

# Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Corridor Ordinance Summary

Presented to Bell Canyon Home Owners Association

Ventura County Planning Division

May 15, 2019

# Project Components

- **Adoption of Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Corridor map**
- **Adoption of three Critical Wildlife Passage Area maps**
- **Regulations added to the Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance (NCZO)**
  - **Lighting**
  - **Fencing**
  - **Surface Water Feature buffers**
  - **Invasive Plant Prohibition**
  - **Compact Siting in CWPAs**
  - **Rebuilding After Fire**
  - **Wildlife Crossing Structure buffers – Not applicable in Bell Canyon**

# Overview

## What the Ordinance Does:

- Limits on outdoor night lighting.
- Limits disturbance around surface water features and important road crossings.
- Limits the amount of impermeable fencing.
- Encourages compact siting of structures in 3 locations within the Corridor.
- Prohibits intentional planting of invasive plants.

## What the Ordinance Doesn't Do:

- It does not prohibit you from clearing vegetation for fire protection.
- It does not require you to remove any existing structures.
- It does not prohibit use of lights for security.
- It does not prohibit development on your property.
- It does not require you to give up half your property.

# Rebuilding After Fire or other disaster

**The ordinance allows for rebuilding structures and fences after fire.**  
(Sec. 8109-4.8.3.2[d and e])

## **Thomas Fire and Woolsey-Hill Fire Areas**

- Structures may be rebuilt to their original state if a complete building permit application is submitted to the Building and Safety Division within five years and the building permit is complete prior to permit expiration. If this deadline is not met, Corridor regulations apply. This standard is based on the existing language in the NCZO.

## **For structures and fences involuntarily destroyed by fire (and other natural disasters)**

- Owners may rebuild to original state if a complete building permit application is submitted to the Building and Safety Division within 12 months after the occurrence of the damage or destruction, and building permit is diligently pursued to completion prior to permit expiration. If this deadline is not met, Corridor regulations apply. This standard is based on the existing language in the NCZO.

# Fuel Modification for Fire Protection

## Section 8109-4.8.3.2 – General Exemptions

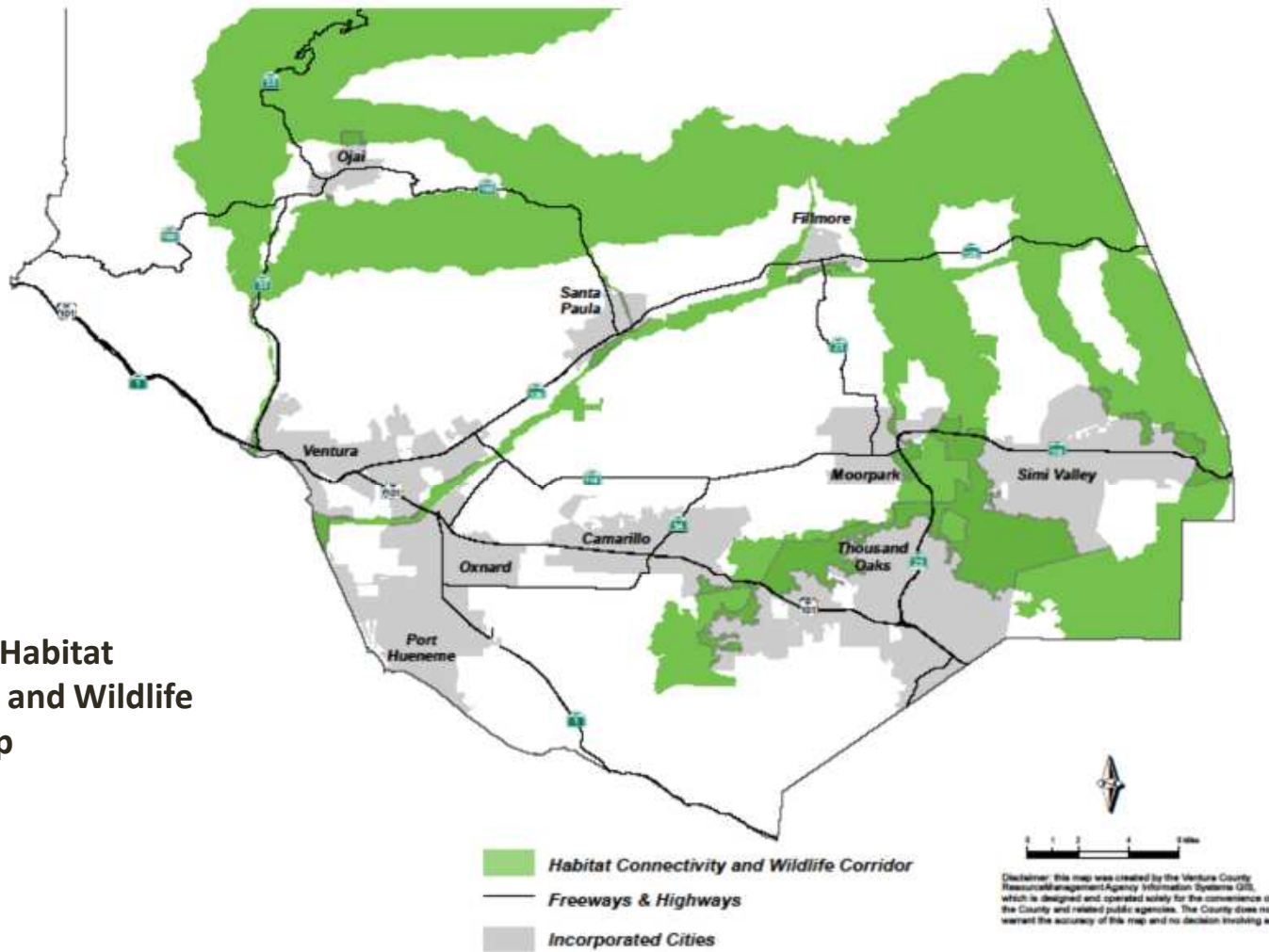
k. *Vegetation modification* including *fuel modification* in accordance with one or more of the following:

- (1) **performed with hand-operated tools and without heavy equipment** (i.e., heavy-duty vehicles designed for performing construction tasks such as earthwork operations), as otherwise authorized under Sec. 8107-25 (Tree Protection Regulations), federal and state law;
- (2) **as required by the Ventura County Fire Protection District (VCFPD) pursuant to VCFPD Ordinance 30, as may be amended;**
- (3) pursuant to a **Community Wildfire Protection Plan** or similar *fuel modification*/wildfire protection plan adopted and/or amended by VCFPD; or
- (4) pursuant to a **burn permit approved by VCFPD.**

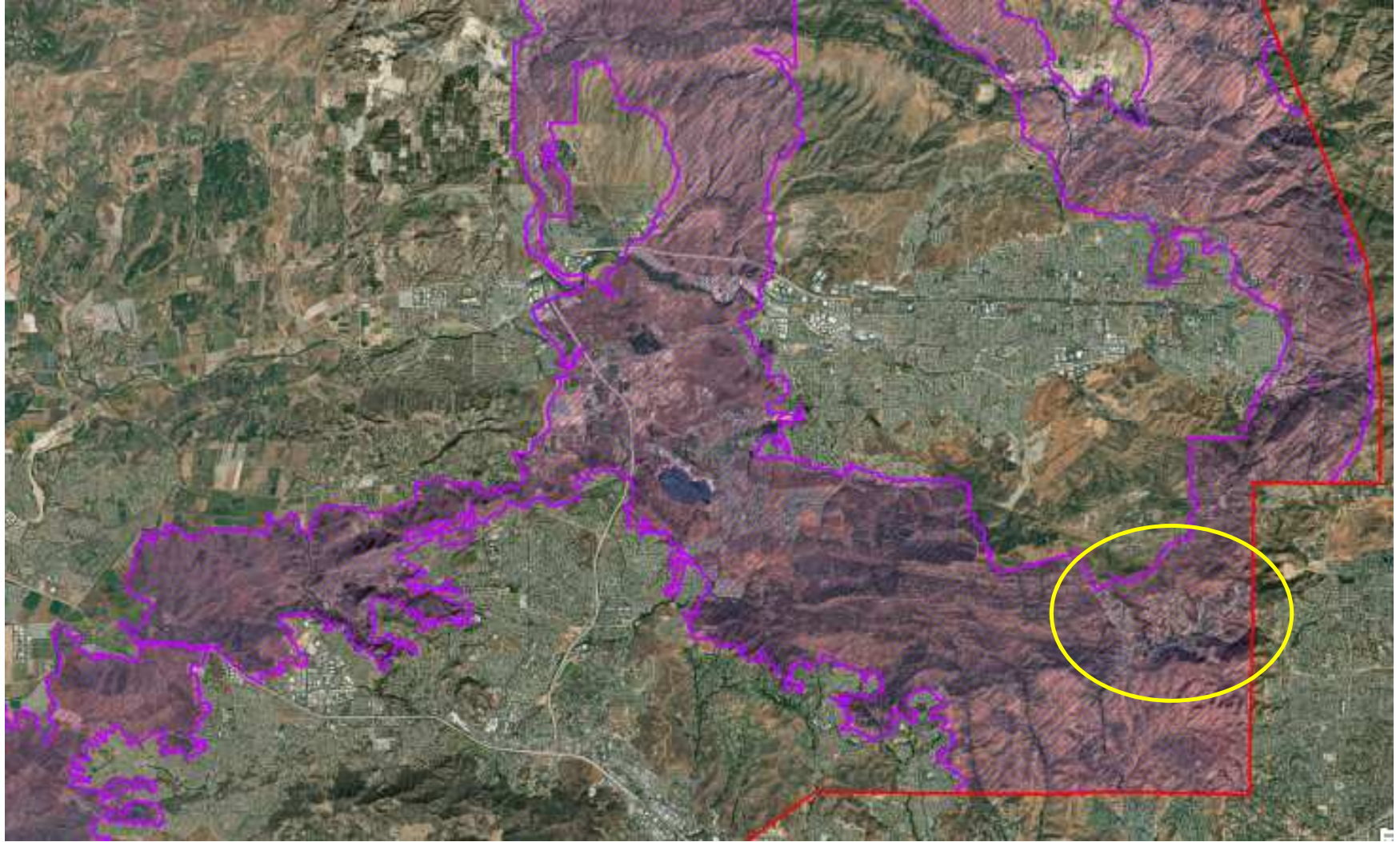
## Fuel Modification and Fire Protection

- Property owners can conduct vegetation and fuel modification within surface water features using hand-operated tools. No permit or approval is required from either Ventura County Fire Protection District or Planning Division for property owners to do so.
- Ordinance does not require a permit for property owners to comply with the Fire District's 100-ft. fuel clearance requirement.

