

Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Corridor Stakeholder Meeting

VENTURA COUNTY PLANNING DIVISION

JUNE 8, 2017

Agenda

- Introductions, Meeting Goal, and Format
- January 2017 Board Action
- Current Project Phasing
- Topic Discussions
- Wrap-up and Next Steps

Meeting Goal

- **Primary goal is to get feedback from all parties**
 - Property owners (including growers and ranchers), environmental advocates, cities, regulators, oil/gas operators, and other interested stakeholders
- What ideas sound feasible or infeasible?
- What do we need to know and understand about your operation?
- What ideas do you have that can help meet project objectives?

Meeting Format and Logistics

- Staff will provide brief summary of each topic area, followed by discussion
 - Comments will be recorded by two notetakers
 - To assist notetakers, please state your name and organization before you share your comment
- A time-keeper will notify the group when 5 minutes remain for each topic discussion
- Comment sheets are available for those who want to provide written comments

Board Action – January 24, 2017

General Plan policies and zoning standards will be developed to address four project objectives:

- Minimize Indirect Barriers
- Minimize Direct Barriers
- Minimize Vegetation Loss and Habitat Fragmentation
- Protect/Enhance Chokepoints

Board Action – January 24, 2017

Next Steps:

- Public Outreach – Begins with today's meeting; Future meeting will be scheduled
- Draft Policies and Standards
- Public Hearing Process – Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors

Project Phasing – Phase One

PHASE ONE ELEMENTS REVIEWED TODAY

- Develop ministerial standards for fencing and lighting
- Develop standards for making some existing exempt uses ministerial (e.g., fences lower than 6 ft.).
- Initial review of habitat fragmentation and chokepoints

PHASE ONE ELEMENTS REVIEWED AT FUTURE MEETING

- Develop ministerial standards for other direct and indirect impacts (e.g., noise, roads/wildlife crossings, invasive plants)
- Clustering development within parcels
- Continue discussion of vegetation removal and chokepoints; develop standards

Phase One will also include adding corridor overlay zone to the Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance

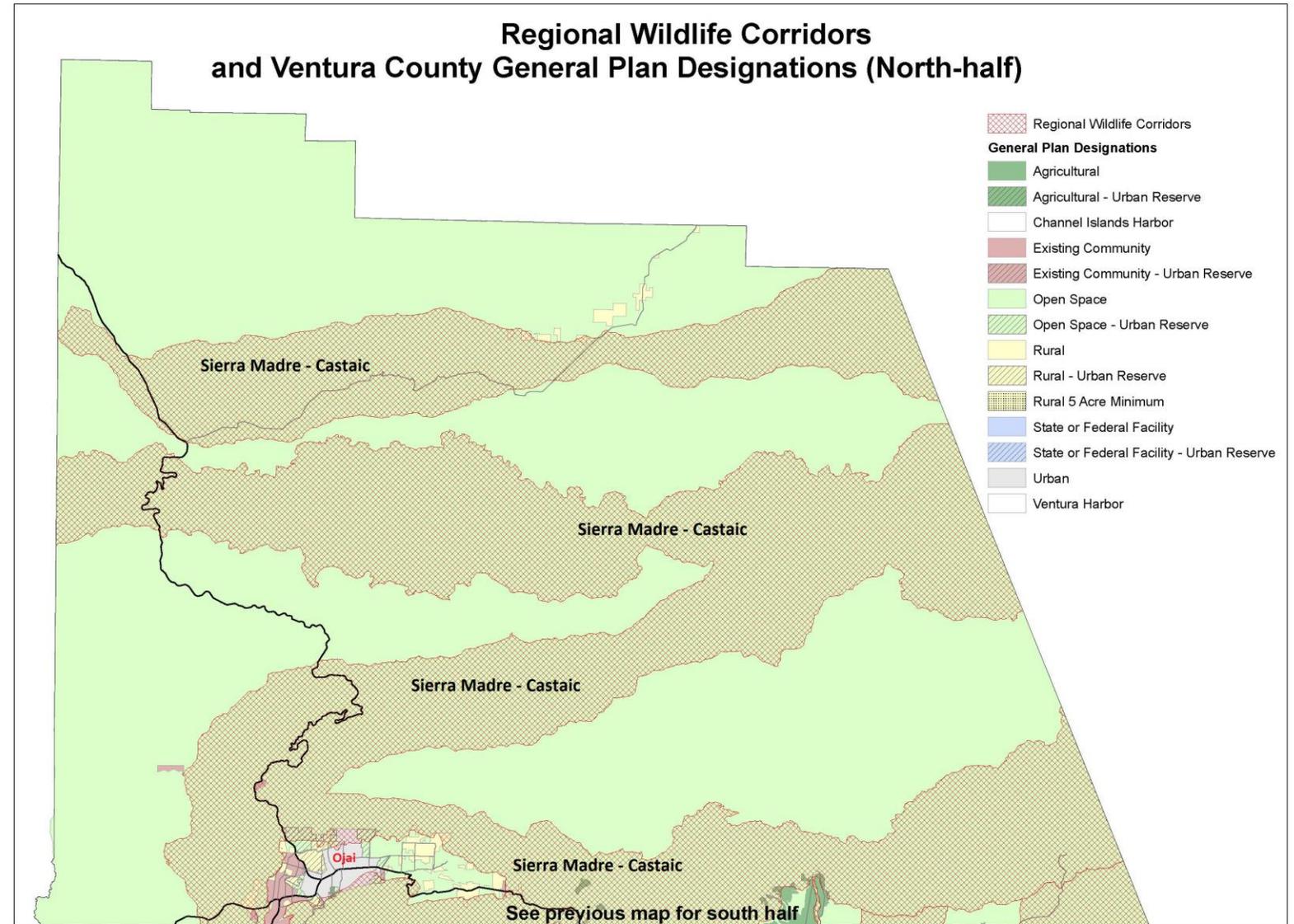
Project Phasing – Phase Two

- Address discretionary permit standards associated with cluster development and subdivisions
- Research and Develop Incentives
- Add Corridor map to General Plan
- Add necessary goals, policies and programs to General Plan

Wildlife Corridors in Ventura County

Corridor in North-half
of the County includes
Sierra Madre- Castaic

Integrated into Initial
Study Assessment
Guidelines (ISAGs)



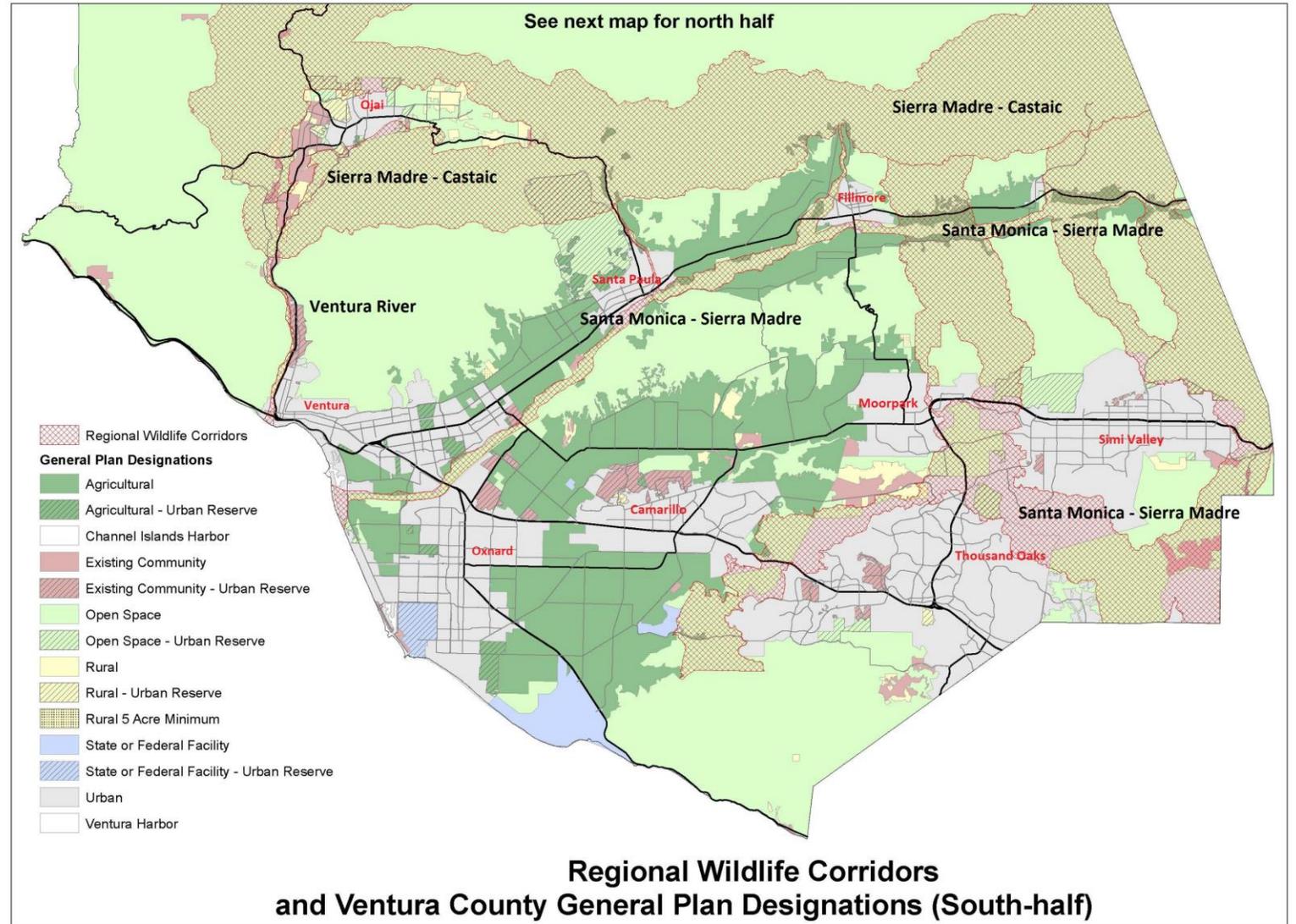
Wildlife Corridors in Ventura County

Corridors in South-half:

- Santa Monica – Sierra Madre
- Sierra Madre-Castaic
- Ventura River

Integrated into Initial
Study Assessment
Guidelines (ISAGs)

North/south corridors
are considered the
most vulnerable



Ministerial Permits

Objective:

To develop ministerial development standards for land use activities that impact wildlife movement within corridors and habitat connectivity.

