

Habitat Connectivity/Wildlife Corridors: Ventura County, California Enacts Ordinance



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The Ventura County, California, Board of Supervisors (“County”) adopted an ordinance (“Ordinance”) on March 12th addressing wildlife habitat connectivity and wildlife corridors.

The Ordinance is described by the Center for Biological Integrity as the first-of-its-kind put in place to safeguard wildlife connectivity. It is titled:

An Ordinance of the County of Ventura, State of California, Amending Division 8, Chapter 1, Articles 2, 3, 4, 5, and 9 of the Ventura County Ordinance Code, Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance to Regulate Development Within the Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Corridors and the Critical Wildlife Passage Areas Overlay Zones

The enacted provisions would become part of the County’s zoning ordinance.

The Ordinance provides protections for areas designated as important wildlife corridors and requires environmental review for development that may degrade those areas. The rationale for the Ordinance includes the linking of fragmented areas of habitat through open space. This is intended to allow wildlife to be able to travel to essential core habitat areas for water, food, and mating.

A Center for Biological Diversity attorney is quoted by that organization as stating:

. . . the ordinance is a major step forward in protecting Ventura County wildlife from habitat fragmentation, overdevelopment and car collisions. . .

Section 8104-7.7 and Section 8104-7.8 describe habitat connectivity and Wildlife corridors overlay (“Corridors Overlay Zone”) and critical wildlife passage areas overlay zones (“Passage Areas Overlay Zone”), respectively.

The purpose of the Wildlife Corridors Overlay Zone is stated to be the preservation of functional connectivity for wildlife and vegetation throughout the overlay zone by minimizing:

- Direct and indirect barriers
- Loss of vegetation and habitat fragmentation
- Impacts to those areas that are narrow, impacted or otherwise tenuous with respect to wildlife movement

The Passage Areas Overlay Zone are stated to be critical for facilitating wildlife movement due to any of the following:

- The existence of intact native habitat or other habitat with important beneficial values for wildlife

- Proximity to water bodies or ridgelines
- Proximity to critical roadway crossings
- Likelihood of encroachment by future development which could easily disturb wildlife movement and plant dispersal
- Presence of non-urbanized or undeveloped lands within a geographic location that connects core habitats at a regional scale

A copy of the Ordinance can be found [here](#).