

COUNTY TREE PROTECTION REGULATIONS

Overview

The County of Los Angeles has acknowledged the importance of protecting California's native trees and has ordinances, plans, and programs in place to protect oak trees, significant ecological areas, Joshua trees, and the biological resources of the Santa Monica Mountains within unincorporated County areas. Such protections do not apply to trees in incorporated cities within County limits. However, existing tree protection policies, their strengths, and their areas for improvement can help the County and regional policymakers continue to develop policies that align with regional urban forest goals.

Table 1: Countywide Tree Regulations

Policy	Oak Tree Ordinance*	Oak Woodlands Conservation Management Plan*	Significant Ecological Areas Program*
Goal	Preserve and maintain healthy oak trees in the development process	No-net-loss of existing woodlands - measured in acres - within unincorporated County areas	To foster biodiversity within the sensitive habitats in the County
Protected trees	Any tree of the oak tree genus, which is 8" or more in diameter four and one-half feet above mean natural grade or in the case of oaks with multiple trunks a combined diameter of twelve inches or more of the two largest trunks	An oak stand, including its understory, which consists of two or more oak trees of at least five inches in diameter measured at 4.5 feet above mean natural grade, with greater than 10 percent canopy cover or that may have historically supported greater than 10 percent canopy cover	All Joshua trees (<i>Yucca brevifolia</i>) and California juniper (<i>Juniperus californica</i>) are protected regardless of size. Riparian species and trees listed as rare by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) are protected at 3-inch DBH, coniferous species are protected at 5-inch DBH, and upland hardwood species are protected at 6-inch DBH. Heritage trees (trees above 36" DBH) and Joshua trees over 20' tall, have additional protections
Restricted Actions	Cutting, destroying, removing, relocating, inflicting damage, encroaching into the protected zone	Significant impacts on oak woodlands	Tree Removal, encroachment, pruning
Requirements	Permit Application Arborist report Replace trees at a ratio of 2:1 to 12:1 to the amount removed, depending on size of tree removed. Monitoring trees for seven years	Oak Woodland Report, including the trees present, canopy density, age demographic, and special status species present. Mitigation through restoration of degraded oak woodlands, land acquisition, contributing to Oak Forests Special Fund Mitigation must achieve a replacement of canopy cover at a 2:1 ratio for the amount removed.	Removing a single heritage tree or more than two trees within a SEA requires a SEA Conditional Use Permit (SEA CUP). Mitigation involves replacing protected trees on site with a 2:1 ratio or paying a fee to the County's Protected Tree Fund. Any removal, encroachment, or pruning of Joshua trees within California requires an Incidental Take Permit (ITP). Permanent preservation of 2.5-4 acres for every acre impacted.

*Link to regulation

Table 2: Area-specific Tree Regulations

Policy	Santa Monica Mountains North Area Plan*	Local Coastal Plan*
Goal	Provide protections for trees that are native to the Santa Monica Mountains, including limiting removal of native trees when feasible.	Protection, enhancement and restoration of environmentally sensitive habitats, including intertidal and nearshore waters, wetlands, bays and estuaries, riparian habitat, certain wood and grasslands, streams, lakes, and habitat for rare or endangered plants or animals
Protected trees	Native tree species specified on the Department of Regional Planning’s “Protected Trees in the Santa Monica Mountains” list.	Oak, walnut, sycamore, bay, and other native trees
Restricted Actions	cutting, destroying, removing, relocating, inflicting damage, or encroaching into the protected zone	Removal of native trees, trimming or encroachment in the protected zone
Requirements	All protected trees must be inventoried within biological review. Mitigation dependent on type of impact, project type, and tree size. Replacement trees up to a 10:1	Mitigation dependent on type of impact, and tree size. Replacement trees up to a 10:1 Where development encroaches into less than 30 percent of the protected zone of native trees, each affected tree shall be monitored annually for a period of not less than 10 years.

*Link to regulation