

**PUENTE HILLS HABITAT PRESERVATION AUTHORITY
CITIZENS TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
*Endowment Provided by the Puente Hills Landfill***

April 14, 2026, Tuesday, 7 p.m.

The regular meeting will take place in-person. Members of the public can observe and participate in the meeting in person.

LOCATION:

Whittier Senior Center: 13225 Walnut St., Whittier, CA 90602

Catherine Houwen	La Habra Heights
Adam Nazaroff, Chair	La Habra Heights
Vacant	La Habra Heights
Michelle Pekko-Seymoure	Whittier
Dr. Janis Cavanaugh	Whittier
Laura Krueger	Whittier
Vacant	County of Los Angeles
Vacant	County of Los Angeles
Bryan Coreas	County of Los Angeles

Members of the public may provide electronic comments by Monday, April 13, 2026, by 4:00 p.m. to info@habitatauthority.org. Please label the email in the subject heading as “Public Comments.” Public comments may also be verbally heard during item III of the meeting.

72 hours prior to Citizens Technical Advisory Committee meetings, the entire Citizens Technical Advisory Committee agenda package is available for review, along with any meeting-related writings or documents provided to a majority of the Committee members after distribution of the agenda package, at the Authority’s website, www.habitatauthority.org. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, if you require a disability related modification or accommodation to participate in this meeting, including auxiliary aids or services, please call Carlos Zelaya at 562.945.9003, at least 48 hours prior to meeting.

Pursuant to Section 54954 of the Government Code, the Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority (Authority) will hold a regular meeting of the Citizens Technical Advisory Committee (CTAC) at the above time and location for the purpose of:

Oath of Office for new Committee Member Laura Krueger.

AGENDA

- I. Call to order.
- II. Roll call.
- III. Public comments.

- IV. Discussion and possible action regarding election of Committee Chair and Vice Chair, and selection of Board Liaison.
- V. Approval of Minutes for the October 21, 2025 Advisory Committee Meeting.
- VI. Standing Reports:
 - a) Report by the Board Liaison on previous Authority's Board of Directors meeting.
 - b) Committee Member feedback from the public as it relates to the Authority.
- VII. Discussion and possible action addressing the Health and Environmental Impacts of Data Centers.
- VIII. Discussion and possible action authorizing the Executive Director to enter into a contract with California Arborist for annual fuel clearance services within the Authority's Preserve in La Habra Heights, in an amount of \$185,450 for a possible five-year total of \$584,634.
- IX. Discussion and possible action amending contract with Authority consultant mPR in the amount of \$30,000 to facilitate an informational mailer.
- X. Discussion and possible action approving Authority comment letter regarding the Los Angeles County General Plan Tune-Up (001).
- XI. Closing remarks (Comments/questions from Committee Members and/or Executive Director).
- XII. Adjournment and announcement of the next meeting.

The Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority is a public entity established pursuant to the Joint Exercise of Powers Act by agreement between the City of Whittier, Los Angeles County, and Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County. Regular meetings of the Citizens Technical Advisory Committee are scheduled for the Tuesday before the third Thursday of every month. Questions about any agenda item can be addressed to Andrea Gullo, Executive Director, 562.945.9003.

MEMORANDUM

Meeting Date: April 14, 2026
To: Citizens Technical Advisory Committee
Prepared by: Andrea Gullo, Executive Director

Agenda Item IV. Discussion and possible action regarding election of Committee Chair and Vice Chair, and selection of Board Liaison.

Background:

On February 28, 2013, at the Advisory Committee's recommendation, the Board of Directors approved the attached Advisory Committee election policies. The Chair and Vice Chair positions are rotational and elections to the positions occur annually during the first month of the calendar year. This year an Advisory Committee Member from the unincorporated County of Los Angeles is scheduled to fill the Chair position, and a member representing the City of Whittier is scheduled to fill the Vice Chair position. Please see the attached rotation schedule of officers.

Also, the election of officers is the most opportune time for the Advisory Committee to identify a Board Liaison for the group. This position has historically been filled either by the Advisory Committee Chair, or by the member designated by the Committee to present the actions and thoughts of the Committee to the Board of Directors at their meetings.

Upon approval of the positions, they will take effect.

Attachments:

Rotational schedule of officers
Election policies

Recommendation:

- 1) That a member nominate a Vice Chair person, and have this motion seconded by another for a vote.
- 2) That a member nominate a Chair person, and have this motion seconded by another for a vote.
- 3) That a member nominate a Board Liaison, and have this motion seconded by another for a vote

Advisory Committee Chair and Vice Chair Rotation Schedule
PHHPA

Notes

Year	Chair Region	Held By	Vice Chair Region	Held By
2013	LHH	Cathy Houwen	LA County	Gina Natoli
2014	LA County	Gina Natoli	Whittier	April Garbat
2015	Whittier	April Garbat	LHH	Cathy Houwen
2016	LHH	Cathy Houwen	LA County	Richard Lacy
2017	LA County		Whittier	
2017	Whittier	Shelley Andros	LHH	Cathy Houwen
2018	Whittier	Shelley Andros	LHH	Cathy Houwen
2019	LHH	Cathy Houwen	LA County	Karen Chang
2020	LA County	Karen Chang	Whittier	Ray Wong
2021	Whittier	Chuck Lawrence	LHH	Roy Francis
2022	LHH	Roy Francis	LA County	Matthew Liang
2023	LA County	Matthew Liang	Whittier	Brauckmann
2023			Whittier	Shelley Andros
2024	Whittier	Shelley Andros	LHH	Cathy Houwen
2025	LHH	Adam Nazaroff	LA County	Matt Liang
2026	LA County		Whittier	
2027	Whittier		LHH	
2026	LHH		LA County	
2027	LA County		Whittier	
2027	Whittier		LHH	
2026	LHH		LA County	
2027	LA County		Whittier	

1
2
3
4
5

Notes:

- 1 No meeting: Feb, March or April
- 2 May meeting elections, no County representative on CTAC
- 3 Elections held in October 2022
- 4 Elections held February 2023
- 5 Vice Chair Andros elected September 2023



Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority

Endowment Provided by the Puente Hills Landfill

Citizens Technical Advisory Committee Election of Officers Policy

1. The CTAC's chair and vice-chair positions (the positions) shall have a standard term limit of one year. Members may be elected to hold these positions in the future but not in consecutive calendar years, except as described in section 3 below.
2. The positions shall rotate by communities represented on the CTAC. Starting in the year 2013 a CTAC member representing La Habra Heights shall be elected to hold the chair position, following the year afterwards by a member from the unincorporated communities of Los Angeles County (either Hacienda Heights or Rowland Heights), and followed by a member from the City of Whittier. Starting in 2013, the vice-chair position shall be a member from the unincorporated communities of Los Angeles County, followed the next year by a member from the City of Whittier, and then by a member from La Habra Heights.
3. If a vacancy occurs with the positions, the CTAC shall vote at the next meeting to fill that position with a member from which community the position was held. In the event that a community member representing that of the current position is unavailable to be elected to fill the vacancy, then the succeeding community in the rotation will be eligible for election into that vacant position, as well as be eligible for re-election at the next first meeting of the calendar year. The objective is to not have any position held by the same community for two consecutive years, but not be shorter than one year in length. Should the chair position change representative communities then the vice-chair position shall rotate community representatives as well.
4. Should no member decide to make themselves available for election, the current officer shall continue to hold that position until a replacement officer is elected even if the officer's term expires.
5. The CTAC is eligible to elect any member to the positions out of rotation order if it acts by a majority in the belief that the interests of the Authority will be best served in that manner.

The above policy is compatible with Authority Board Resolution 97-01 that established the CTAC. Section 2f of the Resolution authorizes annual elections of officers, the positions, to occur in the first meeting of the calendar year. Specifically, the proposed term limits and rotation schedule of the positions are not in conflict with the Resolution as each year the election



of officers would be limited to a candidate pool of up to three members representing the community that is eligible to hold the positions according to the rotation schedule. The Resolution allows for a re-election of officers, which would be the case should a member be re-elected to a position in a non-consecutive year of holding that position, or in the special case of a member who has filled a vacant position the previous year.

