

# Alpine AL-8

## Recommendation

CPG – Rural Lands 20 (RL-20)

Staff – Rural Lands 40 (RL-40)

## Property Description

### Property Owner:

David Howe, Christopher Dougherty, 9 others

### Property Size:

1,748 acres; 23 parcels

### Location/Description:

Alpine Community Plan Area;

East of Loveland Reservoir

Near Japatul Valley Road/Japatul Road;

Outside County Water Authority boundary

### Existing General Plan:

General Agriculture (1 DU/4, 8, 20 ac) and

Multiple Rural Use (1 DU/4, 8 ac)

### Travel Time (See Safety Element Table S-1):

Closest Fire Station — ≤ 20 minutes

### Prevalence of Constraints (See following page):

● – high; ◐ – partially; ○ - none

◐ Steep Slope (Greater than 25%)

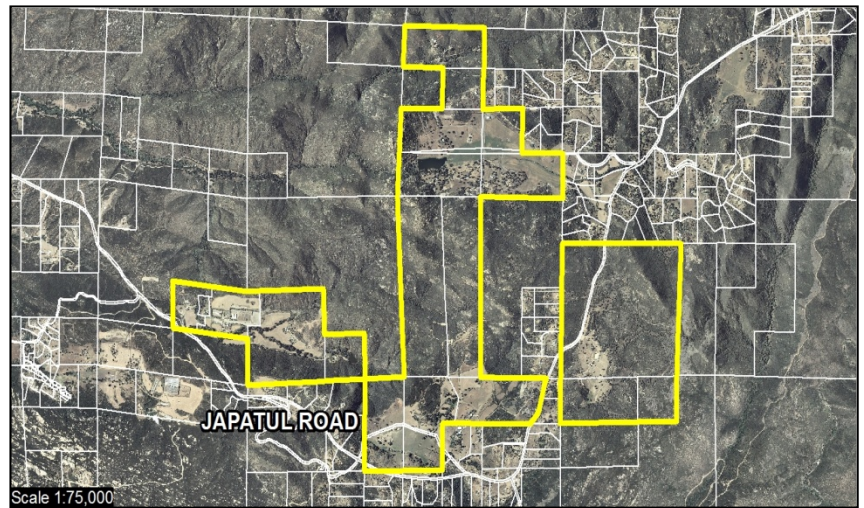
○ Floodplain

○ Wetlands

◐ Sensitive Habitat

◐ Agricultural Lands

● Fire Hazard Severity Zones



Aerial

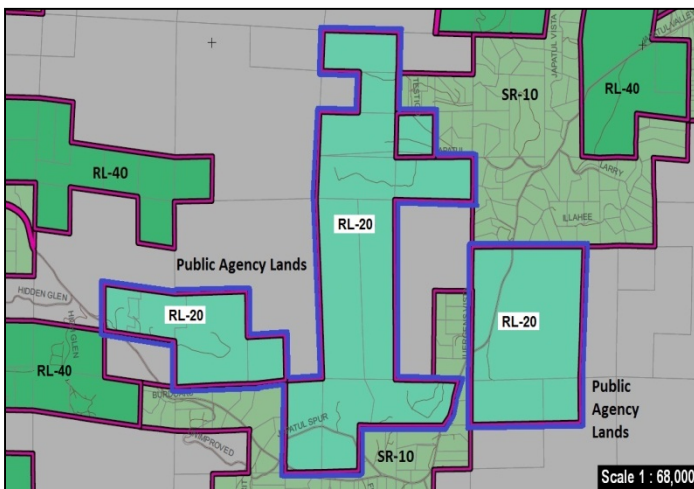
Category	Recommendation	
	CPG	Staff
Designation	RL-20	RL-40
Density	1 DU/20 ac	1 DU/40 ac
Maximum Potential Dwelling Units	81	41
Zoning Use Regulation	A72	A72
Lot Size (acres)	8, 40	8, 40
Spot Designation/Zone	No	No
Opposition Expected	Yes <sup>1</sup>	Yes <sup>2</sup>

