

## Significant Ecological Areas Ordinance Amendment

### Understanding the Public Review Draft (March 2018)

Since the adoption of the Significant Ecological Areas (SEA) ordinance in 1982, there has never been a comprehensive update to these regulations. With the 2015 adoption of the expanded boundaries, more understanding of the importance of our SEAs and the new General Plan 2035, the ordinance itself needed to be re-examined and updated.

The **SEA ordinance** is a set of zoning regulations that subjects land use projects to additional scrutiny by County planners, biologists, and decision-makers to ensure that development in the SEAs will be compatible with the County’s biodiversity and will not impair the ability of County ecosystems to provide services such as wildlife habitat, water quality maintenance, and erosion control.

Since 2014, the Department of Regional Planning has been working on a series of proposals for revised ordinance language. This fact sheet summarizes the most recent recommended changes to the ordinance based on new understanding of biological resource management, the need to improve case processing, and public comments.

#### **New sections added to Public Review Draft (March 2018)**

The following new sections are proposed to be added to the new ordinance:

- Definitions
- SEA Counseling
- SEA Review
- SEA Development Standards
- Open Space
- Review Procedures for County Projects
- Review Procedures for Habitat Restoration Projects
- Significant Ecological Areas Technical Advisory Committee (SEATAC)

#### **Comparing Draft 9 (July 2017) to Public Review Draft (March 2018)**

This table compares the previous draft of the SEA ordinance amendment Draft 9 (July 2017) with the current Public Review Draft (March 2018).

<b>Previous Draft Ordinance – Draft 9 (July 2017)</b>	<b>Proposed Ordinance – Public Review Draft (March 2018)</b>
<b>Code section numbering</b>	Numbering changed to reflect upcoming Technical Update of the Zoning Code (“TU”) numbering system.
<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Purpose</b> – no changes
<b>Definitions</b>	<b>Definitions</b> – minimal updates. Added more definitions for clarity.
<b>Applicability</b>	<b>Applicability</b> – added additional language that states that SEAs in the Santa Monica North Area and Santa Catalina Island are not subject to this version of the SEA ordinance.  Exemptions transferred to new section - <b>Exemptions</b> . Added more exemptions to clarify what types of development will not be subject to the SEA ordinance.
<b>Development Standards</b>	<b>Development Standards</b> – substantive updates. Developed SEA Resource Categories and added new vegetation removal thresholds and preservation ratios.

	<p>Organized development standards into 4 subsections – SEA Resource Categories, Water Resources, Area-wide Development Standards, Land Use Specific Development Standards.</p> <p>Habitat Restoration transferred to new section – <b>Review Procedures for Habitat Restoration Projects.</b></p>
<b>When SEA Review is Required</b>	<p>Substantive updates were made. Removed Minor CUP option. Created three sections - <b>SEA Counseling, SEA Review, and SEA Conditional Use Permit.</b></p> <p><b>SEA Counseling (SEA-Stop)</b> is required prior to submittal of permit application. Inventory of SEA resources (Through a required “Biological Constraints Map”) and Conceptual Project Design is required at the SEA-Stop to help guide siting of development that avoids or minimizes impact to SEA Resources.</p> <p><b>SEA Review</b> is the ministerial review process for development that meets all development standards and open space requirements. SEA Review is a biological review accompanying the appropriate land use permit.</p> <p><b>SEA Conditional Use Permit</b> is the discretionary review process for development unable to meet development standards and/or open space requirements.</p>
<b>Application Requirements</b>	<b>Application Requirements and Fees</b> – revised and updated
<b>Findings and Decision</b>	<b>Findings</b> – minimal updates to streamline and use current ordinance language.
<b>Conditions of Approval</b>	Subsection disaggregated – development standards and open space became their own sections (see above “New sections added”).
<b>Review Procedures</b>	<p><b>SEA Review, SEA Conditional Use Permit (CUP)</b> – In the Public Review Draft (March 2018), development in SEAs can undergo one of two review processes – the ministerial SEA Review or the discretionary SEA CUP. A project’s ability to meet development standards and/or open space requirements will determine which review process will be required.</p> <p>Review processes for County projects and habitat restoration projects have been added as new sections.</p>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>SEA Habitat Types, Value, and Preservation Ratios</b> – These tables were removed from the ordinance and added to the Implementation Guide as information for implementation needs.