For example, if La Habra Heights' representative as chair is no longer available in May to hold the position, then at the June CTAC meeting a vote shall occur to elect a different La Habra Heights representative to that position. If no other La Habra Heights member is available to fill that position, then a CTAC member from unincorporated Los Angeles County shall be elected to the position of chair. With this being the case, the vice-chair position will need to rotate to the next representative community, the City of Whittier. In January of the next year, the County CTAC chair member will be eligible for re-election to the chair position, or another member from the County will be eligible for election to the chair position. The same logic applies for the vice-chair position.

DRAFT Minutes
PUENTE HILLS HABITAT PRESERVATION AUTHORITY
CITIZENS TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
October 21, 2025

The meeting of the Citizens Technical Advisory Committee was held on Tuesday, October 21, 2025, at the Whittier Senior Center, 13225 Walnut Ave, Whittier, CA 90602.

I. CALL TO ORDER.

Chair Nazaroff called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL.

A roll call was taken, and there was a quorum at this time.

Members Present:

Matthew Liang, Vice Chair	County of Los Angeles
Bryan Coreas	County of Los Angeles
Adam Nazaroff, Chair	La Habra Heights
Catherine Houwen	La Habra Heights
Dr. Janis Cavanaugh	Whittier
Shelley Andros	Whittier

Members Absent:

(Vacant)	County of Los Angeles
(Vacant)	La Habra Heights
Michelle Pekko-Seymoure	Whittier

Authority Representatives Present:

Andrea Gullo, Executive Director
Michelle Mariscal, Ecologist
Kenn Hughes, Deputy Chief Ranger- Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS.

Steve Huber from Whittier Area Audubon shared information from the most recent beginner bird walk in Sycamore Canyon. Forty-five species of birds were observed, including many winter residents. Of special note was a first-ever observation of a Greater Peewee in the canyon.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE SEPTEMBER 16, 2025 ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING.

Member Houwen motioned to approve the September 16, 2025 minutes as drafted. Member Andros seconded the motion, and in a vote, the motioned passed unanimously.

V. STANDING REPORTS:

a. REPORT BY BOARD LIAISON ON PREVIOUS MONTH'S AUTHORITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING.

Member Houwen, Board Liaison, provided the report for the September Board meeting.

b. COMMITTEE MEMBER FEEDBACK FROM THE PUBLIC AS IT RELATES TO THE AUTHORITY.

Member Houwen reported that she had attended the October La Habra Heights City Council meeting gave an update on Habitat Authority activities.

Member Cavanaugh mentioned the upcoming virtual public information session regarding an opportunity to review and provide input on a draft Regional Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).

VI. UPDATE AND RANGER REPORT FROM THE AUTHORITY'S CONTRACTOR FOR RANGER AND MAINTENANCE SERVICE, THE MOUNTAINS RECREATION AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY.

Deputy Chief Ranger Hughes provided a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the recent MRCA activities.

VII. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AUTHORIZING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH LAND IQ IN THE AMOUNT OF \$170,000 FOR PREPARING A PRESERVE-WIDE VEGETATION MAP USING GRANT FUNDS FROM THE SAN GABRIEL AND LOWER LOS ANGELES RIVERS AND MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY.

Ecologist Mariscal provided an overview. In this case noncompetitive procurement is in the best, expeditious, economical and most efficient interest of the Authority. Land IQ is recommended because the proposed consultant is known to possess the needed experience and qualifications as they have successfully implemented several projects for the Authority. Also, they are extremely familiar with the Habitat Authority's Preserve. Their services are offered at fair and reasonable prices. Therefore, they are the most satisfactory for Authority purposes. Discussion took place.

Member Coreas motioned to recommend to the Board of Directors that they authorize the Executive Director to execute a contract with Land IQ in the amount of \$170,000 for preparing a Preserve-wide vegetation map. Vice Chair Liang seconded the motion, and in a vote, the motioned passed unanimously.

Chair Nazaroff requested that the Board be provided reasons for noncompetitive solicitation.

VIII. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AUTHORIZING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE CONTRACTS WITH NAKAE & ASSOCIATES FOR 1) LOS ANGELES COUNTY MEASURE A GRANT FUNDED NATIVE LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE IN THE AMOUNT OF \$100,000; 2) NATIVE HABITAT ENHANCEMENT AND VEGETATION MAINTENANCE IN THE AMOUNT OF \$80,000 OVER TWO YEARS USING GRANT FUNDS FROM THE SAN GABRIEL AND LOWER LOS ANGELES RIVERS AND MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY; 3) MONTEREY MITIGATION LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT PROGRAM IN THE AMOUNT OF \$29,500 OVER FIVE YEARS; AND 4) SCE MITIGATION LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT PROGRAM IN THE AMOUNT OF \$80,000 OVER FIVE YEARS.

Ecologist Mariscal explained that noncompetitive procurement is in the best, expeditious, economical and most efficient interest of the Authority. Nakae & Associates is recommended because the proposed contractor is known to possess the needed experience and qualifications since they have successfully implemented several years of similar services for the Authority, and in particular they provide specialized expertise involving maintenance of native habitat restoration areas and landscapes including site specific federally regulated criteria, and therefore, are the most satisfactory for Authority purposes. There was discussion.

Member Andros motioned to recommend to the Board of Directors that they authorize the Executive Director to execute contracts with Nakae & Associates for 1) Sycamore and Turnbull Canyons native landscape maintenance in the amount of \$100,000; 2) native habitat enhancement and vegetation maintenance in the amount of \$80,000; 3) Monterey Mitigation Long-term Management Program in the amount of \$29,500; and 4) SCE Mitigation Long-term Management Program in the amount of \$80,000. Chair Cavanaugh seconded the motion, and in a vote, the motioned passed unanimously.

IX. UPDATE, RECEIVE AND FILE OF AUTHORITY'S QUARTERLY BUDGET REPORT.

Executive Director Gullo provided an overview. Discussion took place before the item was received and filed.

X. CLOSING REMARKS (COMMENTS/QUESTIONS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND/OR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR).

Executive Director Gullo recapped the Habitat Authority-hosted Mid-Autumn hike that occurred in early October. Executive Director Gullo also notified the Committee that a Personnel Resolution would be going before the Board of Directors at their October meeting for the creation of two new staff positions.

XI. ADJOURNMENT AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE NEXT MEETING.

There being no further comments or business to discuss Chair Nazaroff adjourned the meeting at 8:34 p.m. The next regularly scheduled meeting is on November 18, 2025.

MEMORANDUM

Meeting Date: April 14, 2026

To: Citizens Technical Advisory Committee

Prepared by: Andrea Gullo, Executive Director

Agenda Item VII. Discussion and possible action addressing the health and environmental impacts of data centers.

Background:

Data centers are industrial complexes that house large-scale computer systems used to store and process digital information, commonly referred to as “the cloud.” These facilities are expanding nationwide, including within Los Angeles County.

As development increases, questions have been raised regarding potential impacts of data centers on local infrastructure, public health and the environment. Local representatives have recognized growing community concerns in areas near proposed data center developments. Additional study would provide a better understanding of these potential effects.

In response, on April 1, 2026, Supervisor Solis introduced a motion at the Community Services Cluster meeting to address the study and regulation of data centers in unincorporated areas. Supervisor Solis's motion has reportedly been advanced and may be considered at a future Board of Supervisor’s meeting.

At this time the potential effects of data centers near Authority-managed lands, including impacts to the local environment, remain unknown.

Recommendation:

Discussion and possible recommendation to the Board of Directors.

MEMORANDUM

Meeting Date: April 14, 2026
To: Citizens Technical Advisory Committee
Prepared by: Michelle Mariscal, Ecologist
Through: Andrea Gullo, Executive Director

Agenda Item: **VIII. Discussion and possible action authorizing the Executive Director to enter into a contract with California Arborist for annual fuel clearance services within the Authority’s Preserve in La Habra Heights, in an amount of \$185,450 for a possible five-year total of \$584,634.**

Background:

In March, the Authority solicited proposals for fuel modification (weed abatement) services for the Authority’s properties in La Habra Heights. This solicitation was specifically for hand clearance services, although quotes for mechanical clearance work (mowing) for select parcels were also accepted for the Habitat Authority’s consideration. The solicitation advertised for a contract term of one year, plus the option to renew annually up to five years total. A mandatory video call and job walk were held and attended by four prospective companies, resulting in the following three proposals that were received by the March 30th deadline:

Proposals Received	Year 1 \$	Hourly crew \$	Total 5 Years \$
Proposal 1 Hand clearance only	82,644	235*	438,768
Hand clearance + mechanical	81,549		432,957
Proposal 2[§] Hand clearance only	95,450	450**	494,633
Hand clearance + mechanical	89,825		465,399
Proposal 3 Hand clearance only	200,200 ^{††}	690 [†]	1,062,889^{††}
Hand clearance + mechanical	Not submitted		

*Three-member landscape crew (\$55/hr) + one supervisor (\$70/hr)

**Four-member landscape crew (\$76/hr) + one supervisor (\$148/hr) as specified by the contractor; should be \$452 based on the crew member rates provided, although the proposed rate will be used

§Recommended proposal

†Five-member landscape crew (\$115/hr) + one supervisor (\$115/hr).