### Notes:

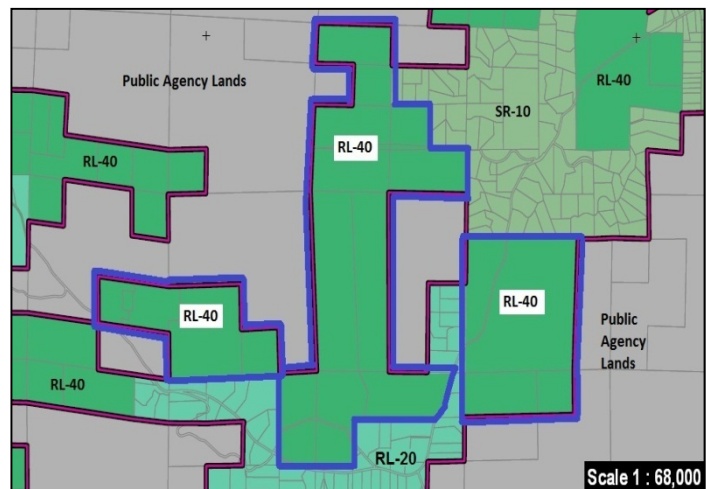
1) U.S. Forest Service (letter dated March 18, 2013)

2) Property owners (see letters)

