



NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

Via Email (ruiuz@planning.lacounty.gov, ehoward@planning.lacounty.gov)

August 5, 2014

Esther L. Valadez, Chair
Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission
300 West Temple St., 13th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Item 6d, August 6, 2014: Significant Ecological Areas Program – SUPPORT

Dear Chairperson Valadez and Commission Members:

On behalf of the Natural Resources Defense Council and its tens of thousands of members and activists who live and work in Los Angeles County and the surrounding areas, we urge the Commission to protect the County's rich biodiversity and wildlife habitat and linkages through expanded Significant Ecological Area (SEA) boundaries.

We strongly support the concept of SEAs. Because Los Angeles County lacks a comprehensive system of habitat preserves, SEAs literally are the last remaining refuges for wildlife, rare and unique biological resources, relatively undisturbed habitat types, and wildlife linkages. The expanded SEAs have been developed through a sound scientific process, and are needed to balance the major growth called for in the new General Plan. Besides expansion, in order to make SEAs stronger, connectivity should be added as a defining factor.

We also need a revised SEA Ordinance that is both efficient for applicants and effective for resource protection. We urge the Commission to look to innovative implementation mechanisms such as density transfers and comprehensive agreements with landowners.¹

¹ NRDC is signatory to the 2008 Tejon Ranch Conservation and Land Use Agreement, where the landowner has committed to dedicate lands of high resource value for permanent conservation both within SEAs and adjacent to SEAs but not in them solely by virtue of jurisdictional boundaries. Such circumstances should be considered relevant when assessing whether SEA objectives are met.

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Expanded SEAs are our best hope for ensuring the long-term protection of wildlife and habitat in Los Angeles County. Thank you for considering our comments.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Damon K. Nagami". The signature is written in a cursive style with a clear, legible font.

Damon Nagami

Senior Attorney

Director, Southern California Ecosystems Project