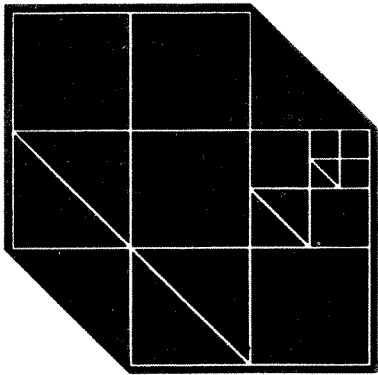


**COUNTY
OF
LOS
ANGELES
GENERAL
PLAN**



technical supplement

TECHNICAL SUPPLEMENT E
SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREAS/HABITAT MANAGEMENT AREAS
IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

This summary report identifies the most significant ecological areas in Los Angeles County, and contains selected portions of the full Significant Ecological Areas Report prepared in 1976 by England and Nelson, consultants to the County of Los Angeles.

A. Biotic Resources

Los Angeles County possesses within its approximately 4,000 square miles an extremely diverse topography. It contains coastline, flatlands, mountains and desert. Only San Diego County, among other counties in the United States, possesses such rich geographical diversity. Elevations within Los Angeles County range from sea level to over 10,000 feet. Likewise, the climate ranges from mild near the coast to severe in the high mountains and the desert. This tremendous variation in physical environments has produced a unique and diverse assemblage of biotic resources.

Biotic communities are composed of plant and animal species found in specific physical habitats. They are ecological units containing a diverse group of organisms that exist together in an orderly, predictable manner and have a close and complex set of interrelationships. These communities are commonly identified and discussed with reference to one or two dominant plant species and the nature of the vegetation.

B. Significant Ecological Areas

Over one hundred fifteen sites were nominated as significant ecological areas in Los Angeles County. Of these, sixty-two were selected by the consultants for final listing as proposed significant ecological areas.

During the final selection process, candidate areas within a geographical region were compared. For example, in the Santa Monica Mountain region, virtually every undisturbed canyon was recommended as a significant ecological area. Primary consideration was given to areas with unique, uncommon or scientifically interesting features. For this reason, Point Dume, Upper La Sierra Canyon, Malibu Canyon and Lagoon, Las Virgenes, Hepatic Gulch, and Cold Creek were chosen. Other areas were selected to provide good examples of the more common habitats and to ensure that the full range of the remaining biotic and geographic diversity in the region has been sampled. For these reasons, Zuma Canyon, Tuna Canyon, Temescal-Rustic-Sullivan Canyons, Palo Comado Canyon, and Encino Reservoir were selected. They were picked over other areas on the basis of such parameters as size, condition of habitat, the diversity of communities present, presence of water, and information available. Similar selection procedures were followed in other regions of the County.

A certain amount of natural habitat, already preserved in State and County parks, reserves and sanctuaries, has been included in significant ecological areas in Los Angeles County. However, this should not be interpreted to mean that the remainder of natural habitat in other parks is unimportant to the preservation of floral and faunal resources in the County.

Although the Angeles National Forest was not included in the study area, a limited amount of information on its resources was acquired during the course of the investigation. This data is also included in the full report. Significant ecological areas for Santa Catalina Island have been identified in a separate study prepared by the Center for Natural Areas.

C. Riparian Woodland Community

In addition to the sixty-two areas selected for inclusion, the riparian woodland community was identified as possessing significant biological resources. This community is composed of shrubs and trees that require a perennial water supply near or above the ground surface. The riparian community is extremely limited in distribution, and is extensively threatened with development. Characteristic plants include western sycamore, white alder, big leaf maple, Fremont cottonwood and willows. It is the best wildlife habitat found in the State. It can support wading birds, song birds, quail, deer, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians, a more diverse and often denser fauna than that found in any other habitat. It is the sole community for many of these organisms, while others use it for cover and forage in surrounding areas.

