

Chapter Two – Existing Conditions and Issues



Topanga Creek

PARK SUMMARY

The following section summarizes existing land uses, facilities, and significant resources of Topanga State Park. The information was adapted from resource inventories (Appendix G – under separate cover) conducted as part of the General Plan update process. These resource inventories supplement the baseline data provided by the 1977 Resource Management Plans, General Development Plans (GDP), and Environmental Impact Reports for Topanga, Malibu Creek, and Point Mugu State Parks. These data provided a baseline for developing:

- management zones and planning matrix;
- the goals and guidelines found in Chapter 3 (the Plan) and
- The Preferred Plan.

EXISTING LAND USE

Topanga State Park currently offers limited camping opportunities; a modest, but soon to be renovated nature center at the Trippet Ranch skeet lodge; and an extensive trail system that serves multiple regional and park-wide circulations needs. The Park's steep topography and vast expanse of canyons and ridgelines play host to a wide range of users, from recreational hikers, to bicyclists, to equestrians. Other users include scientists, scholars, and students such as geologists, entomologists, naturalists, biologists, historians, and archaeologists.

EXISTING FACILITIES

Trippet Ranch

Existing facilities at Trippet Ranch include the main residence, stable/barn, machine shed, and skeet lodge.

- Ranger and maintenance facilities - housed in the historic stable/barn and machine shed
- A nature center - housed in the historic skeet lodge (will reopen after renovation)
- Park staff residence – in the historic main ranch residence (dubbed the Superintendent's House)
- Park entrance station, restroom, picnic area, and parking

Maintenance Yard and Residential Area adjacent to Trippet Ranch

- Storage yard
- Two staff residences (one stand-alone and one modular)

Los Leones

- Amphitheater, ramadas, picnic tables, restroom, modular unit, and parking (another restroom is scheduled to be constructed in 2012)

Musch Camp

- Developed walk-in, bike-in, or horseback ride-in campground with restroom and corrals

Lower Topanga Canyon Area

- Topanga Motel
 - Approximately 27 structures; all currently vacant except for one staff residence
- Two restaurants with parking

- A retail business with parking selling animal feed, beach-going items, and gifts
- A furniture business with parking
- A vacant business structure adjacent to the creek – planned for an interim concession in 2011
- Parking, picnic tables, and beach access (under the highway)

Park staff residences

- One staff housed in one of the Topanga Motel units
- One staff housed in one of the structures at Trippet Ranch
- One stand-alone structure in the Residential Area near Trippet Ranch
- One modular unit in the Residential Area near Trippet Ranch
- One stand-alone structure near Musch Camp

Trail System

The Park contains an extensive trail system including an interpretive loop trail at Trippet Ranch.

- The Backbone Trail runs through the middle of the Park and the Rim of the Valley Trail passes through the northern part of the Park along Dirt Mulholland
- The Coastal Slope Trail is proposed to run through the southern part of the Park
- Trail nodes, including a developed node at Hub Junction, which is planned for a new vault toilet in 2012
- Overlooks and viewpoints are present throughout the trail system

The Overlook at the end of the ridge above Parker Mesa has been named “Vista Marquez” in honor of Francisco Marquez, who built the first adobe structure on Rancho Boca de Santa Monica. This Rancho was originally established in 1827 and granted to Marquez and his partner, Ysidro Reyes in 1838. It included the southern portion of what is today Topanga State Park.

Roads

Access into the Park is from adjacent or bisecting roads such as Topanga Canyon Boulevard, Pacific Coast Highway, Reseda Boulevard, Los Leones Drive, Entrada Road, and Sunset Boulevard, with internal circulation, mainly for operation and maintenance, handled by unpaved dirt service and fire roads. Along these fire roads are strategically located emergency landing zones for fire protection and management that are used by both the County and City of Los Angeles fire departments. One of the major emergency landing zones is near Trippet Ranch.

A traffic study prepared as part of this planning process produced data used to evaluate proposed planning decisions as well as for the Environmental Analysis.

Parking

Three parking areas currently exist within the Park at Trippet Ranch, Los Leones, and the Lower Topanga Canyon area. Street access to the

Park's Trippet Ranch entrance is from Entrada Road via Topanga Canyon Boulevard in the west central part of the Park. Los Liones Drive, off of West Sunset Boulevard and Temescal Canyon Road, provides access to the Los Leones entrance. The Lower Topanga Canyon area is accessed via Pacific Coast Highway.

