

Ojai Meadow Preserve Sign



Recreation opportunities on these lands include hiking, bicycling, horse-back riding, wildlife viewing, swimming, and wading.

OVLC's properties have over 22 miles of marked trails. Establishment of marked trails on VHC's properties is under development. Both conservancies' properties are well-used as field trip locations for local schools and youth groups.

Table 3.6.4.1.1 provides an overview of the seven publicly-accessible land preserves in the watershed.

Table 3.6.4.1.1 Public Preserves in the Ventura River Watershed

Preserve	Managed By ¹	Acres	Aquatic/Watershed Amenities
Ventura River Preserve	OVLC	1,583	Trail access to Ventura River, Wills Creek, Rice Creek
Ojai Meadow Preserve	OVLC	57	Trail access to freshwater marsh habitat
Valley View Preserve	OVLC	195	Trail access to watershed views
Ilvento Preserve	OVLC	80	Trail access to watershed views
Confluence Preserve	OVLC	13	Protects riparian habitat at the Ventura River/San Antonio Creek confluence; access is provided only by the adjacent Ojai Valley Trail
Big Rock Preserve (Upper and Lower)	VHC	17	Access to Ventura River, though trails unmarked
Willoughby Preserve	VHC	8	Access to Ventura River, though trails unmarked
Total:		1,963	

1. OVLC – Ojai Valley Land Conservancy; VHC – Ventura Hillsides Conservancy



Camping at Lake Casitas

Campgrounds

There are seven public, car-accessible campgrounds in the watershed, several of which also serve as day use parks. There are eight established backcountry camps in the LPNF. Fees are charged only for the car-accessible campgrounds. Backcountry campsites are on a first-come first-served basis. A free California Campfire Permit is required to build a campfire in a backcountry camp. No fires are allowed during fire restrictions. The Los Padres National Forest website has information of fire restrictions. Table 3.6.4.1.2 lists the campgrounds in the watershed.

Table 3.6.4.1.2 Campgrounds

Detail Map # ¹	Facility	Type ²	# of Camp Sites	Managed By ³	Aquatic/Watershed Amenities
4	Camp Comfort	CC	15	County of Ventura	Next to San Antonio Creek
4	Dennison Park	CC	32	County of Ventura	Views of Ojai Valley
5	Emma Wood State Beach Group Campground	CC	4 group sites; 30 people per	State of California	Next to coast and Ventura River estuary
4	Foster Park Campground	CC	16	County of Ventura	Next to Ventura River
–	Gridley Springs Camp	BC	1	USFS	Off of Gridley Trail; follows Gridley Creek
1	Holiday Group Campground	CC	group site	USFS (via concessionaire)	Next to Cannon Creek
4	Lake Casitas Recreation Area	CC	400+	Casitas Municipal Water District	Access to Lake Casitas (though no body contact)
–	Maple Camp	BC	group camp	USFS	Off of North Fork Matilija Trail; next to Upper North Fork Matilija Creek
–	Matilija Camp	BC	several	USFS	Off of North Fork Matilija Trail; next to Upper North Fork Matilija Creek
–	Middle Matilija Camp	BC	several	USFS	Off of North Fork Matilija Trail; next to Upper North Fork Matilija Creek
–	Murietta Camp	BC	several	USFS	Off of Murietta Trail; next to Murietta Creek
–	Ortega Camp	BC	several	USFS	Off of Ortega Motorcycle Trail
–	The Pines Camp	BC	several	USFS	Off of Horn Canyon Trail; crosses Thacher Creek
–	Valley View Camp	BC	several	USFS	Off of Pratt Trail; next to Stewart Canyon Creek
1	Wheeler Gorge Campground	CC	72	USFS (via concessionaire)	North Fork Matilija Creek and Bear Creek pass through campground.

1: Backcountry campgrounds are not included on the maps. The USFS has information on these campgrounds.

2: BC – Backcountry Campground, CC – Car-Accessible Campground

3: USFS – United States Forest Service

Sources: Ojai Trails (LPFA 2014); Hiking & Backpacking Santa Barbara & Ventura (Carey 2014);

Parks and Recreation Areas

Table 3.6.4.1.3 lists the nine nature-based parks and recreation areas in the watershed.

Table 3.6.4.1.3 Parks and Recreation Areas

Detail Map #	Facility	Managed By	Aquatic/Watershed Amenities
4	Camp Comfort ¹	County of Ventura	Next to San Antonio Creek
4	Dennison Park ¹	County of Ventura	
5	Emma Wood State Beach Group Campground ¹	State of California	Access to coast and Ventura River estuary
4	Foster Park	County of Ventura	Next to Ventura River
5	Grant Park	City of Ventura	Views of the watershed
4	Lake Casitas Recreation Area ¹	Casitas Municipal Water District	Access to Lake Casitas
5	Seaside Wilderness Park	State of California (west of river) City of Ventura (east of river)	Access to the Ventura River cobble delta and sand dunes
4	Soule Park	County of Ventura	Next to Thacher Creek
5	Surfers' Point	City of Ventura and Ventura County Fairgrounds/31st District	Ocean and estuary access

1. Also a campground

Trails

The watershed is home to over 40 trails that are maintained for public access. In addition to pedestrian access for walking, hiking, and back-packing, many of these trails provide access to bicyclists and equestrians. These trails are summarized in Table 3.6.4.1.4.

Table 3.6.4.1.4 Trails in the Watershed

Detail Map #	Trail Name	Trail Uses ¹	Miles ²	Difficulty	Trailhead, Route & Notes
Casitas Municipal Water District					
4	Lake Shore Trail	F, B	2.1	Easy	Unpaved trail begins at the eastern end of the paved road in the Lake Casitas Recreation Area (LCRA). Beginning from the free parking area outside of the LCRA entrance adds 1.4 miles to the walk/ride.
City of Ventura Trails					
5	Omer Rains Trail	F, B, P	2 ³	Easy	Runs from San Buenaventura State Beach to Emma Wood State Beach
5	Ventura River Trail	F, B, P	6.3	Easy	Main St., Ventura to Foster Park
County of Ventura Trails					
4	Ojai Valley Trail	A, F, B, P	9.5	Easy	Foster Park to Fox St., Ojai
2	Shelf Road	F, B, H	1.75	Easy	N. Signal St. (trailhead) to Gridley Rd. (trailhead)
4	Sulphur Mountain Road	F, B, H	10.5	Mod	From trailhead to trailhead (Sulphur Mountain Rd. at Casitas Springs to Sulphur Mountain Rd. at Upper Ojai)

Table 3.6.4.1.4 Trails in the Watershed (continued)

Detail Map #	Trail Name	Trail Uses ¹	Miles ²	Difficulty	Trailhead, Route & Notes
Ojai Valley Land Conservancy Trails					
Ilvento Preserve					
2	Huntington Trail	F, B, H	1	Easy-Mod	Thacher School (trailhead) to Forest N. Cook Trail
2	Forest N. Cook Trail	F, B, H	1	Easy-Mod	Connects lower to upper Huntington Trail
Ojai Meadow Preserve					
3	Interpretative Loop Trail	F, B	1	Easy	Various trail segments in Ojai Meadow Preserve
Valley View Preserve					
2	Foothill Trail	F, B	1.1	Easy-Mod	OVLC maintains sections of Foothill Trail on their preserve
2	Fox Canyon Trail	F, B	1.03	Mod-Diff	Shelf Road (trailhead) to Foothill Trail
2	Luci's Trail	F, B	0.75	Mod-Diff	Shelf Road (trailhead) to Foothill Trail
Ventura River Preserve⁴					
3	Chaparral Crest Trail	F, B, H	2.9	Mod	West side of river; see map
3	Fern Grotto Trail	F, B, H	0.3	Mod	West side of river; see map
3	Kennedy Ridge Trail	F, B, H	1.0	Mod	West side of river; see map. (Trail distance is to the edge of the preserve, not the end of the trail.)
3	Rice Canyon Trail	F, B, H	1.5	Mod	West side of river; see map
3	Oso Ridge Trail	F, B, H	1.5	Mod-Diff	West side of river; see map
3	Wills Canyon Trail	F, B, H	2.2	Easy-Mod	West side of river; see map
Other					
2	Fuelbreak Road Easement	F, B	1.0	Easy-Mod	OVLC maintains an easement over private property at the far east end of Fuelbreak Road
State of California Trails					
5	Emma Wood River Trail	F	0.7	Easy	Loop from Emma Wood Group Campground to estuary and back. Connects to Ocean's Edge Trail. Note: often occupied by transient campers.
5	Ocean's Edge Trail	F, B	0.6	Easy	Trailhead in Emma Wood State Beach Group Campground. Travels next to coast through Seaside Wilderness Park to Ventura River estuary. Connects with Emma Wood River Trail.
US Forest Service Trails					
1	Cozy Dell Trail	F, B, H	2.1	Mod	Hwy 33 (trailhead) to Foothill Trail
1	Dry Lakes Ridge	F, B, H	2.3	Diff	Hwy 33 (access) to the basins; another 2.9 to Ortega Motorcycle Trail. Accessed by an old, unmaintained bulldozer line.
2	Foothill Trail	F, B, H	1.3	Mod	From Cozy Dell Trail to dead-end just past Luci's Trail
2	Fuelbreak Road	F, B, H	2.3	Mod	Connects Gridley Trail to Pratt Trail (and trails in between)
2	Gridley Trail	F, B, H	7.1	Mod-Diff	North end of Gridley Rd. (trailhead) to Nordhoff Ridge Road
2	Horn Canyon Trail	F, B, H	4.9	Mod-Diff	Thacher School (trailhead) to Nordhoff Ridge Road
1	Murietta Divide Road	F, B, H	4.2	Diff	Main trailhead to Murietta Divide Road at T-intersection, then up to the divide

Table 3.6.4.1.4 Trails in the Watershed *(continued)*

Detail Map #	Trail Name	Trail Uses ¹	Miles ²	Difficulty	Trailhead, Route & Notes
1	Murietta Trail	F, B, H	2.4	Easy-Mod	Main trailhead to Murietta Trailhead - 0.7 miles, then 1.7 miles to junction with Murietta Divide Road
2	Nordhoff Ridge Road	F, B, H	12.7 ³	Easy	The ridge runs from above Wheeler Gorge to the top of Horn Canyon, then continues into the Santa Clara River watershed
1	North Fork Matilija Trail	F	8.5	Easy-Diff	Main trailhead to North Fork Matilija Trailhead - 0.6 miles, then 7.9 miles to Cherry Creek Road trailhead
2	Ortega Motorcycle Trail	F, B, M	8.9	Mod	Hwy. 33 (trailhead) to Cherry Creek Road trailhead. Rough conditions. Seasonal closures.
2	Pratt Trail	F, B, H	4.8	Diff	N. Signal St. (trailhead) to Nordhoff Ridge Road
2	Wheeler Gorge Nature Trail	F	0.7	Easy	Loop from Hwy. 33 (trailhead)

1: ADA Accessible, B-Bike, F-Foot, H-Horse, HC-High-Clearance Vehicles, M-Motorcycle, P-Paved,

2: One-way unless otherwise indicated.