## Countywide Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Corridor Map



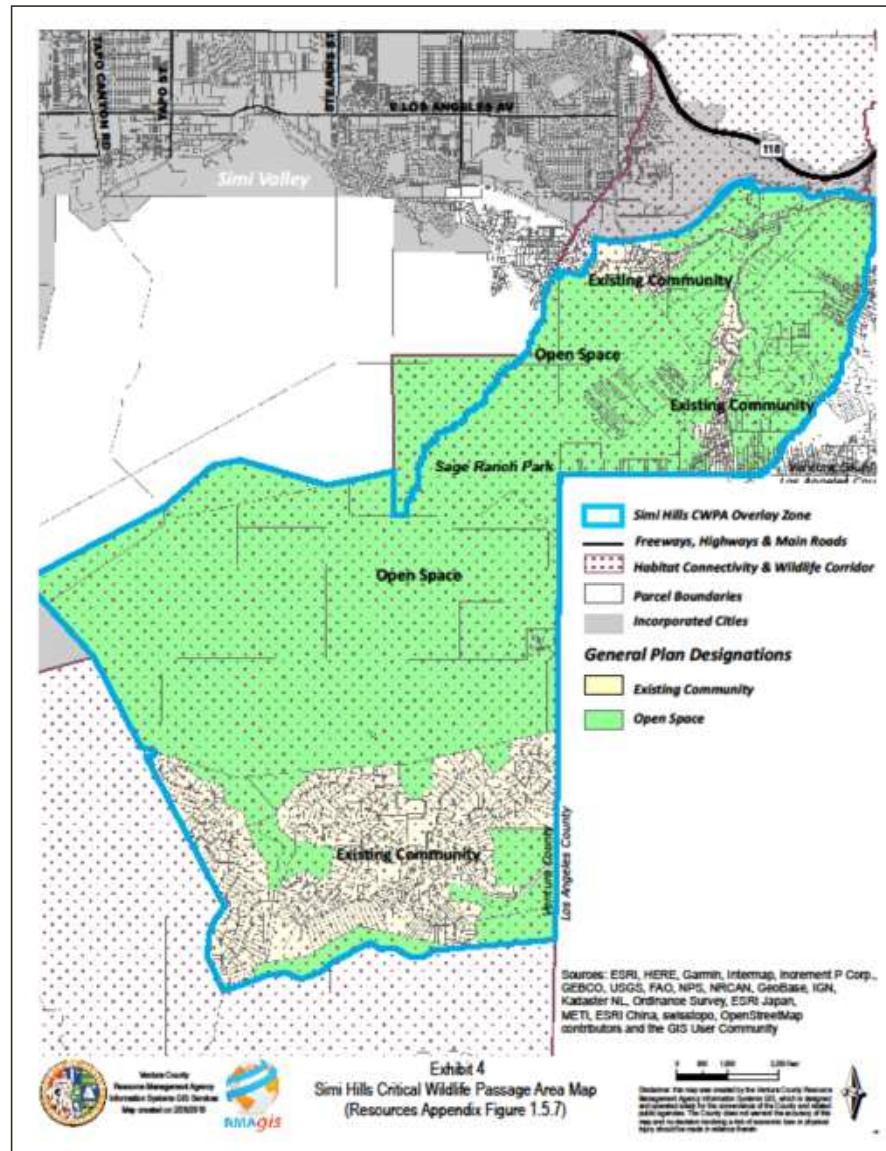


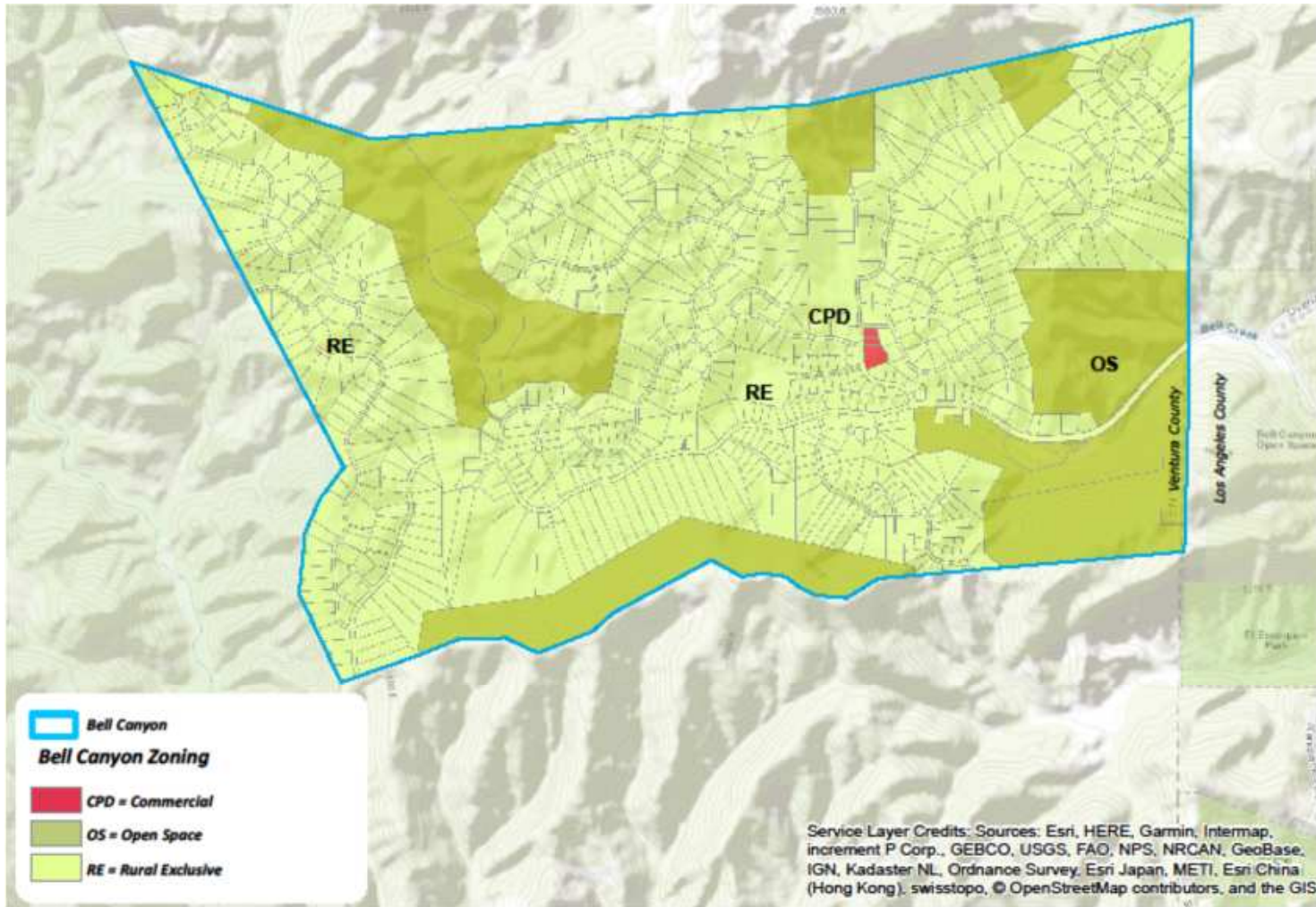




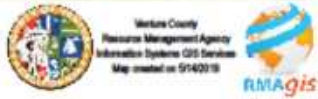
# Simi Hills

## Critical Wildlife Passage Area (CWPA)





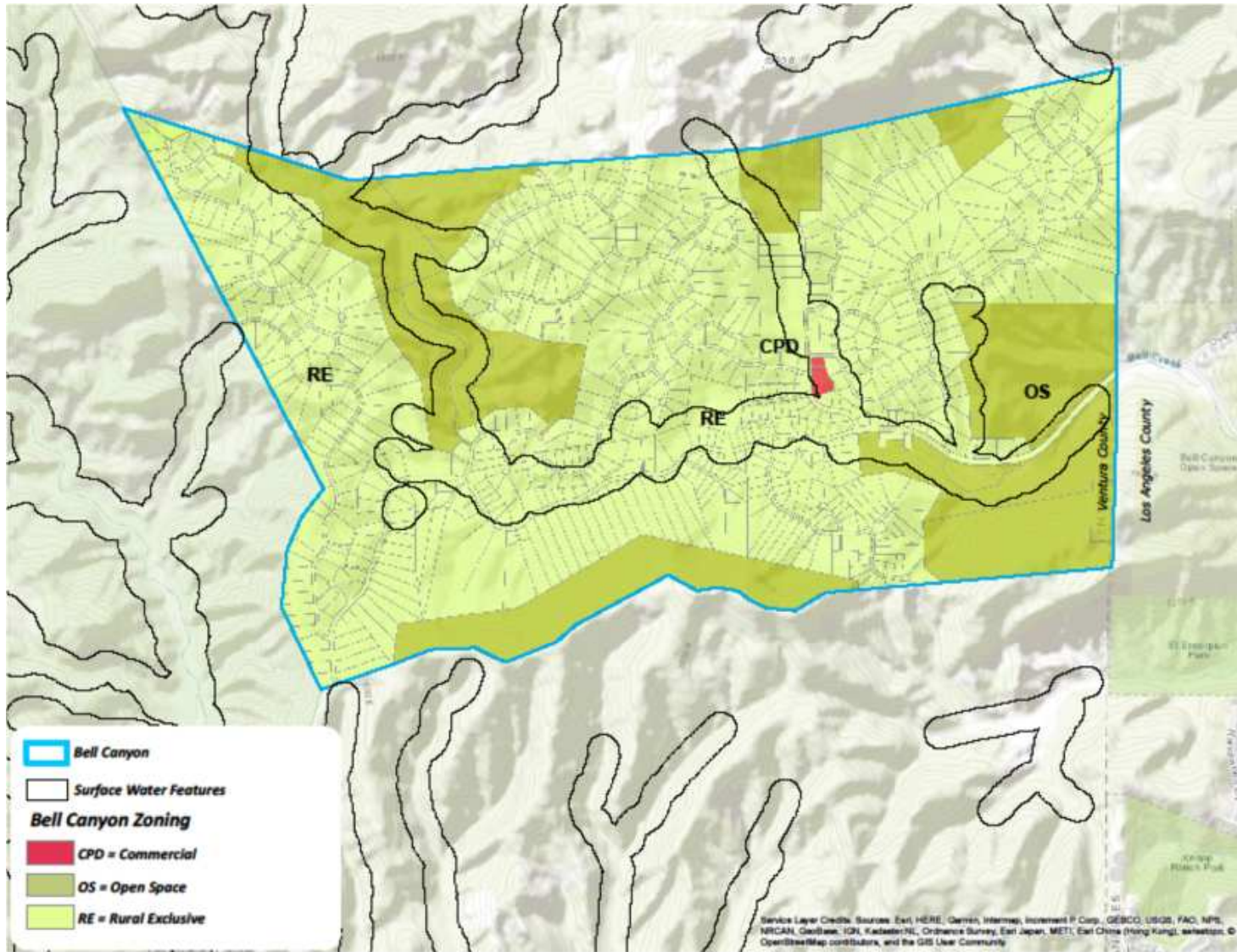
Bell Canyon Zoning



0 500 1000

Disclaimer: This map was created by the Ventura County Resource Management Agency Information Systems GIS, which is designed and covered solely by the convenience of the County and without public approval. The County does not warrant the accuracy of this map and no decision involving a risk of economic loss or physical injury should be made in reliance thereon.





