Chapter Two:
County Overview

Photo: Independent

2.0. County Overview

A necessary step in the recreation planning process involves the assessment of the existing setting in Santa Barbara County, considering both the physical environment and the regulatory setting for plan implementation. Understanding this setting ensures that the Recreation Master Plan will integrate successfully with existing plans and policies and relate to the physical opportunities and constraints of the landscape. This chapter provides an overview of Santa Barbara County's key features as a setting for recreation planning and describes the different communities in each of the county's recreation planning areas (refer to Section 2.8, *Recreation Planning Areas*). It also provides a summary of plans, policies, and regulations that may relate to the recommendations provided in Section 5.0, *A Plan for Parks, Recreation, and* Trails.

2.1. County Snapshot

Santa Barbara County is located about 100 miles north of Los Angeles on the California coast, encompassing beautiful coastlines, mountains, and rural agricultural valleys. It is geographically diverse with over 450,000 residents who live in eight small- to medium-sized cities and 19 unincorporated communities (Figure 2-1). Santa Barbara County is one of 58 counties in California, bordered by Ventura County to the east and south, Kern County to the east, San Luis Obispo County to the north, and the Pacific Ocean to the west and south (Figure 2-1). Santa Barbara County encompasses approximately 3,789 square miles (more than 2.4 million acres), extending approximately 45 miles north from the south-facing coastal segment and approximately 65 miles inland from the west-facing coastline. Of its total area, 2,735 square miles (72 percent) is land area, and 1,061 square miles (28 percent) lie in the Pacific Ocean. Approximately 202 square miles (5 percent) of the county's land area is part of the Channel Islands National Park. Santa Barbara County has 110 miles of coastline with coastal access provided in both rural and urban settings, although most access points are located primarily along the southern coastline.

Santa Barbara County Snapshot:

3,789 Square Miles:
Land 2,735 | Ocean 1,061

8 Incorporated Cities with 310,000 Residents

19 Unincorporated Communities with 140,000 Residents

2 Special Districts for Recreation and Parks

4 State and Federal Agencies with Recreational Assets

Dozens of Private Recreation Organizations

2.2. Lay of the Land

Topography in the county is highly varied within coastal terraces between the ocean and the mountains, scenic inland valleys with large expanses of cultivated farmlands and gently rolling hillsides, and rugged terrain of the Los Padres National Forest. There are three mountain ranges within the county: the Santa Ynez range divides north county from south county, and the Sierra Madre and San Rafael Mountains, running parallel with the Los Padres National Forest, divide the Cuyama Valley from the Santa Maria and Santa Ynez Valleys. Elevations range from sea level to 6,803 feet at Big Pine Mountain. The largest water body within the county is Lake Cachuma, a water supply reservoir on the Santa Ynez River with a surface area of 3,100 acres. Other key water bodies include Jameson Lake, Gibraltar Reservoir, Twitchell Reservoir, Alisal Lake, and Zaca Lake, the county's only natural lake. Major drainages include the Santa Ynez River, Santa Maria River, and Cuyama River, as well as San Antonio Creek. Only Lake Cachuma is outfitted for recreational uses such as boating and fishing; as a water supply reservoir, Lake Cachuma does not allow swimming. Coastal access is available within coastal communities (i.e., Goleta, Santa Barbara, Carpinteria) and rural recreation amenities (i.e., state parks along the Gaviota coast, Jalama Beach County Park, Guadalupe Dunes County Park).

Santa Barbara County is a coastal county comprising scenic inland valleys, farms and ranches, and rugged mountains. Photo: Santa Ynez Valley Star

2.3. Climate & Weather

The mild Mediterranean climate in Santa Barbara County attracts visitors and supports outdoor recreation year-round. In coastal areas, the Pacific Ocean regulates seasonal climates so that temperatures rarely spike or drop below freezing. In the interior valleys and higher elevations, high heat and freezing temperatures are more common seasonally. Annual temperature extremes range from an average of 33 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) to 55°F in the winter to an average of 50°F to 80°F in the summer, depending on elevation and proximity to the coastline. The warmest months of the year are usually August and September, and the coldest months of the year are often December and January. Average annual rainfall varies from 18.55 inches in the City of Santa Barbara, 20.5 inches in the town of Santa Ynez, and 16.5 inches in the City of Santa

Maria, with mountainous areas such as San Marcos Pass receiving more than 22 inches annually. Most precipitation falls between December and March, and little rain falls during the summer months.

