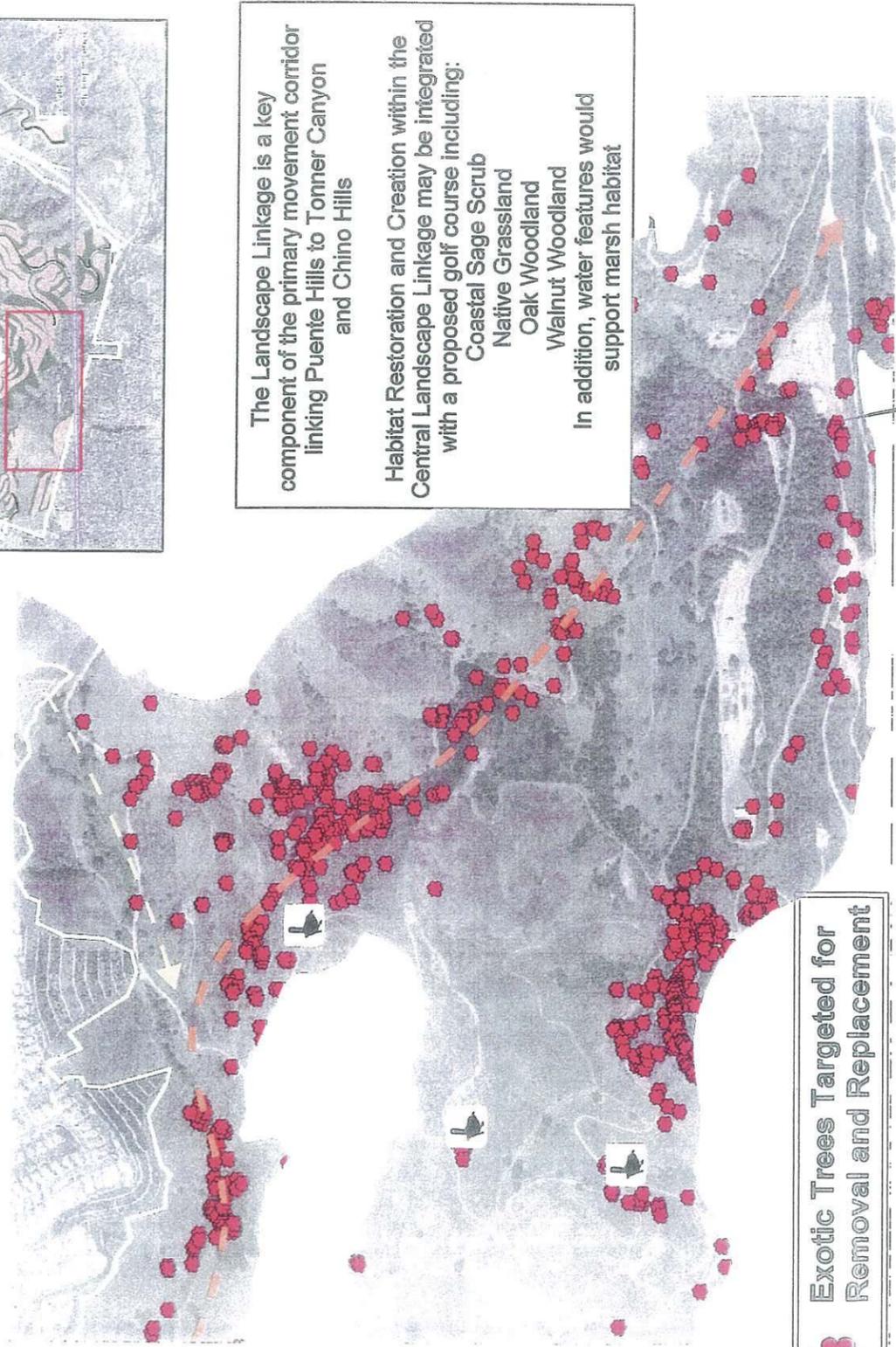
**FIGURE ES-6**

# CENTRAL LANDSCAPE LINKAGE: NORTH OF BERRY CREEK

FIGURE ES-7



Coastal Sage Scrub Occupied by California Gnatcatcher



Exotic Trees Targeted for Removal and Replacement

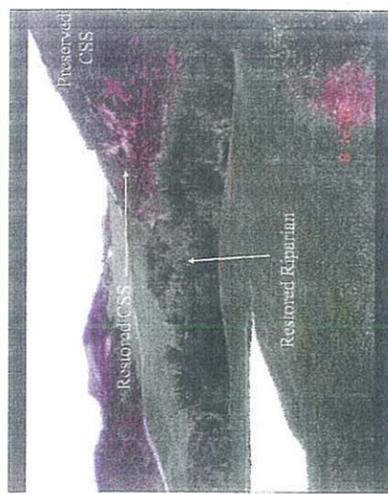
The Landscape Linkage is a key component of the primary movement corridor linking Puente Hills to Tonner Canyon and Chino Hills

Habitat Restoration and Creation within the Central Landscape Linkage may be integrated with a proposed golf course including:

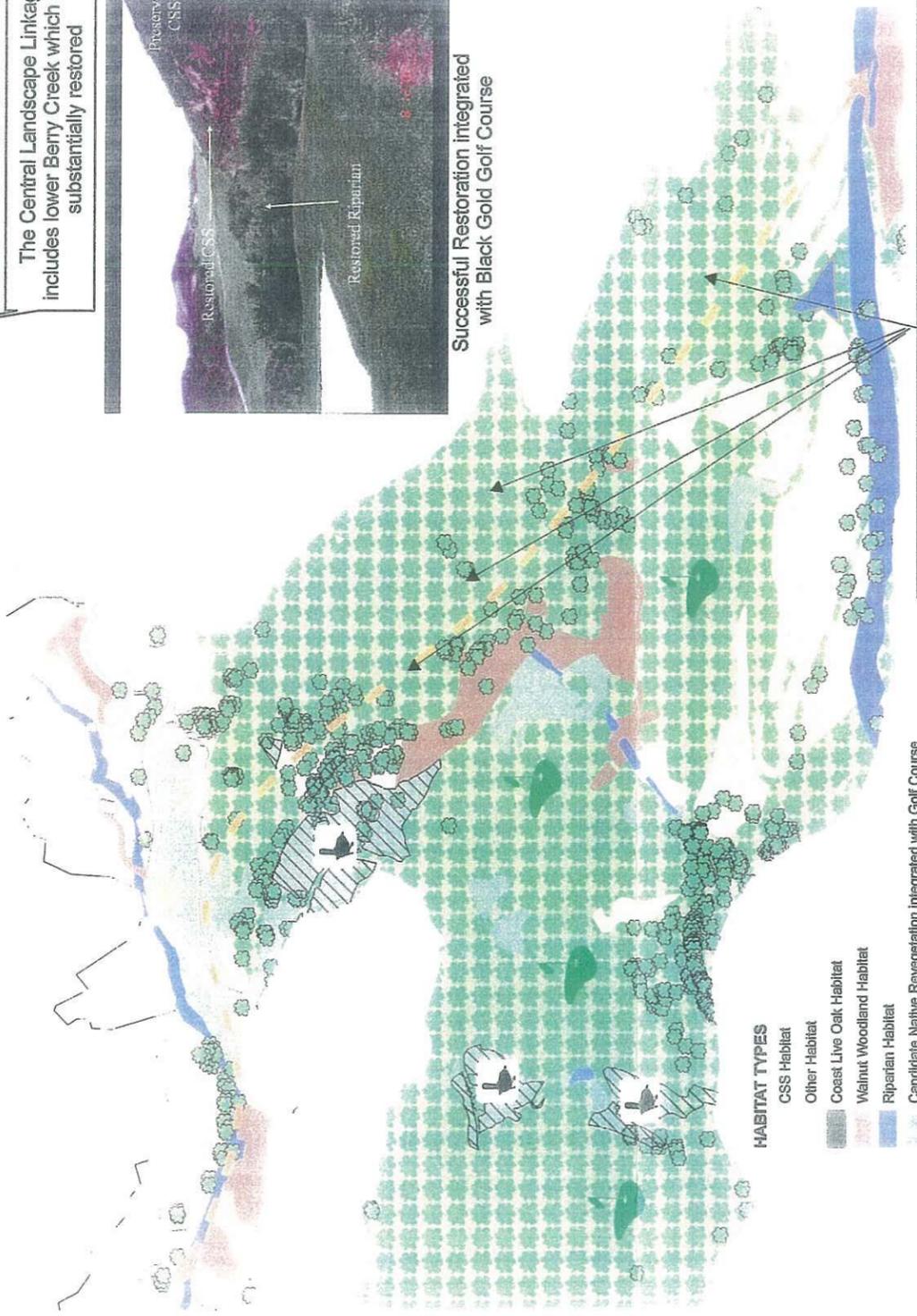
- Coastal Sage Scrub
- Native Grassland
- Oak Woodland
- Walnut Woodland

In addition, water features would support marsh habitat

The Central Landscape Linkage includes lower Berry Creek which will be substantially restored



Successful Restoration integrated with Black Gold Golf Course



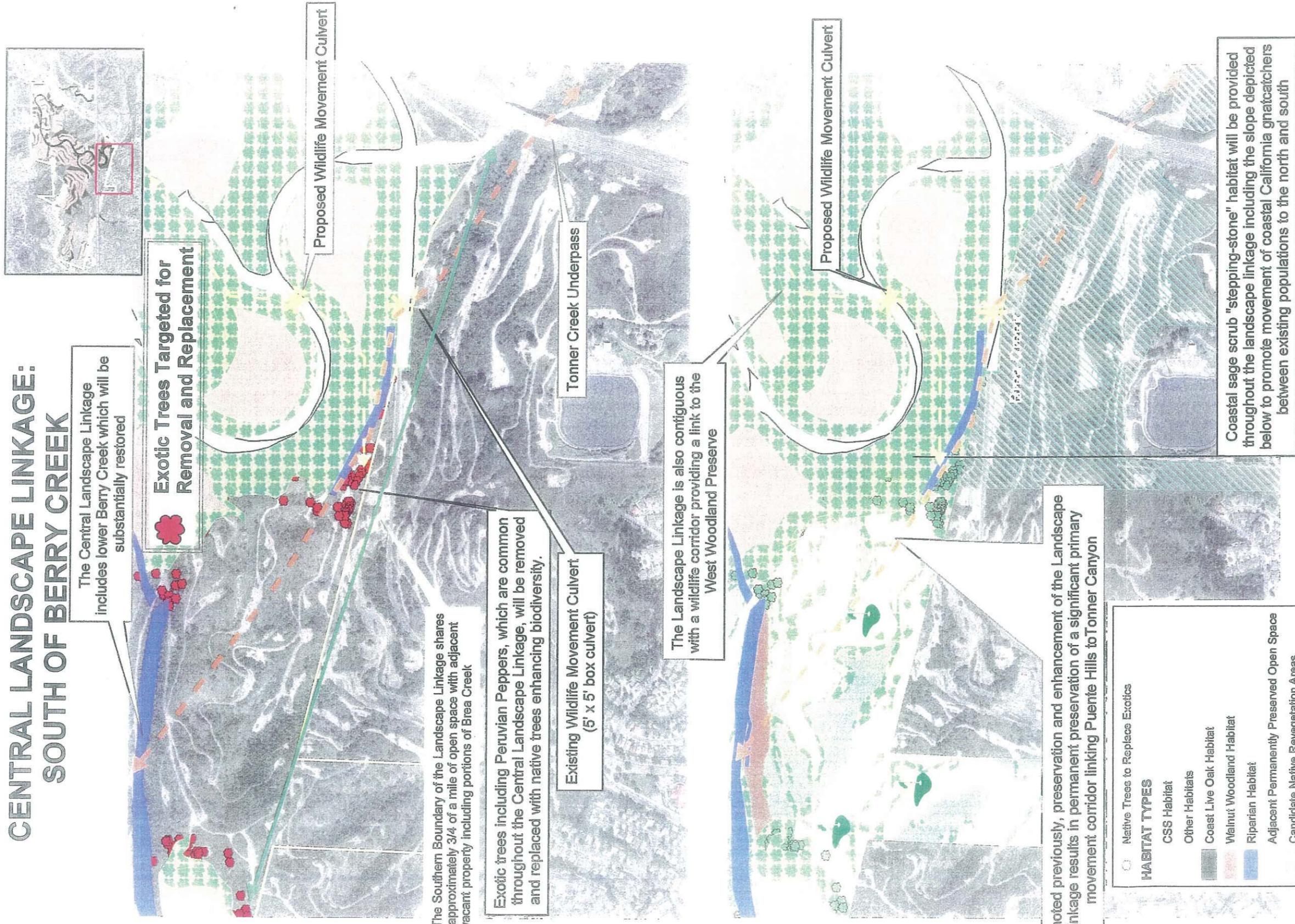
- HABITAT TYPES**
- CSS Habitat
  - Other Habitat
  - Coast Live Oak Habitat
  - Walnut Woodland Habitat
  - Riparian Habitat
  - Candidate Native Revegetation integrated with Golf Course
  - Native Trees Replacing Exotics

The Central Landscape Linkage currently supports an average of two to three pairs of California gnatcatchers. Sage scrub restoration will focus on enhancing existing occupied habitat as well as providing "stepping-stone" patches to promote movement through the corridor. Restored coastal sage scrub "Stepping Stone" patches will be located on throughout manufactured slopes to complement existing patches within Central Landscape Linkage.

NOTE: GRAPHICS REPRESENT CONCEPTUAL DESIGN. FINAL DESIGN WILL BE PROVIDED PRIOR TO GRADING IMPACTS

t:472-6\graphics\NorthofBerry.mxd November 13, 2005(IIC)

# CENTRAL LANDSCAPE LINKAGE: SOUTH OF BERRY CREEK



The Central Landscape Linkage includes lower Berry Creek which will be substantially restored

**Exotic Trees Targeted for Removal and Replacement**

Proposed Wildlife Movement Culvert

Tonner Creek Underpass

Proposed Wildlife Movement Culvert

The Southern Boundary of the Landscape Linkage shares approximately 3/4 of a mile of open space with adjacent vacant property including portions of Brea Creek

Exotic trees including Peruvian Peppers, which are common throughout the Central Landscape Linkage, will be removed and replaced with native trees enhancing biodiversity.

Existing Wildlife Movement Culvert (5' x 5' box culvert)

The Landscape Linkage is also contiguous with a wildlife corridor providing a link to the West Woodland Preserve

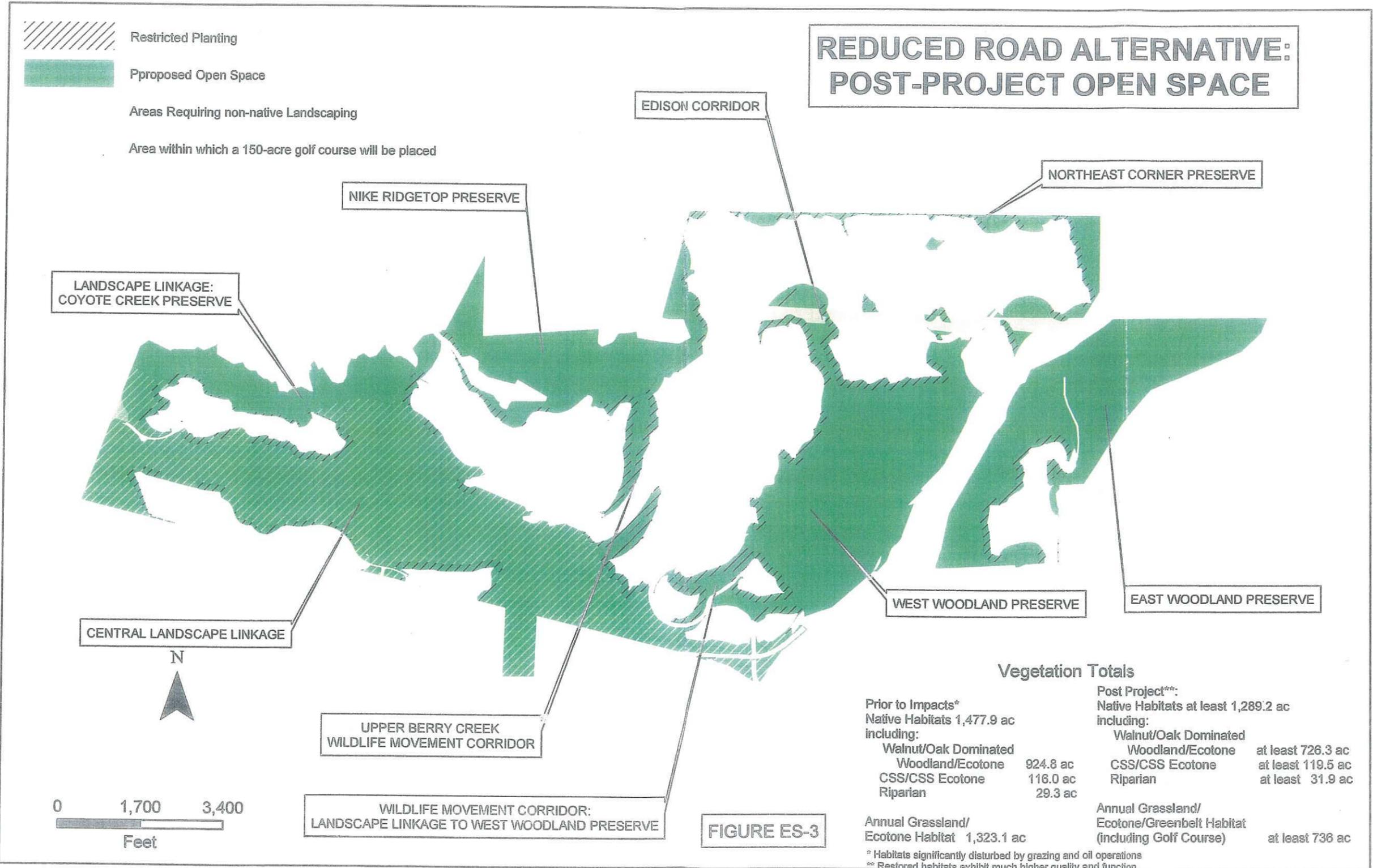
As noted previously, preservation and enhancement of the Landscape Linkage results in permanent preservation of a significant primary movement corridor linking Puente Hills to Tonner Canyon

○	Native Trees to Replace Exotics
HABITAT TYPES	
■	CSS Habitat
■	Other Habitats
■	Coast Live Oak Habitat
■	Walnut Woodland Habitat
■	Riparian Habitat
■	Adjacent Permanently Preserved Open Space
■	Candidate Native Revegetation Areas

Coastal sage scrub "stepping-stone" habitat will be provided throughout the landscape linkage including the slope depicted below to promote movement of coastal California gnatcatchers between existing populations to the north and south

**FIGURE ES-8**

**NOTE: GRAPHICS REPRESENT CONCEPTUAL DESIGN. FINAL DESIGN WILL BE PROVIDED PRIOR TO GRADING IMPACTS**



**REDUCED ROAD ALTERNATIVE:  
POST-PROJECT OPEN SPACE**

FIGURE ES-3

**Vegetation Totals**

<b>Prior to Impacts*</b>		<b>Post Project**:</b>	
Native Habitats 1,477.9 ac		Native Habitats at least 1,289.2 ac	
including:		including:	
Walnut/Oak Dominated		Walnut/Oak Dominated	
Woodland/Ecotone	924.8 ac	Woodland/Ecotone	at least 726.3 ac
CSS/CSS Ecotone	116.0 ac	CSS/CSS Ecotone	at least 119.5 ac
Riparian	29.3 ac	Riparian	at least 31.9 ac
Annual Grassland/ Ecotone Habitat	1,323.1 ac	Annual Grassland/ Ecotone/Greenbelt Habitat (including Golf Course)	at least 736 ac

\* Habitats significantly disturbed by grazing and oil operations  
 \*\* Restored habitats exhibit much higher quality and function



August 29, 2007

Los Angeles County Dept. of Regional Planning  
Attn: General Plan Section, Room 1356  
320 W. Temple Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**SUBJECT: COMMENTS TO THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY SIGNIFICANT  
ECOLOGICAL AREAS PROPOSED PUENTE HILLS SIGNIFICANT  
ECOLOGICAL AREA DESIGNATION/ROWLAND HEIGHTS  
COMMUNITY PLAN AREA**

Dear Department of Regional Planning:

We appreciate the opportunity to provide you with comments regarding the proposed revisions to the Puente Hills Significant Ecological Area (SEA) as it applies to our property located in the Rowland Heights/Diamond Bar area. For your reference, we have also attached an earlier comment letter dated April 27, 2001 (Attachment A) sent to your office regarding the County's SEA update study. Aera Energy LLC, successor in interest to Shell Western E&P Inc., owns the land depicted on the attached regional location map (Attachment B). Significant portions of this landholding (i.e. almost half of the site) have been used for extensive oilfield drilling and producing operations that have been ongoing for more than 100 years. The balance of the property continues to be occupied by cattle grazing uses that date back even longer than the oilfield operations.

The proposed expansion of the existing SEA 15 designation set forth in the draft County General Plan Update Program SEA for the Puente Hills would encompass all but a very small portion of our approximately 3,000 acre landholding (see Attachment C). Thus, our land appears to be an exception to the statement in the SEA Update that "a vast majority of the SEAs encompass existing public open space, floodplains, and steep hillsides".

For the reasons set forth in this letter we believe that the proposed expansion of the SEA designation is both premature in the context of current land use planning for our land and is not justified in biological terms due to existing oilfield conditions within the SEA expansion area.

**A. Current Land Use Planning, the Proposed SEA Designation and Existing  
Conditions within the Proposed SEA Expansion Area on Aera Property**

Aera is currently in process regarding a comprehensive set of General Plan, Specific Plan and Zoning Program land use proposals for the Aera Master Planned Community

("AMPC") involving the City Of Diamond Bar and the Counties of Los Angeles and Orange. This proposed project would provide a broad range of housing opportunities totaling a maximum of 3,699 dwelling units and supporting commercial development in close proximity to major employment centers (see Attachment D). In the context of the project population growth in Southern California and the current imbalance between housing and jobs in the sub-region (an excess of jobs in relation to housing), the provision of the AMPC housing opportunities would further SCAG regional policies to reduce regional Vehicle Miles Traveled ("VMT") and associated air emissions by locating housing in close proximity to major employment centers.

On May 2, 2007, the City of Diamond Bar, acting as the Lead Agency, issued an NOP for environmental review of the proposed AMPC project. Acting as Responsible Agencies under CEQA, the County of Los Angeles and the County of Orange will be extensively involved in the review of the AMPC project. Attachment E depicts the land area proposed to be annexed by the City of Diamond Bar and the area that would remain within the jurisdiction of Los Angeles and Orange Counties. Almost all of the Aera land lying within the present SEA 15 would be annexed into the City of Diamond Bar. Since the SEA Update indicates that "SEA regulations do not apply within City boundaries", this land would cease to be subject to County SEA review upon annexation to the City of Diamond Bar.

Thus, the implications of final action on the AMPC project (likely early next year) should be taken into account with regard to the timing and substance of any current SEA proposals: if an annexation is approved and implemented, this fact would potentially change the perspective of any proposed SEA designation. Notwithstanding the likelihood of annexation, the environmental impact report will contain an extensive review of consistency with the existing SEA designation as a General Plan designation currently in effect.

We believe that final environmental review and action on the AMPC should occur before any final action is taken on the proposed expansion of the SEA on Aera land for the reasons set forth below and in Section "B" of this comment letter.

1. Absence of a Specific Rationale for Expanding the SEA to Include Virtually the Entirety of the Aera Property

The specific rationale for expanding the SEA on Aera's property is not included in the SEA Update. Only one relatively small stand of walnut woodlands is in the SEA expansion area and that stand of trees will be avoided under the proposed AMPC project. With regard to listed species, over 13 years of surveying for coastal California gnatcatchers only three pairs of gnatcatchers have shown persistence on the site and those gnatcatchers have occupied habitat in a limited area near what is termed the "Crossover Canyon". The remaining coastal sage scrub on the AMPC site is highly fragmented, limited in acreage, generally of low quality, and not occupied by gnatcatchers. Occupied gnatcatcher habitat and unoccupied habitat important for recovery purposes is protected under Section 7 of the Federal Endangered Species Act and any potential impacts on such

habitat will be addressed through a Section 7 consultation with USFWS. On-site riparian habitat is limited and, except for the Coyote Creek riparian habitat which will be avoided by the AMPC project, is of limited quality and is fragmented by the presence of invasive pepper trees. Almost all of the 1,750 pepper trees on the AMPC project site are found within the SEA expansion area. Brea Canyon is listed as a major canyon habitat unit, but the two sides of the canyon have been bisected physically and functionally by SR 57, a major freeway, and Brea Canyon road; major woodlands preserves are proposed under the AMPC project for Aera land within Brea Canyon on both sides of SR 57.

2. Wildlife Movement Connectivity Appears to be the Only Plausible Rationale for the Proposed SEA Expansion on the Aera Project Site.

Although no justification has been given, the only rationale that appears to apply to the proposed SEA expansion on Aera property is wildlife movement. The SEA Update, under the heading of Wildlife Movement, states that the “major habitat units . . . are connected by a series of open space corridors which allows population exchange to occur”. Studies performed in conjunction with planning for the AMPC and reflected in submittals to Los Angeles County SEATAC indicate that the potential for subregional wildlife movement opportunities on the AMPC site are defined by the Harbor Road undercrossing at the northwest portion of the Aera property and extend in a southeast manner toward the SR 57/Tonner Canyon undercrossing (the balance of the SR 57 has been shown to be a complete barrier to the movement of non-avian species). However, virtually all of this area on the AMPC site is and has been host to extensive oilfield activities and associated facilities that have been in place for many decades (see – Exhibit C from the 2001 letter in Attachment A).

