9. Conservation Element

Introduction
The Conservation Element addresses conservation and utilization of natural resources and the management and protection of open space lands. The Conservation Element provides policy guidance to protect, maintain, and enhance Yorba Linda’s natural resources and open space land.

Authority and Scope
The State of California Government Code Section 65302(d) requires that a General Plan include “a conservation element for the conservation, development and utilization of natural resources including water and its hydraulic force, forests, soils, rivers and other waters, harbors, fisheries, wildlife, minerals, and other natural resources.”

The Conservation Element must contain goals and policies that further the protection and maintenance of the State’s resources such as water, soils, wildlife, mineral, and other natural resources. The Conservation Element identifies those undeveloped lands that contain open space for the preservation of natural resources; open space for the managed production of resources; and open space for public health and safety.

Background
Approximately one-fourth of the land in Yorba Linda is preserved as permanent open space, including natural habitat, wildlife corridors, and viewsheds. Much of Yorba Linda’s open space areas are located in the northern and southeastern portions of the planning area. The unincorporated areas of Orange County located in the north and east of the City’s Sphere of Influence (SOI) contain natural resources significant to the sub-region. These portions of Yorba Linda contain natural habitat directly adjacent to the Chino Hills State Park. The steep slopes along Yorba Linda’s northeastern City boundary form an edge between Orange County and Chino Hills State Park, located in San Bernardino County, as illustrated in Exhibit CN-1: Open Space and Recreation Areas.
Wildlife Habitat

Areas in the northern and southeastern portions of the City of Yorba Linda, provide natural open space, important wildlife connectivity, and biological habitats. Exhibit CN-2: Natural Habitat Areas, shows the locations of natural habitat areas in the planning area. The natural habitat areas are open spaces which contain wildlife and native plant life.

Important open space in Yorba Linda includes the riparian habitat around the Santa Ana River in the southeastern portion of the City, as well as extensive oak woodland, chaparral, coastal sage scrub and riparian habitats located adjacent to the Chino Hills State Park in the northern portion of the City. According to the National Land Cover Database, Yorba Linda’s natural open space areas consists of a majority of shrub/scrub, with some herbaceous and woody wetlands land cover.¹

According to the California Department of Parks and Recreation, the open space areas around the City are ideal locations for observing many wildlife species native to Southern California. More than 200 species of birds and mammals, numerous reptiles and amphibians, and thousands of types of insects and other invertebrates can be found in habitat areas, including Chino Hills State Park. Wildlife species in and around Yorba Linda include: mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes, mule deer, raccoons, opossums, striped skunks, western grey squirrels, red-tailed hawks, Cooper’s hawks, and turkey vultures.

According to data provided by the California Natural Diversity Database, there are sensitive plant and animal species located in the Yorba Linda Planning Area. Sensitive biological resources include species present in the project vicinity that have been given special recognition by federal, state, or local resource conservation agencies and organizations due to declining, limited or threatened populations, resulting in most cases from habitat reduction; and habitat areas that are unique, of relatively limited distribution, or of special value to wildlife. State governments have developed a rating system to designate the status of sensitive species. These designation include, “Candidate,” “Threatened,” or “Endangered.” Official designation of a species in one of these categories affords species or habitats certain levels of protection in an effort to preserve their existence. Table CN-1: Sensitive Animals, Plants, and Communities, lists the sensitive species that are rated “Threatened” or “Endangered.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Federal Status</th>
<th>State Status</th>
<th>CDFW/Rare Plant Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Animals: Birds</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Buteo swainsoni  
Swainson’s hawk | None | Threatened | n/a |
| Coccyzus americanus occidentalis  
Western yellow-billed cuckoo | Threatened | Endangered | n/a |
| Empidonax trailli  
Willow flycatcher | None | Endangered | n/a |
| Empidonax trailli extimus  
Southwestern willow flycatcher | Endangered | Endangered | n/a |
| Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi  
Belding’s savannah sparrow | None | Endangered | n/a |
| Polioptila californica californica  
Coastal California gnatcatcher | Threatened | None | SSC |
| Sternula antillarum browni  
California least tern | Endangered | Endangered | FP |
| Vireo bellii pusillus  
Least Bell’s vireo | Endangered | Endangered | n/a |
| **Animals: Fish and Mollusks** |
| Catostomus santaanae  
Santa Ana sucker | Threatened | None | SSC |
| **Plants** |
| Eriastrum densifolium ssp. Sanctorum  
Santa Ana River wolly star | Endangered | Endangered | 1B.1 |

Notes:
CDFW = California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
SSC = Species of Special Concern  
FP = Fully Protected  
B1.1 = Plants rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere, seriously threatened in California.

