



The Making of L.A.'s Beaches

A History of Action, Advocacy and Access



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Why Our Beaches Matter

- 75 miles of coastline
- 70 million visitors annually
- \$3 billion economic boost



Our Beaches in Jeopardy

- Severe erosion
- Extreme storms
- Unrelenting sea level rise

From Indigenous Homeland



The Tongva's deep and long-standing connection to the Los Angeles Basin and Channel Islands:

- Fishing and Hunting
- Ti'ats (Plank Canoes)
- Trading abalone shells and soapstone from Catalina Island

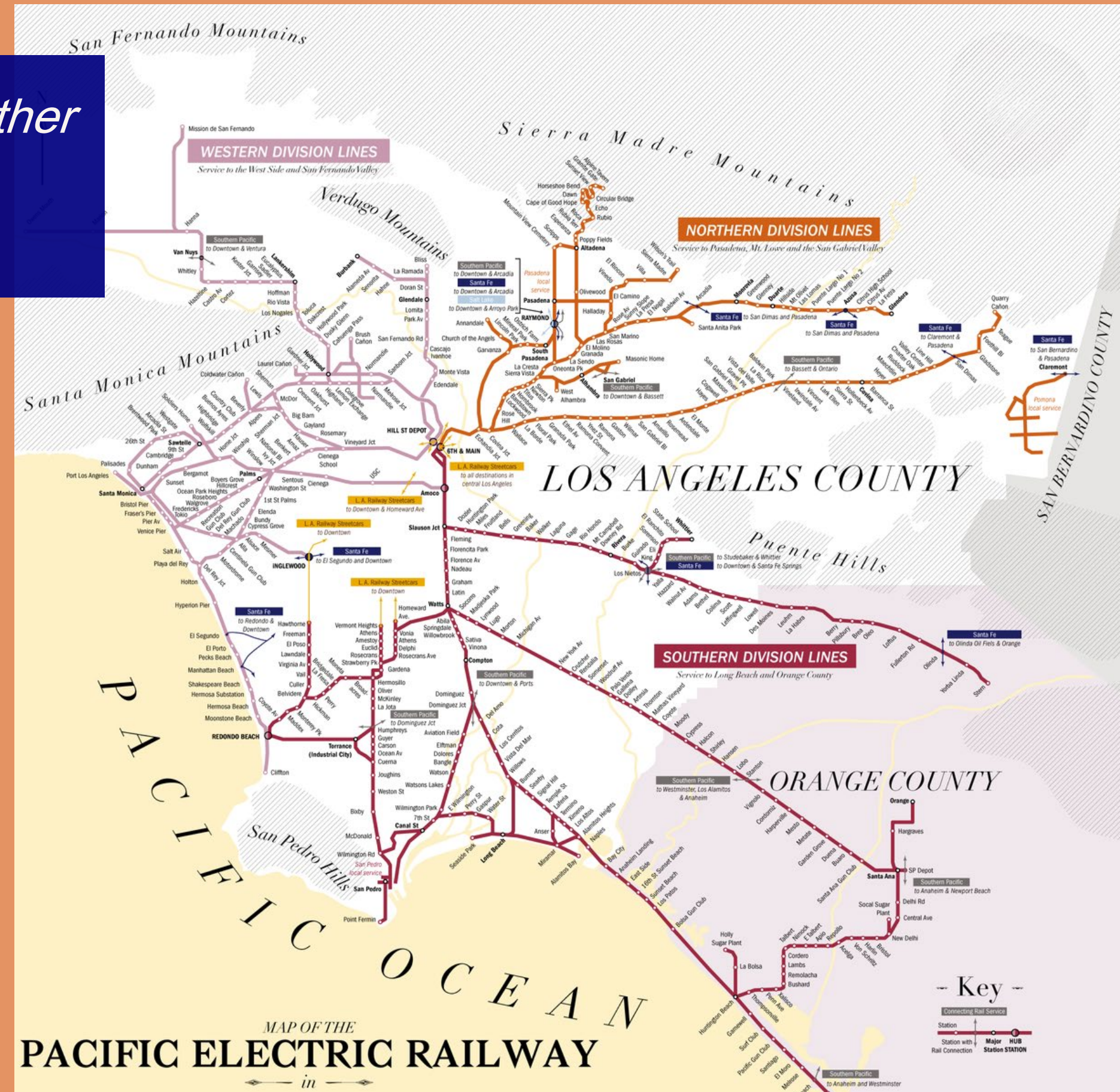
Tongva mythology often features the ocean as a source of life and connection to the spirit world.