2.4. Transportation & Access

Regional road access to Santa Barbara County is provided primarily by U.S. Highway 101, which traverses the county north to south, connecting to San Luis Obispo County and Ventura County, and U.S. Highway 166, which connects Santa Barbara County with Kern County in the east. Additional access to San Luis Obispo County is provided by State Route (SR) 1, with SR 150 providing secondary access into Ventura County. Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) maintains north-south train tracks supporting daily Amtrak passenger operations and regional freight trains. Passenger rail stations are located in Carpinteria, Santa Barbara, Goleta, Lompoc (Surf Beach), and Guadalupe. Municipal airports in Santa Maria and Santa Barbara provide regional, national, and international flight services; the Santa Ynez Airport and Lompoc Airport support regional aviation. Santa Barbara Harbor also supports boating, fishing, and periodic cruise ship activities. This connectivity supports robust tourism to Santa Barbara County, including visitors seeking active and passive recreation opportunities.

2.5. History

The county has a rich history of human habitation dating back at least 11,000 to 12,000 years, including the region's first historically identified inhabitants, the Chumash. Native American habitation extended through European exploration periods, which began in 1542 with Juan Cabrillo's explorations and establishment of missions in the 1760s. The naming of both the City of Santa Barbara and the County of Santa Barbara originates from the establishment of Mission Santa Barbara in 1786. Following Mexican independence from Spain in 1822, the Mexican government gained control over California. About 500 land grants were given to local rancheros during the Rancho Period. The Mexican-American War occurred between 1846 and 1848 and ended with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which made California a United States (U.S.) territory. In 1848, the land once occupied by the Chumash was overtaken by the U.S., which led to California's statehood in 1850. The County was one of the original 27 counties in the state, formed at the time of statehood on February 18, 1850. The County originally comprised areas of modern-day Santa Barbara and Ventura counties, but was later divided to create the County of Ventura in 1873. American settlers claimed land in the County through the 1800s as part of the state's Gold Rush, which led to an expansion of ranching and American industrialization, including commercial agriculture and tourism.

2.6. Communities & Character

The character of Santa Barbara County is defined by its distinct urban communities separated by extensive areas of rural and agricultural lands. Most of the county is rural, with substantial mountainous areas dividing productive agricultural valleys. Much of the county is sparsely populated. Developed cities and towns are located primarily along the coastal plain and in the intermountain valleys. Much of the land in the unincorporated areas is undeveloped and used for agriculture, recreation, and tourism, with extensive areas of open space within Los Padres National Forest, Vandenberg Space Force Base, and several state parks. Residential uses are scattered throughout the unincorporated areas, with recreation and tourism-related land uses located primarily along the coastline and in the mountainous areas, including state parks and national forest lands.

Parks create community with facilities for gathering and socializing, bringing people together from communities throughout Santa Barbara County. Photo: Solvang USA

There are eight incorporated cities in the county, including Buellton, Carpinteria, Goleta, Guadalupe, Lompoc, Santa Barbara, Santa Maria, and Solvang. These cities provide most community services to residents, including parks and recreation. Each city provides a hub for surrounding unincorporated areas, including small towns scattered throughout the county (Figure 2-1). Major unincorporated population centers are Isla Vista, Montecito, Eastern Goleta Valley, Orcutt, and Santa Ynez Valley.

Vandenberg Space Force Base, the Los Padres National Forest, and the sovereign nation of the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians also lie within the county. Portions of Channel Islands National Park, including Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, San Miguel, and Santa Rosa Islands, lie within Santa Barbara County. There are four federally managed areas within the county, including Channel Islands National Park, Vandenberg Space Force Base, the Los Padres National Forest, Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes National Wildlife Refuge, and a property at Point Sal.

2.7. Demographics

Demographic factors such as existing population, projected growth rate, age, and income are indicators for where and how recreation facilities and programs should be provided. For example, considering age characteristics, where children may seek

playgrounds, sports fields, and active recreation programs, adults and seniors may desire hiking and running trails, sports courts, and fitness facilities that support active lifestyles. Further, consideration of income helps indicate where residents may struggle with recreation costs and require access to free or low-cost recreation facilities and programs.

Santa Barbara County Demographic Snapshot

Population: 450,000
Population by 2050: 510,000
Population Increase: 13%
Median Age: 35.1
Children: 22%
Seniors: 27%
Median Household Income (2024): $96,000

A. Population

Approximately 450,000 residents call Santa Barbara County home, representing approximately one percent of the population of the State of California. The county is geographically diverse, with different cities and unincorporated communities that range dramatically from large suburban communities such as Orcutt and Eastern Goleta Valley to small rural towns such as Sisquoc, Los Olivos, and Los Alamos. Most of the county's 2.4 million acres (3,789 square miles) support very low population densities outside of the urban communities, including areas such as Channel Islands National Park and offshore waters, Los Padres National Forest, Vandenberg Space Force Base, and extensive areas of rural agricultural land and wilderness. Approximately 96 percent of residents live in cities and established communities, and approximately 4 percent of residents live in rural areas outside of established communities. The county's population is concentrated in the Santa Maria Valley, along the eastern and central reach of the South Coast from Goleta to Carpinteria, and, to a lesser extent, the Lompoc Valley and Santa Ynez Valley. Within these regions, most residents live in the cities of Santa Maria, Santa Barbara, Goleta, and Lompoc, which support approximately 60 percent of the county's population. The largest unincorporated communities are Orcutt, Eastern Goleta Valley, and Isla Vista, supporting approximately 20 percent of the County's population (Appendix B).