In 1963 less than 1.4% of the County supported riparian woodland. Losses from upstream reservoir construction, flood control, and water conservation programs are estimated to have reduced this to 1.2% by 1980, a greater proportionate reduction than for any other habitat type. The majority of the areas that remain today are in the National Forest and in the Santa Monica Mountains. Small examples can be found in the remainder of the south County, and most of these have been designated as significant ecological areas if surrounded by good examples of native vegetation.

Riparian woodland habitat, occurring outside the National Forest and not placed in a significant ecological area, should still be regarded as important wildlife habitat and preserved.

D. Habitat Management Areas

Eight "Habitat Management Areas" were identified by consultants for the North Los Angeles County planning program. Five of these areas have been added to the Joshua Tree Woodland Habitat (SEA #60); one area has been combined with Little Rock Wash (SEA #49); and the following two areas have been added to the SEA list:

1. Lyon Canyon (SEA #63) near Newhall; and,
2. Valley Oaks Savannah, Newhall (SEA #64).

E. Methodology

The following criteria were used to select and classify significant ecological areas in Los Angeles County. The criteria are presented as classes in order of increasing availability of the resource. Each criteria is accompanied by a statement of its intent and the rationale behind it.

CLASS 1 -- The habitat of rare, endangered, and threatened plant and animal species.

These areas are important for the maintenance of plant and animal species that are recognized as being either extremely low in numbers or having a very limited amount of habitat available. The terms "rare", "endangered" and "threatened" have precise meanings defined in both State and federal law.

State of California definitions:

Rare - An animal of a species or subspecies of birds, mammals, fish, amphibia, or reptiles that, although not presently threatened with extinction, is in such small numbers throughout its range that it may be endangered if its environment worsens.

Endangered - An animal of a species or subspecies of birds, mammals, fish, amphibia, or reptiles; the prospects of which are in immediate jeopardy from one or more causes, including loss of habitat, change in habitat, over-exploitation, predation, competition or disease.

United States Government definitions:

Threatened - Any species which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

Endangered - Any species which is in danger of extinction throughout all, or a significant portion, of its range other than a species of the Class Insecta determined by the Secretary of the Interior to constitute a pest whose protection under the provisions would present an overwhelming and overriding risk to man.

Severe penalties can be imposed for destroying individual organisms or their habitat.

The California Department of Fish and Game and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service publish official lists of rare, endangered and threatened species. Both agencies recognize mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians, but only the Fish and Wildlife Service is empowered to recognize insects and plants.

The literature on rare, endangered and threatened species is extensive, and increasing all the time. This information was used to identify existing habitats in Los Angeles County.

CLASS 2 -- Biotic communities, vegetative associations and habitat of plant and animal species that

are either one of a kind, or are restricted in distribution on a regional basis.

The purpose of this criterion is to identify biotic resources that are uncommon on a regional basis, where the region considered extends beyond the boundaries of Los Angeles County. The geographical region considered could be as small as the Southern California coastal plains, the transverse mountain ranges, the Mojave Desert, the Southern California coastline, etc; or it could be as large as Southern California, the Pacific coast, all of California, the western United States, or even larger. Resources that are limited in distribution in the region being considered, but are common elsewhere, are also included under this category.

CLASS 3 -- Biotic communities, vegetative associations and habitat of plant and animal species that are either one of a kind, or are restricted in distribution in Los Angeles County.

The purpose of this criterion is to identify biotic resources that are uncommon within the political boundaries of Los Angeles County, regardless of their availability elsewhere. The County has a high diversity of biological components. It and San Diego County are the only counties in the United States that possess coastal, mountain and desert communities within their boundaries. It is a rich heritage that few local governments have an opportunity to preserve.

Many of the communities that were once common in Los Angeles County have been severely reduced due to urban and agricultural development. This is especially true south of the San Gabriel

Mountains and among the agricultural fields of the north County. Other biotic features have never been common.

CLASS 4 -- Habitat that, at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as a concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds, and is limited in availability.