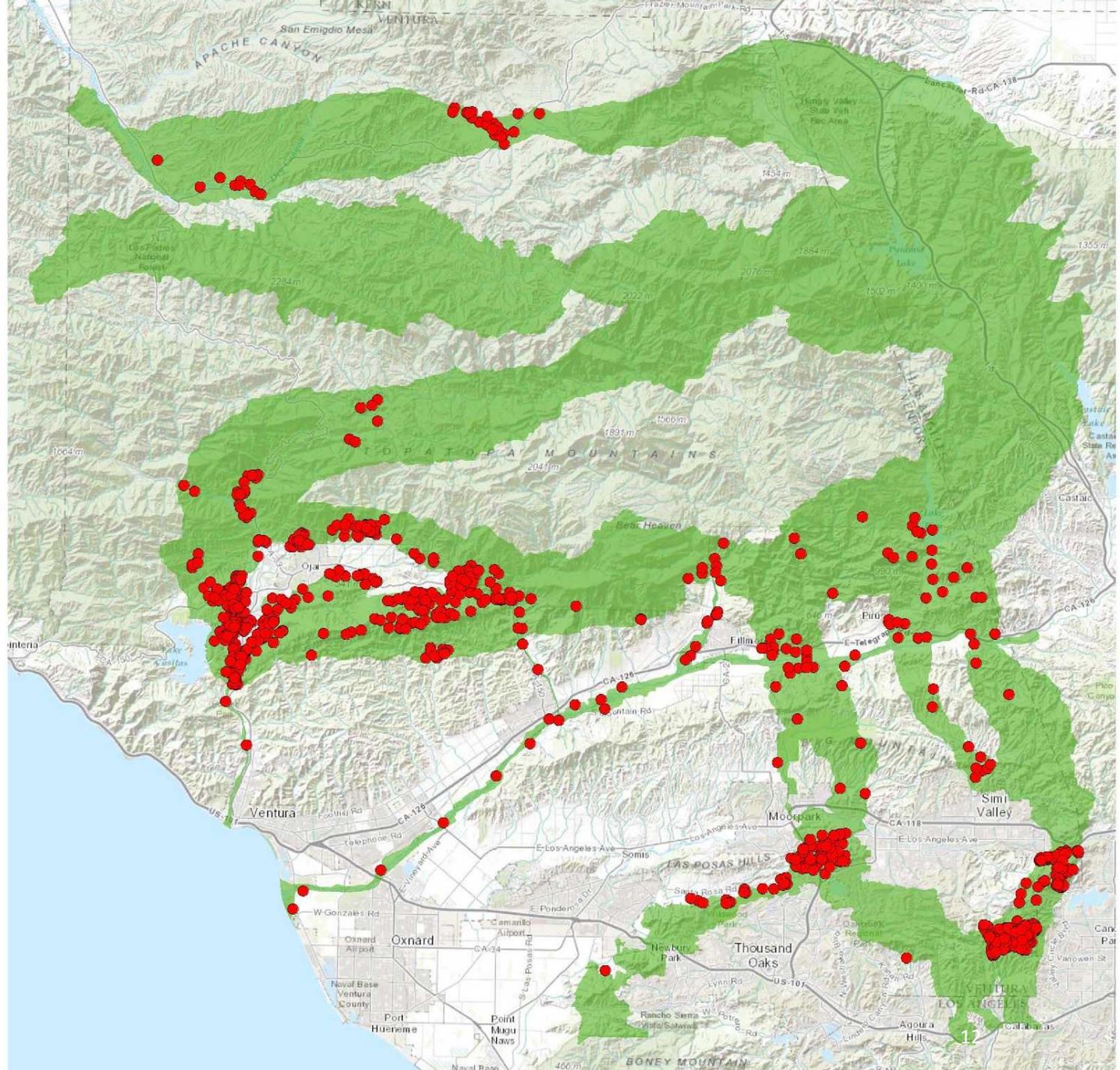
Why it matters:

Over 1,000 ministerial permits for development within the corridors were issued between 2005-2016.

- Some exempt development affects wildlife passage and habitat connectivity.
- Some ministerial development may require additional standards to increase compatibility with wildlife movement and habitat connectivity.

Ministerial Permits

- Approved Zoning Clearances 2005 – 2016
- Examples of common ZCs:
 - Fences/Walls over 6 ft.
 - Greenhouses (up to 20,000 sq. ft.)
 - Accessory Structures (up to 2,000 sq. ft.)



Project Objective:

Minimize Indirect
Barriers

Why it matters:

Many activities can disturb wildlife, which results in alteration of behavior and movement.