B. Growth

Based on the Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) Regional Growth Forecast, Santa Barbara County's population is projected to increase through 2050 by 13.2 percent for a total population of approximately 510,000 (Table 2-1). Most of this growth (48.5 percent) is projected to occur in the Santa Maria Valley. The Lompoc Valley is projected to grow by 13.3 percent, the second-highest growth rate in the County. While the South Coast is projected to experience the lowest growth rate, the population is projected to increase by approximately 14,000 residents, the second-highest total in the county. While all communities within the county are projected to grow, the City of Guadalupe is projected to have the highest population increase of 27.9 percent through 2050, followed by the City of Buellton with a 19.9 percent total increase (Appendix B).

Table 2-1. Population Growth by Region

Region	Current Population (2019)	Future Population (2050)
Cuyama Valley	596	647
Lompoc Valley	54,806	62,069
Santa Maria Valley	146,838	169,101
Santa Ynez Valley	19,157	21,326
South Coast	208,530	222,659
Total	450,084	509,697

Appendix B

C. Age

The median age in Santa Barbara County is 35.1. The largest age group in the county is seniors over 55 years old, at approximately 27 percent. Children under the age of 18 comprise approximately 22 percent of residents, with young children (ages 0 to 14 years old) comprising about 18 percent. The median age of residents is lowest in the Santa Maria Valley at 37.2, and the median age is highest in the Santa Ynez Valley at 48.4. Communities like Isla Vista, the City of Buellton, and the City of Guadalupe have the youngest populations in the county, while the City of Solvang, Montecito, and Vandenberg Village have some of the County's oldest populations based on median age (Appendix B).

D. Income

The median household income in Santa Barbara County is approximately $96,000, resulting from wide variations between communities ranging from $25,00 in Isla Vista to $223,000 in Montecito. Several communities have substantially lower median incomes than Santa Barbara County, including the City of Guadalupe, the City of Santa Maria, the City of Lompoc, and Isla Vista. Other communities have notably higher median incomes compared to the County, including Orcutt, Eastern Goleta Valley, the City of Goleta, Vandenberg Village, Mission Hills, Buellton, Santa Ynez, Ballard, and Los Olivos (Appendix B).

A countywide demographic analysis is provided in Appendix B, *Demographics*.