3: Mileage represents only the part of trail within the watershed.

4: Not all of the Ventura River Preserve Trails are included here or labeled on the map.

Sources: Carey 2014; Ventura County Trails 2014; LPNF 2014; Walter 2014



Ojai Valley Trail. The Ojai Valley Trail (known as the Ventura River Trail below Foster Park), runs 15.8 miles from the City of Ojai down to the coast, following an old railway route for most of the way. The trail is very popular with bicyclists, as well as walkers and horseback riders (on the Ojai Valley Trail segment). At the coast, the trail connects to the Omer Rains Trail, which runs along the coast to the San Buenaventura State Beach.

Photo courtesy of Michael McFadden

San Antonio Creek Bridge, Ojai Valley Trail



Ventura River Parkway

The “Ventura River Parkway” is a vision actively pursued by a coalition of stakeholders. The river parkway would create a continuous network of publicly accessible trails, vista points, and natural areas along the river, from the coast to Matilija Canyon. Existing trails form the beginnings of the parkway. By working with willing landowners on a voluntary basis over time, supporters hope that a parkway will take shape that will yield the many health, quality of life, and economic benefits seen in other communities that have established river parkways.

California River Parkway Act

In 2004, the state Legislature passed the California River Parkway Act, which outlined the following values of river parkways:

- (a) River parkways directly improve the quality of life in California by providing important recreational, open space, wildlife, flood management, water quality, and urban waterfront revitalization benefits to communities in the state.
- (b) River parkways provide communities with safe places for recreation including family picnics; bicycling and hiking; areas for river access for swimming, canoeing, and fishing; and many other activities.
- (c) River parkways help revitalize deteriorated urban neighborhoods and provide an anchor for economic development by providing important recreational and scenic amenities.
- (d) River parkways provide accessible open space that helps remedy the severe shortage of park and

open-space areas that plague many urban and suburban communities, small towns, and rural areas.

(e) River parkways provide flood protection benefits for communities by providing wider corridors along our waterways that help store, and provide safe corridors for the passage of, storm waters.

(f) River parkways protect and restore riparian and riverine habitat.

(g) River parkways improve or protect the water quality in our rivers and streams.

(h) River parkways provide the recreational and ecosystem components of integrated regional water management and watershed plans.

(i) California can improve the quality of life in this state by assisting public agencies and nonprofit organizations in establishing, developing, and restoring river parkways.

—California River Parkway Act of 2004:
California Public Resources Code 5751(b)

In 2010 (with funding from the California Coastal Conservancy, and sponsorship by The Trust for Public Land and VHC), California Polytechnic University Pomona (CalPoly) created a conceptual document, *Vision Plan for the Lower Ventura River Parkway* (vision plan) for the lower parkway (from the coast to Foster Park) (CalPoly 2008/2010). The vision plan, developed by CalPoly's Department of Landscape Architecture, presents a vision for the lower parkway based on local research and stakeholder input. The 317-page vision plan includes a detailed characterization of the lower watershed, complete with maps, photos, and data graphs. Sketches of potential future parkway features help bring the community vision to life.

The vision plan was intended to educate and engage the community and prospective funders about the potential for a river parkway that is compatible with recreational use, stewardship, river function, and regional ecosystems. Because it was intended to be a visioning document, the project team did not overly constrain themselves with the pragmatic hurdles that would be involved in implementing some of the design features. The plan outlines big ideas to stimulate possibilities.

Vision Plan Sketch

Source: Vision Plan for the Lower Ventura River Parkway (CalPoly 2008/2010)



National Recreation Trail Sign,
Ventura River Parkway

National Recreation Trail Designation

Two existing trails form part of the Ventura River Parkway Trail: the Ojai Valley Trail and the Ventura River Trail. These interconnected multi-use trails connect the coast to the City of Ojai. In June 2014, this part of the Ventura River Parkway Trail was designated a National Recreation Trail (NRT). The NRT designation recognizes existing trails and trail systems that link communities to recreation opportunities on public lands and in local parks across the nation. Each designated trail is identified with a set of trail markers.

Viewpoints

Views of the river and other natural landscapes offer another important way that residents and visitors have access to nature. Viewpoints that are easily accessible by car or an easy walk allow less mobile individuals to see and enjoy these resources. Some of the watershed’s key, readily accessible viewpoints—many of them at bridges—are summarized in this section.

Main Street Bridge

Photo Courtesy of Santa Barbara Channelkeeper



Table 3.6.4.1.5 Viewpoints

Viewpoint	View and Conditions ¹
Main Street Bridge	Views of lower Ventura River, just above the estuary. Typically has perennial flow.
Casitas Vista Bridge	Views of lower-middle Ventura River at Foster Park. Typically has perennial flow.
San Antonio Creek Bridge (on Ojai Valley Trail)	Views of the convergence of San Antonio Creek with Ventura River and the “confluence pool.” Typically has perennial flow.
Santa Ana Bridge	Views of upper-middle Ventura River in the river’s dry reach. Typically dry.
Santa Ana Road	Expansive views of the upper-middle Ventura River along the road. Typically dry.
Highway 150 Bridge	Views of the upper-middle Ventura River in the river’s dry reach. Typically dry.
Highway 150 above Lake Casitas	Views of Lake Casitas.
Surfers’ Point	Ocean views.
Grant Park	Views of the entire lower watershed, estuary, and coast.
Highway 33 - State Scenic Highway	Views of the steep, chaparral-covered mountains of the Los Padres National Forest and the Transverse Ranges.
Dennison Park	Views of the Ojai Valley’s East End.

1. Conditions in the Ventura River are quite variable from year to year. “Typical” here indicates conditions in most years except during extended, multi-year droughts.

Fishing

Lake Casitas is a popular fishing destination known for its “world class” bass fishing. In addition to largemouth bass, the lake is filled with rainbow trout, crappie, red-ear sunfish, bluegill and channel catfish.

Stream fishing in the watershed is permitted (for any species of fish) only above “anadromous waters,” which are inland waters that are accessible to fish migrating from the ocean. This limits stream fishing to Matilija Creek above Matilija Dam, and North Fork Matilija Creek above Wheeler Gorge Campground.

Aquatic Recreation

Swimming, wading, surfing, boogie boarding and other body contact sports are very popular year-round activities in the watershed’s coastal ocean waters. Swimming in the estuary is uncommon, though children can sometimes be seen wading around its edges.

Swimming and other body contact sports are not allowed in Lake Casitas or Matilija Reservoir.

Small, unmarked swimming holes can be found along the Ventura River, Matilija Creek, and North Fork Matilija Creek. Water levels in these swimming holes depend upon local groundwater and surface water levels.



**No Fishing Sign,
Ventura River Estuary**

Swimming Hole, Ventura River Preserve

Photo courtesy of Ojai Valley Land Conservancy



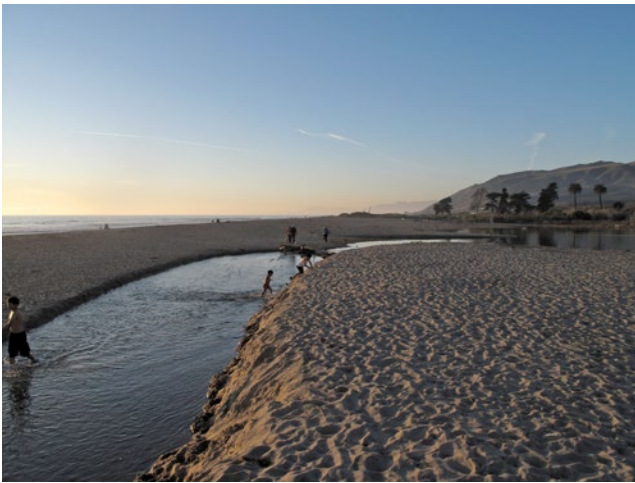


Boys Relocating Crayfish, Lower Ventura River



Kiteboarders, Surfers' Point

Photo courtesy of Santa Barbara Channelkeeper



Kids Playing in Ventura River Estuary



Kayaking on Lake Casitas near Dam

On the rare occasions when the Ventura River water levels are high enough to be navigable by boat, the strong flows and rocky conditions are generally unsafe for boating.

... during each summer in the early years of the 20th century, the county forester built a rock dam across the river at Foster Park to form a free swimming hole for visitors, as instructed by E. P. Foster (Percy 1976).

—*Vision Plan for the Lower Ventura River Parkway – Reconnecting People with the Ventura River* (CalPoly 2008/2010)

Environmental Information and Interpretation

More insight into the watershed's natural habitats can greatly enhance visitor's appreciation of and connection to a natural site, greatly enriching their experience there. By providing environmental information and interpreting that information, resource managers aim to cultivate educated and appreciative visitors, and to encourage respect for and stewardship of those resources.

Environmental information is typically communicated through signs, printed materials, and websites.

Interpretive Sign, Ventura River Estuary



This section summarizes the watershed's key onsite environmental information and interpretation programs provided by public agencies and nonprofits. Private businesses also offer nature-based interpretive opportunities in the watershed.

Interpreting environmental information is a way of translating factual information into stories, firsthand experiences, or graphic images. Interpretive workshops, field trips, displays, tours, and presentations are all offered in the watershed to help people develop a meaningful connection with environmental resources, relationships, or processes.

Onsite static information in the form of signs or displays is underdeveloped. Vandalism of such resources has been a significant problem. Online information is well developed, especially with the completion of this watershed management plan. Part 3 of this plan, "Watershed Characterization," includes a comprehensive overview of the watershed's geology, hydrology, ecosystems, and water quality—illustrated with a comprehensive atlas of maps that are now available for use in interpretive materials (www.venturawatershed.org/map-atlas).

Information about the watershed's nature-based access opportunities needs to be better communicated to the public through a variety of different media in English and Spanish.

Wheeler Gorge Visitor Center

The Wheeler Gorge Visitor Center offers educational information and programs about the flora, fauna, geography, geology, natural history, trails, and camps of the LPNF. The center is located at 17017 Maricopa Highway about eight miles north of the City of Ojai, and across Highway 33 from Wheeler Gorge Campground. It is open weekends year round. Picnic sites are provided at the center. The Los Padres Forest Association manages the facility under an agreement with the USFS.