Under present conditions, portions of the SEA expansion area reflect resource extraction and grazing activities extending over 100 years on the AMPC project site. Existing conditions reflect the following:

- Lower Berry Creek – This long reach of Berry Creek contains extensive pipelines laterally along the creek and at road crossings. This portion of Berry Creek is deeply incised and riparian habitat is fragmented by invasive pepper trees and is not generally present in incised areas. Oilfield support facilities, including a separation plant, are located adjacent to the creek.
- Coastal Sage Scrub Habitat – As noted previously, the onsite gnatcatcher population is extremely low in absolute terms and in comparison with other sites in this subregion (e.g. Tonner Hills project, Shell/MWD HCO Study Area, East Coyote Hills HCP area, West Coyote Hills). The remaining css within the SEA expansion is highly fragmented and does not support resident gnatcatchers.
- Woodlands Habitats – The riparian areas within Coyote Creek at the extreme northeast portion of the Aera property are of high value, as are the

walnut woodlands found on the southern bank of Coyote Creek. However, other woodlands (both riparian and upland) and habitat types have been severely impacted by grazing and oilfield activities, as well as the presence of over 1,700 invasive pepper trees.

Thus, except for Coyote Creek, the habitats within the potential subregional connectivity area on the AMPC site are generally degraded and in many cases have been impacted by oilfield activities.

3. Alternative Scenarios for the Existing Oilfield Operations Area Found in Most of the SEA Expansion Area

The existing oilfield operations on the Aera site are rapidly approaching the end of their economic life. Within the next few years, there are two scenarios for the oilfield area:

*(a) Oilfield Remediation*

If a development proposal is approved on the AMPC project site that is economically feasible, Aera will undertake an extensive remediation effort comparable to that which was undertaken on the Shell Yorba Linda site. This would involve the plugging and abandonment of oil wells, removal of existing facilities and pipelines and impacted soil bio-remediation. This extensive remediation effort presents opportunities for habitat restoration such as the riparian and stream course function restoration program proposed for lower Berry Creek as an integral part of the AMPC project.

*(b) Oilfield Closure*

If a feasible development proposal is not approved on the AMPC project site, oilfield remediation may be limited, deferred, or may not be undertaken. In the absence of a conversion to residential and commercial uses, wholesale oilfield remediation would not be required. Instead “oilfield closure” could be implemented. Under the “oilfield closure” approach, absent a proximate public health and safety condition, existing oilfield facilities would be either demolished or securely and safely shuttered in place, oil wells would be capped, pipelines would be left in place and soil bio-remediation would not be undertaken. Without a development project, there would be no rationale for a comprehensive restoration program such as that proposed by the AMPC Project.

With the withdrawal of oilfield operations personnel due to the cessation of oilfield operations, there would be minimal to no on-site personnel to maintain site security on a daily basis. As a consequence, the oilfield area would have to be securely fenced to prevent trespass, vandalism and other types of intrusion that could present a hazard both to intruders and to the general public. These security measures would also limit or preclude the ability for wildlife to move through the property.

**B. The County Should not Act on the Proposed SEA Expansion on Aera Land Until It Can Assess the Outcome of Current Land Use Planning for SEA Purposes**

Current land use planning for the proposed AMPC site could affect both the existing and proposed SEA in many ways. Much of the existing SEA 15 would be annexed to the City of Diamond Bar if finally approved. Land uses within the proposed SEA expansion area would be finally resolved, as well as land uses within contiguous areas under the jurisdiction of the County of Orange.

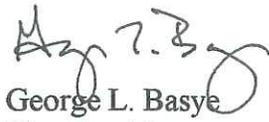
Importantly, for purposes of addressing wildlife movement, there are several fundamental considerations addressed by the proposed AMPC project. Regional connectivity cannot be addressed without resolving the future land uses within the County of Orange portion of the AMPC site which encompasses the critical southeast connectivity to the Tonner Creek undercrossing and thereby to Tonner Canyon. Equally importantly, existing degraded conditions are proposed to be addressed through the following resource management elements of the AMPC project:

- The creation of a gnatcatcher movement archipelago of restored and created habitat patch “steppingstones” (see – Bio Addendum restoration map [Attachment F]);
- Implementation of a comprehensive program of habitat and streamcourse restoration for lower Berry Creek (Figures ES-9 and ES-10 from the Biota Report Executive Summary [Attachments G & H]);
- The removal of 1,750 invasive pepper trees in what has been termed the “Landscape Linkage” (see Figures ES –5 through ES-7 from the Biota Report Executive Summary [Attachments I, J & K]);
- Strengthening of habitat connectivity in the southeastern portion of the AMPC project site within the jurisdiction of the County of Orange (see Figure ES-8 from the Biota Report Executive Summary [Attachment L]); and
- The phased dedication of conservation easements assuring the permanent protection of the proposed Landscape Linkage and Wildlife Movement Corridors connecting proposed on-site preserves and off-site preserves to the north (see Figure ES-3 from the Biota Report Executive Summary [Attachment M]).

Until the above land use issues, including land use designations in areas under the jurisdiction of the County of Orange, are addressed comprehensively among three jurisdictions – the City of Diamond Bar, the County of Los Angeles and the County of Orange – any proposed SEA designation would be premature and would likely need to be revisited almost immediately if an SEA designation were to be finalized prior to the resolution of land uses for the Aera property.

Again, we very much appreciate the opportunity to comment on the SEA Update. We trust that you will take into account our comments and would like to have the opportunity to provide additional comments in the future, as well as continue to meet with appropriate County staff as the environmental review of the proposed AMPC project moves forward.

Sincerely,



George L. Basye  
Vice President

GLB:mep

Attachments

cc: Supervisor Don Knabe  
County of Los Angeles  
822 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 W. Temple St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Jim DeStefano  
City Manager  
City of Diamond Bar  
21660 E. Copley Dr., Suite 100  
Diamond Bar, CA 91765



April 27, 2001

Department of Regional Planning  
ATTN: Mr. George Malone  
General Plan Development Section  
320 W. Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**SUBJECT: COMMENTS TO THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY SIGNIFICANT  
ECOLOGICAL AREAS UPDATE STUDY**

Dear Mr. Malone:

We would like to take this opportunity to provide you with comments regarding the November 2000 proposed revisions to the Puente Hills Significant Ecological Area (SEA) as it applies to our property. Aera Energy LLC, successor in interest to and agent for Shell Western E&P Inc. (SWEPI LP), owns the lands depicted on Exhibit A. Significant portions of this landholding are comprised of extensive oilfield drilling and producing operations that have been ongoing for more than 100 years.

The primary biological consideration for the existing SEA designation covering portions of our property was due to the presence of walnut woodlands. It should be noted however, that portions of the current SEA includes lands which do not contain walnut woodlands and which are characterized in large part by non-native annual grasslands that have been subject to regular grazing for more than 100 years as depicted in Exhibit B.

According to the November 2000 SEA Update Study, "pre-existing developed portions of properties within SEA's, such as buildings,...oilfield facilities...were not intended as part of the SEA." The study goes on to note that these "features and their maintenance and operation are not subject to SEATAC review." The study further notes that "due to considerations of mapping scale these features may have been included within SEA boundaries but are recognized as not being biologically sensitive." (SEA Update Study, p. 27).

It is important to understand how much of our property has been and remains involved in oilfield activities as well as the extent to which these land areas will be further modified through eventual oilfield remediation activities mandated existing by health and safety laws and regulations which govern the closure of these facilities. We have attached several maps that indicate:

- The extent of oilfield roadways and facilities and the location of oil wells, pipelines and other supporting equipment (Exhibit C)

- The estimated areas that will be subject to oilfield abandonment and remediation (Exhibit D). This map is very preliminary and, based on our experience with other local oilfield closure operations, will likely involve a much more substantial area once all facilities have been located, delineated in the field and actual remediation is underway.

As can be seen from the above exhibits, a very large part of the proposed SEA expansion on our property includes major oilfield activities that will be subject to a large-scale remediation effort. We believe that this land area should be removed from the proposed designation because most of the biological resources in the area have been impacted by previous oilfield activities and much of the remaining resources will be substantially altered or removed by oilfield remediation. If there are biological goals considered desirable under post-remediation conditions, such goals could be noted in a narrative text but the SEA map should not extend to this area.

The Puente Hills Biological Resources Assessment identifies several "Sensitive Biological Resources" in the Puente Hills including "walnut woodland, southern willow scrub, coastal sage scrub and wetlands which occur within the study area". We would like to note that several of these natural communities are present on our property only to a limited extent:

- The only wetland areas on the property are in a limited drainage basin/area receiving urban runoff from adjoining development immediately east of SR-57 Freeway and a small area located near the northwesterly corner of our property (see Exhibit E). These wetlands are in areas already covered by existing SEA.
- Southern willow scrub is found in only two limited areas. One location is the wetland area noted above east of the SR-57 Freeway and second location within a riparian area adjacent to the northwesterly portion of our property also apparently receiving urban runoff from a recent Shea Homes development (see Exhibit E).
- Coastal sage scrub is found in scattered patches in the oilfield area subject to future remediation (Exhibit E).

Based on the SEA Update's discussion of the intent to exclude oilfield areas and the absence or minimal presence of the above habitat types outside of the existing SEA, we see no basis for the proposed expansion of the SEA on our property beyond the limits of the existing SEA.

Finally, regarding the proposed SEA regulations and management practices, there is no basis for the proposal to limit development densities to one residential unit per ten acre parcel. A centrally located, large infill site such as ours presents an ideal opportunity to provide critically needed housing in close proximity to major job centers and clearly would be in conflict with the proposed density limitations. Such a density restriction is at odds with the housing goals for the region and appears to create inconsistencies with the Housing Element of the County's General Plan. Furthermore, when geotechnical conditions and infrastructure costs are considered, such a proposal would also likely

preclude a landowner from having sufficient economic incentive to cluster development and thereby being able to protect/preserve substantial land areas with truly significant resource values. We would hope that the one unit per ten acre proposal is not intended as a basis to argue a reduction in land values in order to facilitate public acquisition of private property.

We appreciate very much the opportunity to comment on the SEA Update. Our current intent is to proceed with processing of a comprehensive land use plan for our property in the near future. In light of the realities of the oilfield remediation requirements, we believe that any consideration of SEA designation revisions for our property would best be deferred until the County of Los Angeles completes the land use and associated CEQA review process.

We hope that you will take into account our comments and would like to have the opportunity to provide additional comments in the future as well as meet with appropriate County staff as the process moves forward.

Sincerely,



George Basye  
Vice President – Fee Lands

GLB:mep

Attachments

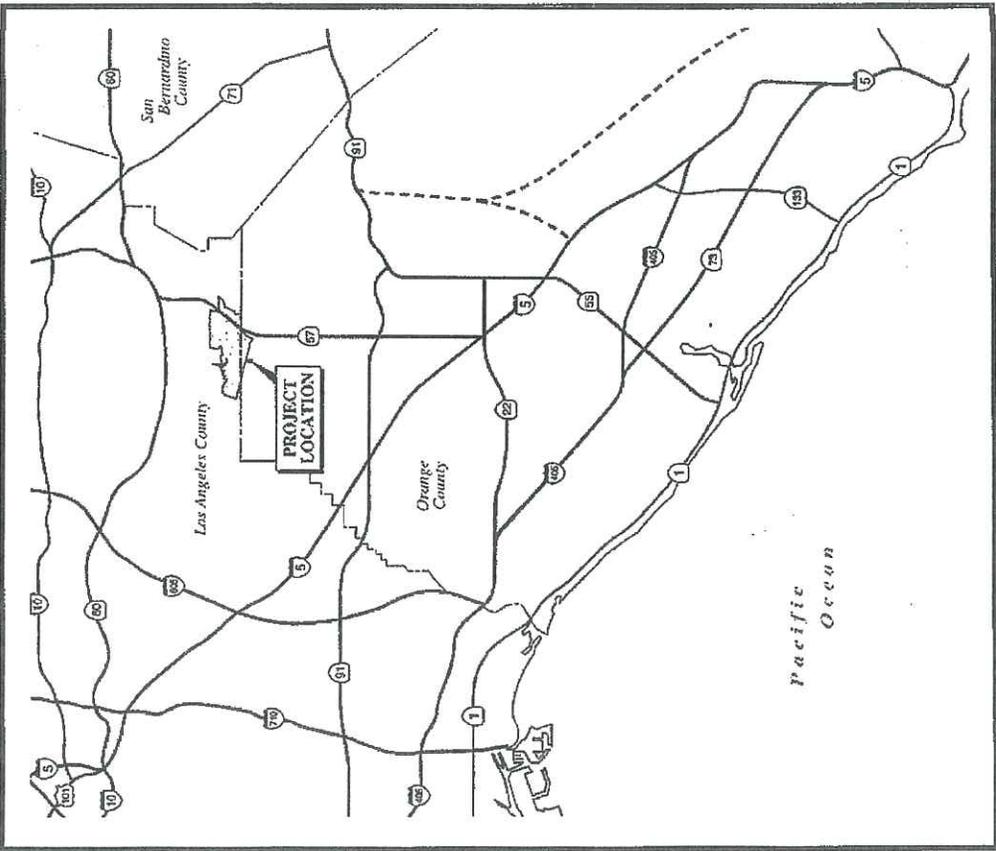
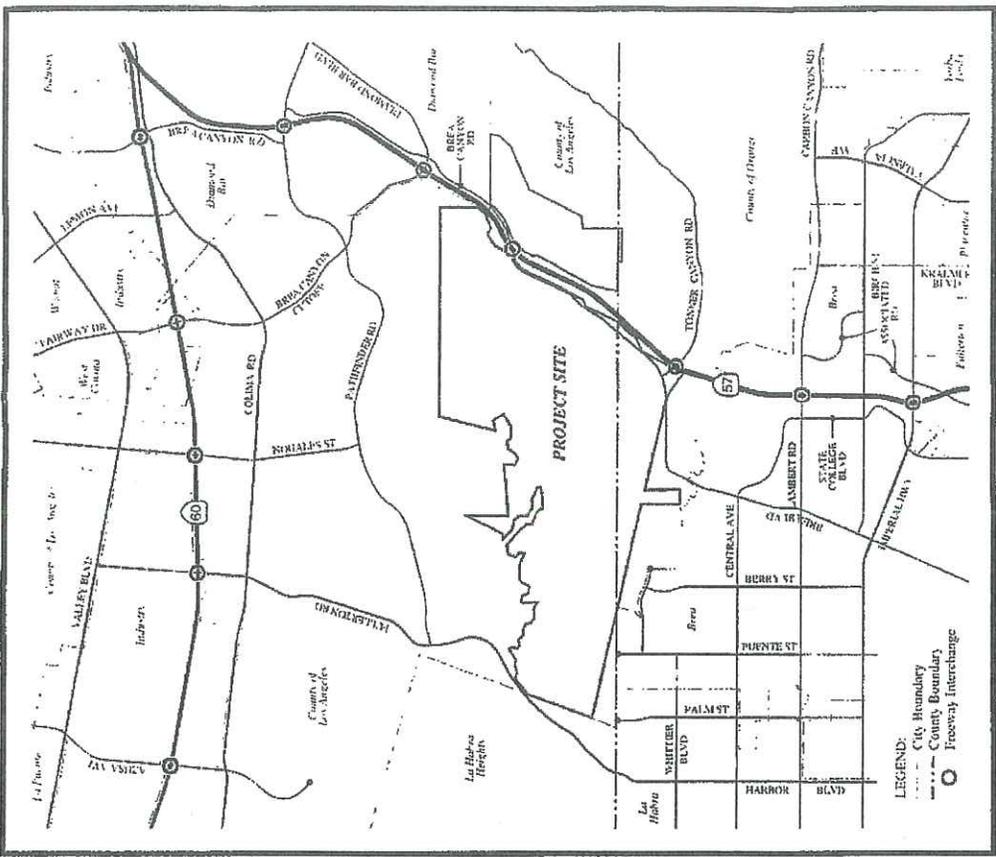
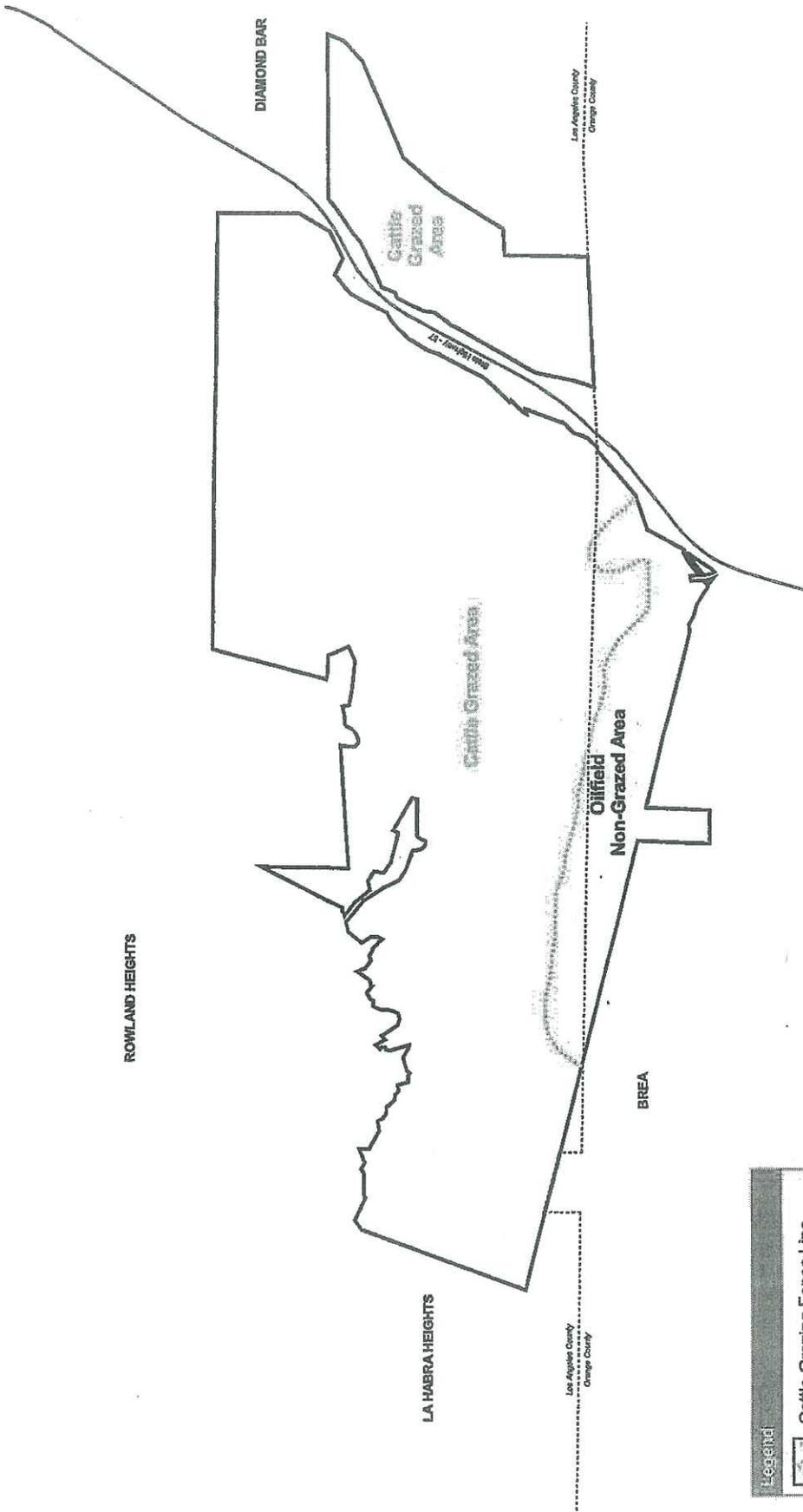


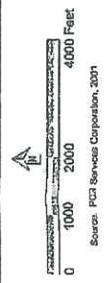
Exhibit A  
 Aera Puente Hills  
 Regional & Vicinity Maps

Exhibit B  
Aera Puente Hills  
Cattle Grazing Areas



Legend

- Cattle Grazing Fence Line



ROWLAND HEIGHTS

DIAMOND BAR

LA HABRA HEIGHTS

BREA

Los Angeles County  
Orange County

Los Angeles County  
Orange County

State Highway 67

Legend

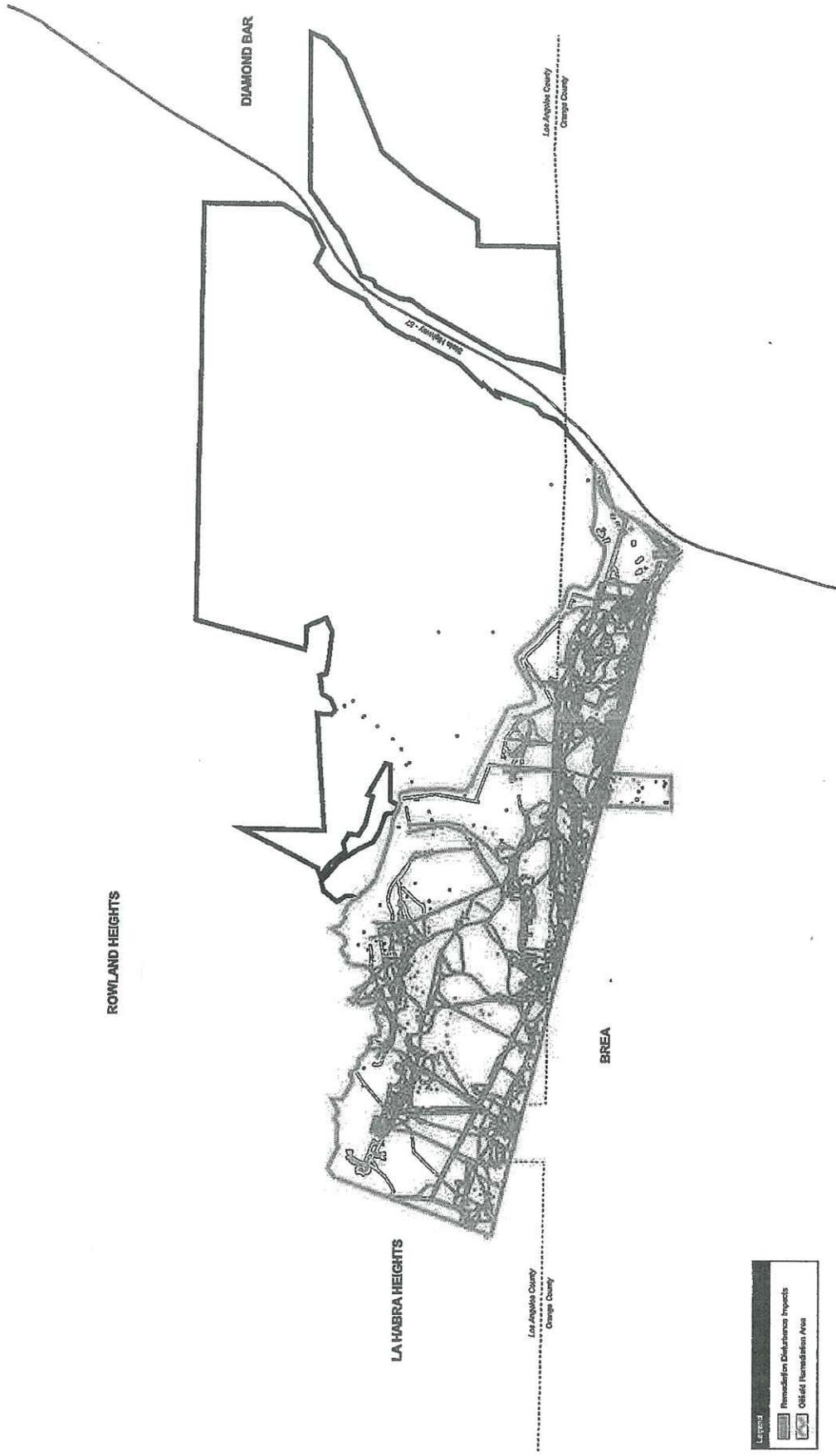
	Offfield Roadways
	Structures
	Surface Wells
	Poles
	Oil Lines
	Gas Lines
	Electrical
	Communication



