

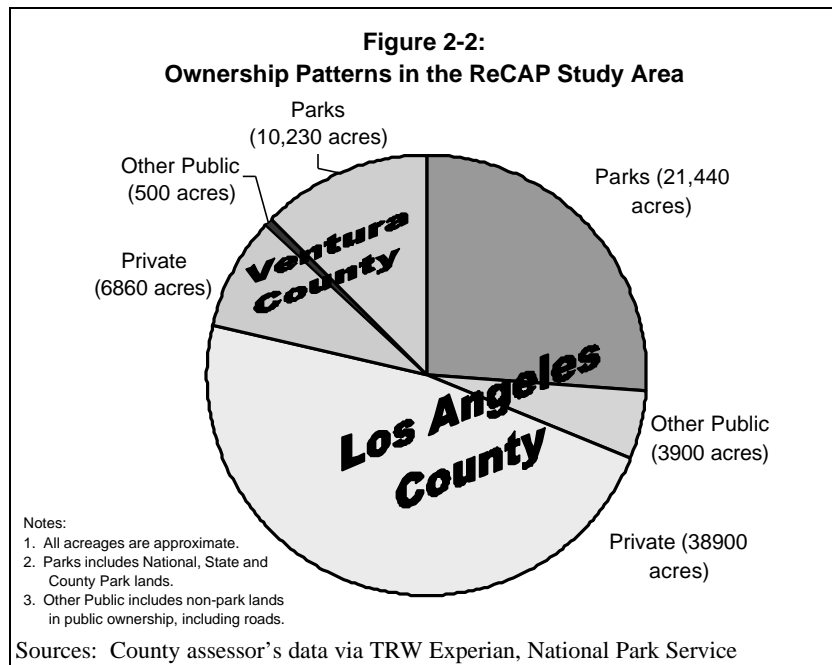
Chapter 2: Regional Overview

The Santa Monica Mountains/Malibu area is located west of Los Angeles along California’s southern coast. The Santa Monica Mountains are part of the Transverse Ranges, the only east-west belt of mountains in California, and extend from the Oxnard Plain east to the Los Angeles River. A coastal terrace of varying width extends from the base of the mountains to the sea. The Santa Monica Mountains support a Mediterranean ecosystem that is found in only four other areas of the world. This ecosystem comprises 26 distinct natural communities, including wetlands, riparian, oak woodlands and savannas, coastal sage scrub, and chaparral. Hundreds of identified archaeological sites are found in the Santa Monica Mountains. A wide variety of recreational opportunities exist in the area including picnicking, hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, camping, fishing, nature study, surfing and swimming. The beaches of Malibu are world-famous tourist destinations for millions of visitors annually. Malibu and the Santa Monica Mountains have long formed a backdrop for films and television, epitomizing the California beach lifestyle.

The ReCAP study area is defined by the coastal zone extending from the edge of the Calleguas Creek watershed in Ventura County to the City of Los Angeles boundary (see Figure 2-1, next page). The project area comprises approximately 81,850 acres of land, 44% of which is publicly owned (Figure 2-2). The coastline of the project area consists of 32 miles of

bluffs, sandy beaches, and rocky intertidal areas, and encompasses public parks and beaches as well as areas of private development. Much of the private development along the shore is protected by seawalls or other types of shoreline armoring. The mountainous portion of the ReCAP study area includes public

parkland, areas of relatively low-density, rural development, and a number of “rural village” areas with clusters of small lots. The density and intensity of development



generally increases from west to east as one travels from the more rural Ventura County area across Malibu toward Los Angeles.

