

Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation, Inc.



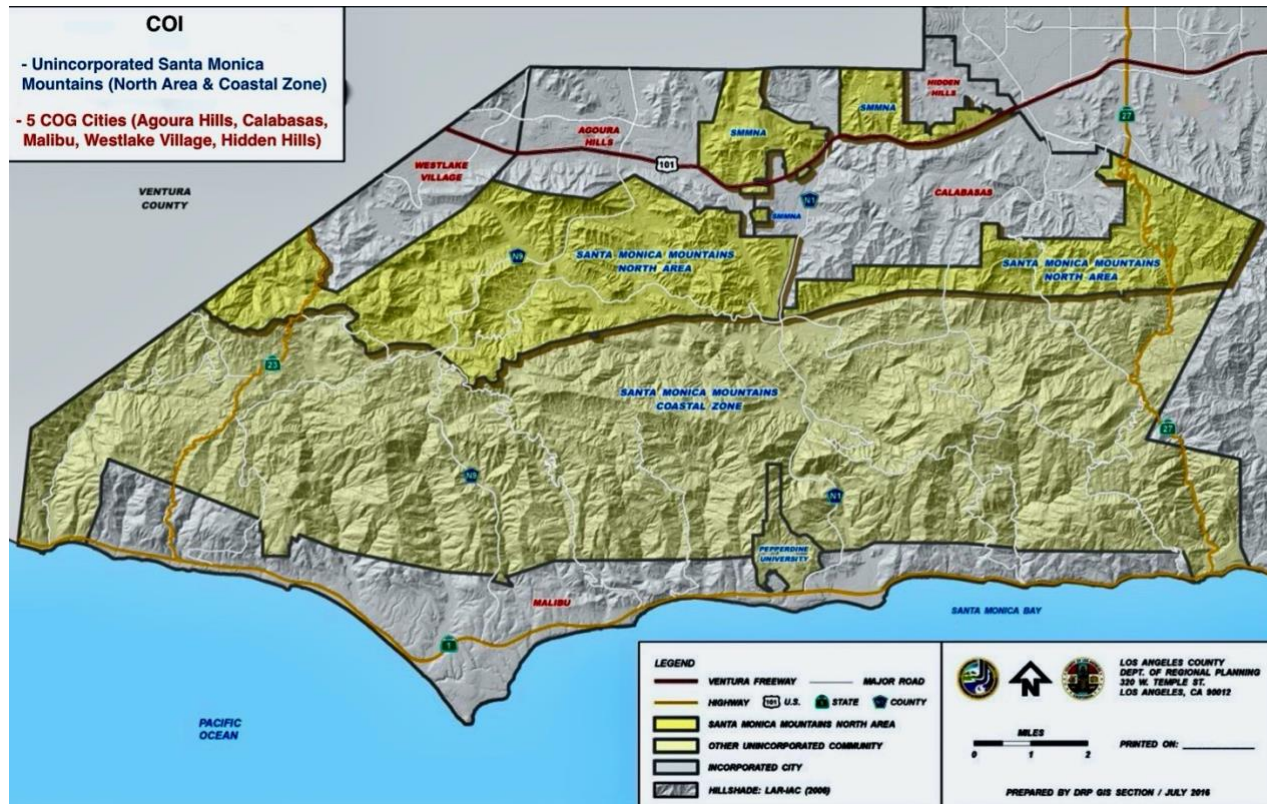
The *voice* and conscience of the Santa Monica Mountains since 1968

September 29, 2021

Honorable Commissioners:

The Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation, Inc., (LVHF) is the oldest and largest umbrella organization of communities and neighborhoods in the Western Santa Monica Mountains.

