

**SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

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**State of California  
SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS  
COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING COMMISSION  
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(213/620-2021)**

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## INTRODUCTION

Through the heart of California's largest metropolitan area, the Santa Monica Mountains extend from Elysian Park overlooking Los Angeles City Hall to the Oxnard Plain. The Santa Monica Mountains are unique in California as the only unspoiled coastal range in the midst of a major metropolitan area with both coastal and mountain ecosystems.

While the range itself is a physically and ecologically integrated area of over 223,000 acres, a history of fragmented political jurisdictions led to piecemeal development and uncoordinated planning which threatened to ruin the area's natural open space and recreational value.

Some places in the western end of the range remain undeveloped and wild, home to mountain lions, bobcats, golden eagles, and hundreds of other species. In contrast to the rugged chaparral or oak-covered terrain, the streams deep in the canyon provide habitat for steelhead and other fish and support some of the last remaining streamside vegetation in the Los Angeles region. The eastern hills—largely covered by residential communities—have many untouched areas suitable for parks and open spaces.

As early as 1930, the Olmsted report recognized the irreplaceable value of the Santa Monica Mountains. By 1972, the Ventura-Los Angeles Mountains and Coastal Study Commission recommended establishing a continuing planning and permit-issuing agency to assure environmentally sound use. Four years later, the Legislature passed AB 163 by Assemblyman Howard Berman that would, in part, carry out the recommendation in the 1972 report. This bill created the Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Planning Commission and empowered it to prepare "a comprehensive and specific plan which is capable of implementation, for the conservation and development of (the mountains) consistent with the preservation of the resource."

### The Planning Process

Organized in March 1977, the Commission first reviewed all relevant, prior planning studies and, most important, compiled the general plans of each jurisdiction within the Mountains into a "Composite Plan." In the case of the Los Angeles County Plan, invalidated by court action, the Commission used the findings of the Court and current County planning practice. The Composite Plan clearly identified the jurisdictional conflicts that led to the creation of the Commission.

Commission staff then prepared five alternative plans for the Santa Monica Mountains. The choices ranged from a continuation of the present system to outright federal acquisition of most of the Mountains. With the Composite Plan and the five alternatives, the Commission then sponsored a number of hearings throughout the region, from East Los Angeles to Thousand Oaks, to hear the citizens' ideas and suggestions.

At the same time, the Commission began working with a team from the University of California at Santa Cruz in writing the Land Capability Study

describing every major physical constraint on the land as well as the environmental resources that should be protected as land is developed. Armed with the findings of the Land Capability Study and the important contribution of the public, the Commission adopted a modified "Sketch Plan" and a set of Planning Objectives that called for protection of the public values of the Mountains and development based on the maxim that the "land should dictate the use."

After further public hearings, the Commission began adopting each Element of the Comprehensive Plan. In early June 1978, the entire Preliminary Comprehensive Plan, consisting of the land use, conservation, recreation, transportation, scenic parkways and corridors, and public services and facilities elements, was the subject of still more hearings. Once again, the draft was edited and revised and adopted as the Preliminary Comprehensive Plan in July 1978.

Commission staff and consultants (Williams-Kuebelbeck and Associates in association with Wallace, McHarg, Roberts, and Todd, Stanford Research Institute, and David L. Peterson) prepared an analysis of the costs and benefits of the Preliminary Plan and the Composite Plan. The findings of this study are the basis for the Economic Element, adopted as a part of the Final Comprehensive Plan in December 1978.

Following final adoption of the policy and economic elements of the plan, the Commission identified alternative implementation strategies and potential responsible implementation agencies in February 1979.

#### **Federal Planning Requirements Under the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978**

In 1978, Congress created the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, in part implementing policies recommended in the Commission's Preliminary Report. The National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 authorizes the appropriation of \$125 million for National Park Service land acquisition within the National Recreation Area, \$500,000 for National Park Service park development, and \$30 million in grants to the State of California for specific uses in the Santa Monica Mountains Zone. The Act called for several specific actions by the Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Planning Commission. It asked the Commission to make acquisition recommendations and to review the acquisition plan prepared by the National Park Service. For this reason, the Commission has worked closely with the National Park Service to identify areas for inclusion within the National Recreation Area.

Furthermore, Congress recognized the Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Planning Commission as the planning entity for the Santa Monica Mountains Zone and required that the Commission identify agencies responsible for implementing the Comprehensive Plan. Congress also required that the Comprehensive Plan include two additional elements beyond those included to meet state requirements: (1) a minimum fee and less than fee acquisition program of critical and strategic sites not to be acquired by the Federal Government; and (2) a recreational transportation plan for the National Recreation Area. These portions of the Plan were adopted in August 1979 and are included in the Comprehensive Plan in accordance with section 507(n) of the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978.

## Coastal Zone

The legislation establishing the Commission required it to coordinate planning for the coastal zone "to the fullest extent possible" with that for the Santa Monica Mountains, because the Legislature found the Mountains to be "a single ecosystem in which changes that affect one part may also affect all other parts." Accordingly, the Land Capability Study, the Comprehensive Plan, and the maps for the Plan all include recommendations and data on the mountainous portion of the Malibu Coastal Zone.

The Commission has made these recommendations in the firm belief that public policy should strive for uniform regulations and development standards where the topography and natural constraints are essentially the same in the Mountains as in the Coastal Zone. The Commission, however, has not made recommendations regarding land use for the immediate Coastal Corridor (generally south of the Rancho Topanga-Malibu Sequit boundary) since it is topographically different from the Mountains. The Commission felt that any detailed recommendations for this area would be redundant in view of the continuing coastal planning process. The Comprehensive Plan identifies the Coastal Corridor for statistical purposes only; it does not represent an attempt to redefine the Coastal Zone, nor does it purport to delineate the extent of coastal resources.

## Plan Maps

As an aid to the reader, this Plan contains simplified black and white maps (See inside back cover). The official maps detailing Land Use, Parks and Open Spaces, Scenic Parkways and Corridors, Trails, and the Wildlife Network at a scale of 1:24,000 are available for public inspection at the State Building in Los Angeles. These large-scale maps should be consulted to determine the applicability of the Plan to specific areas.

## CHAPTER I: LAND CAPABILITY

In response to Section 67480 of the Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Planning Act, the Commission made a "detailed study. . . of land capabilities" to supply data on the physical environment of the Santa Monica Mountains pertinent to planning and future development. The study defined constraints of the land, the capability of the land to support land uses, and the compatibility of the various constraints and land uses. The study is a planning tool; it should not replace specific evaluation of a parcel's development potential. This chapter contains a summary of the full study.

Information and data for the study were collected from various state, regional, and local agencies as well as private organizations and knowledgeable individuals. The data were evaluated for accuracy; in some cases, data were restructured to improve comparability and consistency. Field checks and limited amounts of original research were conducted where necessary. The study's detailed interpretative maps show hazards and resources which have an effect on the capability of the land to support various uses. Outside professionals and specialists in each field reviewed the maps and the text, as far as time permitted. These detailed maps were consolidated in a "Composite Constraint" map showing the combined effects of selected hazards and resources on land capability. The scale of these detailed maps (1:24000) prevents their inclusion here. Only a simplified version of the Composite Constraint Map has been included in this report (See inside back cover).

### COMPATIBILITY MATRIX

Using a simple matrix to determine the compatibility of land uses with each area became the final task of the land capability study. The matrix includes the following land uses:

**PRESERVATION:** Access limited to guided tours or entrance by special permission. Objective is to preserve the area in a pristine state. An example is the Nature Conservancy's Cold Creek Canyon Preserve.

**NATURAL RECREATION:** Low-intensity recreational uses including hiking, equestrian activity, and wilderness camping. Little improvement to existing topography.

**AGRICULTURE:** Cattle or horse grazing, irrigated crops, and limited orchard use.

**INTENSIVE RECREATION:** Moderate- to high-intensity recreational uses including picnicking, golfing, destination camping (trailers, full facilities), service facilities (parking areas, restrooms, visitor centers, etc.), and improved and graded areas for sports activities. Private dude ranches or conference grounds fall into this category.

**RESIDENTIAL:** The various acreages represented are gross acres and are self-explanatory. Single-family dwellings would most generally fall into the 5-40 acre/unit and 1-5 acre/unit categories. Condominiums, townhouses, and multiple-family dwellings would be in the 1 or more units/acre category. Should cluster housing be considered, building 40 units in a clustered fashion in the 5-40 acres/unit designation would require 200-1,600 acres.