Certain areas tend to concentrate a species or group of species at various points in their life cycles. These areas possess specialized characteristics that are essential to the maintenance of wildlife. This criterion is intended to identify those areas that are limited in distribution, and not the specialized habitat of a common species or group of species.

CLASS 5 -- Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographic limitations, or they represent an unusual variation in a population or community.

Often scientists learn the most about a biological phenomenon by studying it at an extreme in its distribution. This reveals what the extremes are under which it can survive. In addition, isolated populations and communities are often relics of what was present in an area at some previous time, and often show genetic traits not found elsewhere in the species. These characteristics may be useful in determining taxonomic relationships.

CLASS 6 -- Areas important as game species habitat or as fisheries.

This criterion was designed to identify areas that are critical to the maintenance of game and fish populations in Los Angeles County.

CLASS 7 -- Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the natural biotic communities in Los Angeles County.

The intent of this criterion was to identify examples of the more common biotic resources in Los Angeles County. As often as possible, the areas selected:

1. Were completely or nearly undisturbed;
2. Had a diversity of habitats;
3. Were large enough to support a representative sample of the native fauna; and
4. Were more or less isolated from outside impacts, such as a self-contained watershed or an isolated mountain peak.

Examples of each vegetation type were selected from the various geographical regions in the County in order to preserve geographic diversity.

CLASS 8 -- Special areas.

Certain areas that are worthy of inclusion, but that do not fit any of the above criteria, are identified by this criterion. Each area has its own special characteristics that are discussed on the individual area description sheets.

Chart Note

The following chart identifies the criteria that each significant ecological area meets in order to be placed in a particular class.

The classes are presented in order of increasing availability of the resource. Thus, the "principal priority class" symbol identifies the rarest resource criterion that the particular SEA meets, while the "second priority class" symbol identifies all additional classes that the SEA falls into.

SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREAS/HABITAT MANAGEMENT IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

X = Principal priority class
O = Second priority class

CLASS 1: The habitat of rare, endangered and threatened plant and/or animal species.

CLASS 2: Biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are either one of a kind, or are restricted in distribution on a regional basis.

CLASS 3: Biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant and animal species that are either one of a kind, or are restricted in distribution in Los Angeles County.

CLASS 4: Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as a concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds, and is limited in availability.

CLASS 5: Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical geographical limitations, or they represent an unusual variation in a population.

CLASS 6: Areas important as game species habitat or as fisheries.

CLASS 7: Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the natural biotic communities in Los Angeles County.

CLASS 8: Special areas.

In alphabetical order (numbers in parentheses assigned for identification).

Kentucky Springs	(61)	X	O		O			O	
Las Virgenes	(6)				X			O	
Little Rock Wash	(49)			X	O			O	
Lovejoy Butte	(53)							X	
Lyon Canyon	(63)							X	
Madrona Marsh	(36)		X	O	O			O	
Malibu Canyon and Lagoon	(5)	X	O	O	O	O	O	O	
Malibu Coastline	(1)	X	O	O	O	O	O	O	
Malibu Creek State Park Buffer Area	(8)								X
Palo Comado Canyon	(12)		X					O	
Palos Verdes Peninsula Coastline	(34)	X	O	O	O	O	O	O	
Piute Butte	(54)							X	
Point Dume	(2)		X	O	O			O	
Portal Ridge/Liebre Mountain	(58)				X			O	
Portuguese Bend Landslide	(27)		X	O	O			O	
Powder Canyon/Puente Hills	(17)							X	
Rio Hondo College Wildlife Sanctuary	(43)								X
Ritter Ridge	(56)				X			O	
Rolling Hills Canyons	(31)		X	O	O			O	

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CLASS 4: Habitats that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as a concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds, and is limited in availability.
CLASS 5: Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographical limitations, or they represent an unusual variation in a population.
CLASS 6: Areas important as game species habitat or as fisheries.
CLASS 7: Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the natural biotic communities in Los Angeles County.
CLASS 8: Special areas.

