SCAG Regional Advanced Mitigation Draft Policy Framework

Regional Advance Mitigation Planning – Advisory Task Group – Meeting #3

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October 7ᵗʰ Regional Council Action & Next Steps

Regional Council Action

Continued the pause on implementation of the SoCal Greenprint, allowing further engagement with stakeholders to ensure the tool advances required PEIR mitigation measures and is aligned with regional policy objectives

Next Steps

- **Establish policy framework & white paper for advance mitigation**
- Develop Greenprint with focus on cities, counties & transportation agencies
- Review and revise proposed data layers with feedback from strategic & scientific advisors, stakeholders, and RAMP-ATG members
- Conduct user testing
- Disclosure statement & acknowledgement
- Return to RC to seek feedback and remove the pause

Realizing Connect SoCal

THE 2020-2045 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN/
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY OF THE
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS

CONNECT SoCal

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ADOPTED ON
SEPTEMBER 3, 2020

RAMP is part of the vision outlined in Connect SoCal to advance the region's economic vitality, improve mobility options, and grow in a sustainable way that builds healthy and vibrant communities

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RAMP Can Help Support Connect SoCal Goals

| Enhance the preservation, security, and resilience of the regional transportation system | Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality | Support healthy and equitable communities | Adapt to a changing climate and support an integrated regional development pattern and transportation network | Promote conservation of natural and agricultural lands and restoration of habitats |

RAMP Can Help Implement Connect SoCal Strategies

- Preserve, enhance and restore regional wildlife connectivity;
- Reduce consumption of resource areas, including agricultural land;
- Support local policies for renewable energy production, reduction of urban heat islands and carbon sequestration;
- Promote more resource efficient development focused on conservation, recycling and reclamation;
- Identify ways to improve access to public park space

Climate Change Action Resolution

- Regional Council unanimously adopted Resolution 21-628-1 in January 2021
- Affirmed the climate change crisis in Southern California
- Committed SCAG to a series of actions, including to:

  "*develop a regional advanced mitigation program (RAMP)* as envisioned in Connect SoCal for regionally significant transportation projects to mitigate environmental impacts."

Addressing Environmental Impacts in California

(a) Avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action;

(b) Minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation;

(c) Rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the impacted environment;

(d) Reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action; and

(e) Compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environment.

Challenges with Project-by-Project Mitigation

- Infrastructure
  - Inefficient project-by-project analysis
  - Costly and difficult to manage mitigation sites
  - Delayed project delivery

- Environment
  - Isolated islands of habitat, disconnected from natural systems
  - Missed opportunities for other benefits

CaLandTrusts.org

Benefits of Regional Advanced Mitigation

- Multiple agency collaboration and cooperation
- Increased certainty in project delivery
- Reduced time in the environmental review process
- Reduced costs for compensatory mitigation investments
- Improved watershed and ecosystem health
- Increased connectivity and conservation

Regional advance mitigation programs (RAMP) allow state and federal agencies to consider the environmental impacts and mitigation needs of multiple planned infrastructure projects and urban development all at once, and satisfy those mitigation requirements early in the project planning and environmental review process

CaLandTrusts.org

– SCAG Draft RAMP Policy Framework

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County Transportation Commissions Feedback Summary

- **Potential Benefits of RAMP:**
  - Address data gaps, providing input on land use, sharing data
  - Enhance cross-jurisdictional and cross-county collaboration
  - Encourage continued collaboration between SCAG and CTCs to address mitigation project-by-project & at a county scale
  - Incentives for advanced mitigation
  - Provide solutions for reducing the impacts of projects

Summary of Feedback from CTCs (con't)

- Concerns on establishing a RAMP:
  - Potential duplication and/or conflicting mitigation efforts between regional, county, and local approaches
  - May hold a gap in direct application to local conditions

- Suggestions on establishing a RAMP:
  - RAMP can be valuable across multiple sectors, not just transportation
  - Menu of mitigation options and approaches for each county
  - Focus on water resources in addition to biological resources
  - Transparent engagement with CTCs, partner agencies, utility agencies

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DRAFT
Regional Advance Mitigation (RAMP) Policy Framework

RAMP Policy Framework

1. Background

2. Framework for Advance Mitigation

- Regional Advance Mitigation Program & Advisory Task Group
- Regional Policy Foundation: Connect SoCal Goals and PEIR Requirements
  - Connect SoCal Goals
  - Natural and Farm Lands Conservation and Climate Resolution 21-628-1
  - PEIR Mitigation Measures
- RAMP Opportunity & Challenge Areas
- Goals for Regional Advanced Mitigation