**EMPLOYMENT CENTERS:** Large-scale commercial development, industrial areas, large institutions such as Camarillo State Hospital, and schools would fall into this land use category.

The matrix also considers the following environmental variables:

**GEOLOGY:** Rockfall, landslides, surface fracture, tsunami, liquefaction

**SLOPE:** Less than 20%, 21%-33%, 34%-67%, greater than 67%

**FIRE HAZARD:** Extreme, high, and moderate

**SOILS ERODABILITY:** Very high, high, moderate, and slight

**VEGETATION:** Riparian and other woodlands, savannah, chaparral, sage, grasslands, and unusual plant communities

**WILDLIFE:** Habitat located within wildlife network

The matrix approach is valuable because it relates the nature of each constraint to the specific land use and the intensity of the specific land use to each constraint. With the help of the completed data base, each variable was carefully considered in relationship to each land use to determine their compatibility rating. To assist in this evaluation, several criteria were used:

#### HAZARDS:

1. Length of danger warning time.
2. Directness of danger.
3. Number of persons endangered.
4. Availability of rescue services.
5. Frequency of occurrence.
6. Availability of mitigation measures.
7. Impact of mitigation measures on resources.

#### RESOURCES:

1. Scarcity of resource in the Santa Monica Mountains.
2. Scarcity in the Los Angeles Region.
3. Disturbance and damage to immediate area.
4. Disturbance and damage to adjacent areas.
5. Availability of mitigating measures.
6. Impact of mitigating measures on resource.

Based on the results of this evaluation against the environmental data base, each cell of the matrix was assigned a compatibility rating of very high, high, moderate, low, or very low compatibility.



The matrix has been used in two ways:

1. To find compatible land uses for an area.
2. To find suitable land for a specific land use.

## MAJOR FINDINGS OF LAND CAPABILITY

### Ground Slope

Most of the Santa Monica Mountains is steep, rugged, and in many cases unbuildable. Over three quarters of the Santa Monica Mountains has slopes greater than 20%; over one third has slopes greater than 50%.

The predominance of steep slopes and rugged terrain is responsible for the high scenic beauty of the Mountains.

Development hazards tend to increase on steeper slopes.

The degree of slope contributes directly to many other constraints such as fire hazard, landslides, and soil erosion. These factors increase in severity with the steepness of the slope, although the severity of slope is rarely the only reason for development hazards.

Every 10% increase in slope doubles the speed at which a fire spreads.

With the extreme flammability of the chaparral, which covers most of the Mountains, the steep slopes create an ever-present fire danger.

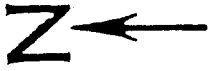
Steeper slopes generally have more highly erodible soils with much lower tolerance to disturbance than soils found on lesser slopes. Grading and removal of brush required for development on steep slopes have a severe impact on the natural resources of the Santa Monica Mountains.

Development on steep slopes requires extensive grading for access, building site preparation, and brush clearance to meet fire regulations. These practices increase erosion and leave unsightly scars on the landscape.

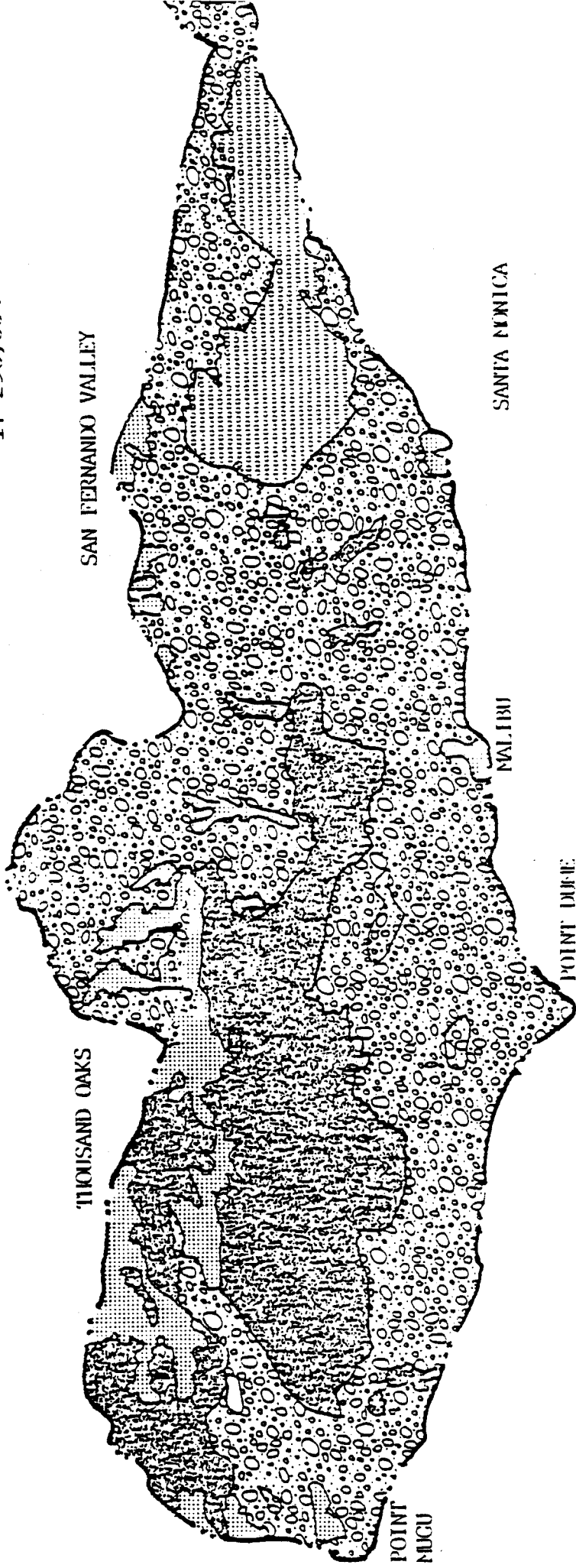
### Geology

The Santa Monica Mountains are geologically young.

The Santa Monics Mountains have a ruggedly beautiful terrain that reflects its geological youthfulness. This scenic beauty, however, is accompanied by several geological hazards, stemming directly from their recent emergence.



GEOLOGIC MAP UNITS  
1: 250,000



MAP UNIT #1

MAP UNITS #2, 3, 4, 6, 7, & 9

MAP UNIT #5

MAP UNIT #8

The Santa Monica Mountains are seismically active.

Earthquake epicenters are clustered in Point Mugu and on the southeastern boundary of the Mountains in the Los Angeles plain. On February 21, 1973, the Point Mugu area experienced an earthquake of 5.9 on the Richter Scale. Even though it occurred in a sparsely populated area, there was over \$1 million damage to the Oxnard area. Significant fault activity with potential surface fracture is evident along the Pacific Coast Highway. Earthquakes close to shore may create a tsunami hazard in the Oxnard Plain portion of the Santa Monica Mountains Zone as well as the Malibu Coastal strip. A tsunami is a tidal wave produced by a release of energy from an underwater earthquake.

Many areas in the Santa Monica Mountains have a low stability rating.

The map on the following page shows sedimentary rocks in Units Nos. 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 9, which have from very low to moderately low stability. When steeply inclined and heavily fractured, these clay-bearing marine sandstones and shales are particularly prone to landsliding.

Map Unit 8, though containing some of the steepest slopes found in the Mountains, is characterized by highly stable rock structure, metamorphics, and granites. However, where heavily fractured, this unit is prone to sliding.

The volcanic rocks in portions of the interior of the Santa Monica Mountains have moderately high stability; in the event of an earthquake, however, this area will suffer severe rockfalls.

Some mountain valleys are subject to moderate liquefaction.

Liquefaction is a process which transforms solid ground into a liquified state which cannot support structures. Map Unit No. 1 includes mountain valleys, such as Hidden Valley, and the western portion of the Ventura Freeway Corridor. The slopes are under 20%, but their sediments consist of poorly consolidated alluvium with a relatively high water table (from 25 to 50 feet below the surface). In the event of an earthquake, this saturated alluvium can undergo severe shaking and moderate liquefaction, thereby endangering structures.

### Soil Erosion

Over 80% of the soils in the Santa Monica Mountains have high or very high erosion potential.

Very high is the maximum degree of erodability determined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service.

Vegetation is extremely important in maintaining soil stability.

The presence of vegetation acts like a screen protecting the soils from direct exposure to rain. The root systems of chaparral and sage present in the Santa Monica Mountains are particularly effective in holding the highly erodible soils covering the steep slopes.

Removal of natural vegetation by grading and removal of brush leads to accelerated erosion.