0 1000 2000 4000 Feet  
 Source: PCH Services Corporation, 2001

Exhibit C  
 Aera Puente Hills  
 Offfield Roadways & Facilities





ROWLAND HEIGHTS

DIAMOND BAR

LA HABRA HEIGHTS

BREA

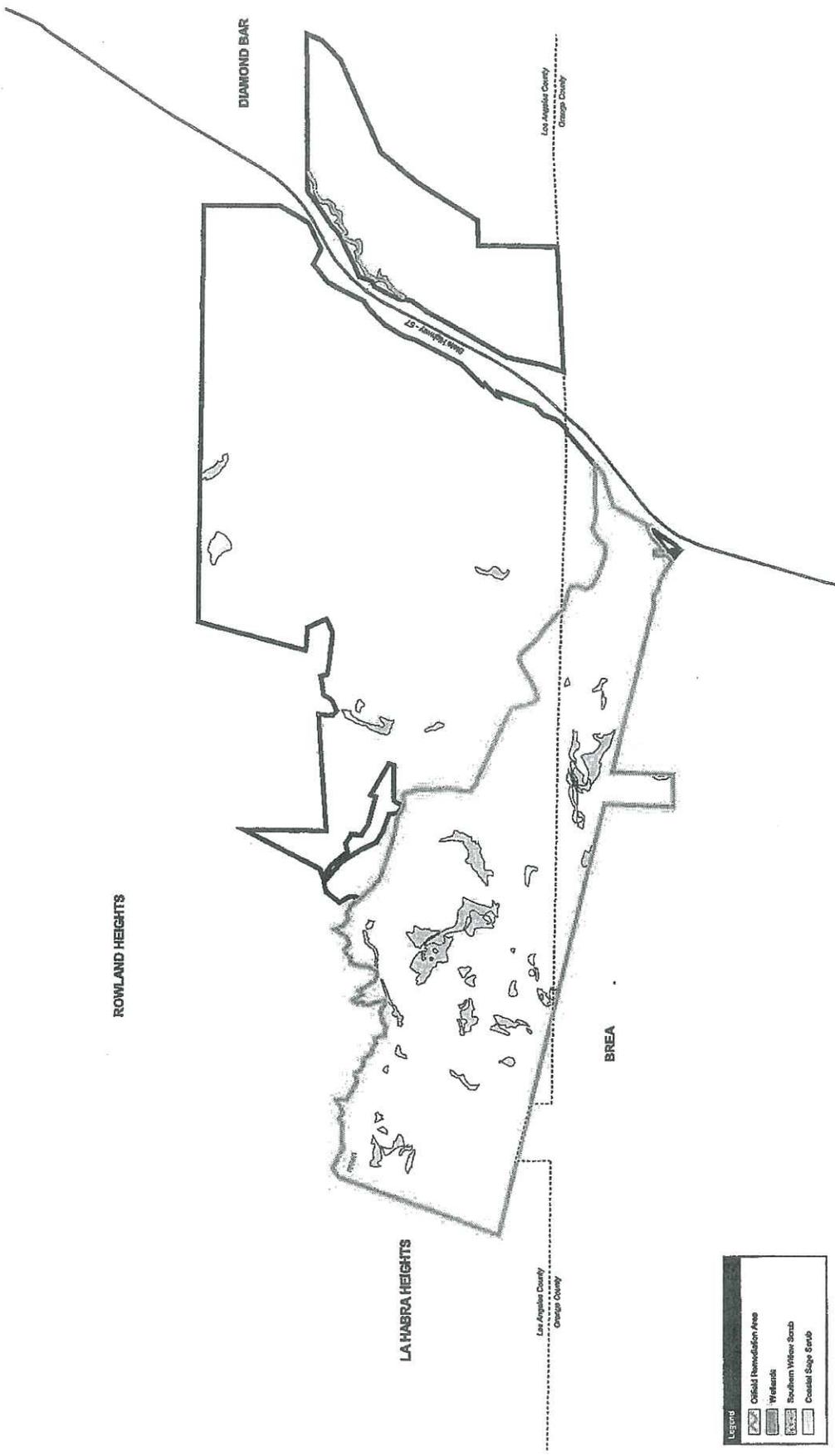
Los Angeles County  
Orange County

Los Angeles County  
Orange County



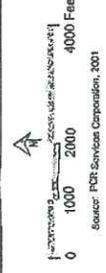
Exhibit D  
Aera Puente Hills  
Oilfield Remediation Disturbance



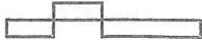
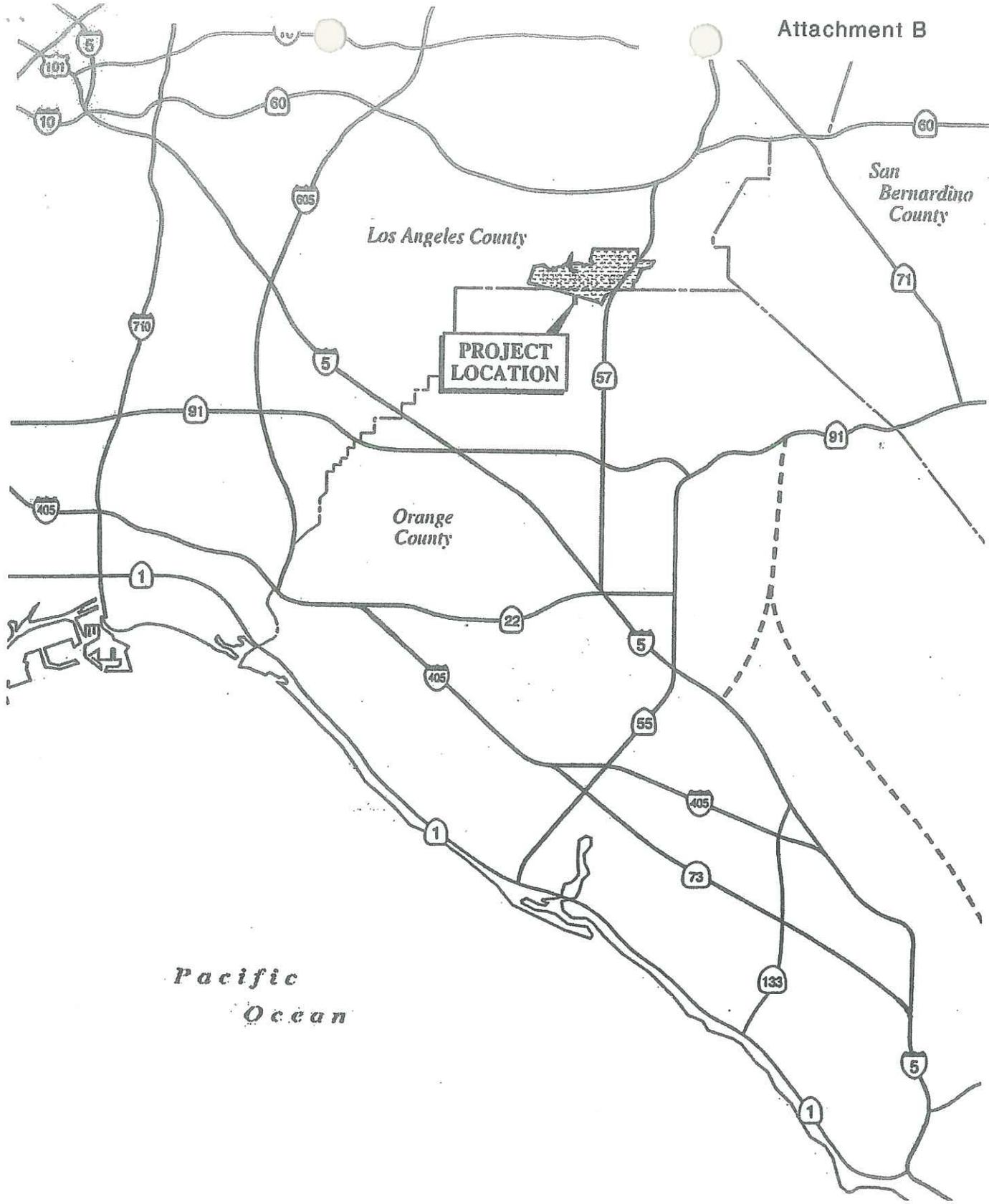


**Legend**

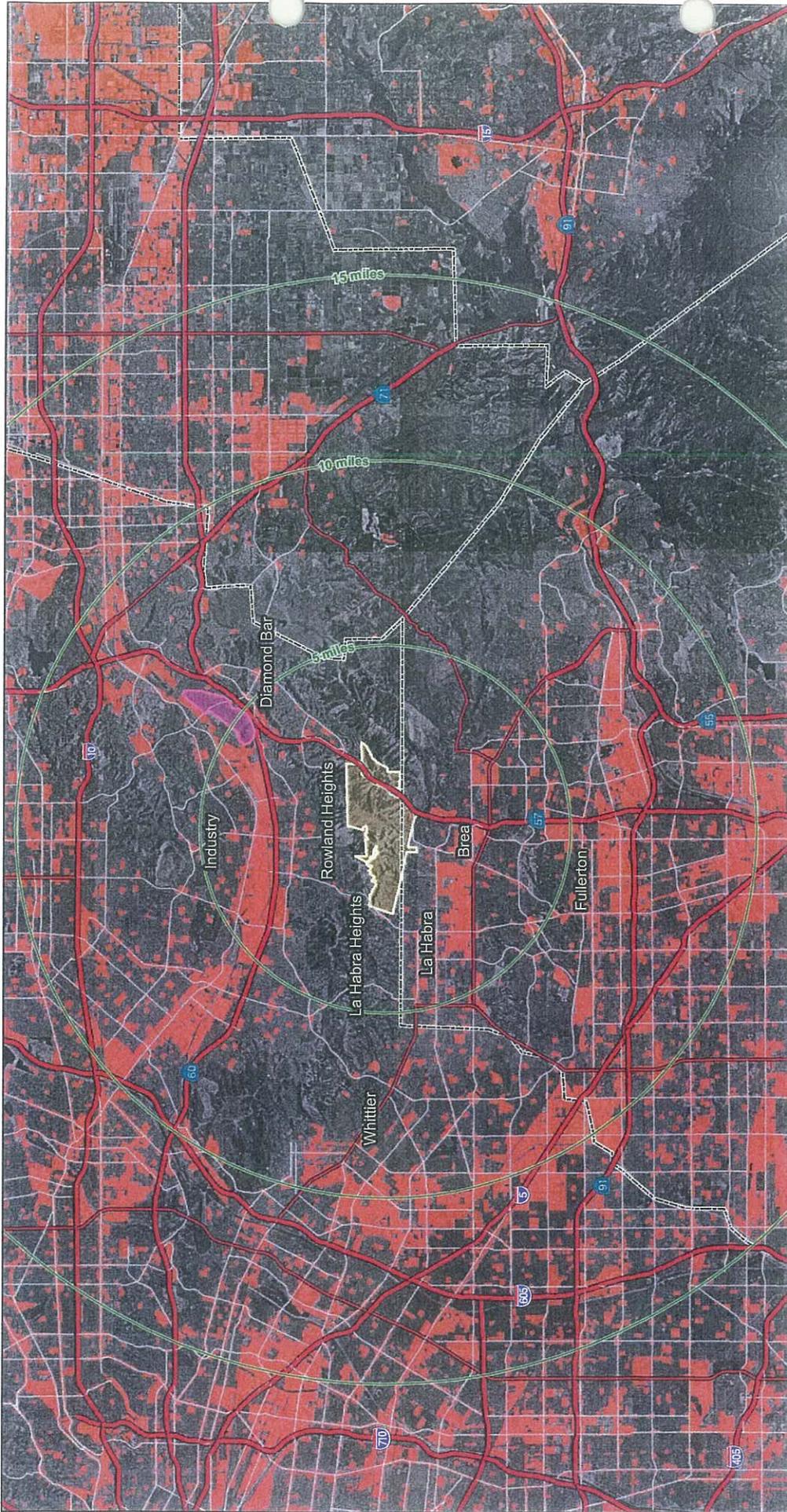
	Offfield Remediation Area
	Wetlands
	Southern Willow Scrub
	Coastal Sage Scrub



**Exhibit E**  
**Aera Puente Hills**  
**Wetlands, Southern Willow Scrub,**  
**Coastal Sage Scrub & Offfield Remediation Area**







**LSA**

0 1.25 2.5  
MILES

↑ N

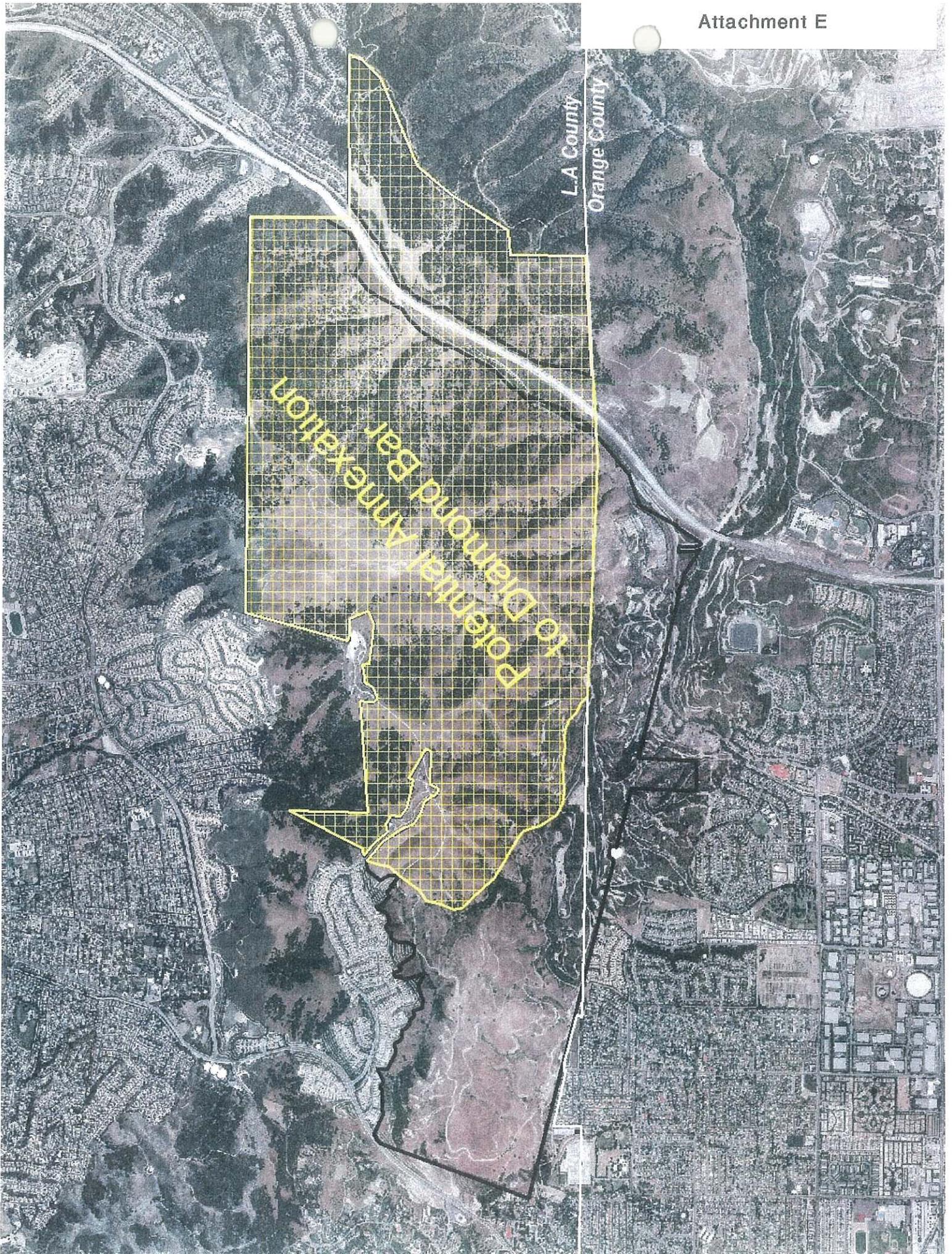
**Legend**

- Project Site
- Employment Centers (Commercial and Services and Industrial Designations from SCAG, 2001)
- County Boundary
- Industry Business Center (4,779,000 square feet)

**FIGURE**

*Area Master-Planned Community*  
**Regional Employment Centers**

SOURCE: TerraServer (32m) DOQ, 2004; SCAG Existing Land Use, 2001.  
I:\env630\gis\employment\_areas.mxd (11/07/05)



## **28 Chatsworth Nature Preserve**

**From:** [Lowry, Julie](#)  
**To:** [Imsand, Shirley](#); [Colvin, Wesley](#)  
**Cc:** [Howard, Emma](#)  
**Subject:** FW: SMMC comments on Draft GP  
**Date:** Friday, July 29, 2011 3:40:03 PM  
**Attachments:** [Las Lomas WL discussion.pdf](#)  
[Henrickson Corridor Evaluation annotated.pdf](#)  
[Las Lomas Species List.pdf](#)

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Newhall wedge data. Thanks for going out and looking at the underpasses. Please let Emma know what you think about them.

Julie Lowry  
General Plan Section  
213-974-6423

---

**From:** Eric Bruins [mailto:[eric.bruins@mrca.ca.gov](mailto:eric.bruins@mrca.ca.gov)]  
**Sent:** Friday, June 24, 2011 5:27 PM  
**To:** Lowry, Julie  
**Cc:** 'Judi Tamasi'; Glaser, Mitch; 'Paul Edelman'  
**Subject:** RE: SMMC comments on Draft GP

Hi Julie,

I've spent much of the day reviewing documents prepared in conjunction with the Gate-King and Las Lomas developments in the Newhall Wedge, which provide the biological justification for the broader SEA requests in that vicinity. DFG is presently preparing a CAPP with Trust for Public Land covering the entire Newhall Wedge between I-5 and SR-14. The extent of this CAPP is similar to the Conservancy's requested SEA boundaries (and more extensive than the County's proposed SEA).

Much of the difficulty in providing species documentation is that bio studies aren't conducted until an area is proposed for development and an EIR prepared. Only when the development proposal fails or is delayed do we end up with a comprehensive bio report for an intact ecosystem. DFG's database frequently lists communities that have since been lost to development, but is incomplete for adjacent undeveloped land. This is the unfortunate information void within which we all must operate. We therefore must work under a presumption of inclusion when discussing habitat areas. As I understand it, the SEA program is designed under this same presumption wherein meeting any one criteria warrants inclusion.

With that, I can provide the most additional commentary on the Newhall Wedge requested addition. The Wedge operates as a "connected island" in that neither I-5 nor SR-14 are 100% porous. Therefore the Wedge itself must be preserved as a core habitat block of sufficient size to support target species. A diminution of the size of the "island" would expose the block to greater edge effects and necessarily reduce the likelihood of maintaining regional genetic exchange. The current natural habitat area in the Wedge is approximately 4 square miles—too small for top

predators like mountain lions, but plenty large to serve as a home range for small resident or transient populations of bobcats, coyotes, deer, foxes, etc. The successful continued presence of these intermediate species is critical for landscape-level connectivity. The SEA must be large enough to support home ranges of these target species and must therefore encompass the entire extent of remaining natural habitat in the Wedge.

Likewise, every bridge to the “island” must be noted for its ecological significance. Even an inferior bridge increases the likelihood of successful movement. This is why the Conservancy’s SEA would include the corridor to Calgrove—which is already protected on the west side of the freeway—even though it is widely acknowledged to be inferior to other possible crossings. With the current condition of multiple potential—but compromised—crossing locations, all must be protected (along with their respective approaches) to maximize the probability of successful passage. Loss of any one crossing would be a significant impact (but could potentially be mitigated with enhancements to an alternative). The Conservancy’s requested addition specifically includes additional area near The Old Road at I-5, which is the principal crossing point of that freeway. The County’s proposal does not include the primary approach to this crossing in its SEA.

As far as specific species, Henrickson (attached) goes into detail about the ecology of the Wedge and its regional role. Additionally, species lists from the Las Lomas project are attached. American Badger has recently (May 2011) been confirmed in Los Pinetos undercrossing by a team of UCLA students with camera traps and therefore is likely in the expanded SEA area. The Las Lomas property is currently the subject of intense acquisition focus for the yet-to-be-written CAPP, yet even its entirety is not included in the County’s SEA.

For the other two requests (Mormon Canyon and Valley Oaks Connection), both additions are also rooted in the tenets of conservation biology, as described in our letter. Species surveys are not available for Mormon Canyon, but we included documentation from neighboring Browns Canyon where species are in the DFG database (some from occurrences on MRCA property). For Valley Oaks Connection, the purpose of the SEA is to avert imminent isolation of the Valley Oaks SEA. As noted by Henrickson, the removal of top predators from an ecosystem affects population balance all the way down the line, increasing the risk of disease or other sources of instability among prey species. The presence or absence of special-status species in the requested addition is not a component of this justification. However, expected species would be similar to those documented for Stevenson Ranch and Newhall Ranch, theoretically including the potential for spineflower or other special status species. Until further bio surveys are completed, we won’t know.

We have an active research program in coordination with UCLA, NPS, USGS, and others to fill some of these information gaps. If there are particular topics you’d like us to add to that research program, I’m more than happy to discuss them.

Please give me a call if there’s more information you’d like from us.

Thank you,  
-Eric

Eric Bruins  
Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority  
5810 Ramirez Canyon Road, Malibu, CA 90265  
310-589-3230 ext. 125 eric.bruins@mrca.ca.gov

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**From:** Paul Edelman [mailto:edelman@smmc.ca.gov]  
**Sent:** Friday, June 24, 2011 11:02 AM  
**To:** Lowry, Julie; Eric Bruins  
**Cc:** Judi Tamasi; Glaser, Mitch  
**Subject:** RE: SMMC comments on Draft GP

Hey Julie – Eric is going to provide you some answers. We all wish you the best and thank you for hanging tough on the whole SEA revamp. We always trust you to give it your best shot.

Paul

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**From:** Lowry, Julie [mailto:jlowry@planning.lacounty.gov]  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 23, 2011 5:52 PM  
**To:** Paul Edelman; Eric Bruins  
**Cc:** Judi Tamasi; Glaser, Mitch  
**Subject:** RE: SMMC comments on Draft GP

Hi Paul,

Sorry I've been off the past two days and unable to touch base. I've checked in with Mitch and know that he spoke with Eric about the SMMC letter. I will be meeting internally to discuss the SEA boundaries and your requests on Tuesday and it would be very helpful if you could provide any studies or species documentation that I could review to better inform the discussion.

I'd like to address these issues as soon as possible because I'll be leaving the County this summer so I can spend more time with my young children. I've been facilitating the SEA Update through its various iterations for ten years, so it's hard to let go, but I hope to leave the Department with a strong Program.

Please let me know if you have any additional comments or questions about the Program.

Julie

Julie Lowry  
Principal Planner  
General Plan Section  
Department of Regional Planning  
320 W. Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
<http://planning.lacounty.gov>  
213-974-6423



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**From:** Paul Edelman [mailto:edelman@smmc.ca.gov]  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 23, 2011 1:27 PM  
**To:** Eric Bruins; Lowry, Julie  
**Cc:** Judi Tamasi  
**Subject:** RE: SMMC comments on Draft GP

Julie – even Monday first part of the day is fine too.

PE

---

**From:** Eric Bruins [mailto:eric.bruins@mrca.ca.gov]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 22, 2011 2:00 PM  
**To:** jlowry@planning.lacounty.gov  
**Cc:** 'Judi Tamasi'; Paul Edelman  
**Subject:** SMMC comments on Draft GP

Hello Julie,

We've prepared the attached comments for our June 27<sup>th</sup> Conservancy meeting. Before the Board adopts the letter on Monday, we wanted to give you an opportunity to review it. We are still able to make changes before Monday. If you would like to discuss any aspects of the letter, please give me a call.

Thank you,  
-Eric

Eric Bruins  
Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority  
5810 Ramirez Canyon Road, Malibu, CA 90265  
310-589-3230 ext. 125 eric.bruins@mrca.ca.gov

### *Southern mixed riparian forest*

Two distinct vegetation associations occur under the broader category of Southern mixed riparian forest. The first of these, Southern cottonwood-willow riparian forest, occurs along the downstream reaches of the largest streams on-site. Fremont cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), arroyo willow, and narrow-leaved willow dominate here, with sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) and black cottonwood (*Populus balsamifera* ssp. *trichocarpa*) also occurring. For the purposes of the delineation this community was identified variously as oak/willow/sycamore woodland, willow/sycamore woodland, and oak/willow riparian.

The second, southern coast live oak riparian forest occurs along reaches of the larger drainages on the project site. Scattered willows, black walnut, and an occasional large sycamore can be found in this community but coast live oak dominates and is often the only tree present. The canopy is often dense enough to preclude understory development. Where the canopy is less dense poison oak tends to dominate the understory. For the purposes of this delineation this community was identified as coast live oak riparian.

### *Freshwater seep*

One example of this plant community was identified on-site (ESA, 2003b). This is a small area, estimated to be 30' wide by 50' long along Creek G, where water trickling down a cliff face supports ferns, mosses, California blackberry, and poison oak.

### *Special Status Plants and Sensitive Plant Communities*

A total of ten special status plant species were identified as having potential to occur at the project site. Two of these species, slender mariposa lily (*Calochortus clavatus* var. *gracilis*) and Plummer's mariposa lily (*Calochortus plummerae*), which are both federal species of concern, have been observed on-site (Envicom 2001; Tierney 2001). Six natural plant communities considered sensitive by the California Department of Fish and Game have been observed to occur on the project site: California walnut woodland, Riversidian upland coastal sage scrub, southern coast live oak riparian forest, southern cottonwood-willow riparian forest, southern mixed riparian forest, and southern willow scrub (ESA, 2003a). Small to large areas of most of these sensitive plant communities occur along portions of the creeks at the project site.

## 2.6 WILDLIFE

The Project area has substantial wildlife value when considering that the site and adjacent properties provide a corridor for wildlife movement between surrounding undeveloped areas and mountain ranges. The riparian forests provide nesting, foraging, hunting and resting habitat for a variety of bird and mammal species. Many species observed within the Project boundaries, including western fence lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*), western rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis*), red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), deer mouse (*Peromyscus maniculatus*), Botta's pocket gopher (*Thomomys bottae*), black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*), and mule deer

(*Odocoileus hemionus*), are common in suburban and urban areas. Other common species, including coyote (*Canis latrans*), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), house mouse (*Mus musculus*), Norway rat (*Rattus norvegicus*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), and opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*), are also presumed present in the creek corridors.

### *Special Status Wildlife*

Forty seven special status animals were identified as having potential to occur in, or within the vicinity of, the Las Lomas Project area, including twenty two birds, nine reptiles, one amphibian, and fifteen mammals (ESA, 2003a). Although no federally or state threatened or endangered species have been observed on-site during numerous field hours (Envicom, 2001; Tierney, 2001; ESA 2003a; ESA 2003b) their potential presence may not be ruled out since suitable habitat is present. Fourteen<sup>1</sup> federal and/or state species of concern have been observed on-site: Coastal western whiptail (*Cnemidophorus tigris multiscutatus*), San Bernadino ringneck snake (*Diadophus punctatus modestus*), San Diego mountain kingsnake (*Lampropeltis zonata pulchra*), Coast horned lizard (*Phrysonoma coronatum*, not identified to subspecies), Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperi*), Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow (*Aimophila ruficeps canescens*), Lawrence's goldfinch (*Carduelis lawrencei*), yellow warbler (*Dendroica petechia brewsteri*), Pacific slope flycatcher (*Empidonax difficilis*), rufous hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*), Allen's hummingbird (*Selasphorus sasin*), Bewick's wren (*Thyromanes bewickii*), California thrasher (*Toxostoma redivivum*), and San Diego desert woodrat (*Neotoma lepida intermedia*).

