

LA COUNTY
PLANNING

Conservation & Natural Resources Element Update

May 14, 2026



Conservation & Natural Resources (CNR) Element Update

Purpose of Today's Meeting

- Provide an overview of the proposed draft updates to the Conservation and Natural Resources Element, Parks & Recreation Element, Significant Ecological Areas (SEA) Ordinance, and Hillside Management Areas (HMA) Ordinance.
- Explain why the County is updating these elements, including legislative requirements.
- Highlight policy updates and updates to the SEA and HMA Ordinances.
- Outline next steps.

Project Scope

CNR Element Update

The Conservation and Natural Resource Element of the Los Angeles County 2035 General Plan is being updated to comply with State legislation, specifically SB 1425 and AB 1889.

Related Updates:

- Parks & Recreation Element
- Significant Ecological Areas (SEA) Ordinance
- Hillside Management Areas (HMA) Ordinance

SB 1425

Requires cities and counties to update the General Plan Open Space Element to address:

- Access to open space for all residents in a manner that considers social, economic, and racial equity, correlated with the environmental justice policies in the general plan, as applicable.
- Climate resilience and other co-benefits of open space, correlated with the Safety Element.
- Rewilding opportunities, correlated with the Land Use Element.

AB 1889

Requires cities and counties to update applicable General Plan Elements to:

- Consider the effect of development on wildlife movement and habitat connectivity.
- Identify and analyze:
 - Connectivity areas, permeability, and natural landscape areas.
 - Existing or planned wildlife passage features.
- Evaluate and address:
 - Impacts and barriers to wildlife movement and habitat connectivity.

CNR Element

The **CNR Element** is part of the Los Angeles County General Plan. It guides how the County protects, manages, and connects natural resources while planning for future growth.

Purpose:

- Sets Countywide policy direction
- Guides future planning decisions
- Supports biodiversity and connectivity
- Balances environmental protection with development

Topics:

- Open Space Resources
- Biological Resources
- Local Water Resources
- Agricultural Resources
- Mineral and Energy Resources
- Scenic Resources
- Historic, Cultural, and Paleontological Resources

General Plan vs Zoning Code - What is the Difference?

General Plan

- Long-term vision
- Countywide Policy Framework
- Guides land use decisions

Zoning Code

- General Plan Implementation
- Regulatory Framework
- Development Regulations
- Enforceable Requirements

How do they work together?

General Plan

(CNR Element
and
Park & Rec
Element)



Zoning Code

(SEA Ordinance
and
HMA Ordinance)



Plan Review & Enforcement

CNR and Parks & Recreation Elements

Legislation	CNR Element	Parks & Recreation Element
SB 1425	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthens policies for climate resilience, conservation, and rewilding.• Expands integration of environmental justice and equitable access to open space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advances equitable park access and distribution.• Positions parks as multi-benefit infrastructure.
AB 1889	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifies and analyzes wildlife corridors, connectivity areas, and barriers.• Establishes policies to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts to habitat connectivity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports connected open space networks.• Strengthens linkages between parks, habitat areas, and regional ecological systems.

Overview of Updates

CNR Element: Open Space Resources

What changed:

- Added discussion of climate resilience and the co-benefits of open space, including cooling, floodplain functions, habitat, and wildfire buffers.
- Expanded discussion of PNA and PNA+ as planning tools for conservation, restoration, and equitable access.
- Strengthen policies on habitat connectivity, open space acquisition, and ecological resilience

Example:

Policy C/NR 1.9: Encourage the design and enhancement of open spaces and streetscapes that incorporate climate-adaptive strategies.

CNR Element: Biological Resources

What changed:

- Added stronger emphasis on regional habitat linkages, wildlife corridors, and interconnected ecological systems.
- Expanded discussion of current issue areas regarding edge effect, invasive pests and diseases, habitat fragmentation, climate change, and biodiversity loss.
- Added and revised policies to better address these issue areas and support long-term resilience.

