



Setting

"Riverside County is a family of special communities in a remarkable environmental setting." RCIP Vision

Describing the physical setting of Riverside County cannot be done in a single document. This "remarkable environmental setting" includes many facets, from the topography and major physical features, to the natural setting, built environment, unique communities, environmental habitat, circulation system, and most importantly, the people. However, in order to provide a framework for the reader, a general description of the County is important.

This section of the Land Use Element provides a general description of the major features that comprise the County. This general description is further elaborated upon in each element of the General Plan as well as in the RCIP Vision and General Planning Principles. Additional information detailing the County's setting can be found in the Existing Settings Report, an appendix to the General Plan Environmental Impact Report. Future land uses for the County are described in the next section as well as within each Area plan.

As shown on the Location Map (Figure LU-2), Riverside County is located in Southern California and lies east of Orange County, north of San Diego and Imperial Counties, and south of San Bernardino and Los Angeles Counties. Riverside County is the fourth largest county in the State, encompassing approximately 7,400 square miles and extending westward from the Colorado River to within 14 miles of the Pacific Ocean, a stretch of some 200 miles. Riverside County is roughly equivalent in size to the State of New Jersey.

Riverside County contains a spectacular array of diverse geographical features, including deserts, snow capped peaks and rugged hills, deep valleys, forests, and rich agricultural lands. Set among this rich landscape is a variety of established and/or growing urban, suburban and rural communities. This array of physical features provides a home for a rich diversity of natural habitat and biological resources. In addition, the diversity of Riverside County offers a living environment to appeal to every taste: dense urban cities, suburban enclaves, resorts, rural communities, agricultural communities, equestrian communities and sparsely populated outposts.

As can be seen on the attached Physical Features Map (Figure LU-3), Riverside County is roughly divided into eastern and western halves by the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains. A deep valley known as the San Gorgonio Pass, framed by the San Jacinto and San Gorgonio Mountains, creates an accessible corridor linking these two halves. The San Bernardino and Little San Bernardino Mountains form a portion of the northern boundary while numerous mountain ranges, including those in the Santa Rosa Wilderness and Cleveland National Forest, among others, serve as boundaries along the southern and western edges of the County.

These eastern and western halves of the County are distinguished by their physical characteristics as well as their historic growth patterns. The western portion of the County is roughly half the size of the eastern half and is bounded by the Santa Ana Mountains and Cleveland National Forest on the west and the



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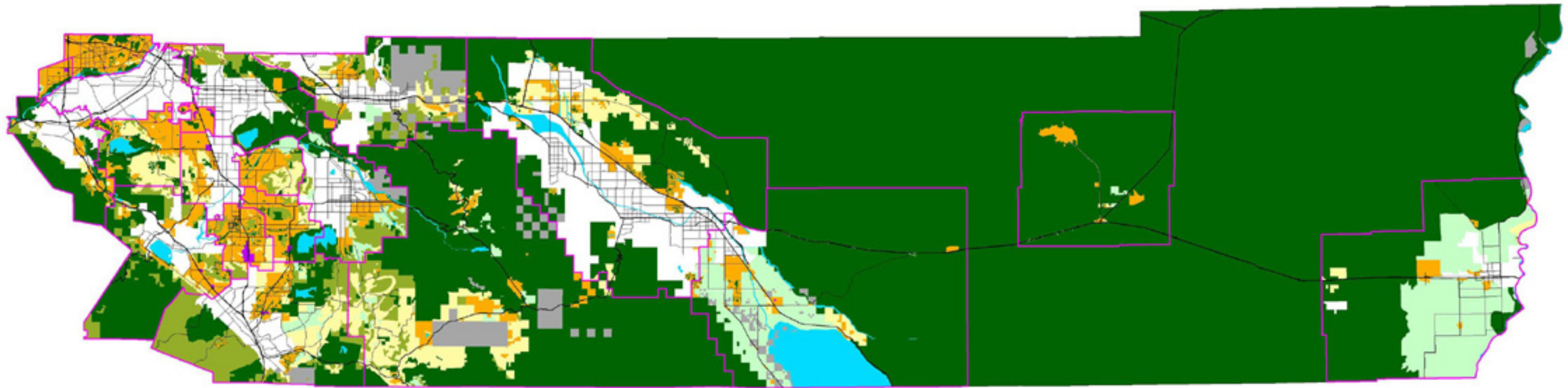
San Jacinto Mountains and the San Bernardino National Forest on the east. Compared to eastern Riverside County, the western portion of the County contains the greatest concentration of population and has experienced the greatest growth pressures. The majority of this population is concentrated in the incorporated cities of Corona, Riverside, Beaumont, Banning, Norco, Lake Elsinore, Perris, Hemet, San Jacinto, Moreno Valley, Calimesa, Canyon Lake, Murrieta, and Temecula.

