

# Ventura County Planning Division and Conserving Biological Resources

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for

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# VCPD Goals & Policies

- Implement County **General Plan** \* 1.5 - Biological Resources
- 1.5.1 - Goal
  - Preserve and protect significant biological resources in Ventura County from incompatible land uses and development. Significant biological resources include endangered, threatened or rare species and their habitats, wetland habitats, coastal habitats, wildlife migration corridors and *locally important species/communities*.
- 1.5.2 - Policies
  - 1. Discretionary development which could potentially impact biological resources shall be evaluated by a qualified biologist to assess impacts and, if necessary, develop mitigation measures.
  - 2. Discretionary development shall be sited and designed to incorporate all feasible measures to mitigate any significant impacts to biological resources. If the impacts cannot be reduced to a less than significant level, findings of overriding considerations must be made by the decision-making body.

# Definition in General Plan

- “Locally important species: a plant or animal species that is not an endangered, threatened, or rare species, but is considered by qualified biologists to be a quality example or unique species within the County and region. This term also includes Candidate Species.”
- A catch-all definition with no measurable metrics

# Results Prior to 2007

- Consulting biologists really didn't know how to determine which species should be considered as Locally Important
- Most consultants only identified trees covered under the County's tree ordinance
- Only one of the 5 County-contracted consultants routinely identified locally important species (1997-2007), resulting in inconsistent and uneven implementation of the GP Policies regarding special-status species, in particular, Locally Important Species

# How to Implement GP Policies

- Need to identify and quantify bio resources of county
- Not enough money to perform resource inventory
- Must rely on best available information
- Must rely on resource experts
- “Shall” consult with CNPS and Audubon

# Methods Used

- Obtained grants from EPA and other agencies to improve County's resource protection tools
- Convened team of local expert biologists
  - Botanists
  - Wildlife Biologists
- Identified bio resource data gaps
- Identified locally important species not otherwise listed (e.g. USFWS, CDFG, CNPS, Audubon, CNDDDB, ICUN)

# Locally Important Species

- Adopted Heritage Program's rarity ranking system rather than inventing new criteria
  - G1/S1 rarity ranking definitions used to identify rare species of County
  - G1/S1 = 1-5 populations (those declining in County)
- Biologists identified species that met these criteria
- Used to develop list of locally rare species
  - Species of Local Concern

# Implementation

- VC Planning Division requires all discretionary projects to consider impacts to Species of Local Concern under CEQA
- Planning Division maintaining lists of Species of Local Concern, except.....
- Planning Division does not have expertise or funds to properly maintain such lists
- Uses other credible lists where available



# Locally Rare Plants List

- Local botanist experts (Carl Wishner, David Magney, Rick Burgess, Cher Batchelor, Elihu Gevirtz, and others) identified a preliminary list of candidates, over 400 taxa
- After vetting the candidates, preliminary list adopted by workshop botanists
- VCPD then required all projects to consider impacts to them on all discretionary projects in CEQA review
- Burden of maintaining list was too great for VCPD's one and only biologist, and experts failed to.....
- In December 2008, deferred to CNPS list developed and maintained by Channel Islands Chapter (Magney)

# Future of Local Lists

- VCPD hopes to find other credible lists, such as CNPS Channel Island Chapter's list, for other groups of species (and communities/habitats)
  - Reptiles and Amphibians
  - Birds
  - Mammals
  - Fishes
  - Invertebrates
  - Nonvascular Plants
  - Plant Communities (Alliances) and Habitats

# Additional Information

- For more information on Ventura County Planning Division's resource protection program, visit:
- <http://www.ventura.org/rma/planning/ceqa/bio.html>
- Data on bio resources of Ventura County desired –  
send to: [Christina.Danko@ventura.org](mailto:Christina.Danko@ventura.org)