Wheeler Gorge Visitor Center



Ojai Valley Land Conservancy

The OVLC offers many ongoing environmental interpretation programs. OVLC's monthly "Wild About Ojai" lecture series offers programs on different topics such as geology, fire ecology, watershed health, Chumash history, and native plants. Guided hikes on OVLC's preserves are offered periodically—some are general interpretive hikes and some focus on specific topics such as birds. Preserve tours are offered on request for groups of six or more; tours cover the preserve's history, ecology, trail system, and more. OVLC also partners with the nonprofit Once Upon a Watershed to host school field trips on their preserves. Kiosks at several OVLC trailheads—Old Baldwin Road, Riverview, Valley View, and Ojai Meadow Preserve (next to Nordhoff High School)—provide trail information and some information on plants and animals found on the preserves.



Ojai Valley Land Conservancy Interpretative Plant Hike

Photo courtesy of Ojai Valley Land Conservancy

Ventura Hillside Conservancy

The VHC offers many educational and outreach programs each year. Partnering with Santa Barbara Channelkeeper (as well as Surfrider Foundation and Audubon Society when possible), VHC coordinates field trips for local schools, introducing children to the issues and environment of the Ventura River watershed. VHC conducts outreach activities at local events, educating the public about the value of the watershed and recruiting volunteers to help clean trash and restore habitat in the lower river. During the wet season, they organize tree planting events on their preserves, removing non-native weeds and replacing them with native trees. VHC hosts guided preserve tours by appointment year-round.

Ventura Hillside Conservancy Tour of Willoughby Preserve



Once Upon a Watershed

Once Upon a Watershed is a nonprofit program that provides hands-on watershed education, restoration, and stewardship experience to 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students in the Ventura River watershed. This nonprofit partners with OVLC to provide to provide school field trips on their preserves.

California State Parks

The Channel Coast District of California State Parks offers summer campfire interpretive programs at Emma Wood State Beach Campground; their staff also provides guided tours, kayak instruction, and ancient native technology classes as time permits. The district offers one of the largest junior lifeguard programs in the state with nearly 1,000 participants a year, ranging from 9 to 17 years old. In addition to water safety and awareness, the lifeguard program incorporates an

introduction to the surrounding flora and fauna. The junior lifeguard program is held at San Buenaventura State Beach, just south of the watershed.

City of Ojai/Ventura Wild

The City of Ojai's Recreation Department partners with the Ventura Wild organization to provide wilderness discovery programs, including seasonal camps, for youth in the Ojai Valley.

City of Ventura's Interpretive Outreach Program

For over 30 years the City of Ventura has been providing an Interpretive Outreach Program to students (preschool to 6th grade), providing them with interactive education programs both in the classroom and at local parks, beaches, and historic sites. These programs correspond with the California Science and History-Social Science curriculum framework



City of Ventura's Interpretive Outreach Program. The City of Ventura's Interpretive Outreach Program serves more than 16,000 participants annually.

Photo courtesy of City of Ventura

and content standards. During a nature study field trip, classroom presentation, or living history field trip, students are actively engaged as they learn through direct hands-on experience. The City of Ventura's Interpretive Outreach Program serves more than 16,000 participants annually, including those from schools outside of the City of Ventura.

Santa Barbara Channelkeeper

Santa Barbara Channelkeeper (SBCK) provides watershed education for a variety of students including college, high school, and elementary school students. SBCK meets with classes at sites throughout watershed for field trips. Topics covered include the history of the watershed, current issues, and the importance of water quality monitoring. SBCK also works with teachers individually, and collaborates with community organizations including VHC and Once Upon a Watershed.

Santa Barbara Channelkeeper Water Quality Educational Field Trip

Photo courtesy of Santa Barbara Channelkeeper



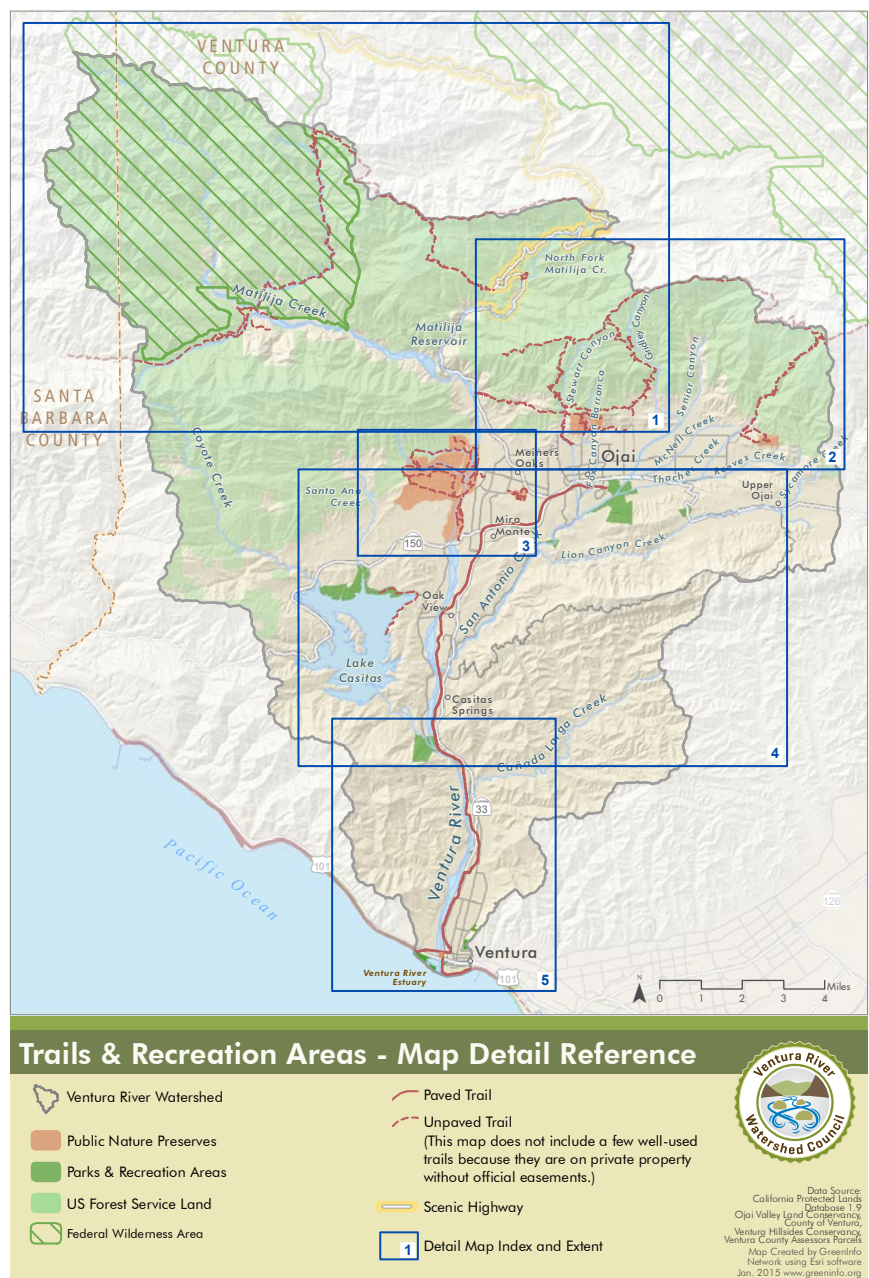
3.6.4.2 Nature Access by Area

This section provides descriptions of nature access opportunities in the following five geographic areas:

- Up Highway 33 (Detail Map 1)
- Ojai Front Country (Detail Map 2)
- Ventura River Preserve (Detail Map 3)
- Ojai Valley & Upper Ojai (Detail Map 4)
- Coastal Area (Detail Map 5)

Trailheads are numbered in this section to reflect the number used to identify them on the Detail Maps.

Figure 3.6.4.2.1 Trails & Recreation Areas – Map Detail Reference



Up Highway 33 (Detail Map 1)

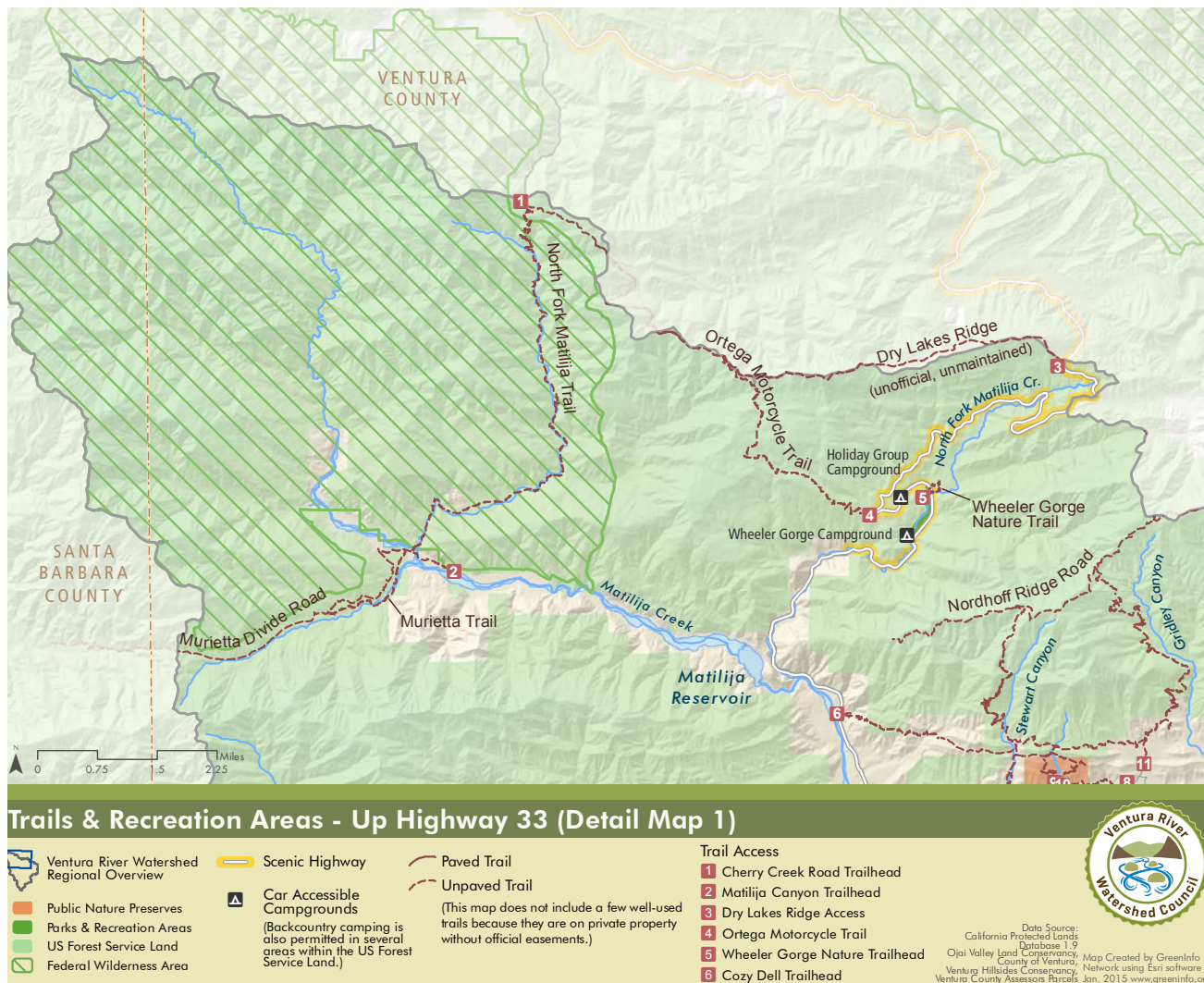


Figure 3.6.4.2.2 Trails & Recreation Areas – Up Highway 33 (Detail Map 1)

Habitat and Terrain in Los Padres National Forest

The habitat in the LPNF is largely pristine chaparral. Alluvial, mulefat, and riparian scrub habitats, as well as alder and other riparian forests, are found along streams. Patches of coast scrub and oak woodland are also found here, and there are montane/conifer forests at higher elevations. The terrain is steep.

