

# **AGENDA PLANNING & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**Regular Meeting  
Thursday, November 13, 2014  
9 A.M.**

**Laguna Woods City Hall  
Council Chambers  
24264 El Toro Road  
Laguna Woods, CA 92637**

**AGENDA DESCRIPTION:** The agenda descriptions are intended to give notice, to members of the public, of a general summary of items of business to be transacted or discussed. Any person wishing to address the Planning & Environmental Services Committee on any matter, whether or not it appears on this agenda, may do so under the appropriate section of the agenda. Whenever possible, lengthy testimony should be presented to the Committee in writing (12 copies) and only pertinent points presented orally. Requests to speak to items on the agenda shall be heard at the appropriate point on the agenda; requests to speak about subjects not on the agenda will be heard during the Public Comment section of the meeting.

## **I. CALL TO ORDER**

## **II. ROLL CALL**

## **III. COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

### **A. General Plan Conservation Element Update**

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Discuss and provide input.

## **IV. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**

## **V. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

## **VI. ADJOURN**

The next regular meeting of the Planning & Environmental Services Committee will be at 9 a.m. on December 11, 2014, at Laguna Woods City Hall, 24264 El Toro Road, Laguna Woods, CA 92637. Meetings may be cancelled due to a lack of agenda items.

**AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT:** In compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the City Clerk at (949) 639-0500 (Voice) or, TDD (949) 639-0535 or the California Relay Service at (800) 735-2929 if you have a TDD or (800) 735-2922 if you do not have a TDD. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting should enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to assure accessibility to the meeting.

**AGENDA:** The Planning & Environmental Services Committee agenda and agenda back-up materials are available from the Office of the City Clerk, after 4:30 p.m., on the Friday prior to the Planning & Environmental Services Committee meeting. The office of the City Clerk is located at Laguna Woods City Hall, 24264 El Toro Road, Laguna Woods, CA 92637. Copies of the agenda are provided at no cost. Agenda back-up materials are available at City Hall for inspection and copies are available at no charge prior to the meeting. A per page copy cost does apply after the meeting. If you wish to be added to the e-mail or regular mail list to receive a copy of the agenda, a request must be made to the City Clerk in writing. Copies of the agenda are mailed only if stamped, self-addressed envelopes are provided. The City of Laguna Woods mailing address is 24264 El Toro Road, Laguna Woods, CA 92637. Phone: (949) 639-0500, FAX (949) 639-0591.

I declare under penalty of perjury that I posted this notice of agenda at the locations designated by Resolution 02-33.

11-7-14

Date

Yolie Trippy, Deputy City Clerk

# PLANNING & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE RECAP

Thursday, October 9, 2014  
9:00 A.M.

Laguna Woods City Hall  
Council Chambers  
24264 El Toro Road  
Laguna Woods, CA 92637

## I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Schneider.

## II. ROLL CALL

**Present:** Ferguson, Hamm, Hatch, Holman, Joss, Schneider, Tso

**Absent:** Lo, Malone

## III. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

### A. El Toro Water District's Drought Response and Water Conservation Efforts

El Toro Water District (ETWD) Assistant General Manager and Chief Financial Officer Mike Grandy and ETWD Customer Service Manager Mike King reviewed and discussed issues pertaining to the ETWD's drought response and water conservation efforts.

Committee members asked questions and provided comments as follows:

- Member Holman – Confirmed that rebates for turf removal are available from the ETWD, financed by the Metropolitan Water District (MET).
- Member Hatch – Noted that invasive plants in the area use a lot of water and wondered if there is a way to remove them to save water.
- Member Tso – Noted that she had not noticed a difference in irrigation in Laguna Woods Village, and that the City and the rest of Southern California needs water from the Bay Delta. Mr. Grandy

explained that Laguna Woods Village has been granted a waiver on the limitation of irrigating only three days per week, and that the ETWD is a strong supporter of the Bay Delta Conservation Plan. City staff noted that the limit on the number of days for irrigation would fall to one day per week from November 1 through March 31, 2015, according to ETWD's Water Conservation & Water Supply Shortage Ordinance 2010-1.

- Member Ferguson – Asked about the MET's storage capacity and was told by Mr. Grandy that it has 2.7 million acre feet, but that it was expected to drop to 1.2 million acre feet by the end of 2014.
- Chair Schneider – Noted that water conservation and the shortage of water supply can be confusing and wondered how technology such as desalination plants in Carlsbad and Huntington Beach could help.
- Resident Irv Snyder – Advised that construction of the Carlsbad desalination plant is scheduled to be completed in July 2015, and wondered how much water the Huntington Beach plant, if approved and constructed, would provide as a percentage of Orange County's potable water. Mr. Grandy explained that, while he did not have that percentage, the water from the new plant would be a relatively small amount compared to the water provided from other sources, but that every additional acre foot would be helpful if the drought continues.

## B. Waste and Recycling Services

Assistant City Manager Reilly presented information regarding the history of the City's integrated waste management services franchise and the process by which the City is preparing to solicit proposals from waste and recycling firms for a new franchise to be awarded in spring 2015 and take effect in July 2015. He explained that the City Council's Ad Hoc Solid Waste Committee, comprised of Mayor Pro Tem Cynthia Connors and Councilmember Shari Horne, had held meetings to solicit input on services to be provided to residents and businesses in the City, and that this meeting of the Planning & Environmental Services Committee is an opportunity to allow Committee members, residents, and businesses to provide input.

Committee members asked questions and provided comments as follows:

- Member Ferguson – Asked whether the potential increase in the state's waste diversion mandates from 50% to 75% was accounted for in the RFP. Staff explained that, yes, that provision and others

are included to provide the City with the greatest flexibility in the selection of services, equipment, and operations.