††Quote was missing costs for one zone (i.e., clearance area), and no mechanical quotes were submitted

All proposals that were received met the minimum contractor qualifications set forth in the solicitation, including five years of experience conducting fuel abatement work at the urban-wildland interface for contract amounts of \$50,000 or more, or other similar demonstrable experience (references were required); ability to conduct tree removal work or subcontract for such work; ability to meet minimum limits of insurance coverage; experience with prevailing wage; compliance with all California Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) requirements; and possession of appropriate licenses. The mid-cost proposal (“Proposal 2” in the above chart), submitted by California Arborist Complete Tree Care, Inc., is recommended. For approximately \$6,400 more than Proposal 1, annually, this company will provide one additional landscape crew member, which will presumably enable the work to be completed more quickly.

According to Section 2-1 of the Authority’s Purchasing Policy, contracts over \$25,000 need Board approval. According to Section 4-2, the procurement of services such as maintenance shall be based on demonstrated competence, the professional qualifications necessary for satisfactory performance of the required services, and a fair and reasonable price.

California Arborist Complete Tree Care, Inc holds the previous fuel modification contract for the La Habra Heights properties, which expired on March 31, 2026. This company has stayed within budget, has been extremely responsive to emergency change orders (such as removing downed trees blocking emergency access routes), and staff and rangers have been satisfied with the services that they have provided over the term of the contract. If renewed, the new contract amount would increase approximately 3% annually during years 3-5 only, for a five-year total amount of \$584,634 which includes \$90,000 of RMC grant funds for second clearance of selected zones during the winter of the first contract year. This amount is also based on the higher hand clearance rates, however, staff anticipate that select zones will be mowed utilizing the lower mechanical rates (see chart below) unless weather conditions, equipment availability, or unforeseen circumstances arise. Upon execution of the contract, work is expected to begin the first week of May.

Proposal 2	Year 1 \$	Total 5 Years Base \$	Total \$ with 2026 winter re-clearance**
Hand Clearance only	95,450	494,633	584,634
Hand clearance + mechanical	89,825*	465,399	

*Expected expenditure for fiscal year 2025-26.

**\$90,000 funded by the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy

Additional Background:

The Authority Board has made a commitment to conduct fuel clearance on properties it owns and manages. All clearance is between 100 to 200 feet from adjacent structures, and along emergency access routes. The goal with the annual clearance efforts is to

minimize fire hazards, especially ladder fuels and to create a defensible space zone for first responders. Wildfire prevention is multifaceted involving many agencies and efforts of private residences (ignition prevention, fuel management, modeling, evacuation plans, evacuation route maintenance, local and regional wildfire/hazard plans, water infrastructure, development standards/codes, home hardening, financial support, public education, etc.). The scope of work this year has been expanded from the previous contract scope to address specific and new areas that need additional clearance efforts.

Fiscal Impact:

This action would be consistent with the approved Authority budget.

Recommendation:

That the Committee recommend that the Board of Directors authorize the Executive Director to enter into a contract with California Arborist for annual fuel clearance services within the Authority's Preserve in La Habra Heights, in an amount of \$185,450 for a possible five-year total of \$584,634.

MEMORANDUM

Meeting Date: April 14, 2026
To: Citizens Technical Advisory Committee
Prepared by: Andrea Gullo, Executive Director

Agenda Item IX. Discussion and possible action amending contract with Authority consultant mPR in the amount of \$30,000 to facilitate an informational mailer.

Background:

In September 2025, the Authority Board of Directors approved a contract in the amount of \$60,000 with mPR to assist Authority staff with outreach services to inform communities about the Authority's work and to keep them updated about efforts involving Measure PH. The scope of the contract includes consulting support services with social media, newsletters, print mailers, and other communication services. The contract is in accordance with the Authority workplan and item No. 10, priority level 2, which is to facilitate Community Outreach (Measure PH).

The proposed amendment with mPR would fund services of designing and mailing 50,400 informational flyers designed to be approximately 6 inches by 11 inches in full-color production on 100 lb matte stock. The purpose of the mailer is to provide information to local households about Measure PH and the public services provided by this agency. It would reach households within the Measure PH community facilities district: the communities of Whittier, Roland Heights, La Habra Heights and Hacienda Heights. According to section 2-2 of the Authority Purchasing Policies, change orders above 25% require Board approval. With this amendment, the new contract amount would be \$90,000, a 50% increase.

Fiscal Impact:

This action would be consistent with the approved Authority budget.

Recommendation:

Discussion and possible recommendation to the Board of Directors to authorize the Executive Director to execute the proposed contract amendment with mPR.

MEMORANDUM

Meeting Date: April 14, 2026

To: Citizens Technical Advisory Committee

Prepared by: Michelle Mariscal, Ecologist

Through: Andrea Gullo, Executive Director

Agenda Item: **X. Discussion and possible action approving Authority comment letter regarding the Los Angeles County General Plan Tune-Up (001).**

Background:

Staff was recently made aware of the Los Angeles County General Plan Tune-Up (001) efforts. According to the County's website: "The General Plan Tune-Up Program consists of recurring, targeted updates to ensure that the General Plan remains accurate, consistent, and clear. It entails periodic revisions to the General Plan to identify and correct inconsistencies, minor errors, and outdated information. This will ensure that the General Plan continues to reflect the most current planning standards, regulatory requirements, and County practices."

This tune-up of the General Plan presents the Habitat Authority with the opportunity to request that current environmental laws be proactively addressed during this tune-up iteration. In part, the laws require open space plans to include rewilding opportunities and the conservation element of the general plan be updated to incorporate wildlife connectivity considerations. These requested updates would not only ensure compliance with state law, but also foster more sustainable, biodiverse, and resilient communities.

The General Plan Tune-Up document is expected to go before the Regional Planning Commission during their April 29, 2026 meeting.

Recommendation:

That the Committee recommend to the Board of Directors that they approve the comment letter, which will be sent under separate cover.

Additional Materials



**Puente Hills
Habitat Preservation Authority**
Endowment Provided by the Puente Hills Landfill

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ivan Sulic
Chair
County of Los Angeles

Mary Ann Pacheco
Vice Chair
City of Whittier

Robert Ferrante
Director Sanitation Districts of
Los Angeles County

Cassandra Garcia
Director
Hacienda Heights

February 10, 2026

Shelley Andros
[REDACTED]

Whittier, CA 90603

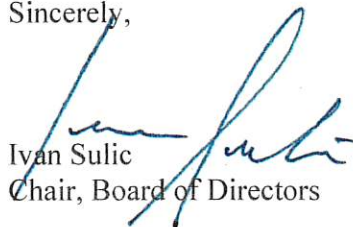
Dear Ms. Andros:

The Habitat Authority would like to thank you for serving as a Citizens Technical Advisory Committee (CTAC) member.

Your contribution of approximately 16 years of service over a 23-year time-span is deeply valued! Your volunteerism, support and dedication over these many years have helped the Habitat Authority with its continued efforts in preserving the local hills for wildlife and providing quality recreational opportunities for people. We'd especially like to recognize your involvement with the foundational documents and processes of the agency. You attended many meetings representing the agency, assisted with quality checks of trailhead horse stepovers, volunteered for many events, and were a critical member of the subcommittee that advised on the Trails Plan. Your leadership, dedication, and contributions to the Committee in furthering the agency's mission is greatly appreciated.

Thank you again. You will always be a part of the Habitat Authority family, and we hope our paths allow us to collaborate again.