Figure 2-1. Santa Barbara County Communities

2.8. Recreation Planning Areas

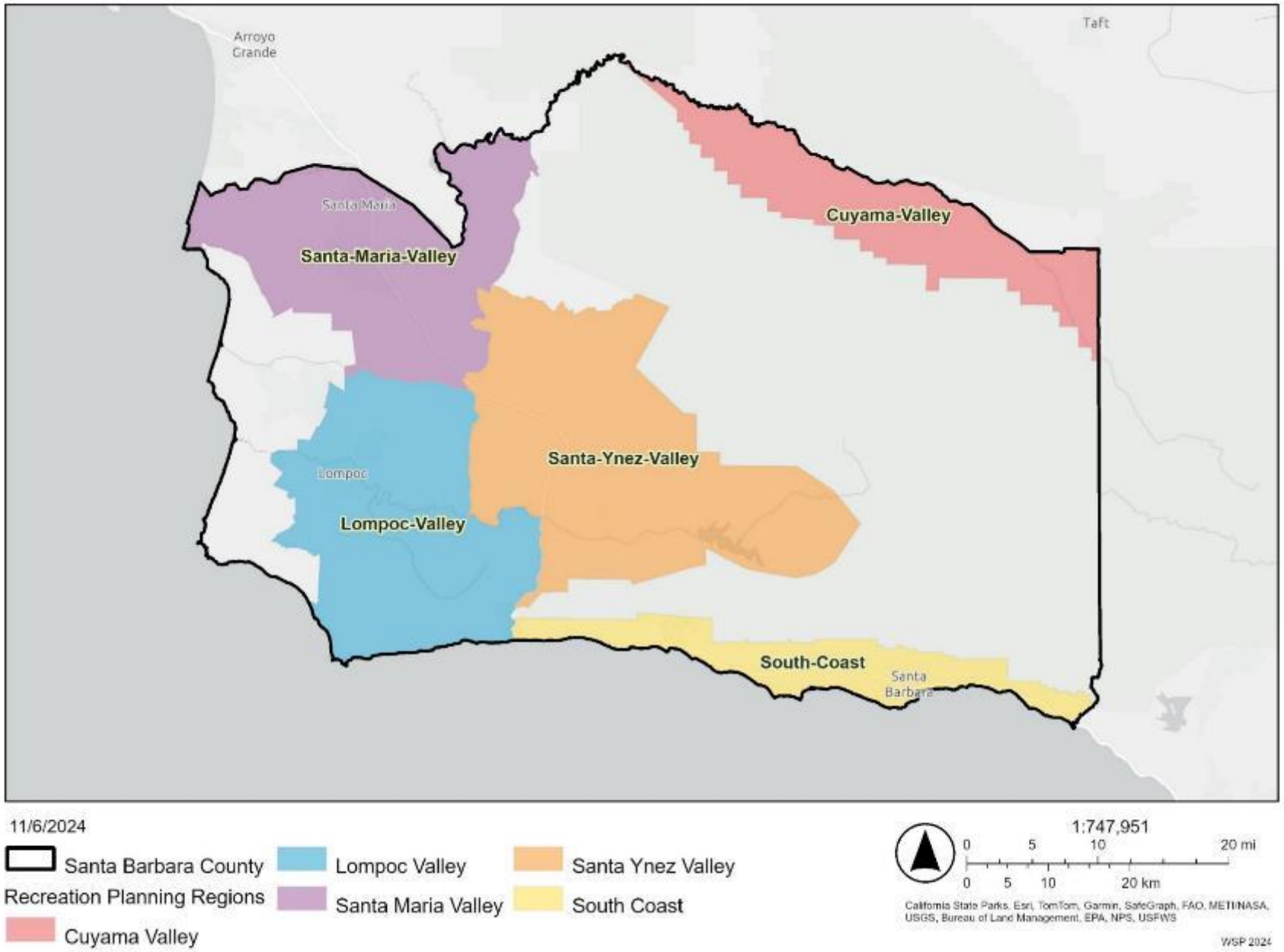
Each community in Santa Barbara County has its own identity, but for recreation planning purposes, there are essentially five recreation planning areas, including Santa Maria Valley, Lompoc Valley, Santa Ynez Valley, Cuyama Valley, and the South Coast. These planning areas recognize that residents tend to share recreational facilities and programs in their local community, such as regional parks, sports complexes, gymnasiums, trail systems, or community parks. The Recreation Master Plan addresses existing parks and trails, recreation needs, and planned improvements countywide and by recreation planning area. Notably, Vandenberg Space Force Base, Los Padres National Forest, and Channel Islands National Park have unique recreation features and are managed outside local agency jurisdictions. While the Recreation Master Plan recognizes recreation in these areas, it does not apply to them.

For recreation planning in Santa Barbara County, these five planning areas consist of:

- The **Santa Maria Valley**, including the cities of Santa Maria and Guadalupe, as well as the communities of Orcutt, Casmalia, Garey, and Sisquoc.
- The **Cuyama Valley**, including the communities of Cuyama and New Cuyama.
- The **Lompoc Valley**, including the City of Lompoc, and the communities of Vandenberg Village and Mission Hills.
- The **Santa Ynez Valley**, including the cities of Buellton and Solvang, as well as the communities of Ballard, Santa Ynez, and Los Olivos; although located in the San Antonio Valley, Los Alamos is also included in this planning area.
- The **South Coast**, including the cities of Santa Barbara, Goleta, and Carpinteria, as well as the communities of Isla Vista, Eastern Goleta Valley, Montecito, Mission Canyon, Toro Canyon, and Summerland, as well as the rural Gaviota Coast.

Each recreation planning area is described below, and a summary of the size and population of each planning area is provided in Appendix B.

Figure 2-2. Recreation Planning Areas in Santa Barbara County



A. Santa Maria Valley

The Santa Maria Valley encompasses 178,146 acres in the northwestern portion of Santa Barbara County, including areas inland from the county's northern coastline and south of the County of San Luis Obispo. This planning area is bound by the Santa Maria River to the north, the Pacific Ocean and Casmalia Hills to the west, the San Rafael Mountains to the east, and the Solomon Hills to the south. The Santa Maria River traverses the valley and drains into the Pacific Ocean west of Guadalupe. The area is accessed by U.S. Highway 101 from the north and south, SR 166 from the east and west, SR 1 from the northwest and southwest, and SR 135 from the south. Amtrak train service is available in the City of Guadalupe. The Santa Maria Airport provides regional and continental passenger flight services. Alan Hancock College's main campus provides higher educational services. The Santa Maria Valley is home to approximately 146,838 residents within the City of Santa Maria, the City of Guadalupe, and several unincorporated communities, including Orcutt, Garey, Sisquoc, and Casmalia, as well as rural residents. Santa Maria Valley communities are geographically distinct from one another, except for the City of Santa Maria and Orcutt, which physically combine as the population center of the Santa Maria Valley. Land uses outside this urban hub are largely rural and dominated by cultivated agriculture, grazing, and open space.

