



September 27, 2020

Mayor Eric Garcetti
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Via Email

Re: 2020 Draft Biodiversity Report

The Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment (LASAN) has recently released its DRAFT 2020 Los Angeles Biodiversity Report, which was presented at the August meeting of the Community Forest Advisory Committee (CFAC). This report is an inspiring and critical document that deserves broad support, integration by all city entities, and future funding for implementation.

1 million species are threatened worldwide with one species going extinct EVERY HOUR! Los Angeles is part of the California Floristic Province, one of 36 recognized biodiversity hotspots - defined as one of 36 regions in the entire planet that are most biologically rich, yet also the most threatened. There are more than 150 species listed as threatened or endangered, and an unknown number of species that have been extirpated (eradicated, eliminated), making Los Angeles a biodiversity hotspot with increasingly fragmented habitat patches that are threatened by destruction of wildlife habitat. If Los Angeles wants to be the world leader in a global effort to preserve species diversity and promote environmental equity, we are in need of swift and decisive leadership to reverse this trend. As the report aptly states, “Biodiversity is one of the highest indicators of environmental quality - if you have equitable distribution of biodiversity and healthy ecosystems across the City, then it is a sign that infrastructure is well integrated with built, natural, and social systems.”

We agree with the report that “rapid expansion of stewardship is necessary to accommodate urgent climate-driven changes to urban ecosystems.” The report continues “Along with stewardship of ecosystem services, ecological hazards, and pollution, biodiversity stewardship is central to cities’ ability to provide urban forest cooling benefits, accommodate changing flood regimes, maintain

equitable nature access, and conserve species within fragmented urban landscapes.” We encourage the City to use the Biodiversity Index and ecotopes framework to develop a comprehensive biodiversity policy, action plan, and site-level decision-making support tools to make our city healthier, more resilient in the face of the climate crisis, and ecologically diverse in order to enrich future generations.

CFAC understands the challenges that are laid out in the draft Biodiversity Report: the need to get biodiversity-thinking integrated into other departments, the need for site-based tools, and that outreach to residents must be done in simpler, more accessible forms. CFAC would like the City of Los Angeles under the guidance of the Biodiversity Group, to complete the following measures, recommendations, and/or alterations to the Report and next steps.

1. **CREATE A SIMPLIFIED GUIDEBOOK OF ECOTOPES AND SPECIES** – Create a “dummies guide” to Biodiversity, per Ecotope so that residents can better understand where they live and how they can help protect it. Things to include would be selection of plant species and indicator insects and birds. This might also include a summary of the endemic, threatened, and endangered species, as well as some general examples of how Ecotope information can be used in design of open spaces, land use, planning and building, and what individual residents can do.
2. **ADVANCE THE ACTION PLAN**- The City must move swiftly on the creation of the LA Biodiversity Action Plan and Policy (Page 14) and spell out next steps and a near-future timeline.
3. **DEVELOP MORE FREQUENT BENCHMARKING**- Revise benchmark evaluations on biodiversity to a minimum of every 5 years instead of 10, and preferably every 3 years.
4. **REVISE THE WEIGHTING OF THE METRICS** - Revise the Indicator/metrics for Native biodiversity so that it is equal to social and governance combined. Social and governance can change rapidly, loss of biodiversity/changes in biodiversity take time and may never recover. Make Nature - 50 points and Social and Governance - 25 points each.
5. **INTEGRATE WITH PROJECT DEVELOPMENT** - CFAC would like more information on the Site Biodiversity Index (SBI) and how it might be useful to the Building & Safety, Planning, as well as a tool to be used by developers. Design principles such as building orientation, massing, and scale can impact habitat quality and pinch points. Window glazing, wall albedo, permeable surfaces, and drainage patterns from buildings, green patios & roofs, solar orientation, and artificial light pollution, all also impact connectivity.
6. **INTEGRATE WITH OTHER CITY DEPARTMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS** – How will this report implement and institutionalize the framework in other City departments, a stated goal of the report? CFAC seconds the Biodiversity Reports proposal to incorporate SCAG data to anticipate future planning and land use impacts. This will encourage planners and developers to get engaged in how to design with biodiversity in mind. page 75

7. DEVELOP IMMEDIATE PINCHPOINT RELIEF - CFAC recommends the report provide more examples of pinch points and solutions, again to draw attention to this concept to residents that may live near some of them. Additionally a broad discussion on the locations of the known critical pinch points would be useful to prevent further degradation of these areas. What are examples of “landscape naturalness and land use intensity” page 68? Are there easy solutions that can be manifested immediately by concerned residents?
8. MARKETING - This effort needs heavy marketing to builders, developers, architects, designers, and the general public. The benefit of a citywide campaign to increase biodiversity will provide abundant long term benefits. Currently the marketing of this report is very limited to a small group of experts and is little known even in the environmental community. CFAC believes that the City of Los Angeles can't reverse biodiversity loss on its own. This effort needs the stewardship and support of the general public which requires public buy-in and education.
9. OVERALL GOAL- Revise the goals of no net loss by 2035 and establish a more positive goal such as net gain of biodiversity by 2035, by 10%.
10. IDENTIFY OTHER RESOURCES – Provide general information on which other cities are leaders at managing threatened and endangered species and what shared resources are possible.

The Community Forest Advisory Committee (CFAC) is committed to enhancing the health and long term viability of our urban forest and protecting natural habitat that sustains and promotes biodiversity. We look forward to a collaborative relationship with LA Sanitation and would like to dialogue on ways in which CFAC can support this critical work in implementing our shared vision of a healthy, resilient and biodiverse home.

Respectfully,



Shelley Billik
Chair, Community Forest Advisory Committee

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