Indirect Barriers - Lighting

Joint CoLAB/Nature Conservancy Recommendation

“Basic practices such as directing lighting toward homes and work areas to avoid unnecessary light spillover is recommended. In general, lighting for large facilities such as parks, ball fields, golf ranges, equipment yards, etc., is acceptable, if is not used between 10PM and dawn.”

Example Regulations for Lighting CA Counties

Exterior lighting shall be minimized, restricted to low-intensity features, shielded and concealed to maximum extent feasible. (LA County)

Exterior safety lighting that includes low-level walkway lighting, motion detector security lighting, and hooded driveway and entry lighting is eligible for exemption from watercourse development permit requirements. However, lighting within riparian corridor is prohibited. (Santa Cruz County)

Indirect Barriers - Lighting

Potential “Best Management Practices” for External Lighting

- Exterior lighting should be minimized
- Use low-intensity fixtures
- Avoid light spillover by shielding
- Outdoor lighting restricted between key hours of the day linked to dawn and dusk
- Avoid/prohibit lighting within riparian areas

Open Discussion

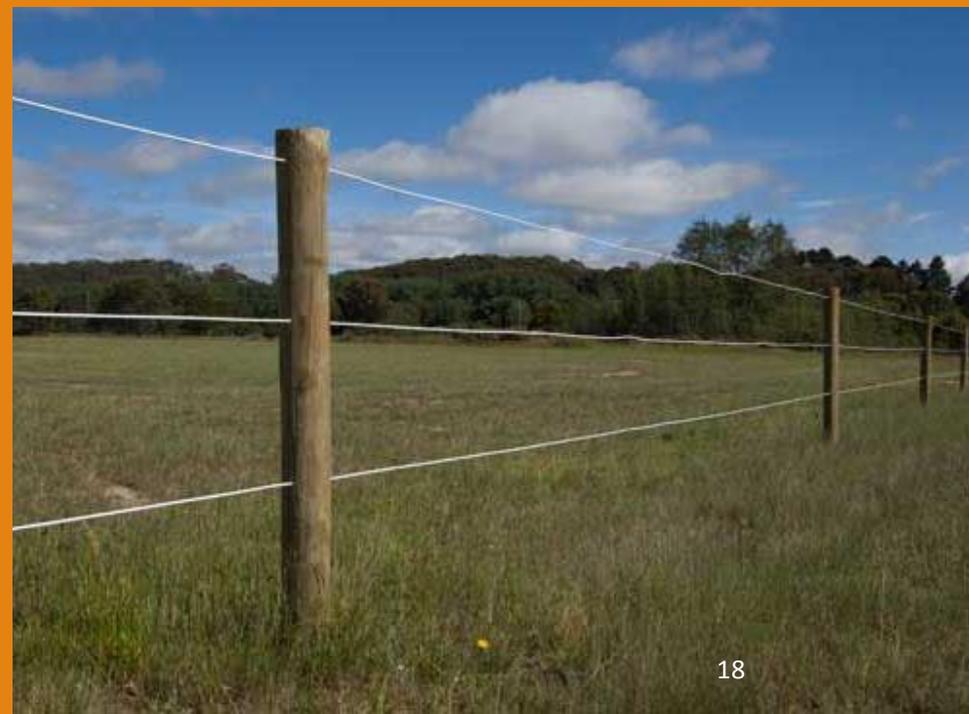
LIGHTING

Project Objective:

Minimize Direct Physical Barriers

Why it matters:

- Barriers, such as fences can become traps for wildlife, resulting in injury, death and separation from habitat
- Necessary infrastructure can be modified to allow for safer wildlife passage



Fencing challenges for wildlife*

Fences that:

- Are too high to jump
- Are too low to crawl under
- Have loose wires
- Have wires spaced too close together
- Are difficult for fleeing animals or birds to see
- Create a complete barrier

* From: *A Landowner's Guide to Wildlife Friendly Fences: How to Build a Fence with Wildlife in Mind, (Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks)*