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<sup>1</sup> There are two subspecies of horned lizards known from the area, since those observed on-site have not been identified to the subspecies level it is possible that one or both species are found on-site. If only one species occurs on-site then the total number of species of concern would be reduced to thirteen.

**Appendix A**  
**Special Status Species Considered in the Evaluation of the Project Site**

Common Name Scientific Name	Listing Status USFWS/CDFG/ CNPS	General Habitat
<i>Birds</i>		
Southwestern willow flycatcher <i>Empidonax traillii extimus</i>	FE/--	Nests in riparian woodlands with willow thickets or other dense understory
American peregrine falcon <i>Falco peregrinus</i>	--/CE	Forages in marshes and grasslands, nesting habitat includes high, protected cliffs
Coastal California gnatcatcher <i>Polioptila californica californica</i>	FT/CSC	Coastal sage scrub habitat in arid washes, on mesas or on slopes of coastal hills
Least Bell's vireo <i>Vireo bellii pusillus</i>	FE/CE	Low riparian vegetation near river bottoms
<i>Plants</i>		
Braunton's milk-vetch <i>Astragalus brauntonii</i>	FE/--/List 1B	Closed-cone coniferous forest, chaparral, coastal scrub, valley and foothill grassland.
Nevin's barberry <i>Berberis nevinii</i>	FE/CE/List 1B	Chaparral, woodland, coastal scrub, riparian scrub. Often on steep north facing slopes or in sandy washes.
<i>Amphibians</i>		
Western spadefoot toad <i>Scaphiopus hammondi</i>	FSC/CSC	Grasslands or valley-foothill hardwood woodlands with shallow temporary ponds for breeding
<i>Reptiles</i>		
Silvery legless lizard <i>Anniella pulchra pulchra</i>	FSC/CSC	Sandy soils in a variety of habitats including dunes, scrub, chaparral, and woodlands
Rosy boa <i>Charina trivirgata</i>	FSC/--	Rocky areas in coastal chaparral and desert scrub habitats
Belding's orange-throated whiptail <i>Cnemidophorus hyperythrus Beldingi</i>	FSC/CSC	Coastal scrub, chaparral, and valley-foothill hardwood habitats
Coastal western whiptail <i>Cnemidophorus tigris Multiscutatus</i>	FSC/--	Open areas in desert, scrub and grassland habitat
San Bernardino ringneck snake <i>Diadophis punctatus modestus</i>	FSC/--	Open, rocky areas in chaparral, scrub and grasslands
San Diego mountain kingsnake <i>Lampropeltis zonata pulchra</i>	FSC/CSC	Moist woodlands, coniferous forests and chaparral
San Diego coast horned lizard <i>Phrynosoma coronatum Blainvillei</i>	FSC/CSC	Sandy or gravelly soils in grassland, chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and wash habitats

<sup>2</sup> Key to listing status codes can be found at the end of the Table.

**Table 3.4-1  
Special Status Species Considered in the Evaluation of the Project Site (Cont.)**

Common Name Scientific Name	Listing Status USFWS/CDFG/ CNPS	General Habitat
<i>Reptiles (cont.)</i>		
California horned lizard <i>Phrynosoma coronatum</i> <i>Frontale</i>	FSC/CSC	Sandy or gravelly soils in grassland, chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and wash habitats
Coast patch-nosed snake <i>Salvadora hexalepis virgulata</i>	FSC/CSC	Open areas in washes, sandy flats, chaparral and scrub
<i>Birds</i>		
Cooper's hawk <i>Accipiter cooperi</i>	--/CSC	Nests in riparian growths of deciduous trees and live oak woodlands
Sharp-shinned hawk <i>Accipiter striatus</i>	--/CSC	Nests in riparian growths of deciduous trees and live oaks
Southern California rufous-crowned sparrow <i>Aimophila ruficeps canescens</i>	FSC/CSC	Coastal sage scrub and chaparral habitats with rocky slopes
Bell's sage sparrow <i>Amphispiza belli belli</i>	FSC/CSC	Inhabits low, fairly dense stands of shrubs including chamise chaparral and coastal sage scrub
Golden eagle <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	--/CSC	Nests in canyons and large trees in open habitats
Lawrence's goldfinch <i>Carduelis lawrencei</i>	FSC/--	Chaparral, coastal sage scrub and woodland habitats
Olive-sided flycatcher <i>Contopus cooperi</i>	FSC/--	Riparian woodlands and forests, prefers mountain conifer forests
Yellow warbler <i>Dendroica petechia brewsteri</i>	--/CSC	Nests in riparian corridors with willows or other dense foliage and low, open canopy
White-tailed kite <i>Elanus leucurus</i>	FSC/FPS	Nests near wet meadows and open grasslands, dense oak, willow or other tree stands
Pacific-slope flycatcher <i>Empidonax difficilis</i>	FSC/--	Warm moist woodlands, including valley foothill and mountain riparian, coastal and blue oak woodlands, and mountain hardwood-conifer habitats
California horned lark <i>Eremophila alpestris actia</i>	--/CSC	Nests and forages in short-grass prairie, mountain meadow, coastal plain, fallow fields, and alkali flats
Merlin <i>Falco columbarius</i>	--/CSC	Breeds outside California, inhabits coastlines, open grasslands, savannahs, and woodlands
Prairie falcon <i>Falco mexicanus</i>	--/CSC	Primarily inhabits perennial grasslands, savannahs, and rangeland, nests on cliffs, canyons and rock outcrops
Rufous hummingbird <i>Selasphorus rufus</i>	FSC/--	Inhabits riparian areas, open woodlands, chaparral, and other habitat with nectar-producing flowers.
Allen's hummingbird <i>Selasphorus sasin</i>	FSC/--	Inhabits coastal scrub, valley foothill hardwood and riparian habitats
Bewick's wren <i>Thryomanes bewickii</i>	FSC/--	Inhabits chaparral, may move to adjacent riparian and edges of woodland habitats
California thrasher <i>Toxostoma redivivum</i>	FSC/--	Moderate to dense chaparral, open valley foothill riparian thickets
<i>Mammals</i>		
Pallid bat <i>Antrozous pallidus</i>	--/CSC	Open, dry habitats with rocky outcrops, cliffs, caverns, and crevices for roosting
Ringtail <i>Bassariscus astutus</i>	--/FPS	Woodland, scrub and chaparral habitats with rocky areas, usually near riparian habitat
Pale big-eared bat <i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i> <i>Pallescens</i>	FSC/CSC	Roosts in caves or man-made structures, forages over open habitats

**Table 3.4-1**  
**Special Status Species Considered in the Evaluation of the Project Site (Cont.)**

Common Name <i>Scientific Name</i>	Listing Status USFWS/CDFG/ CNPS	General Habitat
<b>Mammals (cont.)</b>		
Pacific western big-eared bat <i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i> <i>Townsendii</i>	FSC/CSC	Inhabits a variety of habitats, requires caves or man-made structures for roosting
Spotted bat <i>Euderma maculatum</i>	FSC/CSC	Roosts in crevices and on cliffs in various foothill, mountain and desert regions
Greater western mastiff bat <i>Eumops perotis californicus</i>	FSC/CSC	Breeds in rugged, rocky canyons and forages in a variety of habitats
Mountain lion <i>Felis concolor</i>	--/FPS	Chaparral, scrub, woodland and forest habitats, prefers steep, densely vegetated slopes
San Diego black-tailed jackrabbit <i>Lepus californicus bennettii</i>	FSC/CSC	Open grassland and brushland habitats
California leaf-nosed bat <i>Macrotus californicus</i>	FSC/CSC	Inhabits rugged, rocky desert scrub and riparian areas, roosts in caves, mines or other structures
Long-eared myotis <i>Myotis evotis</i>	FSC/--	Inhabits woodlands and forests up to approximately 8,200 feet in elevation
Occult little brown bat <i>Myotis lucifugus occultus</i>	FSC/CSC	Mountain chaparral, meadows, desert scrub and sagebrush
Fringed myotis <i>Myotis thysanodes</i>	FSC/--	Pinyon-juniper woodland, valley-foothill woodland, hardwood-conifer forests and desert scrub
Long-legged myotis <i>Myotis volans</i>	FSC/--	Inhabits forests and woodland habitats, primarily oak and juniper woodlands
San Diego desert woodrat <i>Neotoma lepida intermedia</i>	FSC/CSC	Chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and desert habitats
Los Angeles pocket mouse <i>Perognathus longimembris</i> <i>Brevinanus</i>	FSC/CSC	Desert washes, sagebrush, coastal sage scrub, and grasslands
<b>Plants</b>		
Slender mariposa lily <i>Calochortus clavatus</i> var. <i>gracilis</i>	FSC/--/List 1B	Chaparral, coastal scrub, endemic to Los Angeles County.
Peirson's morning glory <i>Calystegia peirsonii</i>	FSC/List 1B	Coastal scrub, chaparral. Especially common after fires.
Santa Susana tarplant <i>Deinandra minthornii</i>	FSC/rare/List 1B	Chaparral, coastal scrub. Endemic to Los Angeles and Ventura Counties.
Multi-stemmed dudleya <i>Dudleya multicaulis</i>	FSC/--/List 1B	Chaparral, coastal scrub, valley and foothill grassland. Often found in heavy clay soils or rocky, grassy slopes.

**From:** [Emma Howard](#)  
**To:** [Emma Howard](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Mormon and Browns Canyon, aka chatsworth expanded  
**Date:** Monday, April 14, 2014 5:54:59 PM  
**Attachments:** [FW SMMC comments on Draft GP.msg](#)

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**From:** Emma Howard  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 25, 2014 5:57 PM  
**To:** Carl Nadela; Susan Tae; Joseph Decruyenaere  
**Subject:** Mormon and Browns Canyon, aka chatsworth expanded

I think we should add this Mormon Canyon/Browns Canyon area to our list of potential sites. In my oldest SEA emails I found this chain from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to Julie asking for us to consider this area and supporting it with some biological justifications (please see attached) which would be the basis of the request. I know Eric has moved on to a new job, but we can check in with Paul Edelman I think, as he should still be there. If these other groups are going to be interested in the area I think we should try and track down the past decisions. It may be that Julie had left before she got a chance to consider whether to make the change, and then I simply didn't get any more follow up on this specific area. We can re-check the old comment letters too.

Thanks,  
Emma

*Emma Howard*  
*Regional Planner*  
*Community Studies North Section*  
*Department of Regional Planning*  
<http://planning.lacounty.gov/seq>  
*Telephone: 213-974-6476*

---

**From:** Emma Howard  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 25, 2014 5:51 PM  
**To:** 'Carla Bollinger'  
**Cc:** mark.osokow@sfvaudubon.org; Susan Tae; Carl Nadela  
**Subject:** RE: Correction: SEA Profile: Section 23: Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills SEA: Chatsworth Nature Preserve

Hi Carla,

Our biologist is fixing the errors you and Ms. Landis have brought to our attention. The boundary between Mormon Canyon Creek and Browns Canyon Creek appears to be at a sub-watershed level. Many of the SEA boundaries do divide out along watershed and sub watershed boundaries.

Regards,  
Emma



Emma Howard

*Emma Howard*  
*Regional Planner*  
*Community Studies North Section*  
*Department of Regional Planning*  
<http://planning.lacounty.gov/sea>  
*Telephone: 213-974-6476*

---

**From:** Carla Bollinger [<mailto:Carla.Bollinger@halo.com>]  
**Sent:** Monday, February 17, 2014 12:22 PM  
**To:** Emma Howard  
**Cc:** DRP General Plan Project  
**Subject:** Correction: SEA Profile: Section 23: Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills SEA: Chatsworth Nature Preserve  
**Importance:** High

## Chatsworth Nature Preserve Coalition

Working together to save a crucial wildlife area in Los Angeles-San Fernando Valley  
*A meadowlark needs a meadow to sing ...*

February 17, 2014

Dear Emma Howard:

The Chatsworth Nature Preserve Coalition is submitting a correction to the Draft 4 Santa Susana Mountains/Simi Hills SEA 23, specifically referencing the Chatsworth Reservoir, with correct name, Chatsworth Nature Preserve (CNP) wherever the name is used in this document or in county records. This revision is for page 1, under "General Boundary and Resource: Please delete "Chatsworth Reservoir" and replace with "Chatsworth Nature Preserve" towards the bottom of the 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph and in the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, beginning with "From Chatsworth Reservoir" ... again delete Chatsworth Reservoir and replace with Chatsworth Nature Preserve. On Page 4, paragraph beginning with "Open Space within the SEA supports .... (change this last sentence that reads, "Chatsworth Reservoir forms a portion of the south boundary and is currently dry, except for a small detention basin north of the reservoir.) We request the following replaces this sentence and the paragraph that follows in the SEA to read:

Chatsworth Nature Preserve forms a portion of the south boundary and is one of the last remaining combined oak woodlands-grasslands-seasonal wetlands in Los Angeles County.

Chatsworth Nature Preserve, 1300 acres of open space, teems with wildlife. More than 200 species of birds are on the site including: Residents: Greater Roadrunner, California Quail, sapsuckers, woodpeckers, herons and egrets; Migratory Birds: Canada Goose, Western Meadowlark and Tricolored Blackbird, as well as a variety of ducks and shorebirds; Raptors: Ferruginous Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Prairie

Falcon, Long-eared Owl, and many others; Amphibians and Reptiles: Western spadefoot toad, slender salamander, western skink, ring-necked snake, red racer and much more; Larger Animals: gray fox, coyote, raccoon, and occasional visits of bobcat, cougar and mule deer. During seasonal rains, the CNP become seasonal wetlands with vernal pools and groundwater runoff from Simi Hills' sandstone boulders and canyon creeks. Habitat includes an oak woodlands and savanna, riparian areas, chaparral, grassland, and rock outcroppings. Rare native plants such as Santa Susana tarplant, and many-stemmed dudleya are found on the preserve. On the north end of the CNP is an Ecology Pond with its fringing life-giving fresh water marsh, an extremely scarce habitat in the County and Southern California. This Ecology Pond which was developed from an old detention basin in 1974, is on the Pacific Flyway and supports numerous migratory birds, especially waterfowl, during the winter and through the spring and fall migratory periods. The importance of the Ecology Pond is enhanced by its proximity to the grasslands. This creates one of the last complete habitats for waterfowl, in particular Canada Geese, in the San Fernando Valley. This also makes the location valuable for bird and amphibian study by students, researchers, and naturalists. The Ecology Pond also serves the County by providing water for helicopters to suppress wildfires in the area. The periphery of the CNP is savanna, with a mixture of valley and coast live oaks (*Quercus lobata* and *Q. agrifolia*), some in small stands.

The majority of the SEA is within the unincorporated area of the County.

Thank you for your consideration,

Carla Bollinger

Osokow

CNP Coalition Delegate

Coalition Delegate

SSMPA Board Member

Audubon Society Officer

Mark

CNP

SFV

## **29: Santa Paula Creek Mitigation Bank**

**From:** [Carl Nadela](#)  
**To:** [Emma Howard](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Neenach Property  
**Date:** Thursday, May 29, 2014 4:49:50 PM  
**Attachments:** [spcmb-logo-175.png](#)

---

[Here you go.](#)

**Carl Vincent Nadela**

Community Studies North  
Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning  
213-974-6476

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: This email message, including any attachments, from the Department of Regional Planning is intended for the official and confidential use of the recipients to whom it is addressed. It contains information that may be confidential, privileged, work product, or otherwise exempted from disclosure under applicable law. If you have received this message in error, be advised that any review, disclosure, use, dissemination, distribution, or reproduction of this message or its contents is strictly prohibited. Please notify us immediately by reply email that you have received this message in error, and destroy this message, including any attachments.

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**From:** Richard Lyons [mailto:rl@spcmb.com]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 08, 2014 10:49 AM  
**To:** Carl Nadela; Joseph Decruyenaere  
**Subject:** Neenach Property



Mr. Nadela,

I am writing this letter, as you requested, regarding parcels APN 3277-001-004 & 005, making up 154 acres in the Neenach area of Los Angeles County.

As stated, I am currently in escrow on this land. As a conservationist and mitigation specialist, it is my intent to preserve it for its biological values by way of working with proponents to use it as offset mitigation for development projects elsewhere in Los Angeles County, the Antelope Valley.

The parcels are covered with thick, native Joshua Trees and have an active seasonal wash with riparian vegetation running through the southern portion. My biologists have determined that it provides rich habitat for various species of concern.

I would be interested in having these parcels included in your planned SEA for the area once I complete my purchase.

Please feel free to contact me at any time.

Best regards,

Richard Lyons  
SPCMB, Inc.  
Box 808  
Santa Paula, CA 93061  
[310-795-5616](tel:310-795-5616)

## **30: California Native Plant Society**

# California Native Plant Society

## Los Angeles / Santa Monica Mts. Chapter

3908 Mandeville Canyon Road

Los Angeles, California 90049

February 5, 2014

Los Angeles County  
Department of Regional Planning  
General Plan Development Section  
320 W. Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Phone: 213-974-6417  
Fax: 213-626-0434  
General Plan <[genplan@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:genplan@planning.lacounty.gov)>  
Emma Howard <[ehoward@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:ehoward@planning.lacounty.gov)>

RE: Comments on Los Angeles County General Plan Public Review Draft: Appendix E

Dear Staff:

The Los Angeles / Santa Monica Mountains Chapter of the California Native Plant Society has 450 members in Los Angeles, San Fernando Valley and Santa Monica Mountains.

We are very interested in the progress of the General Plan, especially in Chapter 9: Conservation and Natural Resources Element, and in Appendix E: Significant Ecological Areas.

Here are some comments on Appendix E: Significant Ecological Areas:

SEA 2) Antelope Valley:

Criteria C and F: Mesquite bosque is declining due to wide-spread development drawing down groundwater. In the Antelope Valley this is an original natural biotic community that is dying out due to over-development without consideration of future water supplies. Mesquite bosque needs protection.

SEA 3) Cruzan Mesa Vernal Pools

Criteria B and E: Vernal pools are rare regionally. Vernal pools are very interesting scientifically because they represent an extreme natural biotic community and because they are good subjects for assessing the effects of drought and of climate change.

SEA 4) East San Gabriel Valley

Criteria B and C: California black walnut (*Juglans californica*) woodlands are limited in distribution both regionally and within the county. They used to be more widespread. The City of Los Angeles includes them in their protected tree ordinance. Is the California black walnut protected in Los Angeles County's Oak Ordinance? If not, then in all the SEAs the presence of *Juglans californica* woodlands should be noted as a special biotic community worthy of protection.

SEA 5) Griffith Park

Mountain lion (*Puma concolor*) is the top carnivore in Griffith Park. Please add it to the list of mammals. I ask that you consider expanding the Griffith Park SEA to include small undeveloped areas between residential development in canyons and parks along Mulholland and on the ridges. I have seen evidence and

been given evidence that mountain lions travel along Mulholland and may have cubs in locations like Stone Canyon. There are rare plants along the way as well. Braunton's type location for the milkvetch named after him is in the Santa Monica Mountains, probably near Mulholland's first reservoirs in Franklin Canyon. I haven't found it yet, but the soil is the right type. Griffith Park does not have the right soil (ancient marine sediments) for Braunton's milkvetch.

SEA 6) Harbor Lake

Criterion A has been met by the presence of a core population of fairy shrimp in the vernal pool and the habitat of the vernal pool.

SEA 9) Palos Verdes Peninsula and Coastline

Criterion A: Include the only known mainland population of *Crossosoma californicum* (near Forrestal Drive). It grows on an unusual geologic outcrop and is very old, according to Bart O'Brien, who checked it out a few years ago when he was on the staff of Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden.

SEA 11) Rio Hondo College Wildlife Sanctuary

Criteria B, C, and F are met by the California black walnut (*Juglans californica*) woodlands which are rapidly disappearing and need protection.

SEA 13) San Dimas Canyon and San Antonio Wash

If Frank G. Bonelli Park is in this SEA, then I recorded a core population of *Dudleya multicaulis* there on rock slabs near a horse trail. That meets Criteria A and E. It is an isolated, scientifically interesting site.

SEA 14) San Gabriel Canyon

Criterion E is met because the Braunton's milkvetch population there is the farthest east of any of the other known populations and is of scientific interest due to its isolation.

SEA 15) Santa Clara River

This SEA is losing floodplain resources and watershed values to channelization of the watershed drainages in Newhall Ranch and the channelization of the main river due to development. This was the most important natural water resource in the county. How are you protecting its resource values now?

SEA 17) Santa Monica Mountains

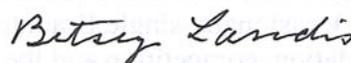
Please add the east and west ridges around the head of Mandeville Canyon to this SEA. There is a very rich west-east wildlife corridor extending from Topanga State Park through Rustic, Sullivan, and Mandeville Canyons with an excellent range of habitats. It includes San Vicente Mountain Park and the undeveloped area above Encino Reservoir.

SEA 18) Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills

Chatsworth Reservoir is not a superfund cleanup site to my knowledge. I am involved in the Santa Susana Field Lab cleanup meetings. That is not a superfund cleanup site. Where did that information come from?

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



Betsey Landis, Conservation Committee  
Los Angeles / Santa Monica Mountains Chapter  
California Native Plant Society

# *California Native Plant Society*

## **Los Angeles / Santa Monica Mts. Chapter**

3908 Mandeville Canyon Road

Los Angeles, California 90049

February 3, 2014

Los Angeles County  
Department of Regional Planning  
General Plan Development Section  
320 W. Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Phone: 213-974-6417  
Fax: 213-626-0434  
General Plan <[genplan@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:genplan@planning.lacounty.gov)>  
Emma Howard <[ehoward@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:ehoward@planning.lacounty.gov)>

RE: Comments on Los Angeles County General Plan Public Review Draft: Chapter 9 and Appendix E

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We are very interested in the progress of the General Plan, especially in Chapter 9: Conservation and Natural Resources Element, and in Appendix E: Significant Ecological Areas.

Here are some comments on Chapter 9:

- 1) P. 123, Goal C/Nr 1: Open Space areas that meet diverse needs of LA County: Open Space Acquisition:
  - a. Policy C/NR 1.4: After “Create” add “support and protect”
  - b. Policy C/NR 1.5: Add to sentence: “except in those areas containing listed flora and fauna, locally rare habitats, or threatened watershed resources.”
- 2) P.124, III Biological Resources,
  - a. Introduction: second paragraph: There are at least nine main types of biological resources. Change “six” to “nine” and add “chaparral, desert shrubland, and alpine”.
  - b. Background: Regional Habitat Linkages, second bullet: Add “to the Tehachapi and San Gabriel Mountains.”
- 3.) Pages 125-127, after Fig. 9.2: Regional Habitat Linkages Map are listed descriptions and locations of the previously listed habitats. Please add to this list descriptions and locations of chaparral, desert shrublands, and alpine habitats. For example, most of the SEAs have significant chaparral habitat, Joshua Tree has desert shrublands, as do most of the Antelope Valley areas, and alpine habitat includes high altitude, treeless areas such as the pebble plains of the San Gabriel Mountains.

California Native Plant Society, Los Angeles / Santa Monica Mountains Chapter comments (continued)

4.) P. 130, Goals and Policies for Biological Resources: Goal C/NR 3: Add after "...including: habitat linkages, *alpine habitat, chaparral, desert shrublands,...*"

a. Protection of biological resources: Policy C/NR 3: Add "chaparral and desert shrublands".

b. Site sensitive design: Policy C/NR 3.10: Add to end of sentence: "without negative impact to in situ native habitat."

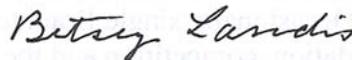
5.) P. 131, Add Goal C/NR 5: Preserve and restore watershed resources that conserve local water supplies and sustain groundwater levels.

6.) P. 131 Policy C/NR 5.1: Preserve and conserve chaparral and shrubland habitat native to each watershed location.

There will be more comments to follow.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsey Landis". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Betsey Landis  
Conservation Committee  
Los Angeles / Santa Monica Mountains Chapter  
California Native Plant Society

# California Native Plant Society

## Los Angeles / Santa Monica Mts. Chapter

3908 Mandeville Canyon Road

Los Angeles, California 90049

February 5, 2014

Los Angeles County  
Department of Regional Planning  
General Plan Development Section  
320 W. Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Phone: 213-974-6417  
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General Plan <[genplan@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:genplan@planning.lacounty.gov)>  
Emma Howard <[ehoward@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:ehoward@planning.lacounty.gov)>

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Criteria B and C: California black walnut (*Juglans californica*) woodlands are limited in distribution both regionally and within the county. They used to be more widespread. The City of Los Angeles includes them in their protected tree ordinance. Is the California black walnut protected in Los Angeles County's Oak Ordinance? If not, then in all the SEAs the presence of *Juglans californica* woodlands should be noted as a special biotic community worthy of protection.

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been given evidence that mountain lions travel along Mulholland and may have cubs in locations like Stone Canyon. There are rare plants along the way as well. Braunton's type location for the milkvetch named after him is in the Santa Monica Mountains, probably near Mulholland's first reservoirs in Franklin Canyon. I haven't found it yet, but the soil is the right type. Griffith Park does not have the right soil (ancient marine sediments) for Braunton's milkvetch.

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Criterion A: Include the only known mainland population of *Crossosoma californicum* (near Forrestal Drive). It grows on an unusual geologic outcrop and is very old, according to Bart O'Brien, who checked it out a few years ago when he was on the staff of Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden.

