

# SCOPE

**Santa Clarita Organization for Planning and the Environment**

TO PROMOTE, PROTECT AND PRESERVE THE ENVIRONMENT, ECOLOGY  
AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE SANTA CLARITA VALLEY

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March 20, 2015

Mayor Michael D. Antonovich, Chair  
and Honorable Supervisors  
Board of Supervisors, Los Angeles County  
500 W. Temple St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**RE: General Plan Update, Item 4, Public Hearing on March 24<sup>th</sup>**

*Please Copy to All Supervisors*

Honorable Supervisors:

SCOPE is a 28 year old organization founded to promote, protect and preserve the environment, ecology and quality of life in the Santa Clarita Valley. Of course that quality of life depends to a large extent on land use decisions made throughout Los Angeles County. We have asserted for several years now that we cannot address climate change or water shortages without changing our land use patterns to ensure efficient transportation options and protection of ground water resources. We therefore make comments to this plan even though the update for the Santa Clarita Area was completed in 2012.

We begin by asking that this approval be delayed until the newly elected supervisors and their staff have an adequate time to fully apprise themselves of the full ramifications of the changes proposed for this plan. This is the first major update that has occurred since the 1980s and it must appropriately address the major challenges of water supply and climate change before us today

## **We Urge that the County NOT Eliminate the Development Monitoring System**

County Urban Expansion Areas are currently subject to the County's Development Monitoring System (DMS). The DMS is a General Plan Amendment (SP 86-173) that was authorized by the Board of Supervisors on April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1987 and included in the General Plan as the "Technical Supplement". The DMS came into existence as a settlement agreement to resolve public interest litigation brought by the Center for Law and the Public Interest over the proposed increase in population projections in the 1987 General Plan.

This litigation was brought on behalf of the public under a situation exactly similar to the one we have today, i.e., the County was proposing a huge increase in the population projection based on SCAG and the Dept. of Finance. This increase has been inaccurate, overstated and self serving in past plans.<sup>1</sup> The population projection will then enable extensive additional housing approvals

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the Santa Clarita OVOV Plan - Even with the rapid growth that occurred prior to the housing downturn, we have not reached even the 270,000 predicted in the last general plan update of 1993, far less the 500,000 that SCAG began pushing in 1996. Estimates for current population in the SCV are around 252,000 (Draft

without sufficient infrastructure to support them, because the “Plan” will project inadequate housing for this enormous increase. Without an established review and analysis process infrastructure, including schools, fire service, roads, sewers, water supply and libraries to support this enormous increase will be insufficient, especially in urban expansion areas.

Developed with the overview of James Kushner acting as Court referee, the DMS aimed to address these infrastructure needs. In an article written by Mr. Kushner, he stated:

“The Los Angeles County Development Monitoring System (DMS) utilizes computer technology to determine capital facility supply capacity and demand placed upon that system by each approved and proposed development. The computer warns decision-makers when demand exceeds capacity and instructs planners on system capacity expansion to meet projected demand.”<sup>2</sup>

In other words, if there aren't enough school classrooms to serve the new development, the project must be downsized, delayed or denied until there are. This also goes for sewer capacity, library facilities, water, roads and fire service. For some reason, sheriff's services were left out. SCOPE believes the County should take this opportunity to up date the DMS to include the sufficiency of sheriff services for new developments.

The Development Monitoring System provided a means of analyzing pending and approved projects that are already in the planning pipeline to ensure that cumulatively they do not out strip infrastructure. If adequate infrastructure does not exist in any of the areas required for review by the DMS, the project must mitigate (build the infrastructure), downsize to existing infrastructure or delay the project until adequate infrastructure can be built.

**This amendment has been an important means of ensuring adequate libraries and reading materials, fire stations that are located close enough to fire hazard areas to ensure a fast response time, etc.**

While the planning department insists that these requirements are fulfilled by CEQA and other requirements, we do not believe that is the case. CEQA review does not require a list of pending and approved, but unbuilt projects with an analysis of the adequacy of infrastructure. Only the Development Monitoring System – proposed for elimination, does this.

**Elimination of the DMS in urban expansion areas would therefore create a failure to fully inform decision makers as to the extent of needed infrastructure as they consider development approvals. Such a failure at a time when urban sprawl is adding to green house gases and inefficient water use during a prolonged drought should not be allowed.**

Elimination of the DMS requirement clearly benefits at least one large developer and one project in particular, i.e., Newhall Land and Development Co. and their 21,000 unit Newhall Ranch project. That is because litigation on the Specific Plan resolved the questions related to

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OVOV Plan, page 3.19-1). The City of Santa Clarita states that the growth rate between 2000 and 2008 was just over 17% or slightly over 2% a year<sup>1</sup>, again, not anywhere near the projected growth rate that would put us over the 500,000 population figure projected by our new “One Valley One Vision”

<sup>2</sup> “Zoning and Planning Law Report”, May 1988

compliance with the DMS by stating that each tract will be evaluated for DMS compliance at the tract map stage.<sup>3</sup>

**Remedy - We therefore urge the Supervisors to delay approval of the new General Plan until the DMS is re-instated into that Plan.**

### **Water Supply Planning and Disclosure is Inadequate**

In *Vineyard Area Citizens for Responsible Growth, Inc., v. City of Rancho Cordova* (53 Cal. Rptr. 3rd. 821; February 1, 2007), the California Supreme Court articulated the following principles for analysis of future water supplies for projects subject to CEQA: To meet CEQA's informational purposes, the EIR must present sufficient facts to decision makers to evaluate the pros and cons of supplying the necessary amount of water to the project.

CEQA analysis cannot rely on "paper water." The EIR must discuss why the identified water should reasonably be expected to be available. Future water supplies must be likely, rather than speculative.

We assert that the General Plan has not met the above criteria for water supply analysis in this Plan. In the midst of the worst drought in California history where recent reports from NASA satellites indicate severe over-pumping of ground water throughout the state and predict that California may have as little as one year of water supply left<sup>4</sup>, the General Plan EIR finds absurdly that "Adequate water supplies have been identified in the UWMP's for the Project Area for demand as projected through the year 2035."<sup>5</sup> The Plan relies on these UWPMs even though they were last updated in 2010 in a time of more plentiful rainfall. Obviously a state that may run out of water in as little as a year does not have adequate supplies to 2035.

According to the DEIR, the General Plan build out would require 157,553,656 more gallons per day. That water is currently not available today. **We ask how this plan can legally be approved without a water supply.**

The General Plan makes several mitigation proposals to reduce hardscape and allow absorption of first flow run off. But even more important would be to ensure that re-charge areas are mapped throughout the County and that building in those zones is highly regulated or not allowed. In the end, it is more important to have a water supply for the people of Los Angeles than some new shopping mall.

**Remedy – provide extensive mapping of ground water recharge areas within Los Angeles County, include this map in the General Plan and restrict hardscape in those areas.**

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<sup>3</sup> Statement of Decision of Judge Roger Randall, Kern Case 238324-RDR, 2000, Page 32

<sup>4</sup> "California has about one year of water left", Los Angeles Times, Jay Famiglietti, March 19, 2015  
<http://touch.latimes.com/#section/-1/article/p2p-83043355/>

<sup>5</sup> General Plan DEIR, Page 5.17-50

**Conclusion**

We therefore ask again that you continue this hearing until such time that these matters are fully investigated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lynne Plambeck".

Lynne Plambeck  
President