1. Cherry Creek Road Trailhead

Located three miles off of Highway 33 on a rough dirt road. Cherry Creek Road is approximately 27 miles past Ojai. The trailhead provides access to both North Fork Matilija Trail and Ortega Motorcycle Trail. Trailhead has a dirt parking area. The road is only open from August 1 to December 15.

2. Matilija Canyon Trailhead

Located at the end of Matilija Road, 4.9 miles past the junction with Highway 33. The Matilija Canyon trailhead, provides access to a vast expanse of wilderness. Much of this area lies within the Matilija Wilderness, a federally designated wilderness area. Trailhead has a dirt parking



Matilija Creek Crossing

area. The trails that lead from the Matilija Canyon trailhead follow drainages that commonly flow year-round: Upper North Fork Matilija Creek, Murietta Creek, and Matilija Creek. These creeks are the primary headwaters of the Ventura River watershed. Swimming holes exist depending on the current water conditions. Fishing is allowed in these drainages since the endangered steelhead cannot get past Matilija Dam.

Car Break-Ins at Trailheads

Car break-ins at trailheads do occasionally happen at some of the watershed's trailheads. Do not leave valuables in the car or the trunk, especially where they would be visible from the outside.



North Fork Matilija Trail Sign

North Fork Matilija Trail

Hiking, horseback riding, swimming/wading, backcountry camping

First trail off the main road, on the right, just past the second creek crossing. Follows Upper North Fork Matilija Creek. The trail goes through wilderness so travel is restricted to foot or horseback (no bikes in wilderness). Ends at Cherry Creek Road trailhead.

Murietta Trail

Hiking, biking, horseback riding, backcountry camping (Murietta Camp)

Second trail off the main road, on the left, shortly after the North Fork Matilija Trail. Offers backcountry camping, swimming and fishing. Meets up with and follows Murietta Creek, then merges with Murietta Divide Road.

Two North Fork Matilija Creeks?

The watershed has two North Fork Matilija Creeks. The one that follows Highway 33 down from the top of the watershed is called "North Fork Matilija Creek;" the one that travels through the Matilija Wilderness in the western corner of the watershed and is an early tributary of Matilija Creek is called "Upper North Fork Matilija Creek." However, the trail that follows this creek is called the "North Fork Matilija Trail."



Murietta Creek Trail

Murietta Divide Road

Hiking, biking, horseback riding

Begins at the T-intersection at the end of the main road. Turn left. Goes to Murietta Divide and beyond into Santa Barbara County.

Scenic Highway

Scenic driving, biking

As Highway 33 climbs out of the Ojai Valley heading north, the landscape quickly turns to the rugged mountains of the Transverse Ranges. The highway follows the Ventura River, and then North Fork Matilija Creek—one of the two tributaries that feed into and form the Ventura River. Nine miles of Highway 33 within the watershed are designated as a National Forest Scenic Byway and a State Scenic Highway. The State Scenic Highway begins where Highway 33 crosses into USFS land 6.4 miles north of Highway 150, and extends to the top of the watershed and beyond to the Santa Barbara County line (CDOT 2014). Considered to be one of the most “picturesque national forest locations” (USFS 2005), the scenic highway features panoramic vistas of steep, chaparral-covered mountains and relatively undisturbed habitats. This scenic drive is itself a recreational destination for many people.

Highway 33 Scenic Highway



3. Dry Lakes Ridge

Hiking

Access to this area starts at an unmarked dirt turnout with parking, located 25 miles past the Wheeler Gorge Campground on the south side of Highway 33. An old, unmaintained bulldozer line leads up to Dry Lakes Ridge and the USFS's Dry Lakes Ridge Botanical Area, an area protected for its special botanical resources. The first segment is an exceedingly steep firebreak. This route is not well used, so some bush-whacking through sharp chaparral along the ridge can be expected.

Dry Lakes Ridge



4. Ortega Motorcycle Trailhead

Hiking, biking, motorcycle riding (some parts are inaccessible to motorcycles), backcountry camping (Ortega Camp)

Located on the west side of Highway 33 1.6 miles above the Wheeler Gorge Campground entrance. The trailhead is a dirt turnout with limited parking and only marked by a small trail sign. The trail is very rough and steep in places and subject to closures. It ends at the Cherry Creek Canyon Road trailhead at the top of the watershed.

Holiday Group Camp

Camping

Located on the west side of Highway 33 about one mile north of the Wheeler Gorge Campground entrance. The campsite is partially shaded with oaks and scrub oaks. This USFS campground has seven campsites.



Wheeler Gorge Nature Trail Sign

5. Wheeler Gorge Nature Trailhead

Hiking

Located on the west side of Highway 33, one half mile above the Wheeler Gorge Campground entrance. The trailhead has limited parking on either side of the highway. The trail is an easy, 0.7-mile loop that follows the North Fork Matilija Creek then climbs up into chaparral habitat and descends back. Fifteen trail markers identify native plants; a brochure interpreting the self-guided hike is available from the Wheeler Gorge Visitors Center.

Wheeler Gorge Campground

Car-accessible camping, hiking, swimming/wading, fishing

Located on Highway 33 about eight miles north of the City of Ojai. The campground is located in a shaded riparian corridor surrounded by high, rocky canyon walls. North Fork Matilija Creek and Bear Creek flow through the campground, the North Fork flows year round. This USFS campground has 72 campsites. Fishing is allowed in the campground on North Fork Matilija Creek upstream of a road crossing that acts as a fish passage barrier. Across the highway is the Wheeler Gorge Visitor Center (described earlier in this section).

6. Cozy Dell Trailhead

Hiking, biking, horseback riding

Located near Friends Packing House on the east side of Highway 33, 3.3 miles north of the City of Ojai. There is ample parking on the west side of the highway. The first mile of the trail is fairly steep and often shaded, and at the top offers exceptional views of the watershed. The trail connects to Cozy Dell Road and the Foothill Trail.

Wheeler Gorge Campground



Ojai Front Country (Detail Map 2)

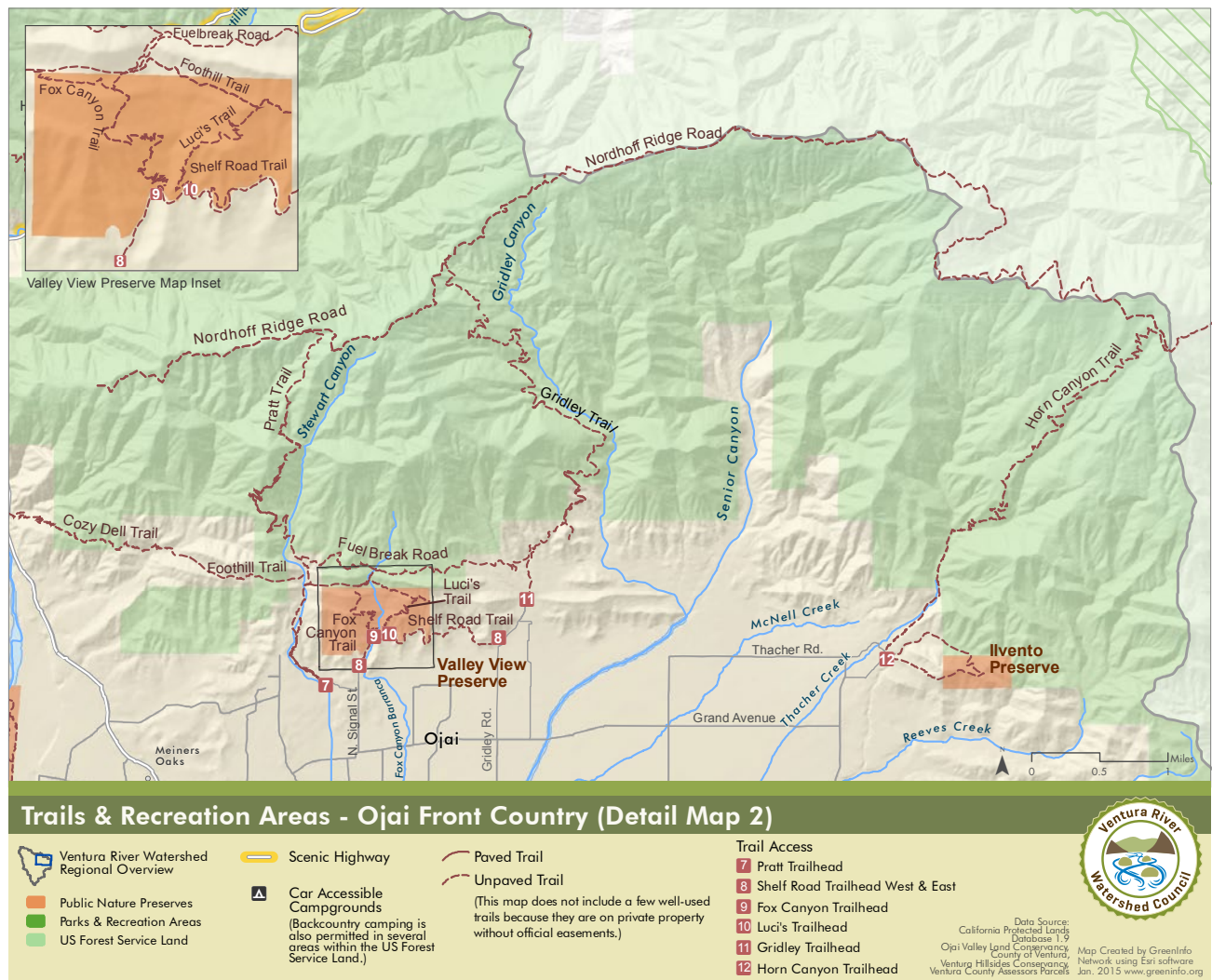


Figure 3.6.4.2.3 Trails & Recreation Areas – Ojai Front Country (Detail Map 2)

A network of publicly accessible trails crisscrosses the foothills and steep mountains that rise up from the Ojai Valley floor to Nordhoff Ridge. Many of these trails lead into the LPNF. The system of trails here provides different opportunities for day hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, and backcountry access. Many of these trails follow drainages, and all of them provide spectacular views. Some trails are quite steep in places.