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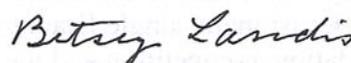
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Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



Betsey Landis, Conservation Committee  
Los Angeles / Santa Monica Mountains Chapter  
California Native Plant Society

**31: LA County Department of Public Works**

## **32: Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County**



# COUNTY SANITATION DISTRICTS OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY

1955 Workman Mill Road, Whittier, CA 90601-1400  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 4998, Whittier, CA 90607-4998  
Telephone: (562) 699-7411, FAX: (562) 699-5422  
www.lacsd.org

GRACE ROBINSON HYDE  
Chief Engineer and General Manager

February 3, 2014

Ms. Emma Howard  
County of Los Angeles  
Regional Planning Department  
Room 1354  
320 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Ms. Howard:

## **Comments on Draft Significant Ecological Area (SEA) Boundaries and December 5, 2014, Draft SEA Ordinance Update**

The Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County (Districts) appreciate this opportunity to review and submit comments on the Draft SEA boundaries (provided on July 18, 2013, by the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning (Regional Planning) at <http://egis3.lacounty.gov/dataportal/2011/12/12/significant-ecological-areas-sea-proposed/>) and the December 5, 2014, Draft SEA Ordinance. The Districts are a confederation of 23 special districts that operate and maintain regional wastewater and solid waste management systems for approximately 5 million people residing in 78 cities and unincorporated portions of Los Angeles County.

The Districts support Regional Planning's efforts to further develop the SEA program and appreciate the boundary adjustments that were made based on our previous comments (e.g., near the Pomona Water Reclamation Plant). Our current comments are noted below. The Districts are willing to share GIS shape files of our facility boundaries to support Regional Planning's revisions to SEA boundaries.

1. Lancaster Agricultural Site. Figure 1 depicts property that Sanitation District No. 14 has developed or intends to develop for agricultural operations using recycled water. The smaller portion labeled A is a site developed with a recycled water storage tank and pump station to serve the agricultural site. We request that the SEA boundary be adjusted to exclude the red hatched areas, which are part of the agricultural site or its supporting facilities.
2. Palmdale Water Storage and Agricultural Sites. Property developed for recycled water storage reservoirs is depicted in Area A on Figure 2. As an existing use, this area should be removed from the SEA boundary or exempted as an existing use at the time the expanded boundary went into effect. Areas B and C on Figure 2 depict land purchased and designated for agricultural operations using recycled water. As these parcels were purchased as part of an approved Facilities Plan and EIR to serve a public need, we believe it would be inappropriate to add a SEA designation to this property now and potentially jeopardize the implementation of this approved public project. This request is consistent with Regional Planning's Conservation and Open Space Element Policy COS 1.4: *Promote the use of recycled water, where available, for agricultural and industrial uses and support efforts to expand recycled water infrastructure* (Chapter 4 at p.

27) of the May 2, 2013, Draft Antelope Valley Area Plan. The Districts requested these same adjustments in a comment letter dated August 30, 2007; however, the adjustments have not been incorporated in this iteration.

3. Valencia Water Reclamation Plant (WRP). The Valencia WRP is shown in Figure 3. We appreciate Regional Planning's prior efforts to retract the SEA boundary to exclude the Valencia WRP. We request small additional adjustments shown as red hatching to eliminate encroachment onto the Valencia WRP parcel. While the areas shown in green are conservation easements and will not be developed, we request that the SEA boundary not encompass those areas because the current proposed ordinance requires a SEA review process for any work on a parcel that has even a minute coverage by a SEA. Requiring such SEA reviews for an active water reclamation plant would not be in the public's best interest.
4. Calabasas Landfill. The active Calabasas Landfill is shown in Figure 4. We appreciate Regional Planning's prior efforts to adjust the SEA boundary to exclude the Calabasas Landfill. We request a slight adjustment to the proposed SEA boundary (shown hatched in red) so that the boundary does not encroach on landfill property.
5. Whittier Narrows WRP. The Whittier Narrows Water Reclamation Plant is shown in Figure 5. We request that the red hatched area be removed from the proposed SEA boundary. Without such adjustment, any work on this active WRP would require SEA review under the current proposed ordinance and such reviews would not be in the public's best interest.
6. Puente Hills Landfill. The Puente Hills Landfill is shown in Figure 6. While this landfill has stopped receiving waste, there will be ongoing maintenance and post-closure construction projects for years to come. Similar to previous comments, we request that the red hatched area be removed from the proposed SEA extents so that SEA does not encroach on landfill property and trigger SEA reviews for routine work onsite.
7. General Comment Regarding Extent of Proposed SEA Boundaries. We wish to reiterate our prior request that boundaries be drawn more precisely and exclude areas where a high percentage of the land has been developed or otherwise previously disturbed. Designating previously disturbed areas as a SEA would require users of the land to go through a site plan review. These efforts require time and resources by both the applicant and the County that are not justified given that the potential significant ecology resources no longer existing due to prior disturbance. While the intent of the Type A CUP (§22.52.2935) seems to be a less rigorous review process for such properties, we believe that the current proposed process is too burdensome. For example, the Type A CUP requires a site visit by a biologist, a determination (\$503), site plan review (\$945), and hearing officer review (\$8,619). We believe the process should be simplified to: (1) the applicant furnishing some sort of proof (e.g., dated aerial photographs) that the portion of the property where work is to take place was disturbed prior to the date that the land was added to the SEA, and (2) Regional Planning staff reviewing the veracity of the proof.
8. Developed Area Exemption (§22.52.2915.2). The Districts agree that projects located entirely within developed or disturbed areas are appropriate permitted uses. However, to best use public resources, such projects should be exempt or required to go through a simple process to verify the location within a previously disturbed area. With the wide availability of aerial imagery including Google Street View, Bing oblique imagery, and high quality imagery available from the Los Angeles Regional Imagery Acquisition Consortium (LARIAC), applicants and County staff could usually verify the disturbed status of a parcel without physically visiting the site. As currently worded, such projects would require a site plan review which would require application

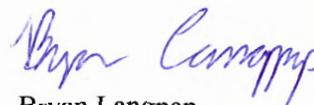
preparation, application review, and a mandatory site visit by a County biologist. These efforts require time and resources by both the applicant and the County that are not justified in most cases.

9. Public Facilities Exemption. Reference §22.52.2910. The Districts believe that public projects that have been approved and have a recorded, valid CEQA document prior to the effective date of the ordinance should be exempt where such projects were not within a SEA prior to their approval. Such projects would already have gone through a public process where the impacts to biological resources were considered and appropriate mitigation was identified. To add a new discretionary approval after a public decision to proceed with the project was already made does not seem appropriate.
10. Requiring SEA Review for Work Proposed Outside a SEA but on a Parcel Containing a SEA (§22.08.190). The existing SEA ordinance only requires a SEA review when proposed work would occur within a SEA. Under the existing process, our understanding is that the County can confirm that proposed work is outside a SEA boundary while reviewing entitlements. The proposed change that a SEA review is required whenever work is proposed on a parcel containing a SEA regardless of whether the work would occur in the SEA would create much additional cost and time impacts for SEA review while the potential benefit to the significant ecological area appears to be limited.
11. Agricultural Developed Areas (§22.52.2915.3). The 2007 draft SEA ordinance identified these regions as agricultural opportunity areas. The Districts has queried Regional Planning's on-line GIS-NET3 and determined that many of our properties designated for agricultural operations (see green hatched in Figure 2) are not identified as Agricultural Developed Areas. We request that the subject parcels either be removed from the SEA or designated as agricultural developed areas.

If you have any questions regarding this comment letter, please contact Wendy Wert at (562) 908-4288, extension 2737, or by e-mail at [wwert@lacs.org](mailto:wwert@lacs.org).

Very truly yours,

Grace Robinson Hyde



Bryan Langpap  
Supervising Engineer  
Planning Section

BL:WW:ddg

Enclosures



# FIGURE 1: LANCASTER AGRICULTURAL SITE Significant Ecological Areas

- CSD Property
- Requested Adjustment to SEA Boundary
- Agricultural Developed Areas
- Proposed SEA
- Existing SEA
- Parcels in Requested Adjustment to SEA Boundary

Parcel Numbers	
3302022027	3306012909
3302022901	3306013907
3302022902	3306013909
3302022903	3307001900
3302022904	3307001901
3302022906	3307001907
3302022907	3307001908
3302022908	3307001918
3302022909	3307002900
3302022910	3307002903
3302022914	3307002904
3302022915	3307015900
3302022917	3307017902
3302023900	3307017913
3302023901	3307017914
3302023904	3307017916
3302023905	3307017922
3302023906	3307017923
3302023907	3307017928
3302023908	3307017929
3302023909	3307017933
3302023910	3307017935
3302023911	3307017936
3306002912	3307017937
3306002916	3307017938
3306002934	3307017944
3306002937	3307017946
3306002940	3307017948
3306005908	3307017949
3306005916	3307017964
3306005918	3307017965
3306005920	3307020921

①

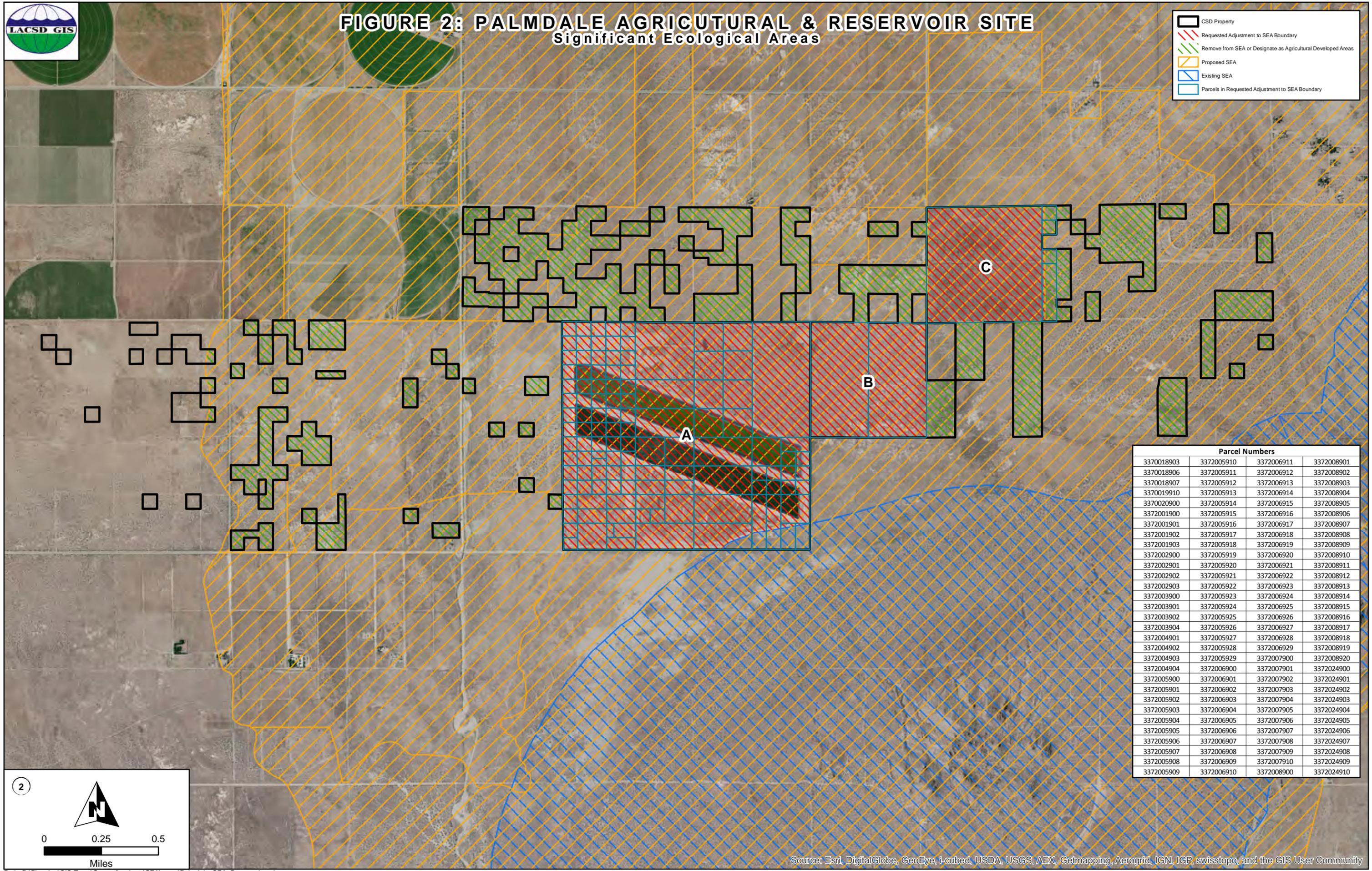
0 0.25 0.5  
Miles

Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, i-cubed, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community



# FIGURE 2: PALMDALE AGRICULTURAL & RESERVOIR SITE Significant Ecological Areas

- CSD Property
- Requested Adjustment to SEA Boundary
- Remove from SEA or Designate as Agricultural Developed Areas
- Proposed SEA
- Existing SEA
- Parcels in Requested Adjustment to SEA Boundary



Parcel Numbers			
3370018903	3372005910	3372006911	3372008901
3370018906	3372005911	3372006912	3372008902
3370018907	3372005912	3372006913	3372008903
3370019910	3372005913	3372006914	3372008904
3370020900	3372005914	3372006915	3372008905
3372001900	3372005915	3372006916	3372008906
3372001901	3372005916	3372006917	3372008907
3372001902	3372005917	3372006918	3372008908
3372001903	3372005918	3372006919	3372008909
3372002900	3372005919	3372006920	3372008910
3372002901	3372005920	3372006921	3372008911
3372002902	3372005921	3372006922	3372008912
3372002903	3372005922	3372006923	3372008913
3372003900	3372005923	3372006924	3372008914
3372003901	3372005924	3372006925	3372008915
3372003902	3372005925	3372006926	3372008916
3372003904	3372005926	3372006927	3372008917
3372004901	3372005927	3372006928	3372008918
3372004902	3372005928	3372006929	3372008919
3372004903	3372005929	3372007900	3372008920
3372004904	3372006900	3372007901	3372024900
3372005900	3372006901	3372007902	3372024901
3372005901	3372006902	3372007903	3372024902
3372005902	3372006903	3372007904	3372024903
3372005903	3372006904	3372007905	3372024904
3372005904	3372006905	3372007906	3372024905
3372005905	3372006906	3372007907	3372024906
3372005906	3372006907	3372007908	3372024907
3372005907	3372006908	3372007909	3372024908
3372005908	3372006909	3372007910	3372024909
3372005909	3372006910	3372008900	3372024910

2

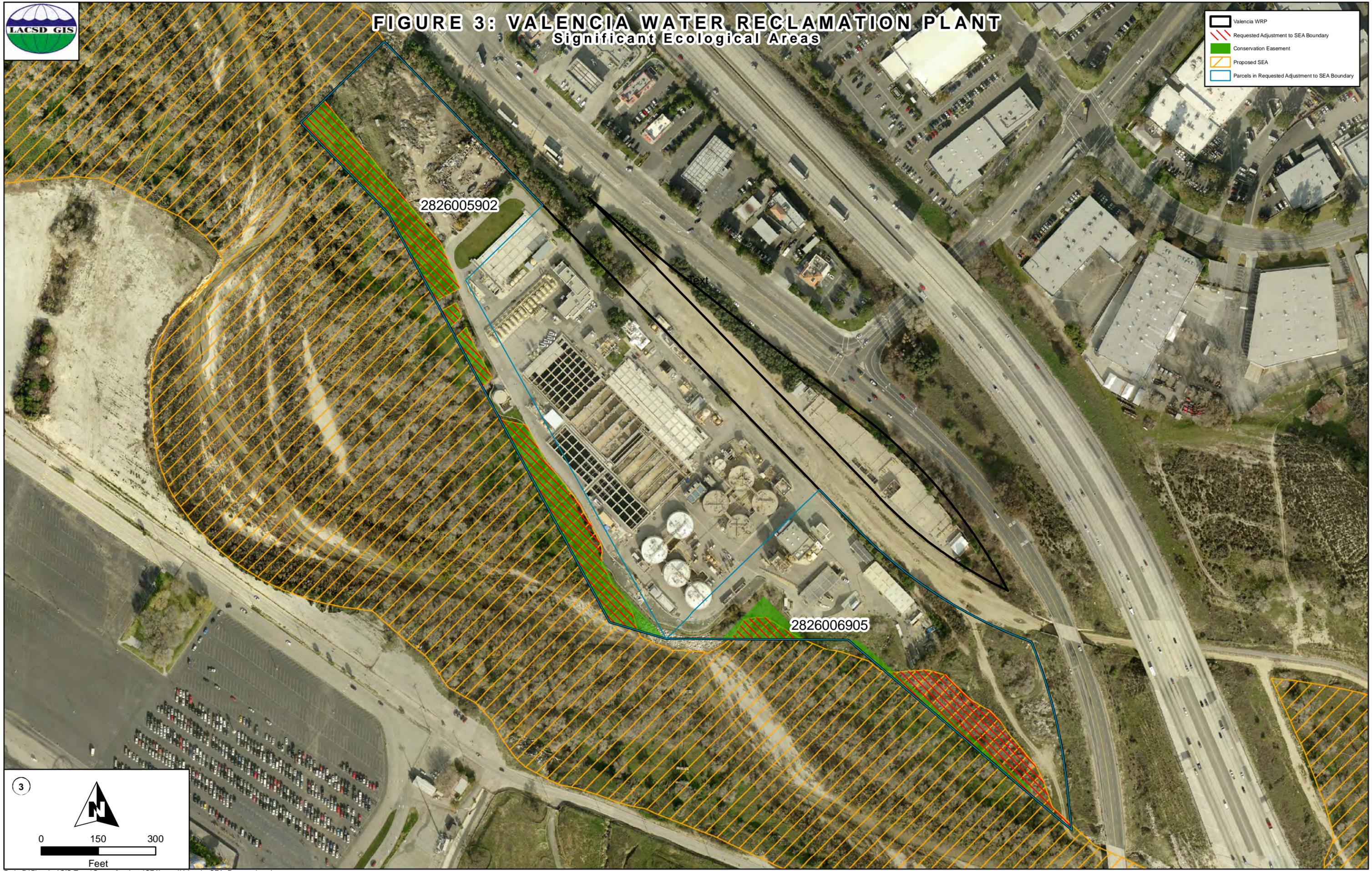
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Miles

Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, i-cubed, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community



**FIGURE 3: VALENCIA WATER RECLAMATION PLANT**  
Significant Ecological Areas

- Valencia WRP
- Requested Adjustment to SEA Boundary
- Conservation Easement
- Proposed SEA
- Parcels in Requested Adjustment to SEA Boundary



3

0 150 300  
Feet



**FIGURE 4: CALABASAS LANDFILL**  
Significant Ecological Areas

- Landfill Property
- Requested Adjustment to SEA Boundary
- Proposed SEA
- Parcels in Requested Adjustment to SEA Boundary



4

0 0.1 0.2  
Miles

Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, i-cubed, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community



**FIGURE 5: WHITTIER NARROWS WATER RECLAMATION PLANT**  
Significant Ecological Areas

Legend:

- CSD Property (black outline)
- Requested Adjustment to SEA Boundary (red hatched area)
- Proposed SEA (yellow hatched area)



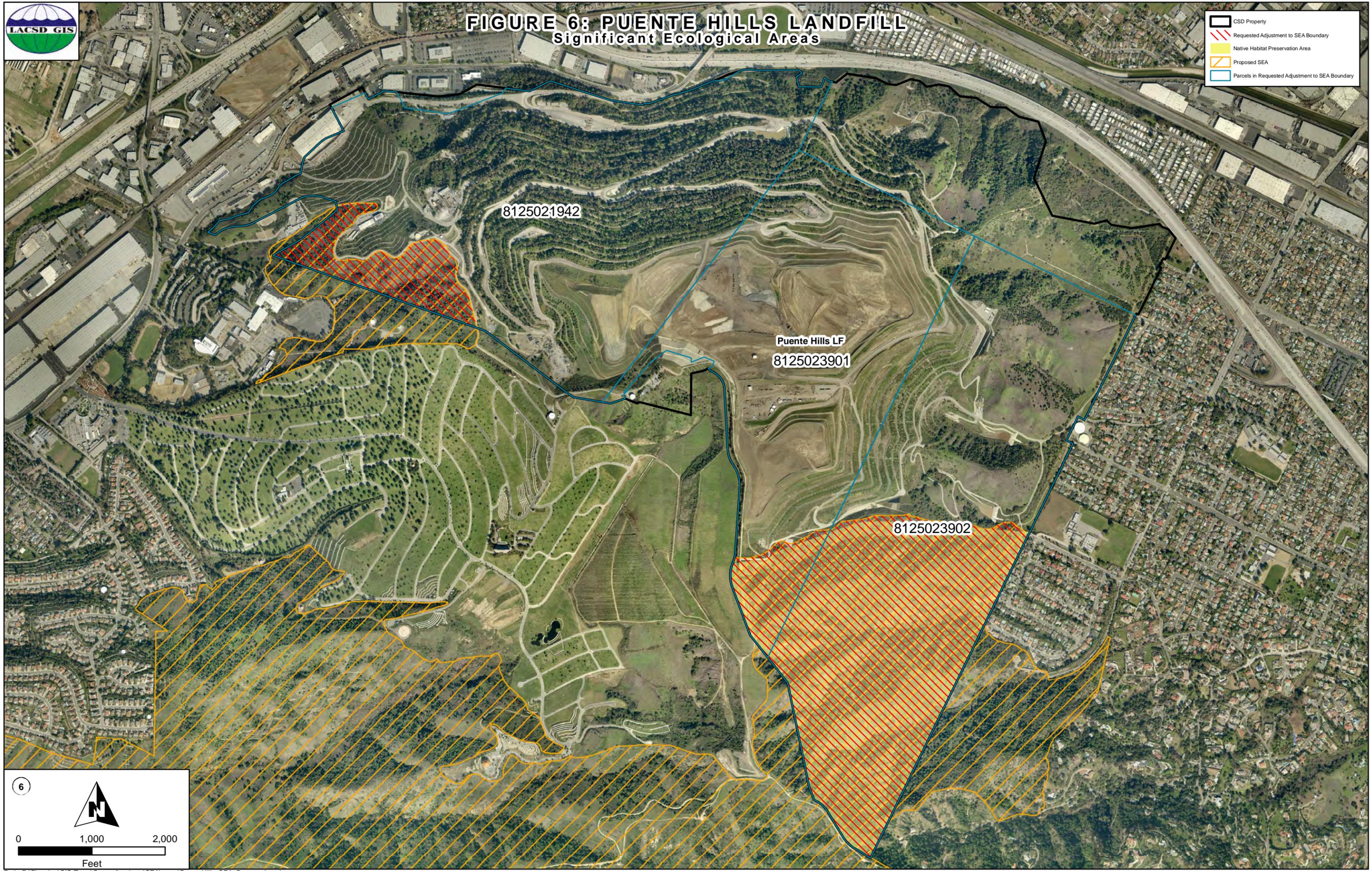
5

0 100 200  
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**FIGURE 6: PUENTE HILLS LANDFILL**  
Significant Ecological Areas

- CSD Property
- Requested Adjustment to SEA Boundary
- Native Habitat Preservation Area
- Proposed SEA
- Parcels in Requested Adjustment to SEA Boundary



6

0 1,000 2,000  
Feet

**33: Windsor Pacific LLC**

Welcome to GIS-NET3 Public!