Off-site parking is available along city and county streets and at adjacent and nearby parks and open space areas, some of which charge parking fees.

Utilities

The majority of the Park's water supply is via connection to local water district supply lines, while most of the wastewater treatment within the Park is handled via septic and leach field systems. For example, facilities at Trippet Ranch and the Lower Topanga Canyon area are connected to a local water line and sewage is treated via septic/leach systems, while the limited facilities at Los Leones are tied into municipal water and sewer systems.

The closest municipal sewer line to the Lower Topanga Canyon area is several miles north along Pacific Coast Highway, near Coastline Drive.

Utility easements, including road, sewer, and water easements run throughout the Park, with many such easements located near the Mulholland Corridor, and the Lower Topanga Canyon and Rustic Canyon areas.

OPERATIONS

Public Safety

The Park primarily relies on CSP rangers for visitor safety. When a 911 call is received by local law enforcement or fire departments, they

contact the Southern Communication Center (SURCOM), which is CSP's law enforcement and emergency telecommunication service. SURCOM will then contact Topanga State Park rangers. For major crimes, the County and/or City of Los Angeles law enforcement agencies will be called upon depending where the crime falls within the Park (the majority of the Park falls within the City limit of Los Angeles).

In the recent past, criminal activities have been infrequent in the Park, mainly involving minor infractions and vandalism.

Firefighting within the Park is a multi-agency effort due to the high fire severity designation for most of the region. First responders for the Park are: County Fire Station #69 in the town of Topanga and City Fire Station #23, located in Pacific Palisades near Los Leones. CSP also has agreements with a few agencies such as the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MCRA), for providing joint-use of fire crews for fire protection.

Concessions

Four existing businesses (see Existing Facilities section, Lower Topanga Canyon area on page 11) were present prior to the acquisition of the Lower Topanga Canyon area. All four have been in continuous operations as part of the Interim Management Plan (IMP). These businesses are operating on either short term leases or month-to-month rental arrangements. Per CSP policies and regulations, all such businesses within a park unit shall be "concessions" as defined in California Resource Code sections 5080.02 - 5080.29, and any concessions

identified to remain need to be consistent with the Park's vision as denoted within the General Plan.

Filming

Although filming is not a major revenue generating component, parking and other fees are charged to recover such expenses as staff review time and monitoring of such events. Filming is allowed in the Park as long as the activities comply with CSP's filming policies as denoted in "The Guidelines for Filming in California State Parks" (1998). Several movies and television shows have used the Park as a minor filming location. The most well-known among these was the television series *The X-Files*, which filmed parts of an episode in the Lower Topanga Canyon area.

ADJACENT LAND USE

As part of the 150,000-acre Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA), Topanga State Park has a wide variety of open space within a 20-mile radius of its boundaries, including ten other CSP-operated units:

- Leo Carrillo State Park
- Los Angeles State Historic Park
- Los Encinos State Historic Park
- Malibu Creek State Park
- Malibu Lagoon State Beach
- Point Mugu State Park
- Río de Los Ángeles State Park
- Robert H. Meyer Memorial State Beach
- Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park
- Will Rogers State Historic Park

The list of land ownership of the adjacent uses that range from public beaches to reservoirs and even a

former Nike missile site, is as long as the numerous miles of highways that stretch adjacent to the Park, including Pacific Coast Highway, Topanga Canyon Boulevard, Sunset Boulevard and the Ventura Freeway. A sampling of adjacent land owners includes the National Park Service, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, County of Los Angeles (e.g., the Beaches and Harbors and Sanitation Divisions), City of Los Angeles, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Las Virgenes Municipal Water District (Figure 2).