Example:

Policy C/NR 5.4: Identify opportunities to restore, enhance, and reclaim degraded lands to expand a network of open spaces or steppingstone habitats to better link SEAs, CRAs, connectivity movement pathways, and undeveloped areas in the region.

CNR Element: General Updates

Resource Sections:

- Local Water Resources
- Agricultural Resources
- Mineral and Energy Resources
- Scenic Resources
- Historical, Cultural & Paleontological Resources

What Changed:

- Aligned the sections with associated County plans.
- Integrated discussion on resilience, reliability, and access to the resources.
- Updated and revised policies to reinforce the protection of the resources.

Parks & Recreation Element

Parks & Recreation Element: Policy Updates

Most background updates are being processed separately through General Plan Tune-Up. This presentation focuses on the proposed policy changes.

Equity & Access to open space

Prioritize underserved communities and improve park access and distribution.

Parks as multi-benefit infrastructure

Recognize parks as delivering cooling, stormwater, habitat, and health benefits.

Climate Resilience

Use park planning to respond to heat, flooding, and other climate pressures.

Connectivity

Strengthen trail, greenway, and open space connections between communities and natural areas.

Key Takeaways

- The CNR Element update modernizes conservation policy by addressing climate resilience, biodiversity, connectivity, and environmental justice.
- The Parks & Recreation Element policy updates highlighting equity, access, and parks as multi-benefit infrastructure.
- Together, these updates improve how the County protects natural systems and expands the public benefits of opens space and recreation.
- The updates also align these elements with current County planning tools, legislation, and implementation priorities.

Significant Ecological Areas Program

Significant Ecological Areas

Officially designated areas within Los Angeles County that contain **irreplaceable biological resources** and ability to **support sustainable populations** of its component species. SEAs include undisturbed to lightly disturbed habitat along with linkages and corridors that promote species movement.

- Zoning overlay map that includes private properties
- Development within SEAs require additional biological review and mitigation
- Not preserves or protected areas

SEA Program

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graph TD; SEA[SEA Program] --- GP[General Plan C/NR Element]; SEA --- ZC[Zoning Code - SEA Ordinance];
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General Plan C/NR Element