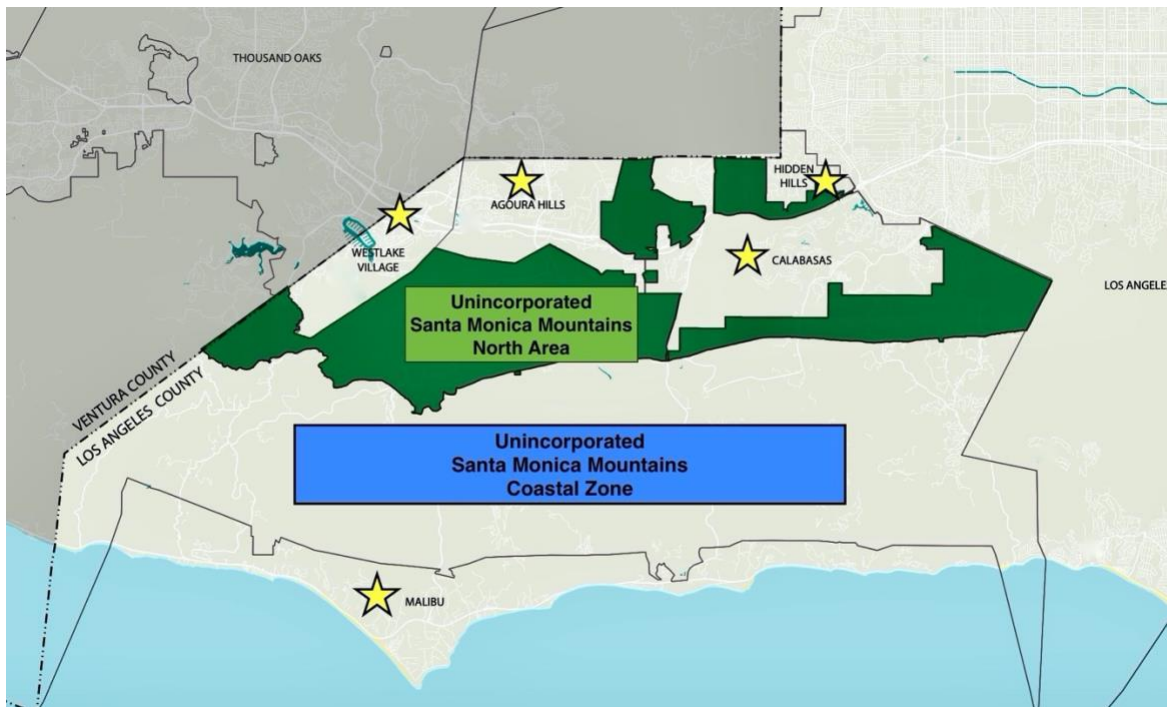
We strongly advocate that our longstanding COI remain together in the same supervisorial district. It consists of: **Unincorporated Santa Monica Mountains** and the Las Virgenes-Malibu Council of Governments (LVMCOG) cities of **Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, Malibu** and **Westlake Village**.



COI = The Contiguous Unincorporated Santa Monica Mountains (The North Area and the Coastal Zone) and the cities of Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Malibu, Westlake Village, Hidden Hills.

It is essential to understand that the Unincorporated Santa Monica Mountains portion of this COI is divided into 2 inseparable, land-use policy areas -- the Santa Monica Mountains Local Coastal Program (LCP) that encompasses 52,000 acres and the adjacent North Area Plan (NAP) which encompasses 22,000 acres.

These two-governing land-use policy documents are administered, implemented, and enforced by the L.A. County Department of Regional Planning -- and are intentionally aligned. They are contiguous and adjoined to the five COG cities forming the compact COI.



Unincorporated Santa Monica Mountains consists of the North Area and the Coastal Zone -- integrated and contiguous with the five COG cities.

Network of Mountain/Coastal Communities and Rural Villages

We have been representing wildland mountain/coastal communities and thousands of stakeholders united in common and shared interest in this COI for more than 53 years.

We have a shared history that unequivocally binds us -- one that is and always has been focused on preservation and conservation. The land use policies of the COG cities and Unincorporated Santa Monica Mountains are **similarly** focused on resource protective policies first and environmental stewardship because stakeholders have worked **together** for decades on COG City General Plans and on the Unincorporated North Area Plan and Local Coastal Program.

Our COI contains a network of **interconnected** designated rural villages, and mountain/coastal communities like: Malibu Lake, Cornell, Topanga, Old Topanga, Calabasas Highlands, Monte Nido, Triunfo Lobo Canyon, Cold Creek, Seminole Springs, Lakeside, Corral Canyon, Sunset Mesa, Old Agoura, Big Rock, Liberty Canyon, Westhills, Sycamore Park, Malibu Canyon, Mountainview, El Nido, Las Flores, Fernwood, etc.

Many of these communities are antiquated subdivisions with single ingress/egress on winding, narrow, steep trails and roadways.



Example of rural villages (pink) crisscrossing the Unincorporated Santa Monica Mountains coastal zone.

