



SPECIAL FOCUS: REGIONALISM AND LAND USE

GRAPPLING WITH REGIONAL GROWTH

Most Californians live in a major metropolitan area that encompasses many local jurisdictions. Three of these four regions each involve multiple counties, while the fourth, San Diego, is a single county with 18 cities. Issues of land use, transportation and air quality all transcend the local jurisdictional boundaries within these metropolitan areas. While regional entities, such as Air Pollution Control Boards and Councils of Government, bring a degree of regional focus to transportation and air quality, land use issues remain rigorously the sole prerogative of local governments. This causes increasing problems, on a variety of scales, and is a very significant factor in our endless suburban sprawl across agricultural lands and wildlife habitat. For example, the need to shift investment resources and development back into existing developed areas transcends county boundaries in the Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay regions.

A degree of land use regional thinking is beginning, as Councils of Government and civic regional initiatives start to propose alternative growth scenarios, particularly for transportation - land use linkages. But it remains to be seen whether these will result in any land use changes at the local government level. Furthermore, as we have seen in other states, effective regionalism requires state leadership and policies - something lacking in California.

Three approaches other than state political leadership may promote some of the changes in metropolitan development patterns that a regional focus would produce. One is the recent shift in state investment of retirement funds and other monies, led by the forward-looking State Treasurer.

The second is attempts at a more integrated planning approach at the County level, as exemplified by a San Diego Comprehensive Plan from the Council of Governments and the Riverside County Integrated Plan. The latter is an attempt by the County to simultaneously address land use, through a General Plan Update, a transportation plan and habitat protection through a Natural Community Conservation Plan / Habitat Conservation Plan.

The third is the promotion of Smart Growth principles at the local jurisdiction level, with a focus on infill, transit oriented development, and mixed use, pedestrian friendly communities.

At the same time, there is an array of other regional-scale approaches on natural resource issues. The premier one is CalFed, which addresses not only the health of the Delta and

water supply issues but also upstream watershed management. River and floodplain management plans, such as the Santa Clara River Plan (see page 8), and some watershed projects can transcend county boundaries. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Comprehensive Study of flood management and ecosystem restoration on the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers will theoretically lead to a set of plans at the sub-regional scale. In 2002, the state's Floodplain Management Task Force recommended a multi-jurisdictional approach to planning and managing our floodplains.

This issue of *Linkages* explores some of these issues. We are hopeful that the growing interest in collaborative, regional thinking will result in meaningful changes in local land use planning and effective curbs on sprawl style development.

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News from IEH

IEH and Land Use Trends

When IEH formed in the mid 1990's we focused on crucial linkages between human communities and rural land conservation. They included problems of urban-suburban sprawl, the roles of infill development, revitalization of decaying commercial areas, and the need for urban boundaries.

Over the last few years infill development has moved from an oddity to a regular occurrence in California. There are developments with a vertical mix of retail, office and residential, and also transit oriented development. We still need removal of a variety of obstacles such as those discussed in *Linkages* Issue # 13, but the momentum is there.

But other essential features are proving harder to achieve. Effective growth boundaries remain the exception. Fringe development still relies on low density, separated use projects. We lack the package of state policies, carrots and sticks that are essential to end the era of mindless sprawl. IEH will continue to work with others to achieve these goals.

At the same time we see a different but growing problem - a surge of large lot rural development, from standard ranchettes to vast "starter castles" on 5, 10, 20 or 40 acre parcels. This is a recipe for habitat fragmentation, ecosystem degradation, and more conflicts for the agricultural industry. We need to restrict such housing to discrete areas, such as the "Agricultural Residential" communities of Sacramento County. Beyond these areas, we need to maintain farming, ranching, wildlife habitat and a minimum parcel size that is commensurate with a viable agricultural operation. In most counties, however, this will be a very difficult restriction to achieve without strong state policies.

The long-term health of our rural, working landscapes depends on the economic viability of agriculture - farming, ranching, and their support infrastructure. This is of growing importance to IEH. Recently, we participated in a California Summit on the federal Farm Bill and the initiation of future collaborative action. This includes addressing issues such as the need for California to get its fair share of federal dollars and the need to start work on the next, 2007, Farm Bill.

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WILL REGIONAL THINKING BECOME IMPORTANT IN LAND-USE DECISION MAKING?

Current regional approaches to future growth issues in California's major metropolitan areas address land use in a variety of ways. One is to consider more transit oriented and compact land use alternatives and to use those in the next round of regional transportation planning. Another is to take a broader Smart Growth approach or to consider land use as part of a broader sustainable future, addressing the three "E's" of sustainability - economy, environment and social equity. Approaches in the different regions exhibit similar themes - show the likely future impacts of allowing current sprawl type growth to continue, then develop alternative growth scenarios and a Smart Growth vision for the region. There are also parallel efforts to promote Smart Growth at the individual project level.

San Francisco Bay Region

This effort began as two independent projects in the late 1990's, one by a civic group and one by regional governments. A multi-stakeholder group, the Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Communities, formed in 1997, spent several years developing a *Compact for Sustainable Bay Area*, then began development of a *Regional Livability Footprint* - a land use alternative for the region.

Meanwhile, in 1999 five regional agencies including the Association of Bay Area Governments began a project to promote the use of Smart Growth strategies across the region. The two projects merged in 2000, becoming the "Bay Area Smart Growth Project and Regional Livability Footprint."

Development of the Compact involved extensive input on a draft version through a regional conversation. This Compact addressed the three E's of sustainability with a commitment to strive to implement proposed actions across the region over a 25 year period. The commitments include advocating and supporting a variety of key Smart Growth features. Examples are residential communities with a mix of densities and housing costs, residential and commercial building near transit stops, a regional open space bond measure, urban growth boundaries with incentives for revitalization and reuse within the boundaries.

Most of the region's counties and many cities have voted to support the Compact. Tools to promote progress on these commitments include a set of Bay Area Indicators to measure progress toward sustainability and a list of best practices.

The Regional Livability Footprint project utilized workshops to consider how to accommodate growth expected over the next 20 years. Participants were

supportive of shifting from sprawl to more intensive development of existing communities and along transit corridors, including dense mixed use transit oriented development, second units on single family lots, and other Smart Growth features. Contra Costa County, for example, would retain 2/3 of its land in agricultural production and various forms of open space.