Biological Resources policies

SEA Policy Map

Zoning Code - SEA Ordinance

Permitting processes

Development standards

Mitigation requirements

SEA Study & SEA Policy Map

Background

1976 - 1st SEA Study

1980 – SEA boundaries adopted as part of Conservation and Open Space Element

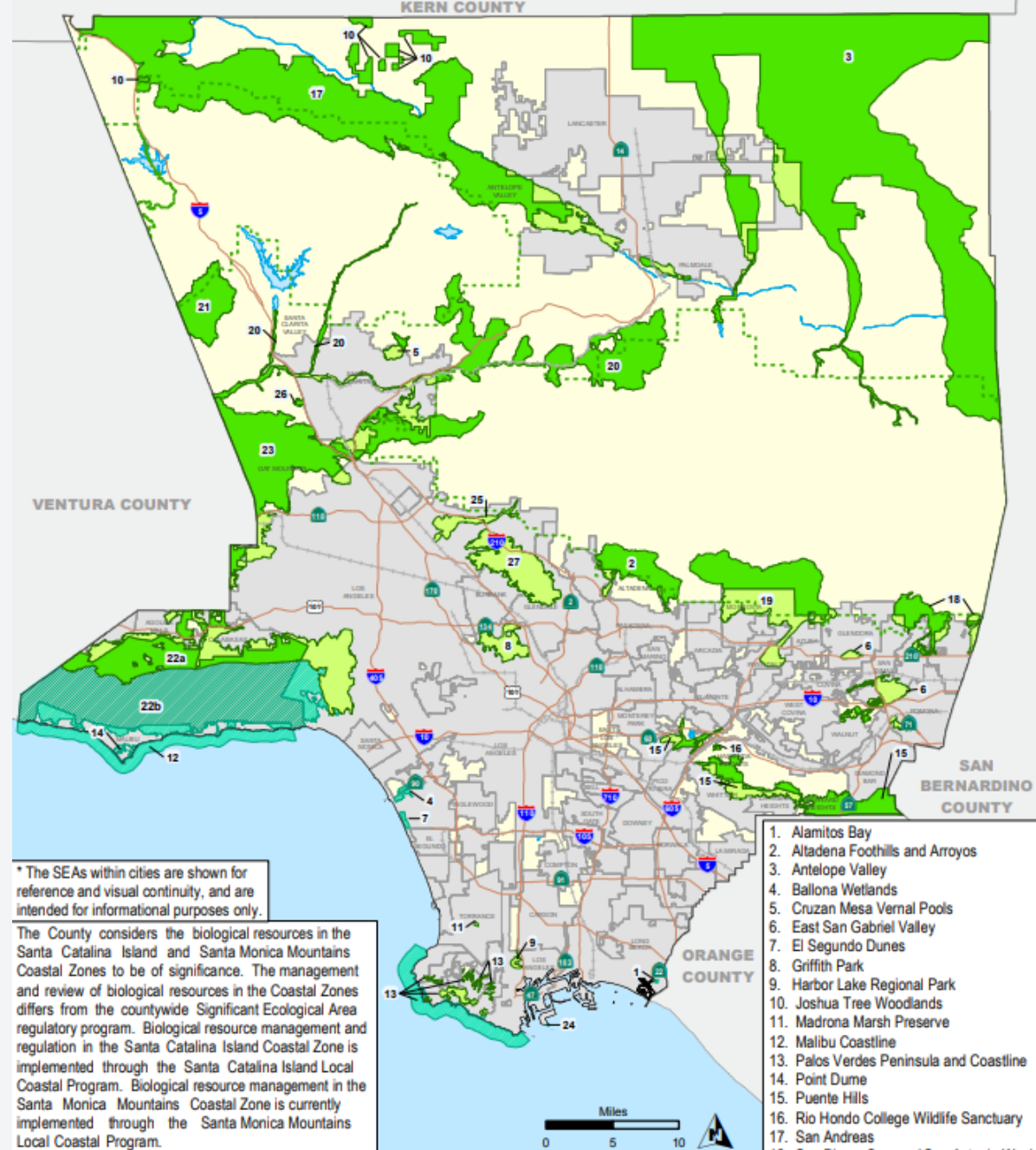
1982 – SEA Ordinance approved

2000 - 2nd SEA Study

2015 – Updated SEA boundaries adopted as part of General Plan 2035

2019 - SEA Ordinance Update

2025 – 3rd SEA Study



2025 SEA Study Objectives

Purpose: To inform the CNR Element Update to comply with SB 1425 and AB 1889. Ensure the biodiversity of the SEAs remain healthy and address climate resiliency, rewilding, and wildlife connectivity.

- Evaluate boundaries to ensure that the SEAs are functioning as planned
- Evaluate for habitat linkages and wildlife corridors
- Consider current day issues such as changing edge effects, climate change, and advances in scientific understanding of local biota and ecology
- Incorporate new information on rare and sensitive species

SEA Selection Criteria

- A. The habitat of core populations of endangered or threatened plant or animal species.
- B. On a regional basis, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.
- C. Within the County, biotic communities, vegetative associations, and habitat of plant or animal species that are either unique or are restricted in distribution.
- D. Habitat that at some point in the life cycle of a species or group of species, serves as concentrated breeding, feeding, resting, or migrating grounds and is limited in availability either regionally or in the County.
- E. Biotic resources that are of scientific interest because they are either an extreme in physical/geographic limitations or represent unusual variation in a population or community.
- F. Areas that would provide for the preservation of relatively undisturbed examples of the original natural biotic communities in the County.
- G. Areas that provide functionally important habitat connectivity between or within designated SEAs, including relatively intact or lightly disturbed habitat that forms functional linkages or corridors connecting portions of the same SEA or linking one SEA to another.**

Proposed SEA Boundaries

What to Expect:

- Proposed boundaries are based on 2025 SEA Study results
- Expansions proposed in both unincorporated and incorporated areas countywide
- No proposed reductions of existing SEAs
- Large blocks of habitat (e.g. National Forest) proposed as new SEAs
- Recorded Final Maps – open space designated as SEA if biological resources are present
- Pending subdivision projects – whole project area designated as SEA if biological resources are present

Public Comment Form

Use this form to submit comments on the proposed Significant Ecological Areas. If your comments exceed the character limit in the comment box, you can email your comments to eps@planning.lacounty.gov. For more information on the CNR Update project, please visit planning.lacounty.gov/cnr.

Name*

John Doe

Email*

✉ johndoe@email.com

Select a Proposed Significant Ecological Area

Select from the map to auto populate the details below before commenting. Skip to the comments section otherwise to leave a

Find address or place

Information ⬆️ ✕

How to use this App

This interactive app allows viewers to explore the proposed boundary revisions, read the descriptions and ecological justification, and submit comments by following the steps below:

- Explore** - Search by property address or Assessor's Identification Number. Also, explore by clicking directly on the map.
- Read** - Click on a proposed SEA area (shaded green) to see the description and ecological summary for the proposed revisions for the SEA.
- Submit** - Use the form on the left side to submit any general comments or comments on specific proposed areas. If your comments exceed the character limit in the comment box, you can email your comments to eps@planning.lacounty.gov.

Significant Ecological Areas - Proposed Boundary Revisions Background
 The Conservation and Natural Resources Element Update project, which was initiated to comply with [SB 1425](#) and [AB 1889](#), includes updating the Significant

Alamitos Bay SEA (Subarea 1a)

Proposed:

Expand the SEA to incorporate adjacent areas of the Los Cerritos Wetlands complex undergoing ecological restoration and/or those recently restored, including lands south of Steamshovel Slough currently approved for a major oil-field reclamation project and natural open space north of the channel restored pursuant to a California Coastal Commission enforcement action. The expansion extends the SEA beyond the currently undisturbed core of Steamshovel Slough to include areas that will function as restored tidal wetlands and associated uplands.

Primary Ecological Justifications:

- **Criterion A:** Documented occurrences of California least Tern, Belding's Savannah sparrow, and *Centromadia parryi ssp. australis*.
- **Criterion B/C:** Occurrences of numerous Bird Species of Special Concern (e.g., Redhead, least Bittern, northern Harrier, and Clark's Marsh Wren) and Los Angeles County Bird Species of Concern.
- **Criterion D:** Existing and restored wetlands provide important foraging habitat for a broad suite of permanent and seasonal wetland-dependent species. Permanent and seasonal wetlands have been extensively lost in Los Angeles County.
- **Criterion E:** Coastal salt marsh and alkali seasonal wetlands present across the entire Los Cerritos wetland/Alamitos Bay complex represents some