When vegetation is removed, the protective qualities it provides for the soil are lost. The consequence is increased erosion.

Accelerated erosion damages the natural resources of the Santa Monica Mountains.

Increased erosion leads to the filling of water courses with sediment. This increased sediment damages water courses necessary for the survival of wildlife.

Accelerated erosion inflicts costly property damage on public services and increases flood hazard.

Damage from erosion to roads and other public services results in high clean-up costs to the taxpayer. By filling up water courses with sediment, the capacity of the channel is reduced, increasing the likelihood of flooding.

Mudslides regularly cause extensive damage to property where development has occurred.

The heavy rains of 1977-78 have again illustrated the tremendous potential for damage to private property in the Santa Monica Mountains. Over \$40 million in damage to public and personal property was reported in the City of Los Angeles alone. Regularly, lives are lost in mudslides. In 1969, 12 people were killed by mudslides in the Santa Monica Mountains.

To accommodate development in areas of high mudflow potential natural resources are frequently destroyed.

Development in areas of high mudslide potential requires extensive alteration of slopes to ensure adequate surface drainage. Grading and other improvements totally alter the natural topography, resulting in a loss of wildlife habitat, visual amenities, and causing increased erosion.

### Flood Hazard

Most streams in the Santa Monica Mountains have natural channels with little flood control improvements.

The many natural stream channels in the Mountains and the riparian vegetation they support are important wildlife habitats and scenic and recreational resources.

**Flooding is a common hazard in the Santa Monica Mountains.**

Streams in the Santa Monica Mountains flood periodically during heavy rains. In 1977-78, flood damage was reported in Malibu Creek and Triunfo Creek. In 1969, Topanga Creek overflowed, causing serious damage to homes and the Topanga Canyon Road.

**Development in a watershed increases the flood hazard.**

When development occurs in a watershed, the ability of the soil to absorb the water decreases as the soil is covered by pavement, houses, etc., that are impervious to water. Development increases storm runoff, thereby increasing flood hazard.

**Grading, removal of brush, and fire increase flood hazard because of greater deposit of debris.**

Excess debris will increase the volume and velocity of stream flows so that floods will be more severe than if the watershed had not been disturbed.

**Channeling streams in concrete beds, though an effective flood control measure, destroys the natural resources of the Santa Monica Mountains.**

Concrete channels significantly alter the stream environment through the destruction of riparian plants and wildlife. Such channels destroy the recreational value of the natural stream.

**Flood hazards can be minimized through controlling development in a watershed.**

Keeping flood plains free of development and controlling the amount of impervious surface in a watershed can reduce flood hazard while protecting the natural resources of the stream environment.

### Vegetation

**Vegetation forms the basis of the food chain supporting the diverse wildlife in the Santa Monica Mountains. Chaparral and sage, the dominant plant communities in the Santa Monica Mountains, are significant natural resources.**

Chaparral and sage cover over 61% of the total land in the Santa Monica Mountains. These two plant communities grow on steep slopes, holding the erodible soils in place. Having adapted to the lack of summer moisture, the chaparral is the basic food source in the Mountains. The value of chaparral is dependent upon periodic burning to maintain vigorous growth. Overly mature chaparral, in addition to being more of a fire danger, is not as valuable as either a habitat or a food source for wildlife.

VEGETATION BREAKDOWN BY PLANNING AREA (ACRES)

(3.4) indicates percent

Planning Area	Urban	Agriculture	Chaparral	Sage	Woodland	Savannah	Grassland	Unusual	Barren	Total
City of L.A. East of S.D. Freeway	11,762 (62.7)	0 (0.0)	6,370 (34.1)	28 (0.1)	177 (0.9)	0 (0.0)	363 (1.9)	0 (0.0)	57 (0.3)	18,761 (100)
City of L.A. West of S.D. Freeway(1)	14,832 (61.8)	49 (0.2)	7,608 (31.6)	110 (0.5)	907 (3.8)	100 (0.4)	256 (1.1)	74 (0.3)	72 (0.3)	24,008 (100)
Agoura/Siml Hills	2,820 (9.7)	129 (0.4)	13,032 (44.6)	7,005 (24.0)	292 (1.0)	1,944 (6.7)	3,860 (13.2)	95 (0.3)	40 (0.1)	29,217 (100)
Central Mountains(2)	5,162 (5.3)	6,810 (7.0)	57,802 (58.9)	14,435 (14.7)	6,580 (6.7)	1,730 (1.8)	3,386 (3.5)	1,042 (1.1)	1,000 (1.0)	97,947 (100)
Thousand Oaks	2,835 (20.5)	0 (0.0)	5,013 (36.2)	2,090 (15.1)	30 (0.2)	441 (3.2)	3,424 (24.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	13,833 (100)
Coastal(3)	3,678 (22.8)	172 (1.1)	3,686 (22.7)	5,905 (36.6)	968 (6.0)	0 (0.0)	1,674 (10.4)	61 (0.4)	8 (0.0)	16,152 (100)
<b>Total(4)</b>	<b>41,089 (20.6)</b>	<b>7,160 (3.6)</b>	<b>93,511 (46.7)</b>	<b>29,573 (14.8)</b>	<b>8,954 (4.5)</b>	<b>4,215 (2.1)</b>	<b>12,963 (6.5)</b>	<b>1,272 (0.6)</b>	<b>1,177 (0.6)</b>	<b>199,918 (100)</b>

- (1) Excludes Topanga State Park
- (2) Excludes Point Mugu State Park, Malibu Creek State Park, and small portion of Topanga State Park
- (3) Excludes Leo Carrillo State Park
- (4) Excludes Point Mugu State Park, Leo Carrillo State Park, Malibu Creek State Park, and Topanga State Park

Riparian and oak woodlands make up a small percentage of the Santa Monica Mountains, yet support a wide range of wildlife.

Riparian woodland is a plant community found along stream bottoms where a year-round source of water exists. The woodland consists of an assortment of ferns and shrubs shaded by a variety of trees, including sycamores, live oaks, and willows. Live oak woodland is a plant community consisting of coast live oak, black walnut, and bay trees with a variety of ferns, herbs, and shrubs. These woodlands, which make up 4.5% of the Mountains, support plants and wildlife found nowhere else in the Mountains. Riparian woodlands are often the only source of water during the summer months for wildlife.

The Valley Oak savannah is a scarce but visually and ecologically significant plant community.

The Valley Oak savannah, which covers just over 2% of the Mountains, consists of grasslands dotted with Valley Oak trees. The Santa Monica Mountains are the southern limit of the Valley Oak, the largest oak in the United States. Their open and gently rolling character gives the savannah its scenic beauty. The oak savannah supports a wide range of birds and mammals. Its open nature provides a major feeding area for animals which prey on the small mammals found in the grasslands. The oak's acorn provide a rich source of food when other food sources are scarce.

Grasslands are scarce but biologically important in the interior of the Santa Monica Mountains, but do not represent critical habitat in the Agoura and Thousand Oaks area.

Grasslands support a population of rodents which are the food source of birds of prey in the Mountains. These large birds, such as the Prairie Falcon and Golden Eagle, need open areas for hunting. Grasslands make up only 3.5% of the land in the interior of the Mountains, but constitute 13% of Agoura and almost 25% of Thousand Oaks. In the Agoura and Thousand Oaks areas, Valley Oak savannahs serve the same ecological function as grasslands.

Certain unusual plant communities are found in the Santa Monica Mountains.

Unusual plant communities are those which are uncommon in the Santa Monica Mountains. These range from a single plant such as the Dogwood in La Sierra Canyon to the rare stand of alders in Tuna Canyon, and to woodland bogs which are remnants of the cooler and wetter Pleistocene age. Unusual plant communities cover just 0.6% of the Mountains.

### Fire Hazard

Fire is a natural and ecologically important part of the Santa Monica Mountains.

Some species of chaparral, the primary vegetation of the Mountains, may require the intense heat of fire to reproduce. Other species sprout from root crowns exposed after a fire. Fire suppression over many years can impair reproduction of chaparral. When chaparral has not burned for a long time, it is of reduced

value to wildlife. Most of the ground vegetation has been eaten, leaving only a thick maze of dead branches that impairs the movement of larger animals. After a fire, the accumulated dead branches are cleared and chaparral again springs to life. The young vegetation creates a better habitat for wildlife.