In alphabetical order (numbers in parentheses assigned for identification).

Area Name	Number	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Class 5	Class 6	Class 7	Class 8
Rosamond Lake	(50)		X		O			O	
Saddleback Butte State Park	(51)							X	O
San Antonio Canyon Mouth	(26)				X			O	
San Dimas Canyon	(25)				X		O	O	
San Francisquito Canyon	(19)	X	O	O	O	O	O	O	
Santa Clara River	(23)	X	O	O	O	O	O	O	
Sante Fe Dam Floodplain	(22)				X			O	
Santa Susana Mountains	(20)							X	
Santa Susana Pass	(21)	X	O	O	O	O	O	O	
Simi Hills	(14)							X	
Sycamore and Turnbull Canyons	(44)							X	
Tehachapi Foothills	(59)						X	O	
Temescal - Rustic - Sullivan Canyons	(11)							X	
Terminal Island	(33)	X	O	O	O	O	O	O	
Tonner Canyon/Chino Hills	(15)							X	
Tujunga Valley/Hansen Dam	(24)	X			O			O	
Tuna Canyon	(10)				X	O		O	

LOVEJOY BUTTE

SEA NO. 53

In general, desert buttes possess increased biotic diversity over surrounding areas and ecological importance as vital habitat to many desert-dwelling species. In addition, they serve as critical refuges for many biological resources that are now disappearing in Los Angeles County due to increased urban and agricultural development.

Lovejoy Butte contains Joshua tree woodland and creosote bush scrub vegetation. On buttes, these communities often have a more diverse flora and fauna than the desert floor. This is the result of an increase in the number of niches available. Wind-blown sand from the desert floor settles in the buttes, creating a mixture of both rocky and sandy habitats. This permits rock- as well as sand-dwelling species to occur in a very localized area.

Desert buttes are critical habitat to many birds of prey and large mammals. These wide-ranging species forage in the surrounding desert areas, but use the buttes as essential roosting, nesting, denning and refuge areas.

Most buttes in the County are potential habitat for the Mojave ground squirrel. This rare species is officially recognized by the California Department of Fish and Game. Once fairly common in localized areas, increased urban and agricultural development have caused its decline. This species' status at Lovejoy Butte should be determined. If it is present, the area should be reclassified into Class 1.

Like the Mojave ground squirrel, many biological resources are declining in the County's desert lands. Most of these resources are now common only in buttes and immediately adjacent areas. Preservation of these lands is essential for the maintenance of biotic diversity in the County.

LYON CANYON

SEA NO. 63

The site consists of a relatively narrow canyon housing both an oak woodland along with an extensive chaparral community. The oak woodland is found in the southerly portion of the area and contains both the coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and the valley oak (*Quercus lobata*). Further north up the canyon is found the chaparral community consisting of sugarbush, ceanothus, black sage, mule fat and chemise - which is the dominant shrub.

MADRONA MARSH

SEA NO. 36

Madrona Marsh is a remnant of the wetlands that once covered the South Bay area. The freshwater plants and animals found here are completely surrounded by residential and industrial development. This type of habitat has been filled, drained and lost to development throughout most of Los Angeles County. In some areas, man-made lakes and ponds have created small freshwater marshes along their edges, but this is minimal when compared to the large expanses of fresh water marsh that were once found in the Los Angeles Basin.

Freshwater marsh habitat supports a great diversity of wildlife. Most of the bird species found here are dependent in some way on the surface moisture and vegetation, and would not be able to survive without it. It is also a habitat that supports several species of amphibians. Frogs and toads can be found here that are becoming extremely difficult to find throughout Southern California. The marsh is also an important area for migratory birds. Because Madrona Marsh and Harbor Lake Regional Park are the only habitat of this type in Southern Los Angeles County, they serve as miniature wildlife refuges. Waterfowl, shorebirds, marsh birds, and others can all be found on the marsh in numbers during the spring and fall migration.