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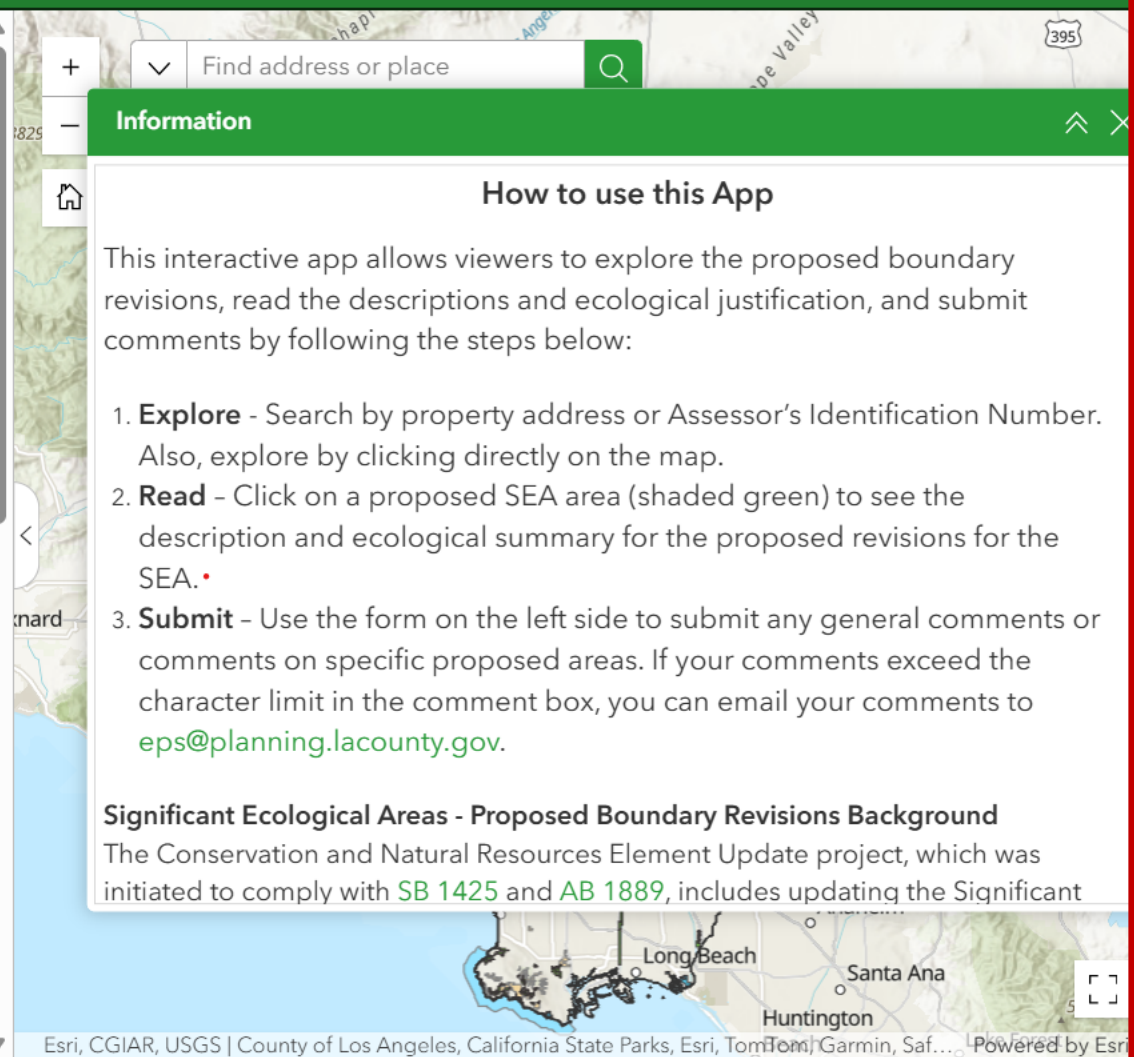
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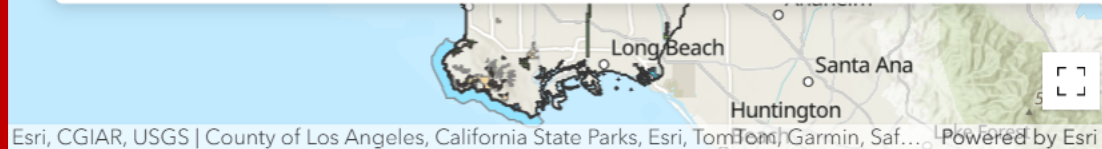
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SEA Ordinance Update

SEA Ordinance Update

Purpose:

- CNR updates – Revisions in response to state legislation, proposed CNR policies, and SEA Study
- Clarification language – Revisions to language for clearer interpretation
- Implementation fixes – Adjustments to the process to improve implementation challenges

Overview of Existing Review Types

SEA Counseling Meeting – Pre-Application Counseling

Exemption	Ministerial SEA Review	Protected Tree Permit Restoration Permit	SEA Conditional Use Permit
SEA Ordinance does not apply	Ministerial Review	Discretionary – Minor CUP	Discretionary – SEA CUP
	No Public Hearing	Public Hearing	SEATAC Public Hearing

