



# Ventura County Planning Division Procedure for Updating the Locally Important Species List

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## Introduction

The Ventura County General Plan recognizes Locally Important Species as significant biological resources to be protected and development (see Goal [COS-1 and Policy 1.1](#)). To ensure consistent identification of Locally Important Species, standard criteria for Locally Important Plants and Animals were adopted by the Board of Supervisors on April 26, 2011 as part of the update to the [Initial Study Assessment Guidelines](#). The Biological Resources Section of the Initial Study Assessment Guidelines also requires that the Planning Division maintain a list of plants and animals that meet the criteria for Locally Important Species and to update the list on an annual basis if changes are warranted. The Initial Study Assessment Guidelines specifically requires that the Planning Division “circulate the proposed changes to the Locally Important Species Lists among the biologists with expertise regarding the biological resources of Ventura County and the public for review and comment.” The following procedure is used by the Planning Division to update the Locally Important Species List as required by the Initial Study Assessment Guidelines.

## Procedure

### 1. Solicit Recommendations for Additions to and Removals from the Locally Important Species List

Recommendations for additions to and removals from the Locally Important Species List can be submitted to the Planning Division throughout the year. To submit a recommendation, a biologist will fill out the Ventura County Locally Important Species Data Form (Species Data Form) (which can be downloaded from the County’s Planning Division webpage at <https://vcrma.org/ventura-county-locally-important-species-list> ) and submit it to the Planning Division. The Species Data Form should be filled out with the biologist’s best knowledge of the species, and should include at least the scientific name, common name, and citations that provide substantial evidence (e.g., species account documented on a California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) Form, voucher specimen for plants, scientific literature, or information that meets the CEQA definition of “substantial evidence”) supporting the recommendation that the species does or does not meet the Locally Important Species criteria. The deadline for submittal of Species Data Forms will be July 31<sup>st</sup> of each year. If no recommendations are received by July 31<sup>st</sup>, the annual review will be considered complete for that year.

### 2. Review of Species Recommendation Forms

Planning Division staff will review the Species Data Forms received for evidence that supports a species’ inclusion on the Locally Important Species List and consult with local experts (e.g., State and federal agencies, universities, qualified consulting biologists). Those who submitted Species Data Forms containing substantial evidence will be invited to participate in the evaluation of the recommendations for additions and removals of plant or animal species being evaluated. Evaluations will be based on the established Locally Important Species Criteria, as listed in the County’s Initial Study Assessment Guidelines adopted by the Board of Supervisors on April 26, 2011. Draft changes to the Locally Important Species List will be prepared following staff review of the submitted evidence.

### **3. Circulation of Draft Changes**

By November 1st of each year, draft changes to the Locally Important Species List will be circulated among biologists and interested members of the public for review. (If a large number of proposals are submitted in any given year, additional time may be needed to review proposals, and the circulation of draft changes may be delayed.) During this 30-day review period, copies of the submitted Species Data Forms and information that summarizes why a species was added to or removed from the Locally Important Species List will be made available on the County website. The purpose of this review period is to solicit all available information on species proposed to be added to or removed from the list to ensure that the Locally Important Species List is based on the best available evidence. During the 30-day review period, additional information may be submitted by filling out a Ventura County Locally Important Species Data Form and by submitting that form to the Planning Division. It should include citations for the sources of information that support statements about a species' populations, range, important habitats, and status. If a Species Data Form is submitted for a species that was not included on the draft List circulated for review, that species will be reviewed the following year.

### **4. Review of Draft List and New Information**

Once the public review period closes, Planning Division staff will compile all Species Data Forms, review the data presented, consult with local experts on the plant or animal species being evaluated, and make any necessary changes to the Draft Locally Important Species List based on new information received. Species Data Forms that do not provide citations that provide substantial evidence (e.g., species account documented on a California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) Form, voucher specimen for plants, scientific literature, or information that meets the CEQA definition of "substantial evidence") for the supporting evidence will not be considered.

### **5. Publish Updated Locally Important Species List**

Planning Division staff will finalize and post changes to the Locally Important Species List on the Planning Division website, and the updated list will become effective 30 days following the end of the public review period unless the Planning Director receives a written request for an extension and it is granted. Typically, the updated list will become effective on December 31<sup>st</sup> of each year. However, if an unusually large number of proposals are submitted in any given year, or an unusually large number of comments are received during the public review period, additional time may be needed to update the Locally Important Species List.