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA)



Unincorporated Santa Monica Mountains and COG cities either are fully enclosed in and comprise the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area or they are Gateways. This map also shows how State Parks are interconnected and woven throughout our COI.

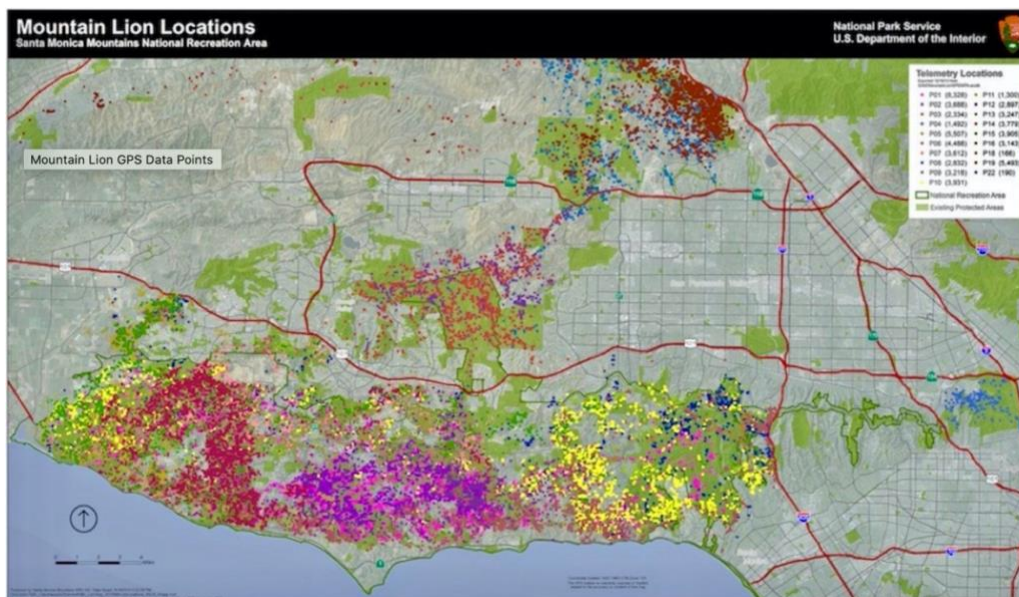


Almost the entire COI is “nested” in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA).

The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA) is best described by the National Park Service, “as the largest urban national park in the country, encompassing more than 150,000 acres of mountains and coastline. **It comprises a “seamless network” of local, state, and federal parks interwoven with private lands and communities.* As one of only five Mediterranean ecosystems in the world, it preserves the rich biological diversity of more than 450 animal species and 26 distinct plant communities.” **Almost the entire COI is nested* in the SMMNRA or is a Gateway to the SMMNRA. The City of Malibu and Unincorporated County are fully enclosed.

Connectivity is Key and just as important for stakeholders/communities as it is for the wildlife -- aka mountain lions. The SMMNRA is a mosaic of parkland, open space, habitat, and **regional trails** all interconnecting in **one eco-system** that link the COG cities and Unincorporated areas.