Ten Principles Define Smart Growth

- Mix land uses
- Take advantage of compact building design
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
- Create walkable neighborhoods
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas
- Strengthen and direct development toward existing communities
- Provide a variety of transportation choices
- Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective
- Encourage citizen and stakeholder participation in development decisions

source: **The Smart Growth Network**

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Misuse of Term Smart Growth

Smart Growth, like any popular phrase, is misused. Two examples: a shopping mall sitting in a sea of parking asphalt is neither Smart Growth nor a Town Center; a large project with several separated uses is neither Smart Growth nor a Mixed-use Development.

The many scenarios proposed at these workshops gave rise to three land use alternatives to business as usual sprawl. One alternative focused growth into central cities, another into a network of existing neighborhoods and the third utilized Smart Growth strategies in the suburban areas. All three approaches produced much less sprawling development than current trends. In a second round of workshops, participants chose an alternative for each county, to become part of a regional 2020 Smart Growth Vision.

Analysis of the potential impact of the Smart Growth Vision on the use of undeveloped lands at the urban fringe (greenfield development) illustrates the importance of changing growth patterns. Estimates are that business as usual growth in the nine county Bay Area will result in the development of 83,000 greenfield acres by 2020. In addition, there will be development of 45,000 acres in the Central Valley and in Monterey - San Benito counties, providing homes for commuting Bay Area workers stymied by lack of housing within the region. Rapid implementation of the Smart Growth vision will result in just 16,000 acres of greenfield development within the region, and no spillover beyond the Bay Area.

A number of parallel projects aid movement toward this Vision. They include a set of Smart Growth policies adopted by the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Bay Area Alliance's Community Capital Investment Initiative to bring more private investment to the poorest neighborhoods.

Another approach addresses incentives and regulatory issues, including local government financing. The latter is an important issue since the state now controls allocation of local property taxes, much of which have not gone to local governments in recent years. Incentive suggestions include state grants to plan mixed use and transit oriented projects, density bonuses for developers of affordable housing, inclusionary zoning (a requirement that a minimum percentage of new housing units be affordable to lower income buyers) and a variety of local incentives to promote infill development. Regulatory proposals include requiring establishment of urban growth boundaries and streamlining the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process for transit oriented and mixed use projects.

Sacramento Region

The Sacramento Area Council of Governments, SACOG, covers a six county area around the state capital. It decided to include consideration of alternative land use patterns as part of its work on the next regional transportation plan that is due in 2005. The first step in this process was the development of the "base case" showing the land use impacts if business as usual development and projected population increases occur. The base case scenario used a long time frame - showing development up to 2050 plus allocation of additional land for homebuilding from 2050



to 2070. The very extensive sprawl and loss of agricultural lands and open space shown by this base case served as a wake up call for the region.

The next step involved a very large number of public workshops around the jurisdiction. A variety of civic organizations assisted in this process. Much of the focus here was consideration of alternate approaches to neighborhood development, using the integrated planning software PLACES-3. The results fed into a second round of workshops that considers four alternate land use scenarios for each county, while a third round of workshops will address the region. The end result will be an alternative, 30 year, land use scenario for use in developing the next Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

San Diego County

While a single county, San Diego is one of the state's largest metropolitan regions. The County and 18 cities have an Association of Governments, commonly known as SANDAG, that has long been in the forefront of regional thinking and addressing multiple issues beyond transportation. For example, SANDAG has played a major role in multi-species and natural community conservation planning in San Diego County (see *Linkages* Issue # 14). It recently developed a 2020 growth management strategy based on Smart Growth strategies. The County, all the cities, a variety of agencies and organizations from the League of Women Voters to the Endangered Habitats League to the North County Republican Club have endorsed the Smart Growth and growth management strategies.

SANDAG is now working to develop a 30-year regional comprehensive plan. As well as transportation and other infrastructure, this addresses urban form, housing and conservation of healthy ecosystems. As with the San Francisco Region, there is a focus on shifting the location of new development to infill and transit corridors and the nature of development to provide mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods. Also there was extensive use of public workshops across the County. The SANDAG board will consider a draft plan at the end of 2003.

Los Angeles Region

The Southern California Association of Governments, SCAG, encompasses six counties, 186 cities and much of the state's population. SCAG too is preparing a regional growth strategy or vision, the Southern California Compass, beginning with public workshops around the region for participants to consider possible locations for future growth. SCAG will use this information to develop a range of land use growth scenarios, then ask the public to choose a preferred scenario.

Most of the developed land is a gigantic area of contiguous development encompassing the Los Angeles Basin, Orange County and the Inland Empire of Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. The resulting problems are immense, and a lesson for other rapidly growing metropolitan regions.

In 2001 the Southern California Studies Center at the University of Southern California published *Sprawl Hits the Wall: Confronting the Realities of Metropolitan Los Angeles*. It is essential reading for all those concerned about the future of California's metropolitan regions. The fringe development of new suburbs is now far inland, in Riverside and San Bernardino and north-east Los Angeles Counties. There is a large, older, regional core that spreads across city and county boundaries and many of the mature cities in the region are struggling economically. The core is fringed by more affluent, slow-growing, coastal and foothill communities, some of which are becoming new job centers. Resolving the myriad of resulting problems requires major re-distribution of public and private investment in the region.

From Scenario to Reality

With regional entities in the state's four metropolitan regions all developing Smart Growth based alternatives to current sprawl development, and the emergence of broad civic efforts to promote these alternatives, there is at least the hope of major changes in growth patterns. Elisa Barbour, author of *Metropolitan Growth Planning in California 1900-2000*, sees these current growth management efforts, the public-private partnerships and the focus on collaborative decision-making as a new wave of reform at the regional scale. However, it is important to remember that land use General Plans, amendments to those plans, zoning and specific plans are all decided at the local government level. Often these deliberations are driven by forces far removed from the regional growth dialog, such as the desires of land speculators and the concerns of neighbors. This, while the Sacramento Region discusses alternate growth scenarios, the problems

Landscapes and Regions: There is a Distinction

By Mike Vasey

In his book *Land Mosaics: The Ecology of Landscapes and Regions*, Richard Forman, one of the founders of the discipline of Landscape Ecology, describes the difference between regions and landscapes as follows (p. 13):

“A **region** is a broad geographical area with a common macroclimate and sphere of human activity and interest. This concept links the physical environment of macroclimate, major soil groups, and biomes, with the human dimensions of politics, social structure, culture, and consciousness, expressed in the idea of regionalism. Regions often have diffuse boundaries determined by a complex of physiographic, cultural, economic, political and climatic factors. A region is tied together relatively tightly by transportation, communication, and culture, but is *extremely diverse ecologically*” (my emphasis).