Fence Locations/Uses

Perimeter fencing around a parcel

Dwellings

Stalls, stables, corrals

Grazing areas

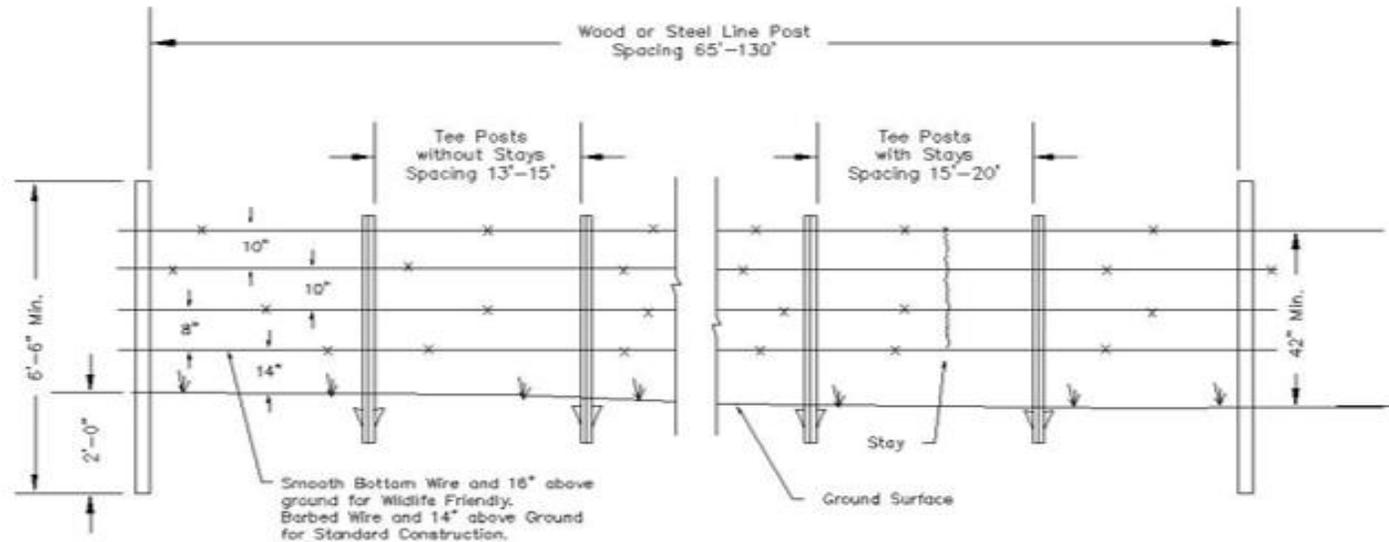
Crops

Domestic animals

Riparian areas

Roadways (including areas where wildlife is funneled to crossing structures)

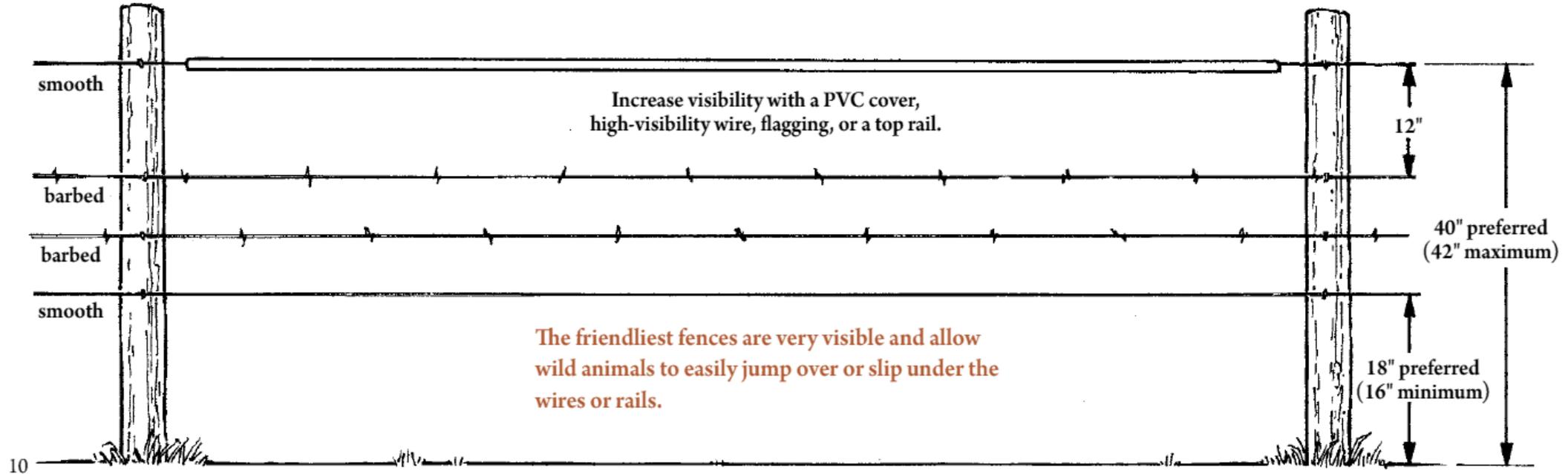
Wildlife Fencing Designs*



Stays only needed if line posts are greater than 15'
Wildlife option is smooth wire on the bottom

* Fence design submitted as recommendation from CoLAB and TNC

Wildlife Fencing Designs*



* *A Landowner's Guide to Wildlife Friendly Fences: How to Build a Fence with Wildlife in Mind, (Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks)*

Example Regulations - CA Counties

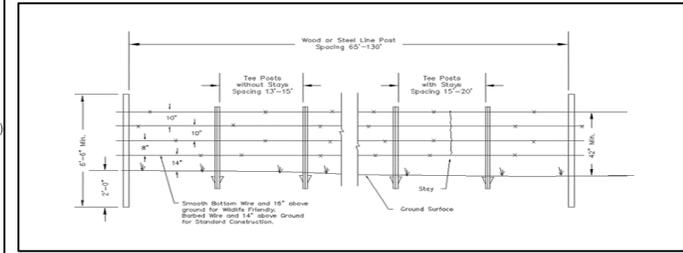
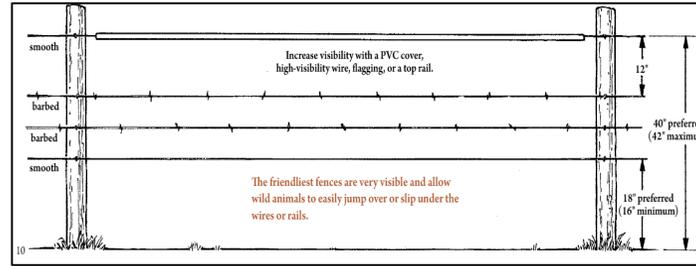
Los Angeles County Standards for “Wildlife Permeable Fencing” (Fencing designed for species found within the Santa Monica Mountains)