Map Layers List

- Layers Legend
- Layer Name Visible
- Freeway
- Inland Waterbody
- Land Use - Catalina Zoning (Boundary)
- Land Use - Catalina Zoning (Shading)
- Land Use Policy - Comm. / Area Plan
- Land Use Policy - General Plan
- Leased Parcel (Marina Del Rey)
- Master Plan of Bikeways (2012)
- Master Plan of Highways
- Parcel Boundary
- Parcel Fabric
- River, Channel, or Stream
- Rural Outdoor Lighting District (Dark Skies)
- Rural Outdoor Lighting District Changes
- Safety Related Stations
- SCAG Existing Land Use (2005)
- Scenic Highway
- SEA (Significant Ecological Area)
- SEA Proposed - Developed Areas
- SEA Proposed - DRAFT
- Section Line
- Setback District Setbacks
- Sensitive Environmental Resources (SERA)
- Significant Ridoelines

Filter Layers:  Clear

Search and Locate Tasks

Identify Query Location Parcels Select/Search

Enter or choose name... Add Remove Go To

Named Extents/Bookmarks



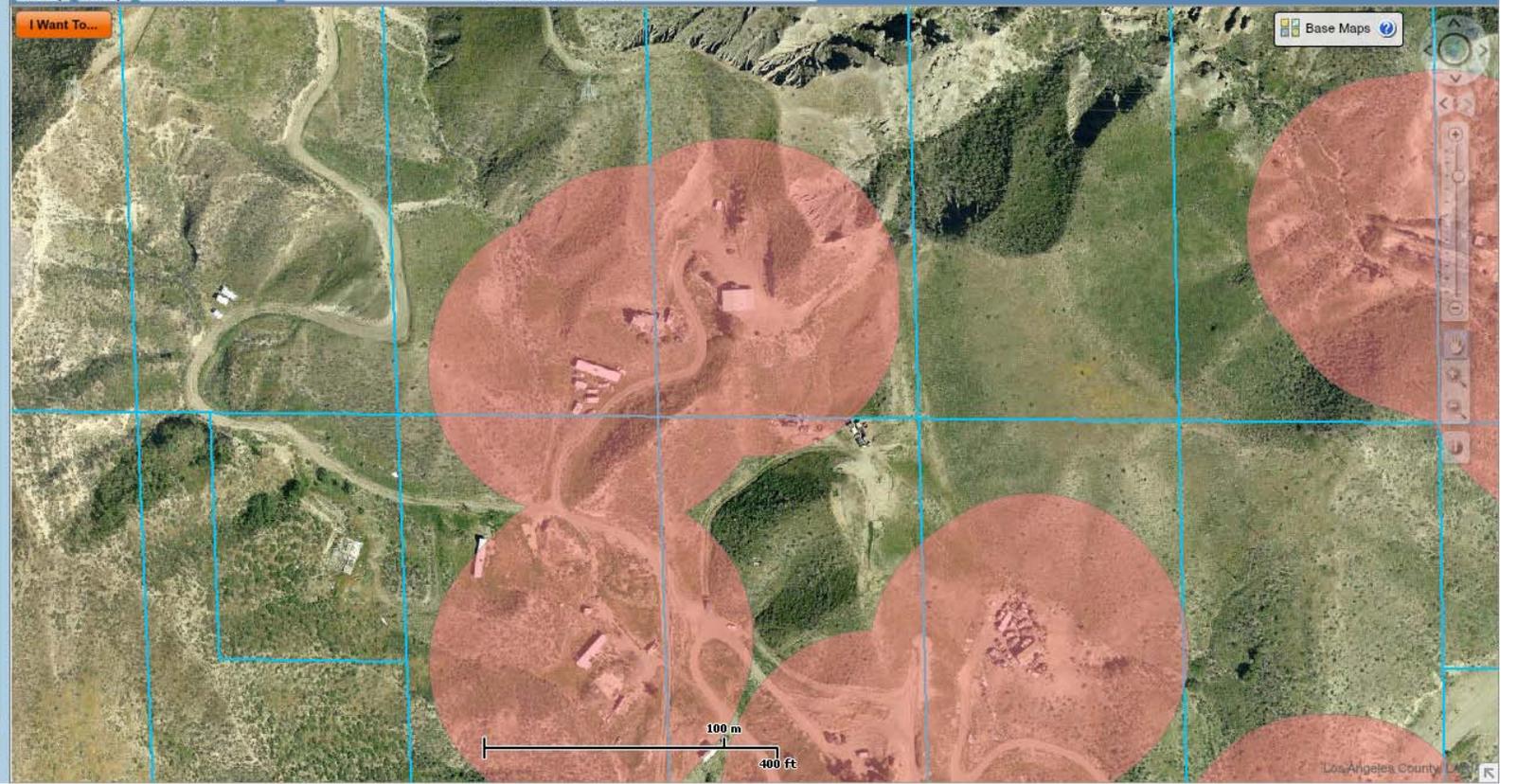
Welcome to GIS-NET3 Public! Search and Locate Tasks

Map Layers List

Close Identify Query Location Select/Search Parcels Enter or choose name... Add Remove Go To

Named Extents/Bookmarks

- Layers Legend
- | Layer Name                                   | Visible                             |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Freeway                                      | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Inland Waterbody                             | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Land Use - Catalina Zoning (Boundary)        | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Land Use - Catalina Zoning (Shading)         | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Land Use Policy - Comm. / Area Plan          | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Land Use Policy - General Plan               | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Leased Parcel (Marina Del Rey)               | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Master Plan of Bikeways (2012)               | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Master Plan of Highways                      | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Parcel Boundary                              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Parcel Fabric                                | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| River, Channel, or Stream                    | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Rural Outdoor Lighting District (Dark Skies) | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Rural Outdoor Lighting District Changes      | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Safety Related Stations                      | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| SCAG Existing Land Use (2005)                | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Scenic Highway                               | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| SEA (Significant Ecological Area)            | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| SEA Proposed - Developed Areas               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| SEA Proposed - DRAFT                         | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Section Line                                 | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Setback District Setbacks                    | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Sensitive Environmental Resources (SERA)     | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Significant Ridelines                        | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
- Filter Layers:  Clear



**From:** [Allen Hubsch](#)  
**To:** [Emma Howard](#)  
**Subject:** RE: SEA Ordinance Draft 5  
**Date:** Monday, May 05, 2014 10:44:17 AM

---

Emma,

Hello. I'm following up on the e-mails below. Is there an update regarding the parcel in question?

Allen

---

From: ahubsch@msn.com  
To: ehoward@planning.lacounty.gov  
Subject: RE: SEA Ordinance Draft 5  
Date: Wed, 23 Apr 2014 12:01:52 -0700

Emma,

Thank you for your e-mail below. I understand that the hearing on the SEA Program has been continued by the RPC. I would appreciate an update regarding the timing of a determination for the parcel in question.

Thanks very much.

Allen Hubsch

---

From: ehoward@planning.lacounty.gov  
To: ahubsch@msn.com  
Subject: RE: SEA Ordinance Draft 5  
Date: Wed, 16 Apr 2014 19:42:56 +0000

Mr. Hubsch,

We have received your comments and will be submitting them to the Regional Planning Commission in a supplemental package to go out tomorrow. Your boundary requests have been added to our list and will be tracked. We will let you know when a decision is made and what decision we made. I may follow up with a request for more information as we work on determining. All determinations for your parcel will be made after the April 23<sup>rd</sup> hearing.

Regards,

Emma

*Emma Howard  
Regional Planner  
Community Studies North Section  
Department of Regional Planning  
<http://planning.lacounty.gov/sea>  
Telephone: 213-974-6476*

---

**From:** Allen Hubsch [mailto:ahubsch@msn.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, April 11, 2014 3:35 PM  
**To:** Emma Howard  
**Subject:** SEA Ordinance Draft 5

Dear Ms. Howard,

Attached are comments. If you are able to provide a response before the hearing, I would appreciate it. Thank you.

Allen Hubsch  
213-712-2357

GIS Web Mapping Applica x GIS-NET3 x Pictometry Online x

pol.pictometry.com/en-us/app/default.php?lat=34.466728&lon=-118.377710&v=p&o=n&type=ob&level=n

Apps TPZ Blog The Planner's Zone II

Pictometry Online 1.10.2 Welcome Guest Guest | Coverage | Logout

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Workspace

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- LARIAC - Address Point
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- LARIAC - Land Types
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- LARIAC - Supervisorial D
- LARIAC - ZIPCodes

Selections

Pictometry © 2010-2014

bing © 2014 Nokia © AND © 2014 N

Date: 02/05/2014 | Level: Community | Scale: 75%

## **34: Wildlife Corridor Conservation Authority**

# WILDLIFE CORRIDOR CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

570 WEST AVENUE 26, SUITE 100, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90065

TELEPHONE: (310) 589-3230

FAX: (310) 589-2408



**GLENN PARKER**  
CHAIR  
PUBLIC MEMBER  
ORANGE COUNTY

February 10, 2014

**MICHAEL HUGHES**  
VICE-CHAIR  
PUBLIC MEMBER  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Emma Howard  
Regional Planning Department  
320 West Temple Street, Room 1354  
Los Angeles, California 90012

**BOB HENDERSON**  
CITY OF WHITTIER

## **Draft SEA Ordinance Released December 5, 2013**

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

**CHRISTINE MARICK**  
CITY OF BREA

Dear Ms. Howard:

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS  
CONSERVANCY

The Wildlife Corridor Conservation Authority (WCCA) was created to provide for the proper planning, conservation, environmental protection and maintenance of the habitat and wildlife corridor between the Whittier-Puente Hills, Chino Hills, and the Cleveland National Forest in the Santa Ana Mountains. WCCA has been following the General Plan and Significant Ecological Area (SEA) development closely and provides the following comments on the draft SEA Ordinance, released December 5, 2013.

**DICKIE SIMMONS**  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

**JACK TANAKA**  
CITY OF DIAMOND BAR

**JANE L. WILLIAMS**  
CITY OF LA HABRA HEIGHTS

WCCA supports the inclusive proposed SEA boundaries and commends the County on applying this approach. We continue to compliment the County's efforts to propose more inclusive and biologically sound boundaries to ensure long-term sustainability of SEAs. However, a key area southwest of the Puente Hills SEA is not included in the newly proposed SEA boundaries. This area contains habitat resources for sensitive species found in the Puente Hills. WCCA recommends that the area shown on the attached map be included in the Puente Hills SEA.

### **Puente Hills Significant Ecological Area Boundaries**

WCCA recommends the inclusion of an area east of Harbor Boulevard, in unincorporated Los Angeles County near the Los Angeles County/Orange County border (shown in the attached map). This area is part of the Aera project boundary. It serves a distinct and critical purpose in the broader integrity of the SEA by providing both habitat for coastal California gnatcatcher (*Poliioptilla californica californica*) and buffer for adjacent core habitat and movement corridors. Any extensive development in this subject area would unquestionably harm the ecological integrity of the Puente Hills and potentially sever genetic connections across Harbor Boulevard. Any further substantial fragmentation of habitat in the Puente Hills would irreparably damage the biological resources WCCA is charged with protecting. Only inclusion in the SEA can provide the needed level of review and protection given the biological significance of the area.

The subject area is adjacent on several sides<sup>1</sup> to known populations of the federally threatened coastal California gnatcatcher.<sup>2</sup> The mixed native-nonnative grassland interface with coastal sage scrub provides ideal less-dense scrub preferred by the species. While dependent on coastal sage scrub within its U.S. range, the gnatcatcher regularly uses other habitats and shows seasonal and perhaps daily patterns in such use.<sup>3</sup> The subject area is positioned between three known occurrences, making it indisputably part of the gnatcatcher's range.

Grassland has noticeably reduced over time in the Puente-Chino Hills due to residential encroachment and the reestablishment of woody plants following the removal of grazing.<sup>4</sup> Vegetation patterns are dynamic and SEA boundaries should consider ecosystems in their entirety rather than static conditions. Any significant disturbance in the subject area would disrupt daily and seasonal patterns and critically threaten the viability of local gnatcatcher populations. Substantial loss of habitat in key areas in this location could irreversibly genetically isolate populations further west in the Whittier-Puente Hills.

Aside from the threatened gnatcatcher, grassland on or adjacent to the subject area is known to support breeding populations of other sensitive and declining bird species. A 1999 report on avian resources in the Puente-Chino Hills states:

The exotic and semi-native grasslands of the Puente-Chino Hills may represent their greatest contribution to the breeding bird community of coastal Southern California, as so much of this habitat has been permanently lost to urbanization.

Subsequently, a 2000 study identified the grassland east of Harbor Boulevard on the Aera project site as one of three areas of highest conservation concern for birds in the Puente-Chino Hills region.<sup>5</sup> The author writes, "While smaller regions of grassland throughout the study area, such as the Whittier Hills, support a few pairs of species like the grasshopper sparrow or lazuli bunting, these and other grassland birds are abundant here." Breeding

---

<sup>1</sup>Glen Lukos Associates. 2005. Biota Report. Aera Master Planned Community. Significant Ecological Area 15, Tonner Canyon/Chino Hills, Los Angeles/Orange County, California.

<sup>2</sup>*California Natural Diversity Database*. Department of Fish and Wildlife.

<sup>3</sup>Campbell, K.F., R.A. Erikson, W.E. Haas, and M.A. Patten. 1998. California Gnatcatcher use of habitats other than coastal sage scrub: Conservation and management implications. *Western Birds* 29:421-43.

<sup>4</sup>Campbell, K.F., R.A. Erikson, W.E. Haas, and M.A. Patten. 1998. California Gnatcatcher use of habitats other than coastal sage scrub: Conservation and management implications. *Western Birds* 29:421-43.

<sup>5</sup>Cooper, D.S. 2000. Breeding landbirds of a highly threatened open space: The Puente-Chino Hills, California. *Western Birds* 31:213-234.

pairs of the following sensitive species are known to occur in or adjacent to the subject area: white-tailed kite<sup>6</sup>, golden eagle<sup>7</sup>, greater roadrunner, lesser nighthawk, loggerhead shrike, horned lark, rufous-crowned sparrow, blue grosbeak, grasshopper sparrow, and western meadowlark. Any substantial diminution in habitat quality on the Aera site may cause a chain reaction of instability among sensitive species populations to the west. Without SEA designation of the subject area, these grassland-dependent sensitive species are expected to become locally extirpated.

Furthermore, the County's proposed SEA to the north of the subject area covers a narrow canyon that crosses Harbor Boulevard to the west. The edge effects of the existing Shea Homes development are already diminishing the value of the corridor through which all east-west Puente Hills wildlife movement occur using the Harbor Boulevard Wildlife Underpass. Should the southern edge of this narrow corridor be similarly developed, the entire corridor will be subjected to the direct and indirect impacts of urbanization. The only way to protect the biological integrity of the movement corridor is to provide as much open space buffer as physically possible. The subject area provides ancillary habitat benefits by serving as an extensive southern buffer for wildlife using the underpass to cross Harbor Boulevard.

Although we note that the County has expanded the SEA slightly in the Puente Hills area, more gnatcatcher habitat can be protected by expanding SEA boundaries to include this key subject area. Conservation biology principles clearly warrant that additional expansion in the Puente Hills area must include the rest of the southwest corner of the Aera project property boundary. There is no biological justification for not including the subject area.

We appreciate your consideration of these comments. If you have any questions, please contact Judi Tamasi of our staff by phone at (310) 589-3230, ext. 121, or by email at [judi.tamasi@mrca.ca.gov](mailto:judi.tamasi@mrca.ca.gov). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Glenn Parker  
Chairperson

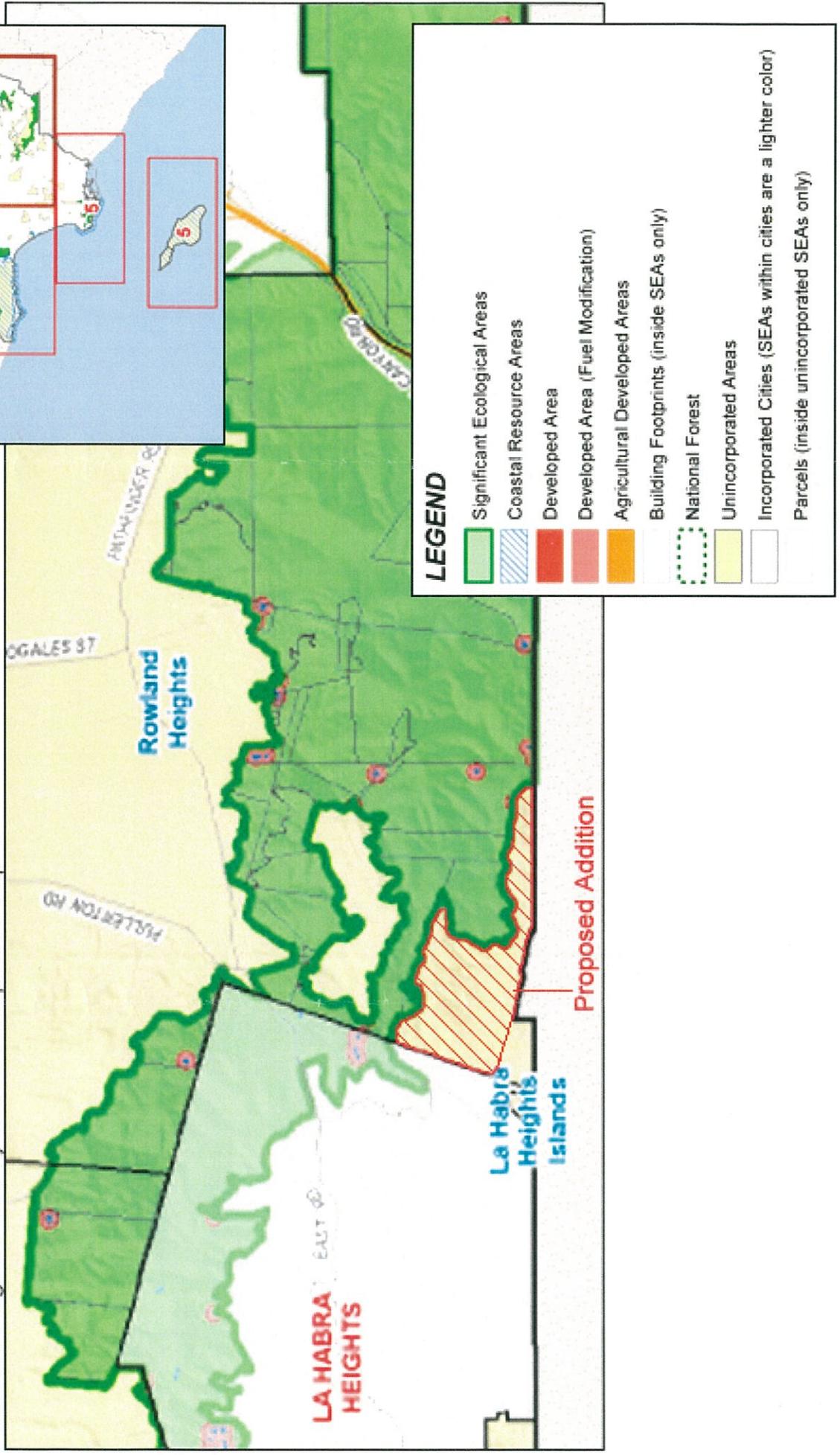
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<sup>6</sup>Ibid. Cooper notes that fewer than ten breeding pairs are known in the Puente-Chino Hills.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. Cooper notes that only one or two breeding pairs are known in the Puente-Chino Hills.

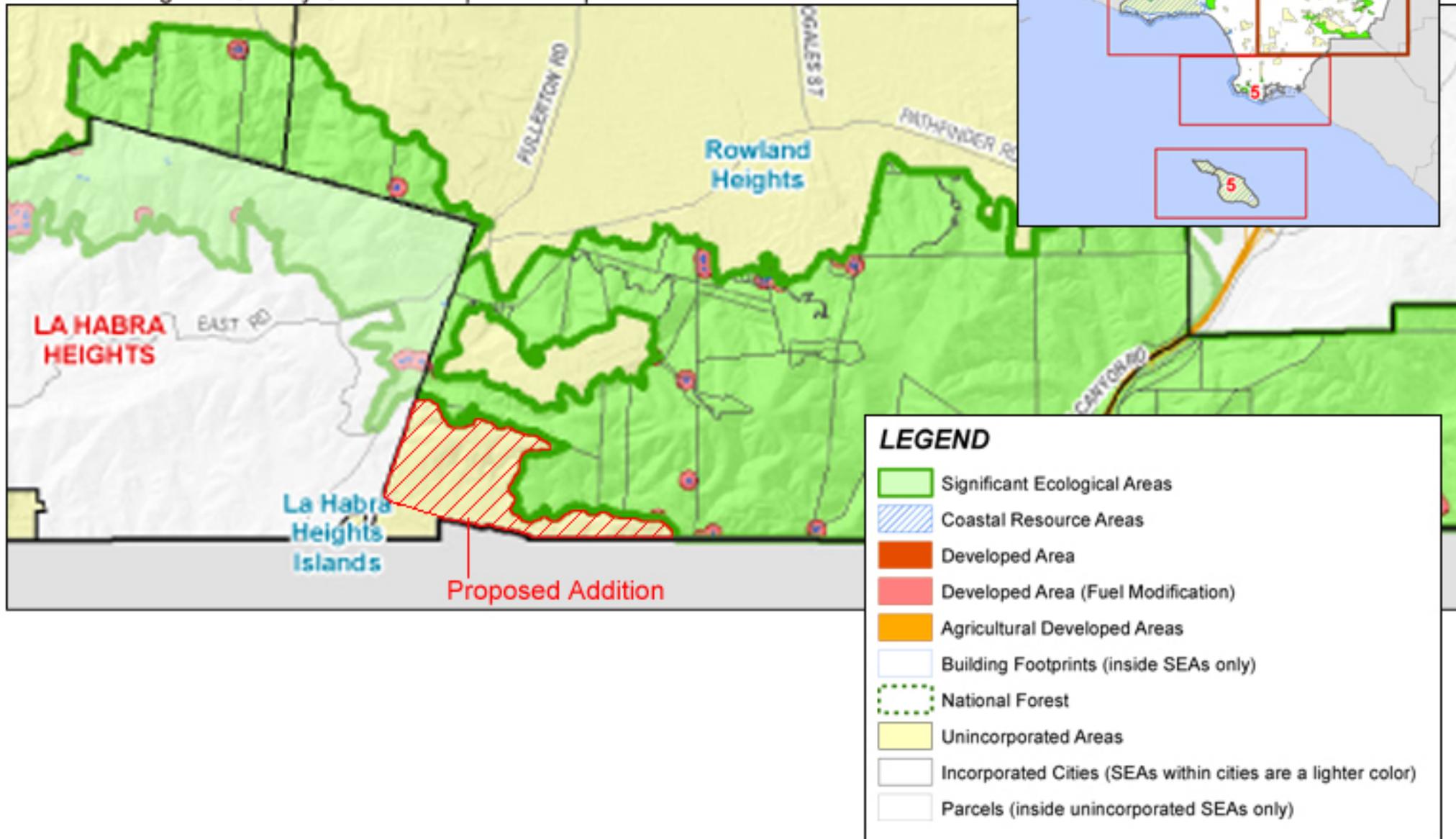
Wildlife Corridor Conservation Authority  
**Proposed Addition to  
 Puente Hills SEA Boundaries**  
 February 10, 2014

From Los Angeles County SEA Development Map 4:



Wildlife Corridor Conservation Authority  
Proposed Addition to  
Puente Hills SEA Boundaries  
February 10, 2014

From Los Angeles County SEA Development Map 4:



**35: Bolthouse Farms**



2000 Oak Street, Suite 250 • Bakersfield, CA 93301  
Ph: (661) 323-4005 • Fax: (661) 323-4006  
www.BolthouseProperties.com

April 22, 2014

SEA Program  
c/o Emma Howard  
Regional Planning Department Floor 13  
320 W. Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**RE: SEA Program Update**

Dear Ms. Howard,

Bolthouse Properties currently owns numerous parcels in unincorporated Los Angeles County that will be subject to the Los Angeles County General Plan Update in the Antelope Valley region. These properties, totaling approximately 4,400 acres lie adjacent to and east of the Cities of Lancaster and Palmdale, and many of them are located in the proposed enlargement of the Antelope Valley Significant Ecological Area. All of these properties, with exception of one, are currently and actively being farmed. Bolthouse Properties has been farming these properties since at least the 1990s, with some of our farming activities extending back for decades.

We have reviewed the RPC Staff Report dated April 10, 2014 and corresponding attachments and would like to convey to the County our existing and future interests for our holdings and concerns regarding the potential impacts on these interests due to the expansion of the SEA boundary and update of the Program.

**Existing and Proposed Significant Ecological Areas**

It is our understanding that the Antelope Valley Significant Ecological Area, located in the central portion of the Antelope Valley primarily east of the Cities of Palmdale and Lancaster, is proposed to expand significantly. The SEA, "an ecologically important land or water system that supports valuable habitat for plants and animals integral to the preservation of rare, threatened or endangered species and the conservation of biological diversity in the County," is an important land use policy to encourage conservation and species protection in Los Angeles County.

Bolthouse Properties understands the value of maintaining our natural biological resources and agrees that the current SEA meets several SEA designation criteria and supports many regional biological values. However, we are concerned about the expansion of the Antelope Valley SEA and how it may

affect our current and future agricultural, residential, and renewable energy facility development plans for parcels located in or transecting the boundaries of the Proposed SEA. Specifically, we have the following concerns that we respectfully request be considered prior to approval of the SEA Program:

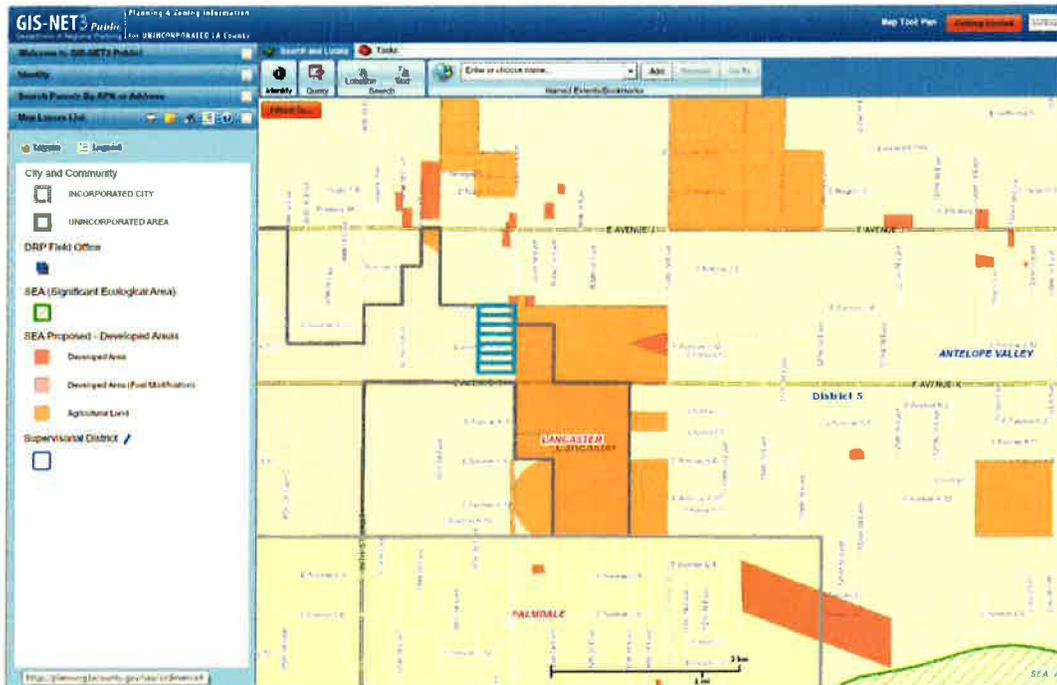
1) Potential Mapping Errors and Properties Optioned for Solar Energy Projects

The expansion of the SEA boundary has most significantly impacted properties owned by Bolthouse located generally along Avenue K from approximately 100<sup>th</sup> to 110<sup>th</sup> Streets. These properties were not previously included in the SEA boundary and are located on the far western edge of the expanded SEA in this location. We believe some of the properties in this location may be included due to mapping errors. We previously requested an analysis from County staff to identify affected properties. The following properties were identified by the County as included in the proposed SEA boundary.