## Recommendations

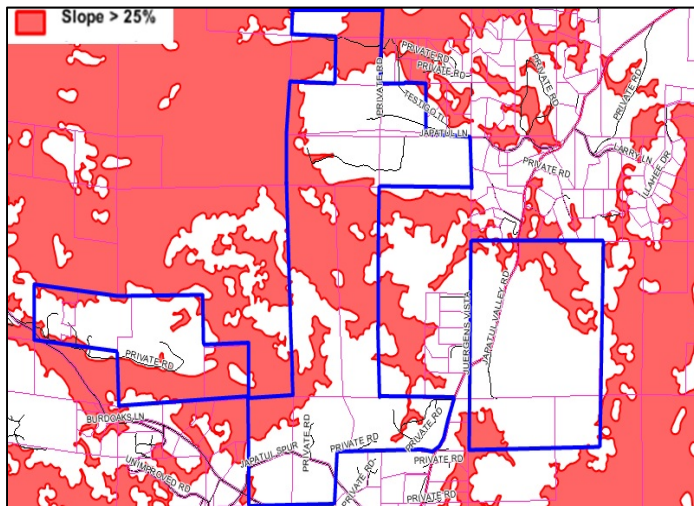


Draft Plan

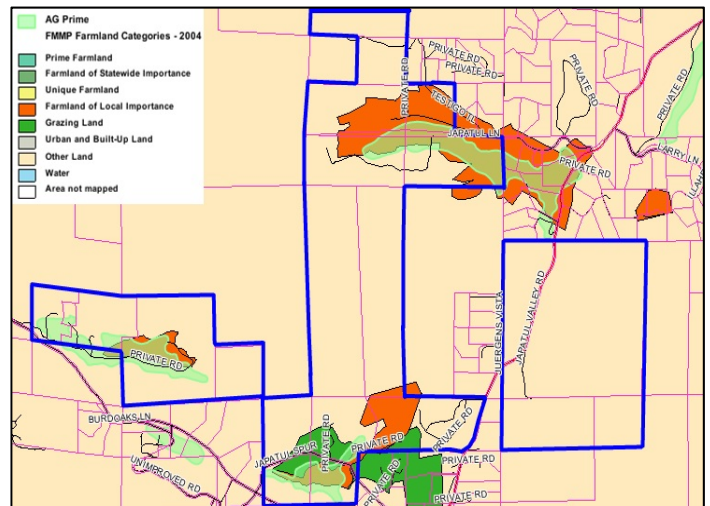


Staff Recommendation

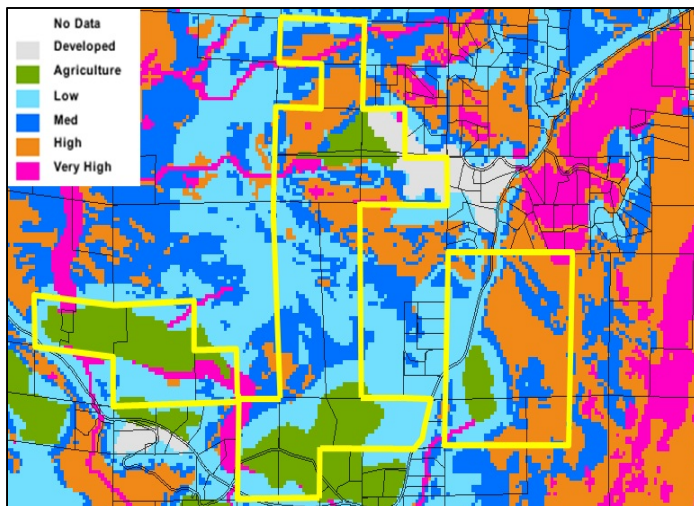
## Alpine AL-8



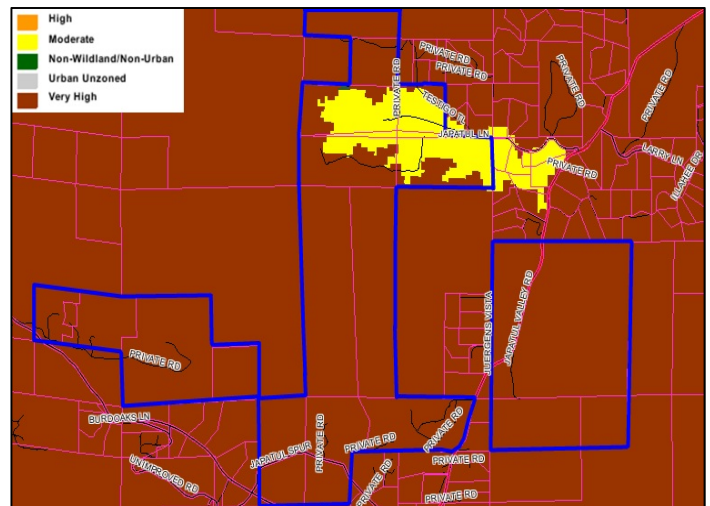
Steep Slope (Greater than 25%)



Agriculture



Habitat Evaluation Model



Fire Hazard Severity Zones

## Context

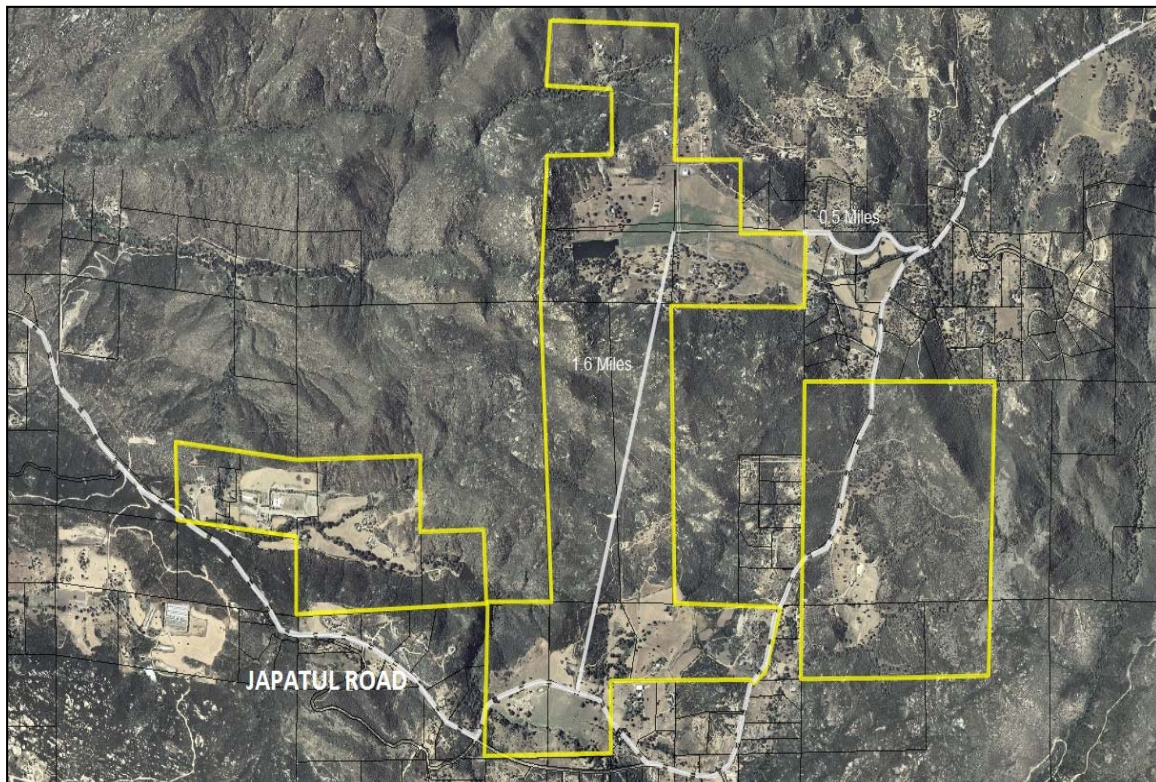
Alpine AL-8 contains 23 parcels that range in size from 4.7 to 355 acres for a total of 1,748 acres. Currently, the property is used for agricultural purposes with some residences, support structures and undeveloped land. The parcels are located approximately 2.3 miles east of Loveland Reservoir along Japatul Valley Road and Japatul Road approximately 3.7 miles southwest from I-8. The property is outside of the County Water Authority boundary and surrounded by the Cleveland National Forest in a federally-designated wilderness area. The parcels contain some steep slopes and approximately 131 acres High Value Biological Habitat. Some properties contain farmland of local importance, grazing land and prime agricultural land. Nearly all of the parcels are located within the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone 10I to 20 minutes away from the nearest fire services.

