SANTA BARBARA COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ELEMENT (ERME)

ADOPTED 1980

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County of Santa Barbara
Planning and Development
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Former Environmental Resource Management Element Cover – Replaced March 2009

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ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ELEMENT-ERME

INTRODUCTION[1] [2]

The relationship among the elements is a point that is emphasized in Guidelines Local General Plans.[3] As stated in the Guidelines:

> The elements of the general plan all, to some degree, related and interdependent, since together they provide the policy framework to direct development needed to serve people and their activities within a given political jurisdiction and its area of influence… The open space element is primarily a tool for protection of the community's natural environment, providing critical input into the preparation of the land use and circulation elements. The seismic safety, conservation, and scenic highways elements provide direct input to this element, and for this reason the community may wish to combine these elements into the environmental resources management element.

The Santa Barbara County Environmental Resources Management Element (ERME) summarizes the various environmental factors analyzed in the Seismic Safety and Safety, Conservation, and Open Space Elements, and relates these factors to proposals on County open space preservation. Thus, the original complete information is retained for reference in the technical elements, while the results presented in the ERME. This will enable the County staff, Planning Commission, Board of Supervisors, and others to refer to a single source to obtain pertinent environmental data for a particular area of the County, and to determine the County's recommendations with respect to development of that area. A series of maps were prepared for the Environmental Resources Management Element. These are the ERME Factors maps - showing the variety of environmental data. For purposes of the study, the County was divided into four study areas mainly on the basis of population. The boundaries are shown on the Santa Barbara County Study Areas map. The study areas consist generally of the following:

South Coast: Areas along the coast, extending from Gaviota Pass to the Ventura County line and from the coast to the approximate crest of the Santa Ynez mountains.

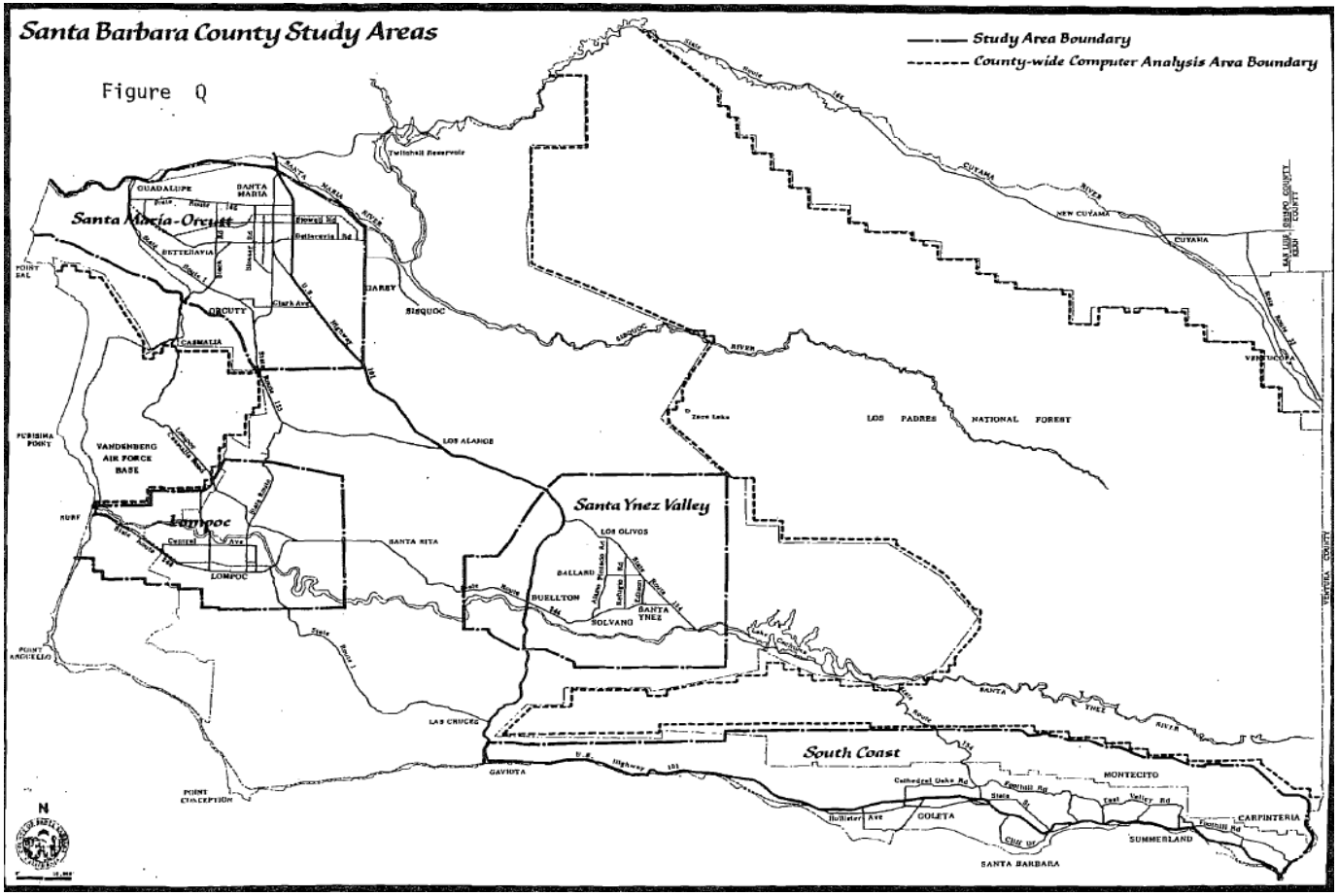
Santa Ynez Valley: Approximately square area in the Santa Ynez River Valley, extending from the vicinity of Buellton on the west to San Lucas Ranch on the east, beyond Los Olivos to the north, and south to and including the foothills of the Santa Ynez mountains south of the Santa Ynez River.