“A **landscape**, in contrast, is a mosaic where the mix of local ecosystems or land uses is repeated in similar form over a kilometers-wide area. Whereas *portions of a region ecologically are quite dissimilar*, a landscape *manifests an ecological unity* throughout its area. Within a landscape *several attributes tend to be similar and repeated across the whole area*, including geologic land forms, soil types, vegetation types, local faunas, natural disturbance regimes, land uses, and human aggregation patterns.” (my emphasis).

By definition, landscapes (e.g. small watersheds) nest into regions. While each of these bio-geographic units is variable in size, regions are very large and heterogeneous whereas landscapes are smaller and more homogenous units that collectively compose the larger scale features of regions. A good example of a region would be the Bay-Delta Bioregion (www.ceres.ca.gov) – an area extending from the central California coast through the Golden Gate into the far reaches of hills and plains surrounding the 1600 square-mile San Francisco Bay Estuary in the Central Valley. A good example of a landscape might be the Suisun Marsh and its surrounding watershed - a sixty thousand acre wetland complex nested within the Bay-Delta Bioregion in the northern part of Suisun Bay.

Although landscapes draw upon regional faunas and floras, in California they often host their own endemic species and certain species assemblages may be distinctive because of particular geologic features and the unique history of each different landscape. If enough intact landscapes within a region can be maintained, then biological diversity tends to remain robust at a larger scale. However, as landscapes are progressively altered, as landscapes themselves degrade and become fragmented, regional diversity may be progressively eroded and large-scale patterns of biological diversity will become impoverished at large scales (for example, the great American prairie ecosystem that once ranged from southern Canada to Texas has now been approximately 95% altered). Landscapes are an excellent size for conservation planning whereas planning for regions is much more challenging. *Mike Vasey is a member of the IEH Board of Directors.*

Reference

Forman, Richard TT (1995) *Land Mosaics: the Ecology of Landscapes and Regions*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

of sprawl and the benefits of Smart Growth, Southwest Placer County faces a juggernaut of major development proposals across its agricultural landscape, even though the existing General Plans provide enough room for several decades of conventional low density growth. There are no signs of the local governments “just saying no” to speculative pressures, and restricting growth to existing General Plan greenfields and the already-developed areas. And in this region, influential interests that support the regional land use dialog also relentlessly promote sprawl-inducing new highways.

In theory, these new regional plans will drive future rounds of Metropolitan Transportation Planning, shifting the allocation of federal and state transportation dollars from local wish-lists to projects that implement Smart Growth. However the boards of the regional Councils of Government that make these decisions are not directly elected to these boards, but city council and county board of supervisors representatives. The pressure will be on these individuals to continue promotion of the local wish lists and it remains to be seen how successfully they can take a regional approach to decision-making.

It will be essential for the civic interests to build strong, broad coalitions

The Bay Area project wisely places significant emphasis on incentives and regulatory changes to promote Smart Growth and curb greenfield growth. However funding for incentives is likely to be hard to come by for some years. Local, state and federal governments all have dismal budget problems that will take years to overcome, at best. This is a far cry from the large federal and state surpluses in existence when the project began.

Regulatory changes are also a difficult proposition. Changes to CEQA to aid infill developments have been proposed and discussed for several years, but run into road block of strong disagreements among powerful interest groups. Regulatory approaches to greenfield development, such as a state requirement for urban growth boundaries, meet a similar fate. Passage of state legislation that provides effective regulatory incentives for Smart Growth, and effective curbs to greenfield growth, is urgently needed, but very difficult to achieve.

In order for these regional visions to become local reality in the absence of effective state policies such as those in Oregon, it will be essential for the civic interests to build strong, broad coalitions that enable local governments to put effective Smart Growth measures in place and to stick with them. An example of the effectiveness of such coalitions in the Housing Action Coalition in Silicon Valley (see *Linkages* Issue # 6). Business and environmental interests joined together to actively support infill housing projects

that met a set of livability criteria. Over the years local jurisdictions approved many infill projects because of the Coalition’s support.

It will also be essential for these Smart Growth coalitions to effectively oppose sprawl development and the infrastructure that supports it, to enable local jurisdictions to just say no. That will be a daunting task in many locales.

Broader but piecemeal achievement of Smart Growth across an entire metropolitan region, from individual projects to local jurisdiction General Plans, zoning codes and ordinances, will achieve many of the goals that a regional approach to land use would bring. But society also needs to find ways to refocus development and investment back to existing neighborhoods and communities at the regional, multi-county scale.

Further Information

Barbour, Elisa (2002) *Metropolitan Growth Planning in California 1900-2000* Public Policy Institute of California, San Francisco, CA. www.ppic.org

Smart Growth Network (2002) *Getting to Smart Growth: 100 Policies for Implementation*. Smart Growth Network. www.smartgrowth.org/default.asp

Wolch , Jennifer et. al. (2001) *Sprawl Hits the Wall: Confronting the Realities of Metropolitan Los Angeles*. Southern California Studies Center, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA. <http://sc2.usc.edu/sg/atlas3.html>

Regional Approach Web Sites

Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Communities
www.bayareaalliance.org

Smart Growth Strategy. Association of Bay Area Governments
www.abag.ca.gov/planning/smartgrowth

Sacramento Area Council of Governments Blueprint Project www.sacog.org

San Diego Area Association of Governments Comprehensive Plan www.sandag.cog.ca.us

Southern California Compass, Southern California Association of Governments www.socalcompass.org

NEEDS OF NATURE

Providing for the Needs of Nature at the Regional Scale

The Needs of Nature at the regional scale are many and varied. Truly effective overall conservation will conserve all native species, aid the recovery of listed species and enhance the population of declining species. It will provide for the conservation of all habitats, from wetlands and streams to grasslands and woodlands and ensure connectivity across and beyond the region. It will conserve and restore ecosystem functions and processes. It will provide for the overall ecological health of the region and for the ecosystem services so essential to human communities. It will do all this in ways that are sustainable over the very long term.

In an urbanizing region most of the conservation occurs outside of the urban-suburban area. It is critical to conserve enough undeveloped land to provide for all these ecological needs. However conservation within the developed environment also plays an important role. Natural stream and river corridors maintain the ecological health of waterways and the estuaries and ocean into which they flow. Small, highly managed, preserves protect key populations of very rare species. Larger natural areas, including hills and steep slopes, can provide significant ecological function.

