

FACT SHEET

Wildlife Pilot Study and Draft Wildlife Ordinance


Summary

The Department of City Planning has initiated a study to draft potential development regulations for wildlife protection at the direction of City Councilmember Paul Koretz [[Council File motion](#)]. The Wildlife Pilot Study is intended to result in regulations that will help to preserve wildlife and promote habitat connectivity in a pilot study area in the Santa Monica Mountains between the 405 and 101 freeways. A draft of proposed regulations for public review and feedback is expected in April 2021.

The overall objective of the proposed regulations is to achieve more sustainable outcomes in hillside developments and to promote biodiversity, in addition to other goals such as climate change resilience, fire safety and water conservation. To meet these objectives, the regulations aim to minimize disturbance of biological resources where sensitive habitat may exist particularly around waterways, riparian areas and highly vegetated areas. The regulations are also focused on protecting soil and native vegetation by improving grading and landscaping standards.

Background

The Wildlife Pilot Study is an effort that the Planning Department began working on in response to direction by City Councilman Paul Koretz of Council District 5 in 2016. The Planning Department began this study to inform the development of a set of regulations that would protect wildlife connectivity in the city. The City's aim has been to balance wildlife habitat maintenance and enhancement with private property development.



The Pilot Study identified areas that could potentially contain sensitive biotic conditions that are important to protect. These areas are identified as proposed Protected Areas for Wildlife (PAWs). The Pilot Study Area is a smaller subset of the PAWs, its boundary includes the communities between the 405 and 101 freeways in the Santa Monica Mountains, including: Hollywood, Laurel Canyon, Bel-Air, Beverly Crest, Sherman Oaks, and Studio City.

The Pilot Study Area represents a mix of primarily low density residential lots and large undeveloped open spaces and natural areas. Development in this area is intermingled with undeveloped land providing an environment for testing regulations to enhance biological value while balancing urban development.

The Study recommended that maintaining and enhancing larger, contiguous areas suitable for wildlife and native species would provide greater biological value than preserving only limited or isolated patches and pathways. Therefore, the proposed Ordinance takes a broad approach to maintaining and enhancing ecosystems, biodiversity, and wildlife corridors across the entire Pilot Study area.

It is intended that the proposed regulations being considered for the Pilot Study Area would eventually be expanded to PAWs throughout the city.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. Why is the Wildlife Pilot Study being conducted?

In 2016 a City Council [motion](#) directed the Planning Department to conduct a study and create an ordinance with a set of land use regulations that would protect wildlife connectivity in the city. Preserving biodiversity and wildlife in natural areas has been a topic of interest to many over the last several decades. More research by the scientific community and better technology are giving cities and counties more tools to understand natural areas and their benefits. The City of Los Angeles has started to advance planning for the related topics of biodiversity, climate change, resilience and sustainability in most recent efforts by the Mayor's Office and City Departments. See Resilient Los Angeles 2018 [RESILIENT LOS ANGELES](#), Sustainability pLAn 2019 <https://plan.lamayor.org/> and LASAN's 2020 Biodiversity Report [Biodiversity 2020](#).

2. Who has been engaged in the work relating to the Wildlife Pilot Study?

The Department has hosted several workshops and outreach efforts since its initial Open House on November 7, 2018 to share concepts and seek public feedback. Planning staff have been meeting with technical experts, community and neighborhood groups and expanding the datasets needed for mapping analysis. Feedback received was supportive of the study and ordinance concepts and included suggestions for mapping additional vegetation data, connecting with additional subject matter experts, finding more outreach opportunities, and obtaining examples of wildlife-friendly best practices.


In addition, staff have also been coordinating with other agencies in the region including the County of Los Angeles, County of Ventura, and other nearby cities, as well as, state and federal agencies such as, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the National Park Service and others. The team has met with topic experts/stakeholders including The Center for Biological Diversity, California Native Plant Society, The Natural History Museum, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), Citizens for Los Angeles Wildlife (CLAW), Arroyos and Foothills Conservancy, Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains, and the American Bird Conservancy.