Santa Maria Valley lies in the northernmost area of the county, encompassing distinct urban communities such as Orcutt and the City of Santa Maria, expansive agricultural lands, and unique recreational and coastal resources, including Rancho Guadalupe Dunes County Park (pictured). Photo: CaliforniaBeaches.com

B. Cuyama Valley

The Cuyama Valley constitutes the northeastern and eastern portions of the county, encompassing 112,783 acres and bound by the Caliente Mountain Range to the north and the Sierra Madre Mountains to the south. The valley is bisected by the Cuyama River and includes the unincorporated communities of Cuyama, New Cuyama, and Ventucopa. Access to the Cuyama Valley is provided by SR 166 from the northwest and SR 33 from the southeast. The area has a population of approximately 596, mostly concentrated in the community of New Cuyama. These communities are geographically isolated from regional urban centers in Santa Maria and Santa Ynez by the Los Padres National Forest and the mountainous areas of the county. The Cuyama Valley is predominantly rural and agricultural in use, with small urban uses limited to Cuyama and New Cuyama.

Cuyama Valley, located in the easternmost area of the county, supports the small communities of Cuyama, New Cuyama, and Ventucopa with one public park, and comprises primarily ranchland and open space. Photo: Noozhawk

C. Lompoc Valley

The Lompoc Valley encompasses 195,287 acres located in the mid-western portion of the county, bound by the Purisima, Santa Rita, Santa Rosa, and White Hills. The Santa Ynez River traverses the Lompoc Valley in a westerly direction and drains into the Pacific Ocean at Ocean Beach County Park. This planning area is accessed by SR 1 from the north and south and SR 246 from the east and west. Amtrak train services are available from Surf Beach on the coast, approximately 10 miles west of the City of Lompoc. The Lompoc Airport provides regional aviation services. The Lompoc Valley is home to about 50,806 residents, primarily in the City of Lompoc and the unincorporated communities of Vandenberg Village and Mission Hills. The unincorporated communities lie in low hills immediately north of the Santa Ynez River and the City of Lompoc to form the population center of the Lompoc Valley. This urbanized core is surrounded primarily by agriculture and open space. La

Lompoc Valley includes the City of Lompoc and communities of Vandenberg Village, Mesa Oaks, and Mission Hills in the mid-western region of the county. The rugged rural coastline is accessible at Jalama Beach County Park and Campground (pictured).

Purisma Mission State Historic Park lies immediately northeast of the City of Lompoc. Vandenberg Space Force Base lies to the west of this population center and separates these communities from the rural northern coastline and beaches.

D. Santa Ynez Valley

The Santa Ynez Valley comprises 202,507 acres located in central Santa Barbara County. The Santa Ynez Valley is located at the base of several converging mountain ranges, including the San Rafael and Santa Ynez mountains, and the Purisima and Santa Rita hills. The Santa Ynez River flows through the valley and into Lake Cachuma, located centrally in the valley, providing both water supplies and a key recreational amenity to the county. The area is accessible by U.S. Highway 101 from the southwest and northwest, SR 246 from the west, and SR 154 from the southeast. The Santa Ynez Airport provides regional aviation services. This planning area is home to approximately 19,157 people who live in the cities of Buellton and Solvang, the unincorporated communities of Santa Ynez, Ballard, and Los Olivos, or rural areas, as well as within the town of Los Alamos, located 6 miles to the north. Population density is generally low in rural areas where land uses are predominantly ranches, grazing, agriculture, and open space.

E. South Coast

The South Coast comprises 77,020 acres along the southern coastline of the county, including the cities of Santa Barbara, Goleta, and Carpinteria, as well as the unincorporated communities of Eastern Goleta Valley, Isla Vista, Mission Canyon, Toro Canyon, Montecito, and Summerland, and the rural Gaviota Coast. This coastal area lies between the ridgeline of the Santa Ynez Mountains and the Pacific Ocean from Gaviota Pass to the Ventura County line. U.S. Highway 101 traverses the

Santa Ynez Valley located centrally in the county, is renowned for its rural wine country and small towns like Solvang, Los Olivos, and Santa Ynez, as well as outdoor recreation in the LPNF and Lake Cachuma (pictured). Photo: Los Angeles Times