How does the Ordinance impact you?

Lots within the Residential Zone and *not within a Surface Water Feature*

- **Lighting**
  - Can keep existing lighting. As fixtures and bulbs are changed, or new fixtures are added: comply with the ordinance.
  - Can have tennis courts lit until people are no longer playing.
  - Can use security lights.
- **Landscaping with invasive plants is not allowed**
- **For these lots, ordinance does not regulate:**
  - Vegetation modification
  - New development (new structures or additions)
  - Fencing

How does the Ordinance impact you?

Lots within the Residential Zone and *within a Surface Water Feature*

- Lighting / Planting of invasive plants prohibited
- **New development (+120 sq. ft.) requires a discretionary permit**
- **Additions to existing structures require a discretionary permit if additional fuel modification is required by Fire Protection District**
- **Removal of invasive plants can be conducted with a ministerial permit**
- **Exemptions:**
  - Vegetation modification performed with hand-operated tools, such as weed whackers
  - Annual vegetation modification performed on up to 10% of the area of the lot that is within the Surface Water Feature
  - Swimming pool installations if “substantially underground”

How does the Ordinance impact you?

**Lots within the Open Space Zone and *not within a Surface Water Feature***

- Lighting
- Landscaping with invasive plants is not allowed
- **Fencing**
- **Compact siting requirements (clustered development)**

How does the Ordinance impact you?

Lots within the Open Space Zone and *within* a Surface Water Feature

- Lighting / Planting of invasive plants prohibited
- Fencing
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# Lighting

## General Regulatory Approach:

- Shield, direct downward and away from natural areas
- Limit brightness
- Limit fixture heights
- Require “warmer” color lights



Fully Shielded



Porch lights and under-eave lights may be partially shielded



# Lighting

## Exemptions

- Seasonal and festive lights
- Lights installed in a swimming pool
- Public/private street lighting – including medians
- Lighting that is 60 lumens or less

## Tennis Court lighting

Installed in accordance with the standards established by the Engineering Society of North America - Lighting Handbook

Lighting standards can differ from the lighting standards used for other uses, (brighter, partially shielded, lights can remain on to complete play)



*Unshielded / Shielded baseball field*

# Lighting



- **Essential Lighting**
  - Can remain on at all times (if 850 lumens or less).
  - Brighter security lighting is allowed if used with motion sensors.
  - Light color can be increased if necessary for proper functioning of security camera.
  - Security lighting controlled by motion sensors or dimmers is a better deterrent to crime than lighting that is left on.
  - Lighting that is fully-shielded reduces glare, which is more appropriate for security lighting.
- **Essential Luminaires:** *A luminaire that is used for safety purposes, for security lighting, to illuminate a circulation area such as a walkway or driveway, or to illuminate a building entrance.*

# Lighting

## General Regulatory Approach:

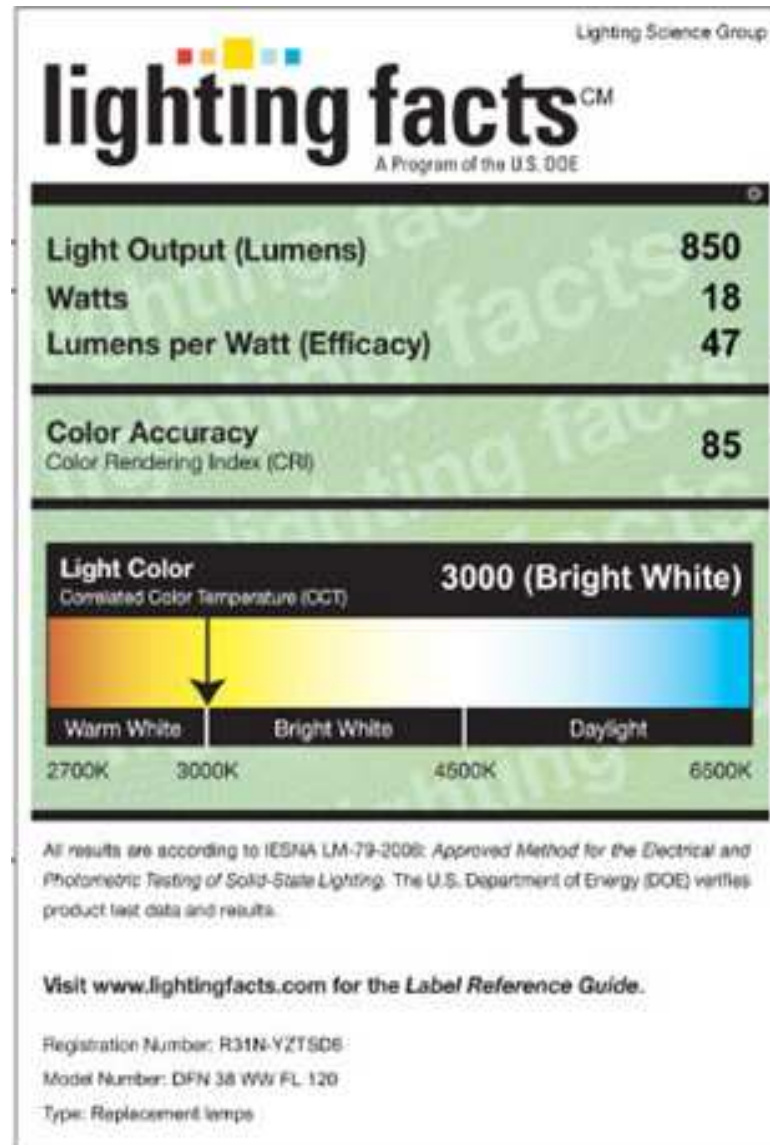
Shield, direct downward and away from natural areas