Source: California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Natural Diversity Database, Yorba Linda, Orange, and Prado Dam Quads.
Open Space and Recreation Areas

City Boundary
Sphere of Influence
Open Space and Recreational Areas

County of Orange GIS data, 2015.
K:ORA_PLAN\041796001 - Yorba Linda General Plan\001_GENERAL PLAN DOCUMENT\Maps\MXD Maps\5_Open Space and Rec

Exhibit CN-1
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County of Orange GIS data, 2015.
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Natural Habitat Areas

Exhibit CN-2
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Wildlife Corridors

A wildlife corridor is a section of land connecting two larger areas of natural habitat which is free of barriers that would prevent wildlife passage. Wildlife movement corridors are important for the free movement of animals between population centers, for access to food and water sources, as escape routes from brush fires, and in the longer term, for genetic dispersal of individuals between populations. According to the California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project, parts of northern and eastern Yorba Linda are considered Natural Landscape Blocks. Natural Landscape Blocks are relatively natural habitat blocks that support native biodiversity and areas essential for ecological connectivity between them.²

Viewsheds

Yorba Linda has diverse topography, from the flood plains surrounding the Santa Ana River, to steep ridgelines in the Chino and Pleito Hills. One of the most important ridgelines is known as Telegraph Canyon, located within the Chino Hills State Park to the north of Yorba Linda. Telegraph Canyon reaches an elevation of 1,476 feet, with an average height of 1,000 feet. Other prominent ridges are to the northeast of the City in the Chino Hills, including Brush Canyon with elevations reaching 1,400 feet and San Juan Hills, reaching elevations of 1,661 feet. Chino Hills State Park is a dominant feature in the area, as are the Santa Ana River, Featherly Park, and Yorba Regional Park.³

Night Skies

Nighttime lighting provides safety and comfort to communities and their residents, but excess and misdirected light creates the phenomenon known as light pollution. An increasing problem in local jurisdictions, light pollution is light not targeted for a specific task, creating an unhealthy and unsightly environment. This light originates from a number of sources including interior and exterior lighting on buildings, and lights associated with advertising, streetlights, sporting venues and shopping centers. There are a number of environmental, ecological, and human health implications associated with light pollution. Excess nighttime light wastes energy and harms the integrity of ecosystems. Upward-directed light creates sky glow above cities, impairing the view of the night sky, stars and planets. The preservation of night skies in Yorba Linda is an important priority to minimize light pollution and preserve the community’s semi-rural character.

Watersheds

A Watershed is the area of land where all of the water that is either on or under it goes into the same place. Yorba Linda is within the Santa Ana Watershed, which is Southern California’s largest watershed. The Santa Ana Watershed begins in the San Bernardino Mountains and discharges into the ocean in Huntington Beach. The Yorba Linda Planning Area is drained by the Santa Ana River in its natural configuration; beyond Yorba Linda, the river is channelized. The flow of the Santa Ana River is intermittent, dependent on the amount of rainfall.

Water Resources

The City receives water service from both the Yorba Linda Water District (YLWD) and the Golden State Water Company. Groundwater is pumped from nine active wells located throughout the YLWD and imported water is treated at the Diemer Filtration Plant and is delivered to the YLWD system through four imported water connections.

In response to the continuing drought in California, the Yorba Linda Water District adopted a Water Conservation Ordinance in 2009. The ordinance consists of permanent year-round restrictions for potable water, focused on the prevention of water waste, and four “Water Supply Shortage” stages. These stages have increasing restrictions on water use in order to allow YLWD to meet all health and safety guidelines in the face of water shortages. The ordinance contains a financial penalty structure similar to a code enforcement violation for wasting water.

Golden State Water Company has files Advice Letter with the California Public Utilities Commission to activate Staged Mandatory Water Conservation and Rationing. The Staged Mandatory Water Conservation and Rationing filings outline restrictions, water allocations, enforcement measures, and surcharges designed to achieve reductions due to water supply shortages or to achieve identified water usage goals established by an authorized government agency or official.