The South Coast, including Goleta, Santa Barbara, and Carpinteria and the rural coastline of Gaviota, is set at the base of the LPNF in the Santa Ynez Mountains and provide access to the coastal recreation like off-leash play at Hendry's Beach (pictured). Photo: TheTravelPockets.com

planning area from west to east and parallels the UPRR. Amtrak train service is provided from stations in Carpinteria, Santa Barbara, and Goleta. The Santa Barbara Airport provides regional and continental flight services. The area's 208,530 residents are concentrated within the eastern reach of the South Coast between Goleta and Carpinteria, while the western extent along the Gaviota Coast is sparsely populated and rural. The Los Padres National Forest borders the South Coast to the north and supports several state parks, including Carpinteria State Beach, El Presidio de Santa Barbara State Historic Park, El Capitan State Beach, Refugio State Beach, and Gaviota State Park. The University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) campus is located on the coast adjacent to the community of Isla Vista and the City of Goleta, while another major educational institution, Santa Barbara City College, is located within the City of Santa Barbara.

Table 2-2. Communities in Santa Barbara County by Recreation Planning Area

Community by Recreation Planning Area	Acres	Population	Incorporated Cities	Unincorporated Communities
Santa Maria Valley	178,146	146,838	Santa Maria Guadalupe	Orcutt Garey Sisquoc Casmalia
Lompoc Valley	195,287	50,806	Lompoc	Mission Hills Mesa Oaks Vandenberg Village
Santa Ynez Valley	202,507	19,157	Buellton Solvang	Los Olivos Los Alamos Ballard Santa Ynez
South Coast	77,020	208,530	Goleta Santa Barbara Carpinteria	Gaviota Coast Isla Vista Eastern Goleta Valley Mission Canyon Montecito Summerland Toro Canyon

Community by Recreation Planning Area	Acres	Population	Incorporated Cities	Unincorporated Communities
Cuyama Valley	112,783	596	N/A	Cuyama New Cuyama Ventucopa

2.9. Key Recreation Agencies in Santa Barbara County

> "Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul."
>
> *John Muir, The Yosemite (1912)*

Parks, open space, trails, and recreation amenities in Santa Barbara County are provided by the County, the eight cities, including Buellton, Carpinteria, Goleta, Guadalupe, Lompoc, Santa Barbara, Santa Maria, and Solvang, and two special districts, including the Isla Vista Recreation and Parks District (IVRPD) and the Cuyama Valley Recreation District (CVRD), as well as private recreation providers. The County provides facilities and limited programs, including campgrounds, regional parks, open space, and trails, while the cities provide both facilities and programs, including local and neighborhood parks hosting recreational sports and classes. Private organizations provide several programs and services (e.g., sports leagues and hiking groups) at many recreation facilities. Private recreation organizations are typically nonprofits like YMCAs and sports leagues. However, there are also for-profit organizations like Rancho Oso RV and Camping Resort, Ocean Mesa RV Park and Campground, and El Capitan Canyon Campground. Groups such as YMCAs throughout the County, the Ben Page Youth Sports Center and the Girsh Park Foundation in the Goleta Valley, and the Elings Park Foundation in the City of Santa Barbara provide key active recreation facilities to supplement local agency efforts. Agencies, organizations, and recreational service providers work together to meet local recreation needs and increasing demands, often with limited budgets and staffing.

Planning for parks, recreation, and trails involves local agencies and organizations and regional and state organizations with ties to recreation facilities and programs such as the Los Padres National Forest, State Parks, and organizations such as the Santa Barbara County Land Trust, which collectively manage hundreds of thousands of acres of land in the County; this land is often set aside for conservation purposes and associated trails and campgrounds are generally reserved for passive recreation uses. Each agency has a unique approach to planning for parks, recreation, and trails based on its adopted recreation planning framework, the facilities and land managed, and the user groups served. Recreation demands can be quite different in each jurisdiction. Interagency coordination with cities and other recreation service providers is open and efficient to maximize high-quality recreation programs in each community in Santa Barbara County (Figure 2-3).

The County of Santa Barbara Community Services Department, Parks Division (County Parks) provides the most public parkland of any local agency. State and federal governments also provide expansive lands for outdoor recreation and open space. The eight cities in the county each provide diverse parks and commonly provide robust recreation programs (e.g., sports leagues and fitness classes) to serve residents regionally. Two special districts also provide park facilities and/or recreation programming to meet local needs, including the Isla Vista Recreation and Park District (IVRPD) and the Cuyama Valley Recreation District (CVRD). The cities and special districts, along with private organizations (e.g., youth sports leagues, YMCAs), are central to providing recreational services, particularly for children and seniors, as well as adult fitness and active sports (Figure 2-3). This diversity of demands and services requires interagency coordination to provide adequate parks and recreation, with each agency fulfilling different needs in particular regions. Planning for recreation involves considering those unique needs in the adopted goals, policies, actions, and programs for the recreation service providers, including the cities, special districts, and state and federal agencies.