Nordhoff Ridge Road

Hiking, biking, horseback riding, driving (4-wheel-drive vehicles only), paragliding, hang-gliding, backcountry camping

Nordhoff Ridge Road travels along Nordhoff Ridge at the top of the watershed, providing commanding views all around. Several trails lead up from the watershed and end at this road. A permit from the USFS is

required to drive on the road, which is accessed by vehicle from the Rose Valley Campground (located outside the watershed).

Fuelbreak Road

Hiking, biking, horseback riding

Runs more-or-less horizontally across the mountainside and connects Gridley Trail with Pratt Trail. The east end of the trail near Gridley Trail is a public easement over private property.

Foothill Trail

Hiking, biking, horseback riding (no horses on OLVC's portion of Foothill Trail)

Runs horizontally across the mountainside and connects Cozy Dell Trail, Pratt Trail, Fox Canyon Trail, and Luci's Trail.

Biking on Foothill Trail

Photo courtesy of Chad Ress



7. Pratt Trailhead

Hiking, biking, horseback riding, backcountry camping (Valley View Camp)

Located above the Stewart Canyon debris basin, up N. Signal Street. The trailhead has a dirt parking area. The lower end of Pratt trail follows Stewart Canyon Creek; the trail then heads up the steep slope of Nordhoff Ridge, ending at Nordhoff Ridge Road and Nordhoff Peak (4,485 ft). The trail's lower section ties into the Cozy Dell Trail, Foothill Trail, and Fuelbreak Road.

8. Shelf Road Trailheads West and East

Hiking, biking, horseback riding

A trailhead is located at each end of Shelf Road. The western trailhead is at the top of N. Signal Street and the eastern trailhead is on Gridley Road. Parking is on-street on N. Signal Street (or at the Pratt trailhead), and there is a small dirt parking area on Gridley Road. Shelf Road is a relatively flat trail.



Valley View Preserve Trailhead Kiosk

Photo courtesy of Ojai Valley Land Conservancy

Valley View Preserve

Hiking, biking

Located adjacent to and above Shelf Road. This 195-acre Ojai Valley Land Conservancy preserve includes the mountainside behind the City of Ojai and two short, steep trails that connect to Foothill Trail and Shelf Road. The preserve is accessed from Shelf Road.

9. Fox Canyon Trailhead

10. Luci's Trailhead

Hiking, biking

Both trailheads are accessed by foot off of Shelf Road—Luci's is bit farther east than Fox Canyon. Both trails are quite steep and connect to Foothill Trail.

11. Gridley Trailhead

Hiking, biking, horseback riding, backcountry camping (Gridley Springs Camp)

Located in the East End of the Ojai Valley at the north end of Gridley Road. The trailhead is off of a cul-de-sac and parking is on-street. The trail ends at Nordhoff Ridge Road. A horse trough is located about a third of the way to the top. Question: Is there usually water in this trough? May want to clarify.

Gridley Trailhead Sign



Ilvento Preserve

Located in the East End of the Ojai Valley on the private Thacher School campus near the Gymkhana Field. The 80-acre preserve offers great views. Park at the Horn Canyon trailhead parking area and follow the road to the right a short distance to the Ilvento Preserve trailhead (Huntington Trail).

Ojai Valley Land Conservancy Hike, Ilvento Preserve

Photo courtesy of Ojai Valley Land Conservancy



Huntington and Forest N. Cook Trails

Hiking, biking, horseback riding

Accessed from the Ilvento Preserve trailhead. These short trails form a loop.

12. Horn Canyon Trailhead

Hiking, biking, horseback riding, backcountry camping (The Pines)

Located in the East End of the Ojai Valley on the private Thacher School campus. Turn right after you enter the campus and continue east through the parking lot; keep right to dirt road, stream crossing, and avocado orchard. The trailhead has a dirt parking area. Horn Canyon trail crosses Thacher Creek several times before climbing up the mountain. Near the top of the watershed the trail crosses Sisar Canyon Road and then intersects with Nordhoff Ridge Road.

Ventura River and Ojai Meadow Preserves (Detail Map 3)

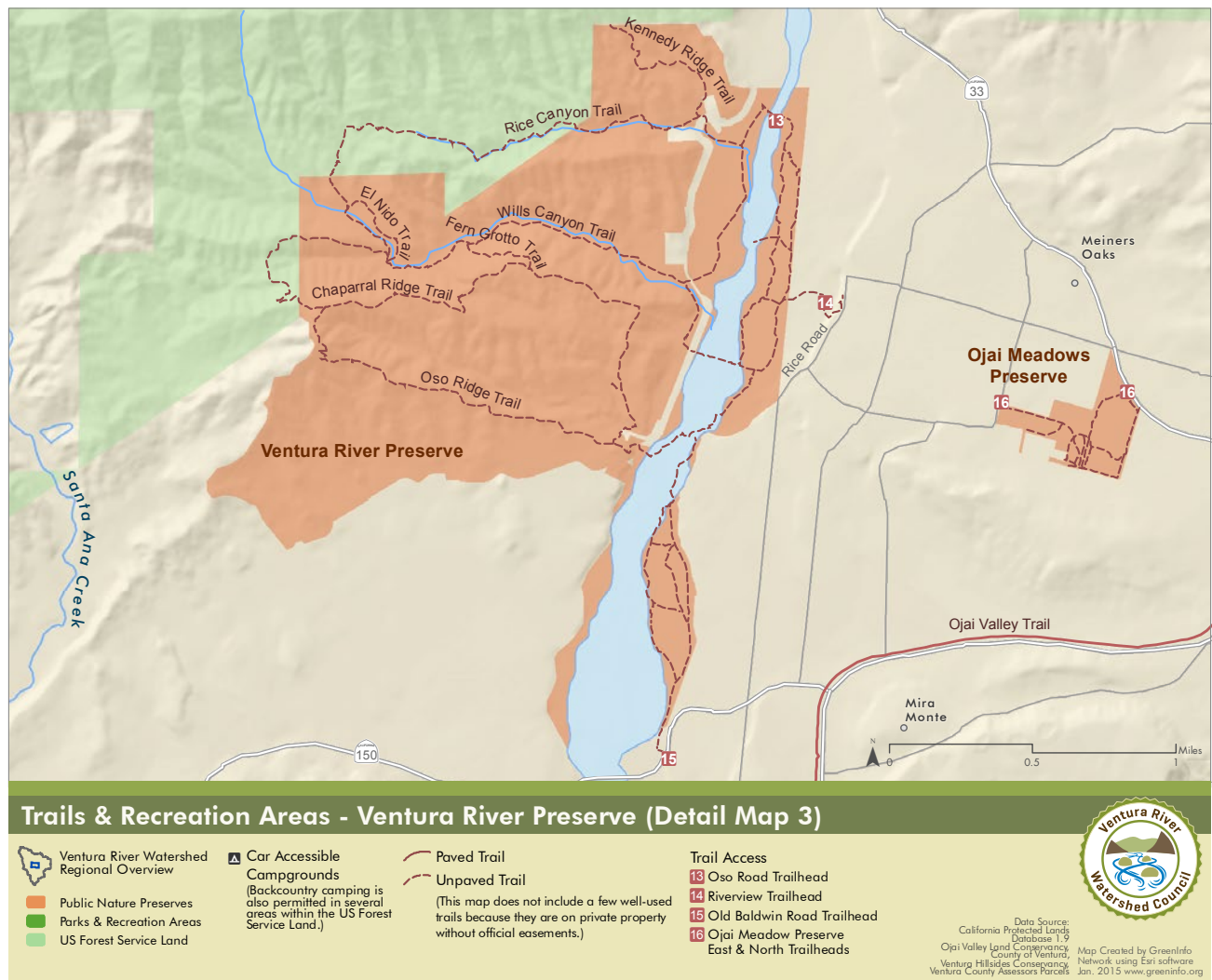


Figure 3.6.4.2.4 Trails & Recreation Areas – Ventura River and Ojai Meadow Preserves (Detail Map 3)

Ventura River Preserve

Hiking, biking, horseback riding (allowed on many but not all trails), swimming/wading, wildlife viewing

Located in and west of the Ventura River, next to the communities of Meiners Oaks and Mira Monte on one side and the LPNF on the other. The Ventura River Preserve (VRP) is the watershed's largest preserve, covering 1,583 acres, including 655 acres of floodplain, 2.6 miles of the Ventura River, and adjacent canyons to west of the river.

The VRP has three trailheads with parking adjacent to the Ventura River. A network of over 12 trails, totaling 20 miles, traverse the wide river bottom and connect to trails leading through canyons or along ridges on the west side of the river. The Rice Canyon/Wills Canyon loop is a very popular hike; the lush oak woodlands of Wills Canyon are noteworthy

for their “enchanted forest” feel. Swimming holes in the river are sometimes available depending on the season and amount of rainfall that year. Provides excellent opportunities for wildlife viewing.

The habitat on the VRP is largely pristine, except for trails and historic orchards that are being restored. The river bottom includes primarily alluvial scrub and mulefat scrub habitats. The river-adjacent terraces comprise mainly grasslands and oak woodlands. Chaparral and oak woodlands dominate the canyons to the west of the river. The terrain is varied. The river bottom is flat with many boulders in some areas; canyons are moderately-steep to steep.

Ventura River Preserve Hike

Photo courtesy of Ojai Valley Land Conservancy



13. Oso Trailhead

Located at the end of Meyers Road, off of N. Rice Road in the river bottom. The trailhead has a large gravel parking area that accommodates horse trailers. The trailhead gate opens at 8:00 am and closes at 5:00 pm in the winter (Nov 1 - Mar 31) and 7:30 pm in the summer (Apr 1 – Oct 31).

Oso trailhead connects to a network of trails on the preserve. Two popular destinations are Kennedy Ridge Trail and the Wills-Rice Canyon Loop, described below. See Table 3.6.4.1.4 for more information on the various small connector trails on the preserve.

Kennedy Ridge Trail

Hiking, biking

Accessed off of Rice Canyon Trail, across the river bottom and up some gentle slopes. The trail is moderately steep and offers great views.