Sincerely,



Ivan Sulic
Chair, Board of Directors

cc: Board of Directors
CTAC



**Puente Hills
Habitat Preservation Authority**
Endowment Provided by the Puente Hills Landfill

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ivan Sulic
Chair
County of Los Angeles

Mary Ann Pacheco
Vice Chair
City of Whittier

Robert Ferrante
Director Sanitation Districts of
Los Angeles County

Cassandra Garcia
Director
Hacienda Heights

February 17, 2026

John and Laurie Peel

[REDACTED]
Whittier, CA 90601

Dear John and Laurie,

Thank you very much for your tax-deductible donation of \$500.00 to the Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority.

On behalf of the Habitat Authority, I want to extend our heartfelt appreciation for your generous contribution. Your support will help us address important unfunded needs, such as the purchase of wildlife cameras.

Your gift plays an important role in advancing the Habitat Authority's mission to preserve and protect the Puente Hills Preserve. Contributions like yours help ensure that the hills remain a thriving place for wildlife, their habitats, and the people who enjoy them.

We are truly grateful for your support. Thank you again for helping us continue this important work.

All the best,

original signed

Andrea Gullo
Executive Director



**Puente Hills
Habitat Preservation Authority**
Endowment Provided by the Puente Hills Landfill

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ivan Sulic
Chair
County of Los Angeles

Mary Ann Pacheco
Vice Chair
City of Whittier

Robert Ferrante
Director Sanitation Districts of
Los Angeles County

Cassandra Garcia
Director
Hacienda Heights

February 10, 2026

Matthew Liang

[REDACTED]
Hacienda Heights, CA 91745

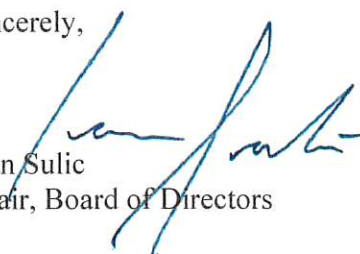
Dear Mr. Liang:

The Habitat Authority would like to thank you for serving as a Citizens Technical Advisory Committee (CTAC) member.

Your contribution of approximately three and one-half years of service is deeply valued! Your volunteerism, professionalism, support and dedication over these many years have helped the Habitat Authority with its continued efforts in preserving the local hills for wildlife and providing quality recreational opportunities for people. We'd especially like to recognize your commitment, engagement with the local community and contributions to the Committee discussions in furthering the agency's mission.

Thank you again. You will always be a part of the Habitat Authority family, and we hope our paths allow us to collaborate again.

Sincerely,


Ivan Sulic
Chair, Board of Directors

cc: Board of Directors
CTAC



Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority

Endowment Provided by the Puente Hills Landfill

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ivan Sulic
Chair
County of Los Angeles

Mary Ann Pacheco
Vice Chair
City of Whittier

Robert Ferrante
Director Sanitation Districts of
Los Angeles County

Vacant
Director
Hacienda Heights

April 7, 2026

Whittier, CA 90601

Dear Ms. Brooks,

Thank you very much for the tax-deductible donation of \$2,000 to the Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority. Your donation is generous and very appreciated.

This gift will contribute towards the Habitat Authority's mission of preserving and protecting the Puente Hills Preserve. Contributions like this help our agency to continue to preserve the hills for the benefit of wildlife, their habitats and people. Your support means a lot to us. Again, thank you!

Sincerely,

Andrea Gullo
Executive Director

C:
Board of Directors
Advisory Committee

Daily Inspiration: Meet Ivan Sulic



Today we'd like to introduce you to Ivan Sulic.

Alright, so thank you so much for sharing your story and insight with our readers. To kick things off, can you tell us a bit about how you got started?

My path to the Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority really began through public service. I was appointed to the Habitat Authority by Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn, who I've worked for for more than 14 years. When Supervisor Hahn was elected to the Board of Supervisors in 2016, she asked me to serve as her Field Deputy for the Whittier area, where the majority of the Puente Hills Preserve is located.

The Habitat Authority itself was created over 30 years ago as a Joint Powers Authority, with the County of Los Angeles playing a key role in its formation. Through my work representing the Supervisor, I became deeply involved with the agency and its mission. In the early years, it was very much a learning experience, understanding the history of the Preserve, the vision of its founders, and the importance of habitat preservation in a region as urbanized as Los Angeles County.

Managing nearly 4,000 acres of open space comes with a unique responsibility. It requires balancing public access, thousands of residents use the trails every year, with the need to protect sensitive habitat, wildlife, and native plant species. Over time, that work became incredibly meaningful to me. When longtime leaders stepped away, I was honored to be asked to serve as Chair of the Board, a role I continue to take very seriously.

Would you say it's been a smooth road, and if not what are some of the biggest challenges you've faced along the way?

It definitely hasn't always been a smooth road. Personally, one of my biggest challenges early on was simply learning—learning the agency's history, its relationships with surrounding cities like Whittier, La Habra Heights, Hacienda Heights, and Rowland Heights,

and understanding what it truly means to be a habitat preservation agency rather than a traditional park.

From an organizational standpoint, funding has been one of our greatest challenges. Like many public agencies, our costs were increasing while revenues were not keeping pace. That reality pushed us to think differently. I championed placing Measure PH on the ballot, which ultimately passed with over 68% voter approval. That measure created a stable funding source to support fire prevention, ranger programs, and long-term stewardship of the Preserve.

Another major challenge has been balancing access and preservation, especially as trail usage surged, even before COVID. During the pandemic, outdoor spaces became one of the few places people could safely gather, which led to unprecedented use of the Preserve. While we want people to enjoy this open space, increased traffic also has real impacts on our local wildlife and habitat. Navigating that balance thoughtfully has been one of our most ongoing and important challenges while creating an opportunity to teach others how to be good stewards of the Preserve.

Thanks – so what else should our readers know about your work and what you’re currently focused on?

In addition to serving as Chair of the Habitat Authority, my primary role with Los Angeles County is as Supervisor Hahn’s Homeless and Housing Deputy. I work closely with colleagues across the county to address homelessness and housing affordability, two of the most complex challenges facing our region.

I also serve as an alternate board member for the Los Angeles County Affordable Housing Solutions Agency (LACASA) and sit on the Southeast Social Services Funding Authority, which oversees workforce development services for the greater Whittier area. I currently serve as Chair of that board as well.

Throughout my career, I’ve worn many hats, but the common thread has always been public service, working collaboratively, managing complex issues, and trying to make thoughtful decisions that improve quality of life for residents across our communities.

Are there any important lessons you’ve learned that you can share with us?

One of the most important lessons I’ve learned is the value of taking time before making decisions, especially when managing large, sensitive open spaces. Decisions made today can have ripple effects on wildlife, habitat, and surrounding communities for years to come.

I've learned that it's essential to look at all sides, listen carefully, and find balance rather than rushing to quick solutions. That mindset applies whether we're evaluating trail access, habitat restoration, or public safety measures.

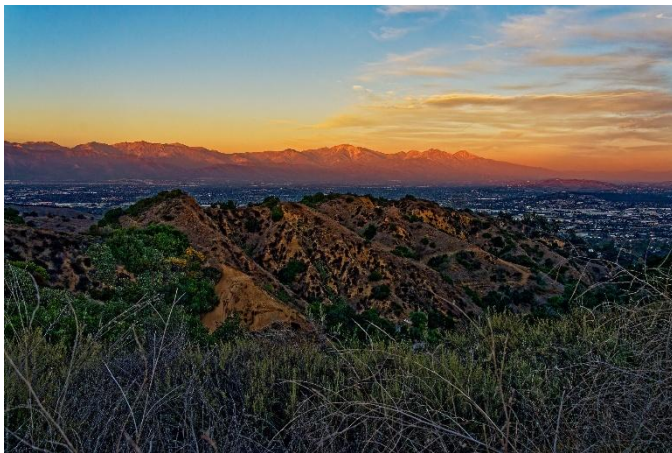
Coming from San Pedro, an area shaped by heavy industry like the Port of Los Angeles, stepping into the role of stewarding nearly 4,000 acres of preserved open space was eye-opening. It reinforced for me just how critical protected open spaces are not only for local communities, but for the health and resilience of the entire region. Preserving these lands for future generations is a responsibility I am honored to have.

Contact Info:

- **Website:** <https://www.habitatauthority.org/>
- **Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/habitatauthority/>
- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/PuenteHillsPreserve>
- **Twitter:** <https://x.com/phhpa>
- **Other:** <https://www.meetup.com/puente-hills-preserve-hikers/>







Habitat Authority purchases 5.5-acre open parcel in Heights to enhance wildfire safety efforts

The Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority completed the purchase in December of a 5.5-acre parcel of open space in La Habra Heights. The acquisition ensures permanent preservation and protection of the land and enhancement of critical wildfire resilience measures for surrounding communities.