Technical Updates

Clarification of sections:

Definitions (22.14.190-S)	Wildlife Connectivity related definitions
Applicability (22.102.030)	Boundary applicability for partial SEAs
Protected Tree Permit (22.102.070)	Applicability and thresholds
SEA Development Standards (22.102.090)	Threshold for SEA Protected Trees and Water Resources
Enforcement (22.102.110)	Required compliance for unpermitted development
SEA Counseling (22.102.050)	Removal of SEA Counseling waiver

Exemptions (22.102.040)

Remove:

- Antelope Valley-specific SFR exemption to be removed

Revise:

- Additions to Existing SFR - Applied countywide with 15,000 sq ft building site area threshold
- Agriculture uses as a standalone exemption

New:

Pending or approved subdivision developments with current and valid vesting rights determined by the State.

Ministerial SEA Review (22.102.060)

Clarification:

- Building site area (BSA) threshold only applies to development within the SEA boundaries
- Development must be consistent with applicable SEA Development Standards

Revise:

- BSA threshold for Ministerial SEA Review - revised to 15,000 sq ft

No Changes

No changes are proposed for the following sections:

Conditional Use Permit (22.102.080)

Natural Open Space Preservation (22.102.100)

Review Procedures for County Projects (22.102.130)

Review Procedures for Habitat Restoration Projects (22.102.140)

SEA Technical Advisory Committee “SEATAC” (22.102.150)

Hillside Management Areas (HMA) Ordinance

Hillside Management Areas (HMAs)

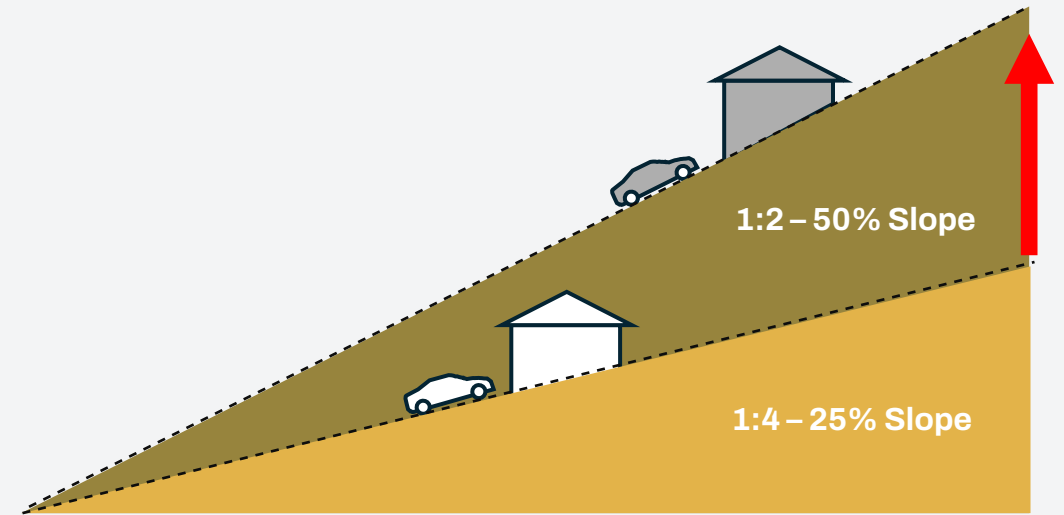
Purpose:

The ordinance regulates development in hillsides to ensure it preserves scenic character, protect natural features, provides open space, and minimizes hazard risks.



What is a Hillside Management Area?

Land which contains terrain with a natural slope gradient of 25 percent or steeper.



Overview of Updates

Why update?

- Convert design guidelines into objective design standards.
- Improve clarity and implementation.
- Integrate hazard considerations.

Key Objectives

Protect hillside landforms, scenic views, and hillside resources, while providing open space and reducing exposure to hazards.