## Staff Review: Rationale for RL-40 Designation

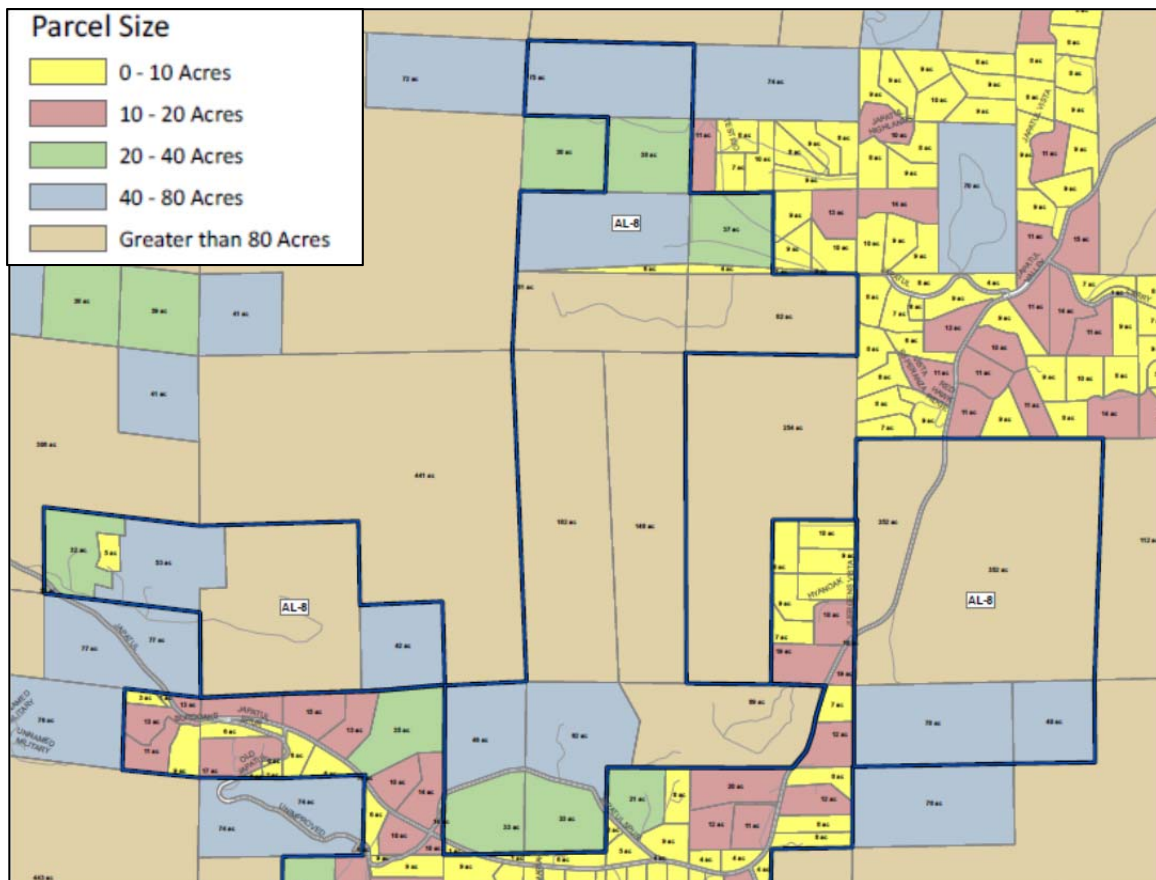
- Very large existing parcel sizes [up to 355 acres]
- Some parcels are only accessible by dead-end roads that exceed County Fire Code standards. Improved connectivity would require construction of new roads through steep terrain (slopes greater than 25%) to existing road approximately 1.6 miles away.
- A large portion of this area contains steep slopes with undisturbed native habitat.
- Properties are virtually surrounded by National Forest Lands. RL-40 designation would reduce development capacity adjacent to National Forest in the Wildland/Urban Interface (refer to U.S. Forest Service letter).
- Consistent with how the General Plan land use map applies the RL-40 designation in remote areas with the large parcel sizes, outside the County Water Authority boundary.
- Further improvement of infrastructure in this area, including utilities and road access required for smaller lot size zoning would have a negative impact on wilderness values, and increase the need for fuel treatments as well as other issues related to locating development in remote areas.