Wills-Rice Canyon Loop

Hiking, biking, horseback riding

Travels through two adjacent canyons. Wills Canyon is a deeply shaded oak woodland with a special “enchanted forest” feel to it; the terrain is relatively flat/gently sloping. Rice Canyon is more exposed with more varied terrain. Both trails begin on the west side of the Ventura River. The loop trail is easily accessed by either the Oso trailhead or the Riverview trailhead.

14. Riverview Trailhead

Located on Rice Road just south of W. El Roblar Drive. The trailhead has a dirt parking area. Riverview trailhead offers connection to a network of trails on the preserve. The Wills-Rice Canyon Loop, described above, is a popular destination, as are the River Trails, Oso Ridge Trail, and Chaparral Crest Trail, described below. See Table 3.6.4.1.4 for more information on the various small connector trails on the preserve.



Ventura River Preserve, Riverview Trailhead

River Trails

Hiking, biking, horseback riding

A network of trail segments run along the east side of the Ventura River along its 2.6-mile extent. These flat trails run through diverse alluvial scrub and grassland habitats studded with oaks and sycamores. Various options are available to cross the river bottom and connect to loop or ridge trails on the other side.

Oso Ridge Trail

Hiking, biking, horseback riding

Begins on the west side of the Ventura River; accessed from either Riverview or Oso trailhead. The trail is moderately steep, ascending and dipping as it climbs, and travels through tall stands of dense chaparral. Offers great panoramic views. Connects with Chaparral Crest Trail.

Chaparral Crest Trail

Hiking, biking, horseback riding

Begins on the west side of the Ventura River; accessed from either Riverview or Oso trailhead. The trail is accessed off of Oso Ridge Trail, Upper Wills Canyon Trail, or Fern Grotto Trail. The trail travels through a variety of habitats, and the terrain is quite varied, with some steep ascents and descents. Offers spectacular views.



Ventura River Preserve, South Riverview Trail

Nature Preserves

The watershed is home to seven nature preserves that are accessible to the general public. These preserves are managed by local land conservancies.

15. Old Baldwin Road Trailhead

Located at the end of Old Baldwin Road, just off of Highway 150. The trailhead has plenty of parking and accommodates horse trailers. The first quarter mile of the trail is ADA-accessible. River bottom trails are accessible from this trailhead, as are the Oso Ridge Trail and the Chaparral Crest Trail, described above. The trailhead gate opens at 7:30 am and closes at 5:00 p.m. in the winter (Nov 1–Mar 31) and 7:30 pm in the summer (Apr 1–Oct 31).

Ojai Meadow Preserve

Hiking/walking, biking, birding

Located in an urban setting at the northwest edge of the City of Ojai, just west of Nordhoff High School off Highway 33. The 57-acre preserve is the site of a site of a restored freshwater marsh wetland that provides flood management services for the surrounding properties. As a wetland site, the preserve is particularly popular for bird watching. Habitats include oak woodland, grassland, freshwater marsh, eucalyptus forest, and southern willow riparian scrub. The terrain is open and flat.

The preserve has two trailheads and a number of winding trails and several scenic resting spots.

Birders at Ojai Meadow Preserve

Photo courtesy of Ojai Valley Land Conservancy



16. Ojai Meadow Preserve, East and West Trailheads

The eastern entrance is located on Lomita Avenue in Meiners Oaks, to the right of Meiners Oaks Elementary School. Parking is on-street. The western entrance is located on Highway 33, just north of Nordhoff High School. Parking is on-street.

Ojai Valley & Upper Ojai (Detail Map 4)

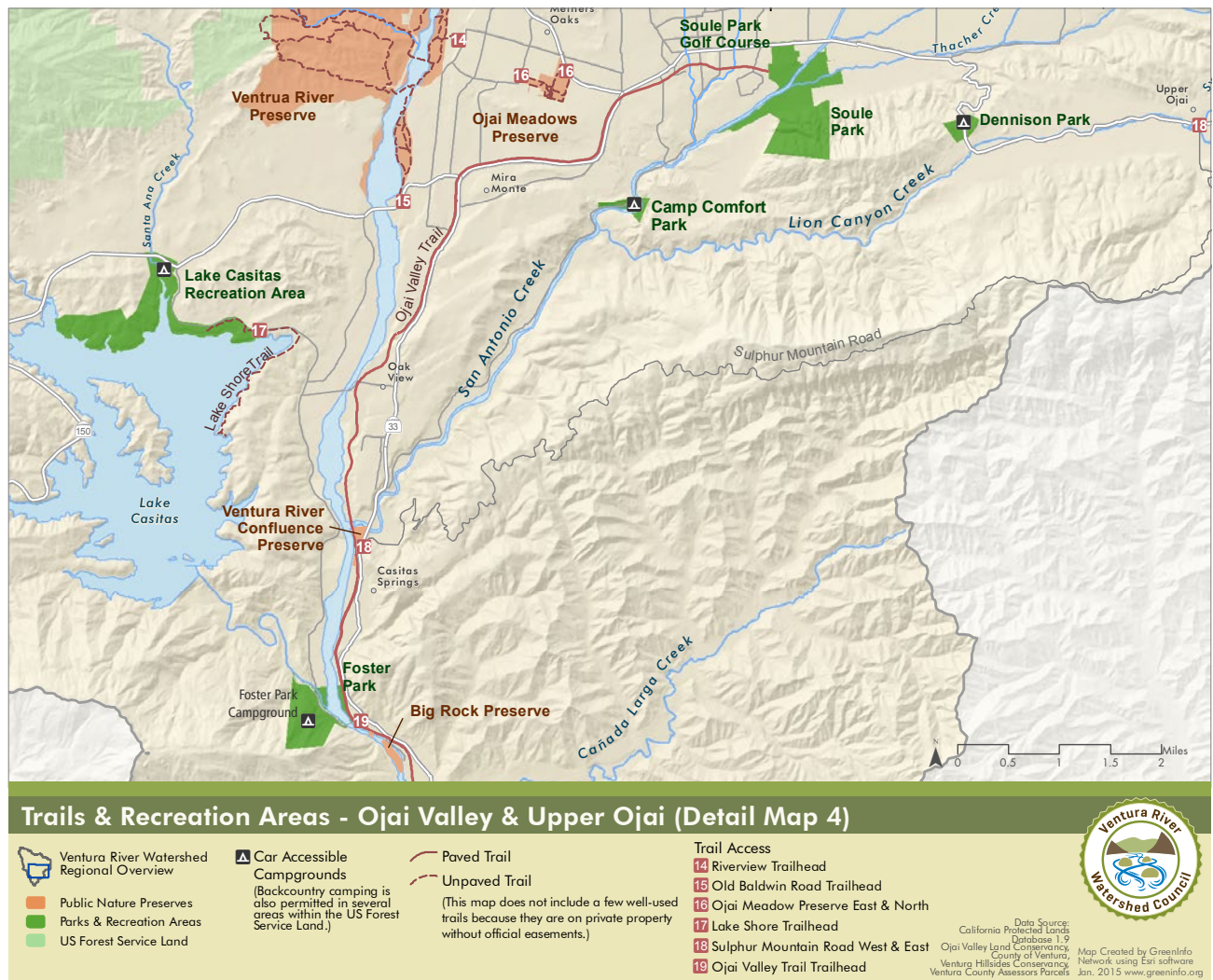


Figure 3.6.4.2.5 Trails & Recreation Areas – Ojai Valley & Upper Ojai (Detail Map 4)

Lake Casitas Recreation Area

Boating, rowing, fishing, camping, picnicking, biking, hiking, water park activities, other sports, birding, wildlife viewing

Located west of Oak View off of Highway 150 at Santa Ana Road. The expansive LCRA provides a wide variety of recreation opportunities. See the Lake Casitas Recreation Area description above in “Parks and Recreation Areas.”

Habitats include open water lake, marsh, oak woodlands, grasslands, chaparral, and coastal scrub. The accessible terrain is mostly flat or rolling.

Kayaking on Lake Casitas

Photo courtesy of Michael McFadden



**Bench on Lake Shore Trail,
Lake Casitas**

17. Lake Shore Trailhead

Hiking, biking

Located at the eastern end of the paved road in the LCRA. The trail is a well-maintained dirt road that follows the lake's eastern edge. The habitat is California walnut and oak woodlands, grassland, and riparian scrub. The terrain is mostly flat.

Soule Park

Picnicking, park-related sports, horseback riding

Located in the Ojai Valley's East End. Soule Park consists of a golf course and a large public park that has extensive grassed areas, playgrounds, two equestrian arenas, and other sports facilities. Thacher Creek runs through Soule Park, and the confluence of San Antonio and Thacher Creeks occurs within Soule Park golf course.

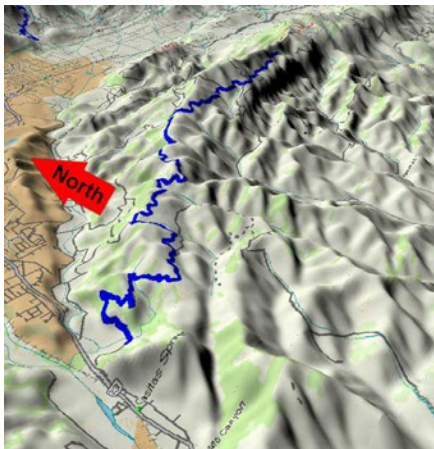
Soule Park Entrance Sign

Photo courtesy of Tracey Joyce





Dennison Park Sign



Sulphur Mountain Road 3D Map

Image courtesy of VenturaCountyTrails.org

Sulphur Mountain Road

Camp Comfort Campground and Park

Camping, picnicking, wading

Located adjacent to San Antonio Creek about one mile south of the City of Ojai. Camp Comfort is both a small campground and a large day use park. Large oaks and riparian trees shade most of the campground and park.

Dennison Park

Camping, picnicking

Located on the Santa Paula-Ojai Road (Highway 150) at the top of the Dennison Grade, which connects the Ojai Valley with Upper Ojai. Dennison Park is both a campground and a day use park, with expansive views of the Ojai Valley. Mature oaks shade much of the facility.

18. Sulphur Mountain Road East and West Trailheads

Hiking, biking, horseback riding

The eastern trailhead is located 4.6 miles up the upper end of Sulphur Mountain Road, which is off of Highway 150. Trailhead parking is on-street. The trail is a well-maintained fire road that climbs gradually from Casitas Springs to Upper Ojai. The trail is 10.5 miles one way. The lower end travels through oak woodland. Most of the trail travels through grazed grasslands. The terrain consists of rolling hills. The trail offers views of much of the watershed and beyond, including the Channel Islands.

The western trailhead is located 0.3 miles up the lower end of Sulphur Mountain Road, off of Highway 33 just north of Casitas Springs. Trailhead parking is on-street. Sulphur Mountain Road is a well-maintained fire road that climbs from Casitas Springs to Upper Ojai. The trail is 10.5 miles one way.