Assessor Parcel Numbers	Location
3376026009	Lancaster
3376026008	Lancaster
3376026007	Lancaster
3376026006	Lancaster
3376026005	Lancaster
3376026004	Lancaster
3376026003	Lancaster

The figure below depicts the above listed properties as shown on the SEA Proposed – Developed Areas layer on the County’s GIS-Net3 mapping system. If you look closely, the boundary of the “Agricultural Land” does not coincide with parcel boundaries, but overlaps a small portion of the listed properties. When a GIS based analysis is conducted, these properties are being included within the proposed SEA boundary.

Bolthouse Properties owns a total of 34 parcels in this area totaling approximately 380 acres. These 34 parcels, which include the above listed properties, have been under contract for over two years for options to develop utility scale solar projects. Bolthouse Properties has been working diligently with the County, State and utility companies to further pursue these solar options. As a considerable amount of time and capital has been invested pursuing these solar options, we would like to request that the County carefully review the SEA boundary in this location. We believe it should be adjusted to remove the above listed properties.



2) Additional Properties not Previously Included and Optioned for Solar Energy Projects

The following additional properties have been impacted by the expanded SEA boundary:

APN#	Location	SEA Proposed-Developed Area (as shown in GIS)
3376022004	County	Agricultural Developed Area
3376022005	County	Agricultural Developed Area
3376022006	County	Agricultural Developed Area
3376022016	County	Agricultural Developed Area
3376022017	County	Agricultural Developed Area
3376022018	County	Agricultural Developed Area
3378005006	County	Agricultural Developed Area
3378005001	Lancaster	Agricultural Developed Area
3378005002	Lancaster	Agricultural Developed Area
3378005004	Lancaster	Agricultural Developed Area
3378005005	Lancaster	Agricultural Developed Area

Approximately six of the properties listed in this table (all located within unincorporated County) are included in the 34 parcels discussed in #1 above. This land is optioned to develop utility scale solar projects. We request an explanation and evidence to support the expansion of the SEA boundary in this area. As stated in #1 above, these properties have been under contract for over two years for options to develop utility scale solar projects. Bolthouse Properties has been working diligently with the County, State and utility companies to further pursue these solar options. As a considerable amount of time and

capital has been invested pursuing these solar options, we are concerned about their inclusion in the expanded SEA boundary.

3) Clarification of Review Process

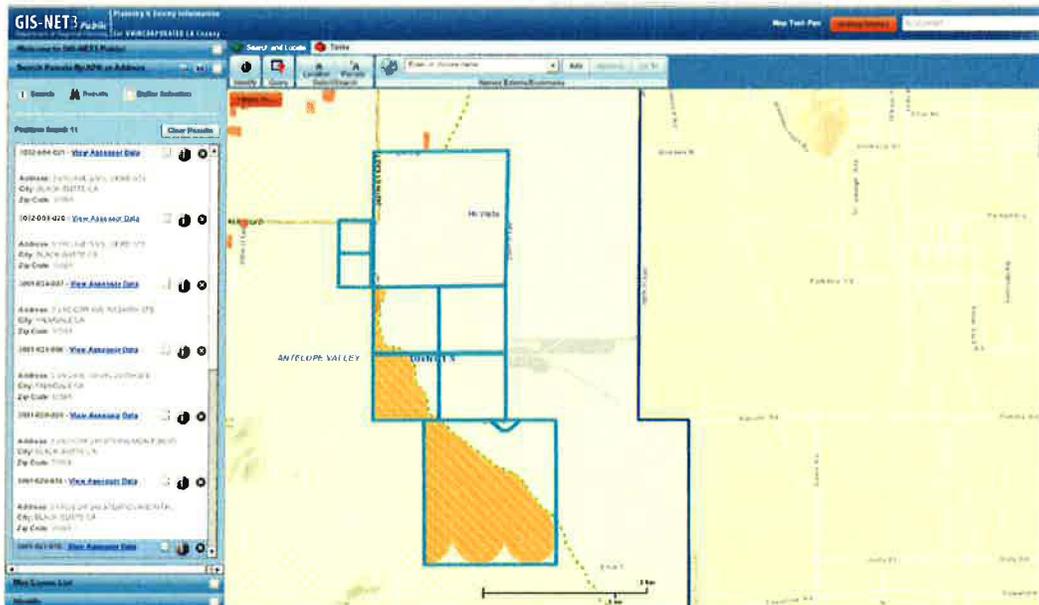
Most of the properties that are owned by Bolthouse, that are within the SEA boundary are identified as Agricultural Developed Areas on the SEA Development Map and therefore it is our understanding that they qualify for Site Plan Review. As stated previously, one of our concerns is to protect our interests in the future development of utility scale solar projects on our land. Please confirm the review process and standards we would be subject to for a utility scale solar project on land entirely within Agricultural Developed Areas.

Please clarify the review process and standards we would be subject to for a utility scale solar project on land that is not identified as Developed or Agricultural Developed Land on the SEA Development Map.

4) SEA Boundary Adjustment and Properties Optioned for Solar Energy Projects

The properties listed below were previously identified by the County as being included in the proposed SEA boundary. However, it appears only two of them are included in the latest proposed SEA boundary.

APN#	Location	Included in Proposed SEA (as shown in GIS)	SEA Proposed-Developed Area (as shown in GIS)
3091021018	County	No	
3091020019	County	No	
3091020020	County	No	
3091024006	County	No	
3091024007	County	Yes	Agricultural Developed Land
3032004020	County	No	
3032004021	County	Yes	Agricultural Developed Land



The two properties are considered Agricultural Developed Lands. The SEA boundary bisects the properties and it is unclear why they have been delineated in this way.

These two properties, along with other adjacent properties totaling approximately 2,020 acres have been under contract for over two years for options to develop utility scale solar projects.

Bolthouse Properties has been working diligently with the County, State and utility companies to further pursue these solar options. As a considerable amount of time and capital has been invested pursuing these solar options, we would like to request that the County review the SEA boundary in this location and that it be adjusted to remove these properties.

##### 5) Process for SEA Boundary Adjustments

We request that the County consider including a provision in the SEA Program that would allow properties to be removed from the SEA boundary without being subject to a lengthy or expensive review process. If properties, such as those above, are located on the edge of the SEA boundary, and/or where development or long-term use of the property has diminished its value as suitable habitat or as a valuable ecological area, and/or where mapping errors have occurred, property owners should have a mechanism to remove the properties from the SEA designation without incurring significant costs or a significant investment of time.

We appreciate the County's consideration of our concerns and requests as they pertain to the SEA Program. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or would like to further discuss.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad DeBranch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brad" being more prominent than the last name "DeBranch".

BRAD DeBRANCH, Project Planner for  
STEPHAN J. DeBRANCH  
Vice President of Development  
Bolthouse Properties, LLC

Cc: Kimiko Lizardi, ESA

## **36: CalCIMA, Vulcan, Granite & Sespe Consulting**



MICHAEL LINTON  
VICE PRESIDENT  
PROPERTIES & LAND DEVELOPMENT

500 N. BRAND BLVD., SUITE 500  
GLENDALE, CA 91203  
TELEPHONE 818.553.8953  
EMAIL LINTONM@VMCMAIL.COM

April 15, 2014

Emma Howard  
Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning  
General Plan Development and Housing Section  
320 W. Temple Street, Room 1354  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Comments on Draft 5 of the Proposed Significant Ecological Areas

Dear Ms. Howard,

This letter was prepared in response to Draft 5 of the Los Angeles County (County) proposed Significant Ecological Area (SEA) expansion. CalMat Land Company (a.k.a Vulcan Materials Company) would like to protect the interests of their two properties located in Los Angeles County, California. Vulcan Materials Company appreciates your consideration of our comment prior to the hearing scheduled for April 23, 2014.

Vulcan Materials Company is a major producer of construction aggregates and aggregated-based construction materials in the State of California. Large quantities of aggregates are used to build and repair valuable infrastructure such as roads, bridges, waterworks, and ports, and to construct buildings such as homes, schools and hospitals.

The Vulcan Materials Company operations will be negatively affected by the proposed SEA expansion in association with the Los Angeles County General Plan Update and this letter has been written to ensure that the County has considered the potential impacts to the natural mineral resources in the area. It is imperative that the significant aggregate materials located in the Antelope Valley and Santa Clarita River Valley areas of Los Angeles County remain unaffected by the proposed SEA expansion. Our primary concerns include the following:

Vulcan Materials Company is interested in the preservation of mineral resources as well as significant natural habitat. The SEA should define the specific critical habitat areas for clarity. The sensitive species and habitat information was generalized to include a vast majority of the areas in the County—disturbed and undisturbed without a proper scientific evidence supporting the purpose for the proposed boundary expansion. The SEA Ordinance is forcing the landowner to invalidate the SEA assumptions.

The SEA is proposed to expand to include areas with low biological activity. The Vulcan Materials Company operations include areas that were historically disturbed and are currently utilized for

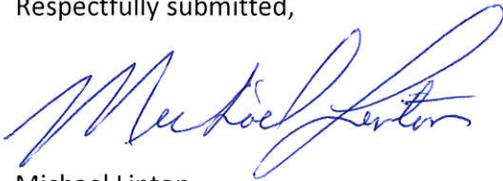
industrial purposes. Expanding the SEA to include these existing industrial areas and forcing potential projects to undergo more extensive review is not logical. Vulcan Materials Company requests that the County consider removing areas that possess significant mineral resources and are currently operated for industrial purposes from the proposed SEA expansion.

The proposed increased review of reclamation plans for surface mining by the Significant Ecological Areas Technological Advisory Committee (SEATAC), with the ability for SEATAC to make recommendations for the project is unreasonable. The information regarding the selection process for SEATAC members has not been presented. Vulcan Materials Company is concerned that there is potential for the review board to be unfamiliar with surface mining reclamation plans and have a possible biased anti-development agenda.

The County relies heavily on aggregate materials and demand is expected to increase in the future. Vulcan Materials Company supplies a significant amount of aggregate that is mined in this region. Vulcan Materials Company cannot relocate their operations because they rely on finite resources that are located in specific State designated mineral resource areas. The proposed SEA expansion conflicts with the State designated mineral resource areas and has negative consequences on future plans for Vulcan Materials Company to expand their operations to potentially provide for the future needs of the County.

Please do not hesitate to call me at (818) 553-8953 if you have any questions or would like to discuss. Thank you for your time and we look forward to hearing back from you.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael Linton  
Vice President, Properties & Land Development

# SESPE

CONSULTING, INC.

468 Poli Street, Suite 2E • Ventura, CA 93001  
Office (805) 275-1515 • Fax (805) 667-8104

June 19, 2014

Ms. Emma Howard  
**Los Angeles County, Department of Regional Planning**  
320 W. Temple Street, Room 1354  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**RE: Boundary Change Request for SEA Draft 5, Big Rock Creek Area**

Dear Ms. Howard,

On Behalf of The California Construction and Industrial Materials Association (CalCIMA), a statewide trade association representing construction aggregate, ready-mix concrete and industrial materials producers in California, Sespe Consulting, Inc. is pleased to present the following request for a boundary adjustment to the proposed SEA Draft #5. Attached to this letter is a figure that illustrates the proposed boundary changes and figures from a hydrology report prepared for a mine in that area.

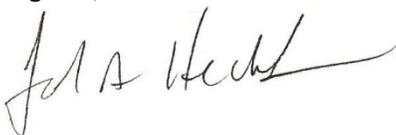
The boundary request is being made on the following basis:

1. The areas that we are asking to be removed from the proposed SEA have been Classified as MRZ-2 and designated as Regionally Significant Aggregate Resource Areas by the State Mining and Geology Board in 1987. This process formally recognized significant deposits that could provide for future needs and was conducted in full compliance with CEQA. We believe that the proposed SEAs are in conflict with this designation and the Mineral Resource Protection Policies in the proposed 2014 Los Angeles County General Plan, Policy C/NR 10.1 which states "Protect MRZ-2s and access to MRZ-2s from development and discourage incompatible adjacent land uses". An SEA can be considered an incompatible use to mineral extraction.
2. Cal Trans has recently made significant improvements to Highway 138 that crosses the existing Regionally Significant Aggregate Resource Areas E-5, E-4, E-3, E-2, and E-1 of the Big Rock Creek Fan. The result of these improvements is that surface flow of storm water runoff has been permanently and significantly reduced and is no longer alluvial in nature. This warrants removal of this area from consideration as an SEA. Attached are figures from a Hydrology Study from Stetson Engineers that illustrate the changes in flow in this area. The full study can be found in Appendix 3 of the EIR that is available online at:

[http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/case/project\\_r2007-00670\\_deir-appendices.pdf](http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/case/project_r2007-00670_deir-appendices.pdf)

Please consider our request and feel free to contact me at 805-275-1515 if you have any questions or require additional information.

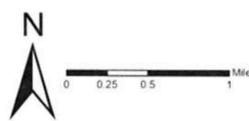
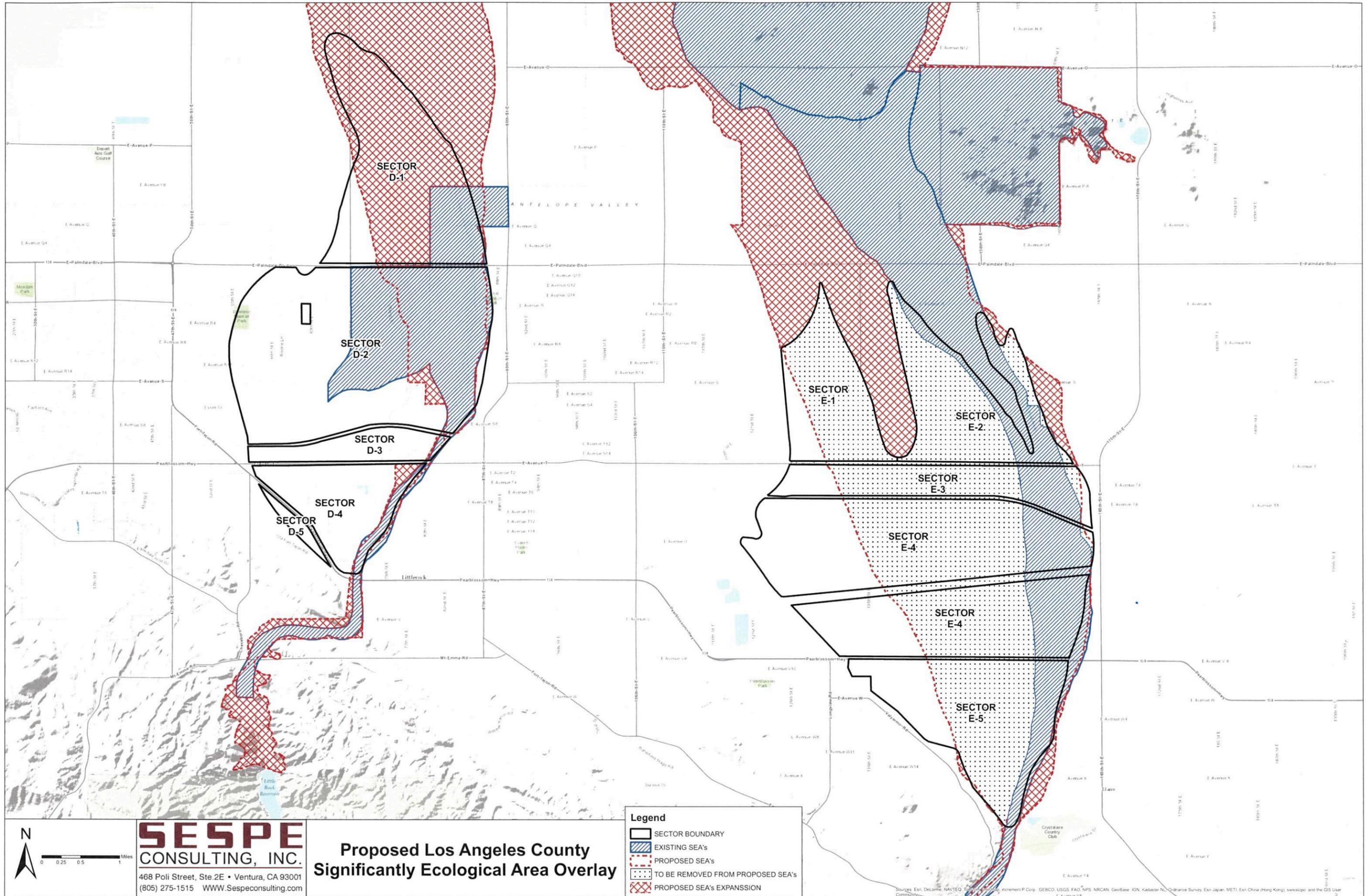
Regards,



John A. Hecht, P.E.  
President  
**Sespe Consulting, Inc.**

Attachments:

1. Figure 1 Deletions from Proposed SEA Draft 5
2. Stetson Engineers Figures 3b, Existing and Pre Cal Trans



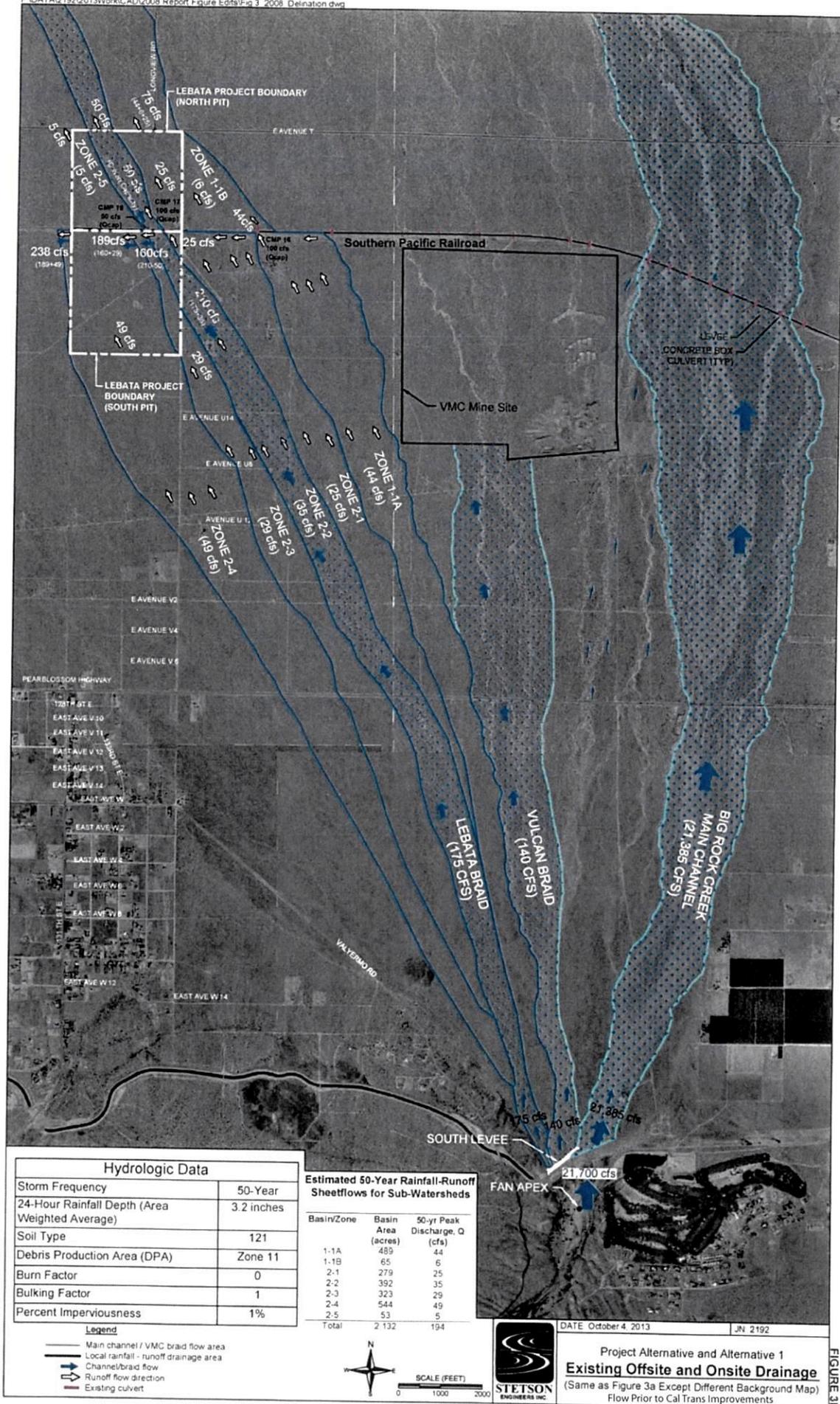
**SESPE**  
**CONSULTING, INC.**  
 468 Poli Street, Ste. 2E • Ventura, CA 93001  
 (805) 275-1515 WWW.Sespeconsulting.com

**Proposed Los Angeles County  
 Significantly Ecological Area Overlay**

**Legend**

- SECTOR BOUNDARY
- EXISTING SEA's
- PROPOSED SEA's
- TO BE REMOVED FROM PROPOSED SEA's
- PROPOSED SEA's EXPANSION

Sources: Esri, DeLorme, NAVTEQ, Swisstopo, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Swisstopo and the GIS User Community



Hydrologic Data	
Storm Frequency	50-Year
24-Hour Rainfall Depth (Area Weighted Average)	3.2 inches
Soil Type	121
Debris Production Area (DPA)	Zone 11
Burn Factor	0
Bulking Factor	1
Percent Imperviousness	1%

Estimated 50-Year Rainfall-Runoff Sheetflows for Sub-Watersheds		
Basin/Zone	Basin Area (acres)	50-yr Peak Discharge, Q (cfs)
1-1A	489	44
1-1B	65	6
2-1	279	25
2-2	392	35
2-3	323	29
2-4	544	49
2-5	53	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,132</b>	<b>194</b>

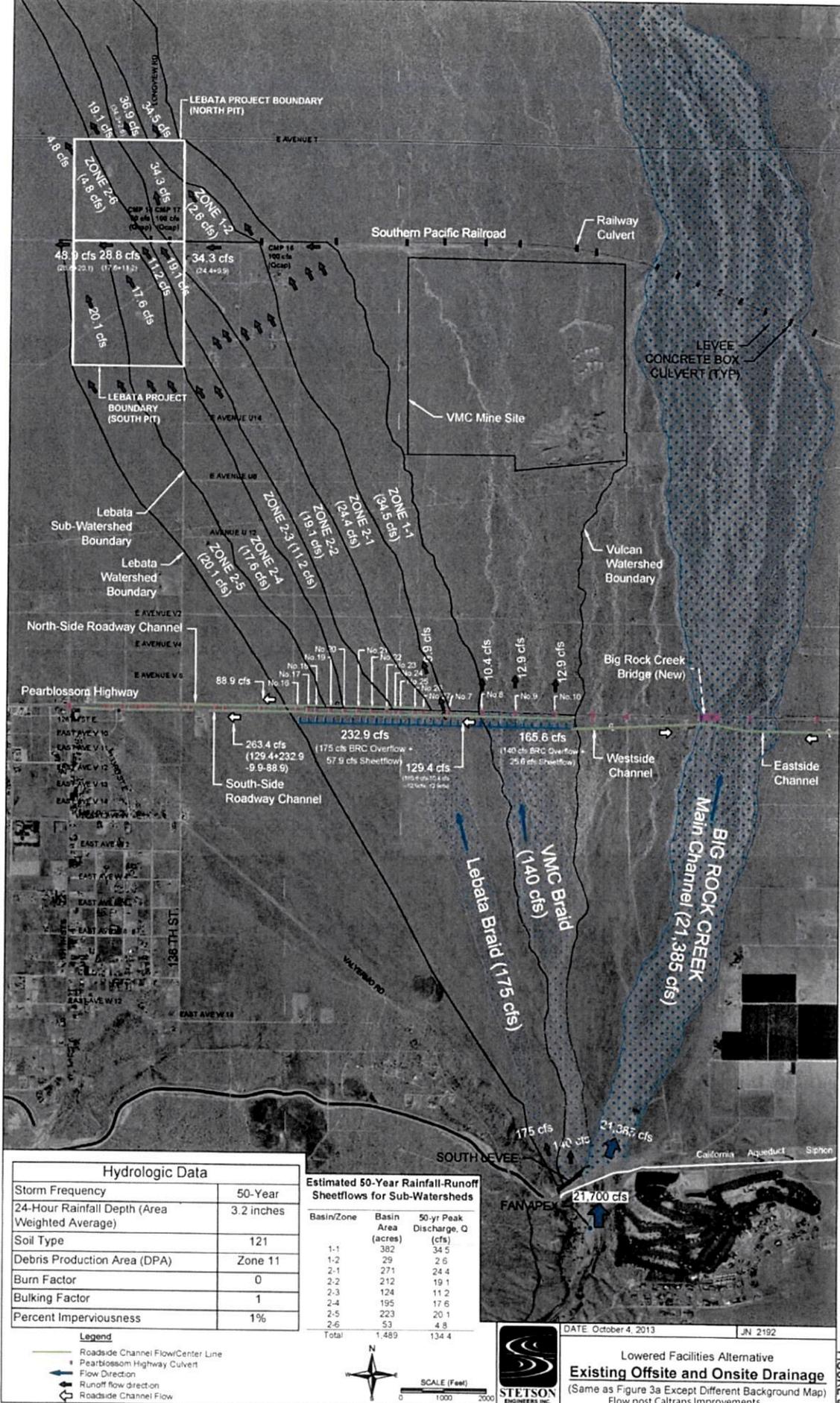
- Legend**
- Main channel / VMC braid flow area
  - Local rainfall - runoff drainage area
  - Channel/braid flow
  - Runoff flow direction
  - Existing culvert



DATE October 4, 2013 JN 2192

**Project Alternative and Alternative 1 Existing Offsite and Onsite Drainage**  
 (Same as Figure 3a Except Different Background Map)  
 Flow Prior to Cal Trans Improvements

FIGURE 3b





California Construction and  
Industrial Materials Association

April 11, 2014

VIA EMAIL

Ms. Emma Howard  
Los Angeles County, Department of Regional Planning  
320 W. Temple Street, Room 1354  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Comments Regarding Draft 5 of the Significant Ecological Areas

Dear Ms. Howard,

CalcIMA is a statewide trade association representing construction aggregate, ready-mix concrete and industrial materials producers in California. Our members supply the materials that build our state's infrastructure, including public roads, rail, and water projects; helps build our homes, schools and hospitals; assists in growing crops and feeding livestock; and plays a key role in manufacturing wallboard, roofing shingles, paint, glass, low-energy light bulbs, and battery technology for electric cars and windmills.