The City of Yorba Linda has also adopted Water Efficient Landscape Regulations. These regulations establish alternative water efficient landscape regulations that are acceptable under AB 1881, the State Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance. The adopted ordinance provides regulations that are at the least as effective in conserving water as the Model Ordinance in the context of conditions in the City in order to:
• Promote the benefits of consistent landscape ordinances with neighboring local and regional agencies;
• Promote the values and benefits of landscapes while recognizing the need to invest water and other resources as efficiently as possible;
• Establish a structure for planning, designing, installing, maintaining, and managing water efficient landscapes in new construction and rehabilitation projects;
• Establish provisions for water management practices and water waste prevention for existing landscapes;
• Use water efficiently without waste by setting a Maximum Applied Water Allowance as an upper limit for water use and reduce water use to the lowest practical amount; and
• Encourage the use of economic incentives that promote the efficient use of water, such as implementing a budget-based tiered-rate structure.

**Municipal Storm Water Permitting Program**

The Municipal Storm Water Permitting Program regulates storm water discharges from municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s). Storm water is runoff from rain or snow melt that runs off surfaces such as rooftops, paved streets, highways or parking lots and can carry with it pollutants such as: oil, pesticides, herbicides, sediment, trash, bacteria and metals. The runoff can then drain directly into a local stream, lake or bay. Often, the runoff drains into storm drains which eventually drain untreated into a local waterbody.

Additionally, municipal or urban areas commonly include large impervious surfaces which contribute to an increase in runoff flow, velocity and volume. As a result streams are hydrologically impacted through streambed and channel scouring, instream sedimentation and loss of aquatic and riparian habitat. In addition to hydrological impacts, large impervious surfaces contribute to greater pollutant loading, resulting in turbid water, nutrient enrichment, bacterial contamination, and increased temperature and trash. MS4 permits were issued in two phases.

Under Phase I, which started in 1990, the Regional Water Quality Control Boards have adopted National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System General Permit (NPDES) storm water permits for medium (serving between 100,000 and 250,000 people) and large (serving 250,000 people) municipalities. Most of these permits are issued to a group of co-permittees encompassing an entire metropolitan area. These permits are reissued as the permits expire. The Phase I MS4 permits require the discharger to develop and implement a Storm Water Management Plan/Program with the goal of reducing the discharge of pollutants to the maximum extent practicable (MEP). MEP is the performance standard specified in Section 402(p) of the Clean Water Act. The management programs specify what best management practices (BMPs) will be used to address certain program areas. The program areas include public education and outreach; illicit discharge detection and elimination; construction and post-construction; and good housekeeping for municipal operations. In general, medium and large municipalities are required to conduct monitoring.
On April 30, 2003 as part of Phase II, the State Water Resources Control Board issued a General Permit for the Discharge of Storm Water from Small MS4s (WQ Order No. 2003-0005-DWQ) to provide permit coverage for smaller municipalities (population less than 100,000), including non-traditional Small MS4s, which are facilities such as military bases, public campuses, prison and hospital complexes. The Phase II Small MS4 General Permit covers Phase II Permittees statewide. On February 5, 2013 the Phase II Small MS4 General Permit was adopted and will become effective on July 1, 2013.

Agricultural Resources

According to the State of California Department of Conservation, Yorba Linda contains a small parcel of Unique Farmland, located just east of Lakeview Avenue and south of Buena Vista Avenue. There is a small portion of land located north of the Santa Ana River, near Featherly Regional Park that is designated Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance and Unique Farmland. Prime Farmland has the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term agricultural production. Farmland of Statewide Importance is similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Unique Farmland consists of lesser quality soils used for the production of the state’s leading agricultural crops.¹

Mineral and Petroleum Resources

Mineral Resources

Yorba Linda contains mineral resources in the form of potential source of aggregate. Aggregate is the term used to describe sand, gravel, and crushed stone which are used as construction materials. In the Yorba Linda planning area, construction aggregate is found in the natural sand and gravel deposits along the Santa Ana River. There are no active quarries in the planning area.

California’s Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA) requires that the State Geologist classifies land based on the known or inferred mineral resource potential of that land. The Mineral Land Classification process identifies lands that contain economically significant mineral deposits. The primary goal of mineral land classifications is to ensure that the mineral source potential of lands is recognized and considered in land use planning.⁵

The SMARA designated Mineral Resource Zones for areas with minerals which were of State-wide or regional importance, as shown in Exhibit CN-3: Oil Production and Mineral Resource Zones. The areas along the Santa Ana River are classified as Mineral Resource Zone 2 (MRZ-2). Adequate information indicates that significant mineral deposits are present, or it is judged that a high likelihood exists for their presence.⁶ The classification process does not take into account existing land uses and may result

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⁶ Department of Conservation, Division of Mines and Geology, Santa Ana River and Lower Santiago Creek Resource Areas. 1994.
in the classification of MRZs which are already developed, rendering these zones unsuitable for mining production.

