

CHAPTER 9. SEA PROGRAM MONITORING

The Conservation and Natural Resources Element of the General Plan identifies strategies for the preservation of natural resources. Specifically, *C/NR-1 SEA Preservation Program*³¹ includes strategies such as establishing a Transfer of Development Rights Program, Habitat Conservation Plan, Mitigation Land Banking Program/Open Space Master Plan, or Open Space Land Acquisition Strategy. To maintain and sustain the SEAs, and to evaluate the applicability of these programs, monitoring disturbance to and protection of SEA Resources is needed. Monitoring will also allow the County to better work with partner organizations interested in permanently conserving the SEAs.

The effects of climate change will also be clearer through the County's monitoring of SEAs. Some of these concerns include the need to preserve ecosystems that can continue to support the biodiversity of the County despite future changes in temperature and precipitation and increased hazards from wildland fires. SEAs contain evolving biological resources that occur in places at risk from development pressures and climate change. To ensure the continued effectiveness of the SEA Program, the following monitoring practices shall be implemented:

- 1) Tracking approved development within SEAs;
- 2) Tracking habitat restoration within SEAs;
- 3) Mapping habitat information collected through the permitting process; and
- 4) Mapping natural open space protection resulting from approval of projects.

TRACKING APPROVED DEVELOPMENT

As part of case processing, information from applicants and public agencies proposing to develop in SEAs will be collected, including information on land use and impacts to SEA Resources. Such information will be compiled into a Countywide SEA database, which will be used for tabulating types and amounts of approved development within each SEA.

TRACKING HABITAT RESTORATION

Projects proposing habitat restoration either as mitigation or as an independent project will be tracked utilizing information collected during case processing or Habitat Restoration Review. Information to be compiled includes the location, size, and type of restoration being carried out in each SEA.

MAPPING SEA RESOURCES

A Biological Constraints Map (BCM) is required before most development can occur within a SEA. As part of the application package, the applicant will be required to submit their BCM data to the Department in digital form³² to be integrated into the SEA Resource database. The data acquired in this manner will allow the Department to more accurately map habitat information within unincorporated County SEAs. In instances where further assessment of sensitive biological resources is needed, a more in-depth Biological

³¹ planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_final-general-plan-ch16.pdf

³² Map or site plan data displaying SEA Resources, preserved open space, and development footprints must be submitted in a GIS useable format such as .shp, .gdb, .kml/.kmz, .dwg, etc.

Constraints Analysis could be required. In such cases, submittal of final SEA Resource map data will be required as a condition of approval.

MAPPING PROTECTED OPEN SPACE

With the adoption of the SEA ordinance update, the County will embark on an effort to map protected open space in the unincorporated Los Angeles County. For this effort, any open space area that has legal protections through a permanent on-site deed restriction, conservation easement, conservation or mitigation bank, or dedication to a government entity or non-profit land conservation organization, as described in the Ordinance, will be considered “protected open space.” With this information, it will be possible to illustrate the extent to which the SEA Program is meeting the County’s overall goal to develop *permanent, sustainable preservation of genetically and physically diverse biological resources and ecological systems* (Los Angeles County General Plan Goal C/NR 3).

Starting with the California Protected Areas Database (CPAD), California Conservation Easements Database (CCED), and other open space geographic databases maintained by state and local organizations, the Department will establish a baseline of existing protected open space in the unincorporated County (including federal, state, and county owned open space and Conservation Easements monitored by land trusts). The resulting Open Space Database will include polygons of each recorded open space area with corresponding information such as date of adoption, type of protection, size, and ownership.

Protected open space will be monitored as follow:

1. The Department will integrate all newly dedicated open space associated with permits in SEAs into the Open Space Database. Data for new open space dedicated in this manner will also include project and permit numbers and will link to the public record(s) for the associated project.
2. The Department will identify resources to review previously approved projects in SEAs that included protection of open space as mitigation and incorporate those areas into the Open Space Database.
3. The Department will also track in-lieu fees and contributions to mitigation banks associated with SEA CUPs. In the case of in-lieu fees, the County Biologist will review and approve where the fees are used³³, and any resulting new protected open space will be included in the Open Space Database.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

1. GENERAL PLAN ANNUAL REPORT

The County is required to prepare a general plan annual progress report on the status of General Plan implementation. The annual report is prepared by the Department and presented to the Regional Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. The annual report is the County’s mechanism for comprehensively reporting on the following: 1) program implementation; 2) effectiveness of major policies; 3) updates to datasets; and 4) map maintenance.

³³ In-lieu fees should be designated for use within the same SEA as that in which the associated development is located.

For the SEAs, the General Plan report is given biennially on the status of the County's SEAs and is required to include:

- ❖ A summary of new development within SEAs approved by DRP;
- ❖ A public comment process for accepting suggestions on improving the SEA Program, and its components;
- ❖ The overall status of biological functions within each SEA, if known;
- ❖ Identification of any new techniques or methods of conservation planning which are, or could, be utilized to enhance the SEA Program;
- ❖ Assessment of the necessity for new SEA studies and any resulting scientific studies undertaken on SEAs;
- ❖ Recommendations for any modifications to the SEA Program, including General Plan goals and policies, SEA boundaries and the SEA Ordinance;
- ❖ Identification of lands within individual SEAs as priority habitats or areas for protection;
- ❖ A description of any ongoing partnerships with conservation agencies and other stakeholders;
- ❖ A current map of SEA lands that are protected in perpetuity through deed restrictions, Conservation Easements, etc.; and
- ❖ The Director's conclusion as to the overall successes and challenges of the SEA Program in implementing General Plan goals and policies.

2. SUSTAINABILITY PLAN INDICATOR

The County's Chief Sustainability Office is in the process of preparing the first sustainability plan for the entire County. One of the important indicators for sustainability identified for the Plan is the health of the County's SEAs. In addition to communicating the status of the SEA Program through the General Plan Annual Report, the County's Sustainability Plan will be another avenue for reporting on the health of the SEAs.

3. SEA WEBSITE

The Department will be updating the SEA webpage housed within the Department's website to digitally provide information as information is gathered and mapped.