

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Adopted February 1979

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Interior, August 1979**



**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.

Constraints		Residential Densities							
		Land Uses	Preservation	Natural Recreation	Agriculture (Including Grazing)	Intensive Recreation	5-40 ac./unit	1-5 ac./unit	1 unit or more per acre
<u>Hazards</u>									
Geologic	Rockfall	VH	VH	VH	M	M	L	VL	VL
	Landslides	VH	VH	VH	L	L	VL	VL	VL
	Surface Fracture	VH	VH	VH	M	L	L	VL	VL
	Tsunami	VH	VH	H	M	VL	VL	VL	VL
	Liquefaction	VH	VH	VH	H	L	L	VL	VL
Slope	Less than 20%	VH	VH	VH	VH	VH	VH	VH	VH
	21%-33%	VH	VH	VH	M	H	M	M	L
	34%-67%	VH	VH	VH	L	H	L	L	VL
	Greater than 67%	VH	VH	H	L	M	L	VL	VL
Fire Hazard	Extreme	VH	H	VH	M	L	L	L	L
	High	VH	H	VH	H	L	L	L	L
	Moderate	VH	VH	VH	VH	H	H	H	H
Soils Erodability	Very High	VH	H	VL	VL	M	L	VL	VL
	High	VH	H	L	L	M	M	L	L
	Moderate	VH	VH	M	M	H	H	M	M
	Slight	VH	VH	H	H	VH	VH	H	H
<u>Resources</u>									
Vegetation	Riparian & Other Woodlands	VH	M	VL	L	H	L	VL	VL
	Savannah	VH	VH	L	H	VH	H	L	VL
	Chaparral	VH	VH	VL	M	H	M	L	VL
	Sage	VH	VH	VL	H	VH	H	M	M
	Grasslands	VH	VH	VH	H	VH	H	M	M
	Unusual Plant Communities	VH	VH	VL	VL	H	L	VL	VL
	Wildlife. Within Network	VH	VH	M	H	M	VL	VL	VL

Compatibility Rating Symbols: VH = Very High
 H = High
 M = Moderate
 L = Low
 VL = Very Low

* Refers to average slope over portions of any given parcel as shown on Slope Analyses Maps by U.S. Geologic Survey and County Engineer, Los Angeles County

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.

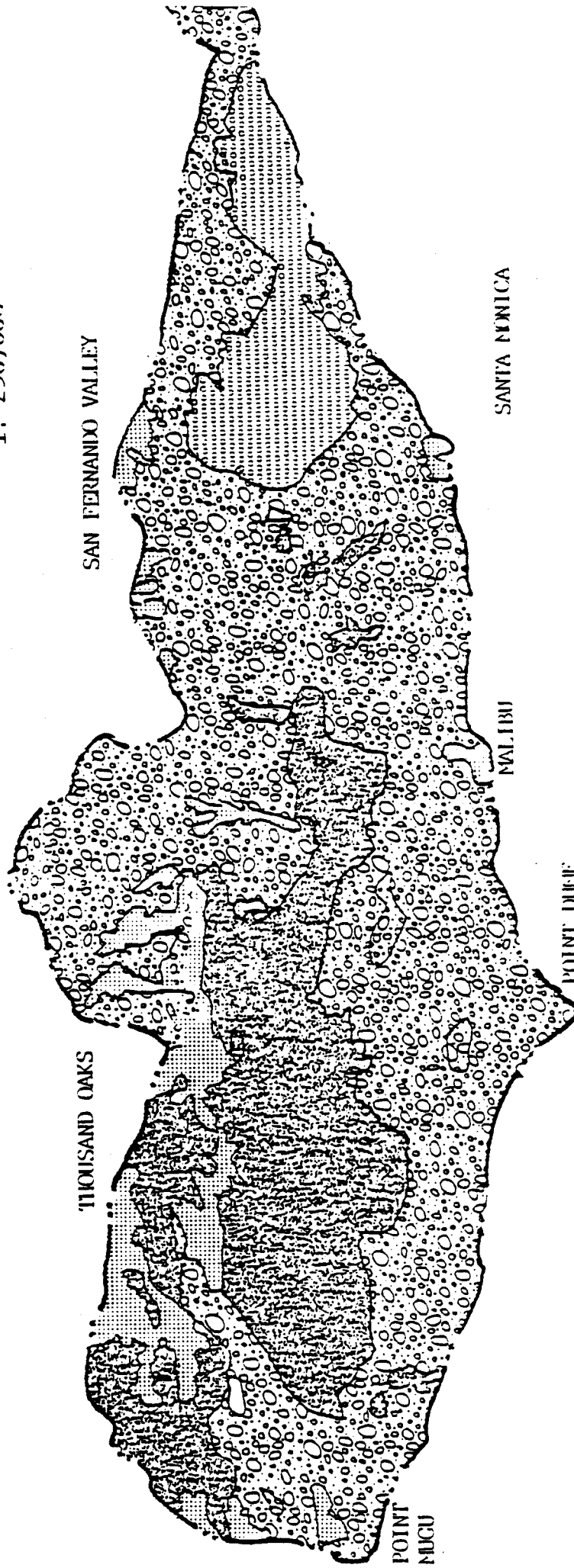
Geology

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)
Total(4)	41,089 (20.6)	7,160 (3.6)	93,511 (46.7)	29,573 (14.8)	8,954 (4.5)	4,215 (2.1)	12,963 (6.5)	1,272 (0.6)	1,177 (0.6)	199,918 (100)

- (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.