There are a wide variety of approaches and projects providing some conservation of biological resources in California. But in most urbanizing regions these currently seem most unlikely to result in the needed level of overall conservation, and will be best achieve various bits and pieces of the list above.

A standard approach is the mitigation of individual projects. This tends to result in very small reserves, which are not necessarily managed and monitored over the long term and may turn out not even to be effectively protected from development. Habitat restoration is also small scale and fragmentary in most instances

Local government General Plans, zoning and ordinances may require some conservation, such as protection of stream corridors with set backs. However, they may have loopholes. For example, Sacramento County requires 600 feet wide undeveloped stream corridors. But preparation of a master drainage plan, as is done for sizable new developments, cancels the requirement.

Also these local government requirements do not necessarily result in the conservation of natural lands that are properly managed and monitored, essential needs for their long-term health.

Another approach is large scale regional conservation planning by local governments. This focuses on a small suite of species and their habitats (see *Linkages* Issue #14). The biological goal is to aid recovery of listed species and assist declining, special status species.

This approach can result in conservation of extensive landscapes but is likely to short-change habitats with few listed species or that are not the focus of a Plan. Thus some of the early plans in southwest California, with their strong focus on coastal sage scrub and a few key species, ignored the needs of rare vernal pools and other wetland or aquatic habitats. In other locales, oak woodlands, which provide key habitat for a very large percentage of California vertebrates, may receive inadequate attention because they have few or no listed species. And while the new state Natural Communities Conservation Planning law states that this planning shall protect ecological functions associated with habitats and communities, their ecological integrity and biological diversity, these ideas address a reserve system rather than the entire regional landscape. Developing plans in various counties are not geared to protecting the broad suite of regional scale ecological needs.

Another approach is planning focused on aquatic and riparian resources. Scale varies from small to vast, from a watershed plan for a small stream to the CalFed plan that addresses the health of the Delta and also considers the rivers flowing into it. In Southern California, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has a number of Special Area Management Plans under development, each covering a large watershed of several hundred thousand acres and providing for conservation of waters and wetlands under federal Clean Water Act provisions.

Putting the pieces together and really providing for the Needs of Nature at the regional scale is a daunting task, yet to be accomplished. In the meantime, the essential need is to “save the pieces” by drastically curbing urban-suburban sprawl into the rural landscape.

PLANNING FOR A FLOODPLAIN : SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S SANTA CLARA RIVER

By Ron Bottorff

The Santa Clara River is the largest river system in southern California remaining in a relatively natural state. It drains a watershed of 1634 square miles and flows westward from the San Gabriel Mountains of Los Angeles County about 84 miles through Ventura County along the southern edge of the Los Padres National Forest. Major tributaries include Castaic and San Francisquito Creeks in Los Angeles County, and the Sespe, Piru, and Santa Paula Creeks in Ventura County.

About 99% of the River is privately owned. In the past, the River has been heavily mined for aggregate. The upper River, which runs through the City of Santa Clarita, is currently undergoing extensive urbanization northwest of Los Angeles. Farming operations have intruded well into the floodplain along the lower sections of the River below Santa Clarita.

The Santa Clara River Enhancement and Management Plan evolved because of potential conflicts among various stakeholders along the river: farmers, aggregate miners, flood control agencies, developers, and various state and federal agencies charged with administering complex environmental laws such as the state and federal Endangered Species Acts and the federal Clean Water Act. In 1991, Ventura County and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service began a series of discussions and stakeholder meetings which led to the formation of a 26-member Project Steering Committee, consisting of state and federal agencies, Los Angeles and Ventura County Flood Control Districts, property owner groups, city representatives, and one environmental group.

This Project Steering Committee became fully operational in 1993 and has been meeting periodically ever since. A draft version of the Enhancement and Management Plan has been developed by AMEC Earth and Environmental, the plan consulting firm, and is now ready for public dissemination and comment. This Plan covers only the 500-year floodplain (defined by a flood event that has a 1 in 500 probability of occurring in any one year). Initial efforts aimed at the eventual development of a full watershed plan are underway by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the two affected counties.



The primary objective is to develop a comprehensive management plan for the resources of the Santa Clara River within its 500-year floodplain that will achieve a balance among the various ways that these resources are utilized and the ways they will be sustained. The Enhancement and Management Plan is intended to facilitate the implementation of public agency mandates so as to promote strategies for the preservation, enhancement, and sustainability of physical, biological, and economic resources, while also acknowledging and respecting the property and water rights of private property owners. It also has the objective of simplifying permitting processes, where possible, for private property owners.