- Member Tso – Asked about the participation rate at the public meetings held to date and asked if changing vendors would change the bins. Staff explained that approximately 150 blue bins and 2,000 blue carts were purchased by the City using state and county grant funds, so those would be provided to the next vendor. All trash and other recycling bins and carts would be new when installed.
- Councilmember Horne – Discussed the need and goal of having a recycling bin in each trash enclosure. She also noted the need for a separate green waste bin at Laguna Woods Village garden centers. She explained that not all of the curbside collection residents have blue recycling carts and that she would like more of those residents to participate in recycling.
- Member Tso – Stated that a recycling bin in each trash enclosure and a blue recycling cart for each curbside collection home should be mandatory. She asked about newspaper disposal and staff said that all paper should go into the blue bins or carts.
- Member Hamm – Expressed support for lower, more accessible, and lighter lids that would be more in keeping with serving the City’s elderly population. She noted how difficult it could be to lift the existing bin lids when you are shorter and not strong enough to lift with one hand and throw in trash or recyclables with the other.
- Member Holman – Asked about how the mandatory recycling rates are calculated. Staff explained that the state had moved to a waste diverted per-capita reporting system, but that the City is still tracking all of its waste and reporting diversion as a percentage of its entire waste stream. This is, in part, due to the discovery by waste hauler CR&R in 2005 that it had incorrectly assigned 1.7 tons of trash to Laguna Hills, when it was actually collected in Laguna Woods. That extra waste was not included in the City’s base year waste study and the state has not permitted adjustments to base year calculations for many years.
- Member Holman – Suggested adding waste reduction options as a part of a community education program.
- Vice Chair Hatch – Suggested that a community education campaign should be conducted that identifies waste types and whether they go into trash or recycling bins and carts. A Yes or No listing of items that can go into recycling containers should be easy to produce and should be on each bin or cart. Staff noted that, really,

only wet waste should go into the trash container, and that almost all other types of waste should go into recycling containers.

- Chair Schneider – Asked if potential service providers would present their proposals at City Council meetings and supported better education efforts with the public about what goes into collection containers. Staff explained that the Ad Hoc Solid Waste Committee would recommend a firm to the City Council for approval.
- Resident Irv Snyder – Suggested that a mailing to all residents is needed to inform them about where to put trash versus recyclables, and noted that smaller bins may cost more in the long run because of the cost for additional collections.
- Unidentified Resident – Asked about the disposal of batteries and compact fluorescent bulbs or tubes, which resulted in a short discussion of the high turnover of residents and how many do not know about the free recycling and safe-disposal services offered by the City, which shows the need for ongoing education efforts.
- Resident Rhoda Lindner – Noted that she had been active in helping to get source-separated recycling started in 2005. She appreciates the need for lighter and lower lids, better signage at the source – bins and carts – but wants the message to be clear and easy to understand. She also asked about how residents are to treat food and organic waste under the new franchise, and staff explained that diversion options would be evaluated as a part of the process.

### C. Building Services Operational Improvements

Assistant City Manager Reilly reviewed the agenda report and noted that the goals of expanded permit counter hours (7:30 a.m. to 12 noon, instead of 8:00 a.m. to 12 noon), increased capacity for over-the-counter plan review, reduced plan review turnaround times, reduced plan review costs, and the immediate digitization of many building permits and plans had been achieved over the past few months. There were no questions from Committee members or the public.

Committee members asked questions and provided comments as follows:

- Member Ferguson – Asked whether the potential increase in the state’s waste diversion mandate from 50% to 75% will be accounted for in the waste RFP. Staff explained that, yes, that provision and others are included to provide the City with the greatest flexibility in the selection of services, equipment, and operations.

**IV. COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMENTS**

None

**V. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None

**VI. ADJOURN**

The next regular meeting of the Planning & Environmental Services Committee will be at 9 a.m. on November 13, 2014, at Laguna Woods City Hall, 24264 El Toro Road, Laguna Woods, CA 92637. Meetings may be cancelled due to a lack of agenda items.

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## City of Laguna Woods Agenda Report

**DATE:** November 13, 2014  
Planning & Environmental Services Committee Meeting

**TO:** Honorable Chair and Committee Members

**FROM:** Christopher Macon, City Manager

**AGENDA ITEM:** General Plan Conservation Element Update

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### **Recommendation**

Discuss and provide input.

### **Background**

The City's Fiscal Year 2014-15 Budget includes a significant work plan item to update the General Plan Conservation Element to "enhance long-term commitments to environmental sustainability; expand consideration of water and energy issues in the General Plan; incorporate the forthcoming Climate Adaptation Plan; and, prepare technical reports that would also be used to inform the Comprehensive General Plan Update [tentatively scheduled for Fiscal Year 2015-16]."

State law requires the City to adopt and maintain a General Plan "for the physical development of the... city." General Plans are required to address a minimum of seven elements – land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. The City's existing Conservation Element (Attachment A) was adopted in 2002 as a part of the City's first General Plan and amended in 2003 to include additional stormwater and water quality implementation measures.

Conservation elements focus on the "conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources" (State of California General Plan Guidelines, 2003).

### **Discussion**

Today's meeting will "kickoff" the public participation component of the General Plan Conservation Element Update, including a project overview and solicitation

of initial input from both the Planning & Environmental Services Committee and the general public. The City will be providing numerous opportunities for public participation throughout the course of this project as shown in Table 1.

*Table 1: Tentative Public Participation Schedule*

<b>MEETING</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
Planning & Environmental Services Committee Thursday, November 13, 2014 at 9 a.m.	Project overview/initial input
Planning & Environmental Services Committee Thursday, February 12, 2015 at 9 a.m.	Review and discuss draft
Planning & Environmental Services Committee Thursday, March 12, 2015 at 9 a.m.	Recommendation to City Council
City Council (Public Hearing) Wednesday, April 15, 2015 at 2 p.m.	Consideration of adoption

In addition, this project will require compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), including preparation of an Initial Study and the appropriate level of environmental review (e.g., Negative Declaration or Environmental Impact Report). Regardless of the level of environmental review required, a public review and comment period will be provided in accordance with CEQA Guidelines.