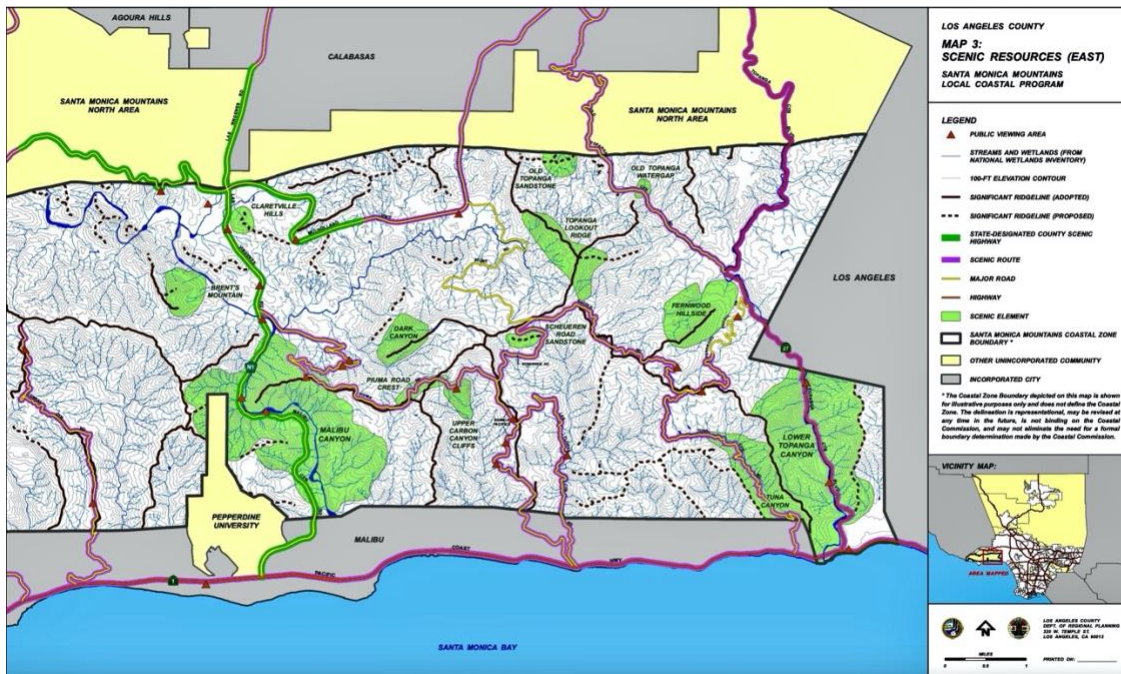
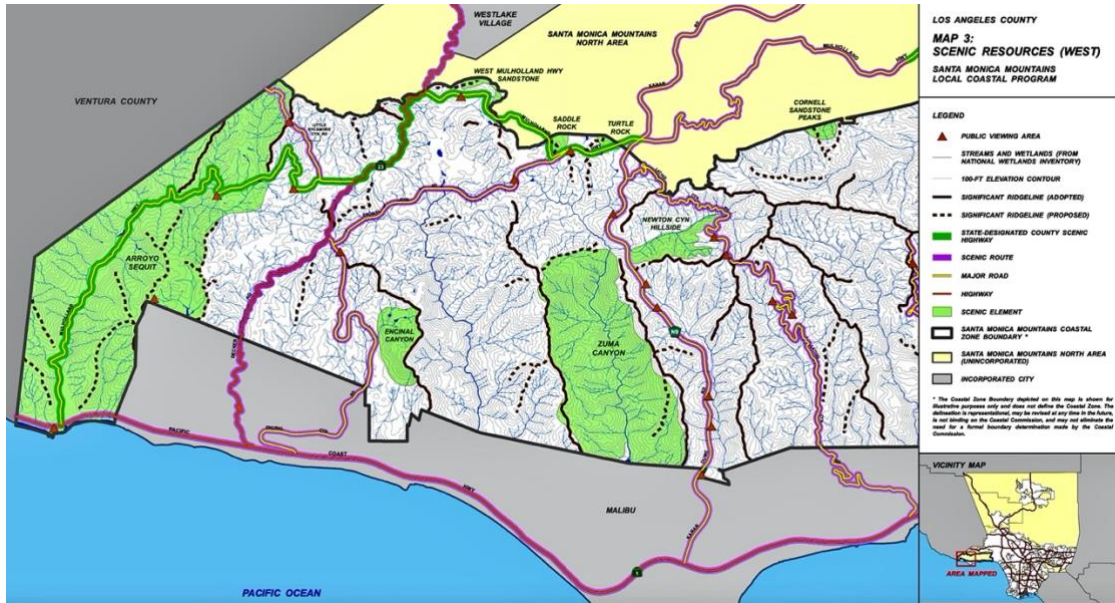
Preserving Wildlife Corridors that allow and link wildlife passage from the sea, throughout the mountains, and the COG cities (and hopefully soon over the 101 freeway via the Liberty Canyon Wildlife bridge) has always been a shared priority of the SMMNRA park agencies & stakeholders.



Clearly it is one cohesive/connected wildlife movement area.

People Corridors -Transportation. There are 3 main north-south arterials connecting residents from the sea through the mountains inland which are Kanan-Dume, Las Virgenes-Malibu Canyon, and Topanga Canyon. The principal east west arterials are Pacific Coast Highway, Mulholland Highway, and the 101 Freeway.

As per the scenic resource map below, residents also daily utilize a distinct web of interconnected scenic canyon routes like Piuma, Latigo Canyon, Cold Canyon, Corral Canyon, Las Flores, Decker, Encinal, Mulholland, etc., to access their neighborhoods, and likewise visitors do to recreate.