#### **Fire is inevitable in the Santa Monica Mountains.**

Fires are inevitable in the Santa Monica Mountains because of the extreme flammability of both the living and dead brush and the extreme weather conditions that exist. Danger to life and property rises as the use of the Mountains increases. Between 1953 and 1970, 831 homes were destroyed in brush fires larger than 100 acres. The Bel Air fire of 1961 burned 6,000 acres and destroyed 481 homes. Roughly three-fourths of the Mountains have burned more than once in the past 50 years. In 1978, the Kanan-Malibu and Mandeville Canyon fires destroyed more than 200 homes, resulting in over \$50 million in damage.

**Housing development in fire hazard areas creates a paradox: protecting houses will inevitably lead to larger, less controllable, more destructive fires. Present fire suppression techniques have led to an increased fire hazard in the Santa Monica Mountains.**

Fire departments have been successful in suppressing the vast majority of fires in the Mountains. As a result, there is a massive buildup of highly flammable vegetation. This buildup increases the chances that fires will overwhelm initial control efforts and turn into major conflagration. Some evidence indicates that as chaparral increases in age from twenty to thirty years, the average size of a fire doubles.

**Fuel management techniques are at present impractical.**

Fuel management techniques, such as controlled burning, should be further investigated. Unresolved issues of fire control and liability, however, makes the present use of these techniques impractical.

#### **Wildlife**

**The Santa Monica Mountains support a diverse and healthy wildlife population.**

In spite of the already extensive development of the Santa Monica Mountains, there are large numbers of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects, and fish. Species include mountain lion, golden eagle, steelhead, bobcat, racoon, and coyote. Malibu Creek is the southern limit for steelhead spawning.

**Wildlife is a recreational resource in the Santa Monica Mountains.**

Activities include bird watching, fishing, and some hunting. Wildlife is an integral part of the outdoor experience of the Mountains and is important for scientific research.

It is difficult to determine key wildlife habitats, but at least four basic elements must be present:

1. Breathing room: undisturbed areas where animals feed and separate themselves from other animals.
2. Basic food source: at its most basic level, certain plant communities.
3. Key land features: rock outcroppings for nesting sites, open areas for feeding, year-round streams, etc.
4. Flexibility: the ability to move to other areas to deal with the often rapid and harsh changes in the ecosystem of the Santa Monica Mountains.

To satisfy the basic elements required by wildlife, the concept of a wildlife network is appropriate.

The wildlife network is a 90,000 acre system of land corridors containing the key ingredients and key habitat areas for wildlife. The network is a minimum, ecological backbone necessary to support a diverse and healthy population of wildlife. The completed network represents a synthesis of areas considered important by local agencies and wildlife specialists consulted by the Commission.

Wildlife in the Santa Monica Mountains is not confined to the wildlife network and must be considered outside of the network's boundaries.

The wildlife network is not complete or exclusive, as animals live outside the boundaries superimposed on a map. For this reason, land outside the network has been evaluated as to its ecological importance to wildlife. The wildlife network takes this evaluation one step further; it includes significant ecological areas and the other basic elements required by wildlife.

### Air Quality

The Santa Monica Mountains allow fresh air from the Pacific Ocean to enter the inland valleys of the Los Angeles Basin.

The Santa Monica Mountains lie between the Pacific Ocean and the heavily populated inland areas, including the San Fernando Valley, West Los Angeles, and the remainder of the basin. During the summer, clean sea breezes passing through the Mountains dilute the polluted air in the inland areas.

If major pollution sources are built in the Mountains, fresh air would be polluted before reaching inland areas, thereby decreasing the already poor air quality.

Should this happen, the relief from pollution that the Santa Monica Mountains provide for the heavily populated inland areas will be lost.

The vegetation of the Santa Monica Mountains does not significantly improve air quality.

Most of the land within the Mountains is chaparral. Chaparral is dormant during the summer months, the critical air quality period in Southern California. Some of the Mountain's vegetation produces oxygen during this time: the woodlands and savannahs. As these comprise but a small area, the vegetation of the Santa Monica Mountains is producing little fresh air during this period. For this reason, the vegetation of the Santa Monica Mountains can not claim to play a significant role in regional air quality.

The degree of cleansing action the Santa Monica Mountains have on the region is still undetermined.

The actual degree of cleansing action the Mountains provide can only be answered by a more detailed quantitative study.

## CHAPTER II: THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

### GUIDING PRINCIPLE: LET THE LAND DICTATE THE USE

The goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to accommodate land uses that will least damage the natural and manmade environment, given the constraints the land itself imposes. This principle will be set aside only if adhering to it will mean that the region will lose benefits of overriding importance.

### Objectives

The Comprehensive Plan seeks to:

1. Emphasize the value of open space, conservation, and recreation compatible with the resources of the Santa Monica Mountains.
2. Protect the Santa Monica Mountains from further despoliation by establishing and implementing management programs to protect and preserve the scenic, natural, historic, cultural, and scientific resources.
3. Provide for public parks and facilities in the Santa Monica Mountains that offer a variety of recreational opportunities accessible to all income groups.
4. Provide a pattern of land use which balances conservation and development, prevents urban sprawl, retains a maximum amount of open space, avoids natural hazards, and allows the efficient and economic delivery of public services.
5. Give priority to natural resource protection when balancing development and conservation goals.
6. Improve air and water quality and prevent noise pollution.
7. Support and encourage private open space, conservation, and recreation as a supplement to public efforts.
8. Develop innovative public transportation alternatives within the framework of existing roadways for access to the Santa Monica Mountains in ways that will protect the environment, maintain air quality, efficiently deliver public services, and assure maximum access to the recreation areas for all the public.

Policies 1 through 62 in the following elements seek to carry out these objectives.

## LAND USE ELEMENT

The Land Use Element emphasizes the preservation of the remaining natural resources in the Santa Monica Mountains for the enjoyment of present and future generations. It balances this emphasis by allowing development where the land is capable of supporting it and where urban services are available or can be extended easily. The extent of existing development and the ability of the land, air, and water as well as available public services to support the various land uses are prime factors that have influenced the Land Use Element.

### 1

#### Resource Protection

Development should be restricted in areas most suited for recreation or in areas needing special protection to retain and protect valuable and unique environmental resources.

This policy will ensure that private development is compatible with recreational or special features which need protection. Restrictions on private development could include low-density zoning (5-to-40 acres dwelling unit), special design regulations for building, set-back requirements, and the granting or selling of trail easements by developers or private landowners. In Significant Ecological Areas, special restrictions should be imposed on grading or alterations of the vegetation (See Conservation Element), and in general, uses should be compatible with the special ecological qualities of the area.

### 2

#### Development in Low-Constraint Areas

Housing and employment should be directed to areas which are near major transportation arteries and where the essential urban services are available or can be readily extended. Future development should be directed towards areas which are relatively free of natural constraints.

In the context of the Plan, areas relatively free of natural constraints are those which indicate zero or only one constraint on the "Composite Constraint Map" of the Land Capability Study (See Map. No. 2, back pocket).

### 3

#### Development Density

- A. Development densities in areas of low resource constraints should be provided to satisfy most of the foreseeable demand for development in the Santa Monica Mountains.
- B. In the high-resources constraint areas of the Santa Monica Mountains, development densities should be kept low (5-to-40 acres per dwelling unit) to maintain a rural land use pattern with a minimum of urban services and with open space for protection of the environment.

## 4

## Slope Density and Hillside Management

A slope density formula and the development constraints matrix shall be uniformly applied in the "high constraints zone" which shall consist of all areas shown on the Land Use Map as lower than one unit per five acre density.

A slope density formula adopted by responsible implementing agencies should reflect the pattern of environmental constraints in the Santa Monica Mountains and provide a summary indicator of appropriate maximum density on any given parcel in high constraint areas. However, on specific sites where development density and ancillary structures (e.g., access, slope retention structures) allowed under this formula would conflict with other Plan policies, the local agency should take steps to (1) further reduce allowable density, or (2) develop additional project design and siting mitigation strategies.

The local agency should further lower densities, by the application of the development matrix when the slope/density formula or design and building placement modifications will not prevent the following adverse environmental impacts:

1. Filling or clearing of ponds, creeks or natural drainage channels.
2. Obstruction of or decrease in the quality of views from scenic roadways, trails, or parks.
3. Removal of vegetation unique to the Santa Monica Mountains.
4. Major landform alteration resulting in accelerated erosion, major habitat destruction, and viewshed impacts on scenic views from parks or publicly used recreation areas.
5. Creation of peak storm runoff at flood hazard level, adding to offsite erosion potential, thus requiring major drainage alterations.
6. Structure siting within a natural flood plain.
7. Precedent setting for similar density and design on parcels in the traffic corridor, thus leading to a cumulative local increase in traffic causing new bottlenecks on the existing major road network.
8. Major extension of urban services in rural areas.