Limit brightness

Limit fixture heights

Require “warmer” color lights

Night lighting for enclosed agricultural operations



# Lighting

Type of Lighting	Timing	Notes
<b>Newly-installed or replacement lighting</b>	Compliance required by May 18, 2019	
<b>Existing lighting</b> (not otherwise prohibited or permitted as part of a discretionary permit)	May remain in place; but must comply with certain standards as noted May 18, 2020.	Non-conforming lighting (not considered “essential”) turned off betw. 10 p.m. and sunrise, or when people are no longer present. All lighting should be directed downward, if possible.
<b>Existing lighting</b> (approved and installed as part of active discretionary permit)	At least three years after ordinance effective date	Non-conforming lighting must be modified or replaced on approval of a minor or major permit modification. Replacement lighting may be phased in within a reasonable time after the three-year period.
<b>Existing Prohibited Lighting</b>	Must comply with noted standard by May 18, 2020.	Existing aesthetic uplighting can be used but must be off after 10 p.m. or when people are not present.

# Fencing

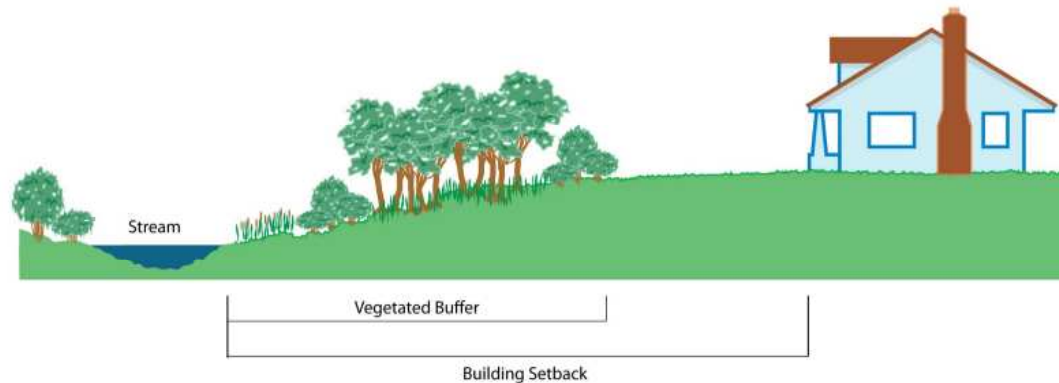
Applies only to parcels zoned “Agricultural-Exclusive” or “Open Space”

Majority of parcels in Bell Canyon are exempt from fencing regulations

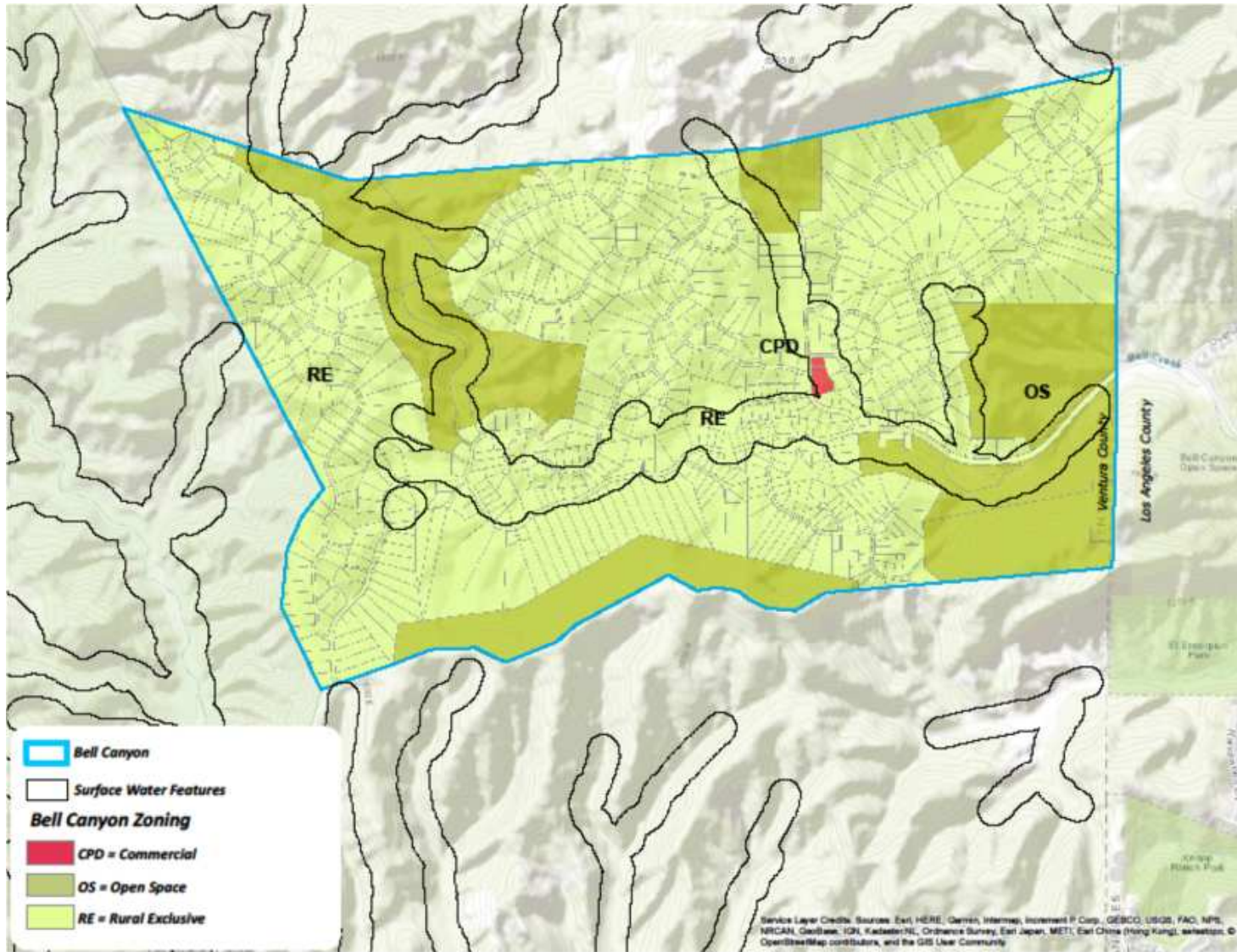
Perimeter fence design currently required by the Bell Canyon architectural standards is not regulated – considered “wildlife permeable”