The planning area contains two specific Resource Sectors (Resource Sector B and Sector C) that are designated Regionally Significant Aggregate. A Resource Sector is an area judged to contain a significant deposit of construction-quality aggregate that is available to meet the future needs of the region. Resource Sector B is located directly east of Featherly Regional Park, north of the Santa Ana River. Resource Sector C is located directly west of Featherly Regional Park and includes lands presently part of the Savi Ranch development.

The Yorba Linda General Plan is required to show the location of the Resource Sectors and incorporate policies for the management of their mineral resources, due to the presence of the MRZ-2 Area in the planning area. The aggregate located in Resource Sectors B and C are unavailable because the areas were developed with land uses that preclude mining. The use of aggregate underlying the sand beneath Featherly Park and within portions of Savi Ranch would require major land use changes, as well as loss of valuable natural spaces and recreational facilities.

**Petroleum Resources**

There are known oil deposits located in Yorba Linda. The on-shore oil fields are aligned with the Newport-Inglewood and Whittier fault zones. The faults have facilitated the entrapment of petroleum resources. Oil extractions in Yorba Linda has been declining over the last several decades as resources are depleted. The large Yorba Linda oil field (previously known as the Shell Property) has been redeveloped into the Black Gold Golf Course and residential development.

There are still several active wells in the southwestern and northern portions of the planning area. The City has identified existing and potential petroleum resource areas through the Oil Production Combining Zone (O). The O Zone designates appropriate areas for the continued extraction and new extraction of oil, gas, and other hydrocarbon substances. Exhibit CN-3: Oil Production and Mineral Resource Zones, shows the locations of the City’s oil producing zones.

**Related Plans and Programs**

There are a number of land use documents which have been adopted, through ordinance or resolution, which bear a relationship to the General Plan. Relevant plans and documents are listed as follows:

**Parks and Recreation Master Plan**

The updated Yorba Linda Parks and Recreation Master Plan was adopted in August 2014. The Master Plan provides direction to continue the orderly and consistent planning, acquisition, development, and administration of the parks and recreation programming in Yorba Linda. The Master Plan guides the

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7 Department of Conservation, Division of Mines and Geology, Santa Ana River and Lower Santiago Creek Resource Areas. 1994.
City’s decision making with regard to overall policy and provides an inventory and assessment of recreation programs and service offerings, operations, maintenance, and capital improvements to be made over the next twenty years that will enhance the quality of life in Yorba Linda. The goals, programs, and strategies identified in the updated Parks and Recreation Master Plan are incorporated into the General Plan Update.

Regional Plans and Initiatives

**County of Orange Resources Element** – The County of Orange Resources Element contains official County policies on the conservation and management of resources within Orange County. The Element is comprised of six components including Natural Resources, Energy Resources, Water Resources, Air Resources, Open Space, and Cultural-Historical Resources. The Resources Element sets forth the strategy for the development, management, preservation, and conservation of resources that are necessary to meet Orange County’s existing and future demands. The Resources Element primarily focuses on the unincorporated areas in Orange County.

**Chino Hills State Park Plan** – The Chino Hills State Park General Plan establishes objectives for the area’s natural and cultural resources, visitor use, facility development, interpretation, general operation, and coordination with other public and private entities. The Plan, developed by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, provides goals, policies, and implementation actions that affect the interface and trail linkages with the Park with significant open space areas of Yorba Linda.

**Yorba Linda Stormwater Program** – The federal Clean Water Act (CWA) was enacted for the purpose of restoring the health of the Nation’s waters to point of being fishable and swimmable for all. The CWA established the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting program to regulate discharges, including urban and stormwater runoff, into the waters of the United States. One of the functions of the NPDES program is to issue permits for stormwater discharges from municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4) entering the waters of the United States. The County of Orange has prepared a Drainage Area Master Plan (DAMP) to comply with the NPDES permit requirements for Orange County. The DAMP identifies the stormwater management practices, control techniques, system design and engineering methods to be implemented to protect beneficial uses of receiving water to the maximum extent practicable. Each permittee city implements programs of the DAMP through its Local Implementation Program.