3. Data Needs & Resources to Support RAMP

- Science Based Approach
- Data Policies
- Governance Standards
- User Guidelines
- Data Selection Criteria
- Data Parameter Requirements

Appendix A – Established RAMPs in SCAG Region

Goals for Regional Advanced Mitigation

1) Expedite project delivery;
2) Improve predictability for project funding;
3) Examine potential environmental impacts at the early stages of project development, utilizing the SoCal Greenprint tool, to help expedite the CEQA process;
4) Reduce costs, risks, and permitting time for responsible development;
5) Improve and reinforce regulatory agency partnerships;
6) Balance future growth and economic development with conservation and resilience; and
7) Achieve meaningful, regional-scale conservation outcomes.

Implementing Goals for Regional Advanced Mitigation

SCAG will seek to:

1) **Be a resource** for local partners to consider actions in a regional context;
2) **Focus on the transportation sector,** and consider opportunities to expedite and streamline mitigation needs for other sectors including housing, energy and utilities;
3) **Identify ways to establish or supplement regional conservation and mitigation banks** and other approaches to more effectively address impacts for projects that support reduction of per-capita vehicle miles traveled;
4) **Support** long term management and stewardship of conserved properties;
5) **Pursue a study to assess RAMP governance structures** that will complement existing advanced mitigation efforts in the region, fill gaps where programs do not exist, and ascertain best ways to collaborate with partner agencies and permitting entities;

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Implementing Goals for Regional Advanced Mitigation (con't)

SCAG will seek to:

6) **Pursue partnerships** and collaborative resource development with state agencies and other MPOs to leverage funding and align efforts beyond SCAG's jurisdictional boundaries;
7) **Be a data resource** with widely accessible data tools to assist in defining a RAMP that can provide the best available scientific data to help municipalities and transportation agencies make better land use and transportation infrastructure decisions and conserve natural and farm lands, consistent with Connect SoCal's PEIR Mitigation Measure AMM AG-2 and SMM BIO-2; and
8) **Identify potential partnerships** to foster the long-term maintenance of the SoCal Greenprint tool.

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Data Needs & Resources to Support RAMP

- Science Based Approach for Regional Advanced Mitigation

As noted by an Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funded study looking at advanced mitigation nation-wide, "*improved environmental information is needed on the front end of the project delivery process. Under the current process, state DOTs retrieve environmental data from a variety of sources and then assess environmental impacts and constraints. A central data clearinghouse...could improve assessment processes and mitigation outcomes.*"

Data Needs & Resources to Support RAMP: Draft Data Policies

1) SCAG will continue to promote data-driven decision making, government transparency, and data as a public engagement tool to accelerate progress toward achieving regional planning goals consistent with policies included in the Agency's final Future Communities Framework;

2) Data included in the SoCal Greenprint tool must be publicly available, meaning that existing datasets are available online or can be accessed if requested and/or licensed;

3) Data available through the SoCal Greenprint tool will not be identified, qualified, or defined as constraints on future development or growth, or in any way endorsed by the regional council as official policy of the agency;

4) Publicly available data to be made accessible through the SoCal Greenprint are not adopted by SCAG and are not an expression of regional policy;

Data Needs & Resources to Support RAMP: Draft Data Policies

5) The SoCal Greenprint will utilize the best available scientific data and will be vetted for inclusion by a selection of scientists across the region with regional knowledge and expertise;

6) Scientists providing vetting will be drawn principally from regional colleges and universities, public agencies, and non-governmental organizations for their expertise in natural science, climate science, energy resources, and water resources;

7) A timeline and process for periodically updating datasets will be established to ensure continuous use of the best available scientific data;

8) SCAG will seek feedback broadly on all proposed data layers for inclusion in the tool to identify, investigate, and address valid data security concerns;

9) Data elements will be regionally comprehensive to the extent feasible, and data depicted will not be altered from their original source;

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Data Needs & Resources to Support RAMP: Draft Data Policies

10) Consistent with policies included in SCAG's final Future Communities Framework, SCAG will continue to promote data-driven decision making, government transparency, and data as a public engagement tool to accelerate progress toward achieving regional planning goals;

11) SCAG will endeavor to increase the availability of civic data and information to reduce costs and increase the efficiency of public services; and

12) SCAG will support development and use of data tools to increase opportunities for public engagement and advocacy to inform local and regional policy

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Data Needs & Resources to Support RAMP: Draft Governance Standards

1) To convey limitations and foster its proper use as well as emphasize to users that the SoCal Greenprint tool is a non-regulatory tool with no legal effect on land-use decisions made by local agencies or property owners, the final, publicly available version of the tool will include a "popup screen" displaying disclosure language and will require user acknowledgment of the data's limitations; and

2) Prior to using the tool, users will be required to acknowledge and agree to the terms of use, containing the aforementioned disclosures and data limitations, through a "clickwrap" statement that is reasonably and prominently visible to all users. This will require the active, affirmative acknowledgement of each user; and will be written to be easily understood by the average user.