NATURAL RESOURCES

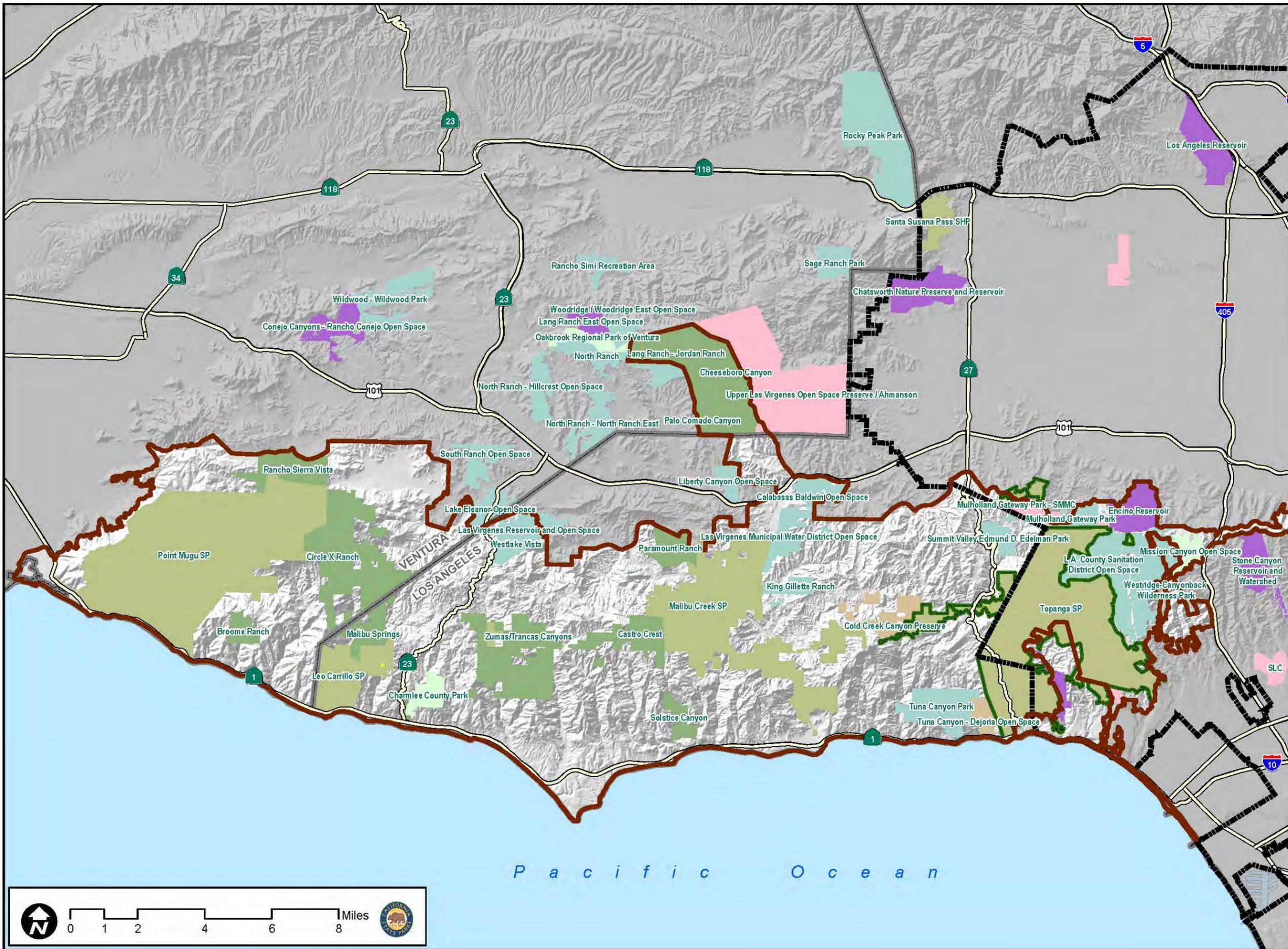
Environmental Setting

The Park is located in the California Floristic Province, Southwest Region, Western Transverse Ranges Subregion. Elevations within the Park range from sea level to 2,614 feet (Figure 3).

The climate is considered Mediterranean and fluctuates with the seasons with hot dry summers and mild wet winters. Average annual precipitation is approximately 16 inches, which primarily falls as rain in the winter. Temperatures range from highs of 68° to 96° F and lows from 38° to 58° F. The frost-free period is from 300 to 350 days.

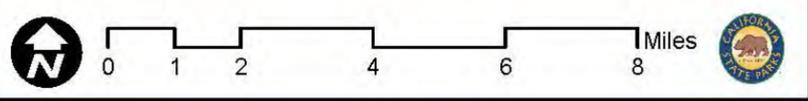
On average, 86% of the rainfall occurs between November and March, with the majority (47%), concentrated in January and February from large storms that last for several days. The dry season is considered to be from May-October. Very little rainfall (1%) occurs in June, July, or August. Evaporation exceeds precipitation from April to November.

