

TAKE EXTRA CARE

Take note of additional protections for two of LA County's most iconic trees.

JOSHUA TREES

The Western Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*) is an ecologically important species in LA County's desert ecosystem. Joshua trees are protected by the SEA ordinance and State of California. Even if a project is exempt from SEA review, any removal or encroachment of Joshua trees will require permits and fees/mitigation from the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). Always check with CDFW before starting any vegetation removal, since even the removal of a dead Joshua tree or trimming may require a permit from CDFW.



OAK TREES

Oak trees (*Quercus* spp.) are keystone species in the LA County landscape, providing habitat for 5,000 insects, 80 species of reptiles and amphibians, 100 species of birds, and over 60 mammals! Oak trees are protected by the SEA ordinance and countywide Oak Tree Ordinance. Even if a project is exempt from SEA review, the Oak Tree Ordinance still applies to any removal or encroachment of oak trees. Always check with LA County Planning before removing or trimming any oak trees.



**Guide for Property Owners
and Renters**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

info@planning.lacounty.gov
(213) 974-6411
planning.lacounty.gov/sea

Talk to a Planner

Field offices: planning.lacounty.gov/locations

Virtual: planning.lacounty.gov/connect-with-a-planner/
(Select "Zoning and Planning Discussion")

CA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife

AskR5@wildlife.ca.gov
(858) 467-4201

SIGNIFICANT ECOLOGICAL AREAS





Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs) are officially designated areas of Los Angeles County where native plants and animals exist and if lost, can never be replaced. For this reason, the SEA Ordinance regulates how much, what type, and where vegetation can be removed. These regulations are important to ensure natural habitats are kept healthy to sustain interconnected ecosystem plants, animals, and humans rely on. Our goal is to help property owners pre-plan their vegetation removal and conceptual project design to avoid impacts to the natural habitat as much as possible and help receive a lower cost permit. Below are the steps for the pre-application counseling required for properties within SEAs:

1. Preparing for SEA Counseling

A SEA Counseling meeting is required for all projects proposing development or vegetation removal within SEAs. The benefits of pre-application counseling is the time and cost savings. Prospective applicants will need to prepare the following to start the process:

- SEA Counseling application
- Biological Constraints Map
- Conceptual Project Design

2. SEA Counseling Meeting

Prospective applicants will meet with the Planner and Staff Biologist to review the BCM and Conceptual Project Design, and provide recommendations to help meet the goals of the SEA Ordinance and streamline the permitting process. The types of SEA permits available are:

- Ministerial SEA Review
- Protected Tree Permit
- SEA Conditional Use Permit

3. Applying for Land Use Permit

Prospective applicants can start to prepare their land use permit application based on the recommendations from the SEA Counseling meeting. Once the land use permit application is submitted, the planner and biologist will confirm that the project description and site plan are consistent with the SEA Counseling recommendations. Additional biological review will be conducted through the SEA Technical Advisory Committee if a SEA Conditional Use Permit is required.

The **SEA Ordinance Implementation Guide** provides more information on the SEA review processes, exemptions, and how to prepare a Biological Constraints Map. Visit planning.lacounty.gov/sea to download the Implementation Guide.



CHECK BEFORE CLEARING



Any kind of development or vegetation removal without approval within SEAs is a violation of the LA County Zoning Code. Doing so may lead to costly permit fees, longer permit process, an expensive restoration, fees, misdemeanor criminal charges, and/or civil action.

If you think someone is committing land use violations in an SEA and you wish to report it, contact us at:

zoningenforcement@planning.lacounty.gov
(213) 974-6453 or (213) 974-6483

A Planner will be assigned to investigate your complaint.

CHECK THE SEA MAP

Check to see if your property is within a SEA. Use our interactive GIS application by visiting our website or contact a Planner to confirm your designation before clearing any vegetation.

WHAT COUNTS AS CLEARING IN A SEA

- Grading
- Removing brush and weeds beyond your approved fuel modification zone
- Cutting down trees
- Dumping truckloads of soil, debris, and unfiltered mulch
- Planting new vegetation

Remember: What may look like weeds to you may be important plant species.