Lompoc: Roughly rectangular area along the Santa Ynez River, extending from the Pacific Ocean on the west to Santa Rita Valley on the east, north to the approximate crest of the

Purisima Hills (but not including Vandenberg Air Force Base), and south to and including the hills south of the Lompoc Urban area.

Santa Maria-Orcutt: Includes the area bounded by the Pacific Ocean on the west, Casmalia and Solomon Hills on the south, Fulger Point-Bradley Canyon on the east, and the Santa Maria River on the north.

The map scale for the ERME Factors is 1" = 8,000' countywide, and 1" = 2,000' for the study areas. These maps are available in the office of the County Resource Department.


Santa Barbara County Study Areas
Figure Q
Study Area Boundary
County-wide Computer Analysis Area Boundary
Santa Maria-Orcutt
Santa Ynez Valley
South Coast
LOS PADRES NATIONAL FOREST
VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE
Lompoc
SANTA MARIA
GUADALUPE
ORCUTT
SISQUOC
LOS ALAMOS
SANTA RITA
LOS OLIVOS
BALLARD
BUELLTON
SOLVANG
SANTA YNEZ
LAS CRUCES
GAVIOTA
POINT CONCEPTION
POINT ARGUELLO
POINT SAL
PURISIMA POINT
SURF
TWITCHELL RESERVOIR
CUYAMA
NEW CUYAMA
VENTURA COUNTY
MONTECITO
COLETA
CARPINTERIA
SUMMERLAND
SANTA BARBARA

ERME FACTORS

This map series depicts 25 separate environmental factors. Where more than one factor occurs in a particular area, the overlap is indicated. The source elements (i.e., Seismic Safety and Safety, Conservation, Open Space) are indicated in each listing, so that more comprehensive information can be obtained when necessary.

