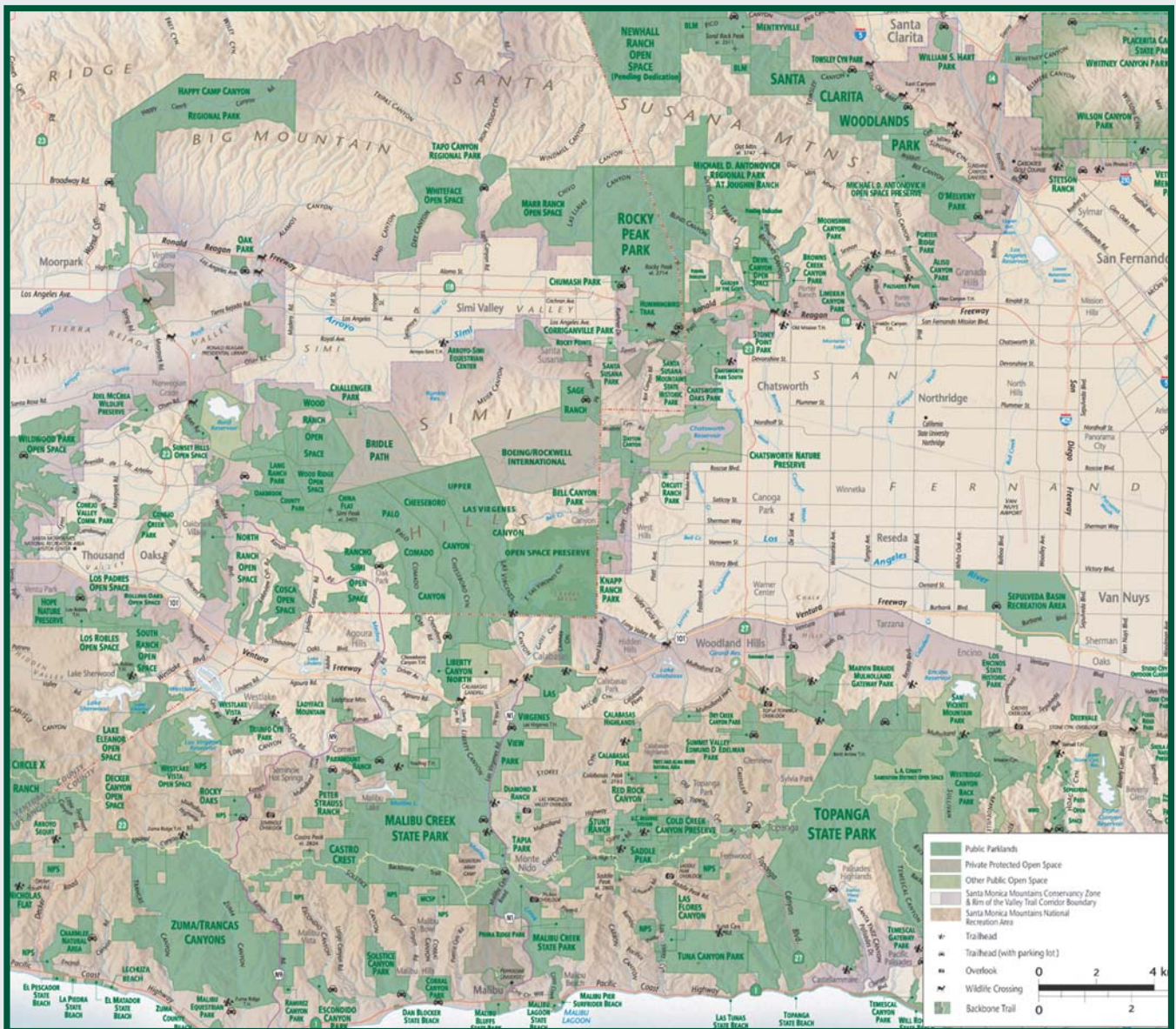


Regional Parks and Open Space



The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy was established by the California State Legislature in 1980. Since that time, it has helped to preserve over 55,000 acres of parkland in both wilderness and urban settings, and improved more than 114 public recreational facilities throughout Southern California. Through direct action, alliances, and partnerships with federal, State and local government, the Conservancy's mission is to strategically buy back, preserve, protect, restore, and enhance treasured pieces of Southern California to form an interlinking system of urban, rural and river parks, open space, trails, and wildlife habitats that are easily accessible to the general public.

History of the Acquisition

On November 7, 2003, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) purchased the 2,983 acre former Ahmanson Ranch from Washington Mutual Bank in a simultaneous close of escrow with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA).

Preservation of the ranch for public parkland marked the close of a fifteen-year, heated Southern California land use controversy. The County of Ventura had approved a Specific Plan to create a self-contained new town of over 3,000 residences, with golf courses, open space, commercial and business centers. The saga involved the entertainer Bob Hope and his vast land holdings; local, state, and federal agencies; elected officials, environmental organizations, entertainment industry figures, neighborhood associations, businesses, lawyers, builders, grass roots groups, and scientists, all of whom had varying and often vociferous points of view about the future of the ranch.

The park purchase was made possible when the bank agreed to sell, and funding became available from California's Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act of 2002 (Proposition 50). The \$150 million below-appraised-value sale price was made up of \$135 million from the State Wildlife Conservation Board, \$10 million contributed by the State Coastal Conservancy, and \$5 million from the SMMC.