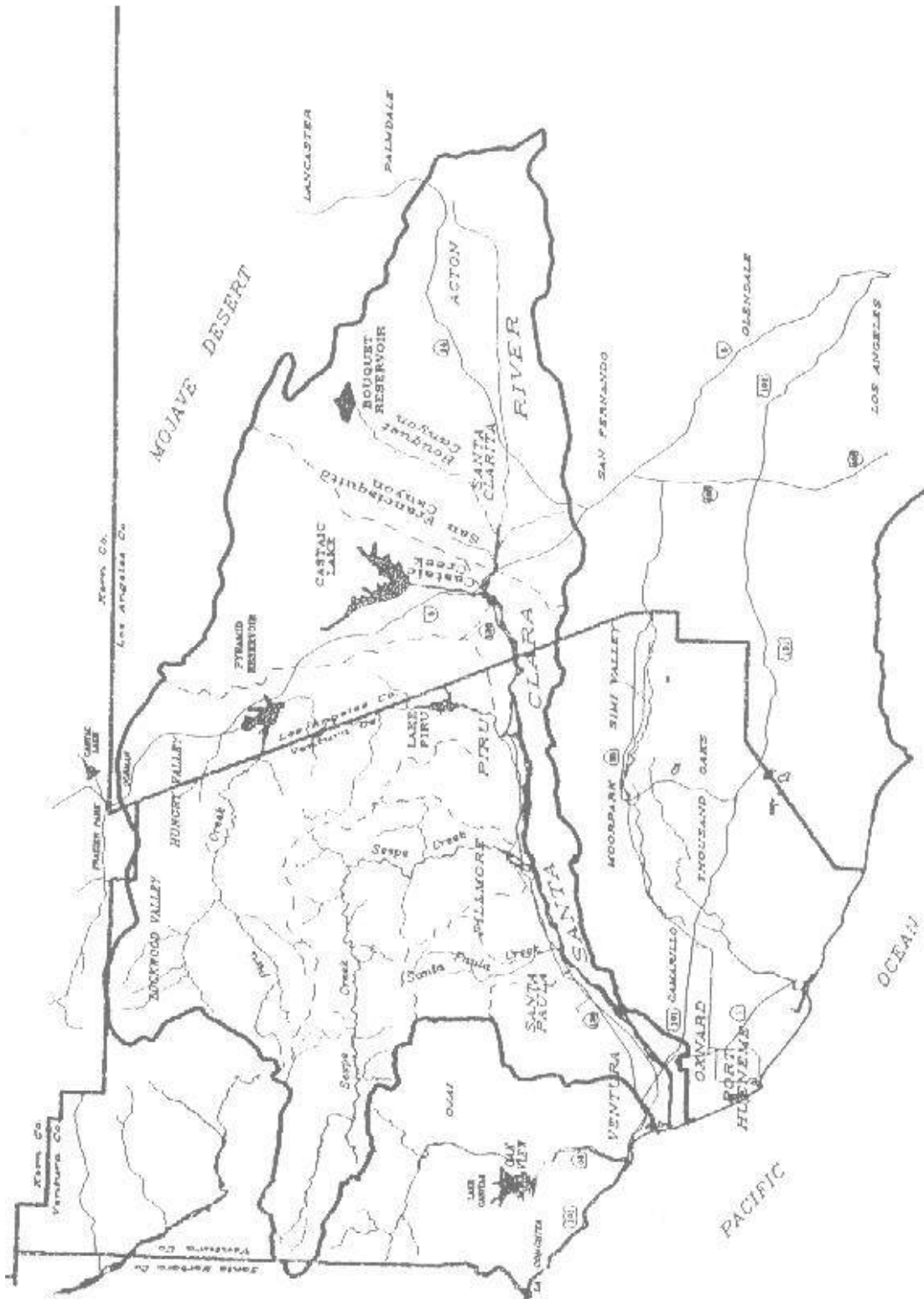
The primary objective is to develop a comprehensive management plan for the resources of the Santa Clara River within its 500-year floodplain

Funding for the Plan has been provided primarily by the California State Coastal Conservancy, the State Wildlife Conservation Board, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the two affected counties. CH2M Hill provided consulting services for the initial phases of the plan, and mapped the entire floodplain utilizing low-altitude fly-over aerial photographs. GIS maps were then prepared for each of several land uses, including agriculture, aggregate mining, habitat, flood control, and urban development. Overlays of the various uses were then developed showing potential conflict areas as well as areas for restoration and enhancement.

Outcomes

To facilitate the Enhancement and Management Plan development, it was decided early-on to establish subcommittees covering the major elements of the Plan - agriculture, aggregate mining, water resources, flood control, biological resources, and recreation. Subcommittees (except agriculture) developed reports in the 1995-96 timeframe, which were accepted by the entire

The Santa Clara River and its Watershed



Steering Committee. Other reports developed under the Plan were a history of the River and a cultural resources report.

An ad-hoc committee was established in mid-1996 to develop a series of riverwide and reach-by-reach recommendations for subsequent approval by the full Steering Committee. Recommendations covered major issues including private property rights, agricultural land preservation, permit streamlining, flood protection, conservation and enhancement of natural habitats, aggregate harvesting, beach erosion and replenishment, recreation, cultural resources, groundwater recharge, water rights, water supply and water quality. AMEC used all of these documents to develop the Draft Plan, which has now been approved by the Steering Committee.

Among specific riverwide recommendations of the Plan were to:

- (1) establish a Long Term River Management Committee for implementing the provisions of the Plan;
- (2) develop a public education program about the values of the river;
- (3) establish a streamlined regulatory process for replacement of agricultural bank protection;
- (4) preserve and enhance instream and riparian beneficial uses while respecting existing water rights;
- (5) encourage use of reclaimed water for non-potable applications;
- (6) utilize sediment deposition removal, if necessary, to maintain the effectiveness of public flood protection facilities;
- (7) maintain fish passage (with details to be developed by the appropriate regulatory agencies);
- (8) control exotics, primarily *Arundo donax*, the giant reed; and
- (9) identify areas where aggregate mining can be done with minimum impact to biological resources.

Property owner groups had been especially interested in the establishment of a streamlined permitting process to aid them in obtaining permits for bank protection installations. This is commonly referred to as “one-stop permitting” wherein one coordinating agency would handle all permits. Although the desirability of such a scheme was conceded by the regulating agencies, numerous discussions produced no practical and legal way to effect it. However, an ad-hoc committee headed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is working to develop a Regional General Permit to facilitate permit streamlining along the River for private agricultural operators.

One of the primary recommendations of the Plan was use of the 25-year floodplain line as the limit of allowable agricultural intrusion into the floodplain. This was based on a study of agricultural operations by Ventura County which showed that the 25-year line represented the effective limits of operations within the floodplain. This recommendation provided that farmers may replace bank protection facilities (excluding levees) up to the 25-year line, if washed out by floodwaters, provided that they had obtained all necessary permits for the original installation.



Another key outcome of the Plan was the development of the Santa Clara River Parkway Project by the California State Coastal Conservancy. The Parkway Project involves the acquisition and restoration of the entire river floodplain, including some levee removals, from the estuary upstream to the Sespe Creek confluence, a distance of about 20 miles. Several parcels have already been acquired, totaling over 1200 acres. A total of 6,000 acres is planned for eventual acquisition. The Coastal Conservancy is working with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to acquire the properties, which are being held by TNC. Management of the Parkway is expected to be carried out under a joint powers agreement between the Coastal Conservancy, Ventura County and the Cities of Oxnard and Ventura.

Some Problems

Several problems have developed over the years as the Plan has gone through its various phases. There have been periods of many months when the Project Steering Committee has not met and momentum was lost. This was due primarily to funding gaps, in which funds for one phase were exhausted without subsequent funds being in place. The very long time span (11 years) to complete a Draft Plan resulted in the turnover of several Steering Committee members and some loss of historic memory. Another result of these gaps was that key members of the Steering Committee lost contact with the Plan and did not always begin re-attending when funds were secured and the next phase begun.