Geologic Problems Index V. This is a computer analysis model that takes into account geologic, seismic, and soil conditions. Lands classified as GPI V have problems severe enough to warrant retention, in most cases, in their natural state, or they may be used for cultivated agriculture and grazing, or certain low intensity recreational uses. (Seismic Safety and Safety Element) [4]

Geologic Problems Index IV. These lands have moderate-severe problems, including all of the same factors present on GPI V lands. Careful study of each of the problems present in GPI IV lands is essential before decisions can be reached on development proposals, because a single factor may be severe enough to warrant retention in open space. On the other hand, development of part or all of a site may be permissible where many factors coexist but special building techniques can provide adequate protection against hazards. (Seismic Safety and Safety Element)

Areas subject to inundation by tsunamis. Because they would affect only a limited coastal area and because there is no reliable historic record to substantiate a damage-producing seismic wave in this area, tsunamis are considered separately from other GPI factors. Under certain tide and storm conditions, a tsunami could affect lands up to 20 and 25-foot elevation, and run-up under these conditions could extend to as high as 40 feet above sea level. (The Seismic Safety and Safety Element included tsunamis in the Geologic Problems Index)

Active and historically active earthquake fault zones. These zones are represented by bands 150 feet wide on either side of the fault. Within these limits a geological report, including subsurface investigation, should be required prior to grading development permission. (The Seismic Safety and Safety Element recommends a 50-foot setback from a fault, within which no development would be permitted. Although less restrictive, the ERME requirement will serve to locate a fault more exactly.)

Potentially active earthquake fault zones. The same standards for active and historically active faults apply.

Reservoirs and areas tributary to existing and proposed reservoirs. Areas tributary to existing facilities are important for the protection of local water resources. No activities that would significantly degrade the quality of surface water supplies or increase silt production should be permitted. In the case of the two proposed reservoirs, Salsipuedes and Round Corral, the areas tributary to the future sites should remain undeveloped until such time as final decisions are made on their construction. Also included in this

class are other major water supply facilities such as the South Coast Conduit. (Conservation Element)

Stream channels with flood hazard. These are streams with significant drainage areas. In addition to restricting the conveyance of water, development in these areas could pose a severe danger to life and property. (Seismic Safety and Safety Element)

Stream channel recharging groundwater. These are stream channels from which significant recharge to usable underlying groundwater bodies from surface runoff takes place. These channels must remain open space to protect the water resource. In many cases, usage other than for light recreational activities also could endanger the quality of the water supply. Most of these stream channels are those with flood hazard, and consequently the two factors are combined on the maps. (Seismic Safety and Safety Element, Conservation Element)

Floodway areas. The floodway is the water course and the portion of the adjacent flood plain required for passage of the waters of a 100-year flood. The floodway represents the area in which no encroachment should be permitted that would impair the ability to convey flows. (Seismic Safety and Safety Element)

100-year flood plain with proposed improvements constructed, and 100-year flood plain with existing improvements only. These lands represent the flood plain (outside of the floodway area) as it presently exists or as it would exist in the future if additional flood control improvements are constructed. Although development in these areas could be permitted after adequate protection measures were taken, this course of action should not be permitted west of the City of Lompoc because the flood hazard there is sufficiently severe to preclude all future development in the 100 year flood plain. (Seismic Safety and Safety Element)

Areas with unknown flood hazard. For many streams, data on potential flood hazard are not available. Because most of these waterways are removed from population centers, future urbanization of their tributary areas is unlikely. However if development were to be proposed, a detailed evaluation should be required. (Seismic Safety and Safety Element)

Slopes 30 percent and greater. Although steep slopes are not always hazardous in themselves, landslides, soil erosion, and other geologic hazards are most prevalent in these areas. Even if landslide and slope stability problems are solved by engineering design, other problems can ensue, both in known hazardous areas and in areas thought to be safe, resulting in damage on the building site itself, as well as on sites at lower elevations. Another important problem arising from building on steep slopes is that it usually results in significant scarring of the terrain because massive grading generally is necessary for both access and for siting the structure. (Open Space Element)