### **Fiscal Impact**

Funding to complete the General Plan Conservation Element Update (estimated at approximately \$70,000) is included in the Fiscal Year 2014-15 Budget.

### **Conclusion**

The General Plan Conservation Element is a critical and State-mandated long-term plan focused on natural resources. This project will result in the first significant update of the Conservation Element since its adoption more than a decade ago.

Attachment: A – Existing General Plan Conservation Element

**ITEM III-A – Attachment A**

Existing General Plan Conservation Element

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# CONSERVATION ELEMENT

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# CONSERVATION ELEMENT

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## I. INTRODUCTION

California law requires that a conservation element be prepared as part of a city's General Plan as follows:

*Government Code Section 65580 (d): 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. That portion of the conservation element including waters shall be developed in coordination with any countywide water agency and with all district and city agencies, which have developed, served, controlled or conserved water for any purpose for the county or city for which the plan is prepared. Coordination shall include the discussion and evaluation of any water supply and demand information described in Section 65352.5, if that information has been submitted by the water agency to the city or county.*

The Conservation Element sets forth a strategy for the protection, conservation, and management of natural resources including water, soils, wildlife, and minerals to the extent possible at the local level. For an urbanized area such as the City of Laguna Woods, the scope of the Conservation Element has been modified to include air quality and waste management issues and local historical, paleontological, and archaeological resources.

The Conservation Element is organized into two sections:

### **Policy Document**

The Policy Document identifies a course of action for preserving natural and cultural resources. The course of action is defined through a series of "Objectives", "Policies", and "Implementation Measures".

Objectives are broad statements on the community's expectations about the City's role and future direction in managing these resources.

Policies stated in the Conservation Element suggest possible strategies for achieving results consistent with each defined objective.

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Implementation Measures are specific, discreet actions to be taken as part of the strategy for achieving each defined objective appropriate to protecting, preserving, and managing cultural and natural resources.

## ***Background Report***

The Background Report identifies and describes existing cultural and natural resources whose preservation and management are appropriately of concern to decision makers in the City of Laguna Woods. In addition to state mandated components, the Conservation Element includes air quality and solid waste reduction and recycling discussion appropriate to urbanizing areas such as the City of Laguna Woods.

The *Existing Conditions* section of the Background Report provides the social and physical context within which the cultural and natural resources of the City are found.

The *Natural Resources* section of the Background Report describes each natural resource of significance to the City. An appreciation of this significance is important in determining a future course of action for managing and preserving these resources. *Cultural Resources* provides an overview of historical, archaeological, and paleontological data of relevance in the City of Laguna Woods.

*Issues, Opportunities, and Constraints* are factors taken into account in preparing the future-oriented Policy Document of the Conservation Element. *Issues, Opportunities, and Constraints* include input received from participants in a series of General Plan community workshops and from professional planners' inventory and analysis of the City of Laguna Woods environment.

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## II. POLICY DOCUMENT

The Policy Document of the Conservation Element provides direction for conserving, managing, and preserving natural resources. The Policy Document assists in reconciling conflicts between land development pressures and the desire to preserve natural resources.

**Objective I:** Preserve and enhance the environment.

**Policy I.A:** Protect existing riparian and wildlife habitats.

### **Implementation Measure:**

I.A.1 Revise the Zoning Ordinance as required to preclude establishment of land uses and construction of buildings within the flood plain of Aliso Creek that would disturb its natural state.

I.A.2 Work with the Orange County Flood Control District to employ flood control devices that will maintain Aliso Creek and its flood plain in a natural state.

I.A.3 Revise the Zoning Ordinance to require preservation of wildlife and riparian habitats.

**Policy I.B:** Cooperate with other cities, governmental units, and private organizations in protecting natural resources of area-wide or regional significance.

### **Implementation Measure:**

I.B.1 Enlist the participation of neighboring cities in developing a strategy for ensuring that the Laguna Laurel property is preserved as permanent open space and wildlife habitat.



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- I.B.2 Evaluate the feasibility of annexing the Laguna Laurel property into the City of Laguna Woods.
- I.B.3 Actively participate with other cities, governmental entities, and organizations to establish a wildlife corridor from the mountains to the ocean and including the former Marine Corps Air Station – El Toro.
- I.B.4 Revise the Zoning Ordinance to retain the Southern California Edison right-of-way at the southwesterly boundaries of the City as open space and include prohibitions on commercial uses of open space.
- I.B.5 Encourage efforts to conserve water as a resource and reduce non-stormwater and pollution from entering the storm drain system and downstream receiving waters.

**Objective II:** Reduce air pollution

**Policy II.A** Cooperate with governmental agencies at the local, County, and State level in attaining established goals for air quality.

## **Implementation Measure:**

- II.A.1 Adopt Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance provisions requiring that new development and reuse projects accommodate and promote transportation alternatives to the private automobile.
- II.A.2 Work with local bus service providers to increase ridership by accommodating construction of bus turnouts, transfer stations, and bus shelters.
- II.A.3 Actively participate with bus service providers to make bus travel convenient and user-friendly through

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installation of readily visible identification signs at bus stops and transfer stations, publication and dissemination of understandable schedules, and operation of a passenger help line.

II.A.4 Implement mitigation measures in the Air Quality Management Plan of the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

**Objective III.** Reduce water pollution.

**Policy III.A** Cooperate with governmental agencies at the local, County, and State level in attaining established goals for surface and receiving water quality.

**Implementation Measure:**

III.A.1 Actively participate with surrounding cities and resource agencies in developing and implementing watershed studies and management plans to reduce pollutant levels in Aliso Creek.

III.A.2 Enforce provisions of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System to reduce pollutant run-off into natural and storm drain systems.