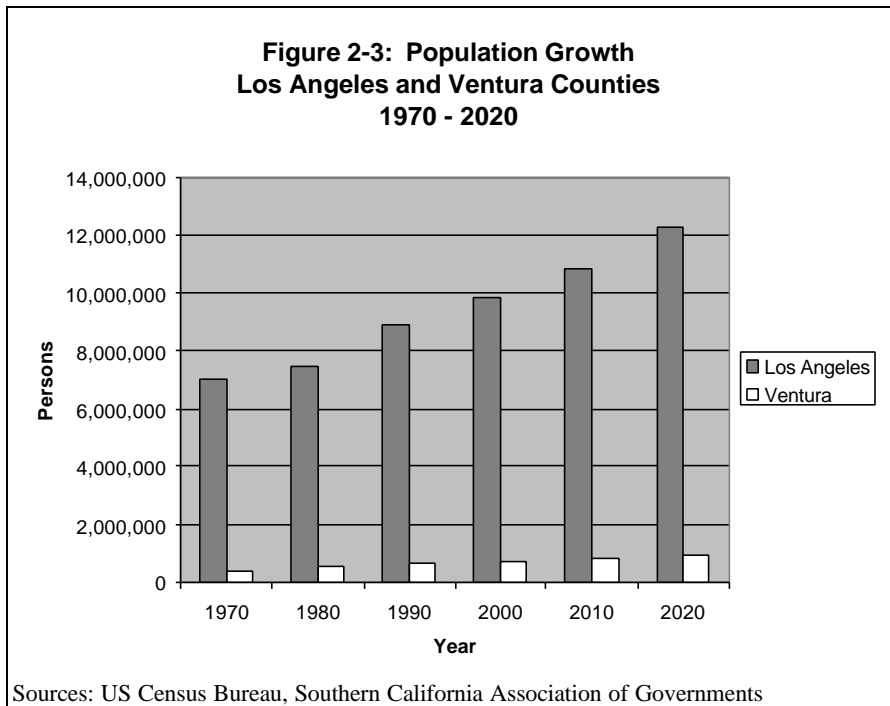
POPULATION

In analyzing the population changes affecting the project area, it would be useful to analyze both the population trends within the coastal zone and those of the region as a whole. However, data available from the U.S. Census Bureau and other sources are not organized in a way that makes it possible to capture just the population within the coastal zone. Therefore, this analysis primarily uses the figures available for Los Angeles and Ventura County which contains significantly more area than the ReCAP study area. In the case of Los Angeles County, the coastal areas constitute a small percentage of the overall area contained within the county which extends north to the Antelope Valley and east to Pomona. In the case of Ventura County, most of the existing development is located on the coastal plain, with a few population centers in the mountains to the north. A large percentage of Ventura County within the study area is contained within a national forest. Nonetheless, the County population figures are representative of increased population pressure in the surrounding area which translate to increased development pressure and demand for coastal access and recreation within the project area.

As Figure 2-3 shows, there has been significant population increase over the project period, particularly in Los Angeles County. While Ventura County experienced a higher percent of change in population from 1970 to 1990 (77%), Los Angeles County had a much higher existing population base, resulting in a much higher numeric increase (1.8 million) over the period.

Projections of future population growth indicate that Los Angeles County is expected to maintain about the same rate of increase (25% change from 1970 to 1990, and 23% change expected from 1990 to 2010). If this projection holds true, the population of L.A. County will grow

by almost 2 million people from 1990 to 2010. Ventura County growth is projected to be at a much lower rate of increase (77% change from 1970 to 1990, and 20% change from 1990 to 2010). If this projection holds true, just over 135,000 people would be added to



the County's population from 1990 to 2010. Such ongoing population growth will increase the regional need for housing, jobs, roads, services, infrastructure, water, parks and recreational areas. Within this context, the Malibu/Santa Monica Mountains area will continue to provide recreational opportunities not only for local and regional visitors, but also for state, national, and international visitors.

LAND USE PLANNING AND REGULATORY AUTHORITIES

There are three local governments that have jurisdiction over development within the ReCAP area: the County of Ventura, the County of Los Angeles and the City of Malibu.

The County of Ventura has jurisdiction over the eastern portion of the ReCAP area. In October 1983, Ventura County's LCP was effectively certified and the County assumed permit-issuing authority. Since that time, the Commission has approved 19 amendments (9 major, 9 minor, and 1 de minimis) to the certified LCP (for the entire Ventura County area, including the ReCAP area).

The Malibu/Santa Monica Mountains area is one of five segments making up the County of Los Angeles Coastal Zone.¹ The County originally submitted the Malibu/Santa Monica Mountains Land Use Plan (LUP) in December 1982. The LUP was resubmitted twice following Commission actions to deny the LUP as submitted and adopt suggested modifications. The Commission certified the revised LUP as re-submitted on December 11, 1986. The County of Los Angeles has submitted only two amendment requests to the certified LUP.² To date, no Implementation Plan for the Malibu/Santa Monica Mountains segment has been submitted, so the County has never been granted coastal development permit authority.