Fighting for and implementing synced land-use policies that protect wildlife and preserve habitat remain the focal point of shared community efforts in the SMMNRA unique to this turf. For example, light and noise greatly impact wildlife, so *dark sky ordinances* and *noise regulations* have been instituted. Full enclosures are required for animal keeping to protect mountain lions because this is their turf and they cannot differentiate between prey. Permeable fencing is required to allow safe wildlife passage, and barbed and razor wire are prohibited as a use. Tree protection policies are also stricter and more encompassing to protect viewsheds and biological resources in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

The communities work collaboratively with the park agencies on education and matters of mutual benefit to residents and wildlife sustainability.

Shared Economic Interests - Outdoor Recreation Area

It is currently estimated the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area hosts between 15-20 million visitors per year to our mountains and beaches. That fuels an economic engine of approximately 675M to 900M annually. The communities and cities are all tied together economically in this **visitor serving region**.

Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ)

Unified/Coordinated Wildfire Fighting Resources, Evacuation, and Emergency Preparedness. The Unincorporated Santa Monica Mountains and the COG cities are all designated as a VHFHSZ served by one Fire Agency -- The Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACoFD) and by County AG for brush clearance requirements on vacant parcels throughout the COI.

We have a coordinated fire preparedness policy, emergency response, and evacuation plans that are unique to us.

We also have specific to us fire-fighting resources like 69 Bravo -- a special tool in L.A. County Fire's tool chest for fighting "wildfire here in the National Recreation Area." It's a helistop located on a mountain-top that is used for water dropping helicopters with 10,000 gallons of water on site. 69 Bravo allows helicopters to pick up water, drop water, re-fill, and quickly get back to the blaze because time is of essence when battling wildfire in our wild, inaccessible steep terrain, mountains and isolated canyons.

Community protection strategies like home hardening, ignition point mitigation, and defensible space are all part of this integrated planning.

Wildfire is our shared number one public safety threat. Wind driven fires courtesy of Santa Ana winds like Woolsey in 2018 wreak devastating harm onto our neighborhoods, wildlife, and habitat. Post Woolsey the Third District Supervisor initiated a TASK Force comprised of COG City and Unincorporated community representatives and hired Consultants to prepare a *Post Woolsey Wildfire Report*. It recommended and outlined a comprehensive, cohesive, and cooperative plan to protect residents and battle wildfire in the Santa Monica Mountains -- acknowledging the strong integrated partnership between the communities, L.A. County Fire, and the Lost Hills Sheriff Dept.

Law Enforcement

We share two law enforcement agencies -- the Lost Hills Sheriff Department based in Calabasas and the CHP based in the West Valley. All of the COG cities contract with the Sheriff's Dept. and Unincorporated Santa Monica Mountains are served by the same. The CHP patrols certain roadways like Topanga Canyon Blvd., Old Topanga, and Mulholland Hwy. Frequently however it is the Sheriff that does too. Citizens have worked for decades with our law enforcement partners re: emergency evacuations and repopulation of neighborhoods due to wildfire, and to mitigate reckless and speeding motorcycles/cars on our scenic and arterial routes.

Enforcement is no easy feat in the Santa Monica Mountains -- the Sheriff knows the turf particularly well -- it is unique because of the topography and remoteness of communities, but also because there are millions of annual visitors. Rescues for example are commonplace here in the coastal mountain areas due to hiking injuries, over exertion, falls, etc.

Another unique aspect of law enforcement that we share in the National Recreation Area is Park Rangers -- we have State Park Rangers, National Park Service Rangers, and Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Rangers that patrol and protect people and parkland.

Water Districts

There are two water districts that have always served this COI -- the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District (LVMWD) and Los Angeles County Waterworks District 29.

School Districts

The award-winning Las Virgenes Unified School District is the largest public school district and serves the majority of this area with 8 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, and 2 high schools -- and several specialty schools.

Secondarily, the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District, serves Malibu but that has been fraught with conflict for years. Malibu has been attempting to sever ties and they moved one step closer last month when the Los Angeles County Office of Education's County Committee on School District Organization, held a preliminary hearing. Councilmember Farrer remarked that, "When it comes to common community interests, whether its places of worship, commerce, shopping, Malibu and Santa Monica [the city] don't mix." Furthermore, the two are not connected geographically -- they are separated by Pacific Palisades which is part of the City of Los Angeles.