Confluence Preserve

Birding

Located along the Ventura River above and below its confluence with San Antonio Creek. This 13-acre preserve is only accessible along the Ojai Valley Trail, which marks the western edge of the preserve. The habitat is dense riparian forest with willows, tall sycamores, and cottonwoods.

Foster Park

Picnicking, biking, wading, birding, wildlife viewing

Located on the east bank of the Ventura River just south of Casitas Springs. A large historical park first developed in 1906. Large sycamores and cottonwoods shade the park. Offers easy access to the Ventura River and the Ventura River/Ojai Valley Trail.



Foster Park Campground

Photo courtesy of Tracey Joyce

Foster Park Campground

Camping, wading, birding, wildlife viewing

Located on the west bank of the Ventura River across from the Foster Park day use park. The campground is set among mature oaks.

19. Ojai Valley Trail Trailhead

Biking, walking (paved), horseback riding

Follows an old railroad right-of-way along the Ventura River from Foster Park to Oak View, continuing through urban and open space areas to the City of Ojai. Traveling north along the Ventura River, the Ojai Valley Trail winds through riparian forest habitat, crosses San Antonio Creek, and then offers overlooks of the lower end of the river's dry reach. A fence separates the paved path from an adjacent dirt bridle path for horseback riders. The south end of the trail connects seamlessly to the Ventura River Trail. The area under the freeway overpass at Casitas Vista Road is used informally for parking.

Big Rock Preserve

Wading, birding, wildlife viewing

Located in the Ventura River bottom just south of Foster Park. Ventura Hillside Conservancy's 17.5-acre Big Rock Preserve is accessible from the Ventura River Trail near the watershed mural. The habitat is riparian willow forest.



Sign at Big Rock Preserve

Photo courtesy of Ventura Hillside Conservancy

Coastal Area [Detail Map 5]

Figure 3.6.4.2.6 Trails & Recreation Areas – Coastal Area (Detail Map 5)



Seaside Wilderness Park

Hiking, biking, swimming, surfing, ocean fishing

Located south of Emma Wood State Beach Group Campground and extending to the east bank of the Ventura River at the estuary. The park is located on the Ventura River delta and covers a long stretch of coast, from the estuary at one end to Emma Wood State Beach North Beach Campground at the other. The park land to the west of the river is state-owned, and a smaller piece of land to the east of the river is owned by the City of Ventura. Open, windswept cobble fields cover much of the area, along with dunes and rare dune swale and rocky intertidal wetlands. The Ocean's Edge Trail travels through the park.

20. Ocean's Edge Trailhead

Located in the Emma Wood State Beach Group Campground. The trail begins by going under the railroad tracks, continues into the open cobble field habitat of Seaside Wilderness Park, and follows the coast southeast to the estuary.

Ocean's Edge Trail, Seaside Wilderness Park



Emma Wood State Beach Group Campground

Camping, picnicking, biking, hiking, swimming, surfing, ocean fishing

Located on the coast west of the Ventura River estuary, south of Highway 101. The Emma Wood State Beach Group Campground is at the west end of Main Street. Camping is restricted to groups or bicyclists/hikers without vehicles (one night limit). Two miles west (outside of the Ventura River watershed) is the Emma Wood State Beach North Beach Campground, which has paved campsites located immediately adjacent to the beach for self-contained vehicles.



Emma Wood State Beach Group Campground

Photo courtesy of Tracey Joyce

The group campground is an open, grassed area with capacity for four groups of 30 people. On the river side, the campground is adjacent to riparian scrub and forest along the Ventura River estuary. On the ocean side, the campground is adjacent to Seaside Wilderness Park (described below). The campground marks the western edge of the Ventura River delta.

Those not using the campground's facilities can still access the trails and wilderness park by parking outside the campground on Main Street.

21. Emma Wood River Trailhead

Located at the eastern edge of Emma Wood State Beach Group Campground. The trail makes a short loop to the Ventura River estuary and back through its adjacent riparian habitats. This area has historically been used by homeless individuals for camping.

22. Omer Rains Coastal Trail and Ventura River Trail Access

Biking, walking (paved)

Omer Rains Coastal Trail travels along the coast between Emma Wood State Beach North Beach Campground and San Buenaventura State Beach. Passes over the Ventura River at Main Street Bridge then along the river and estuary. The trail is popular for walking and biking, with connections up and down the coast and to the Ventura River Trail.

Omer Rains Coastal Trail



Ventura River Trail Sign

Ventura River Trail follows an old railroad right-of-way along the Ventura River from the Main Street Bridge to Foster Park. The Ventura River Trail connects to both the Ojai Valley Trail and the Omer Rains Coastal Trail. Much of the trail travels through urban and industrial areas. Paved parking is available east of the Main Street Bridge. At the Foster Park end, the dirt area under the freeway at the Casitas Springs exit is used for trailhead parking. The north end of the trail connects seamlessly with the Ojai Valley Trail.

A Continuous Trail from the Coast to Ojai

Together the Ventura River Trail, the Ojai Valley Trail, and the Omer Rains Coastal Trail provide a continuous multi-use paved path along the Ventura River corridor from the beach all the way to the City of Ojai. This trail network facilitates bicycle commuting in the Ojai and Ventura areas. The trail follows the route of the old Southern Pacific Railroad that once transported Ojai Valley produce to Ventura. The 1969 floods washed out much of the tracks.

Willoughby Preserve

Hiking, wading, birding, wildlife viewing

Located in the Ventura River bottom in Ventura, between the Main Street Bridge and the 101 Freeway, adjacent to the RV park. Paved parking is available east of the Main Street Bridge. A small network of trails on the Ventura Hillsides Conservancy's 9-acre preserve provide a unique look at the lower river where it enters the estuary. The habitat is riparian scrub and forest. Provides excellent opportunities for wildlife viewing.

Surfers' Point/Seaside Park

Located at the coast at the end of Figueroa Street, adjacent to the Ventura County Fairgrounds. Surfers' Point/Seaside Park is a popular location for surfing and kite surfing as well as picnicking and enjoying the beach. The park has parking, outdoor showers, and other amenities (City of Ventura 2007). The Omer Rains Coastal Trail travels through the park.

Surfers' Point

Photo courtesy of Paul Jenkin



Promenade, Ventura Beach

23. Promenade and Omer Rains Trail Access

Biking, walking (paved)

Travels along the beachfront, from the estuary to the Ventura Pier.

Grant Park Overlook

Picnicking, watershed viewing

Located on a low ridge overlooking downtown Ventura and the lower Ventura River. The overlook at Grant Park lies on the edge of the Ventura River watershed. The park is accessible from Ferro Drive or Brakey Road or by foot via the Ventura Botanical Gardens Demonstration Trail behind Ventura City Hall. The overlook provides expansive views of the coastline, Channel Islands, and the Ventura River watershed.

3.6.4.3 Key Data and Information Sources/ Further Reading

Below is a summary of some of key documents that address access to nature in the watershed. See “4.3 References” for complete reference citations.

City of San Buenaventura, 2005 Ventura General Plan (City of San Buenaventura 2005)

Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report for the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project (USACE 2004)

History of the Ventura County Parks (VCGSA 2013)

Lake Casitas Final Resource Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement, & Appendices (URS 2010)

Land Management Plan: Part 2 Los Padres National Forest Strategy (USFS 2005a)

Recreational Impacts on Coastal Habitats: Ventura County Fairgrounds, California (Capelli 1991)

Ojai General Plan – Circulation Element (City of Ojai 1997)

Ojai General Plan – Conservation Element (City of Ojai 1987)

Ventura County General Plan: Ojai Valley Area Plan (VCPD 2008)

Vision Plan for the Lower Ventura River Parkway (CalPoly 2008/2010)

Acronyms

ADA—Americans with Disability Act

LCRA—Lake Casitas Recreation Area

LPNF—Los Padres National Forest

NRT—National Recreation Trail

OMP—Ojai Meadow Preserve

OVLC—Ojai Valley Land Conservancy

SBCK—Santa Barbara Channelkeeper

USFS—United States Forest Service

VHC—Ventura Hillside Conservancy

VRP—Ventura River Preserve

3.7 Land Use and Demographics

3.7.1 Political Boundaries and Communities.....	657
3.7.2 Demographics	659
3.7.3 Land Use.....	667

City of Ventura's Westside



3.7 Land Use and Demographics

3.7.1 Political Boundaries and Communities

The Ventura River watershed is located in southern California, in western Ventura County, with a small section in the northwest corner located in eastern Santa Barbara County.

Much of the watershed is rural and undeveloped. Urbanized areas are found on the valley floors in the middle and lower half of the watershed; the upper half is in the Los Padres National Forest.

Cities comprise only 3.17% of the watershed (1.24% City of Ventura; 1.93% City of Ojai). The City of Ojai lies entirely within the watershed and 13% of the City of Ventura lies within the watershed. The rest of the watershed is in unincorporated Ventura County.

Unincorporated communities include Meiners Oaks, Mira Monte, Oak View, Live Oak Acres, Casitas Springs, Matilija Canyon, and part of Upper Ojai. The watershed's most densely urbanized area is in the City of Ventura near the coast, an area known as the Westside or colloquially as "the Avenue." The Westside has an active community council working to improve the quality of life on the Westside.

*Cities comprise only
3.17% of the watershed.*

Westside Community
Council Logo



Two small coastal watersheds—the North Ventura Coastal Streams watershed and the Buenaventura watershed—flank the Ventura River watershed's lower section. Water from the Ventura River watershed supplies users in both of these coastal watersheds (see Figure 3.7.1.2).