Slopes 20 to 30 percent. Although not as hazardous or unsightly as development on steeper slopes, development on lands this steep should be minimized because they

often are subject to geologic problems, comprise portions of important watersheds, or form the scenic backdrop of urban communities. (Open Space Element)

Airport hazard and noise. Areas within and near the approach patterns of the four airports (Santa Barbara, Santa Maria, Lompoc, and Santa Ynez) should be designated for special review of development proposals because of safety hazard and noise impact problems. (For more detailed information on airport noise, in addition to data on other noise-impacted areas, see Santa Barbara County Noise Element.)

Existing croplands with a high soil series rating or on Class I and II soils. All existing croplands on prime soils should be preserved. In the study areas, prime soils were defined as those with a high soil series agricultural suitability rating according to a classification system devised by the County Farm Advisor's office. Elsewhere the Soil Conservation Service's Soil Capability Classes I and II were used to identify prime soils. (Conservation Element)

Existing croplands with a moderate or low soil series rating or on Class III and IV soils. Even though they may not be as productive as prime soils lands, for similar reasons these agricultural lands should be preserved insofar as possible. (Conservation Element)

Lands highly suitable for expansion of cultivated agriculture. The lands in this classification are those which, according to the Suitability for Expansion of Agriculture computer analysis model, are highly suitable for expansion of cultivated agriculture, and consequently they are worthy of preservation. High soil series agricultural suitability ratings were considered in the study areas, and Soil Capability Classes I and II in the rest of the County. (Conservation Element)

Mineral resources sites. Mineral resources are important to the County economy and, in some cases, to the national and state economies as well. However, mineral extraction can have adverse environmental impacts, and existing operations should be monitored and proposed new or expanded operations subjected to review and imposition of conditions necessary to protect the environment. Site rehabilitation and reuse plans should be required for mineral extraction sites; and when the resource is depleted, the ERME should be revised to fit the new use. (Conservation Element)

Existing parks and recreation areas, historic sites and archaeological sites. Because existing parks and park sites definitely programmed for public acquisition can be considered as permanent open spaces, overlaps with other environmental factors are not shown on the ERME maps. (Complete environmental data for these areas are available on computer maps and original source maps on file with the County Resource Management Department). Historic sites five acres and larger are shown. (Mapping of historic sites can be found in the Conservation Element.) Archaeological sites cannot be mapped for publication due to problems of vandalism and theft. (A copy of the archaeological site map is on file with the County for use in preparing environmental impact reports and otherwise evaluating applications for development permission.)

Open space suitable for outdoor recreation. These lands are shown in the Recreation Study[5] as having the highest suitability for light or heavy recreation use, as well as being the most scenic of all the highly suitable sites. They were identified by utilizing computer analysis models that took into account existing land use, the tolerance/intensity of environmental biology, water supply distribution, protection of local water resources, slope, slope stability and slides, elevation, flood hazard, and scenic value.

Proposed scientific preserves. The environmental biologists made recommendations for scientific preserves (areas which would be closed to the general public to minimize deleterious environmental effects occurring both naturally and through man's activities) on 57 different sites throughout the county and offshore. These preserves include 14 ecological communities of greatest interest that have been judged as rare and/or endangered. Vandenberg Air Force Base and the Channel Islands are among the recommended preserves. The vast majority of the Vandenberg land is relatively undisturbed and contains important plant and animal communities, including marine life and coastal dunes. The islands are of extreme scientific interest because they are a showcase of the way in which fundamental biological processes proceed, especially evolution and genetics. (Conservation Element)

Prime examples of common ecological communities, significant habitats. Eleven communities representing twelve sites and nine freshwater streams (including 100 on either side as a protective buffer zone) were selected by the environmental biologists as prime examples of common ecological communities. These communities are not rare, but are patches within larger communities representing the dominant species and remaining relatively undisturbed. Six additional areas of introduced grasslands and roosting sites for birds that are significant habitats also are included in this factor. (Conservation Element)

