Los Angeles County
Department of Regional Planning

*Planning for the Challenges Ahead*

James E. Hartl, AICP
Director of Planning

September 19, 2006

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

**HEARING ON AMENDMENTS TO THE SANTA CLARITA VALLEY AREA PLAN AND THE ANTELOPE VALLEY AREAWIDE GENERAL PLAN, PLAN AMENDMENT NO. 2006-00001-(5), RELATING TO THE ADOPTION OF REVISED TRAILS MAPS (FIFTH SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT) (3-VOTES)**

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOUR BOARD, AFTER THE PUBLIC HEARING:

1. Consider the attached Negative Declaration together with any comments received during the public review process, find on the basis of the whole record before the Board that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment, find that the Negative Declaration reflects the independent judgment and analysis of the Board, and adopt the Negative Declaration;

2. Approve the recommendation of the Regional Planning Commission to adopt Plan Amendment No. 2006-00001-(5), amending the Trails Maps in the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan and the Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan, pursuant to the authority granted to the County by the State of California in Article 6 of Chapter 3 of Division 1 of Title 7 of the Government Code (commencing with Section 65350);

3, Adopt Plan Amendment No. 2006-00001-(5), previously approved as to form by County Counsel, to amend the Trails Maps in the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan and the Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan as recommended by the Regional Planning Commission, and determine that it is compatible with and supportive of the goals and policies of the Los Angeles County General Plan and the County's Strategic Plan; and

4. Find that adoption of the proposed Plan Amendment is *de minimus* in its effect on fish and wildlife resources and authorize the Director of Planning to complete and file a Certificate of Fee Exemption for this project.

## PURPOSE OF RECOMMENDED ACTION

The proposed Plan Amendment was prepared by the Department of Parks and Recreation in response to concerns over the preservation of historic trails in rapidly growing northern Los Angeles County. The Department of Regional Planning was asked to process the Plan Amendment for adoption by the Board of Supervisors.

The proposed Plan Amendment would add several trail routes to those already depicted in the currently adopted Trails Maps in the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan and the Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan. These trail routes have been utilized for decades but were never formally included in previous Trails Maps.

## JUSTIFICATION

The communities of northern Los Angeles County have long been known for their suburban and rural lifestyle, which stresses the importance of adequate provision of recreational facilities such as multi-purpose trails appropriate for hiking, bike riding, and equestrian use. As growth continues to transform the region, new development must accommodate trail routes that have been utilized by previous generations to ensure that future generations are able to enjoy them as well.

The proposed Plan Amendment is the result of extensive public outreach conducted by the Department of Parks and Recreation. The new trail routes being proposed were identified by the Santa Clarita Valley Trails Advisory Committee (SCVTAC), which includes representatives from hiking groups, mountain bike groups, equestrian groups, other local community groups, land owners and developers, the Angeles National Forest, California State Parks, the City of Santa Clarita, and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.

The proposed Plan Amendment is consistent with current County policy. The Open Space Element of the Countywide General Plan promotes the development of a system of equestrian and hiking trails to be linked with recreational facilities where possible, and both the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan and Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan contain policies that promote the implementation of Trails Plans that provide for the dedication, construction, and maintenance of regional trails systems for hiking and equestrian use.

Decision-making bodies, including the Regional Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors, will retain discretion in determining the most appropriate location for trails in future development projects. The revised Trails Maps proposed in this Plan Amendment will remain advisory in nature, serving to guide decision-making bodies in implementing County policy.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF COUNTYWIDE STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The proposed Plan Amendment promotes Goal 1 of the County's Strategic Plan pertaining to "Service Excellence" through development of revised Trails Maps using Global Positioning System (GPS) and Geographic Information System (GIS) technologies, allowing for the creation of precise, detailed maps. The revised maps will assist property owners who wish to design appropriate developments on land traversed by one or more trail routes.

The proposed Plan Amendment promotes Goal 5 of the County's Strategic Plan pertaining to "Children and Families' Well-Being" by enhancing the quality-of-life for residents of the suburban and rural communities in northern Los Angeles County. Continued provision of recreational facilities such as multi-use trails encourages physical activity that promotes the health and social and emotional well-being of children and families.

The proposed Plan Amendment promotes Goal 6 of the County's Strategic Plan pertaining to "Community Services" by providing recreational facilities tailored to the needs of the suburban and rural communities in northern Los Angeles County. The revised Trails Maps were prepared in response to identified community needs through a public process involving a variety of stakeholders.

## FISCAL IMPACT

Implementation of the proposed Plan Amendment will not result in any significant new costs to the Department of Regional Planning, the Department of Parks and Recreation, or other County departments. Funding mechanisms for the construction and maintenance of trails will be developed when specific development proposals are brought before the Regional Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors.

## FINANCING

The proposed Plan Amendment will not result in additional net County costs and therefore a request for financing is not being made at this time.

## FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Article 6 of Chapter 3 of Division 1 of Title 7 of the Government Code of the State of California (commencing with Section 65350) provides for adoption of amendments to County General Plans. The proposed Plan Amendment is compatible with the Los Angeles County General Plan in that it promotes the development of a system of equestrian and hiking trails to be linked with recreational facilities where possible.

The Regional Planning Commission conducted a public hearing regarding the proposed Plan Amendment on May 24, 2006.The Commission heard testimony from eight individuals in support of the Plan Amendment and ten testifiers who raised concerns over the proposed Plan Amendment's effect on their ability to develop their landholdings in the future.

A public hearing by the Board of Supervisors is required to amend the General Plan pursuant to Section 65355 of the Government Code of the State of California. Notice of hearing must be given pursuant to the requirements set forth in Sections 6061, 65090, and 65094 of same.

An amendment to the General Plan must be adopted by resolution and such resolution must be adopted by at least three affirmative votes of the members of your Board, as set forth in Section 65356 of the Government Code of the State of California.

## IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)

Approval of the proposed Plan Amendment will not significantly impact County services.

## EXEMPTION/ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The proposed Plan Amendment constitutes a regulatory action that could have a significant effect on the environment. The attached Initial Study, prepared by the Department of Parks and Recreation, shows that there is no substantial evidence, in light of the whole record before your Board, that the adoption of the proposed Plan Amendment will have a significant effect on the environment. Therefore, in accordance with Section 15070 of the State CEQA guidelines, a Negative Declaration was prepared.

A copy of the proposed Negative Declaration was transmitted to two public libraries for public review. In addition, public notice was published in four newspapers of general circulation pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21092. Two comments on the proposed Negative Declaration were received during the public review period.

Based on the attached Negative Declaration, adoption of the proposed Plan Amendment will not have a significant effect on the environment.

Respectfully submitted,

DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL PLANNING

James E. Hartl, AICP
Acting Director of Planning

JEH:mwg

Attachments:

1. Project Summary
2. Summary of Regional Planning Commission Proceedings
3. Resolution of the Regional Planning Commission
4. Resolution of the Board of Supervisors
5. Recommended Plan Amendment (CD-ROM)
6. Environmental Document
7. Legal Notice of Board Hearing
8. List of Persons to be Notified

c: Chief Administrative Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Auditor - Controller