From the time of certification of the LUP until 1991, the coastal zone in the County of Los Angeles included both the coastal terrace and the mountain areas. Although not legally bound by the LUP, the Commission used the LUP as guidance when making coastal development permit decisions for this entire area. In 1991, the City of Malibu was incorporated, generally covering the coastal terrace portion of the area previously included in the Malibu/Santa Monica Mountains LUP. The City has adopted a General Plan and completed part of the Issue Identification phase of LCP planning. Because L.A. County's LUP represented the Commission's determination of appropriate policies at the time of certification in 1986, the Commission still consults the LUP for guidance when reviewing permit applications within and outside of the City of Malibu.

The Commission recently approved an LCP planning grant for the County of Los Angeles to fund the first phase of a two-phase completion of the LCP for the area remaining in its jurisdiction. The first phase will consist of updating the LUP to reflect

¹ The other segments are Marina del Rey, Playa Vista "A", Santa Catalina Island, and Los Cerritos Wetland.

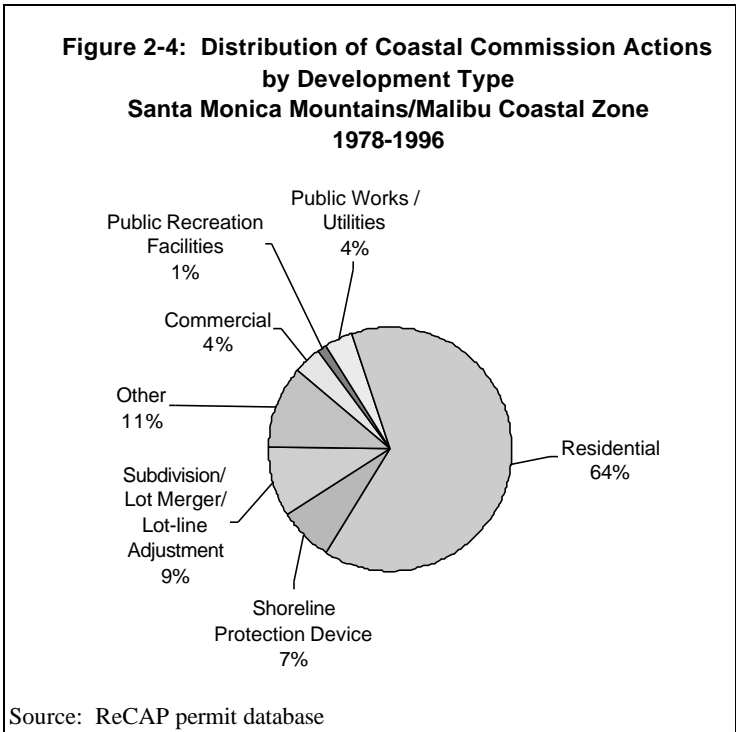
² The County withdrew Amendment 1-91 prior to consideration by the Commission. Amendment 1-97 was approved in 1997 for the Soka University property.

the changed circumstances of city incorporation and the second phase will be the development of implementing ordinances. A grant application for the City of Malibu to develop an LCP is pending before the Commission.

REGULATORY OVERVIEW/PROJECTIONS

ReCAP’s analysis of permit records for the period from 1978 through 1996 indicates that the Commission acted on approximately 4,360 coastal permit applications within the project area.³ An additional 792 items⁴ were reviewed by the County of Ventura under its LCP from 1983 to 1996. The Commission approved almost 90 percent of all actions considered, most as conditional approvals. The projects reviewed included new residences, new commercial or office uses, subdivisions, lot line adjustments, private and public recreation improvements, shoreline protective devices, and additions/remodels of existing development.

Sixty-four percent of the Commission’s permit actions were for residential uses, by far the greatest number for any category (see Figure 2-4). The Commission approved the creation of 943 new parcels through subdivision and the development of 2,686 new residences within the project area. Another 15 lots were legalized by the Commission through the review of the issuance of certificates of compliance. Ventura County approved the creation of 11 lots and 145 new residences in post-certification permits, and legalized an additional 29 lots through certificates of compliance. Fifty-four percent of the new parcels and thirty-four percent of the new residences were approved in or near existing developed areas on the coastal terrace.⁵ The remaining percentages of new parcels and residences were located in mountain or canyon areas outside the terrace.