We are deeply concerned with the proposed Significant Ecological Areas (SEA) overlay which, as currently drafted, would create direct and detrimental conflict with current and future aggregate materials operations located in the Antelope Valley and Santa Clara River Valley areas of Los Angeles County. Our members' facilities are located on finite mineral deposits, and often, such deposits have been identified by the State as significant to the Los Angeles region or to the State as a whole. These facilities have been in operation for years and are already subject to extensive and repeated environmental review. Expanding the SEA to include these mineral resource deposits and facilities and forcing projects to undergo even more extensive review is illogical and unnecessary.

The classification of aggregate resources in the three-county area of Los Angeles, Orange and Ventura was followed by a "designation" process performed by the State Mining and Geology Board (SMGB). This process formally recognized significant deposits that could provide for future needs and was conducted in full compliance with CEQA. Maps and descriptions of the deposits were placed in the California Code of Regulations and officially transmitted to those county and city governments empowered with authority over the use of those lands. The proposed SEA overlay is therefore in direct conflict with the already- identified needs of the County and the State of California.

CalCIMA  
1029 J Street, Suite 420  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Phone: 916 554-1000  
Fax: 916 554-1042

Regional Office:  
1077 E Pacific Coast Hwy, # 342  
Seal Beach, CA 90740  
Phone: 562 370-7129  
Fax: 916 379-5742

The State has continued to express concern about aggregate availability. The 2012 California Geological Survey *Sustainable Aggregates* report states that the County will require more than 476 million tons of aggregates over the next 50 years while only 77 million tons are currently permitted. Thus, according to the State's expert agency, the County has permitted less than 20% of construction aggregates needed to meet its projected need. Increasing the SEA overlay over significant mineral resource areas would directly conflict with the recognized needs of the County. Additionally, the proposed SEA expansion would pose considerable challenges to any future plans for aggregate companies to expand their operations, creating serious long-term impacts to the County through significant losses of high-paying jobs and tax revenue.

Increasing the review of a reclamation plan for surface mining by the Significant Ecological Areas Technological Advisory Committee (SEATAC) and the added bureaucratic authority of SEATAC to make recommendations on a surface mining site is unreasonable. A surface mining reclamation plan is highly technical and is produced by experts in the mining industry, including geologists, engineers, and landscape architects. Any additional review by an appointed SEATAC official would be unnecessarily duplicative, burdensome and costly.

As a statewide association, CalCIMA represents the majority of aggregate producers in the potentially impacted area. As of yet, none of our members have been notified that their facilities and properties could potentially be included within the proposed SEA overlay. We therefore respectfully request that our members and other property owners have due process of notification in the future. Sending mass email blasts to the public has proven to be a wholly inappropriate and ineffective communication method, which does not achieve "meaningful" notice, and therefore fails to provide due process.

Based on the foregoing, CalCIMA requests that the SEA ordinance be revised so that any mineral resource deposits classified as MRZ-2 or designated as regionally significant are excluded from the coverage of the SEA overlay.

As the County continues in the SEA process we would certainly be amenable to meet to discuss our industry's specific issues.

Sincerely,



Angela Driscoll,  
Director, Local Government Affairs

cc: Richard Bruckner – Director, Regional Planning  
Edel Vizcarra – Supervisor Antonovich Office

## **37: Sunshine Canyon Operators**

# SUNSHINE CANYON LANDFILL

May 22, 2014

Commissioner Esther L. Valadez, Chair  
Commissioner David W. Louie  
Commissioner Laura Shell, Vice Chair  
Commissioner Curt Pedersen  
Commissioner Pat Modugno  
Los Angeles County  
Department of Regional Planning  
320 W. Temple Street, Room 1354  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Subject: COMMENTS ON PROPOSED SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREA (SEA)  
ORDINANCE CHANGE, GENERAL PLAN 2035

Dear Commissioners,

As owner and operator of Sunshine Canyon Landfill, Republic Services (Browning-Ferris Industries of California, Inc.), wishes to inform the Regional Planning Commission of the potential impacts of the above-referenced proposed ordinance and accompanying SEA map changes on the Landfill and related developments.

Based on these impacts, which we discuss in detail below and in the attached Exhibits, we respectfully request that proposed changes in the boundaries of the Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills SEA ("the SEA") adjacent to Sunshine Canyon Landfill, be eliminated and that the existing boundaries of the SEA be maintained.

Our concerns with respect to draft boundary changes as shown in the SEA map contained in the County map database "GIS-NET3", are based on their potential impacts on:

- Approved grading limits for the landfill;
- Approved waste limits for the landfill;
- Approved plans for permanent and temporary grading plans, access roads and construction of Southern California Edison (SCE) transmission lines that are critical for development of the approved landfill; and
- Planned future development in a portion of the permitted landfill limits that has been deferred pending a revision of current grading limits to remove existing landslides.

Exhibits 1 through 4 illustrate these concerns, as discussed below.

Exhibit 1 - This exhibit shows the existing grading limits approved by the County for the side of the landfill north of the City/County Line. It also shows the existing and proposed boundaries of the SEA, and identifies areas where proposed SEA boundaries impinge on the approved landfill grading limits. If implemented, this change could potentially complicate completion of required and approved drainage structures as well as completion of the approved landfill liner system, and impact the site's disposal capacity and life.

- Exhibit 2- This exhibit shows the approved limits of waste and the existing and proposed SEA boundaries. The area impacted by the proposed SEA boundary change contains portions of the approved waste footprint in both the City and County sides of the landfill.
- Exhibit 3 - This exhibit presents plans approved by the California Public Utility Commission (CPUC) for re-routing of transmission lines of Southern California Edison (SCE) that currently cross the center of the landfill. These transmission lines must be rerouted in order to allow the site to be developed to its approved final capacity under entitlements issued jointly by the City of Los Angeles and County of Los Angeles. It shows potential conflicts with the proposed SEA boundary revision in several areas:
- The new boundary on the ridgeline east of the landfill coincides with an existing access road needed to maintain existing and proposed power lines on that side of the site; and,
  - Some approved poles and access roads on the west side of the landfill fall within the proposed SEA boundary.
- Exhibit 4 - This exhibit shows an area in the northwest corner of the Sunshine Canyon property. It highlights two major features of the site:
- An area of approximately 11.8 acres in the extreme northwest end of the approved landfill waste limits that was temporarily filled with soil as a buttress against adjacent landslide areas; and
  - Documented landslides that would need to be removed by excavation and grading prior to removing the temporary soil fill and developing the site to its full permitted size and capacity. The landslides were known and taken into account in prior environmental documentation based on their identification in original site characterization geologic studies (Purcell, Rhodes & Associates, Site Geologic Map, May 27, 1988).

Removal of these landslides would require an adjustment in the existing grading limits shown in Exhibit 1. Such an adjustment would be subject to review and approval by the County under terms of the existing CUP, Condition 37, which requires prior approval by the Department of Public Works "for all grading within the County's jurisdiction that is outside the Landfill footprint." If the area is incorporated into the SEA as proposed, the County review process prescribed by the CUP could be superseded by Section 22.52.2915.E of the proposed ordinance as a "modification to any development previously authorized by a valid. ....Conditional Use Permit....." and thereby become subject to development standards of the SEA ordinance. We believe this change in County review procedures for the landfill is unnecessary and would impose a needless burden on both the Landfill and the County.

Given the proposed extension of the SEA map boundaries to include more property owned by the Sunshine Canyon Landfill (Browning-Ferris Industries of California, Inc.), we are very concerned with the language in the Ordinance (Section 22.52.2910 A) that states the Ordinance applies to the entirety of any lot or parcel, even if only a small fraction of that lot or parcel falls

with the revised SEA map area. Further, the exemption for property covered by existing land use permits is restricted to the lifetime of those permits and, moreover, the implication that any future land use approvals would be covered by the Ordinance creates many additional questions. What exactly is meant by the phrase "land use approval"-- as distinct from a land use permit? If an approval is required under a condition of an existing CUP, is that approval considered a "land use approval," which in turn will trigger application of the Ordinance? Can you give us a complete list of "land use approvals" that would be covered by the ordinance, and those that would not be covered?

The impact of requiring SEA Ordinance clearance of approvals for the currently- permitted build-out of the Landfill could prevent or substantially delay that build-out. The Landfill services a vital public interest for the County, the City of Los Angeles, including its residents and businesses. It could also hinder vitally important actions needed to correct safety concerns, such as existing or newly discovered landslides, or hinder access to power lines or critical landfill environmental control systems.

Any such preclusion or delay of the build-out of the Landfill under its current permits, which underwent extensive review under CEQA before these land use permits were obtained, should itself be subject to further robust CEQA review. These potential environmental impacts of implementation of the Ordinance would include, but not be limited to, the impacts on public services; interference with the transmission of electricity to surrounding areas; interference with the proposed and approved co-generation facility at the Landfill, which will greatly reduce the creation of greenhouse gases by producing significant quantities of renewal electric energy from landfill gas; safety impacts if the landfill is unable to take correction actions to remedy landslides; environmental impacts if the Landfill cannot take corrective action required by a regulatory agency with jurisdiction over the Landfill; closure and post-closure of the Landfill; and other activities that produce environmental benefits.

We can elaborate on the foregoing environmental concerns that should be addressed in an environmental document to support adoption of the Ordinance, but prior to doing so we request that the draft SEA map boundary simply be revised to not include additional Sunshine Canyon Landfill property, and that the existing SEA boundaries be maintained.

Sincerely,

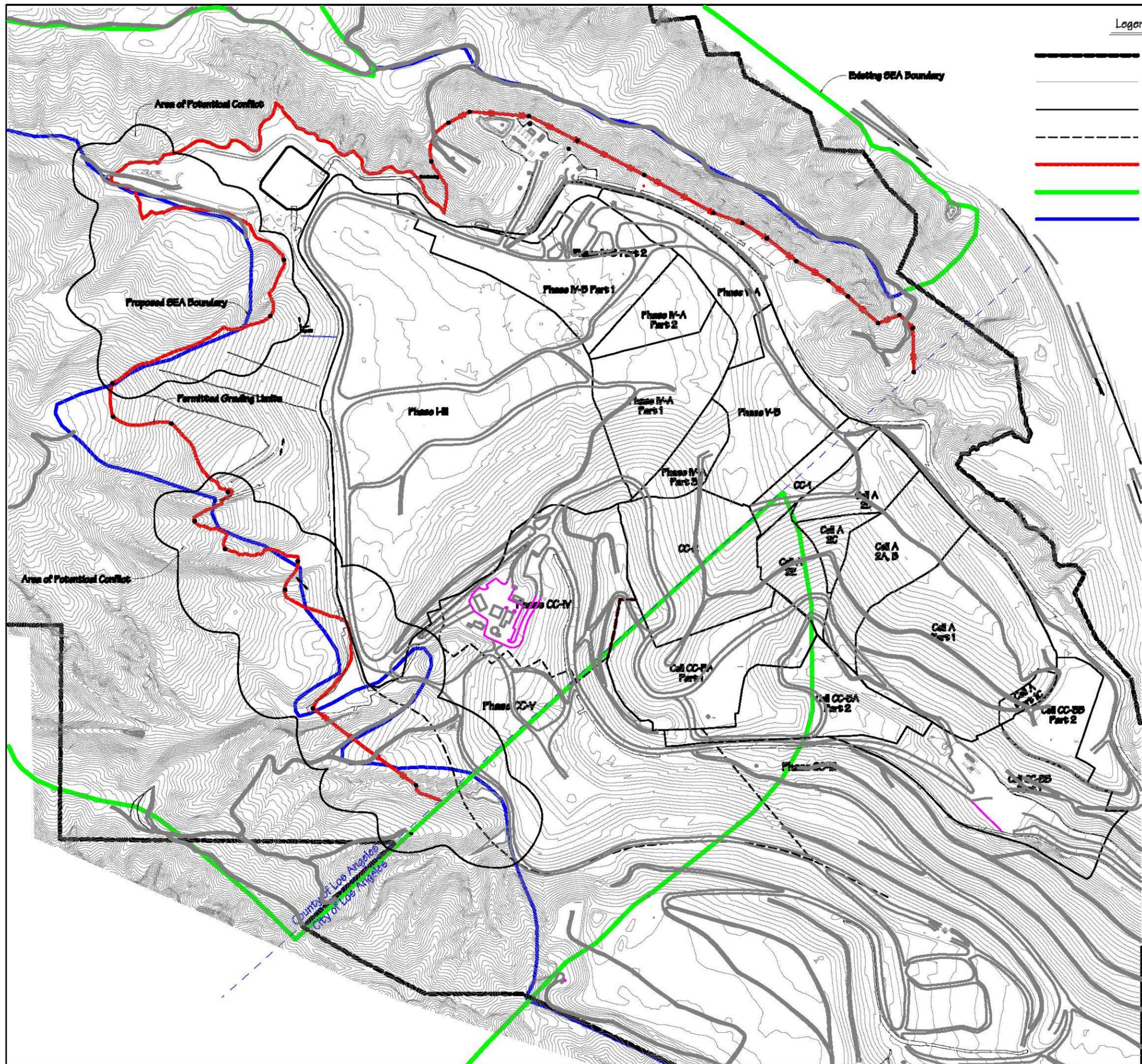


Rob Sherman  
General Manager  
Sunshine Canyon Landfill

Cc: Mr. Tom Bruen, Esq.  
Mr. Michael Stewart, Republic Services  
Mr. Harold Barber, Republic Services  
Mr. Ron Krall, Republic Services

Attachments

Sunshine Canyon Landfill  
14747 San Fernando Road, Sylmar, CA 91342  
Phone 818-362-2124 Fax: 818-362-5484



- Legend:**
- Property Boundary
  - Existing Topography As of 3/12/14
  - Existing Liners
  - Future Phases CC-III, CC-IV and CC-V
  - Approved Grading Limits
  - Existing SEA Boundary
  - Proposed SEA Boundary

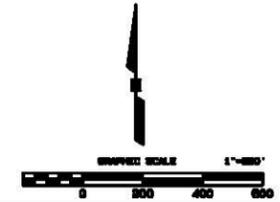
Area of Potential Conflict

Proposed SEA Boundary

Permitted Grading Limits

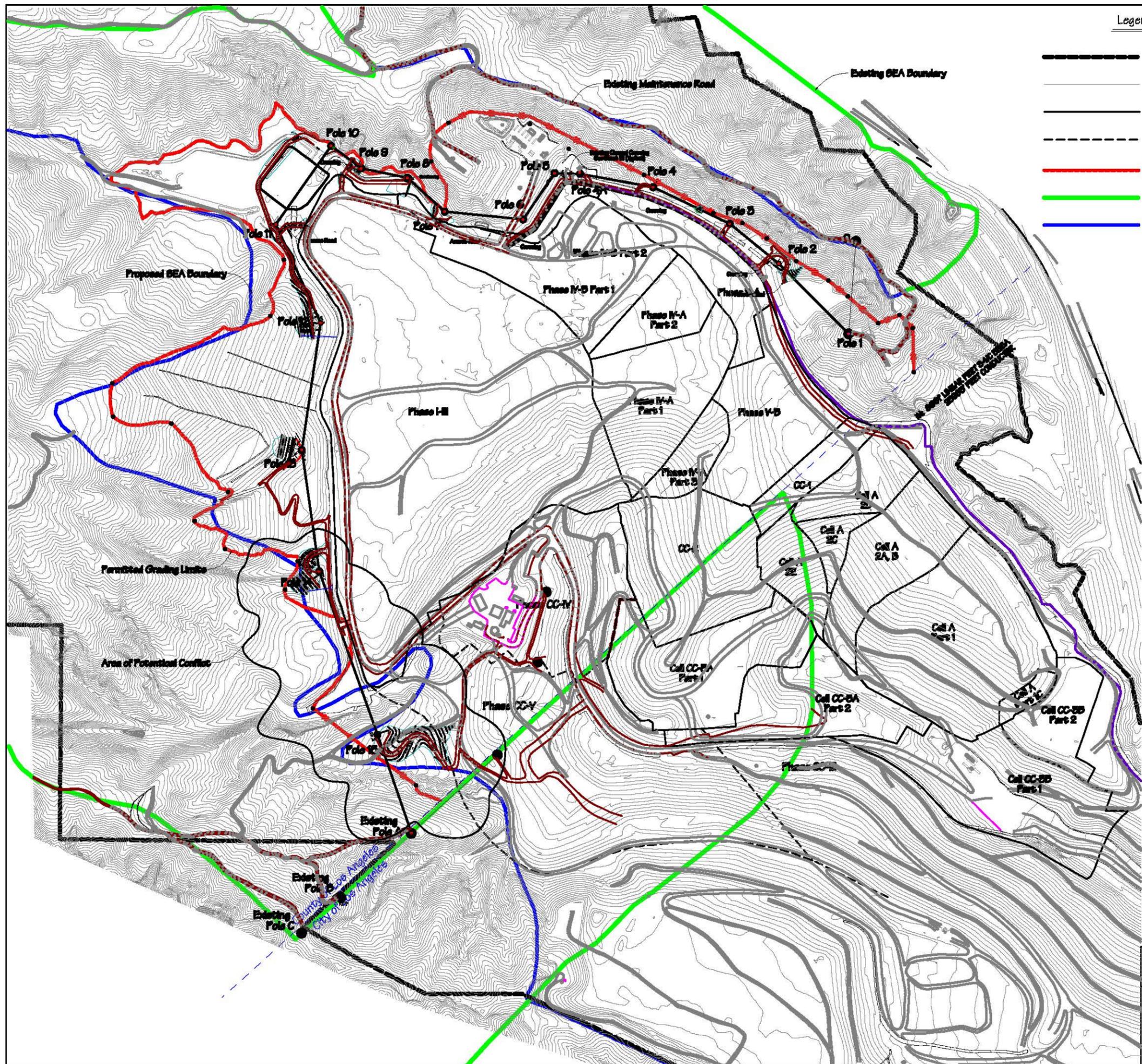
Area of Potential Conflict

County of Los Angeles  
City of Los Angeles

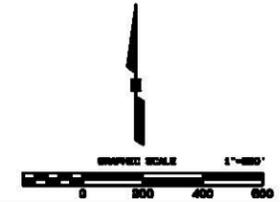


<b>A-MEHR, INC.</b>		ILLR/SHL
22246 Hill Creek Drive, Laguna Hills California 92653 (949) 206-0977		IllrPos5614
Sunshine Canyon County Extension Landfill		DROWN
Approved Grading Limits		RM
Topography Grades as of 3/12/14		CHECKED
		AM
		DATE
		5/6/14
		FIGURE
		1

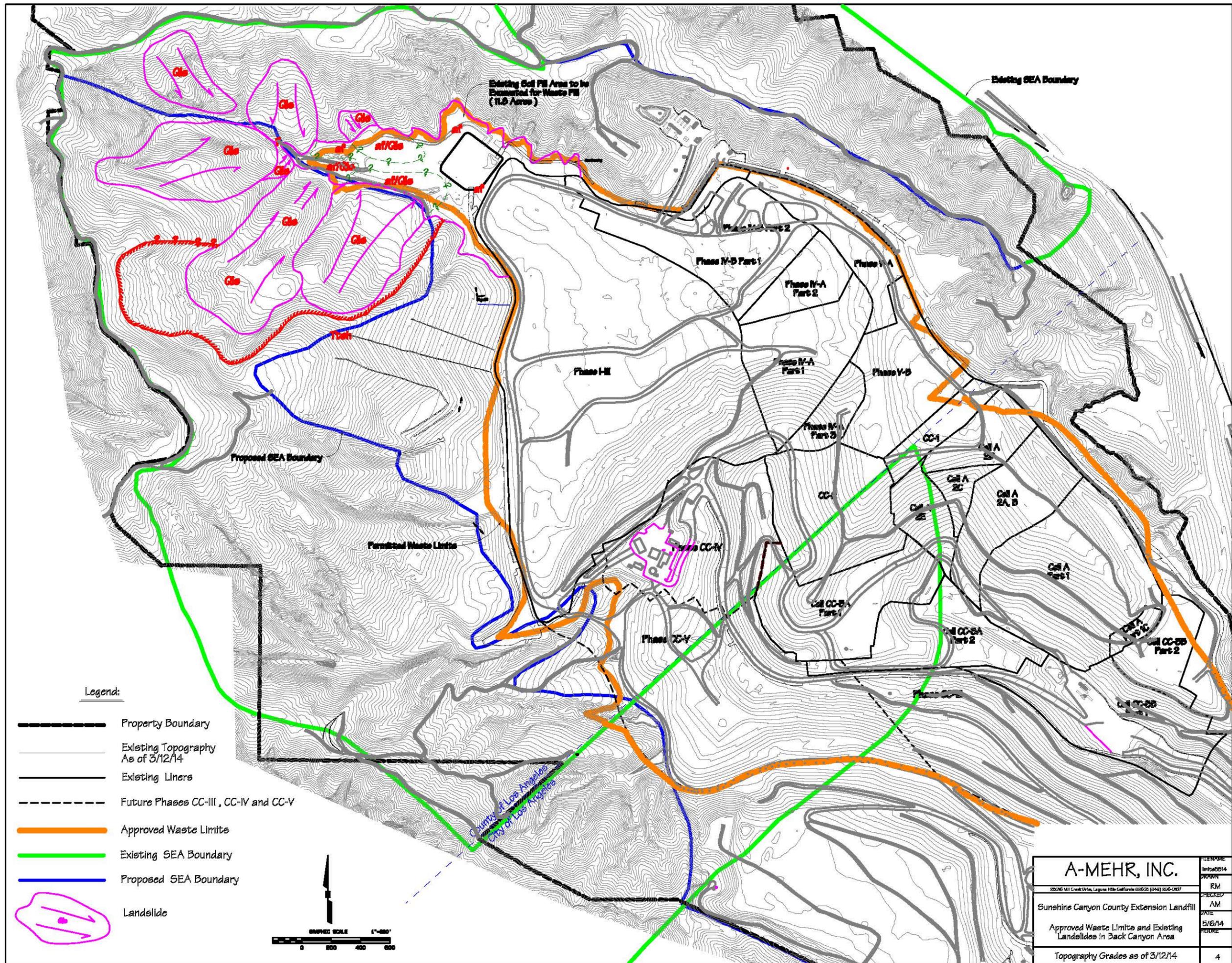




- Legend:**
- Property Boundary
  - Existing Topography As of 3/12/14
  - Existing Liners
  - Future Phases CC-III, CC-IV and CC-V
  - Approved Grading Limits
  - Existing SEA Boundary
  - Proposed SEA Boundary

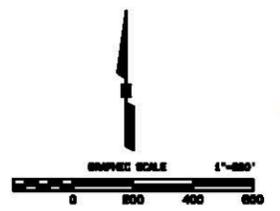


<b>A-MEHR, INC.</b>		ILLR/SHL
22260 Hill Creek Drive, Laguna Hills California 92653 (949) 206-0877		IllPos0514
Sunshine Canyon County Extension Landfill		DROWN
Approved Edison Transmission Lines and Access Roads		RM
Topography Grades as of 3/12/14		CHECKED
		AM
		DATE
		5/6/14
		FIGURE
		3



**Legend:**

-  Property Boundary
-  Existing Topography As of 3/12/14
-  Existing Liners
-  Future Phases CC-III, CC-IV and CC-V
-  Approved Waste Limits
-  Existing SEA Boundary
-  Proposed SEA Boundary
-  Landslide



<b>A-MEHR, INC.</b>		ILLUMINATE
22260 Hill Creek Drive, Laguna Hills California 92653 (949) 206-0977		IlmPos0514
Sunshine Canyon County Extension Landfill		DRAWN
Approved Waste Limits and Existing Landslides in Back Canyon Area		RM
Topography Grades as of 3/12/14		CHECKED
		AM
		DATE
		5/6/14
		FIGURE
		4

**38: Justin Lane**

*Justin G. Lane*  
42220 N. 10<sup>th</sup> St. West, Suite 101  
Lancaster, Calif. 93534  
(661)942-0435

---

June 17, 2014

Emma Howard, SEA Regional Planner  
Communities Studies North Section  
L.A. County Department of Regional Planning  
320 Temple Street, Floor 13  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
ehoward@planning.lacounty.gov

RE: SEA Current and Proposed Areas Effecting Assessor Parcel Numbers:

3036-008-042	3080-022-004	3080-023-001
3036-008-051	3080-022-005	3080-023-010
3036-008-039		

And surrounding areas

Dear Ms. Howard:

Upon review of the current and newly proposed SEA areas, we notice that there are areas being proposed that are of concern for the future of Los Angeles County.

The above referenced areas have potential use for quarry development and operations. Quarry operations in this area are important for future development in Los Angeles County. Having quarry operations in the local vicinity keeps building and development costs down while increasing economic growth for the county by keeping companies and businesses local.

We are making a formal request for these properties and surrounding areas that would be of potential quarry use to be removed from consideration for the new proposed SEA area.

We would appreciate a response and any further information on how we can protest the new proposed areas.

Sincerely,

  
Justin G. Lane

CC: Supervisor Michael Antonovich