Areas of significant biological value. These are additional areas noted by the environmental biologists as having special biological value. (Conservation Element)

Areas of high scenic value. The county's scenic beauty is one of the principal factors that has attracted its residents and visitors. Highly scenic areas, selected utilizing a computer analysis model supplemented by field inspections of travel corridors and urban perimeters, are shown on the maps. (Open Space Element)

Scenic Corridors. An analysis of scenic values in travel corridors was included in the Open Space Element. Computerized analytical models were supplemented by visual surveys. The following routes were classified as having the highest scenic values:

U.S. 101: Los Alamos-Buellton

U.S. 101: Gaviota Beach-South Coast Urban Complex

U.S. 101: Montecito-Rincon Point

Cal. 1: Lompoc-U. S. 101

Cal. 154: Los Olivos-U.S. 101

Cal. 154: Lake Cachuma-Santa Barbara

Cal. 166: Santa Maria-Cuyama

Cal. 176: Santa Maria-Los Olivos

Jalama Road: Cal. l-Jalama County Park

Jalama County Park-Gaviota Beach State Park

Drum Canyon Road: Los Alamos-Lompoc-Buellton link

Toro Canyon Park-Serena Park

Portions of State Routes 1 and 154 are already designated as official State Scenic Highways. (See also Santa Barbara County Scenic Highways Element).

Because they are in public ownership, Los Padres National Forest and Vandenberg Air Force Base were subject to less intensive environmental study than the rest of the county. Data on the following factors are available and are shown on the ERME Factors maps if appropriate: active and historically active earthquake fault zones, potentially active fault zones, areas tributary to reservoirs, stream channels recharging groundwater, floodway areas, l00-year flood plain, areas with unknown flood hazard, slopes 30 percent or greater, slopes 20 to 30 percent, existing parks and recreation areas, existing croplands with high soil series rating or on Class I and II soils, existing croplands with a moderate or low soil services rating or on Class III or IV soils, proposed scientific preserves, prime examples of common ecological communities and significant habitats, areas of significant biological values, and mineral resources sites. Data on the following factors were not mapped for these areas: Geologic Problems Index, open space suitable for outdoor recreation, lands highly suitable for expansion of cultivated agriculture, areas of high scenic value, and scenic corridors.

For the Channel Islands, only geology, earthquake faults, and environmental biology were studied. Although they are not mapped, all four of the islands in the county are proposed to be classified as scientific preserves and left in open uses, as well as closed to general public use.

The purpose of the ERME FACTOR maps is to translate the summarized environmental factors information into a general[6] expression of County policy on environmental resources management. These ERME Factors maps depict environmental constraints on development which differ in intensity and importance. Some of these constraints are so serious that they dictate that development be limited to relatively few areas. Others pose severe obstacles to development that are usually, but not always, insurmountable. Still other constraints, while significant, do not rule out all development, but make it advisable to review development applications on a case-by-case basis and to impose appropriate limitations or conditions on grants of permission. All lands within the Urban,

Inner-Rural and Rural areas that are identified as affected by one or more environmental constraints are classified in one of three categories on the ERME maps. The ERME maps propose the following policies on development of lands subject to environmental constraints unless these constraints are disapproved by site-specific information.

A. All urbanization[7] should be prohibited.

B. Urbanization should be prohibited except in a relatively few special instances.

C. Urbanization could be permitted only in appropriate instances, subject to project plan review and imposition of specific conditions to protect against hazards and to preserve the integrity of the land and environment.

Lands not subject to identified environmental constraints are classified in a fourth category:

D. Urbanization should be permitted unless necessary public services could not readily be provided, or development would result in undesirable social consequences and where conditions to protect against hazards are imposed.