³ This includes actions within the Ventura County portion of the study area prior to certification of the Ventura County LCP in 1983. The number does not include waivers, exemptions, permit extensions, applications withdrawn or returned as incomplete, and a few other categories. See Technical Appendix for further details of what was included in the ReCAP permit database.

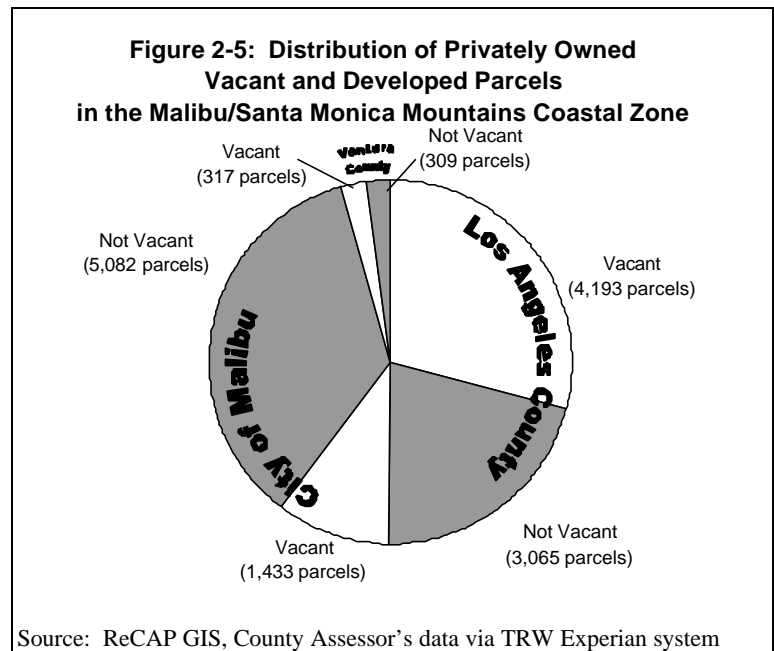
⁴ This number overstates the amount of physical development proposed in the Ventura County portion of the ReCAP study area because it includes items such as temporary filming permits. In addition, the County issues more than one type of permit for a given project.

⁵ These areas were mapped for illustrative purposes in the Commission’s 1981 District Interpretive Guidelines for the Malibu-Santa Monica Mountains and included in the L.A. County LUP. Figure 3-1 in

Utilizing a Geographic Information System (GIS) constructed for the project area, ReCAP staff evaluated existing patterns of development and assessed future development potential based on current land use plans for the region.⁶ ReCAP found that:

- If future development occurred to the maximum densities shown on current land use plans, the result would be nearly a doubling of the number of residential units, from approximately 9,400 existing units to almost 17,400.
- More than 5,600 privately owned vacant parcels exist in the ReCAP area, the vast majority of which are located in the mountainous unincorporated section of Los Angeles County (see Figure 2-5).
- Under current land use plan densities, a total of 941 existing lots are of a size that could potentially be subdivided, creating a total of 3,380 new parcels.
- Second units and legalization of previously created but unrecorded lots could add hundreds of additional units.
- In general, parcels available for future development have significantly greater constraints -- such as steep slopes and sensitive resources -- than do the parcels where the Commission has previously approved development.

A Geographic Information System (GIS) is a computer system capable of assembling, storing, manipulating, and displaying geographically referenced information. A GIS allows analysis of spatial relationships between many different types of features based on their location in the landscape. For example, using parcel boundaries and topography, a GIS can be used to calculate slopes and then display parcels with slopes greater than 25%.



These findings are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 of this report.

The amount of potential future development, coupled with topographic, infrastructure and resource constraints, suggest that there is a potential for significant cumulative impacts from new development in the Malibu/Santa Monica Mountains area. This report presents

Chapter 3 of this report shows the location of these mapped areas. For a more detailed discussion of Existing Developed Areas, see Chapter 3.

⁶ Ventura County's LCP, the City of Malibu's General Plan zoning, and the L.A. County LUP for the portion of L.A. County outside the City of Malibu.

recommendations for program improvements to improve the management of potential cumulative impacts of future development in the Malibu ReCAP area.