The Project Steering Committee, from the beginning, operated under a Memorandum of Understanding which provided that “*the completion of the Plan will in no way impact permitting activities of the various regulatory agencies.*” In effect, this meant that any project, including large development projects, which was in some phase of agency or jurisdictional approval process or permitting activity, could not be limited by Plan provisions and recommendations. Most of the projects affected were large urban developments in the Los Angeles County portion of the River, done by Newhall Land and Farming.

Newhall has established its own management plan for the upper river, the Natural River Management Plan. The only Santa Clara River Enhancement and Management Plan recommendation concerning areas covered by Newhall’s Natural River Management Plan was that they be governed by the latter plan.

The Natural River Management Plan, which was covered by a Corps 404 permit and California Department of Fish and Game 1603 Stream Alteration Agreement, has now been in affect for 5 years. This Plan has proved difficult to amend and adaptive management has not been followed. Many biologists are convinced that impacts to biological resources in the upper river under the Natural River Management Plan have not been adequately mitigated, and that some species, such as the arroyo toad, will likely vanish from the area over time as a result of massive urban encroachment onto the floodplain and terrace lands. Newhall plans to establish a similar Natural River Management Plan for Newhall Ranch, a 21,000-unit development along 5 miles of the river downstream of Santa Clarita.

Parallel Efforts

The southern steelhead, an anadromous fish, uses the Santa Clara River as a migration corridor and spawns in several creeks, primarily Sespe Creek. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is developing a recovery plan for the steelhead, which is listed as endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act. Steelhead migration on the River has been interrupted by the Freeman Diversion Dam (the only dam on the main stem of the River) despite the incorporation of a fish ladder at the diversion. NMFS is now working with the United Water Conservation District, the diversion operator, to develop improved streamflows after storm events to facilitate steelhead passage up the River and through the fish ladder.

The Regional Water Quality Control Board is in the process of developing pollution limits known as Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for chlorides and nutrients in the River. In support of these limits, a study of river-bottom life at several sampling points in the River has been carried out by a UCLA team. Further studies will be done as part of TMDL implementation.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has recently completed a reconnaissance study of the watershed in anticipation of a watershed assessment project to be carried out in conjunction with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works and the Ventura County Watershed Protection District.

Conclusion

Development of the Santa Clara River Management and Enhancement Plan has been a long and difficult process. Turnover of Project Steering Committee members was a significant problem and the process was often interrupted by funding gaps. The Plan is also limited in jurisdiction, with major sections of the river governed by developer-originated plans that lack adaptive management and have inadequate mitigation for urban encroachment impacts.

During the Plan process, litigation was initiated against the Newhall Ranch Project by two Project Steering Committee members, Ventura County and Friends of the Santa Clara River. This did not help the process. Yet, as a general comment, the planning process resulted in stakeholders communicating with each other and often gaining an improved understanding of the other’s perspectives.

The importance of the river and its resources has been highlighted. Property owner groups have bought into the concept of acquisition of land or easements from willing sellers. The River Parkway Project, involving acquisition and protection of floodplain lands unprecedented in scope for a river of this type, was spawned by the Plan.

Looking to the future, funding sources for implementation of the Enhancement and Management Plan have not been as yet established. Hopefully, enough Project Steering Committee members will become part of the Long Term River Management Committee to make it an effective organization in carrying out implementation tasks.

Ron Bottorff is a member of the Project Steering Committee, Secretary of IEH and Chair of the Friends of the Santa Clara River.

Further Information

Santa Clara River Enhancement and Management Plan, Public Review Draft, August, 2003, prepared by AMEC Earth and Environmental, Riverside, CA.

Santa Clara River Enhancement and Management Plan website, <http://sdgis.amec.com/scremp/>

Friends of the Santa Clara River website, www.fscr.org

SUSTAINING AGRICULTURE

California and the World Agricultural Crisis

These are difficult times for California agriculture, with very low prices for a wide variety of crops. In 2001, the California Farm Bureau Federation reported that prices for many crops had collapsed due to foreign imports. Low prices threaten the future of family farming and the benefits to environment and rural communities that these farms can bring. While the reasons vary with the crop, the problem is part of a world-wide agricultural crisis.

The price of the suite of eight major U.S. commodity crops has dropped by 40 percent since 1995-1996. By 2001, 47 percent of U.S. farm income came from government subsidy payments made especially to the large growers. At the recent World Trade Organization meeting in Cancun, Mexico, a group of developing nations banded together to demand the U.S. and the European Union end their systems of subsidizing agricultural production. We learned of small farmers from Mexico to West African countries being undercut by dumping of the U.S. products.

Free marketeers and the WTO blame the international problems on the developed nations' subsidies. Reality is more complicated. Increased production of a number of crops in other countries is part of the overall problem.

Three University of Tennessee agricultural economists, Daryll Ray, Daniel Ugarte and Kelly Tiller, presented *Rethinking U.S. Agriculture Policy: Changing Course to secure Farmer Livelihoods Worldwide* to the Cancun meeting. It focuses on the eight commodity crops that receive major subsidies in the United States and are the mainstay of crop farming in the Midwest and the South and explored the complex world of agricultural production levels, crop prices and subsidies. The report is available on the Web - www.agpolicy.org/blueprint.html.

The three economists state that "diversified, independent, owner-operated farms are rapidly disappearing. Many of the remaining small farms may well be controlled by large agribusiness firms through contract production. Such a future spells ruin for farm-dependent rural communities and small and moderate-size farms within the U.S. and around the world. The future is especially grim for the 2.5 billion people in developing countries who depend on agriculture for their livelihoods."

For the eight commodity crops, the economists point to a major change in the 1996 Farm Bill, which moved the U.S. moved away from a system of controlling the level of production to reliance on exports of U.S. crops. The result was the acreage planted went up and prices dropped. With farmers growing crops at a loss, government subsidies went up dramatically to over \$20 billion a year. While the free marketeers put the blame on the government payments, Daryll Ray and colleagues make a detailed and convincing argument that the real problem was removal of controls and that the subsidies were the consequence of the problem, not the cause.

One key factor is that, unlike industrial producers, farmers do not respond to the market by cutting production when prices are low. They keep planting. For example NAFTA resulted in a drop of 50 percent in Mexican corn prices because of the influx of cheap U.S. and Canadian corn. Millions of traditional small Mexican farmers could not cover the costs of production. Many farmers left the land but domestic corn production levels stayed about the same as others grew more corn.