Data Needs & Resources to Support RAMP: Draft User Guidelines

1) The SoCal Greenprint will be web-based and easily accessible; and

2) The SoCal Greenprint will help identify potential priority conservation areas based on user needs using the best available scientific data to support decision making for municipalities, transportation agencies, conservation groups, developers, and researchers.

Data Needs & Resources to Support RAMP: Draft Data Selection Criteria

1) SCAG staff will prioritize selection of data accessible through the tool by rigorously applying the foregoing data policies, governance standards, and user guidelines;

2) SCAG staff shall explicitly instruct scientists providing vetting to identify data that supports regional advance mitigation planning for cities, counties and transportation agencies as the highest priority for inclusion in the tool;

3) SCAG staff shall actively engage with local partners through an open and transparent process and in consultation with established Regional Planning Working Groups, the Technical Working Group, as well as other strategic advisors representing key users to help inform data selection ensuring that the SoCal Greenprint tool can support decision making for municipalities, transportation agencies, conservation groups, developers, and researchers as required by Connect SoCal's PEIR mitigation measure;

Data Needs & Resources to Support RAMP: Draft Data Selection Criteria (con't)

4) Data will be organized in seven thematic areas, which are aligned with feedback from stakeholders and based on local planning needs in support of RAMP:
   a) Agriculture and Working Lands;
   b) Built Environment;
   c) Environmental Justice, Equity and Inclusion;
   d) Habitat and Biodiversity;
   e) Vulnerabilities and Resilience;
   f) Water Resources;
   g) Context;

5) Through outreach conducted with municipalities, transportation agencies, conservation groups, developers, and researchers, the following data topics have been identified as valuable for land use and transportation infrastructure decisions as well as conserving natural and farm lands, and are listed under each thematic area;

6) A timeline and process for periodically updating data sets will be established to ensure continuous use of the best available scientific data.
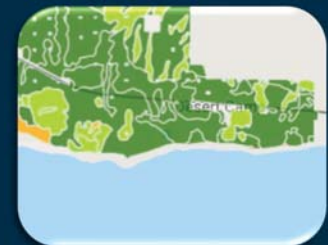
Agriculture and Working Lands:

- Prime agricultural land;

- Williamson Act contracts;

- Soil ratings;

- Irrigation;

- Groundwater recharge areas

    for agricultural land;

Built Environment:

- Impervious surfaces;
- Vehicle miles traveled (VMT);
- Light pollution;
- Noise;
- Public transit facilities;
- Sewer network;
- Airports;
- Entitlements;
- Clusters of parcels meeting
  CEQA streamlining definitions;
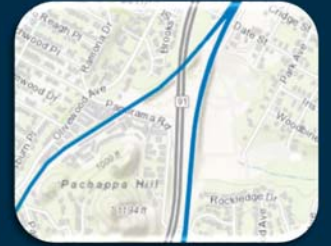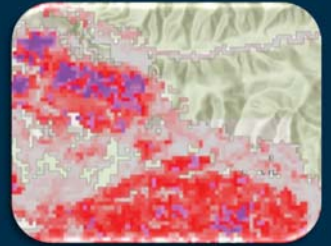
Environmental Justice, Equity and Inclusion:

- Gentrification and displacement;
- Historic redlining areas;
- Tribal nations;
- Affordable housing opportunity areas;
- Park access equity;
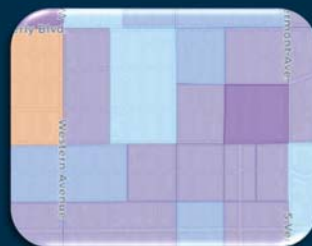
Habitat and Biodiversity:

- Habitat connectivity;
- Fish passage barriers;
- Soil/above ground/wildland carbon production;
- Species biodiversity;
- Species requiring mitigation;
- Areas with least conflict for solar energy development;
- Existing conservation plans;
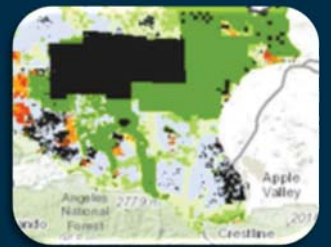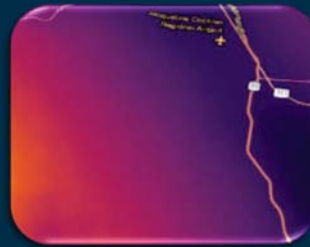
Vulnerabilities and Resilience:

- Urban heat islands;
- Earthquake hazard zones;
- Earthquake shaking potential;
- Fire hazard severity zones and risks to communities;
- Historic wildlife perimeters;
- Landslide zones;
- Liquefaction zones;
- Projected high heat days;
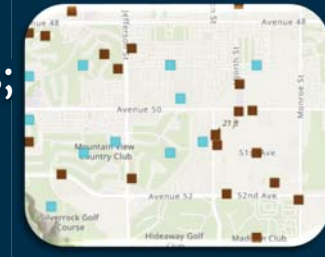- Sea level rise impact areas;
- Tsunami inundation zones;
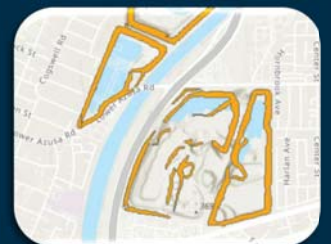
Water Resources:

- Water districts;
- Altered streams;
- Water quality monitoring sites;
- Groundwater recharge areas;
- Points of diversion;
- Runoff;
- Wells and change in groundwater levels;
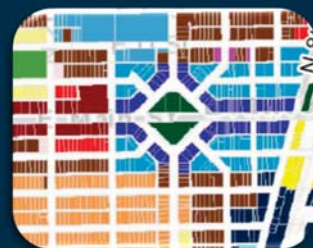- Water stress;
- Watersheds;
- Water quality index;

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Context:

- Land cover;

- General Plan Land use;

- Zoning;

- Protected open space areas;

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Data Needs & Resources to Support RAMP:
Draft Data Parameter Requirements

Consistent with SCAG's past and current practice, all data layers included in the SoCal Greenprint will feature individual background information on methods, limitations, sourcing, as well as guidance on their proper use, including:

1) The SoCal Greenprint shall feature a glossary and methods section that will provide full transparency to users on data elements featured, and will include:

   a) Narrative definitions that cite the data sources, explain the data in accurate and user friendly terms, and offer guidance on how the information can be used;

   b) A description of the methodology, reporting framework, and processing methods used to develop the data; c. Dataset names and URLs of original data sources;

Data Needs & Resources to Support RAMP:
Draft Data Parameter Requirements (con't)

   c) Data creation date and anticipated update schedules;

   d) Geographic constraints identifying the geographic unit of accuracy for the dataset. In some instances, data is accurate at larger areas but is not accurate when zoomed in to a smaller geography. For these instances, the minimum reporting size, or minimum level of geographic accuracy, will be displayed alongside the glossary entry (note that this reporting threshold will be used in the tool to hide reporting for measures that are not precise enough for a given area of interest report);

2) Layers will be consolidated in a single database for download and the database will include metadata consistent with the Geospatial Metadata Standards and Guidelines established by the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC):
   a) Identification information (originator, publication date, title, abstract, purpose, time period for content, currentness, progress, maintenance, etc.);
   b) Data quality information (attribute accuracy, completeness, positional accuracy, etc.);
   c) Spatial data organization information (indirect spatial reference for locating data without using coordinates);
   d) Spatial reference information (geographic coordinate system, latitude and longitude, etc.);

   e) Entity and attribute information (detailed description of dataset, overview description, attribute domain values, etc.);
   f) Distribution information (contact information for the individual or organization that distributes the data, a statement of liability assumed by the distributing individual or organization); and
   g) Metadata reference information (date metadata was written, contact information for the metadata author, metadata standard, metadata access constraints, metadata use constraints).

Timeline of the RAMP-ATG & SoCal Greenprint

December 2021 – March 2022

- RAMP Advisory Task Group

March 2022

- Greenprint Science & Strategic Advisory Committee Meeting

April 2022

- Draft Policy Framework Complete

May 2022

- Finalize list of data layers based on feedback from strategic & scientific advisors, stakeholders, and RAMP-ATG members

June – August 2022

- Complete draft tool and conduct user testing

Fall 2022

- Present tool to Regional Council & Energy & Environment Committee (EEC)

Thank you!

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