

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW BOARD (ERB)
Unincorporated Coastal Zone, Santa Monica Mountains, Los Angeles County
In-Person Meeting of February 23, 2026**

Present:

ERB Members

Katherine Pease
Grant Dinson, Deputy Forester
Ivan Castillo, Forestry Assistant
Edgar De La Torre (alternate)
Cameron Robertson (alternate)

Regional Planning Staff

Joseph Decruyenaere, Senior Biologist
Tyler Montgomery, Principal Planner
Iris Chi, ERB Coordinator

PART I: PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

1. Roll call
2. Coordinator's Report – Update on new legislation regarding modifications to requirements of how the Brown Act meets. Legislation was reviewed to determine how modifications could apply to the Environmental Review Board so the board could meet virtually.

PART II: APPROVAL OF MINUTES

3. November 17, 2025 ERB meeting minute approval. Motion/second by De La Torre/Pease, Vote – Unanimous consent with no objections to approve the minutes.

PART III: OLD BUSINESS

PART IV: NEW BUSINESS

4. **Project No.:** PRJ2022-003851-(3)
Permit No.: RPPL2024000580
APNs: 4438-029-900, 4438-029-901, 4445-004-900, 4445-004-901, 4445-004-903, 4445-005-902
Address: 141 N. Topanga Canyon Blvd., Topanga CA 90290
Location: Topanga Creek Watershed
USGS Quads: Topanga
Project Applicant: Los Angeles Unified School District
Project Biologists: Rosi Dagit and Daniel S. Cooper, Ph.D., Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains
Staff Planner: Tyler Montgomery
Staff Biologist: Joe Decruyenaere

Project Description:

The project is mitigation of approximately 4.75 acres of impacts to H1, H2, and H3 habitats that resulted from unpermitted vegetation clearing and grading activities beyond the approved fuel-modification and off-site brush thinning zones of Topanga Elementary Charter School.

ERB Comments:

- ERB requested more detail on the amount of trees. There are numbers for the oaks and other trees with habitat impacts. County Biologist provided both oak mitigation and habitat mitigation based on LIP requirements is being addressed with the proposed project with the only need being to fill the space in H1 habitat mitigation area with additional trees that may come by retaining natural recruitment.

- ERB noted that the landscape plan graphic look extremely dense in Fuel Mod Zone B, Zone C, and outside of the Fuel Mod Zone and is asking if the layout is beneficial or detrimental to the plantings. Project Biologist provided the landscape plan layout in compliance with the requirement of proposing a high number of mitigation trees in a limited amount of room on the parcel.
- The County Biologist advocated for oak tree survival and an oak woodland monitoring plan.
- ERB asked if there were any alternative locations considered for planting the mitigation oaks. CA State Parks stated they discussed planting off-site in disturbed areas of State Parks lands.
- ERB asked how many of the 160 mitigation oaks are going to be planted. The applicants landscape architect state 60 of the 160 mitigation oaks are to be planted outside of the fuel mod zones and the disturbed areas. The remaining 100 mitigation oaks to be planted in the fuel mod zones were designed to maintain spacing between oak plantings outside of meadow lands to keep from converting habitat and complying with fire codes.
- CA State Parks confirmed that various conifers and non-native pepper trees will be removed that will lessen the density of trees on the landscape plan and make room for mitigation oak trees. All mitigation trees will not be planted within 30 feet from structures and will be outside of Fuel Mod Zone A.
- ERB asked if there was an ideal horizontal spacing between mitigation oak plantings that the applicant should be aware of. The suitable design would have oaks in clusters and larger spaces between clusters.
- ERB asked about the benefit of removing non-native trees on-site in phases? The applicant stated there were some pine trees that were removed as a result of the Palisades Fire. There is already a recommendation to remove the pine trees (outside of bird nesting season) but the removal in phases could be implemented.
- ERB asked if the area would be re-mapped to H1 habitat considering there is no proposed development. County planner confirmed that re-mapping is not necessary for the development but would be the best practice for ERB to request it to record the update, however it could not be preemptively re-mapped to H1 habitat.
- The Fire Department made a recommendation that they would like to see oak clusters with a minimum distance between clusters. ERB Coordinator followed up with asking what the minimum distance could be and how many trees would create an oak woodland that would also meet Fire Dept requirements.

ERB Motion for adequacy of the Biological Assessment Report:

I move that the Environmental Review Board close the review of Project Number PRJ2022-003851 and conclude that a project's biological report, as reviewed by the staff biologist, adequately addresses the requirements of the SMMLCP.

Motion/second by Pease/Robertson, Vote – Ayes: Unanimous with no objections

ERB Motion for consistency with the resource protection policies and provisions of the LCP, including any suggested mitigation measures:

I also move that the Environmental Review Board conclude that Project Number PRJ2022-003851 is consistent with the applicable biological resources protection policies and development standards of the SMMLCP and that the project meets the Burden of Proof after incorporation of following project recommendations. The recommendations are: fire advises that oaks be planted in clusters and to create more distance between the clusters; non-native trees be removed in phases to minimize impacts to habitat, like denuding the grounds or drastically reducing the

shade provided; considering there is no fuel modification plan, ensure the planting plan creates more defensible space and ensure there are less contiguous lines of vegetation or fuel, where County staff can review the revised plan; applicant to work with the Fire Department and Staff Biologist to review the seedlings in the field, review the combination of new plantings that can satisfy the Fire Department advisement, meet the goal of creating old woodland habitat, and meet the minimum number of required tree plantings of 150 oaks and 10 sycamores with review of County Staff Biologist.

Motion/second by Pease/De La Torre, Vote – Ayes: Unanimous with no objections

PART V: PUBLIC COMMENT

5. Public comment pursuant to Section 54954.3 of the Government Code. No request for public comments.

PART VI: ADJOURNMENT: Adjournment to 1:00 pm, March 16, 2026.