The local agencies should apply a range of design and siting mitigation strategies as indicated:

1. Special design and other techniques as noted in Policy 13 should be incorporated into development within conservation areas.
2. Development should be sited and designed to avoid portions of parcels

which are extremely hazardous (e.g., geologically unstable, subject to flooding).

3. The allowable units, access and ancillary structures as defined by the slope density formula and above criteria should be located to minimize the grading of the site, specifically the amounts of earth movement and the depth of cut and fill.
4. Development should be concentrated on portions of the project site under 33% slope.
5. Buffer zones should be established where parcels are adjacent to park acquisition areas or contain conservation areas. The width of the buffer zone should vary, depending on the nature of the hazard or the resource that the parcel abuts.

## 5

### Subdivision Standards

In order to protect the public health and safety and to protect unique environmental resources, new subdivisions and lot splits in the Santa Monica Mountains, along with existing substandard lots whether created legally or illegally, should be subject to the following minimum standards:

- A. Each lot shall have frontage and legal vehicular access on one of the following:
  1. A maintained public street;
  2. A maintained private street, provided the private street has a defined location of record and a level of improvement comparable to functionally similar public streets in the immediate vicinity; or,
  3. A private road easement, provided the easement has a defined location of record, a minimum width of 15 feet and a length of not more than 300 feet between the lot and maintained public or private street as defined in (1) and (2) above.
- B. Each lot shall have adequate water supply for domestic and firefighting purposes.
- C. Each lot shall have adequate provision for sewage disposal. Sewage disposal may be provided by sanitary services or by a private or communal septic system.

These standards are the basic requirements necessary to avoid the problems caused by many older subdivisions. Many of these standards have been applied by the South Coast Regional Commission.

## 6

### Substandard Lots

- A. Local government should merge substandard lots to the extent possible under State Law.
- B. New state laws should be passed to lessen the damage done by recorded substandard subdivisions and lot splits.

One of the major obstacles to sound land use planning in the Santa Monica Mountains is the cumulative effect of recorded substandard subdivisions and minor land divisions. In this context, the term "substandard" includes inadequate access, water, sewage disposal, or other essential services, steep slopes which would require excessive grading for construction, or exposure to high risks such as landslides or flooding.

## 7

### Efficient Land Use Pattern

- A. Pollution from motor vehicles should be reduced by a land use pattern which prevents urban sprawl, results in fewer vehicle trips and more efficient transit services, and institutes energy conservation.
- B. Deterioration of air quality in the immediate ecosystem of the Santa Monica Mountains should be prevented in order to reduce injury to vegetation and to permit full enjoyment of recreational opportunities.

In the suburban and rural areas of the Santa Monica Mountains, most air pollution comes from automobiles. Controlling this air pollution can be partly achieved by concentrating residential development near transportation arteries and by providing employment close to residential neighborhoods.

## 8

### Sewer Extension

Sanitary sewers should not be extended into rural areas where large parcels can accommodate septic tanks.

Parcels must be large enough to accommodate septic systems. Lot size, however, is only one criterion in determining septic tank feasibility. Soil permeability and ground slope are also important. If there is no suitable soil on a lot for a septic system, the lot may be unbuildable unless soil is imported.

## 9

### Effluent Discharge

Discharge from sanitary treatment plants and septic systems into streams and lakes should not be allowed.

The Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Planning Act requires the Commission to consider the cumulative effect of the "development of new sanitary facilities that would cause material pollution of streams, aquifers, or ocean waters" (Section 67840). Questions regarding the effect of sewage effluent on streams and lakes, including the possible hazards to public health, the growth of algae, and the outcome when the effluent is removed, all have yet to be resolved. Experiences in other parts of the state dictate caution in allowing discharge into streams and lakes in the Santa Monica Mountains.

## **10** Private Recreation

New zoning ordinances should be adopted to assure the compatibility of private recreational facilities with natural constraints and with other land uses in the Mountains.

Private recreational facilities are desirable land uses when they supplement public recreation and when they serve as an alternative to low-density residential use. Private operators can provide a variety of recreational facilities compatible with the natural setting and the general pattern of existing developments.

The Resort and Recreation Zone in Los Angeles County, however, allows a wide variety of recreational uses in the Santa Monica Mountains which may not be compatible with the natural constraints and other land uses. For instance, this zone allows dance pavillions, movie studios, and movie sets without a use permit. With a use permit airports, heliports, jails, and mobile home parks are allowed. These may be acceptable in urban areas, but they are questionable and potentially damaging, in the interior of the Mountains. Recreation zone ordinances in Ventura County are more restrictive and allow primarily outdoor, low-intensity recreational uses.

## **11** Preference for Recreational Land Uses

Residential density should be restricted where residential traffic and recreational traffic compete for limited road capacity.

In the interior of the Mountains many roads cannot handle both residential and recreational traffic. This policy reflects the Commission's goal of best serving the public interest by assuring recreational access for the region's population.

## CONSERVATION ELEMENT

The Conservation Element deals with the planned management, preservation, and wise use of the natural resources in the Santa Monica Mountains.

### Priority for Resource Protection

The natural resources of the Santa Monica Mountains should be protected. To the extent possible, all development should be compatible with this goal. Conflicts between development and natural resource values should be resolved by giving priority to protecting the resource unless benefits of overriding regional importance would otherwise be lost.

This policy attempts to strike a balance between conservation and development but recognizes that the Santa Monica Mountains are an irreplaceable resource.

### Regulations on Development in Conservation Areas

A conservation area should be established in the western and central portions of the Mountains to include lands of the phase two acquisition program, buffer zones around existing parks, and Significant Ecological Areas. Within this area, open space, conservation, and recreational values should be protected by the following methods:

- A. Where appropriate, very low density residential zoning (5-to-40 acres per dwelling unit).
- B. Design review regulations for all public and private buildings, signs, and major grading projects.
- C. Dedication of trail easements as a condition of development approval.
- D. Scenic easement contracts or dedications where appropriate to encourage landowners to maintain private open space.
- E. Transfer of densities or clustering used even in very low density zones (5-to-40 acres per dwelling unit) to group residential structures away from the most sensitive resources so as to retain them in a natural state.
- F. Environmental impact reports for all projects in Significant Ecological Areas and for major projects in other parts of the Conservation Area.

## **14** Protection of Landforms

Natural landforms should be protected from excessive grading.

The bold ridges, deep canyons, and interior valleys with their supporting vegetation provide the basis for the natural beauty of the mountains. Almost three-quarters of the Mountains are steep slopes of more than 20% grade. Most recent developments, such as Palisades Highlands, have used massive cut-and-fill methods to level hillsides for houses, leaving ugly scars and exposed ground destroying the natural beauty and causing erosion. Contour grading, generally used before heavy-duty earthmoving equipment became available, does less damage, leaves the site and surrounding areas more natural-looking, and does not result in such heavy erosion. Because developers claim that only the destructive cut-and-fill methods will yield sufficient flat land for the number of units allowed, lower densities are proposed for the steep and remote portions of the mountains to reduce the damage from grading where development occurs.

## **15** Restrictions on Development in Fire Hazard Zones

Fire is an imminent hazard to development. In extreme and high fire hazard zones residential development should be restricted to 5-to-40 acres per dwelling unit, clustered and surrounded by natural areas planted with fire resistant vegetation.

This policy suggests planning and development techniques which should be used in conjunction with fire safety regulations to reduce the risk of fire damage in the Mountains. A low residential density would reduce the exposure of persons and homes to fire hazards. Clustering would allow the fire fighters to concentrate their efforts in a smaller area. In view of the potential cutbacks in fire fighting forces as a result of Proposition 13, a more efficient use of the remaining forces is an important consideration.

The 1978 Agoura and Sepulveda fires again proved that homes built with fire resistant materials have a good chance to survive very severe fires with little or no damage. Guidelines should include requirements for construction materials that retard fire, water storage and distribution systems, brush clearance, and construction of roads wide enough to allow evacuation of people and access to the fire by fire equipment. Finally, fire departments agree that effective protection requires that the houses be clustered, surrounded by greenbelts, and that clustering of houses helps their efforts to prevent structural damage in brush fires.

## **16** Disclosure of Geologic Hazards

Where new development is permitted in areas of geologic hazards, a disclosure of such hazards should be recorded with the claim of title of any property.