Figure 2-3. Key Providers of Parks & Recreation in Santa Barbara County

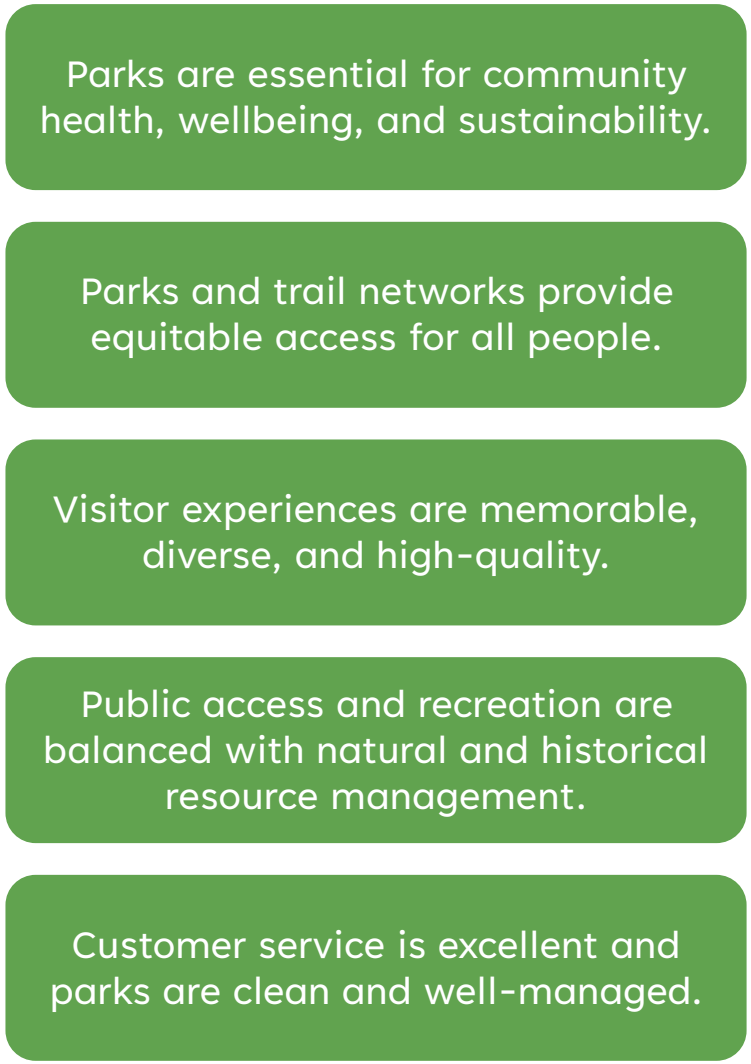
2.10. County Parks

The mission of County Parks is to provide, protect, and enhance parks, recreation, and trails for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of present and future generations in a safe and resilient environment.

A. A Vision for County Parks

County Parks' vision is to create and manage a sustainable, vibrant, and diverse system of parks, trails, and recreation facilities that offer all people the opportunity to explore, play, exercise, socialize, and connect with the County's natural resources, consistent with responsible environmental stewardship and resilience. This vision is supported by several key principles presented in Figure 2-4.

Figure 2-4. County Parks Key Principles



B. County Parks Operations

County Parks provides recreation facilities and services to approximately 7.6 million visitors annually (County Parks 2021). County Parks currently has 62.75 full-time equivalent employees (FTE) and is supported by seasonal employees (e.g., lifeguards) and volunteers. County Parks staff includes rangers, naturalists, maintenance and custodial team members, water/sewer plant operators, and administrators. Leadership team members include the deputy director, a grant program manager, operations managers, a project manager for capital improvements, an aquatics manager, and a planner. Staff members are stationed at four main locations at Waller Park in Santa Maria, Lake Cachuma in the Santa Ynez Valley, the County Parks maintenance yard in Eastern Goleta Valley, and the Parks Division headquarters in County offices in Downtown Santa Barbara, with some staff assigned to duties at different parks throughout the county. County Parks' operating budget for FY 2023/24 was $17.2 million, with approximately $3.8 million in planned capital improvement needs.

County Parks provides a focused range of recreational programs within its public parks. Lifeguard services are provided seasonally at three beaches and two pools at Lake Cachuma. A junior lifeguard program is also provided at Hendry's Beach (Arroyo Burro Beach County Park) in Santa Barbara. While County Parks does not provide in-house recreation programs or services, the County contracts with concessionaires located at various locations throughout the County to provide extended services such as restaurants (e.g., Boathouse at Arroyo Burro County Park or Jalama Beach Store at Jalama Beach County Park) and boat rentals (i.e., watercraft rentals such as kayaks at Goleta Beach and Lake Cachuma). County Parks also provides facilities for programs provided by cities and private recreational service providers (County Parks 2021).