Daryll Ray and colleagues explain how U.S. prices for the eight commodity crops are the leader, determining world prices, and how our lowered production will bring prices up. They propose a set of solutions for the U.S. that include re-establishing control of the acreage planted and the use of temporary set asides, similar to the system in place before the 1996 Farm Bill.

But this does not help for the wide variety of Californian crops that are not part of the Farm Bill system and for which it is increased non-U.S. production that is the problem. Indeed some pessimists consider that the existence of cheap land and cheap labor in other countries means that U.S. agriculture will collapse. This would lead to disaster for family farmers and ranchers, rural communities and the environment, which would see endless ranchette development. It could also impact the long-term food security of our nation and the world.

We need workable international solutions to this tremendous international problem, as well as a rethinking of the Farm Bill sooner than at its scheduled reauthorization in 2007.

PLANNING FOR QUALITY OF LIFE

It is Time to Fix the Local Government Fiscal Crisis

Local government finances have been in bad shape for a number of years as a result of various ballot propositions and use of local income to balance the state budget. This fiscal problem has exacerbated land use problems. One example is the fiscalization of land use, where increased reliance on the sales tax resulted in excessive development of auto malls and big box retail, while housing often became a low priority.

The great majority of local government spending is for programs mandated by federal and state governments, with much of the money coming from those levels of government. Some additional activities, such as road repair, rely on specific funding from the state. But local government general fund money provides much of the funding for police, fire, libraries and a variety of other essential local services.

Local government problems began with the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978 that drastically limited property taxes. Then in the early 1990's, during the last major state budget crisis, state government shifted about \$4 billion a year in local government property tax revenue to schools through ERAF, the Educational Revenue Augmentation Fund. By 1993, about half of the ERAF loss to local government was made up by a permanent allocation of a ½ cent of sales tax to local governments. Various other mechanisms provided additional funds. But there has been a net deficit of about \$1 billion a year, impacting local governments' general funds.

The current state budget, adopted this August, contains a number of details addressing local government funding. One little noticed item was a halt to local government receiving the ½ cent sales tax increment for five years. Instead, this money was earmarked to repay a proposed bond sale of about \$10 billion, used to balance the state budget. In its place, the state would provide more

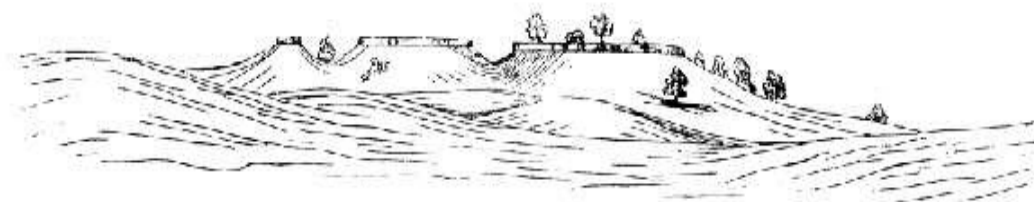
property tax dollars to local government. Other local government general fund money comes from the car tax, which the governor-elect proposes to abolish, and the gas tax.

There is hope that in the coming months the governor and the legislature will craft a real and lasting solution to the state's budget system. It is very important that at the same time the local government financing problems are resolved.

The solutions for local government financing need to address various complexities, including the relationships to land use planning and decision-making. A simple shift from sales tax back to property tax does not solve all the problems and provide the needed incentives. For example, local jurisdictions often find that only high-end housing provides sufficient tax revenues to cover the costs of services. Also property taxes are not equitably distributed across jurisdictions. Many of the communities in trouble, such as declining older suburbs, will not receive sufficient revenues to fix their problems if they must rely on their own property taxes for general fund revenue.

The solutions should remove incentives for excessive commercial development, detrimental competition between jurisdictions, and disincentives to the development of affordable housing. They should also provide real incentives for a shift to Smart Growth and curbs on endless sprawl and low density development. They should address regional-scale issues, at least through effective incentives encourage to regional tax-sharing.

We hope that the state legislature and the governor-elect have the vision and the will to develop real solutions that achieve these crucial goals.



INFORMATION RESOURCES

National

Smart Growth Zoning Codes: A Resource Guide.

Tracy, Steve (2003) Local Government Commission, Sacramento, CA. www.lgc.org

Many of the features of Smart Growth, including a mix of uses, housing above retail, smaller lots, and presence of second units, are illegal under the zoning codes of a great number of municipalities. Crafting and enacting new or additional local zoning codes is essential in these jurisdictions. This resource guide, based on the use of examples from around the nation, is a good place to start.

Each example illustrates a specific point. Thus the chapter on Traditional Neighborhood Development uses Dade County, Florida for architectural and streetscape standards and Onondaga County, New York, for comprehensive Traditional Neighborhood Development guidelines. Other chapters address mixed-use and live-work codes, transit area codes, streets and blocks, parking and design. There's a brief explanation of each code example.

An accompanying CD provides the actual codes from 48 locales. It also has a complete list of web sites for the local governments and other useful appendices.

Measuring Sprawl and Its Impact. Reid Ewing et.al. (2002) Smart Growth America. Washington, DC. www.smartgrowthamerica.org

This analysis treats sprawl as defined by four factors: (1) low density, dispersed population; (2) separation of housing, retail and workplace areas; (3) a road system based on major arterials with limited access to housing, retail and workplace zones, and (4) a lack of thriving activity centers such as vibrant downtowns. The authors created a rating for each of these four factors and determined a "sprawl index score" for 83 major metropolitan areas across the United States.

By this system of measurement, the worst of the 83 metro regions was the Inland Empire of Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, while the Ventura-Oxnard area was number nine. The rest of the top ten most sprawling areas were all in the East and Texas.

The report also showed the rating of metro areas by each of the four factors. California metro areas fared particularly poorly in the Strength of Centers factor. The Fairfield-Vallejo-Napa area in northern California had the

lowest national score, with Riverside-San Bernardino number 2, Oxnard-Ventura number 5, Oakland number 6 and Anaheim-Santa Ana number 10. For the other three indices there was little California representation in the top ten poorest scores.

The report also provides useful information and analysis of the impacts of sprawl, such as more miles traveled per day and less use of transit or walking to get to work. Interestingly, the authors found that more sprawl does not lead to quicker commutes or less traffic congestion as claimed by some advocates of sprawl. Instead, these two factors are simply a reflection of the population size of a metro area. The bigger the population, the longer the commutes and the worse the congestion, independently of the sprawl index.