Staff Review: Rationale for RL-40 Designation (continued)



Many parcels are constrained by a lack of road access. Internal connectivity would require connecting a dead-end road through terrain with slopes greater than 25% to Japatul Road, which is 1.6 miles away.



Parcel sizes where most are 40 acres or larger



## Alpine AL-8: Correspondence Received

*Property owners requesting the Rural Lands 20*

Ms. Mindy Fogg  
Department of Planning and Land Use  
County of San Diego  
5520 Overland Avenue, Suite 310  
San Diego, California 92123

Dear Ms. Fogg:

As an Alpine resident and property owner, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the SEIR for FCI Lands in the Japatul Valley, more specifically, the properties on or near Japatul Lane.

I write in support of the RL20 designations for the Japatul Valley areas, as not only do they abide by the Guiding Principles of the General Plan, but also as a property owner I appreciate your consideration. One size does not fit all in the homogenized attempt to place all semi-rural/rural areas of the FCI into one designation. Our area is unique in topography, economically connected to Alpine, and is a healthy, viable, self-sustaining, and ecologically conscious area. 20 years from now, geographically and demographically it needs to remain as such, and the RL20 designation and planning affords such sustainability.

After countless community meetings, sub-committee meetings, and committee meetings, the RL-20 designations for these properties have been heard and approved by the Alpine Community Planning Group. And your SEIR acknowledges that the SEIR is "...based on community planning and sponsor group endorsed land use maps". The County has now in place numerous ordinances that limit and restrict development: water availability, 2<sup>nd</sup> dwelling units, traffic and mobility, habitats, open space, to name an applicable few. Presumably there will be many more to come over the timeline of this plan. It is regrettable that the present ordinances were not so restrictive as to inhibit the spread of the Sunrise Powerlink towers across our vistas, severely impacting our property values and increasing other costs to us, as property owners.

We live here, pay our taxes, and raise our families here. We live here because we enjoy and appreciate the Japatul Valley and the Alpine area. As such we have been and remain the invested stewards of this land, and we are asking for the RL20.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you for your favorable consideration.