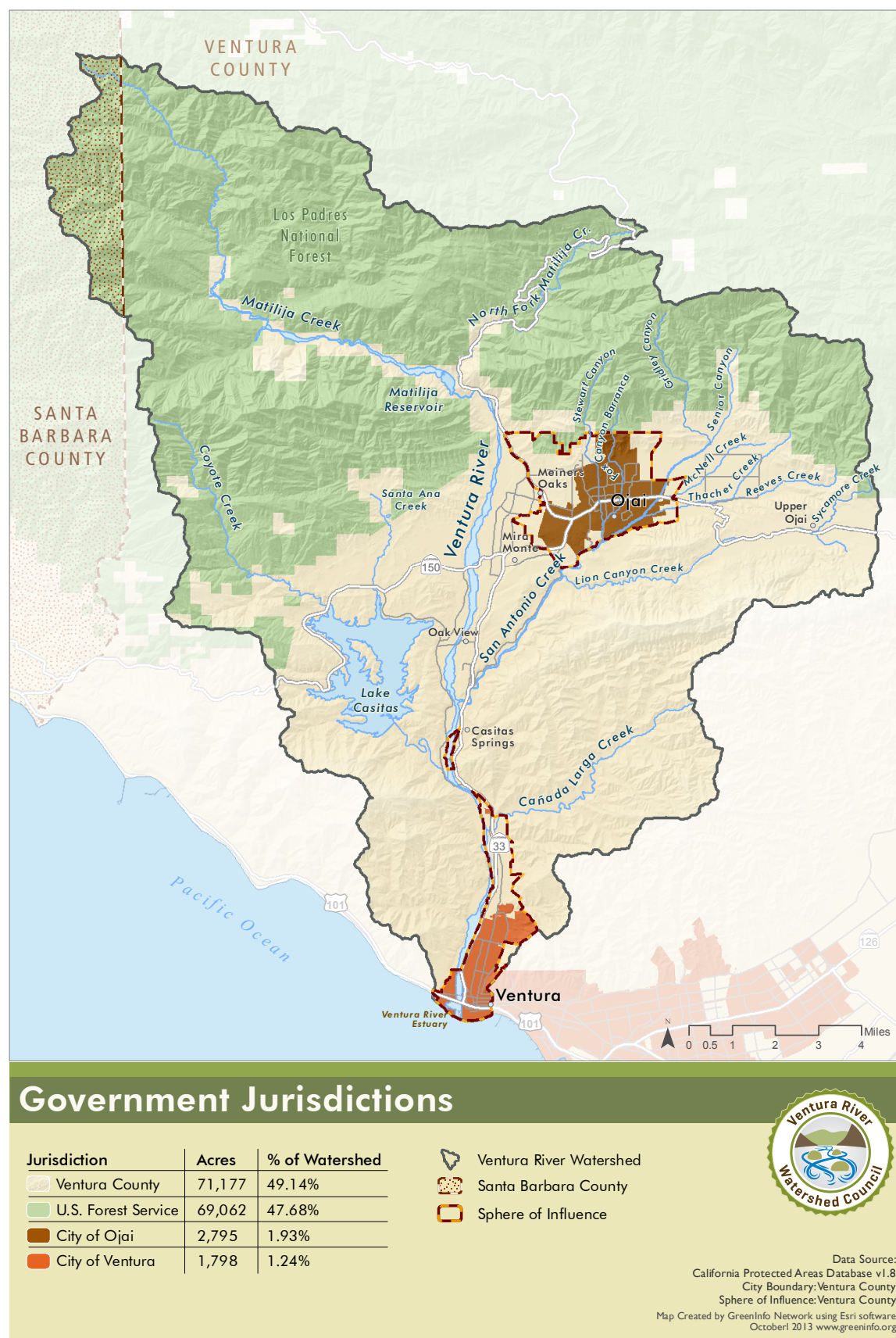


Figure 3.7.1.1 Government Jurisdictions Map



Figure 3.7.1.2 Ventura River Watershed Location Map

From a watershed management point of view, human and socioeconomic dimensions are no less important to understand and consider than physical characteristics.

3.7.2 Demographics

This section provides a summary of population, income, employment, and other basic demographic data. Demographic data describe population characteristics, which are different from one watershed to the next. From a watershed management point of view, human and socioeconomic dimensions are no less important to understand and consider than physical characteristics. For example, the demographics of an area can influence water demands as well as the types of water demand management activities that may be most effective.

Demographic data are generally collected for cities, counties, or Census tracts, not watersheds; therefore the data herein are limited and by necessity based upon compilations and estimates.

3.7.2.1 Population

The Ventura River watershed's population is relatively small and slow growing. As of the 2010 Census, the estimated population was about 44,140, including 22,943 people residing in County of Ventura

unincorporated areas, 13,736 people in the City of Ventura, and 7,461 in the City of Ojai. The population is 58% white, 37% Hispanic or Latino, 2% Asian, and 3% other races. The City of Ventura’s Westside is the area with the most Spanish-speaking households.

Ventura Avenue, City of Ventura’s Westside. The City of Ventura’s Westside is the area with the most Spanish-speaking households.
Photo courtesy of BebbberBlock.org



Between 2000 and 2014, the population decreased in the City of Ojai by 3.4%, increased in the City of Ventura by 8.0%, and increased in unincorporated Ventura County by 4.5%. (The last two figures do not necessarily reflect growth within the watershed, however.)

Between 2003 and 2012, the number of new residential customers increased by 23 for Casitas Municipal Water District, by 634 for the City of Ventura (citywide), and decreased by one for Golden State Water, which primarily serves the City of Ojai. Between 2000 and 2012, total K-12 public school enrollment for schools within the watershed decreased by 1,149, or 28%. The decrease in the City of Ojai was 53.6% percent.

See “Population Projections” in “3.4.3 Water Demands” for more information on population growth trends.

Table 3.7.2.1.1 Population

Watershed Total	44,140
City of Ojai	7,461
City of Ventura (within watershed)	13,736
Unincorporated Ventura County	22,943

Population estimated with a GIS tool using Census Block Groups (except for City of Ojai, which is direct from the 2010 Census).

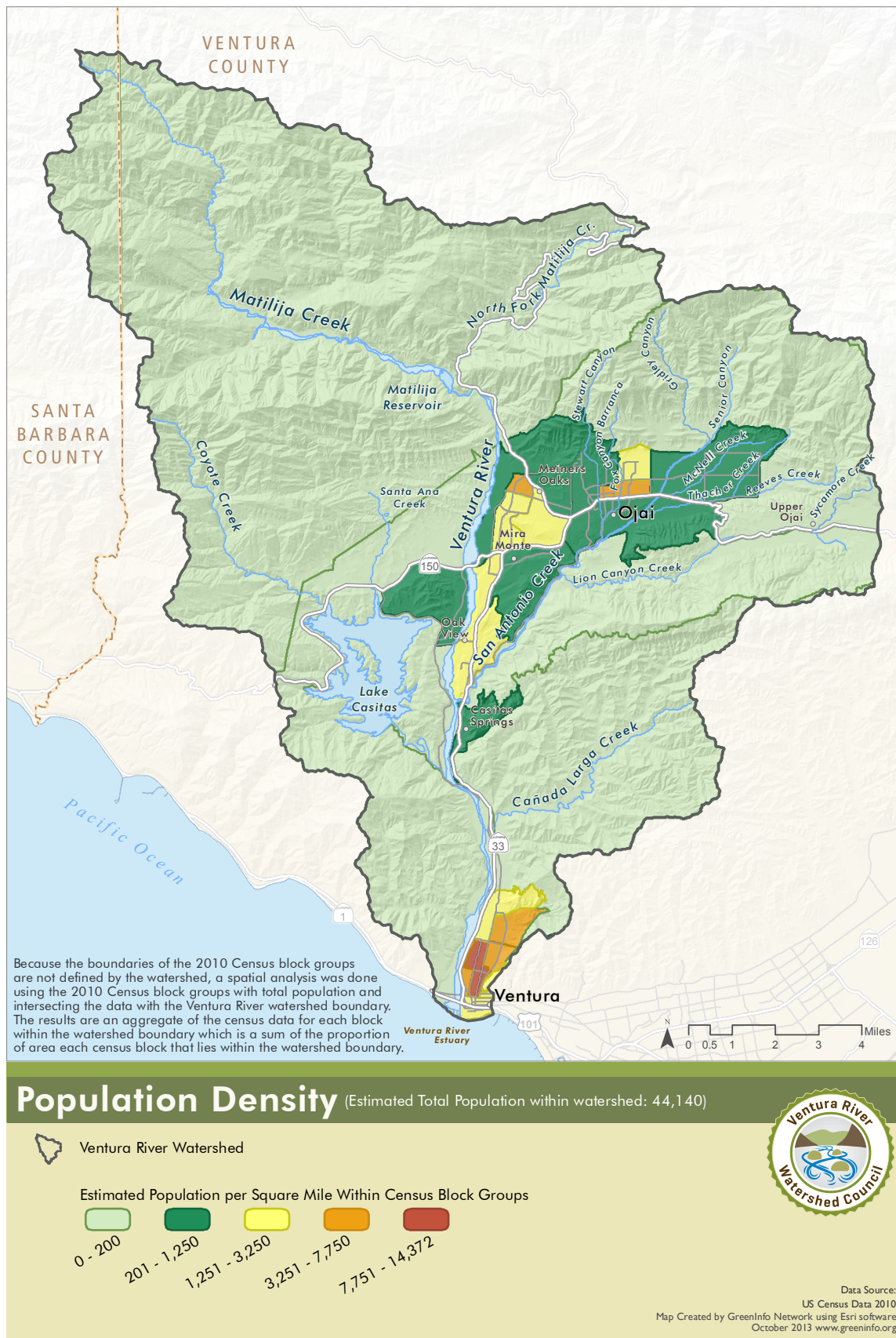


Figure 3.7.2.1.1 Population Density Map



Figure 3.7.2.1.2 Spanish Speaking Households Map

3.7.2.2 Employment and Income

Employment opportunities are diverse in the watershed. Leisure and hospitality jobs, which rely on the watershed's natural beauty and recreational assets to attract visitors, dominate the employment landscape.

The four largest job sectors according to a Southern California Association of Government (SCAG) assessment are leisure and hospitality (art/entertainment) (3,860 jobs in 2012); education and health services (3,750 jobs in 2012); professional and business services jobs (1,493 jobs in 2012); and retail trade jobs (1,323 jobs in 2012). The watershed supported an estimated 15,681 jobs in 2012 (SCAG 2014). Note: the jobs provided by key watershed industries, such as agriculture and oil recovery, are sometimes provided by support services that come from outside the watershed or that fall into a different job category; therefore these jobs are not accurately reflected in these SCAG data.

The watershed is home to a number of large private and public schools, a hospital, and several retirement and assisted living facilities.

There is a wide range of incomes, and several areas qualify as disadvantaged or severely disadvantaged communities. The average household income in 2012 was \$48,423. 30.5% of the households earn less than \$25,000. 12.5% earn greater than \$100,000. In the city of Ojai, the 2012 median household income was \$64,217, and 2% of the population earn more than \$500,000 annually (see Figure 3.7.2.2.1).

The Westside area of the City of Ventura qualifies as a disadvantaged community (with median household incomes below 80% of the state average, or \$48,706). The Ventura River watershed coastal area within the City of Ventura qualifies as a severely disadvantaged community (with median household incomes below 60% of the state average, or \$36,979).

Leisure and hospitality jobs, which rely on the watershed's natural beauty and recreational assets to attract visitors, dominate the employment landscape.

Table 3.7.2.2.1 Watershed Income Data, 2008 and 2012

	2008	2012
Average (weighted) Household Income	\$48,387	\$48,423
% of Household by Income		
Below 25k	31.1%	30.5%
25k–50k	28.4%	28.5%
50k–100k	28.2%	28.5%
100k+	12.3%	12.5%

Source: Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG 2014)