In the above classifications, the A Category is subject to the greatest and/or most numerous environmental constraints, resulting in the policy prohibiting urban development. The B Category lands, though subject to lesser environmental constraints, are not suitable for any urban development except in a relatively few special instances. The remaining lands classed as Category C and D within the urban area are the candidates for urban development.

The ERME FACTORS maps proposed the following policies on development of lands subject to environmental constraints.

Category A: Urbanization should be prohibited.

- Lands with Geologic Problems Index V.
- Reservoirs and areas tributary to existing and proposed reservoirs.
- Stream channels with flood hazard recharging groundwater.
- Floodway areas.
- Slopes 30 percent and greater.
- Existing croplands with a high agricultural suitability rating (within study areas) or a Class I or II soil capability classification. Modification to permit urban uses may be made, within Urban areas, on parcels of ten (10) acres or less.
- Agricultural preserves subject to Williamson Act agreements.

- Mineral resources sites.
- Existing parks and recreation areas, historic sites, archaeological sites (archaeological sites not shown for security reasons).
- Proposed scientific preserves.

Category B: Urbanization should be prohibited except in a relatively few special instances.

- Lands with Geologic Problems Index IV.
- 100-year flood plain (except west of the City of Lompoc).
- Slopes 20 to 30 percent.
- Existing croplands with a moderate or low agricultural suitability rating (in urban areas) or a Class III or IV soil capability classification.
- Lands highly suitable for expansion of cultivated agriculture. Prime examples of common ecological communities, significant habitats.

Category C: Urbanization could be permitted only in appropriate instances, subject to project plan review and imposition of specific conditions to protect against hazards and to preserve the integrity of the land and environment.

- Areas subject to inundation by tsunamis. 150 feet on either side of active and historically active earthquake fault zone.
- 150 feet on either side of potentially active earthquake fault zones.
- Areas with unknown flood hazard.
- Airport hazard and noise impact areas.
- Areas of significant biological value.
- Areas of high scenic value.
- Scenic corridors.
- Open space suitable for outdoor recreation.

It will be noted that agricultural preserves, although not subject to environmental constraints, are included in Category A. The reason is that in entering into Williamson Act agreements, the county has made a legal commitment that the land will remain in agricultural use for a minimum of ten years, subject to automatic annual renewal.

Fire Hazard. Although areas subject to extreme fire hazard and high fire hazard do not appear on the maps, they are mapped in the Seismic Safety and Safety Element. It is proposed that the county adopt a policy that all development proposals on sites shown on the Fire Hazard map as subject to extreme or high fire hazard be reviewed to ensure that adequate fire protection measures will be taken - a procedure comparable with requiring a geologic report for all development projects.

ERME Maps

Environmental Resource Management Maps Consist of the Following:

Santa Barbara County
Environmental Resource Management Element: 1
ERME Factors

South Coast Area
Environmental Resource Management Element: 2
ERME Factors

Santa Ynez Valley Area
Environmental Resources Management Element: 3
ERME Factors

Lompoc Area
Environmental Resource Management Element: 4
ERME Factors

Santa Maria-Orcutt Area
Environmental Resource Management Element: 5
ERME Factors

CITATIONS

[1] Resolution No. 80-566 (Case No. 77-GP-11) Adopted December 22, 1980. (Adopted Environmental Resource Management Element (ERME))

[2] ERME text and maps apply to Urban, Inner Rural, and Rural Neighborhood areas only.

[3] California Council on Intergovernmental Relations, September 1973.

[4] Resolution No. 91-538 (Case No. 81-GP-3) Amended September 3rd, 1991. (Amended Geologic Problems Index V)

[5] Royston, Hanamoto, Beck & Abey, Environmental Planners and Landscape Architects, December 1974.

[6] The ERME Factors maps are not site specific and at a smaller scale (1" = 2,000') than the Land Use Maps (1" = 1,000').

[7] See Land Use Definitions section for definition of Urbanization.

Field Code Changed

Field Code Changed