Mary Kay Borchard  
21916 Japatul Lane  
Alpine CA 91901

David A. Howe

Windfall Ranch  
21800 Japatul Valley Road  
Alpine, CA 91901

Mailing address: P.O. Box 399, Descanso, Ca 91916

March 13, 2013

Supervisor Dianne Jacob  
SD County Board of Supervisors  
1600 Pacific Highway  
San Diego, California 92010

Dear Supervisor Jacob:

This is in response to the County staff's request for comment on the recently released environmental review of the Alpine area, formerly FCI lands.


I have skimmed the huge document that includes environmental findings concerning land formerly under that designation, but I see no direct reference to the request made by my neighbors and me for a reclassification from RL-40 to RL-20. My 475 acres fronts on Japatul Valley Road from both sides of the roadway. My north line touches land already developed in 8 acre minimums – Larry Road and the Japatul Valley Estates. The western most side of my property, on the west side of Japatul Valley Road, is also immediately adjacent to small lot development.

The Japatul Valley is a fertile area with plenty of water. The designation change from 40 to 20 acre minimums in our area is not injurious to the environment, and will provide more roads to aid circulation. I own and operate a horse ranch, and wish to preserve large areas of my land for that pursuit. The change to 20 acre minimums will enable me at some time to cluster homes near the neighboring small lot development, and protect my open spaces.

Giving property owners control over their destiny and fighting against rural "blight" caused by the inability to create usable parcels, is something I believe that your Board and the County of San Diego consider important. Please show that by granting my neighbors and me the right to a RL-20 land use classification.

Thank you for considering my comments

Very truly yours,



DAVID A. HOWE



Supervisor Dianne Jacob  
San Diego County Board of Supervisors  
1600 Pacific Highway  
San Diego, CA

cc. Mindy Fogg, Environmental Analyst

Dear Supervisor Jacob:

My family has lived and farmed this land in the Japatul Valley for 85 years. We have been good neighbors to the people who have come in long after my family settled their land, and we have tried to be conscientious concerning the environment.

We waited patiently during the General Plan Update (I served on the group that created the first Alpine Community Plan), and then we waited through the FCI review for county staff to initiate a discussion of the Japatul Valley lands. It never came up. Never was mentioned. Not until our near neighbor, Mary Kay Borchard asked when would be appropriate to bring up a request for a reclassification from 40 acre to 20 acre, did staff respond that he doubted any change could be made of that sort.

I have 2 wells. One pumps over 500 gallons a minute; the other pumps over 300. My land, and my neighbors' lands are gently rolling topography. Our lands together touch lands that are developed at 8 acre minimum, and are far more 'challenged' than ours. If we are allowed this change in classification from 40 to 20, any development would involve a road causing Japatul Lane to cease being a dead end road and cause it to connect to Japatul Valley Road south of us. I'm told this creates "connectivity" - something that is desired in fire country.

The Alpine Planning Group heard our request for RL-20 and approved it overwhelmingly. I do not see anything that specifically addresses us in the SEIR that the public has been asked to comment upon.

I am joining my neighbors in reasserting that development of this sort in the Japatul Valley will be beneficial to the environment, and will also brighten our economy out here.

We ask you to look with favor on our request, as it is reasonable and proper.



Robert Beale  
21912 Japatul Lane  
Alpine, CA 91901

*U.S. Forest Service comments opposing CPG recommendation*

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Cleveland National Forest  
SO

10845 Rancho Bernardo Rd.  
Suite 200  
San Diego, CA 92127-2107  
(858) 673-6180  
(858) 673-6192 FAX  
(800) 735-2922 CRS

File Code: 1560

Date: March 18, 2013

Mindy Fogg  
County of San Diego, Planning and Development  
Services  
5510 Overland Avenue, Suite 110  
San Diego, CA 92123

To the County of San Diego:

The Cleveland National Forest appreciates the opportunity to comment on the potential impacts of the proposed General Plan Amendment for the former Forest Conservation Initiative (FCI) lands. The Forest's comments include comments previously submitted during the scoping period, on the basis of a meeting with San Diego County staff and review of the proposed land use maps, as well as comments on the recently released Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR). We will begin by highlighting key issues and management challenges related to urbanization that were described in detail in our 2005 Forest Land Management Plan. These issues are common to all former FCI lands and are central to the potential environmental and public health and safety issues associated with increasing population density within and adjacent to the Cleveland National Forest. Next, issues particular to specific mapped areas of the plan are addressed. Finally, comments specific to the SEIR are addressed at the end of this letter.