III.A.3 Develop and implement Best Management Practices (BMP's) as specified by the City Local Implementation Plan (LIP) to minimize, to the maximum extent practicable, non-stormwater runoff and pollution from entering Aliso Creek, the Laguna Lakes and other sensitive receiving waters.

III.A.4 Actively participate and pursue educational opportunities to inform City residents and businesses about stormwater and water quality issues.

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**Objective IV:** Encourage energy conservation and promote alternative sources of energy.

**Policy IV.A** Identify opportunities available at the local level for reducing consumption of non-renewable energy resources.

**Implementation Measure:**

IV.A.1 Pursue funding for local energy conservation education programs.

**Policy IV.B** Identify opportunities for securing a reliable supply of energy at reasonable cost.

**Implementation Measure:**

IV.B.1 Consider alternative electric power sources and their respective costs to determine the feasibility of localized generation.

IV.B.2 Pursue funding for developing alternative energy sources.

**Objective V:** Reduce the amount of solid waste being sent to landfills.

**Policy V.A** Promote solid waste recycling so as to exceed source reduction and recovery requirements mandated by Assembly Bill 939.

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## **Implementation**

### **Measure:**

- V.A.1 Provide information on recycling programs to residents and businesses on a regular basis.
- V.A.2 Work with waste hauling operators to ensure compliance with local requirements for state-mandated waste reduction.
- V.A.3 Work with solid waste generators to reduce waste at the source and to increase recovery of recyclable materials.
- V.A.4 Provide adequate means and opportunities for collection and disposal of household hazardous materials.

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## III. BACKGROUND REPORT

### A. Existing Conditions

The City of Laguna Woods is nearly built-out with residential and commercial uses including roads, golf courses and other man made features. The terrain throughout the City consists of gradual and varying slopes, hills, and low-lying areas. Three identifiable plant communities exist in the City: urban or non-native landscaping, which represents approximately 98% of the vegetation, and coastal sage scrub and riparian habitats.

The most significant natural water resource within the City of Laguna Woods is Aliso Creek. The Creek begins in the Santa Ana Mountains and traverses nineteen miles to its confluence with the Pacific Ocean in South Laguna. It transects the southeastern portion of the City for approximately one-half mile and is maintained, predominantly, in a natural state.

There are five identified archeological sites in the City of Laguna Woods, however, all have been determined to be insignificant, disturbed and/or destroyed. Due to the regions history of alluvium soil deposits, and exposed bedrock, there are also areas in and around the City that have been known to produce paleontology resources as well. Information regarding natural and cultural resources and other topical issues are described in greater detail in the following pages and should be utilized as background information to understand and implement the policy document's *Objectives, Policies and Implementation Measures* or as reference material for land development projects.

### B. Natural Resources

#### Water Supply

The El Toro Water District (ETWD) is the responsible agency for providing water service to the City of Laguna Woods as well as surrounding areas. The District was formed in 1960, and currently serves water and wastewater systems in the Cities of Laguna Woods, Laguna Hills, Lake Forest, Aliso Viejo and Mission Viejo.

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Approximately 85 percent of the connections in the City of Laguna Woods are for residential users, with the balance made up of commercial, industrial, public and landscape irrigation users.

As a constituent agency of the Municipal Water District of Orange County, which is a wholesale importer of water from the Metropolitan Water District, ETWD supplies are a blend of imported water from the Colorado River and northern California. This imported water is transported via pipeline from a Yorba Linda reservoir to the ETWD reservoir located in the City of Mission Viejo near Alicia Parkway.

ETWD also operates the Water Recycling Plant located near the southeast corner of Moulton Parkway and Ridge Route Road, surrounded by the Leisure World golf course. Approximately 10 percent of all wastewater collected by ETWD is recycled for uses such as irrigation. Currently, water is supplied from the plant for irrigation purposes for the Leisure World golf course and Leisure World driving range. Expansion plans are underway to provide a tertiary treatment facility to process wastewater that can be used for commercial and public recreation applications.

## **Local Hydrology**

Two primary “beneficial uses”, or priority recipients of water supplies, have been designated within the Aliso Creek groundwater basin of which the City of Laguna Woods is a part. The first beneficial use designation is for the municipal and domestic supply, including use of water for fire suppression, institutional and residential water supply. The second designation is for agricultural supply and includes uses of water for farming, horticulture, or ranching including, but not limited to, irrigation, stock watering, or support of vegetation for range grazing. During a period of drought, human consumption would have first priority under the hierarchical structure of “beneficial uses”.

Although portions of the City of Laguna Woods are included within the Laguna Canyon Creek and Upper San Diego Creek watershed, the majority of land in the City falls within the Aliso Creek watershed that carries rainfall and urban runoff as it flows to the Pacific Ocean. In the City of Laguna Woods, run-off is conveyed to the Creek through a series

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of storm drains. Dairy Fork is the major storm drain in the City. It drains the Cities of Lake Forest and Laguna Hills before entering the City of Laguna Woods. The confluence of Dairy Fork and Aliso Creek is to the immediate south of the City of Laguna Woods in the vicinity of the intersection of Laguna Hills Drive and Moulton Parkway.

## ***Water Quality***

With the passage of the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Act in 1969, the State gave to the State Water Quality Control Board and its regional component boards regulatory authority over monitoring of surface and receiving water quality and enforcement tools. The Santa Ana and San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Boards are primarily responsible for the monitoring and enforcement activities related to storm water and urban water discharges for the City of Laguna Woods.

The State Water Resources Control Board, the Regional Water Quality Control Board and the Orange County Department of Health Services perform surface and receiving water quality measurement and monitoring. ETWD provides an annual Drinking Water Quality report, which is sent to all water customers within the District. The water supplied by ETWD for domestic use meets or exceeds all federal and State regulations and standards.