...to Urban Incorporation

"The ocean is the great equalizer, drawing together all classes for health and pleasure."
— *Los Angeles Herald*, 1910

As settlers reshaped the region, Los Angeles underwent a rapid transformation:

- 1850: LA was incorporated in 1850
- 1892: Rail lines connected Downtown to the coast
- Beaches draw massive public interest, especially from inland communities



Popularity Grows, Unequal Access

- 2.7M visited LA beaches by 1925; over 10M by 1930
- Working-class and non-white Angelenos often only had access to the most polluted and neglected beaches

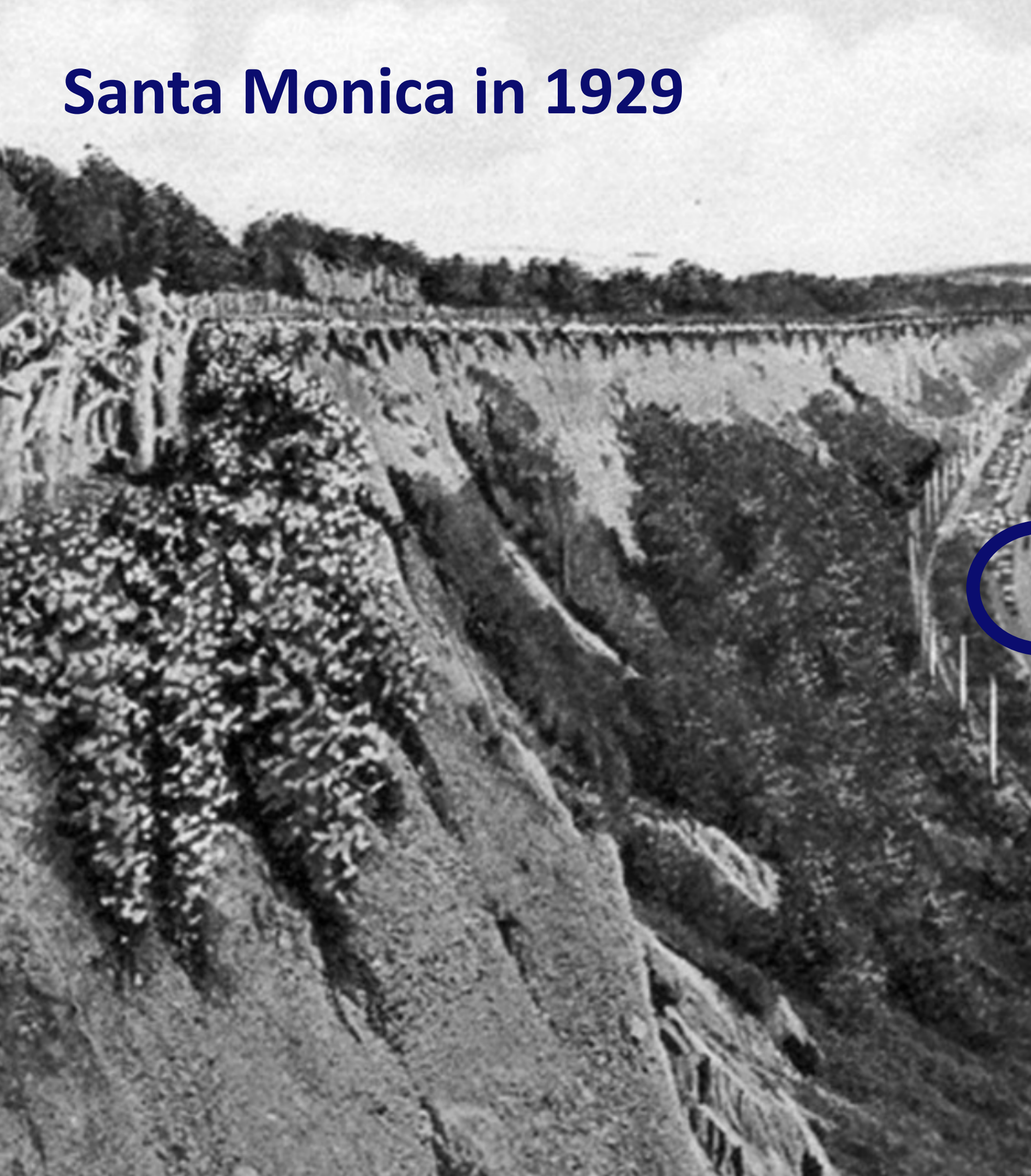




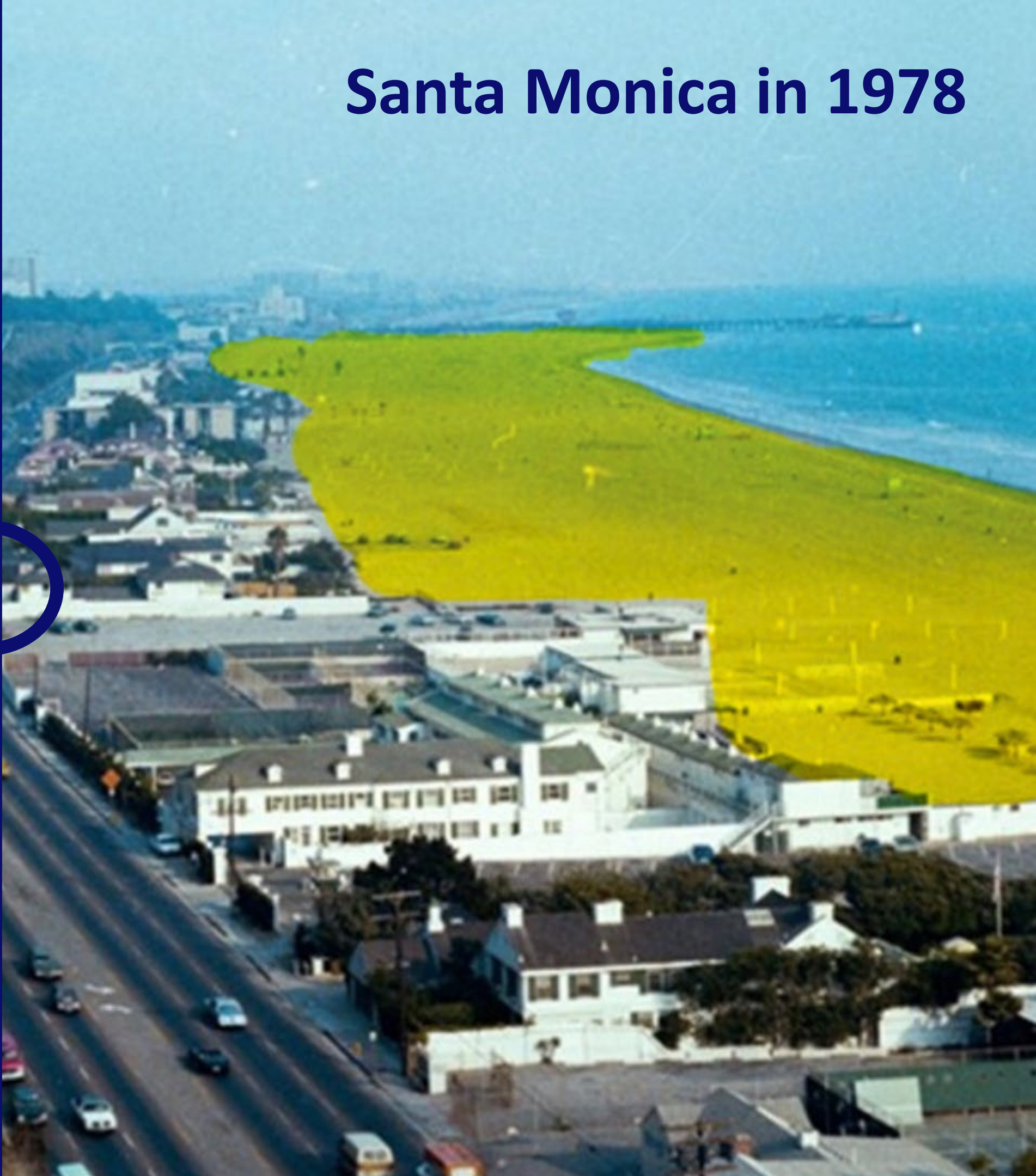
Reclaiming the Shoreline

- 1930: Only 14 of LA's 72 coastal miles were public
- 1936: First sand nourishment project (Hyperion dunes)
- 1938: The LA Times warns of beach loss