During the summer, a marine layer of fog is common along the coast during

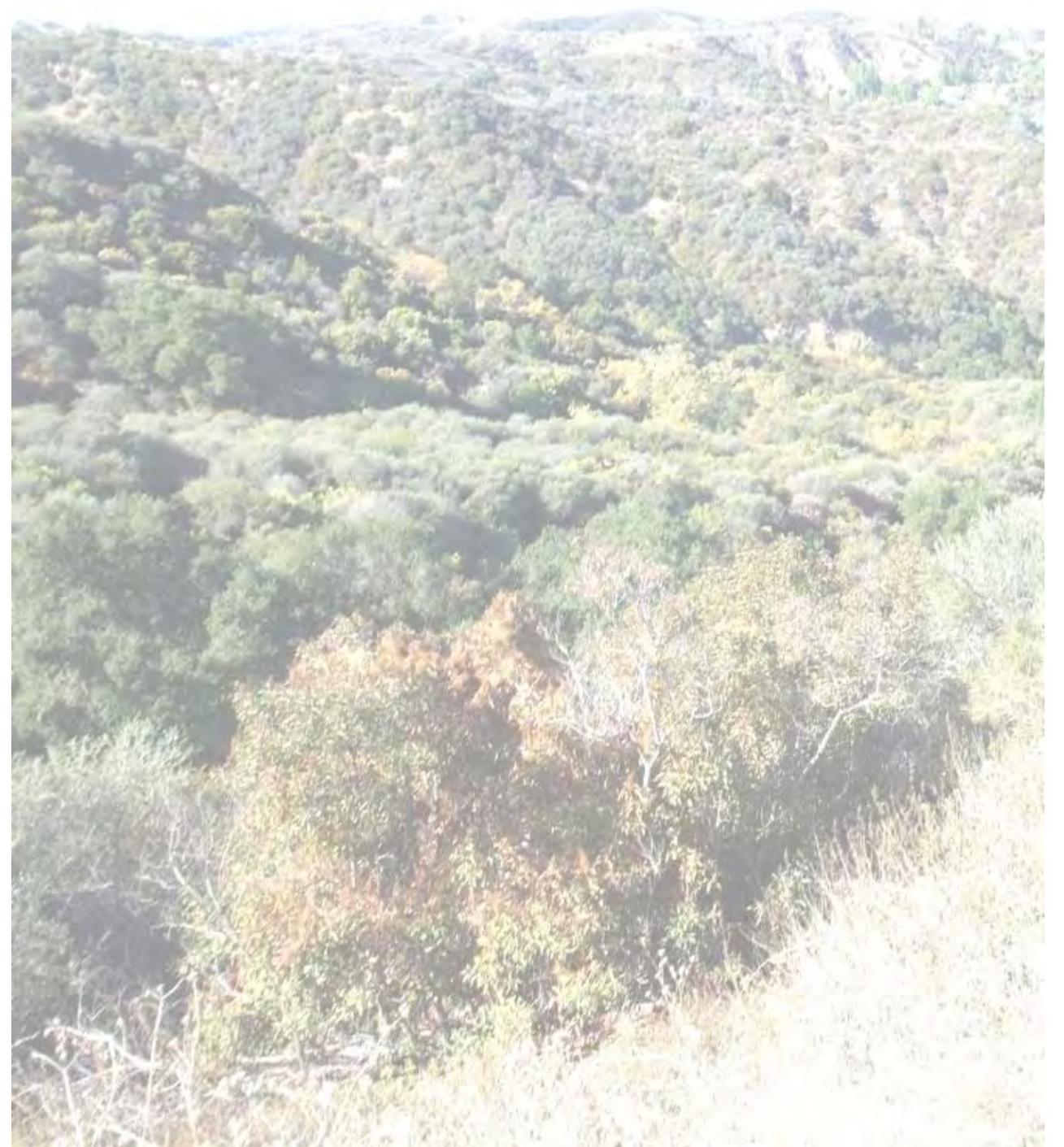


- Legend**
- City of Los Angeles
 - California Counties
 - NRA Boundary
 - Topanga State Park Boundary
 - Highway
- Parks and Open Space**
- CA Parks and Recreation
 - City
 - County
 - National Park Service
 - Other State
 - Special District
 - Non Governmental Organization