Pursuant to the national Clean Water Act of 1972, and amendments adopted in 1987, the Environmental Protection Agency developed a plan to monitor and control water pollution. The plan, which is administered by the Regional Water Quality Control Boards within the state, requires municipalities and developers to obtain permits and to develop water run-off and water quality plans which outline Best Management Practices (BMP's) to reduce contamination of receiving waters from storm-water runoff. The final receiving water for runoff within the City of Laguna Woods and environs is the Pacific Ocean.

In late 2000, the California Water Quality Control Board issued an order to cities within the Aliso Creek watershed to address the issue of pollution of offshore ocean waters due to pollution sources within the Aliso Creek watershed. The order included a requirement to develop a plan to improve water quality within the watershed. The various

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jurisdictions within the Aliso Creek watershed met and developed a response and a plan pursuant to the Water Quality Board's order.

Section 402 of the Clean Water Act also requires adherence to the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) in which the City of Laguna Woods is the responsible agency for urban sources of pollutants that may be discharged into City storm drains and eventually Aliso Creek. The City is a co-permittee of the County of Orange's NPDES permit. The NPDES permit requires the City to reduce discharges of pollutants and runoff flow during each of three phases of urban development: planning, construction, and during use of the site. Specifications to be implemented by the permittee, i.e., the City of Laguna Woods, are outlined in the County of Orange Drainage Area Management Plan.

## **Flood Control**

Flood control within the City and throughout the County is provided by the Orange County Flood Control District. Areas subject to flooding have been identified on Flood Insurance Rate Maps prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Those maps are periodically updated to reflect recent development and flood control projects as they are upgraded or completed. The most recently updated maps for the City of Laguna Woods identify two categories of flood areas within the City:

*Zone A – Areas inundated by a 100-year flood, but for which base flood elevations have not been determined; and*

*Zone X – Areas subject to inundation by a 100-year flood with an average depth of less than one foot.*

Zones A and X identified on the FEMA maps include portions of the Leisure World Executive Golf Course, a small portion of the creek bed at Bahia Blanca West, the El Toro Water District recycled water storage basin east of Moulton Parkway, and areas along Aliso Creek. A small portion of Zone X extends beyond the Aliso Creek channel in the vicinity of Avenida Sevilla and Ronda Sevilla, and two residential units are located within that area. Those units are required to secure flood



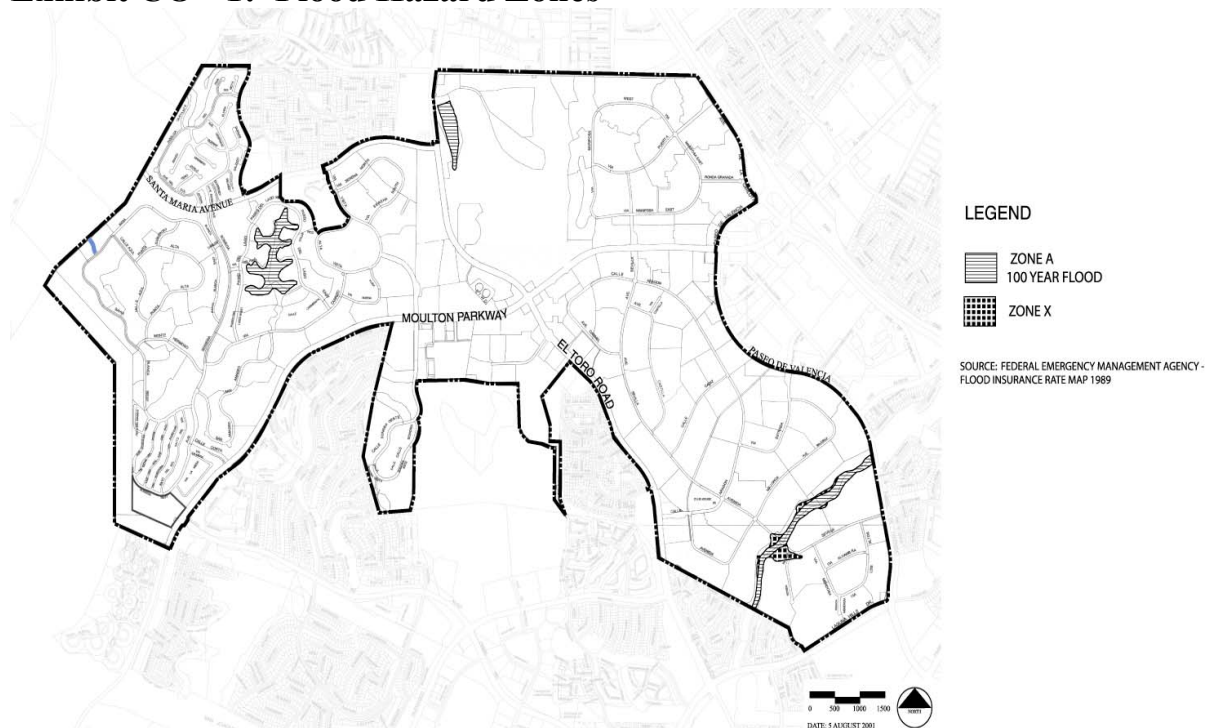
# CONSERVATION ELEMENT

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hazard insurance. Areas in the City of Laguna Woods that are subject to flooding are shown on *Exhibit CO-1: Flood Hazard Zones*.

The Aliso Creek watershed covers an area of 23,000 acres. In the early 1970's, the County of Orange recognized the potential benefits of Aliso Creek as well as the impending development pressures within the Aliso Creek watershed. As a result, the County prepared and adopted the Aliso Creek Corridor Specific Plan that was approved by the County Board of Supervisors on July 19, 1978. The portion of the Aliso Creek Corridor Specific Plan within the City of Laguna Woods is designated for joint Flood Plain and Recreation uses.