The average home buyer cannot determine the existence of most geologic hazards and their potential threat to life and property. Disclosure of these hazards, written in language understandable to lay persons and made part of the chain of title, would help to inform the purchaser of potential hazards. Title reports already include information on many types of restrictions and conditions relating to property. The procedures are well-established so that the geologic hazards report can be added without difficulty.

## 17

## Protection for Special Plant Communities

Development should respect the unique characteristics of the basic types of habitat in the Santa Monica Mountains and should not significantly and unnecessarily alter the surrounding vegetation.

Specifically:

- A. Chaparral and sage habitats should not be altered where watersheds would be extensively damaged.
- B. The scarce woodland areas, because of their importance as wildlife habitat, should be protected from damaging development.
- C. The rapidly diminishing Valley Oak Savannahs should be protected by:
  1. A management program in areas used for grazing to replant and protect young oak trees; and,
  2. Sparing stands of oaks where development does occur and protecting them from overwatering.
- D. Unusual plant communities, unique to the Santa Monica Mountains, should not be lost through development.

Chaparral and sage, the dominant vegetation in the Santa Monica Mountains, grow on the steep, easily eroded slopes, holding them together and preventing massive erosion of watersheds and siltation of streams, lakes, and ponds.

Woodlands occur along stream bottoms, where a year-round source of water for the vegetation and wildlife can be found, or in open areas where live oaks can flourish along with black walnuts and bay trees. Both kinds of woodlands provide important food sources and, equally important, shade and shelter in an otherwise harsh environment. Approximately 3,540 acres of woodlands have been recommended for acquisition.

Though the range of the Valley Oak Savannah has been reduced, there are still some excellent examples in the Santa Monica Mountains zone. Grazing is a desirable use for these areas; however, only rarely does a young oak tree survive in heavily used pastures. Saplings should be surrounded by protective fencing until they reach sufficient size to survive.

Within developed areas, care should be taken through site design or provision of protective structures to keep the oaks from being overwatered. Sewage effluent spray fields should not be located in savannahs. Policy 17 will ensure that a major portion of the valley oaks, which give Agoura and Thousand Oaks their special character, can survive in spite of development.

Unusual plant communities range from a single plant such as the dogwood in La Sierra Canyon to a rare stand of alders in Tuna Canyon and woodland bogs of giant ferns, remnants of the cooler and wetter Pleistocene Ice Age. The Plan recommends that many of these areas be acquired.

## **18** Containing Storm Runoff

Development in the Agoura/Simi Hills subarea should not increase peak storm runoff. This requirement should also apply to other areas where it is found that the increased runoff from development would cause flooding or other damage downstream.

This policy places the responsibility for flood control at the source of the problem: the development itself. In the Agoura area, the increase in runoff through development will cause flood problems downstream in the major watercourses. Not only will private lands and improvements be endangered from more frequent and powerful floods, but the large public investment in Malibu Creek State Park and other facilities will be threatened.

There are several methods to achieve this policy, the choice of method depending on the individual project. These include careful site planning, backyard ponding, street design, and in some cases, retention basins. First priority should be given to those methods using sound engineering standards which will replenish groundwater tables. Backyard ponding and carefully designed retention basins meet this criterion.

## **19** Maintaining Natural Stream Channels

Every attempt should be made to maintain the natural quality of streams, and creek watercourses should not be replaced with concrete flood control channels.

Stream modifications are costly, both in dollars and in environmental damage. Irreplaceable riparian habitat is destroyed whenever a stream is converted to a concrete flood control channel or otherwise modified. Scientific and recreational values are lost. Retaining natural channels reduces peak runoff in downstream areas.

## **20** Minimizing Flood Hazards

Flood hazards should be minimized by:

- A. Limiting development in critical watersheds; and,
- B. Keeping development out of natural flood plains.

Development at suburban densities of many of the watersheds would increase stream runoff from 15% to more than 500%, requiring extensive flood control measures. By reducing densities, flooding and sedimentation will be minimized because the area covered by manmade impermeable surfaces will be relatively low.

**21****Wildlife Network**

- A minimum wildlife network should be established, consisting of:
- A. Significant Ecological Areas;
  - B. Buffer Zones for the Significant Ecological Areas; and,
  - C. Existing parks and other key habitats.

The Santa Monica Mountains support a diverse and healthy population of wildlife, including mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes, golden eagles, steelhead and a wide range of other species. The Land Capability Study identifies a minimum 90,000 acre wildlife network, the most significant portion of which is recommended for acquisition. Where development is allowed within the remaining network, densities should be very low.

**22****Support of Agriculture**

Agriculture should be supported as the primary land use in the Oxnard Plain, Hidden Valley, and Las Virgenes Valley.

Support of agriculture means maintaining very low residential densities. Las Virgenes Valley is designated for spray fields for the treated effluent from the Tapia Sewage Treatment Plant. Spray fields allow limited agricultural use, such as grazing and cultivation of alfalfa or other forage crops. Tax reduction incentives will encourage this desirable use and should be offered to landowners.

**23****Chumash Center**

A Chumash Cultural Center should be established in the Santa Monica Mountains.

The Santa Monica Mountains were once the homeland of the Chumash Indians. It would be most fitting to set aside land and funds for a cultural center—a focal point for the Chumash and their traditional ceremonies as well as an educational center for schools, universities, and individuals interested in the study of the Chumash heritage. The Danielson Ranch in Ventura County would be an appropriate site for such a center.

## **24** Protection of Cultural Resources

A system to protect the historical, archaeological, paleontological and geological resources in the Santa Monica Mountains should be initiated.

Thousands of historical, archaeological, paleontological and geological sites exist in the Mountains, many of which are endangered. The sites include historical homes and landmarks, rock paintings and burial grounds, ancient fossil remains, and unique irreplaceable geological formations. The presence of these resources does not necessarily preclude development or change in the area; rather, it requires great care during planning stages of any impacting action. In only a few cases will a resource be so significant as to foreclose development totally. The permit-issuing agencies should be provided with policies, regulations and confidential maps locating known resources. Builders and potential landowners should be informed that there may be restrictions and/or regulation of construction on a parcel containing such sites.

## **25** Educational Use of Mountains

The use of the Santa Monica Mountains as an educational resource should be expanded.

The Mountains are an outdoor laboratory for Southern California, serving educational uses from elementary school field trips to dissertation research. These uses should be encouraged and increased.

## RECREATION ELEMENT

The Santa Monica Mountains are located in the heart of a metropolitan region of 10 million people in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. In spite of some outstanding parks, the metropolitan region does not have enough parks and open spaces to provide recreational opportunities for all its residents. According to the Conservation and Open Space Plan of the Southern California Association of Governments (1977), the region needs to acquire 75,000 acres in Los Angeles County alone by the year 1997 to reach commonly accepted standards.

The combination of attractive, unspoiled scenery and proximity to population centers makes the Santa Monica Mountains a most desirable location for parks and open spaces offering a wide variety of recreational opportunities. Using data gathered by the State Department of Parks and Recreation, it becomes clear that the demand for recreation in the Santa Monica Mountains will grow dramatically.

The Santa Monica Mountains are most suitable for recreational activities such as camping, hiking, horseback riding, nature walks, and picnicking. The demand for these activities is already relatively high in the Santa Monica Mountains Area; most of the existing recreational facilities, as well as those future recreational facilities planned by the State of California within the Mountains, have been designed to serve this need.

The combined holdings of all public agencies in the Santa Monica Mountains comprise about 40,000 acres, of which about 34,000 acres are parks and open spaces available to the public. The remaining 6,000 acres are restricted public lands, such as sanitary landfill sites or reservoirs. These public ownerships form the foundation upon which a mountain-wide parks and open space system can be built.

### EXISTING PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

<b>State Parks</b>	<b><u>Acreage</u></b>
Point Mugu	14,000+
Leo Carrillo State Beach	2,158
Malibu Creek	4,071
Topanga	8,708
<b>Los Angeles City Parks</b>	
Griffith Park and Griffith Recreation Center	4,000
Elysian Park	575
Small neighborhood parks	250
<b>Los Angeles County Parks</b>	
Charmlee	432
Tapia	110
<b>City of Thousand Oaks</b>	
Conejo Valley Parks and Recreation District	800
Rancho Simi Parks and Recreation District	<u>820</u>
	35,924

The State of California is the largest public landowner in the Mountains, with about 28,000 acres. An additional 2,500 acres are funded or under negotiation for acquisition. The bulk of the holdings are in the four major parks: Point Mugu State Park, Leo Carrillo State Beach, Malibu Creek State Park, and Topanga State Park. State beaches and other minor parks amount to less than 1,000 acres. At the present time, the State Parks—with the exception of Leo Carrillo State Beach—remain largely undeveloped, offering only a small portion of the facilities ultimately planned for construction. In the 1979 Budget Act, the legislature included \$8 million dollars for acquisition of an addition 2900 acres of the Commission's Phase I acquisition program.