# Surface Water Feature (SWF)

- Provide areas for breeding, feeding, moving through a landscape, shelter, and rest.
- Surface water features include drainages that are dry most of the year. (“Ephemeral”)
- Local research shows they are especially important for post-fire survival.







## Surface Water Features



- Establish a 200-foot wide buffer around surface water features (SWF)
- Require a Planning Director-approved permit for new development and vegetation modification within the buffer area
- Limited vegetation modification allowed annually and is exempt (10% of land within SWF)
- Remove invasive plants with a zoning clearance
- Allow “reconsideration” of SWF by Planning Director

**Ordinance allows property owners to conduct vegetation and fuel modification within surface water features using hand-operated tools (e.g., weed whacker). No permit or approval is required from either Ventura County Fire Protection District or Planning Division for property owners to do so. (Sec. 8109-4.8.3.2(k))**

# Surface Water Feature Exemptions

## Exemptions

- Structures, wildlife impermeable fencing or improvements that are temporary, or are located entirely or substantially underground (e.g., cables, swimming pools)
- Modification of intentionally planted landscaping.
- Vegetation modification of 10% or less of the area of the lot that within a 12-month period.
- Vegetation modification conducted on land owned or maintained by a conservation organization for the purpose of maintaining or enhancing functional connectivity.
- Development within a public road right-of-way.
- Repair or maintenance of an existing, legally-established structure or fence.

## Invasive Plants



Pampas Grass

- Limit degradation of habitat by limiting the spread of invasive plants.
- Invasive plants can increase fire frequency, reduce habitat quality, clog creeks, outcompete natives for water.
- **Intentional planting of invasive plants is prohibited** unless planted as a commercial crop or grown as commercial nursery stock.
- Applies throughout the HCWC Overlay Zone, including Bell Canyon
- Based on California Invasive Plant Council Invasive Plant Checklist for California Landscaping.

## Critical Wildlife Passage Area (CWPA)

- **Only applies to Open Space lots 2 acres or larger.** Residential and commercial parcels are exempt from regulations.
- **Requires compact development**

Development must be sited within 100 feet of a legally established structure. If such development requires a zoning clearance, it will still require a zoning clearance under this ordinance.

If an applicant wants to develop beyond 100 feet, a discretionary permit would be required.

If lot is vacant, the principal structure/use can be sited anywhere on the lot with additional structures sited within 100 ft.

## Critical Wildlife Passage Area Factors

CWPA Factor	Description
Government Jurisdiction	CWPAs only located in unincorporated areas
Configuration of Protected Lands	Provide high quality habitat areas where wildlife moves
Proximity to, extent of urban development	Narrow areas near cities or urbanized development were generally considered higher priorities.
Habitat Value	Areas with intact native vegetation, and to a lesser extent any vegetative cover were considered higher priority
Proximity to Major Water Bodies or Water Courses	Areas between or among water courses were considered high priorities
Proximity to Roadway Crossings	Areas with functioning crossings were considered higher priorities
Existing Land Uses	Current land uses and their intensity of use were considered (e.g. grazing, mining, etc.)
Land Use/Zoning Designation	Allowed uses and minimum lot size were used as factors



# Wildlife Crossing Structures

Not applicable  
- None in Bell  
Canyon





# QUESTIONS ?



Images from the Bell Canyon Association Website

## Lighting

### General Regulatory Approach:

Shield, direct downward and away from natural areas

Limit brightness

Limit fixture heights

Require “warmer” color lights

Night lighting for enclosed agricultural operations

The infographic compares traditional incandescent bulbs and LED bulbs. It shows that for the same brightness (lumens), LEDs use significantly less energy (watts). A central lightbulb icon is positioned between the two columns of the table.