County Parks is committed to the delivery of high-quality visitor service, regulatory enforcement, and development and maintenance of recreation facilities for the public's health, safety, and enjoyment when visiting the County's public park system. Capital planning is a continuous process dependent upon prioritized needs and available funding, including development impact fees, community service areas, deferred and preventive maintenance funds, and grant programs. See Section 2.10.D, *Overview of County Recreation Plans, Policies, and Regulations,* below for a description of key recreation planning documents implemented in the County.

County Parks provides a lifeguard program, including Junior Guards at Hendry's Beach in Santa Barbara. Photo: County Parks

County Parks staffs 14 lifeguards at two pools and three beaches, including Goleta Beach (pictured). Photo: daytrippen.com

C. County Recreation Advisory Groups

County Parks Commission

County Parks is supported by the County Park Commission, as appointed by the County Board of Supervisors. Commissioners each represent one district in the county and serve a 3-year term. The Park Commission is tasked with the following review and advisory roles:

- Balancing departmental and capital improvement resources to be in harmony with population and community demand to the extent possible;
- Reviewing departmental policies and actions and meeting with the public to ensure that park policies and actions are well-thought-out and appropriate to community standards;
- Providing a forum where the public's input regarding park issues may be completely heard;
- Acting as an advocate for a strong local park system that is funded to provide beautiful parks and recreation areas with adequate maintenance and development;
- Advising the Board of Supervisors of the Commission's findings and conclusions (County Parks 2021).

County Riding and Hiking Trails Advisory Committee

The County Riding and Hiking Trails Advisory Committee (CRAHTAC) was established by the County Board of Supervisors in an advisory capacity to review programs, policies, and procedures affecting county recreational riding and hiking trails and their use. Committee members are selected by District Supervisors with 3 to 4 members from each District and are concerned with the location, development, and maintenance of the recreational trails system countywide, to provide public access and links to the Los Padres National Forest, parks, beaches, and other public recreation areas (County Parks 2021)

D. Overview of County Recreation Plans, Policies, and Regulations

Recreation planning in the County is guided by several interrelated documents that serve different purposes. These documents, as amended, form the regulatory basis for recreation planning and the Countywide Recreation Master Plan. Key recreation plans and regulations adopted by the County include the following:

- The **Comprehensive Plan** guides land use and development in unincorporated areas. Key aspects of this plan include the following:
  - Eight mandatory elements, per state law, include the Land Use, Conservation, Housing, Circulation, Open Space, Noise, and Seismic Safety and Safety Elements, plus the Coastal Land Use Plan.
  - Five optional elements, including Agriculture, Energy, Environmental Resource Management, Hazardous Waste, and Scenic Highways elements.
  - The County does not have an adopted Recreation Element; rather, recreation is addressed in the Recreation Section of the Land Use Element and 10 community or area plans.
- The **Community Plans** are adopted as amendments to the Land Use Element and/or Coastal Land Use Plan (for areas within the coastal zone) and plan a particular area at a finer level of detail. The County has 10 community or area plans, including Eastern Goleta Valley, Isla Vista/Unincorporated Goleta, the Gaviota Coast, Los Alamos, Mission Canyon, Montecito, Orcutt, Santa Ynez Valley, Summerland, and Toro Canyon. Each community plan contains goals, policies, and

standards guiding the development of the community it serves, including recreation, although their level of detail regarding recreation varies.

- The **Capital Improvements Program (CIP)** is a multi-year planning tool used to identify and implement the County's short-term and long-term capital needs, including key recreation improvements and action items from the Comprehensive Plan and community plans.
- **Park Master Plans** have been prepared for several County Parks. Examples include master plans for Waller Park, Jalama Beach County Park, the Point Sal Reserve, Lake Cachuma County Park, and Guadalupe Dunes County Park. These plans address park design and layout, circulation and access, visitation and user experience, maintenance and capital improvements, and funding/financial considerations.
- The **County Land Use and Development Code** (LUDC; Chapter 35.20 through 28) carries out the policies of the Comprehensive Plan by classifying and regulating the uses of land within the unincorporated county. Additionally, the **Montecito Land Use Development Code** (MLUDC), as well as the **Coastal Zoning Ordinance** (CZO), carry out the policies of the Comprehensive Plan by classifying and regulating the use of land per the Montecito Community Plan Area and the Coastal Land Use Plan, respectively. While land use designations characterize the physical uses and the intensity of those uses, zoning designations legally define permitted uses and development guidelines for those uses.

County Parks has a long-standing history of providing outstanding outdoor recreation opportunities within day-use parks, beaches, pools, group areas, trails, on & off-leash dog parks, open spaces, and campgrounds. Photos: County Parks