## Exhibit CO - 1: Flood Hazard Zones



## Land Resources

The City of Laguna Woods is nearly built-out. The City and surrounding areas were developed in the generally flat portions of the Saddleback Valley between the San Joaquin Hills to the west and the Santa Ana

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Mountains to the east. The City is mostly devoid of natural hillsides, valleys and canyons, having been substantially graded and developed. Although fertile soils are known to exist along Aliso Creek, previous development precludes classification of this area as an agricultural resource. No Mineral Resource Zones as defined by the State Surface Mining and Reclamation Act have been identified in the City of Laguna Woods.

Areas of natural topography in the City include the Edison right-of-way along the southwesterly City boundary, and an approximate one-acre slope located north of El Toro Road and southeasterly of the El Toro Water District water tanks, and an undeveloped 23-acre parcel west of Moulton Parkway and south of El Toro Road. These 23 acres consists of natural and disturbed topography and vegetation and are used in part to meet wetland mitigation requirements for the nearby Aliso Viejo golf course.

Some manufactured 2-to-1 (1 foot vertical rise for each 2 feet of horizontal run) graded slopes exist in the newer developed portions of the City to the north and west of El Toro Road and Moulton Parkway. The earliest development within the City occurred on the flatter terrain adjacent to El Toro Road, Moulton Parkway and along Paseo de Valencia. As the City developed, new construction was extended to the hillside areas along the north side of the southwesterly extension of El Toro Road.

A significant resource in terms of natural landforms and vegetation exists within the Laguna Greenbelt on the westerly edge of the City. Public interest groups and individuals residing primarily within the City of Laguna Beach developed the Greenbelt during the 1960's. Over the years, the importance of the Greenbelt has been recognized throughout south Orange County, and the County and State have formalized plans for the Greenbelt through the implementation of a series of regional and state parks and wilderness areas.

Within the vicinity of the City of Laguna Woods, the Greenbelt encompasses Laguna Coast Wilderness Park and the Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park. Although only a small portion of the Laguna Greenbelt is located in the western portion of the City (the Edison

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easement), the Greenbelt is immediately adjacent to the City boundaries and provides a visual asset to City residents as well as a recognizable delineation of City limits and urban development along the western borders of the City.

The 175-acre Laguna Laurel parcel adjacent to the City of Laguna Woods' western border at the end of Santa Maria Road could provide access from the City of Laguna Woods into the Laguna Coast Wilderness Park. Although previously entitled for residential development, the owner has granted a conservation easement over the property that will keep the property in its natural state. The Laguna Canyon Foundation and the City of Laguna Woods are working to add the Laguna Laurel parcel to the Laguna Coast Wilderness Park.

## **Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat**

A portion of the City of Laguna Woods is located within and adjacent to the coastal hills of southern Orange County identified as the San Joaquin Hills on the United States Geological Survey maps. The coastal hills region encompasses a range of Upper Sonoran terrestrial habitats from coastal sage scrub to riparian habitat. Gentle rolling hills covered with grasslands, coastal sage scrub and chaparral are characteristic of the undeveloped portion of this region. The City is predominantly developed, and relatively few natural habitats remain within the City boundaries.

In general, native plant communities with more vegetation layers and more plant species provide higher value wildlife habitat than plant communities that are non-native or man made such as urban landscaped environments. The native and complex plant communities tend to provide more niches for wildlife and usually support more animal species than less complex communities.

The area with the greatest concentration of native vegetation, coastal sage scrub, is on a forty-five acre parcel located along the southwesterly City boundary. This parcel is owned by Southern California Edison and occupied by power transmission poles and lines. The native vegetation is contiguous with extensive sage scrub habitat in the Laguna Coast Wilderness. Other areas that may contain coastal sage include a vacant

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23-acre parcel south of El Toro Road and west of Moulton Parkway, which is currently owned by the Golden Rain Foundation.

Sensitive biological resources include species that have been given special recognition by federal, State and local resource conservation agencies and organizations due to declining, limited or threatened populations as a result of habitat reduction due to urbanization. The State Department of Fish and Game and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service designate the status of sensitive species as follows:

*Endangered – Species that are in danger of extinction throughout all or a portion of their range.*

*Threatened – Species that are likely to become endangered within the near future.*

*Candidate – Species that are under review for listing as threatened or endangered.*

Coastal sage scrub is considered a sensitive habitat where it supports populations of sensitive species. California gnatcatchers are a federally listed *Threatened* species that nest only in coastal sage scrub and have been observed throughout the San Joaquin Hills. Because the coastal sage scrub community is considered critical habitat for a federally listed species, a certified biologist should survey areas in the City that might contain this plant community and an official determination should be obtained by the appropriate resource agencies prior to any development approvals. Impacts to this habitat may be considered significant under the California Environmental Quality Act and the Endangered Species Act. Mitigation for impacts to this habitat may be available through in lieu fee programs established by the Orange County Coastal Area Natural Communities Conservation Plan.

Aliso Creek is another significant biological resource. Riparian native and non-native vegetation occurs over approximately 14 acres along the creek, which passes through the southeast section of the City. The creek is a water source and a potential movement corridor for area wildlife. Because of the variety of niches found in riparian zones, they often support a greater abundance and diversity of wildlife than other habitats.

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Land birds, mammals and amphibians use these corridors for moving from habitat patch to habitat patch. These movement corridors are important in maintaining gene flow between otherwise isolated populations and ultimately in helping to prevent local extinctions in these isolated habitats.

Due to its wildlife value, riparian communities are considered to be sensitive habitat and are heavily regulated by State and federal resource agencies. Regulatory authority for Aliso Creek is under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). Any proposed activity within or adjacent to Aliso Creek may require a USACE permit to dredge or fill and a CDFG Streambed Alteration Agreement. As part of the permit and agreement applications, a formal delineation of the jurisdictional boundaries would be needed, along with an analysis of impacts, a description of efforts to avoid and/or minimize impacts, and mitigation measures.