- Perimeter fencing of a parcel is prohibited
- Bottom horizontal rail shall be no lower than 18 inches from the ground
- Fence height no higher than 48 inches from the ground
- Minimum of 24 inches between each rail/board
- No barbed wire
- Only wildlife permeable fencing is allowed for perimeter of area where crops are grown

Butte County Fence Standards for Deer Herd Overlay Zone

- Bottom horizontal rail shall be no lower than 16 inches from the ground
- Fence height no higher than 48 inches from the ground
- Constructed of smooth wire, barbed wire, wood, or other material that won't be harmful to deer
- Fences around home sites, corrals used for livestock, enclosures for pets are exempt

Design Elements



Fencing Design Element	Design 1 (MT Fish/Wildlife; other jurisdictions)	Design 2 (CoLAB/TNC)
Height of top rail or wire	40 in. is ideal; 42 in. is maximum	60 in. used for ranching; 42 in. is minimum
Distance between top two wires	At least 12 inches	10 inches
Distance between bottom wire/rail and the ground	At least 18 inches	16 inches
Wire types	Smooth for top and bottom	Barbed on top; smooth on bottom
Fence Stays	None	Optional (only needed if posts are greater than 15 feet)
Post Intervals	16.5 feet	13 – 20 ft. range (depending on whether stays are used)

Open Discussion

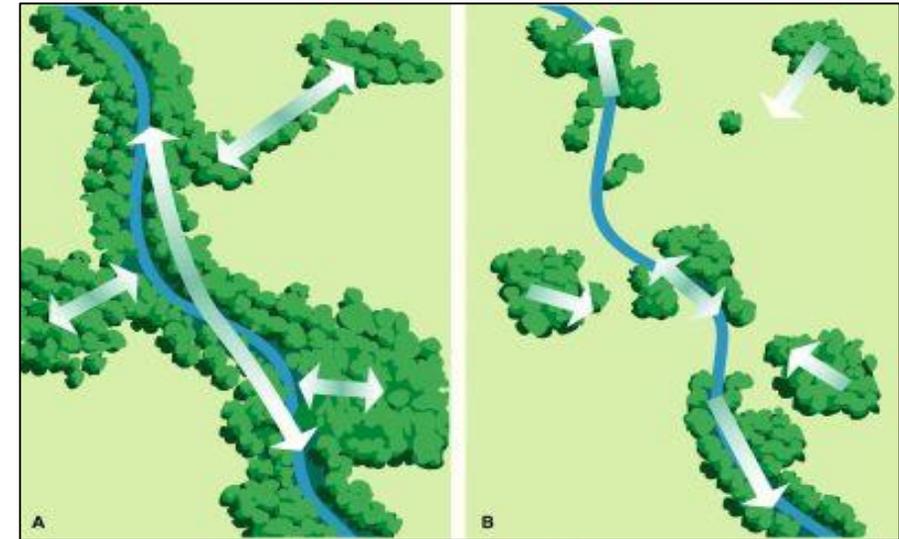
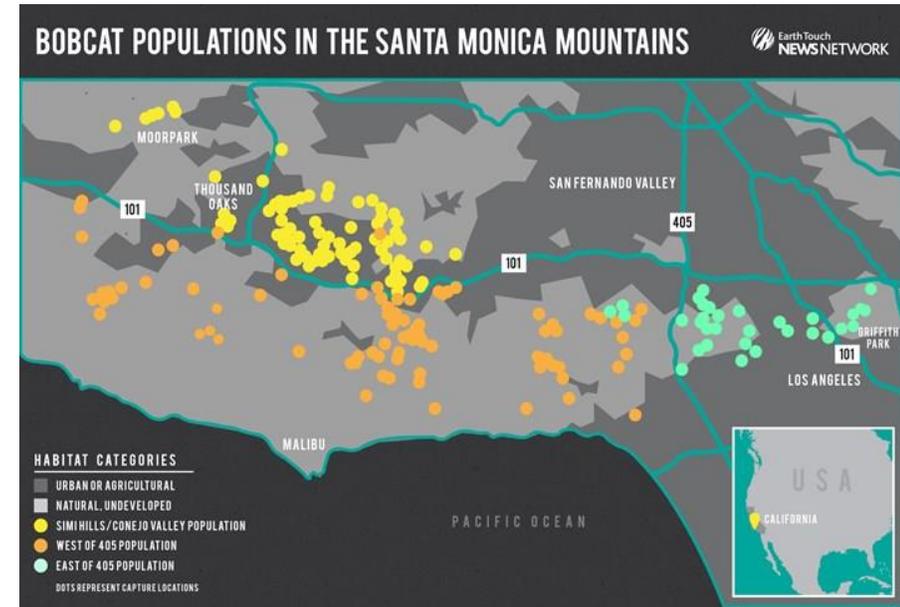
FENCING