Altogether, we are concerned about the potential environmental and public health and safety impacts that would be associated with increases in population density on former FCI lands, and we feel that these impacts are neither adequately disclosed in the Draft SEIR nor consistent with the objectives of the County of San Diego General Plan. Finally, we feel that the best way to protect both the environment and public health and safety on these lands would be to select the Modified Project Alternative along with a provision that buffer zones be set aside between private lands and the Cleveland National Forest.

**Comments Addressing all FCI Lands**

The rapidly increasing population of Southern California, the growing level of development adjacent to the Cleveland National Forest, and the resulting effects on the National Forest System (NFS) lands present some of our main management challenges. Higher density development in more remote areas leads to more Wildland/Urban Interface area that is at risk of and in need of protection from wildland fire. The combination of increased development and the need to protect these developed areas from fire and other natural events, such as flooding, will put increasing pressure on National Forest managers to alter landscape character to accommodate these uses. In the case of fire, suppression efforts to protect communities can lead to the buildup of fuels and eventually to higher severity, more damaging fires than would occur naturally.

Furthermore, increasing the number of homes in an area increases the likelihood of human-caused fires, which can increase fire frequency to levels that harm ecosystems, wildlife, and waterways. Finally, we have concerns about the potential difficulty of evacuating people from remote subdivisions when wildland fires occur nearby on the Cleveland National Forest.

Urban development also puts pressure on public lands to provide urban support facilities (i.e. infrastructure) through special-use authorizations as private land options for development are exhausted. In the past, subdivisions have been established with the expectation that adjacent National Forest land can accommodate necessary water tanks, utilities, and defensible space to protect homes from wildfire. Instead, we now request that private lands be required to serve these purposes for future subdivisions through the blanket incorporation of buffer zones for new development projects on FCI lands. Along the same lines, where water delivery systems are not in place, the installation of wells for household use will lower the groundwater table beneath adjacent NFS lands, thereby degrading habitats for native plant and animal species. To avoid these impacts, we request that water delivery systems be established before enabling increased density on former FCI lands.

Road access presents several primary issues associated with increasing population density within or adjacent to the National Forest. The narrow, winding National Forest road system was built in the 1930s to support fire protection and does not meet typical County access standards. Moreover, the greater the population density of an area, the wider a suitable road would need to be. The National Forest roads generally lack rights-of-way where they cross private lands, which would need to be obtained in order to widen them or convey utilities. Furthermore, any improvements to Forest or County roads on the National Forest would require substantial planning and environmental compliance to be borne by project proponents, if permitted. Widening roads, building new roads, and increasing traffic to accommodate increasing population density in remote County areas would negatively impact plants and animals in a variety of ways, including direct mortality and habitat loss and fragmentation, and would also increase erosion and sedimentation of waterways.

Increased interface between developed private lands and National Forest boundaries also increases boundary management challenges including addressing occupancy trespass, clearly posting boundaries, and retaining clear title to NFS land. For example, in re-marking forest boundary after the 2007 fires, we discovered major encroachments adjacent to some subdivisions.

Another challenge associated with urbanization is the complex problem of National Forest access. For example, traditional points of public and administrative access to the National Forest have been lost as private land is subdivided. New landowners are often reluctant to accommodate access across their land. At the same time, residents living adjacent to the National Forests want convenient access, often resulting in the development of unplanned roads and trails. Unauthorized motorized vehicle use occurs and tends to be more of a management challenge on National Forest lands near private developments. As an example, illegal motor vehicle use of the Pacific Crest Trail has been reported from the Lake Morena area in the midst of the federally designated Hauser Wilderness.