The Wildlife team has met with City departments including Building and Safety, Bureau of Sanitation, Urban Forestry, LA Bureau of Engineering, LA Fire Department, and the Mayor's Office on Sustainability. The team has also consulted with Council Districts, the Community Forestry Advisory Committee, and other neighborhood groups.

3. Why is biodiversity important?

Biodiversity is the variety of plants, animals, and other species interacting with their environment to maintain the balance of nature. In cities, these environments include the natural areas, urban landscapes, and other built environments that these species call home.

The City of Los Angeles is fortunate to be located within a globally recognized hotspot of native biodiversity. While Los Angeles is a biodiversity jewel, this designation also means that the biodiversity here is threatened, and innovative strategies are needed to



ensure its resilience and sustainability. The survival and well-being of the City's residents also depend on ecosystem services provided by biodiversity:

- air pollution reduction
- adapting to a changing climate
- mental health and educational opportunities
- water cleansing
- aesthetic benefits

4. How do I learn more about Biodiversity and the City's efforts?

The City of Los Angeles has many different initiatives underway to address the enhancement of habitat and biodiversity in the City and region.

The Bureau of Sanitation and Environment (LASAN) is spearheading the creation of a Los Angeles Biodiversity Index, and has released informative Biodiversity Reports in both 2018 and 2020. LASAN is also working with internal and external experts on a healthy soils initiative, and on tree planting programs to increase the urban forest. More information on these efforts can be found at lacitysan.org/biodiversity and lacitysan.org/trees. Additionally, LASAN is working towards certifying Los Angeles as a Community Wildlife Habitat™ through the National Wildlife Federation (nwf.org/communitywildlifehabitat), and partnering with the Los Angeles Public Library to create a sci-starter website (scistarter.org/), which will help connect Angelenos to opportunities to engage in community science here in L.A.

There are also efforts to enhance the urban forest within the City, visit laparks.org/forest/reforestation, laparks.org/forest/heritage-trees, cityplants.org/ and dpw.lacity.org/.

The Department of Water and Power also signed on as a partner of the national Power to the Pollinators project (eprijournal.com/power-to-the-pollinators/).

The Cabrillo Marine Aquarium also provides information about biodiversity in marine environments (cabrillomarineaquarium.org/).

5. Why is there a separate Ridgeline Study?

The Wildlife Study and Ridgeline Study were proposed independently, although they have mutually beneficial objectives, occupy similar geography, and are being coordinated. The Ridgeline Study effort was begun in response to a City Council Motion ([Council File No. 11-1441-S1](#)), which asked Los Angeles City Planning to identify ways to better preserve and protect the City's ridgelines – some of the City's most unique and valuable natural resources. To facilitate the protection of these topographic features, the City has drafted proposed regulations for a Ridgeline District which identifies ridgelines and proposes a consistent approach to ensure that new development is appropriate in location, scale, and visual prominence. More information on the Ridgeline Ordinance can be found at planning.lacity.org/plans-policies/proposed-land-use-regulations.

6. Where can I find more information about the Wildlife Pilot Study and how can I stay informed?

Please visit planning.lacity.org/plans-policies/initiatives-policies/sustainability for more information including previous presentations and a video update released January 2021. Click [here](#) to receive updates from the Planning Department about this and other efforts.

7. What is the timeline for the Study?

The Department has gathered initial community feedback on planning concepts and potential regulations related to wildlife and urban residential development in the hillsides. Additional analysis using GIS, test cases, and consultation with subject matter experts has been completed. A set of draft regulations is nearing completion and undergoing internal and interdepartmental review and will be available for public review in mid 2021. Public outreach is planned to obtain feedback on the draft regulations. The Department will then finalize the proposed regulations, and prepare for the City Council approval process through which the regulations would be adopted in late 2021.