In 1978 Congress created the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, with an authorization of \$155 million. The Preliminary Public Ownership map (May 1979) published by the National Park Service indicates some 70,000 acres of new acquisitions for the Santa Monica Mountains. Federal Land acquisition will begin in February, 1980.

### Use of Existing Public Land

There are often opportunities to expand the system without the expenditure of public funds, although acquisition by purchase will probably be the most commonly used method. Public restricted lands are owned by government agencies for a specific use, such as reservoirs or sanitary landfills. Most of these sites are near existing development and adjacent to public parks and open spaces. Securing some public recreational use of these restricted sites could supplement the park system significantly. Agreements with the public agencies would have to be worked out.

The following table lists the major restricted public lands which should make significant additions to the public park and open-space system.

### RESTRICTED PUBLIC LANDS

	<u>Acres</u>
Hollywood Reservoir	225
Upper and Lower Franklin Reservoir	485
Stone Canyon Reservoir	763
Encino Reservoir	1,073
Santa Ynez Reservoir	58
Main Mission Canyon	499
Sullivan/Rustic Canyons	1,900
Calabasas Landfill Site	<u>416</u>
	5,419

**Annual Demand for Outdoor Recreational Activities  
in the Santa Monica Mountains Area  
(In Thousands of Participation Days)**

	1970	1980	1990	%	%
Camping	2,244	2,927	3,870	47	15
Hiking	1,074	1,397	1,938	31	11
Swimming	14,187	18,552	24,541	46	14
Horseback riding	1,868	2,421	3,227	60	17
Bicycling	28,726	37,095	48,850	76	28
Playing outdoor sports or games	81,302	105,049	138,471	73	31
Nature walks	2,827	3,671	4,885	61	18
Picnicking	6,591	8,561	11,325	52	20
Walking for Pleasure	85,669	110,688	145,830	61	29

Source: Santa Monica Mountains and Seashore Plan by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, 1975.

**GRAND TOTAL INCREASES IN PARTICIPATION DAYS  
(In Thousands of Days)**

	1970	1980	1990	Percent Increase 1970-1980	Percent Increase 1970-1990
Santa Monica Mts. Area	204,511	294,061	534,511	43.8%	161.4%
In Percent of Region	42.6%	47.9%	65.2%		
In Percent of Dist. 8	16.7%	18.5%	25.5%		
Ventura-Los Angeles Counties Region	480,429	621,794	820,518	29.4%	70.3%
State Park Planning District No. 8	1,224,900	1,587,300	2,095,400	29.6%	71.1%

## Developer Donations

It has become common practice to negotiate for the dedication of lands for parks and open spaces during the approval process of large developments. The dedicated land is usually difficult to develop. Wherever such dedicated lands complement other public open spaces, they should be made part of the public open space system. Future dedications of this kind should be planned so that the system can be expanded and improved.

## **26** Support Private Recreation

**Private recreational facilities should be supported as supplements to public recreation.**

The State's plans for improvements in the Mountains' parks are generally designed to serve the self-supporting recreationist; most of the public facilities will be camp sites, picnic grounds, trails, and eventually a few hostels. Private recreation operators can, and already do, round out the recreational opportunities with day and overnight camps, where the camp owner provides meals and more extensive facilities, such as tennis courts, golf courses, swimming pools, and dude ranches. Private operators tend to be more flexible, meeting special needs of such groups as the poor, elderly, or handicapped, or those with special dietary needs or the desire for the privacy of a retreat.

Private recreational facilities also help to maintain considerable open space: the Boy Scouts Camp near Boñey Ridge, the Salvation Army Camp at Malibu Creek State Park, and religious camps in the western part of the Mountains are examples of private recreation compatible with public open space values. These should be encouraged and supported with Scenic Easement Contracts offered to the owners of private facilities to reduce the property tax on the open space portion. In return, the owner agrees to leave the open space undeveloped for a specified period. Contracts should also provide for public trail easements over private open space.

Private recreation can also be an alternate land use to residential development in the Mountains. Although it is too early to say how many acres of land may be devoted to recreation, its potential as an economically viable land use should be explored in greater detail.

## TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

Transportation planning in the Santa Monica Mountains has been a controversial topic for many years. During the 1950's and 1960's, the State constructed and expanded the regional system of freeways and arterial roads at a grand scale. In recent years, shortage of funds and opposition to new arterial roads and freeways has slowed the expansion of this system. Residents of the Mountains oppose new road projects because widened roads induce growth, disrupt cohesive communities, and cause environmental damage. They feel that these disadvantages outweigh the advantages of an expanded road system.

Residential traffic accounts for a relatively small portion of the traffic on the major roads and freeways. Particularly in the eastern part of the Mountains, regional through-traffic contributes the greatest volume and number of problems. The implications are clear: within the Mountains, land use planning, alone--no matter how restrictive--cannot solve transportation problems. Significant and long-lasting effects can be achieved only through a well-coordinated, regional effort. The Commission's plans and policies can contribute toward such a regional effort. Thus, the guiding principle for this Element has been to cast the Transportation Plan in the framework of providing safe transportation along existing roadways and incorporating improved public transportation.

### **27** Road Network

Land uses in the Santa Monica Mountains should be accommodated by the existing road network. While limited improvements on existing roads may be made to improve safety or to remedy a local bottleneck, the construction of new cross-mountain roads should not be permitted.

The cost of new roads and their maintenance, damage to the natural environment, and community opposition are the primary reasons why no new cross-mountain roads should be constructed. Budgets are strained at the state and local levels and inflation has seriously affected their ability to improve or even maintain the existing system at its present level.

The effects of this policy will be felt most keenly along the Ventura Freeway, Pacific Coast Highway, Topanga Canyon Boulevard, and Malibu Canyon Road, and on all the cross-mountain roads within the City of Los Angeles. In spite of the low densities proposed for the interior of the Mountains, congestion will increase on these roads as long as the population continues to grow, travel patterns remain the same, and people rely on their cars for transportation.

Added automobile trips can be reduced, but an increase cannot entirely be prevented along Pacific Coast Highway and the major cross-mountain roads, if the construction of housing in Los Angeles County is directed to the Ventura Freeway Corridor. Present trends show that most residents living near the Ventura Freeway will commute on the freeway rather than travel to the coast route.

Higher densities in the central portion of the Mountains than those proposed by the Commission would further increase traffic on all mountain roads. Depending upon where the densities are greatest and development occurs, Malibu Canyon Road and other major cross-mountain roads would have to absorb a substantial portion of the additional commuter traffic. The closer new units are to the coast, the higher the percentage of commuters choosing to use Pacific Coast Highway.

No agency now responsible for transportation within or adjacent to the Mountains considers the construction of new roads in the Mountains a high priority. The City of Los Angeles has no plans to construct or improve roads and although the Los Angeles County Master Plan of Highways shows rights-of-way for widening existing roads and constructing numerous new highways within the Mountains, their short-range plans include no projects in the Mountains. In Ventura County, only the widening of the Ventura Freeway to 6 lanes east of Conejo Summit is planned for the near future. As these agencies realize, major roads should not be constructed within the Mountains, even though west of the City of Los Angeles they could probably be located with minimal disruption to existing communities. New construction would require extensive grading thus significantly lowering the quality of the environment.

Beyond these considerations there remains the residents' constant opposition to new roads. At the urging of hillside residents, the City of Los Angeles adopted Community Plans which prohibit construction of new cross-mountain roads and past efforts to construct freeways were successfully stopped when residents of the Mountains and surrounding areas objected to state proposals.

## **28** Limiting Road Improvements

Improvement of other than cross-mountain roads, or construction of major new roads should be undertaken only if necessary to provide:

- A. Local access to new development where such developments are consistent with the Plan;
- B. Increased safety that minimally disrupts the environment; and,
- C. Access to regional recreational areas.

In areas that are undergoing new development, local road construction to serve that development may be necessary. Careful placement of these new roads will reduce environmental damage and result in an adequate local road network. The following projects would be consistent with this policy:

1. Widening the Ventura Freeway to 6 lanes from Moorpark Road to Conejo Summit.
2. Continuing the frontage road parallel to the Ventura Freeway from Westlake Village to Calabasas, between Liberty Canyon and Lost Hills and between Las Virgenes Road and the westerly extension of Calabasas Road.