Areas in the City that are known to contain sensitive habitats such as riparian or coastal sage scrub are shown on *Exhibit CO-2, Significant Habitats*.

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## Exhibit CO - 2: Significant Habitats



### *Climate and Air Quality*

Climate is a primary factor in the decision by the City of Laguna Woods residents to live within the area. The area lies within a Mediterranean Climatic Zone that is characterized by year-round mild to warm temperatures and light winds. Dominant wind pattern is daytime, offshore breezes from the northwest. The wind pattern is occasionally broken by very strong Santa Ana winds from the northeasterly direction, resulting in wind velocities of up to 70 miles per hour, and increases in temperatures of up to 100 degrees Fahrenheit. The Santa Ana winds typically occur during the autumn and winter months and result in very hazardous potential for wild land fires, as evidenced by the destructive Laguna Beach fires of October, 1993.

The predominant ocean breezes assist in the dispersal of airborne pollutants. However, occasionally, an inversion layer of warm air overlapping the cool marine air traps pollutants, resulting in poor air quality, particularly during the summer months.

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Air pollution is the result of stationary and non-stationary sources. Stationary sources include such items as surrounding industrial, commercial businesses within the City which discharge pollutants into the air, and consumer products such as paint, charcoal lighter fluid and a number of other household products such as cleaning solvents. Examples of businesses responsible for such discharges are restaurants, service stations and dry cleaners with on-site cleaning facilities. It is estimated that approximately 40 percent of all pollutants come from stationary sources.

The largest contributors to non-stationary sources of air pollution are cars, trucks, buses, locomotives, airplanes and construction equipment. The greatest source of pollution in the City of Laguna Woods is the nearby San Diego (I-5) Freeway.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) measures air quality conditions within Orange County. Air pollutants are comprised of two major categories: primary and secondary. Primary pollutants are emitted directly from sources, and include carbon monoxide, reactive organic gases, nitrogen oxides, sulfur oxides and particulate matter. Secondary pollutants are formed by chemical and photochemical reactions in the atmosphere. Ozone and nitrogen dioxide are the principal secondary pollutants.

The State Air Quality Control Board monitors pollutants at locations throughout the State. For the south Orange County area, three stations monitor different pollutants. The El Toro station, located at the Orange County Fire Authority station on the east side of El Toro Road and south of Jeronimo Road, monitors ozone, carbon monoxide, particulates and sulfates. The Costa Mesa station monitors nitrogen oxides and sulfur oxides. The Anaheim station monitors lead.

In addition to their air quality monitoring, the SCAQMD is responsible for issuing permits to businesses that are determined to be stationary sources of air emissions.

Air pollution and air quality are regional phenomena, and local agencies must rely on the efforts of regional, statewide and federal agencies for control. The Federal Clean Air Act requires states to develop plans to

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reach air quality goals and standards. The California Legislature has designated the SCAQMD and the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) as the agencies responsible for development of the Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP), which outlines steps and programs to meet federal air quality standards. The AQMP, prepared in 1998, proposed to attain those standards by the year 2007. Most of the control measures proposed by the AQMP are regional in nature and include:

- Commuter lanes on freeways
- Park and ride facilities
- Rideshare programs
- Transportation improvements
- Incentives for technological improvements

Some programs to reduce air pollution, however, are within the scope of local jurisdictions, and may include:

- Development of riding and hiking trails
- Alternatives to gasoline engines, such as electric vehicles and use of propane gas
- Land use controls to foster better building design and more efficient energy use
- Adoption of a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program to encourage non-residential land users to provide incentives to employees to car pool and to use alternative transportation modes
- Street and intersection improvements to facilitate more efficient traffic movements

## **C. Cultural Resources**

### **Historical Resources**

The City of Laguna Woods is relatively new, with the first dwelling units having been constructed during the early 1960's. However, the region enjoys a strong historical tradition associated with the Spanish missionaries and the ranching activities dating to the early Spanish land grants. Surrounding sites of historical interest include: Heritage Hill



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located at Trabuco Road and Lake Forest Drive, Mission San Juan Capistrano, the Richard Henry Dana monument in Dana Point Harbor and the Cottages at Crystal Cove State Beach (listed on the National Register of Historic Places) located north of Laguna Beach.

Even though the City does not contain sites that are included on State or federal historical registries, some structures and sites do exist which are significant for their historical or cultural value to local residents. The Leisure World Historical Society operates from a building for which they raised funds to construct. The Historical Society is located near Club House I on Calle Aragon, and includes display areas and archive storage. The Society has been active in identifying cultural and historical points of interest within the City and surrounding areas. In addition to the Historical Society building, some other significant sites suggested by the Society for consideration due to their cultural and/or historical significance include:

- Leisure World Art Gallery – located in Club House IV, it includes display of works by local artists. The facility is also home to the Laguna Hills Art Association, which included in its membership Nellie Gail Moulton, ancestor to the area’s pioneer family.
- The Aliso Sycamore Tree – a 400-year old Sycamore tree of substantial size located within the Aliso Creek Greenbelt near Avenida Sevilla. The tree has been designated a historical landmark by the Aliso Canyon Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and a plaque has been erected at the site.
- Serpentine Walk – a meandering walkway along the Aliso Creek within Leisure World, which includes plaques on several specimen trees.
- Golden Rain Trees – approximately eight remaining trees of the original 2,800 planted which are symbolic of the Golden Rain Foundation. The trees are located at various locations throughout the Leisure World community.
- Friendship Gate – a wrought iron gate located between the Laguna Country United Methodist Church and the Temple Judea. The gate

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was constructed in 1969 to celebrate the brotherhood between Christians and Jews.