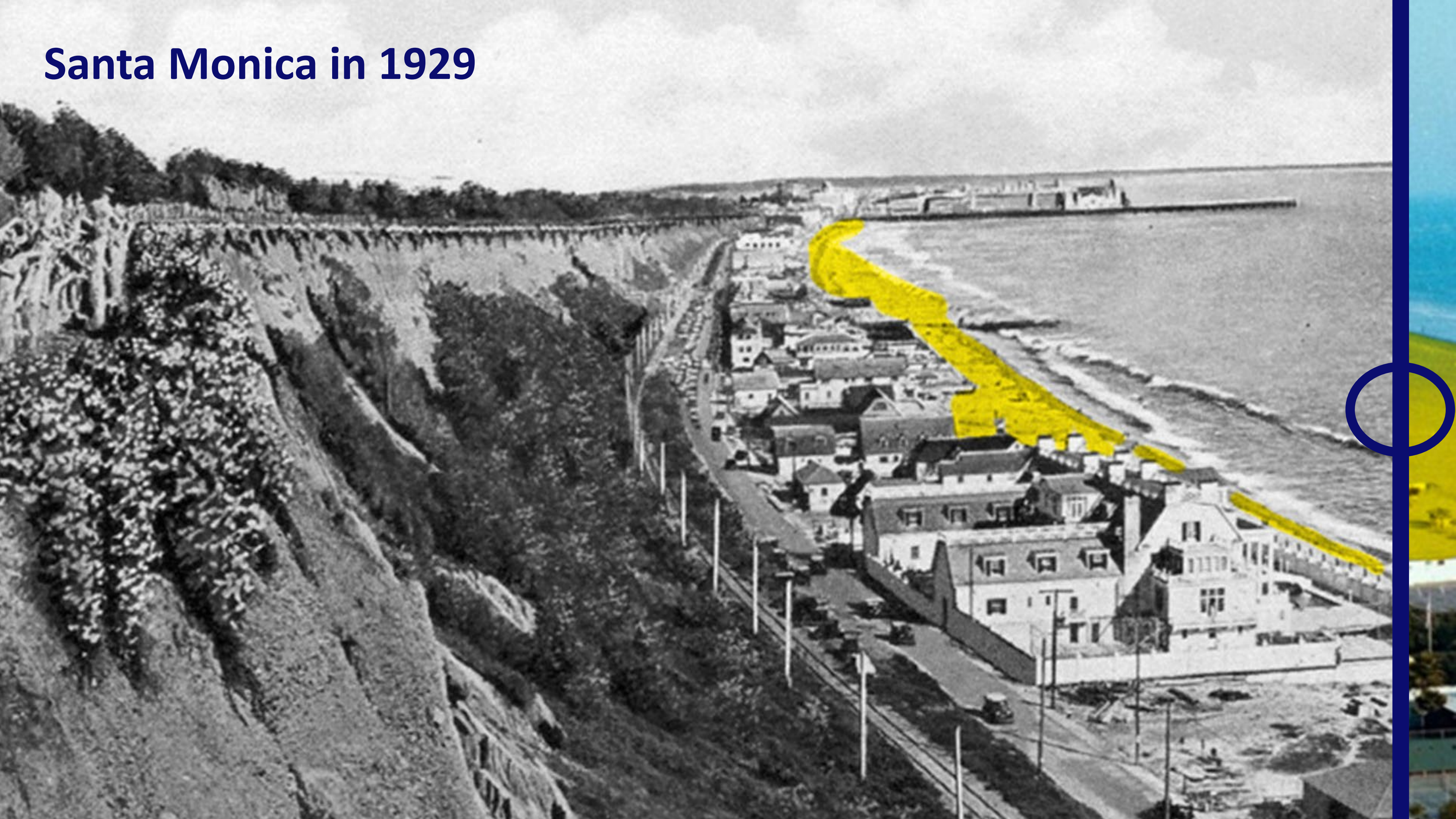
Santa Monica in 1929



Santa Monica in 1978



Santa Monica in 1929



Santa Monica in 1978





Shaping Values

- Wider beaches didn't mean wider access
- Exclusion persisted through private control
- Advocacy reframed access as a civil right

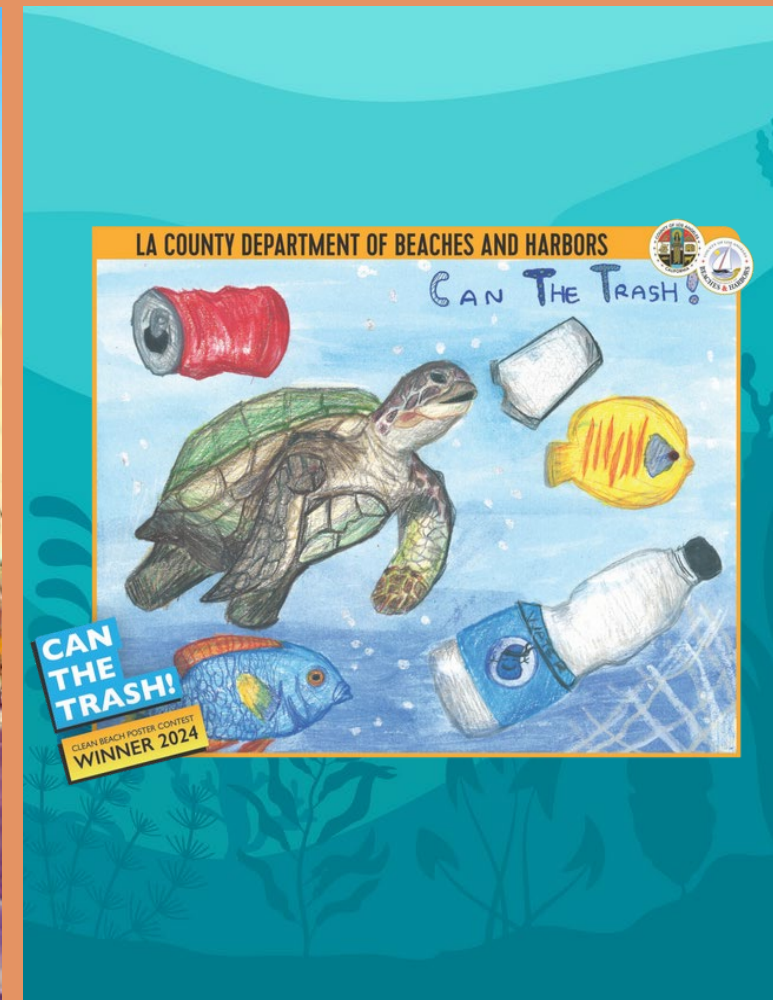
Protecting Public Access

- 1961: 51% of LA County's coastline (38.2 miles) was made public thanks to public pressure and policy decisions from State, County and City agencies
- 1972: Prop 20 passes — a statewide vote to protect California's coast, and a major milestone in ensuring public coastal access
- 1976: The California Coastal Commission was established to prevent the over-commercialization and privatization, aka the "Miami-nization" of the waterfront.



Coastal Custodians In Action:

- Maintains the public amenities that we all expect and enjoy, while cleaning and grooming the sand to keep our beaches safe and sanitary.
- Leads Coastal Resilience through dune restoration, sediment management, and habitat protection.
- Encourage coastal stewardship through programming, events and recreation that ensures continued community access.
- Builds and maintains relationships with previously excluded groups of people to ensure they are part of the decision-making process regarding coastal waters and spaces.



Questions, Ideas, or Reflections?



THANK YOU!