The Santa Ana River, which starts in the San Bernardino Mountains, flows through the northern portion of western Riverside County, through Orange County and eventually into the Pacific Ocean. The San Jacinto River, which flows from the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains, cuts roughly through the middle of western Riverside County and eventually into Lake Elsinore. Several man-made lakes, which provide water supplies and recreational opportunities, are located in this portion of the County, including Lake Mathews, Lake Perris, Lake Skinner, Vail Lake, and Diamond Valley Lake.

The eastern portion of Riverside County is bounded by the Colorado River on the east and the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains on the west. This portion of the County is distinguished from the western portion of the County by its desert terrain and relatively less populated and congested communities.

The vast majority of eastern Riverside County's population is concentrated in the Coachella Valley within the incorporated cities of Desert Hot Springs, Palm Springs, Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage, Indian Wells, Palm Desert, La Quinta, Indio, and Coachella. Many of these communities are noted for their focus on second homes, retirement living, and golf resorts. The Joshua Tree National Park, known for its rich desert habitat, forms a permanent natural boundary at the northern end of the Coachella Valley. The Whitewater River, a seasonal river which forms in the San Bernardino Mountains, flows through the Coachella Valley and eventually into the Salton Sea at the Valley's southern end. A rich agricultural economy has developed in the Coachella Valley and contributes to the rural character of Eastern Riverside County.

A vast expanse of desert wilderness separates the Coachella Valley from the Colorado River. The City of Blythe is located in the Palo Verde Valley along the Colorado River, which provides the source for one of the most productive agricultural regions in the County.



- Community Development
- Community Centers
- Rural
- Mountainous
- Agriculture
- Open Space/Conservation
- Indian Lands
- Water
- Major Roads & Highways
- Area Plan Boundaries
- Cities

Source Information: Land use designations provided by The Planning Group

The shaded areas shown on this map are 2009.

This map is a draft document and has not to be verified by the County of Riverside or their representatives. This map may not represent the most current information available and may be revised without prior notice. The geographic information system and other sources should be queried for the most current information. This map or any information represented on it shall not be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording.

Figure LU-1



RIVERSIDE COUNTY
GENERAL PLAN LAND USE





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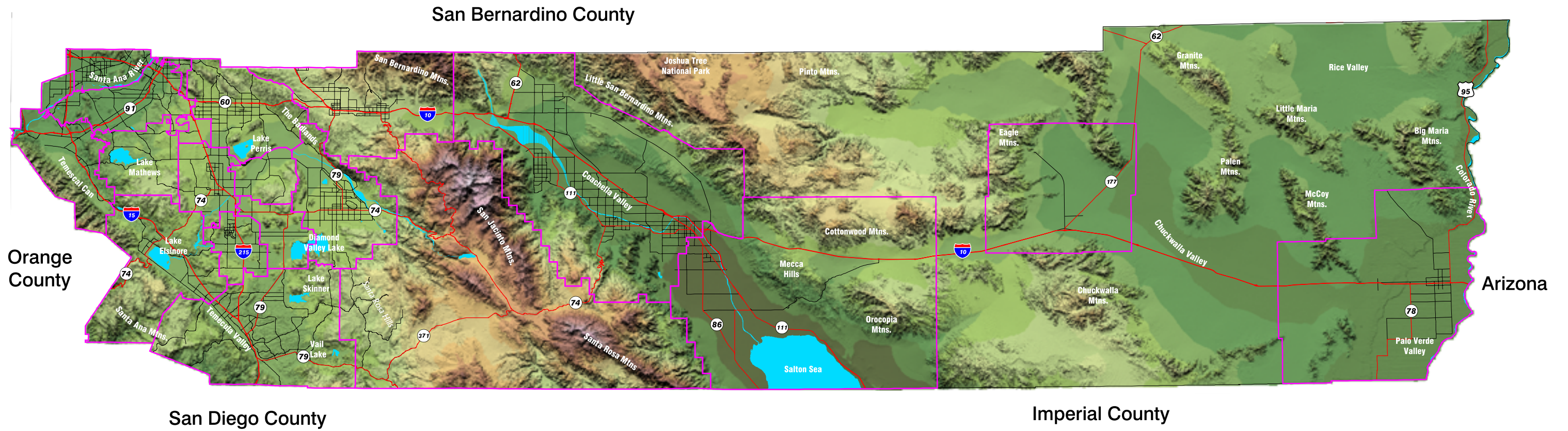
Figure LU-2



County of Riverside General Plan - *Hearing Draft*

Land Use Element

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- Area Plan Boundaries
- Water
- ↘↗ Freeways and Highways
- ↘↗ Major Roads

0 65,000 Feet

Source Information: RBF Consulting.
The oldest data shown on this map is 1990.
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RIVERSIDE COUNTY PHYSICAL FEATURES

Figure LU-3





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