Population growth within and surrounding the National Forests will probably be the single largest impact on National Forest recreation management in the foreseeable future. This growth has pushed urban development closer to and within the National Forest, in some cases directly adjacent to National Forest boundaries. Where NFS lands are or will be the boundary to this development, there will be pressure on these adjacent lands to provide diverse kinds of recreation. Higher density development would be expected to increase this pressure. Recreation on the National Forest is managed according to Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) to provide choices for people to recreate in settings that vary from urban to primitive. In general, the Forest Service would prefer zoning on adjacent private lands to be complementary with the land use zone and ROS on the NFS land. For example, where there is interface between private lands and NFS lands within a designated wilderness area or Inventoried Roadless Area, lower density County zoning would be the more complementary. Solitude, an increasingly rare opportunity, is a desirable feature in wilderness, but would be difficult or impossible to retain in the face of the increasing population and high density development.

Extensive habitat conservation planning efforts led by local government and conservation organizations have identified the need to maintain an inter-connected network of undeveloped areas or landscape linkages, which retain specific habitats and allow for maintenance of biodiversity and wildlife movement across the landscape and led to development of several multi-species habitat conservation plans. National Forest System lands are a core element of this natural open space network and will play an increasingly important role as additional habitat fragmentation occurs on surrounding private lands. Fragmentation is the breaking up of contiguous blocks of habitat by urban development features into progressively smaller patches that are increasingly isolated from one another and of less value for conservation. Higher density zoning allows for a higher level of development and, accordingly, fragmentation. Habitat loss and fragmentation are the leading causes of species extinctions, and the Cleveland National Forest has many populations of federally-listed threatened and endangered species that could be affected by increasing population density on former FCI lands. Meanwhile, invasive species generally enter new areas through human activity in those areas, and so increasing population density would result in the introduction of new infestations that would damage Forest resources and be costly to manage.

#### Comments Specific to Particular Locations

- **Alpine Community Planning Area (CPA).** The Forest is concerned about the density increases proposed for areas at the eastern end of Alpine, both south and north of Interstate 8. Road and water systems should be planned before enabling such increases, and the severe risk of fires starting along the freeway corridor and blowing westward into these areas should be addressed. In addition, Viejas Mountain was designated a Critical Biological Area of the National Forest by our Land Management Plan due to its unique botanical resources. The dense developments proposed for its perimeter and northeast of the Viejas Reservation, shown in yellow (SR-1) on the proposed maps, would be unlikely to effectively buffer this sensitive area from the impacts of residential development. This zoning also appears to be inconsistent with similar areas on the west side of Viejas Mountain, which are designated as RL-40. For the parcels that were re-designated as RL-

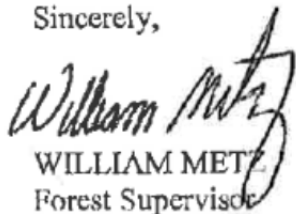
20 since the last maps were made available, we would prefer that the RI-40 designation be retained instead to prevent the environmental and public health and safety impacts described above.

### Conclusion

We appreciate the development and consideration of the Modified Project (Environmentally Superior) Alternative as described in Chapter 4.3. The sacrifice of less than 10% of the residential dwelling units of the proposed project would certainly be worth the resultant protection of resource conditions and reduction of wildfire risk to communities. Moreover, the areas where the lower densities would be located, as specified in the Modified Project Alternative, are precisely the areas where resource and wildfire concerns are greatest. As a result, we strongly support the adoption of the Modified Project Alternative rather than the Proposed Project. In addition, we encourage the County to set aside buffer zones between private and NFS lands to protect the environment and public health and safety and reduce conflict between adjacent land uses.

To conclude, we appreciate the consideration that you have given to our past concerns about this project and hope that you give similar consideration to our concerns about the Draft SEIR. We are very interested in working with the County of San Diego to achieve the objectives of the project that address environmental sustainability and risk avoidance. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the potential impacts of the proposed project for the former FCI lands in the unincorporated areas of San Diego County. If you have any questions about these comments, please contact Jeff Heys, Forest Planner, at (858) 674-2959.

Sincerely,



WILLIAM METZ  
Forest Supervisor

cc: Gloria Silva