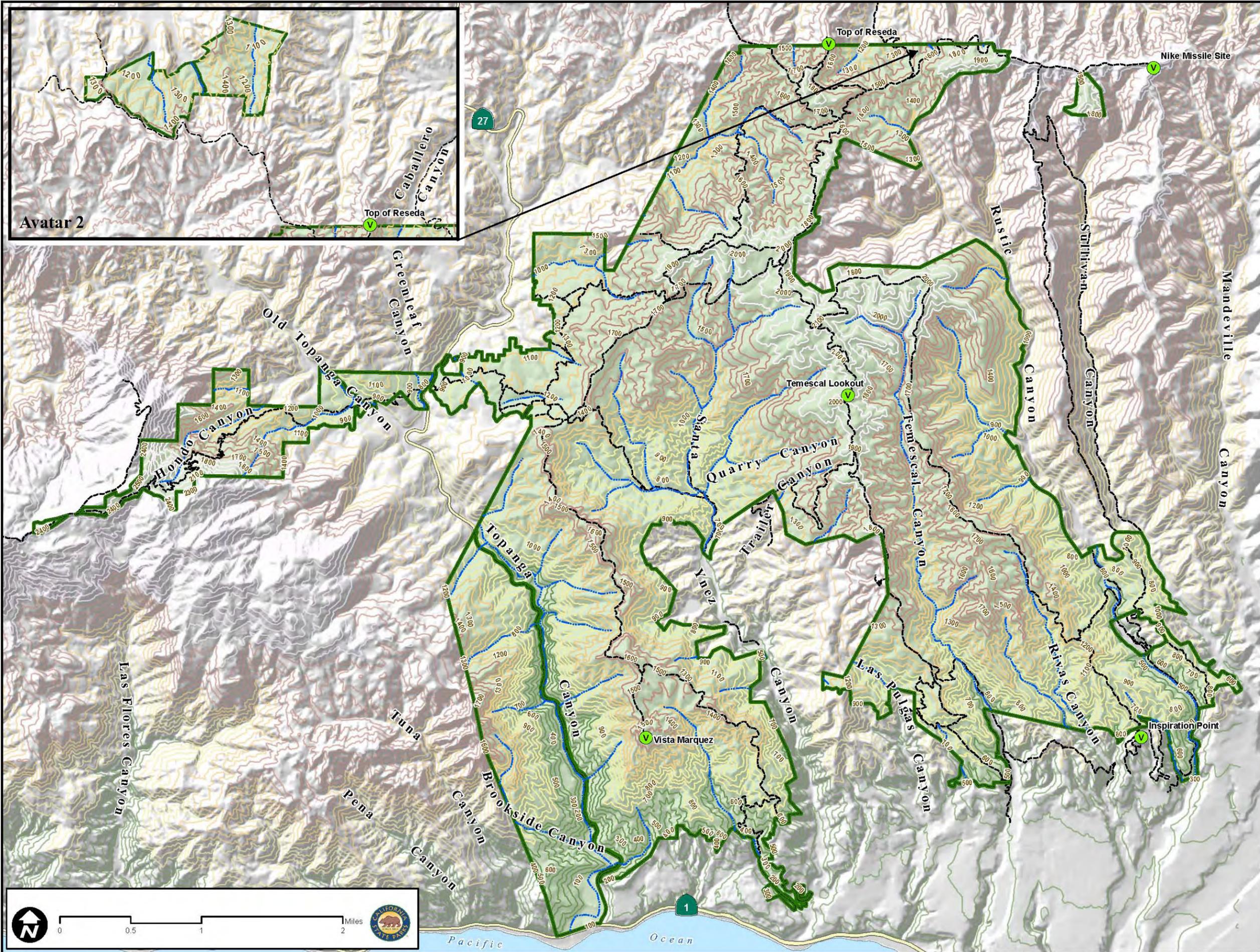
Figure 2
Topanga State Park
Regional Map



Parcel boundaries are approximate and should not be considered legal descriptions. Maps are intended for study purposes only.
Data Sources: NPS, USGS, CA State Parks



View from Dirt Mulholland



Legend

- V Vantage Points
- Creeks and Drainages
- - - Existing Trails
- Highway
- Topanga State Park Boundary

Contours (100ft Interval)

