

NEWS RELEASE



Mountains Recreation And Conservation Authority

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Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Announces Opposition to Las Lomas Project

*Project would jeopardize critical habitat linkage between
Santa Susana Mountains and San Gabriel Mountains*

Los Angeles—The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy reiterated today its strong opposition to the massive Las Lomas development proposal located just north of the I-5/SR 14 interchange in the unincorporated area between the cities of Santa Clarita and Los Angeles. Earlier this year, the Conservancy voted unanimously to oppose the project, which proposes 5,500 housing units, millions of square feet of office and retail space, and other uses on 555 acres of regionally significant habitat within the Santa Susana Mountains Significant Ecological Area (SEA).

“The Las Lomas project would eliminate the only quality wildlife corridor between the Santa Susana Mountains and the San Gabriel Mountains,” said Ronald P. Schafer, Chairperson of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. “It is not only the ecological health of the mountain ranges that are at stake here, but the health of the whole region.”

At present, the site is part of a rugged green belt that has escaped the urbanization of the San Fernando and Santa Clarita Valleys. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) maps show seven intermittent “blue line” streams on the site, five of which flow into the Santa Clara River. The site contains rich riparian habitat with big-leaf maple and California bay trees, thousands of oak trees, and even native big cone Douglas firs. Las Lomas would grade and develop over half of the site, keeping natural only that area which is too steep to be developed. The property includes eight designated significant ridgelines.

Although the Los Angeles County General Plan and zoning allow a maximum of 180-250 homes at the site, the Las Lomas project would exceed the existing allowable density by over 2,000 percent.

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The scale of the Las Lomas project is not sustainable,” said Schafer. “The most sound enduring public policy direction on the subject property is to maximize the permanent protection of these resources.”

To be fully functional, an ecosystem must be large enough to support populations of its largest mammal species. As urban expansion encroaches, our natural areas dwindle in size and become disconnected. Habitat linkages, or wildlife corridors--such as the one through the Las Lomas site--become increasingly critical to allow natural areas to work as a larger system and maintain key mammal species. Because we cannot manufacture more natural lands, protecting wildlife corridors is essential to the long-term health of the mountain ranges that rim the Los Angeles metropolitan area. The San Gabriel and Santa Susana Mountains also provide vital air and watershed resources to our communities.

“The importance of the Las Lomas corridor to the region’s ecology cannot be overstated,” Schafer said.

The Conservancy joins the City of Santa Clarita, United States Congress Members Howard P. “Buck” McKeon and Brad Sherman, California State Senators Alex Padilla and Shelia Kuehl, California State Assembly Members Cameron Smyth and Julia Brownley, Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Los Angeles City Council Member Greig Smith, more than a dozen local organizations including the Sierra Club-Angeles Chapter, the Los Angeles Police Protective League, the Federation of Hillside and Canyon Associations, GREEN LA, and the Chatsworth/Porter Ranch Chamber of Commerce as well as more than a dozen neighborhood councils in public opposition to Las Lomas.

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy was established by the California State Legislature in 1980. Since that time, it has helped to preserve over 60,000 acres of parkland in both wilderness and urban settings, and has improved more than 114 public recreational facilities throughout Southern California. The Conservancy has been recognized nationally by the American Planning Association for its leadership in promoting sound planning principles, and advancing the concept of smart growth.

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