Traditional Bulb (10lm/watt)	LED Bulb (100lm/watt)
<b>40w</b> 0-450 lumens	<b>2-5w</b> 0-450 lumens
<b>60w</b> 500-850 lumens	<b>6-9w</b> 500-850 lumens
<b>75w</b> 900-1150 lumens	<b>11-14w</b> 900-1150 lumens
<b>100w</b> 1200-1650 lumens	<b>15-17w</b> 1200-1650 lumens

LEDs use significantly less watts (energy) to emit the same brightness (lumens) as your traditional incandescent bulb.



Security lighting – Motion sensors are required if brighter than 850 lumens.

## Lumens - Lighting Intensity

Max. 850 lumens, except:

- Security lighting (2,600 lumens)
- Outdoor recreational lighting (2,600 lumens)
- Walkway/Driveway (100 lumens)
- *Essential Luminaire* - Used for safety purposes, security lighting, to illuminate walkways, driveway, building entrance; Can remain on if used for circulation areas and building entrances.



All path lights shown are 90 lumens or less and cost less than \$30 each.



# Lighting

## General Regulatory Approach:

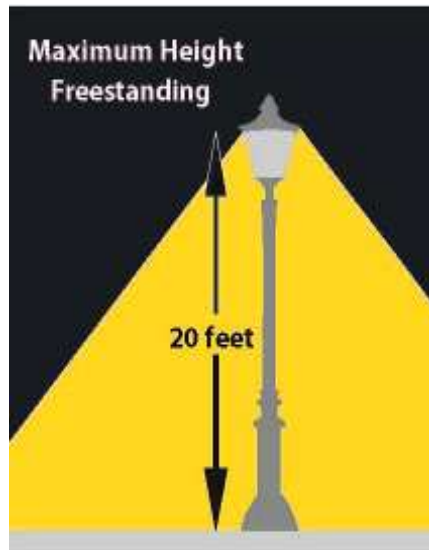
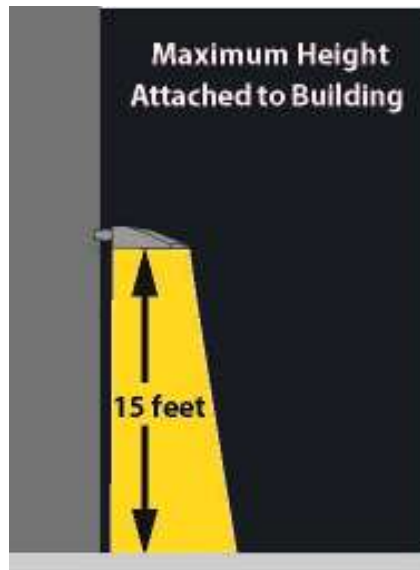
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## Maximum Height Allowance

Attached to -

Structures = 15 feet max.

Fences = no higher than height of fence

Freestanding –

For walkways, driveways, or hardscaping = 2 feet max.

All other freestanding = 20 feet max., unless specified by permit

# Surface Water Feature

## Mapping Methodology of Surface Water Feature (SWF)

- Based on the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), which provides detailed information on the abundance, characteristics, and distribution of wetlands and vegetation communities that support wetland habitats.
- Produced, maintained, and supported by the United States Fish & Wildlife Service and the Federal Geographic Data Committee, incorporates data from USGS/National Hydrography Dataset.
- NWI uses historic hard copy maps, aerial imagery, and deep water and wetland spatial data that are updated.
- Can now be accessed on County View GIS and on the Habitat Connectivity Webpage interactive map.



# Misconceptions

The surface water feature on my property shouldn't be included because it only has water in it when it rains. ("Ephemeral streams")

According to the U.S Environmental Protection Agency ephemeral streams:

- Make up over 81% of all streams in the arid and semi-arid Southwest (including CA).
- Can provide the same ecological and hydrological functions as perennial streams
- Reduce erosion and stabilize stream banks
- Improve water quality and water storage
- Aid in floodplain management
- Provide a wide array of ecological functions including forage, cover, nesting, and movement corridors for wildlife; used by less mobile species that cannot move over large distances.

(EPA/600/R-08/134 ARS/233046 November 2008)

## Fencing - Definition

**Wildlife Impermeable Fencing** – A *fence* or wall, other than a retaining wall, that prevents various species of wildlife including amphibians, reptiles, mammals, birds, from freely passing through with little or no interference. Except for gates and associated gate support components, all portions of a *fence* that include one or more of the following design features is considered *wildlife impermeable fencing*:

- 1) **Any *fence* that is higher than 60 inches above grade, inclusive of any wire strands placed above a top rail of a *fence*.**
- 2) **Electric *fences* comprised of any material or number of electrified strands.**
- 3) **Any *fence* that is constructed of wrought iron, plastic mesh, woven wire, razor wire, chain link or that consists entirely of a solid surface, such as cinderblock.**



# Fencing – General Standards

**Exempt** – Impermeable fence installed entirely within 50 ft. of legally established dwelling or structure related to an agricultural use.



- **Zoning Clearance** - Up to 10 percent of the cumulative area may be enclosed by impermeable fencing.
- Example: On a 40 -acre lot, up to four acres could be enclosed with impermeable fencing with a zoning clearance.
- **Discretionary Permit** – More than 10 percent of cumulative area enclosed by impermeable fence.