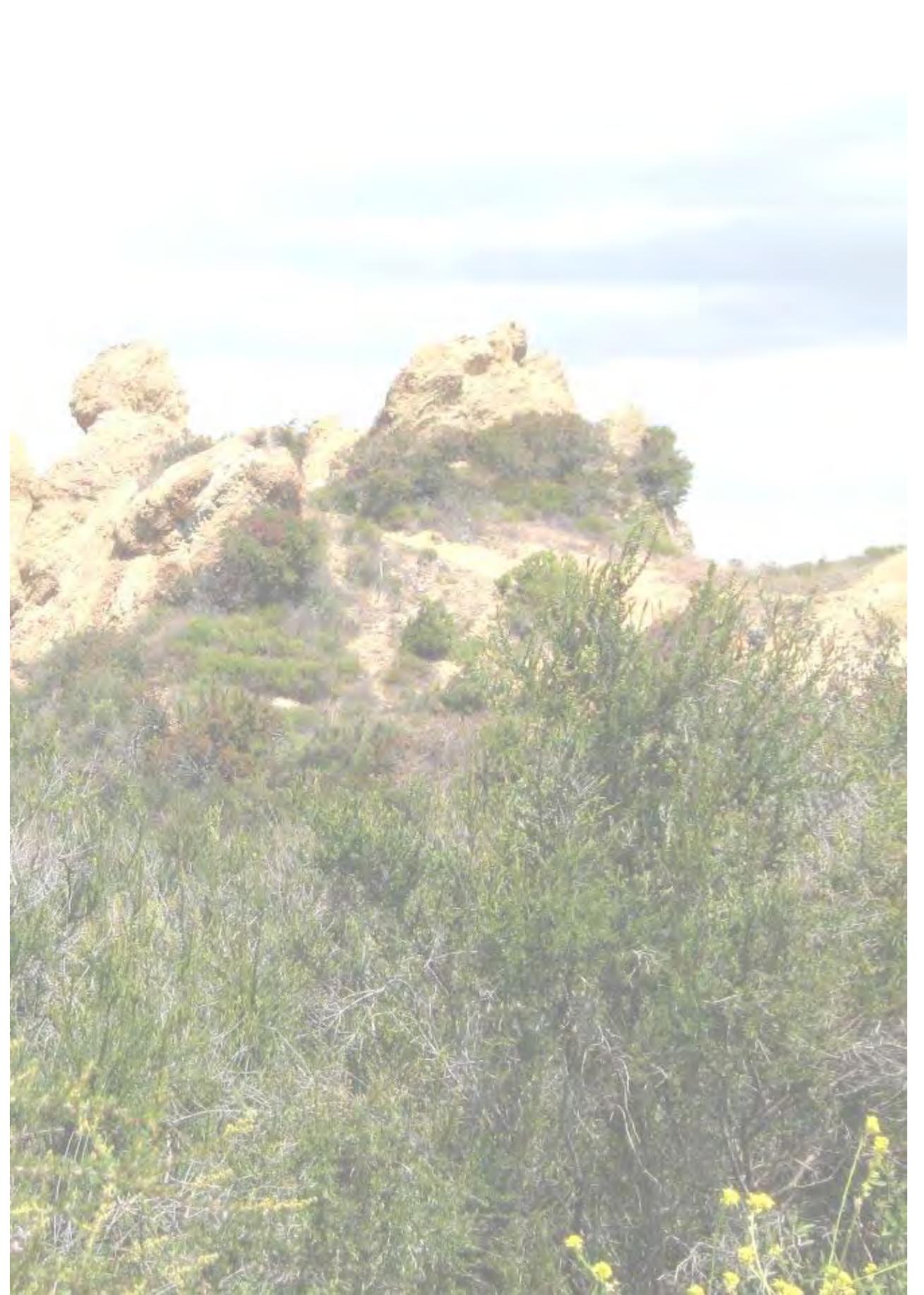
- 100 - 600
- 600 - 1000
- 1000 - 1300
- 1300 - 1700
- 1700 - 2500

Figure 3
 Topanga State Park
 Topography

Parcel boundaries are approximate and should not be considered legal descriptions. Maps are intended for study purposes only.

Data Sources: NPS, USGS, CA State Parks

N
0
0.5
1
2 Miles



Outcrops

the morning hours, but dissipates by early afternoon. Early in the morning inland valleys may be fog-shrouded, but as temperatures increase, the fog dissipates until it crests the mountains and is vaporized or pushed out to sea.