The report provides seven policy recommendations for tackling the sprawl problem. Several focus on shifting growth and investment to already developed areas. Finally there is data on the details for determining sprawl factors and a comparison with several other analyses of sprawl.

Drafting a Conservation Blueprint: a Practitioner's Guide to Planning for Biodiversity. Craig Groves, ed. (2003) Island Press, Washington, DC. www.islandpress.com

This book provides a great wealth of information on the nuts and bolts of landscape scale conservation planning for the conservation of overall biological diversity, as opposed to conservation of a narrower suite of listed and rare species. Most of the book is a set of chapters on how to go about conservation planning, with extensive use of examples from many locations in the United States and elsewhere. It addresses issues ranging from establishing conservation targets, to assessing the likelihood of long term species persistence and conservation of ecological integrity, to anticipating the impacts of climate change.

Local Greenprinting for Growth Hopper K., ed. (2002) The Trust For Public Lands, San Francisco, CA. www.tpl.org

Based on ten years of Trust for Public Lands work with local governments to conserve land, this four volume work explains how to carry out Greenprinting. using a wealth of local examples and case studies from around the nation. Greenprinting is a Smart Growth strategy that emphasizes land conservation to ensure quality of life,

clean air and water, recreation, and economic health.

The Trust for Public Lands sets out three steps for this process. (1) Define a land protection vision that has community support. (2) Secure funds. (3) Acquire and manage park and conservation lands.

Land conservation includes recreational and greenbelt needs, farm and rangeland conservation, wildlife habitat, flood-prone areas and more. There is recognition of the value in integrating land conservation with other local planning issues such as transportation plans. Volume 1 provides an extensive overview, while the subsequent volumes address each of the three steps.

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Riparian Areas: Functions and Strategies for Management. National Research Council (2002) National Academy Press, Washington, DC. www.nap.edu

This detailed volume is the outcome of an extensive consideration of riparian areas by National Research Council's Committee on Riparian Zone Functioning and Strategies for Management. It contains a great wealth of information and the state of the art science on the structure and functions of riparian areas, human impacts and management strategies. There is also an extensive section on current legal strategies for protecting riparian areas.

This habitat type is critical for so many species of wildlife and also for water quality. Areas like California's Central Valley have lost over 90 percent of their historic riparian woodlands. There is major interest in the conservation of remaining riparian areas and the restoration of some of what we have lost over the past 150 years. Streams with riparian corridors have significant ecological and human amenity roles in developed areas, as well as in agricultural and natural landscapes. The need for conservation practitioners and for citizen activists to understand the ecology of riparian areas is very high and this work provides much of the needed information.

California

California Metropatterns. Myron Orfield (2002) Metropolitan Area Research Corporation, Minneapolis, MN. www.metroresearch.org

Often we seem to focus on renewal of downtown areas. Many other communities are declining, however, and in need of major help. Myron Orfield's book *California Metropatterns*, looks at fiscal and social aspects of the state's communities with a map-based system and

concludes that about half our population lives in suburbs with very significant problems.

There are 143 California suburbs with "higher levels of poverty in their schools, weaker tax bases and slower growth" than inner cities. These tend to be older, decaying communities.

There are another 155 suburbs that are growing fast as bedroom communities, but have tax base problems and trouble paying for infrastructure and schools. Their relative newness and fast growth hides underlying problems such as rapid growth of poverty, and lack of commercial development.

Orfield's solutions are tax sharing and regional planning. As we discuss in this issue of *Linkages*, regional planning is fraught with difficulties. Tax sharing is needed but an explosive issue. A bill in the previous state legislative session promoted a degree of sales tax sharing for the six county Sacramento region. Cities in the region that have high sales tax income campaigned strongly against the proposals. Many communities from around the state joined this opposition.

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Investing in a Sustainable Future. Judith Bell (2003) PolicyLink, Oakland, CA. www.policylink.org

This report examines some of the key shortfalls of California's communities, primarily housing and infrastructure, and a variety of solutions. It reminds us of the urgent need to change the way we do business in the state and to better provide for our people and communities.

A few figures exemplify the problems. We need an additional 651,000 housing units for low income renters. 60 percent of San Jose's firefighters live outside of Santa Clara County. Only 10 percent of state transportation funds go to transit. The American Farmland Trust points out the potential for creating two vast urban corridors through farmland - one up the Central Valley from Bakersfield to north of Sacramento, and one on the Hwy 101 / I-80 corridor from Monterey to Sacramento.

Heavy reliance of local communities on sales tax promotes sprawl and inequitable local government funding. One essential solution is the very difficult one of changing the current statewide voter-approved requirement of a 2/3 vote for passage of a local funding measure to 55 percent. This report examines two current legislative proposals for state ballot measures, ACA14 and SCA11. These would create a 55 percent threshold for any local funding measures that allocate a minimum of 20 percent each to affordable housing, neighborhood and transportation improvements, parks and open space, and general infrastructure.

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topography and bioregional boundaries as background. Species-groups maps show variation in species richness around the state. Habitat maps delineate the occurrence of key habitat types. There is also information on climate and topography, soils, general vegetation, invasive species, programs to conserve biological diversity, and some helpful references.

Back Issues of *Linkages* Available

Major articles in each issue focus on a common theme.

These themes by *Linkages* issue are:

#14, *Regional Conservation Planning*; #13, *Overcoming Obstacles to Smart Growth*; #12, *Ecological Benefits from Rural Land Stewardship*; #11, *Land, People and Nature - a Paradigm for the 21st Century*; #10, *Water and Land Use*; #9 *The Future of Rural Landscapes*.

Numbers 6-8 (1998-1999) comprise a set of three issues on *Grappling with Growth*, dealing with the problems and solutions of metropolitan sprawl & the need for livable communities.

Earlier issues address *Conservation Planning* (#5); *Flood Management* (#4), *The Sierra Foothills* (#3), and *The Central Valley* (#2).

Single copies are \$2 to cover postage and handling. No charge with payment of a new IEH membership or to existing members. From: IEH, 409 Jardin Place, Davis, CA 95616. Ieh@cal.net

Atlas of the Biodiversity of California.

California Department of Fish and Game (2003)
www.atlas.dfg.ca.gov/index.htm

This large format book provides general state geographic overviews on various groups of species and key habitat types. For each there is text and a large color map with

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