

FACT SHEET

Wildlife Pilot Study and Draft Wildlife Ordinance - Biodiversity

Summary

The City of Los Angeles (City) has a multitude of efforts to address ecological health and resilience in the Los Angeles (LA) region, including: [LA's Green New Deal](#); [Resilient Los Angeles](#); the [General Plan](#) (which includes a specific [Conservation element](#)); the [Protected Tree Ordinance](#); and the Bureau of Sanitation and Environments' [One Water, Biodiversity, Healthy Soils](#) initiatives, among many others. Together, these various efforts aim to conserve existing natural resources, enhance biodiversity and address climate resilience within the City. One specific effort to address biodiversity within the City that is being spearheaded by the Department of City Planning (Planning) is the [Wildlife Pilot Study and Draft Wildlife Ordinance](#).

Background

The Wildlife Pilot Study is an effort that was catalyzed in response to a [Motion](#) introduced by City Councilmember Paul Koretz of Council District 5 in 2016, which called for Planning to create a Wildlife Ordinance with a set of land use regulations that would address wildlife habitat and connectivity in the city. Connecting larger contiguous patches of habitat provides greater ecological value than preserving isolated patches or singular pathways. This broader ecosystem approach not only promotes wildlife habitat and connectivity, but also addresses overall biodiversity, which is another important initiative being undertaken by the City in response to a [Biodiversity Motion](#) that was proposed in 2014 and unanimously adopted in 2016.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. What is biodiversity and why is it 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 survival and well-being of the City's residents also depend on ecosystem services provided by biodiversity, which include:

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


These services are directly dependent on an integrated ecosystem of natural biodiversity and sustainable urban landscapes.

2. Why is the City of Los Angeles addressing biodiversity?

Los Angeles is located in the California Floristic Province, which stretches from southern Oregon down to Baja California, and is 1 of 36 "Global Biodiversity Hotspots". Part of what qualifies a place as a "Biodiversity Hotspot" is that there are at least 1,500 plants that are found growing in that area and nowhere else in the world. The other qualifying factor is that 70% or more of the original natural vegetation in that area has been lost, oftentimes due to human development. Over half of the population living within the California Floristic Province reside within the LA area, making it difficult for the wild plants and animals to also live here because they have to compete with humans for food and space.

3. Why is a Wildlife Ordinance being created?

To maintain healthy populations of plants and animals in LA, it is essential that habitats are connected across cities and regions. Compared to other cities, it might appear that LA has a lot of open/green space, but these "patches" of nature are now increasingly isolated due to development, making it difficult for plants and animals to move between them. Maintaining and creating such connections between habitat patches is essential for mixing genes and DNA, and keeping populations and overall biodiversity healthy.



In 2016 a City Council [motion](#) directed the Planning Department to create an ordinance with a set of land use regulations that would address wildlife connectivity in the city. The first step of the Wildlife Pilot Study was to identify areas that were potentially ecologically important or sensitive within the City of Los Angeles, this effort was led by a team of biologists hired by the City to conduct this assessment. These areas are being referred to as preliminary Protection Areas for Wildlife (or “PAW’s). Once the PAWs were identified, a smaller subset of the PAWs was selected for further study for the development of proposed regulations.

4. How is the Wildlife Pilot Study and Ordinance addressing biodiversity?


The Wildlife Pilot Study is an innovative approach to managing urban ecosystems at a variety of scales and on a variety of land use types and ownerships that is being undertaken by Planning. The effort identifies areas of ecological significance in the City of Los Angeles, and proposes regulations for new development that can be more compatible with the land, water, plants, and animals that make up our city’s world class natural environment.

The regulations proposed in the Wildlife Ordinance will help to balance development with the need for wildlife habitat and connectivity in a [pilot area](#) in the Santa Monica Mountains between the 405 and 101 freeways. The overall objective of the proposed regulations is to achieve more sustainable outcomes in hillside developments, including ridgeline preservation, and to promote biodiversity, in addition to other goals such as climate change resilience, fire safety and water conservation.

Specifically, the proposed regulations aim to:

- improve watershed health and water quality by promoting infiltration and reducing stormwater runoff,
- provide critical habitat connectivity for wildlife by providing space between structures for habitat retention and fire safety,
- protect natural resources, such as waterways and open spaces,
- limit the removal of trees and habitat, and
- promote habitat enhancement via native, non-invasive, climate-adaptive, and firewise landscaping.

Once adopted, it is intended that the regulations being proposed in the Wildlife Ordinance will be extended beyond the [Wildlife Ordinance District pilot area](#) to all



proposed Protection Areas for Wildlife (PAWs) throughout the city, which will link important ecological areas together to further enhance connectivity and biodiversity.

5. How can I learn more about the City of LA's efforts to address biodiversity?

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

Mayor Garcetti serves as the Chair of the [C40s Steering Committee](#), and his Office is advancing goals related to biodiversity, climate change, resilience and sustainability through efforts such as [Resilient Los Angeles](#), [LA's Green New Deal](#) and [student projects](#).

The Bureau of Sanitation and Environment (LASAN) is spearheading the City's [Biodiversity](#) and [Health Soils](#) initiatives, and is also working on [tree planting programs](#) to increase the urban forest. LASAN also helped to certify Los Angeles as the largest [Community Wildlife Habitat™](#) in 2021.

There are also additional efforts to enhance the City's urban forest, including [laparks.org/forest/reforestation](#), [laparks.org/forest/heritage-trees](#), [cityplants.org/](#) and [dpw.lacity.org/](#).


The Department of Water and Power is also 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/](#)).

6. What other biodiversity related efforts are underway in Los Angeles?

Many other organizations are spearheading work that relates to biodiversity, including but not limited to:

The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County worked with The Nature Conservancy and other local experts on the [Biodiversity Analysis in Los Angeles \(BAILA\)](#) project, and is also running an [Urban Nature Research Center](#) and spearheading [community science programs](#) related to tracking biodiversity in the city.



The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) developed a [Biodiversity Atlas of Los Angeles](#) for the region.

UCLA and California State University, Los Angeles worked with the City of LA's Urban Ecologist to research and publish [an article](#) on the presence, distribution and management of biodiversity within Los Angeles and other cities in California.