There are also several private schools, like Viewpoint in Calabasas, and Manzanita in Topanga, that serve students from the COG cities and Unincorporated areas.

No Boundary Zip Codes

As yet another example of the seamlessness of this COI, zip codes and mailing addresses are not separated by jurisdictional boundaries. Old Topanga for example extends from Unincorporated County through the city of Calabasas, yet homeowners in Old Topanga Calabasas have the Unincorporated Topanga zip code. The Cold Creek community is split between Calabasas and

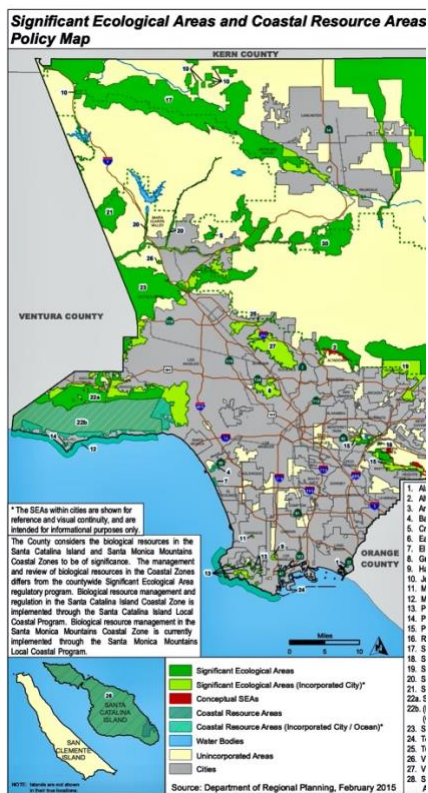
Unincorporated County -- with a Calabasas mailing address. The Unincorporated rural coastal village of Monte Nido has a Calabasas mailing address and zip code. Likewise, the Unincorporated North Area's Malibou Lake community address and zip code is Agoura Hills. Corral Canyon and other Unincorporated coastal communities closer to the city of Malibu, have a Malibu zip code and mailing address.

The **King Gillette Ranch** which is the **Visitor Center** for the entire Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and managed by all three park agencies, is located in the Unincorporated County Coastal Zone, yet its address/zip is Calabasas: *26800 Mulholland Hwy, Calabasas, CA 91302*.

Clearly, this is one cohesive, longstanding COI that cannot be fragmented and must remain intact in the same single supervisorial district. The COG cities of Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, Malibu, Westlake Village and Unincorporated County form a cohesive, compact, contiguous special Santa Monica Mountains community of interest where residents, communities, and natural resource protection benefit from being maintained together in a single District.

The SMMNRA was established by Congress in 1978 to protect the scenic natural and cultural resources of the coastal Mediterranean ecosystem and to preserve public health benefits offered by the natural setting as the largest urban park in the nation.

L.A. County has further designated the majority of this COI as an SEA -- Significant Ecological Area -- containing some of the County's most precious biological resources (see the SMMNRA highlighted in various greens below).



The communities and residents are part of the very fabric of these mountain coastal areas along with all the wild things that call it home and cannot be separated, or cut out.

We respectfully ask the Commission to keep us together as one unique Community of Interest in a single Supervisorial District.

Also -- we strongly advocate that our *Westhills Unincorporated Community* remain with the COI as it is now. It is a part of the SEA, and contiguous to the Upper Las Virgenes Open Space Preserve which is contiguous to the North Area and Calabasas and therefore a natural and important part of the Santa Monica Mountains COI.

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Districts

Encompassed in the Third District as we currently are, has been very beneficial for our Santa Monica Mountains COI and we would ideally prefer the boundaries of the Third to remain relatively the same.

Continuing to incorporate the COI in a District with other Santa Monica Mountain communities along the coast (i.e. Pacific Palisades) and inland by simply following the Santa Monica Mountains eastward as the Third District currently does/encompasses makes sense since we share many of the same issues -- including *wildfire connectivity* -- and communities are nestled in canyons and on hillsides. Communities like Woodland Hills, Encino, Tarzana, Sherman Oaks, Brentwood, Bel Air, etc.

When a wildfire starts in the Brentwood portion of the mountains as it previously has for example, concerns are always that it will burn westward toward the sea, along and through the mountains to Topanga and thus into the SMMNRA.

Sincerely,
Kim Lamorie
President
Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation, Inc., of the Santa Monica Mountains.