Key Takeaways

- The biggest change is the new Development Standards section.
- The update provides clear expectations.
- Updates address hazard risks.

Clarification Updates

Sections:

- Purpose & Applicability
- Definitions
- Exemptions
- Implementation (Permit Required, Conditions of Approval, Findings)
- County and Special Districts Projects

What Changed:

- Reorganized ordinance structure.
- Clarified definitions and key terms.
- Refined and strengthen language for clear implementation.

Development Standards (22.104.080) - Part 1

Site Planning

- At least 50% of the development footprint on slopes under 25% or previously disturbed areas, where present.
- Cluster buildings to consolidate fuel modification zones.
- 200-foot buffer from designated open space.
- Open space configuration requirements.

Grading & Facilities

- Limit on large grading impacts.
- Require contoured grading.
- Require siting of water tanks and similar structures lower on the hillsides.
- Retaining walls limited to 6-feet unless terraced.
- Earth-tone colors and materials for visible hardscape.

Circulation

- Secondary access for projects over 30 dwelling units.
- Restriction on cul-de-sacs unless terrain constraints justify a need.
- Required pedestrian connections where cul-de-sacs are allowed.
- New roads and driveways should follow natural contours and stay below ridgelines.

Development Standards (22.104.080) - Part 2

Building Design

- Building height limits.
- Roofline restrictions for downhill lots.
- Rooftop mechanical equipment screening must be integrated into the building design.

Signs

- Height limits for freestanding and building-mounted signs.
- Non-reflective and durable material compatible with surrounding community character.
- External, downward-directed, lighting only.

Landscaping

- Native or drought-tolerant plants required on graded slopes and disturbed areas.
- Reapplication of topsoil.
- Slope stabilization, habitat restoration, shade, and water-quality co-benefits encouraged.

Summary of Changes

What is changing?

The ordinance is shifting from a menu of design guidelines to a code-based set of development standards for all development in HMAs.

What stays the same?

The core purpose of the ordinance remains the same. Protect hillside resources, scenic value, and compatibility with community character.

What is strengthened?

Clarity and implementation of the ordinance, and emphasis on minimizing hazard risks.

Next Steps



CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

[Home](#) > [Long Range Planning](#) > [Conservation and Natural Resources Element](#)

[Documents](#) [Meetings and Hearings](#) [CNR & Parks Element](#) [HMA Ordinance Update](#) [SEA Program Update](#) [Contact](#)

The Conservation and Natural Resources (CNR) Element is part of the Los Angeles County 2035 General Plan and guides the long-term conservation of natural resources and preservation of available open space areas. The Department of Regional Planning will be updating the CNR Element to provide a current, comprehensive policy guide that balances conservation with development and promotes a sustainable and resilient environment for all LA County residents.



CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

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PUBLIC REVIEW DOCUMENTS

Public review documents will be available on 5/15/26. The public comment period is from 5/15/26 to 6/30/26. Initial feedback on the draft documents will be gathered during this public comment period. There will be additional opportunities to provide feedback during the project planning process.



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(scroll down)

LOOK UP YOUR PROPERTY ON THE SEA MAP

An interactive online map will be [available on 5/15/26](#) to allow viewers to explore the proposed boundary revisions, read the descriptions and ecological justification, and submit comments through the map. You can search by Assessor Identification Number (from your property tax bill) or property address to see if your property is within a proposed SEA.

LOOK UP YOUR PROPERTY



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Contact us if you have any questions regarding the CNR Element Update, associated ordinances, or specific questions about your property.

Online Appointments (available 5/15/26)

Schedule an online meeting to speak to a Planner one-on-one about the CNR Element Update project or about your property.

[Sign up for Online Appointment](#)

Project Timeline

May 15 – June 30

Public Review Period

Fall 2026 (tentative)

Initiate Public Hearings

Contact:

EPS@planning.lacounty.gov

PROJECT WEBSITE:
planning.lacounty.gov/cnr