Hydrology

The Park encompasses parts of five different watersheds with Topanga Creek and Upper Santa Monica Bay the two largest (Figure 4). The Topanga Creek watershed covers approximately 18 square miles and is one of the few watersheds remaining in southern California with large sections that are publicly owned and undeveloped.

The Topanga Creek Lagoon is located at the mouth of Topanga Creek. This lagoon once covered approximately 30 acres. The California Department of Transportation filled in all but approximately two acres in 1933 during activities associated with the re-alignment of Pacific Coast Highway. The lagoon provides rearing habitat for both the endangered southern steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and the tidewater goby (*Eucyclogobius newberryi*).

Streams/Drainages

Approximately 45 miles of perennial

and intermittent drainages have been mapped within the Park and are delineated on United States Geological Services (USGS) topographic quad-range maps. Topanga Creek is the largest perennial drainage in the Park and currently one of only three creeks left in the Santa Monica Bay Watershed that potentially supports a reproducing population of steelhead trout.

In the fall of 2008 CSP removed a large earthen berm along Topanga Creek in the vicinity of the Rodeo Grounds. Removal of this berm has restored the natural creek channel and surrounding flood plain, allowed accumulated sediment to be carried out naturally by storms, and removed a barrier impeding steelhead passage.

Portions of Topanga Creek are listed by the Clean Water Act as a 303(d) listed body of water exceeding the Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for lead. Other potential contributors to the poor water quality include old septic tanks and systems, corralled animals next to the creek, roadway runoff, trash, and sedimentation along the creek.

Springs and Seeps

Springs and seeps are found throughout the Park and are often associated with geological formations such as faults. Fifty-six springs and seeps have been identified along the lower 3.7 miles of Topanga Creek.

Geology and Geomorphology

The Park is located on the eastern end of the Santa Monica Mountains which are part of California's Transverse Ranges. While other coastal mountain ranges run north-south, the Transverse Ranges run predominantly east-west

due to a bend in the San Andreas Fault, which has pushed the mountains up around it. Sedimentary rocks are most common on the western slopes while granitic and metamorphic rock dominate in the eastern mountains. Elevations in the Park range from 0 to 2,614 feet above mean sea level. Topographic relief is diverse and in some cases extreme.

Soils

The United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service has mapped eleven soil series in the Park (Abaft, Botella, Chumash, Cotharin, Elder, Mipolomol, Sapwi, Sumiwawa, Tongva, Topanga, and Zumaridge). These soils vary widely in depth, fertility, permeability, and other important characteristics. There is one listed hydric (wet) soil (*Cumulic Haploxerolls*) identified within the Park boundaries. For detailed descriptions of these soils, please see the resource inventories (Appendix G under separate cover).

Vegetation communities

From 2001 to 2005, the National Park Service in conjunction with other federal and State agencies developed a vegetation map (Figure 5) to document the vegetation types found within the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA) in which the Park is located. Mapping was accomplished using The Nature Conservancy's National Vegetation Classification. This system classifies vegetation at the alliance and association levels.

For purposes of this document, vegetation alliances and associations were crosswalked based on species

composition with the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System (CWHR) to identify major habitat types. It is to be noted that these crosswalks may not be completely equivalent due to the differential spatial scales of both systems.

Chamise-Redshank Chaparral

This shrubland association occurs on flat to steep slopes of variable aspect at low to middle elevations between 125 to 2,828 feet. It is dominated by chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*) in the shrub layer with a diverse but low cover herbaceous layer. There are virtually no emergent trees, but occasionally, coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), California bay (*Umbellularia californica*), and California sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*) can be present.

Coastal Sage Scrub

This shrubland association occurs on gentle to very steep slopes of variable aspect at low elevations between 0 to 2,520 feet. It is characterized by a dominance to co-dominance of California sage (*Artemisia californica*), buckwheat (*Eriogonum* sp.), or sage (*Salvia* sp.) in the shrub layer, and a scattered, mostly non-native herbaceous layer. The emergent tree layer can be insignificant to infrequent and can include coast live oak and California walnut (*Juglans californica*).

Mixed Chaparral

This shrubland alliance occurs on somewhat steep to steep northwest-facing slopes at low to middle to high elevations between 1,827 to 2,881 feet. It is dominated by bigpod ceanothus (*Ceanothus megacarpus*), with Eastwood's manzanita (*Arctostaphylos*