The parcel (in light green in the photo above) is just southeast of Fullerton Road. This acquisition adds to the Habitat Authority's Puente Hills Preserve and preserves the land as open space. The Habitat Authority plans to further protect the hills and surrounding communities with the development of a permanent strategic firebreak in the form of a trailhead on this parcel. The land will also serve as an emergency staging area.

The purchase was made possible with recent funding from the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC), a state agency. The funding supports the Habitat Authority's Puente Hills Fire Resiliency project, which enhances wildfire safety for the Puente Hills Preserve and the surrounding communities of Whittier, La Habra Heights, Hacienda Heights and Rowland Heights.

"This acquisition is a powerful example of what local and state partnerships can achieve for our communities," said Ivan Sulic, Chairperson of the Habitat Authority's board of directors. "By protecting this land forever, we're strengthening wildfire resilience, preserving critical habitat and ensuring that future generations can experience the beauty and natural diversity of the Puente Hills."

The state funding originates from the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024. The three-year grant agreement, executed in August 2025, supports wildfire prevention and protection, wildfire prevention planning, biological consulting and contractor oversight, and land acquisition.

"This purchase represents a major step forward in our long-term strategy to safeguard both the Puente Hills Preserve and the people who live around it," said Andrea Gullo, Habitat Authority Executive Director. "With this new land, we're not only expanding protected open space, we're building real, lasting wildfire defenses that benefit the local community."



The Habitat Authority conducts annual targeted vegetation management and fuel reduction in the wildland-urban interface, areas where preserved open space meets residential neighborhoods. These efforts provide defensible space for first responders. This winter, the Habitat Authority has been using RMC grant funds to clear targeted areas throughout La Habra Heights to increase wildfire safety and preparedness in the community. This work is focused on long-term solutions that reduce fire danger while preserving the natural rural landscape that defines the community.

The Habitat Authority is also working on several other grant projects, including ordering a tactical 2,000 gallon firefighting water tender, home-hardening an Authority facility and long-term strategic fuel-management planning.

These wildfire resiliency efforts are not just about land stewardship, they are about protecting people, homes and critical infrastructure. Proactive land management helps firefighters do their jobs more safely and effectively while providing surrounding communities with greater peace of mind.

Since its establishment in 1994, the Habitat Authority has been preserving and protecting more than 3,800 acres of natural habitats of the Puente Hills area—including Hacienda Hills, Turnbull Canyon, Sycamore Canyon, Hellman Park, Arroyo Pescadero and Powder Canyon—while also providing important recreational opportunities. Learn more at habitatauthority.org.



\$168,000 Cal Fire grant supports Habitat Authority ongoing fuel-reduction and fire-resilience efforts

Cal Fire recently awarded a \$168,000 grant to the Puente Hills Habitat Authority to support ongoing wildfire prevention work in the Puente Hills and surrounding communities.

The grant will be used to create defensible space in wildland-urban interface areas, to reduce fuel loads by removing dead, dying or hazardous trees and clearing brush along emergency access routes.

The Habitat Authority's efforts are intended to enhance local community efforts such as home hardening, brush clearance and emergency planning.

The funding was provide by the Wildfire Prevention Grants Program of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire).

Roy Frances retires from HA Advisory Committee

Roy Frances, former mayor of La Habra Heights, recently ended his term on the Advisory Committee of the Puente Hills Habitat Authority after eight years of outstanding service representing the interests of La Habra Heights. He received recognition and thanks from the Habitat Authority Board.

Advantage Weed Abatement & Landscape Services

Since 1980

Weed & brush clearance to La Habra Heights Fire Department standards

Residential • Commercial • Wildland
Yards • Lots • Slopes • Roadsides
Weeds • Trees • Brush • Bushes
Total yard clean-up & hauling

Free, friendly, no-pressure estimates

562-694-4865



We accept:



Advantageweeds@yahoo.com

CA License #1074078

RURAL LIVING

LHH license plate frames on sale at City Hall for \$10 each

Made in the USA of high-quality, die-cast metal, these attractive, sturdy frames are a great way to display your pride in our unique rural community.

LA HABRA HEIGHTS

2026 Los Compadres high school senior scholarships



Each year, the Los Compadres Club of La Habra Heights awards scholarships to graduating high school seniors living in La Habra Heights. Students attend various local schools.

To be considered, students must have maintained a 3.5 GPA throughout their high school years and have actively participated in school and community activities.

Selected students will receive a scholarship cash grant and a Certificate of Excellence from Los Compadres and will be recognized in *Heights Life*.

Qualified students may request a scholarship application by e-mailing brad@gbcookeinc.com.

Please complete and return applications by **March 13, 2026**.

Mountain lions in Southern California get permanent, protective status from state commission

For the first time, puma populations, mostly in the south, are being listed as "threatened" by the California Fish and Game Commission



Mountain lion P-54's litter as seen in the Santa Monica Mountains in this undated photo. (photo by National Park Service).

By [Steve Scauzillo](#) | sscauzillo@scng.com | Daily News

PUBLISHED: February 12, 2026 at 3:12 PM PST | UPDATED: February 12, 2026 at 4:43 PM PST

The imperiled mountain lions of Central and Southern California were granted permanent protection on Thursday, Feb. 12, by the California Fish and Game Commission.

By deeming six populations of pumas as "threatened" under the California Endangered Species Act, it will mean any entity proposing new developments or roads near mountain lion habitat must formulate a plan to mitigate the harm to these big cats.

It could also bring in funds for additional wildlife crossings to increase the mobility and safety of wildlife movement.

Already, the nearly \$100 million [Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing](#) being built over the 101 Freeway in Agoura Hills with mostly private dollars will enable penned-in mountain lions in the Santa Monica Mountains to cross safely into northern ranges. This will enable them to roam in a more expansive area, for food and to find mates in order to perpetuate the species.

Biologists are examining the possibility of building another crossing over the 5 Freeway in the area between Kern and northern Los Angeles County. Also, the status could generate dollars and support to help keep the wild cats [off the toll roads in Orange County and off I-15](#), where many are struck and killed by vehicles every year.

Two environmental groups, the Center for Biological Diversity and the Mountain Lion Foundation, [received a positive response to their nearly seven-year-old petition for more](#)

Whittier Daily News. 2.12.26

[protections for six subsets of mountain lions](#). These cougars are located in the Santa Cruz Mountains, the Central Coast, Santa Monica Mountains, San Gabriel and San Bernardino Mountains, Santa Ana Mountains and Eastern Peninsular range in San Diego County.

Mountain lions need wide ranges to hunt, usually for deer, and for males to find unrelated females for breeding. These large felines are boxed in by freeways and when they dart across lanes of speeding traffic, they are usually killed, making vehicle strikes the leading cause of death. Secondly, they can get sick with weakened immune systems that can lead to death from eating small prey such as rats, mice and squirrels that have ingested rat poison left outside near wildlands, as the poison transfers into their systems.

This marks the first time California has recognized pumas as a threatened species. That presents a legal mandate for all state agencies to protect these six pockets of cougar populations, according to the Center for Biological Diversity.

“This is a major milestone for a California icon,” said Tiffany Yap, urban wildlands science director at the Center for Biological Diversity.

“Mountain lions are a marvel but too many across the Golden State and are struggling in the diminished and fractured wild places where they live. This state isn’t willing to stand back and watch our precious wildlife vanish forever,” Yap added.

The new status is a bittersweet development, signaling [these animals are in danger of extinction due to inbreeding](#) if nothing is done. But it also brings more attention to their plight and possibly more help.

“This is an epic win for California’s iconic big cats,” said Katie Nolan, Wild Animals campaigner for In Defense of Animals, an international animal protection group based in Marin County. Nolan, who spoke at the meeting Thursday, said in a statement: “Not only will protection give inherently valuable individuals a much-needed lifeline, it will have a cascading impact that will improve biodiversity.”

Mountain lions in these locations face multiple threats, from badly planned development, widespread use of rat poison, car strikes when crossing highways, wildfire and disease.