The City, as an Orange County permittee, has developed its Local Implementation Plan, the Yorba Linda Stormwater Program, to manage stormwater runoff and water quality protection practices. The purpose of the stormwater management program is to ensure that new development incorporates measures, to the maximum extent practicable, to reduce the quantity
of storm flow and the discharge pollutants in the urban/stormwater runoff to protect water quality, biological habitats, and recreational uses of downstream receiving waters.
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Conservation Element Policy Program

Goal CN-1
Preservation of visual resources along existing and planned landscape corridors.

Policy CN-1.1 Ensure that new development along landscaped corridors preserves unique visual features.
Policy CN-1.2 Ensure roadway design that takes advantage of natural or man-made scenic features to provide visual quality and riding comfort.
Policy CN-1.3 Incorporate pedestrian, equestrian, bicycle and multi-use trails into the right-of-way of landscaped corridors.

Goal CN-2
Preservation of natural resource areas of community and regional significance.

Policy CN-2.1 Support the preservation of native wildlife and plant communities, and their habitats.
Policy CN-2.2 Work with developers to ensure that resource protection measures are prepared and incorporated into development proposals.
Policy CN-2.3 Conserve resource areas which are preserved through public and private acquisition by an open space management program.
Policy CN-2.4 Support responsible management of regionally significant natural resources and wildlife habitat such as the Santa Ana River Corridor and Chino Hills State Park.
Policy CN-2.5 Support the delineation of permanent open space areas within the City’s sphere-of-influence.
Policy CN-2.6 Support the requirement for development proposals to provide detailed biological assessments in areas which may contain important plant communities and wildlife habitat.
Policy CN-2.7 Maintain an inventory of existing sensitive resources in and adjacent to the City.
Policy CN-2.8 Ensure open space areas that contain sensitive biological resources are maintained as passive recreation uses.
Goal CN-3
Protection of sensitive hillside areas within and adjacent to the community.

Policy CN-3.1 Support the preservation of sensitive hillside, canyon areas, and ridgelines within the City.
Policy CN-3.2 Ensure that site planning and architectural design respect the natural landform to minimize grading and visual impact.
Policy CN-3.3 Ensure the practice of proper soil management techniques to reduce erosion, sedimentation, and other soil-related problems during the construction and operation of new development.

Policy CN-4.1 Promote the preservation and enhancement of stream courses and watersheds in the City.
Policy CN-4.2 Consider conservation of water resources in the review of all development proposals and public facility improvement plans.

Policy CN-4.3 Promote the use of water efficient practices in site and building design for private and public projects.
Policy CN-4.4 Ensure the maintenance and monitoring of flood control and drainage facilities to provide protection from inundation from a 100-year flood event.
Policy CN-4.5 Promote the retention of local drainage courses, channels and creeks in their natural condition where possible.
Policy CN-4.6 Protect groundwater from sources of pollution.
Policy CN-4.7 Support the reduction of the discharge of pollutants from the City’s storm water system and meet the requirements of the Municipal Storm Water Permitting Program.

Goal CN-4
A healthy watershed and adequate, safe, and reliable water supply.

Policy CN-4.1 Promote the preservation and enhancement of stream courses and watersheds in the City.
Policy CN-4.2 Consider conservation of water resources in the review of all development proposals and public facility improvement plans.

Goal CN-5
Responsible management of designated areas for petroleum and mineral extraction.

Policy CN-5.1 Compile and maintain maps and descriptions of petroleum and mineral resources as a basis for policy and program implementation.
Policy CN-5.2  Document current extraction sites, including petroleum and sand and gravel quarries, including the current status and duration of existing permits and approvals, for compliance monitoring.

Policy CN-5.3  Cooperate with other governmental agencies and educational institutions to arrange for the development and exchange of information on petroleum and mineral resources.

Policy CN-5.4  Support future efforts to protect areas of the City currently identified as potential mineral resource areas when it has been determined that mining is no longer a feasible use for the property.

Policy CN-5.5  Ensure that all mineral extraction reclamation plans be consistent with the policies and procedures of the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act.

Policy CN-5.6  Ensure reclamation projects comply with State, federal, and local standards and attainment programs with respect to air quality, watersheds and basins, and erosion potential.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal CN-6</th>
<th>Preservation of the views of stars and the night sky.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy CN-6.1</td>
<td>Support efforts that require outdoor lighting fixtures to be shielded and down-directed in order to minimize glare and light trespass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy CN-6.2</td>
<td>Promote removal, replacement, or retrofit of non-shielded or non-down-directed light fixtures that contribute to glare and light pollution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy CN-6.3</td>
<td>Strive to achieve a natural nighttime environment and an uncompromised view of the night sky.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>