## **Archaeological Resources**

Archaeological resources consist of sites and artifacts that identify ancient human activity. Such sites typically contain one or more of the following: food remains, tools, waste from the manufacturing of tools, concentrations or alignment of stones, modification of rock surface and human skeletal remains. South Orange County has been rich in archaeological sites, particularly associated with native peoples and the mission period. Abundant sites have been identified in the San Juan Capistrano area, as well as along the coastline and along creek areas.

Records at the Institute of Archaeology at UCLA indicate eight archaeology sites within the Rossmoor Leisure World Planned Community. All of those sites have been determined to be insignificant, disturbed and/or destroyed. Nevertheless, given the City's location in the region and the presence of Aliso Creek, the potential for future discoveries of such artifacts remains a possibility. Although the City is nearly built-out and the majority of the land within the City has been disturbed, there remains the possibility for development and redevelopment of existing land uses at some point in the future. Therefore, the implementation measures contained in this Element include a provision for the identification and protection of any archaeological artifacts in the event any are discovered in the future.

## **Paleontological Resources**

Paleontological resources differ from archaeological resources in that they consist of sites and artifacts that show evidence of pre-human activity such as marine mammal fossils. Occasionally, they consist of small artifacts located on the surface of the soil but are more likely to be discovered during grading activities.

Geologic formations are the most important indicators of potential paleontological resources. The south Orange County area, particularly the area surrounding the current Cities of Laguna Woods, Laguna Hills, Lake Forest and Laguna Niguel have been identified as encompassing

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two general areas of sensitivity: The Laguna Hills-Dana Point District and the San Joaquin Hills District. Paleontologic resources were discovered during the construction of Phase I of Leisure World in the vicinity of Avenida Majorca. Bones of marine mammals, birds, fishes and large quantities of shark teeth were excavated and removed by paleontologists from the Los Angeles Natural History Museum in conjunction with the Phase I construction during 1963.

Significant paleontological finds were discovered in Costeau Park, located adjacent to Alicia Parkway in the City of Laguna Hills. Artifacts are on display at the nearby Plaza de La Paz located at the intersection of La Paz Road and Pacific Park Drive in the City of Laguna Niguel. Given the identification of the area as a sensitive paleontological area and the close proximity of known discoveries, an implementation measure has been included within this Element providing for the identification and preservation of paleontological resources that may be discovered in the future.

## **D. Issues, Opportunities And Constraints**

This section identifies factors that will shape the City's efforts to protect and enhance natural and cultural resources. This information represents a compilation of input from participants at community workshops, data collected in field surveys by scientific specialists, and analysis by planning staff.

### **1. Issues**

#### *a. Waste Management and Reduction*

As landfills reach capacity and new landfill sites become increasingly difficult to obtain, the need to reduce the amount of solid waste generated is critical. The California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989 (AB 939) required all local jurisdictions to develop a Source Reduction and Recycling Element (SRRE) which would reduce solid wastes by specific amounts within given timeframes. Even though the act predated the incorporation of the City of Laguna Woods, it remains an important goal of the City to develop an SRRE and to other strategies for waste reduction and recycling.

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Community members perceive the need for reducing the amount of solid waste being hauled to landfills and for increasing opportunities for recycling. Increases in the numbers of recycling bins in residential neighborhoods is seen as the most direct means of improving participation in recycling programs to continue meeting state mandated municipal goals for waste source reduction.

## *b. Energy Conservation and Alternative Energy Sources*

Availability of alternative sources of energy and energy conservation are issues important to residents and the business community. Solar, wind, and geothermal energy may provide alternatives to fossil fuels. Although energy use and consumption are national and statewide issues, the City may encourage adaptation of alternative energy sources for new construction projects. The City may serve as the facilitator of alternative energy and conservation programs.

## *c. Air and Water Pollution*

Adverse health effects of air pollution are of concern to the City of Laguna Woods residents. Leisure World buses are perceived to be a significant local source of air pollution, particularly when idling during route layovers. Urban run-off containing pollutants continues to degrade Aliso Creek and the Regional Water Quality Control Board requires that cities within its watershed take appropriate steps in stemming pollutant discharge.

## **2. Opportunities**

*a. The City exists in an area characterized by a mild climate, resulting in lessened demand for energy resources as compared to areas in more severe climate zones.*

*b. The City is nearly completely built-out and demand for additional energy resources is not anticipated to increase dramatically over the coming years.*

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*c. The City is located in an area rich in natural and cultural resources, and the existence of a well-developed transportation system ensures residents full access to those resources.*

*d. Tax incentives as well as relatively recent technical and scientific innovations in the field of water and energy conservation, provision of alternative fuel sources, and environmental protection measures present opportunities for better conservation and use of expendable resources.*

*e. The population of the City consists of predominantly retired individuals who have a wealth of career experience and life experience to provide assistance, ideas, voluntary and philanthropic opportunities to the City.*

*f. The presence of significant recreational and open space resources within the City and surrounding areas, such as Aliso Creek, Cleveland National Forest, the Pacific coastline and the wilderness parks, present recreational opportunities to the residents of the City.*

### **3. Constraints**

*a. The City is dependent on other agencies and regions for the provision of basic services and resources such as water, gas and electric.*

*b. On-going water supply is likely to become more critical in future years given the potential for drought and recent court decisions limiting water allocations from the Colorado River.*

*c. Costs of expendable fuels and basic services are likely to increase in future years, which will have additional financial impacts on a population characterized by a high number of individuals on fixed-incomes.*

*d. The City currently experiences traffic congestion, with resultant air pollution, as a result of land uses in surrounding cities, and a road network that provides circulation to those who travel through the City without having destinations within the City.*

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*e. Local resources that are used and/or needed by City of Laguna Woods residents are located in adjacent or regional jurisdictions; the City does not have decision-making authority over those jurisdictions and, therefore, City residents are impacted by decisions made by other local agencies.*

*f. As with other local corporate jurisdictions, the City is severely restrained by financial resources. The passage of Proposition 13 placed constraints on the City for raising revenues for the preservation and enhancement of resources.*