National Park Service

This November 2014 photo provided by the National Park Service shows the Griffith Park mountain lion known as P-22. He died on Dec. 17, 2022. (National Park Service, via AP, File)

Southern Californians fell in love with P-22, a mountain lion that crossed two freeways, only to end up in Griffith Park, a city of Los Angeles park with trails, wild areas, but also with playgrounds, kitty rides and the Griffith Observatory.

P-22 was the only wild cat to live in a city park. He lived there for 10 years, until disease and being hit by a car caused him to be so ill that [he was euthanized on Dec. 17, 2022. A celebration of his life was held at the Greek Theater in Griffith Park](#) a few months later, the first public memorial service for a wild animal in Los Angeles history.

“I’m celebrating this vote as a new chapter for pumas and I hold so much hope for their future,” said Yap.

WHITTIER DAILY NEWS

Habitat Authority receives first Measure PH funds, dedicated to fire prevention, habitat protection

More than \$588, 500 will pay for a myriad projects in the Puente Hills Preserve



Hiker walk on the Arroyo San Miguel trail in the Puente Hills Preserve. The Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority, which manages the area, received the first of Measure PH funds on Jan. 20, the agency announced Monday, Feb. 2. The initial \$588,670 will go toward habitat protection, wildfire prevention, and rangers and trails support. (Photo courtesy of James Ellison/Habitat Authority)

By [Anissa Rivera](#) | arivera@scng.com

PUBLISHED: February 3, 2026 at 2:01 PM PST | UPDATED: February 3, 2026 at 2:03 PM PST

The [Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority](#) received the first half of annual funding from voter-approved [Measure PH](#) on Jan. 20, the agency announced Monday, Feb. 2.

A total of \$588,670.05 has been collected to date, with the remaining expected to be collected between April and June.

The funds will go toward efforts to prevent wildfires, support ranger patrols, protect wildlife habitat and maintain trails for the more than 3,880 acres of open space the [Habitat Authority](#) manages.



“We know visitors cherish recreational areas like Turnbull Canyon, Hacienda Hills, Sycamore Canyon, Hellman Park, Arroyo Pescadero, and Powder Canyon,” said Ivan Sulic, chair of the Habitat Authority’s board of directors. “With voters’ support, these beloved trails will continue to be responsibly cared for.”

•



A ranger goes over safety protocols along the Arroyo Pescadero with hikers in the Puente Hills Preserve in January 2024. (Photo courtesy of the Habitat Authority)

Sulic hailed the funds disbursement as a major step toward protecting and preserving the Puente Hills, which more than two-thirds of voter supported in the November 2024 general election. Measure PH established a 1-cent per building square foot special tax, or about \$18 per year for the average homeowner.

The funds will pay for core safety and conservation services, including adding park ranger patrols for fire safety and emergency response, clearing hazardous brush, improving emergency access roads, reducing ignition sources related to illegal encampments and dumping, protecting sensitive habitats and restoring native species and repairing and maintain trailheads such as the Hacienda Hills, Turnbull Canyon, Sycamore Canyon, Hellman Park, Arroyo Pescadero and Powder Canyon.

Andrea Gullo, executive director for the Habitat Authority, said the money will allow the agency to accomplish the measure’s goals.

“These dollars will let us facilitate the work voters said matters most: wildfire prevention clearance, keeping the Puente Hills a safe home for wildlife, and preserving open scenic spaces our children and grandchildren will inherit.”

Residents can further support the Habitat Authority’s work by joining a newly-established citizens’ Fiscal Oversight Advisory Committee, whose job it will be to verify funds are spent as promised. Applicants can find more information on the Habitat Authority’s website.

The new committee will review annual audits of the funds as well as public financial disclosures.

“With the collection of the Measure PH funding, resources for ranger services and our annual comprehensive wildland-urban vegetation clearance for wildfire prevention throughout the entire preserve is now secured,” Sulic said. “It will enable us to protect dozens of species that depend on the preserve, from mule deer and red-tailed hawks to

salamanders, along with the native plants that define this landscape, and support the work that voters clearly said they value.”

The Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority was established in 1994, and manages more than 3,800 acres of natural habitats of the Puente Hills area, including Hacienda Hills, Turnbull Canyon, Sycamore Canyon, Hellman Park, Arroyo Pescadero, and Powder Canyon. As a Joint Powers Authority, it has a board of directors made up of the city of Whittier, Los Angeles County, the sanitation districts of Los Angeles County, and a member representing Hacienda Heights who is a member of the Hacienda Heights Improvement Association.

MSN, 2.3.26

Catalina Island's deer will be killed to restore its ecosystem

Story by Lila Seidman



One of Catalina's mule deer, brought to the island in the 1930s for game hunting. Under a new plan, all the deer will be killed in what conservationists say will help restore ecology on the island. ((Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times))

California wildlife officials [have approved a plan](#) to eradicate Catalina's entire deer population as part of a broader effort to restore the island ecosystem, sparking fierce opposition from an unusual coalition of hunters and animal welfare advocates.

Per the plan conceived by the Catalina Island Conservancy, professional hunters will shoot the island's non-native mule deer on the ground over four to five years.

The conservancy, which owns and manages 88% of the island, says getting rid of the deer is necessary to bring back the island's unique plants — including the [Catalina Island Mountain Mahogany](#), which may be the rarest tree in North America. That in turn would reduce wildfire risk, restore groundwater and allow other animals to thrive, according to the nonprofit.



A mule deer doe licks its fawn at a feral cat feeding station behind the Descanso Beach Club in Catalina Island's Avalon in 2023. ((Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times))© (Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times)

"Nobody wants to kill animals. Obviously, that's not why we get into conservation work," said Lauren Dennhardt, the conservancy's senior director of conservation. "But we know

what's at stake here, and it's important for us to essentially do the right thing, to make sure that this island stays and gets even better for the future."

Despite the shift away from hunting from the air, many still don't want to see the deer culled. Last week, L.A. County Supervisor Janice Hahn, who represents much of the island, urged the California Fish and Wildlife Department to deny the permit needed to carry it out.

"This plan disregards the deeply held values of many Catalina residents and visitors," [Hahn said in a Jan. 26 letter](#). She called it "a drastic and inhumane approach" and said many who live on the island "cherish these deer."

She also highlighted a concern by L.A. County Fire Chief Anthony Marrone that killing off the deer — which reduce flammable material through grazing — could increase wildfire risk.



A Catalina Island fox stares at a mule deer fawn. ((Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times))© (Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times)

"If we could direct the deer to just eat invasives, we would love to do that but, obviously, deer eat all vegetation," said Pepe Barton, communications director for the conservancy.

According to Barton, when deer munch on native plants, the plants are replaced by invasive grasses that dry out quickly and burn easily. Then, when a wildfire comes through and natives begin to regrow, they're chopped back down, creating a vicious cycle.

Hunting groups like Safari Club International and the California Rifle and Pistol Assn., as well as animal rights groups In Defense of Animals and the Humane Society, also oppose the hunt.

The deer have "provided a really great hunting opportunity in an area of Southern California where there's not a lot of big game hunting opportunities," said Regina Lennox, senior litigation counsel for Safari Club. "So this is really important to us."

She said there's "middle ground" where the deer are perhaps reduced, but not eliminated, so people can hunt and enjoy them. The group is exploring its legal options.

On Friday, a few days after Supervisor Hahn's request, the state wildlife department granted the conservancy's permit.



In 2023, a mule deer fawn watches its mother drink water at a feral cat feeding station behind the Descanso Beach Club in Avalon. ((Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times))© (Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times)

In a statement, Jen Benedet, the department's acting deputy director of public affairs, said the decision was "based on a scientific and legal review of the application." The work is "intended to support the recovery and long-term health of native and endemic California species."

Catalina is part of the [Channel Islands archipelago](#), sometimes called the Galapagos of North America. Removing invasive species, including deer, has led to recovery on other islands, according to the conservancy's Dennhardt.

Unlike the other islands, owned by the federal government, Catalina is all state land. That means the state wildlife department is responsible for managing the deer. But it won't carry out the hunt.

Dennhardt said restoring the island will also involve ripping out invasive plants, cloning rare plant species and seeding the landscape with natives.

"The thing that we have to do before any of this is feasible at scale is to remove the mule deer," she said.

This story originally appeared in [Los Angeles Times](#).