3. Realigning Thousand Oaks Boulevard through Old Agoura between Kanan and Chesebro Roads to provide a second access to the Ventura Freeway. The improvement is designed to be a 2-lane road without street lights to fit into the existing rural character of Old Agoura.
4. Restriping of Pacific Coast Highway between Temescal Canyon and Topanga Canyon Boulevards to accommodate 3 lanes in both directions. Heavy recreational use mandates that the Coastal Commission reconsider its denial of a permit for that project.

Improvements to the existing road network will continue to be made in the interest of safety where a particularly hazardous situation exists or may develop or to give the public access to a recreational area. If improvements to the existing road network become necessary, they should have a high priority. While residential density can be shifted to other areas outside the Mountains in an effort to keep within the existing road capacity, recreational potential cannot be shifted.

## **29** Major Coastal Access Road

The option to widen Kanan-Dume Road to 4 lanes should remain available and Kanan Road overpass at the Ventura Freeway should be widened to 4 lanes plus left-turn lanes and bicycle lanes.

Kanan-Dume Road crosses the Mountains in a strategic location, serving an area where expansion of recreational opportunity is proposed. This major route can and should serve as an alternate to the other cross-mountain roads for visitors traveling to the western beaches from the San Fernando Valley. As weekend traffic becomes more congested along Topanga and Malibu Canyon Roads, Kanan-Dume Road should be designated the primary access route with signs directing beachgoers to use this route.

The need for widening the overpass results from recreational as well as residential traffic. As development proposed in this Plan is built, the problem will become further aggravated.

## **30** State Park Access

The option should be retained to develop a northern access to Malibu Creek State Park.

Increased recreational use of the Mountains and the beaches may make congestion along Las Virgenes and Malibu Canyon Roads unacceptable. Over 2,000 trips will be added each weekend day if State Parks and Recreation's proposals for the development come about. A quick, easy access into the State Park will then be needed.

## **31** Improved Access to Topanga State Park

Public access to Topanga State Park should be improved by:

- A. An entrance road to Trippet Ranch, bypassing Entrada Road.
- B. A northern access from the San Fernando Valley.

Although a new entrance road is part of the adopted plan for Topanga State Park, the Department of Parks and Recreation indicates that it may never be built. Planned facilities at Trippet Ranch would require better access than presently available via Entrada Road, a steep narrow residential street. Direct access from the San Fernando Valley would serve over one million residents living north of the Park. Through a combination of purchase or easement dedication, recreational support facilities should be developed at the southernmost point of Reseda Boulevard, allowing walk-in or equestrian use of Topanga State Park.

## **32** Pacific Coast Highway Congestion

Land uses in the Santa Monica Mountains should have the least possible effect on Pacific Coast Highway.

The Pacific Coast Highway poses a traffic problem that defies solution. Portions of the highway are extremely congested during midweek commuter rush hours and periods of peak beach use; it can take an hour to travel 6-8 miles. The most congested portion of the Highway lies between Topanga Canyon and Chatauqua Boulevards where the road is 2 lanes wide in each direction. There is neither the community support nor the money to widen the Pacific Coast Highway. This means that strict land use controls must be exercised to limit development along the coastal corridor and in the center portions of the Mountains; the closer new units are to the coast, the higher the percentage of commuters using the Pacific Coast Highway.

## **33** Recreational Transit

Improved bus transit to the Santa Monica Mountains should follow the short- and long-range recommendations specified in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area Recreation Transportation System Element, a component of the Comprehensive Plan.

Short range recommendations (1-5 years) call for:

1. The extension and increased frequency of RTD Route 175 along Pacific Coast Highway.
2. The extension of RTD Route 76 to Pacific Coast Highway to link up with Route 175.
3. The provision of service from the San Fernando Valley through Malibu Canyon to Zuma Beach.
4. The provision of weekday commuter service from the San Fernando Valley to the Los Angeles Basin along Coldwater Canyon Ave./Drive. This weekday service would serve the Cross-Mountain Park on weekends.

5. Further service extensions of existing routes as parks are developed and demand can be demonstrated.
6. Subscription and charter service from the more distant areas within the Los Angeles-Ventura Metropolitan region to provide access to recreation centers within the National Recreation Area.
7. RTD's proposed express route S434 to provide weekday and weekend service to Malibu from downtown Los Angeles.
8. The evaluation of other express routes for extended weekend service.
9. Planning and administrative functions of the transportation program for the NRA to be assumed by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG).
10. Continued transit service by the Southern California Rapid Transit District (SCRTD).
11. No road improvements for transit operations except necessary provisions for turn-outs to accommodate transit buses.
12. The National Park Service to actively pursue federal financial support through the Access to Parks legislation ("Chartachoochee" Bill) in order to support the operating costs of recommended short-range transit improvements.

**Long range recommendations (5-20 years) call for:**

1. Bus service along Laurel Canyon Boulevard to provide service to the Cross-Mountain Park and weekday commuters traveling between the San Fernando Valley and the Los Angeles Basin.
2. Bus service from the Thousand Oaks, Conejo Valley, Simi Valley, and Moorpark areas to Zuma Beach along Kanan-Dume Road.
3. Bus service from the San Fernando Valley to Topanga State Beach, Will Rogers State Beach, and Topanga State Park along Topanga Canyon Boulevard.
4. Bus service along Reseda Boulevard to Caballero Canyon.
5. Bus service extended to provide access to the Huntington-Hartford property.
6. Bus service between the communities of Ventura, Oxnard, Camarillo, Simi Valley, and Moorpark and the National Recreation Area.
7. Further study and implementation of additional routes as parks are developed and demand can be demonstrated.
8. Express service from target communities with the Los Angeles-Ventura County Metropolitan region to the National Recreation Area.

9. Shuttle service between recreation centers be a long-term, low priority addition to the overall recreation transportation system.
10. The integration of transportation access programs with CALTRANS through the Commuter Computer ride-sharing program.
11. The integration of planning and administrative functions for transportation access to the NRA into a centralized agency with regionwide responsibility for access to recreation areas.
12. The National Park Service to encourage the permanent commitment of funds for transit operations to and within the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.
13. The development of staging areas for the NRA as the General Management Plans are developed by the National Park Service.
14. The exploration of peripheral parking lot locations in conjunction with a parking control plan and the expansion of transit service.

## SCENIC PARKWAYS AND CORRIDORS ELEMENT

Most highways and roads in the Santa Monica Mountains offer better than average scenic views. In recognition of this, the Scenic Highways Elements of the County of Los Angeles and the City of Los Angeles General Plans designate almost all major roads in the Santa Monica Mountains as scenic highways. The Scenic Highway designation, however, offers insufficient protection for the most important scenic routes and their views.

Scenic Parkways are roads and their rights-of-way which, by comparison with other roads in the Santa Monica Mountains, provide significant or exceptional opportunities for the enjoyment of natural or manmade views. Scenic Corridors are the visible area outside the scenic parkway's right-of-way which is a part of the view and which can realistically be subjected to protective land use controls.

Among the scenic parkways and corridors proposed in this element, Mulholland plays a predominant role. Mulholland Drive was conceived in 1913 as a great scenic road along the crest of the Santa Monica Mountains from Cahuenga Pass west. By the adoption of the Report of the Citizens' Advisory Committee on the Mulholland Scenic Parkway by the Los Angeles City Council in 1973, the official policy established a low-volume, slow-speed, two-lane scenic route, unique and beautiful skyline route in the midst of a metropolis. It calls for a ribbon-like park with hiking, bicycling and bridle trails, vista points, parks, and picnic areas.

In Los Angeles County, Mulholland passes through a largely undeveloped rural setting. The route often follows the valley floor which means that protection from visual blight must be extended to include ridgelines sometimes 2-to-3 miles distant. Within this corridor, special regulations are proposed to safeguard the scenic and environmental values. An ordinance to protect the corridor has been prepared by the Mulholland Scenic Corridor Citizens' Advisory Committee and is about to be considered by the Board of Supervisors.

The purpose of this element is not to duplicate the work of the Mulholland Committees or even to match the level of detail in their reports, but, rather, to integrate their work into a comprehensive system of parkways and corridors that will serve as the vital link between parks and recreational areas in the Mountains and adjacent seashore.

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## Scenic Parkways and Corridors

A system of scenic roadways, parkways, and corridors should be established which would form a comprehensive network linking recreation access routes, recreation destinations, and trails, with final designation, mapping and specific ordinances left with the implementing agency. The following classification system should be used.