

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

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February 25, 2019

Board of Supervisors
County of Ventura
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, California 93009

**Amendments to the General Plan and Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance to Establish a
Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Corridors Overlay Zone, a Critical Wildlife Passage
Areas Overlay Zone, and Related Regulations (PL16-0127)**

Dear Chairperson Bennett and Honorable Supervisors:

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Conservancy) commends and supports the County's efforts on the proposed Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Corridors Overlay Zone, Critical Wildlife Passage Areas Overlay Zone, and accompanying Ordinance and regulations.

Only with such embedded planning mechanisms in place can the County be assured of providing adequate long-term habitat connectivity between its ecologically rich natural areas. The public value of these natural resources is too great to leave to chance based on otherwise wholly unguided land use decisions and actions. As presented to your Board with the Planning Commission's recommendations, the wildlife corridor package guarantees great outcomes for the whole County that are balanced with intentionally flexible regulations derived from years of broad public input.

Our staff has been part of that long public process. The process to date has essentially incorporated all of the specific, tangible suggestions made by the package's opponents. The remaining opposition now appears to be more ideological than rooted in specific package deficiencies that could be remedied by your staff.

In July 2018, as the principal State planning agency for the area, the Conservancy adopted a *Tierra Rejada Valley Habitat Linkage Hub Planning Map*. The abutting northern and southern map sections are attached. The Conservancy both then and now concludes that the Tierra Rejada Valley is essential to ensure adequate long term habitat connectivity between the Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills and to the Montclef Ridge area. The valley is a critical habitat linkage hub identified as early as 1990 by The Nature Conservancy. We urge the Board to reinstate the Tierra Rejada Valley as a Critical

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Wildlife Passage Area in the package. In regards to severely threatened regional connectivity, the valley may be the most vulnerable area in the entire County. Reliance on the non-binding greenbelt agreement cannot yield an adequate wildlife corridor outcome.

You have the opportunity to adopt a masterful package of wildlife protection legislation to set an example for the entire country. Delay will certainly cost both the permanent loss of habitat connectivity and County planning funding. The Conservancy urges your adoption of the full legislative package.

Sincerely,

IRMA MUNOZ
Chairperson