Project Objective

Minimize vegetation loss and habitat fragmentation

Why it matters:

- Isolation of plants and animals and loss of habitat results in reduced population size and “ecosystem services.”
- Some wildlife is unable to move across the landscape
- Increased risk of predation and mortality
- Lack of resources to survive while moving through corridor



Native Vegetation Loss within Corridors

Critical Areas:

- Watercourses, Waterbodies, and Wetlands (Riparian/Alluvial Areas)
- Wildlife Roadway Crossings
- Ridgelines



Existing Regulatory Issues

- Only discretionary permits are evaluated for adverse impacts on critical areas
- Initial analysis shows ~ 600 ministerial permits within 200 ft. of a watercourse (2006-2017)
- Clearing native vegetation is exempted from many uses (except protected trees)
- Can currently build in the floodplain, along creeks and channels, and ridgelines
- CDFW requires notification of clearing in and adjacent to streams to determine whether a streambed alteration agreement is needed

Possible Approaches

- Clustering Development within Parcels and Subdivisions
- Development Setbacks from Critical Habitat Areas
- Limits on Vegetation Clearing within Areas such as Chokepoints

Initial Comments

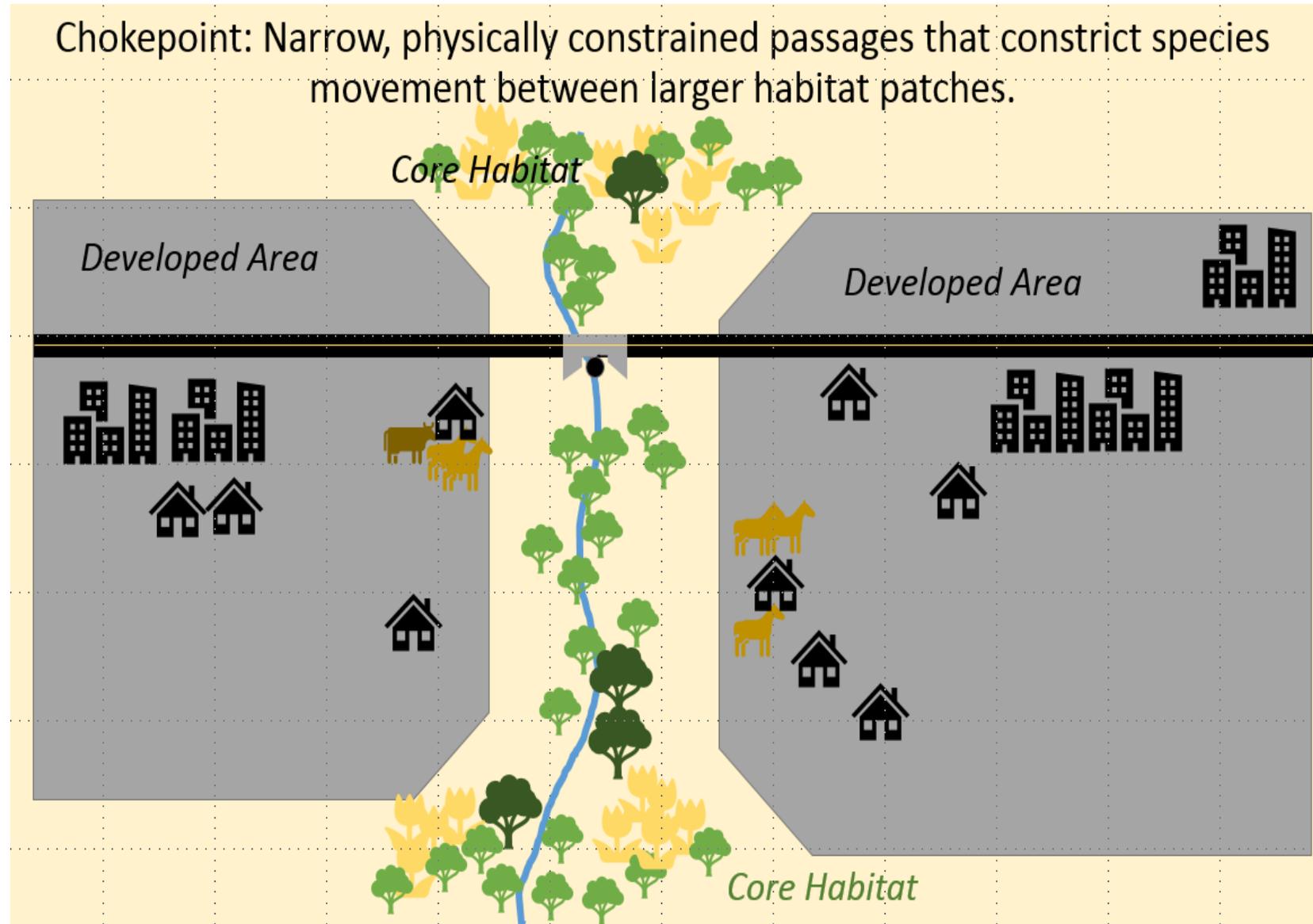
LOSS OF NATIVE VEGETATION AND HABITAT
FRAGMENTATION

Project Objective

Protect corridor widths and enhance function in chokepoints

Why it matters:

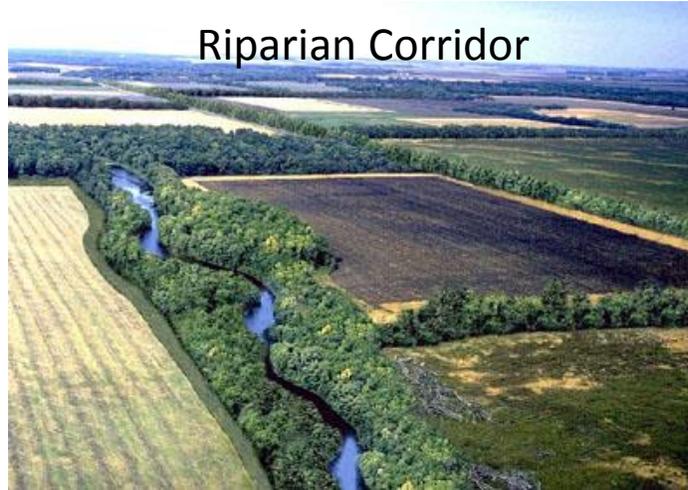
- Chokepoints are areas most at risk
- If connectivity is severed the entire linkage may no longer function



Chokepoints

Chokepoints often contain ***critical landscape features*** that facilitates movement.

These include natural features such as ***riparian corridors, ridgelines*** or human-constructed features such as ***culverts, bridges, and underpasses***.



Riparian Corridor



Ridgeline



Underpass

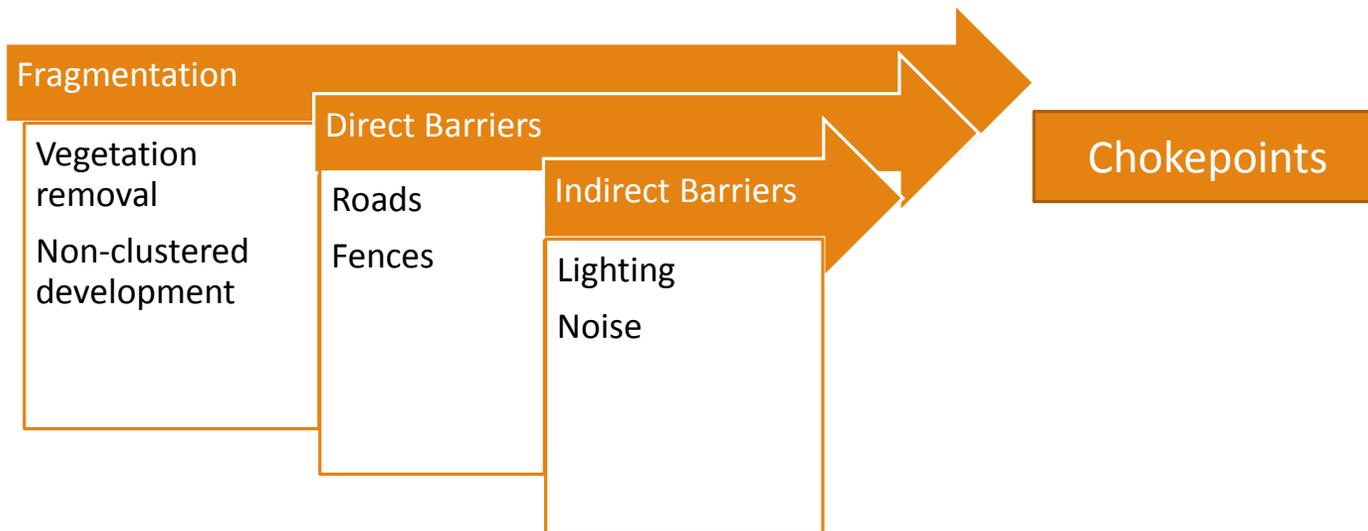
Figure 69. Looking north toward the Santa Susana Mountains through the first-rate bridged crossing at Alamos Canyon.



Bridge

Figure 73. Looking south from Rocky Peak Park toward Santa Susana State Historic Park at the bridge for Rocky Peak Road over SR-118.

Connectivity Issues get Amplified in Chokepoints



Choke points can be **critical** to wildlife movement.

These **high risk** areas could be severed and wildlife cut off from **critical resources**.

Populations can decline and suffer a loss of genetic diversity.

Initial Comments

CHOKEPOINTS

Wrap-up and Next Steps

- Remaining questions or comments?
- Next Steps
 - Begin developing ministerial standards for fencing and lighting
 - Hold additional meeting to discuss other Phase One issues
 - Noise (indirect barriers)
 - County road standards and wildlife crossings (direct barriers)
 - Clustering within parcels (chokepoints/habitat fragmentation)
 - Vegetation Removal (chokepoints/habitat fragmentation)
 - Buffers in critical corridor areas (chokepoints/habitat fragmentation)