California again delays 'zone zero' wildfire protection rules for homes



A home is engulfed in flames during the Eaton fire in Altadena Wednesday Jan. 8, 2025. (Photo by Will Lester, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)

By **Bloomberg** | wordpress@medianewsgroup.com | Bloomberg

PUBLISHED: December 10, 2025 at 11:37 AM PST

By **Todd Woody** | Bloomberg

A California state agency won't meet Governor Gavin Newsom's year-end deadline to finish [long-delayed regulations](#) to protect homes from wildfires, rules that experts say could have limited the destruction of the [January Los Angeles firestorms](#).

At a meeting of the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection on Monday, chair Terrence O'Brien said officials would wait until March 2026 to continue work on regulations to require ember-resistant zones, called Zone Zero, around some 2 million houses in high-risk wildfire areas. That means it could be mid-2029 or later before any mandate takes effect for existing homes.

O'Brien cited continued disagreement on how strictly to enforce the Zone Zero requirement to remove plants, wood fences and other combustible material within five feet of a home for the ongoing delays. A 2020 law enacted after a series of devastating wildfires originally mandated a January 2023 deadline to complete the regulations. "That continues to be the challenge we face," he said at the meeting.

Fed's Powell wants economy in 'good shape' before term ends

"California is committed to getting Zone Zero right, not just getting it done, through rules that reflect what LA fire survivors have told us while balancing resilience to the next fire, the realities of the insurance market and what homeowners can reasonably afford," Anthony Martinez, a spokesperson for Newsom, said in an email.

Scientific studies have shown that measures to prevent wind-blown embers from igniting a home dramatically increases its chance of survival. Wildfire officials and insurance executives have pushed for a stringent interpretation of the law amid residents' pushback against removing lush landscaping, particularly in Southern California.

A similar dynamic led the state in 2023 to put the regulations on hold after missing a January deadline that year to enact the rules. A Bloomberg Green investigation found that the board at that time had refused to ban all combustible materials within Zone Zero while the governor's office worried about the cost to homeowners.

In the wake of the LA catastrophe that destroyed 16,000 buildings and killed 31 people, Newsom in February ordered the board to resume drafting Zone Zero and finish the work by Dec. 31. The board issued draft regulations in March that barred landscaping, wood fences and gates and other combustible material within five feet of a house but allowed non-flammable pots containing small plants. Trees were permitted as long as branches were trimmed away from the dwelling.

Over the course of 11 public workshops held this year on the regulations, a group of Southern California homeowners, including some that lost their houses in the Eaton and Palisades fires, fought the draft rules, arguing that well-watered plants in Zone Zero would actually protect their homes and removing landscaping would hurt wildlife.

After proposing draft regulations that only allowed potted plants in Zone Zero, the board appeared to backtrack in October, presenting four Zone Zero options, ranging from banning nearly all combustible material to allowing "well-maintained plants" within five feet of a home.

At Monday's hearing, the board heard presentations from horticulturalists who favored allowing certain landscaping within the ember-resistant zone. But officials with Cal Fire, the state fire-fighting agency, said a failure to require a strict Zone Zero would put communities at a growing risk of urban wildfires as climate impacts place more homes in high-risk areas.

Some California cities have already implemented their own version of Zone Zero. Following the LA wildfires, Berkeley officials faced opposition from homeowners after proposing strict ember-resistant zone requirements for parts of the fire-prone Berkeley Hills. But over the summer, the city council approved the rules, which will take effect Jan. 1.


CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT

Cal Fire approach to SoCal's wildfire crisis could make things worse, court says



A bulldozer moves into position to cut firebreaks as a hand crew descends a hillside during the Canyon fire in Castaic on Aug. 8, 2025. (Myung J. Chun / Los Angeles Times)



By Noah Haggerty
Staff Writer |  Follow

Nov. 25, 2025 3 AM PT

- A court ruled a statewide Cal Fire program risks making fires worse by removing native chaparral and allowing the spread of more flammable grasses.
- The decision exposes a fundamental rift: Ecologists prefer solutions that preserve native ecosystems, while fire officials incorporate plans to remove vegetation that fuels a fire.

In a case that calls into question plant clearing techniques that have become fundamental to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire, the San Diego Superior Court has ordered the agency to amend a program to reduce wildfire risk across the state because it could make things worse.

The years-long legal action filed by the [California Chaparral Institute](#) and [Endangered Habitats League](#) against the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection within Cal Fire, highlights deep rifts between ecologists' and firefighters' approaches to solving California's wildfire crisis.

Richard Halsey, director of the California Chaparral Institute, was elated. "Chaparral and sage scrub is more than 10% of the state," he said.

"Despite all the rhetoric about how we love biodiversity, you're going to wipe out where most of the biodiversity is in the state," and in the process make the landscape more flammable, Halsey said of the Cal Fire plan.

Cal Fire's Vegetation Management Program aims to use prescribed fire plus tree and brush cutting to reduce the risk of a wildfire igniting, exploding out of control and jeopardizing lives and property. In doing so, the agency also tries to nurture the biodiversity of native species and protect clean water and soil health.



Crews clear a firebreak during the July 2023 Victor blaze in Santa Clarita. (Jason Armond / Los Angeles Times)

In California's conifer forests, this often looks like thinning an unnaturally high density of trees and brush that fuel exceptionally severe fire.

But in Southern California, much of the wildlands are home to chaparral ecosystems of shrubs, oak trees, native grasses and flowers, and the typical approach is to cut fuel breaks: long strips along ridgelines and roadways devoid of all vegetation that can stop creeping ground fires in their tracks and give firefighters safe access to battle wind-driven blazes that can easily jump.



CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT

The state's wildfire policy long overlooked SoCal. Now it's course correcting

Oct. 16, 2025

Severe and frequent wildfires are already causing some areas with trees to become chaparral and some areas of chaparral to become just flammable grasses. The legal action claimed that Cal Fire's chaparral firebreaks can cause this "type conversion."

When native chaparral is cleared from a landscape, whether by a wildfire or through a vegetation management project, it's often not native plants that grow back, but instead opportunistic fast-growing invasive grasses.

Cal Fire argued that its program addressed this in its environmental impact review. But the California Chaparral Institute and Endangered Habitats League said the department did not take into account that these invasive grasses are much more flammable than the native species it is cutting down — meaning it could increase fire risk.

The Vegetation Management Program guides real work on the ground. So far this year it has completed more than 5,400 acres of work on 26 projects. About 13% of the work was in shrublands, like chaparral.



CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT

How recent wildfires have primed Malibu and the Santa Monica Mountains for more frequent blazes

Dec. 14, 2024

The board did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The ecology organizations filed the petition in 2020, and in 2023 the San Diego Superior Court ruled for Cal Fire. The organizations appealed, and, in May 2025,

California's 4th District Court of Appeal reversed the trial court and ordered it to determine how to remedy the problem.

On Nov. 14, the lower court ordered Cal Fire to address the potential for type conversion to worsen wildfire risk and until it does so, barred individual projects in the Vegetation Management Program from relying on the program's blanket environmental review to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act.

The order does not apply to new fuel break projects that already have a plan to prevent flammable grasses from growing, nor to maintaining existing fuel breaks. Projects on land that has already lost its trees or chaparral to type conversion are also allowed to continue.

Ecologists and fire officials ultimately have the same goals: reduce devastating wildfires and protect native biodiversity. After all, fire can wipe out thousands of acres of native ecosystem — and the non-native ecosystems that plague the region can much more easily ignite.

But ecologists tend to favor solutions preserving native ecosystems (such as programs focused on reducing the chance of fire starting in the first place), whereas fire officials tend to gravitate toward solutions that view plants as “fuel” for a potential fire (such as cutting away vegetation to create fuel breaks).



CALIFORNIA

In high-tech race to detect fires early, O.C. bets on volunteers with binoculars

Aug. 15, 2025

Fire officials argue fuel breaks are one tool that gives crews a much needed strategic advantage when they're working to protect communities. However, some ecologists question whether breaks even help in ember-driven fires and whether fire departments actually staff fuel breaks during an emergency.

These differences came into full focus as fire departments and land managers in the Santa Monica Mountains began a project to build a network of fuel breaks throughout the region in September, thanks to an expedited approval process created by Gov. Gavin Newsom and funding from the \$10-billion climate bond that California voters approved last November.



CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT

Man, machine and mutton: Inside the plan to prevent the next SoCal fire disaster

Oct. 14, 2025

“The governor and legislature were clear: We need to move faster to get more of these projects in Wildfire risks are getting worse,” Wade Crowfoot, California’s natural resources secretary, said at the time. “A well-designed fuel break that takes environmentally protective measures will not only protect these communities this winter but will allow for broader, more holistic landscape management.”

More to Read

Can you survive a wildfire sheltering at home? For one community, L.A. County Fire says it may be the only option

Nov. 24, 2025



‘Zone zero’ rule could be California’s wildfire savior — or its environmental undoing

Sept. 15, 2025



California’s wildfire moonshot: How new technology will defeat advancing flames

Aug. 10, 2025





Noah Haggerty

Noah Haggerty is an environment and science reporter at the Los Angeles Times covering wildfire in the American West. A graduate of Northeastern University, he has a background in physics research, focusing on spacecraft propulsion and fusion energy. Haggerty joined The Times in 2024 as an AAAS Mass Media Fellow.

9 public safety issues raised by Eaton, Palisades fires – and what’s been done about them

The Eaton and Palisades fires exposed an array of public safety response issues. A year later, here's a look at some of them and what's been done to correct them.



By **NATHANIEL PERCY** | npercy@scng.com | Southern California News Group

PUBLISHED: December 22, 2025 at 6:00 AM PST



Firefighters battle winds and flames as multiple beachfront homes go up in flames along Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu in the Palisades Fire on Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2025 (Photo by David Crane, Los Angeles Daily News/SCNG)



Roland Vaughan, known as the swamper, works up a sweat digging fire lines as fast as he can. He grew up in an Alabama national forest and like many inmates here hopes to become a firefighter after serving his time. The swamper helps supervise fellow inmates from Fenner Canyon Conservation Camp during Cal Fire’s preparedness training at Hubert Eaton Scout in Cedar Glen, Calif. on Wednesday, May 1, 2019. (Photo by Cindy Yamanaka, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

Several factors affected how first responders battled the [Palisades](#) and [Eaton](#) fires, two of the most devastating wildfires in California history. Such factors ranged from the amount of staff deployed to basic communication among agencies and to the public.

Those factors also impacted the evacuation of tens of thousands of people from their homes in the Pacific Palisades, Malibu, Altadena and its surrounding areas.

One year later, here are updates on some of the challenges on Jan. 7 and what, if anything, is in the works to remedy them.

Pre-positioned resources

The Los Angeles Fire Department, in anticipation of dangerous fire weather starting on Jan. 7, said it pre-positioned resources in key areas where wildfires were likely. Many of these resources were told to report to stations in the San Fernando Valley.

The Los Angeles County Fire Department also pre-positioned three strike teams – comprised of five engines and 21 firefighters each – in Agoura Hills, La Cañada Flintridge and its air operations base in Pacoima. The department also had 900 additional firefighters working overtime. Some of those resources helped LAFD in the response to the Palisades fire before the Eaton fire broke out.

The closest pre-positioned resources to the Palisades were in Woodland Hills and Agoura Hills.

LAFD has since promised to beef up staffing during high-risk fire weather events.



A firefighter stands in the backyard of a home on Chastain Parkway, looking east at the western flank of the Palisades fire an hour after the blaze erupted, in a photo included in the After-Action Review Report released by the Los Angeles City Fire Department on Wednesday. (Photo courtesy of Los Angeles City Fire Department)

Staffing shortages

In an [after-action report made public in October](#), the Los Angeles Fire Department acknowledged that in the interest of being fiscally responsible amid budget restraints, they did not keep staff from a previous shift on to help in the initial stages of the Palisades fire.

Now, “all staff will be immediately recalled and all available apparatus staffed, regardless of external factors or financial impact,” the report said.



FILE | Beachfront properties are burned by the Palisades Fire, Sunday, Jan. 12, 2025 in Malibu, Calif. (AP Photo/Mark J. Terrill, File)

Coordination

In [its own after-action report released on Nov. 4](#), the Los Angeles Police Department said it had difficulties coordinating with other agencies during the Palisades fire response – namely LAFD – and lacked stable communication channels and technology.

Officers were slow to arrive because of the drive to the Palisades and because of a lack of personal protective equipment, they stopped door-to-door evacuation alerts, while wind and bad reception caused a tactical alert to be delayed and a shift to a dedicated radio frequency caused “significant confusion,” the report said.

The report recommended, among other things, that the two agencies train together and emphasize “true Unified Command organizational structure.”



Shawn Tyrie, McChrystal Group Partner and the Government President, speaks during a press conference to preview the McChrystal Group’s independent after-action review of alerts, warnings and evacuations during the Eaton and Palisades fires, during a press conference in Los Angeles on Thursday, Sept. 25, 2025. (Photo by David Crane, Los Angeles Daily News/SCNG)

Emergency alerts

In both the Palisades and Eaton fires, some residents did not receive timely evacuation warnings. This was [particularly true for west Altadena residents](#). An after-action report by the McChrystal Group, a third-party brought on by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, highlighted shortfalls, including staffing shortages at the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and the county's Office of Emergency Management, as well as policies and protocols on evacuation warnings that were "outdated, unclear and contradictory."

The report recommended the county update its policies to make sure that first responders and emergency management understood roles and responsibilities, among others.

Following that report and another [state-commissioned report](#) that concluded alerts were sent out well after the Eaton fire started burning homes in west Altadena, the Los Angeles County Fire Department has [launched its own independent investigation into why evacuation warnings were sent some three hours late](#) to residents in that area.



A heavy air tanker drops a load of fire retardant on a ridgeline to protect Mandeville Canyon — and homes in Brentwood — from the Palisades fire on Thursday, Jan. 9, 2025. (Photo by Mike Meadows/Contributing Photographer)

Air support

Due to high winds, Dan Child, LAFD chief pilot, made the decision to ground aircraft the night of Jan. 7 because pilots were [struggling just to fly the aircraft and maintain altitude in high winds](#).

The aircraft were airborne again the following day and remained in the firefight from that point on.



FILE – Firefighters work a hydrant in front of the burning Bunny Museum, Jan. 8, 2025, in the Altadena section of Pasadena, Calif. (AP Photo/Chris Pizzello, File)

Water supply

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power system was not adequately prepared to take on the demand for water in battling the Palisades fire, [running out of water in the area by early morning, Jan. 8](#). A nearby reservoir was also empty as it was being repaired.

LADWP temporarily asked customers to conserve water while also sending about 20 mobile water tanks to support the fire department. The state later sent another 140 tankers to augment the struggling water systems.

Governor Gavin Newsom, three days after the fires started, [called for a review into the causes of the lost water supply and water pressure](#) across Los Angeles County and asked state and firefighting officials what local governments can do to provide an adequate water supply for emergency responses.

Municipal water systems are not designed to fight wildfires. Experts have said any upgrades to water systems in the foothill communities will not be cheap or easy.



A resident of a senior center is evacuated as the Eaton Fire approaches Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2025 in Altadena, Calif. (AP Photo/Ethan Swope)

Senior centers

Two senior care facilities in Altadena and Pasadena were found to have [failed to follow emergency protocols and improperly handled evacuations](#) of some residents during the Eaton fire, including one – MonteCedro – where LASD deputies found two residents who were left behind at or near the facility.

In an online statement, MonteCedro said a new executive director was brought on in August.

At The Terraces at Park Marino, one resident was left behind and eventually evacuated by Pasadena firefighters. The facility was destroyed by the Eaton fire, but was expected to reopen in 2027.



Edison crews look for damage on an electric tower 227 in Altadena on Thursday, May 8, 2025. The tower was being removed by helicopter and hit another tower during the Eaton fire investigation. (Photo by Gene Blevins, Contributing Photographer)

Power lines

Though the cause hasn't been officially determined, many residents who lost homes in the Altadena area have [filed lawsuits against Southern California Edison](#), claiming its equipment started the blaze.

The utility also started the [Wildfire Recovery Compensation Program for victims of the Eaton fire](#), where residents can file claims. Within the first three days, the utility received nearly 400 applications.

The utility, in April, unveiled a preliminary plan to underground 153 circuit miles, mostly in burn scar areas, among other improvements.

Thermal heat imaging

Los Angeles city firefighters picked up their hoses and other equipment on Jan. 2 and left the scene of the Lachman fire while it continued to smolder underground, reigniting and turning into the Palisades fire on Jan. 7.

The department says it will monitor burn scar areas with heat detecting drones moving forward.

