

Open space

Laguna pioneered the preservation of open space in southern Orange County and now maintains an extensive greenbelt of open space and parks in and around the city. The open space system intends to preserve natural resources including habitats for plant and animal life, provide outdoor recreation opportunities and provide for better public safety.

Within Laguna Beach 1,065 acres are preserved as open space in the city's hillsides and canyons.¹⁵ The City also has approximately 99 acres of parks and recreational areas. In addition, the surrounding hillsides, located outside the city limits, but within the city planning area, are a major part of the community's open space. Figures 15A and 15B provide an overview of all the open space in the area.



Over the last 30 years, Lagunans have witnessed extensive collaboration between federal and state wildlife agencies, county and city governments, major landowners and the environmental community in an effort to conserve open space and provide recreational access. Some of the accomplishments include the approval of the Laguna Greenbelt, the City's purchase of the James Dilley Preserve, the dedication of Aliso and Wood Canyons Regional Park, and Crystal Cove State Park. In addition, citizens played a critical role in the purchase and dedication of South Coast Wilderness Park by approving a \$20 million bond. In the future, the Treasure Island development will also include a bluff top park.

In 1989, the Laguna Biological Resources Inventory recommended that open space management in Laguna

Beach address a variety of land use issues including recreational activities within the future regional parkland, development step-outs in Laguna Canyon, utility infrastructure access, flood control and water quality in Laguna Canyon Creek and efficient traffic flow on Laguna Canyon Road. The City's Open Space Committee is currently reviewing the existing Master Plan of Hiking Trails and updating the Open Space element of the General Plan.

The Pacific Ocean

The Pacific Ocean, or "Blue Belt" provides a spectacular backdrop for Laguna Beach 6.3 miles of City coastline. Considered part of the open space system, the entire coastline is designated as a marine life refuge, allowing only game fishing and recreational sports. The Glenn E. Vedder Ecological Reserve is a protected reserve for marine life, plants, shells and rocks, located at the north section of Main Beach to Divers Cove Point. The entire City of Laguna Beach was designated as a bird sanctuary over 20 years ago. The Marine Mammals Protection Act guards the many seal lions who frequent Seal Rock and other similar coastal areas.

Laguna Beach residents share a concern for the quality of the ocean's water. Consequently, the City focuses on repairing existing sewer lines and diverting summer nuisance flows. Recently, the City Council appointed a citizen's committee to develop a report on ways to improve water quality. The Orange County Health Department, the agency responsible for water testing, recently adopted more stringent statewide standards for issuing public warnings when water quality is poor.

Climate

Laguna Beach enjoys the mild and pleasant Pacific Coastal climate. Annual rainfall averages 12.89 inches. It can rain at any time of year, but most rain occurs in the winter months. In 1997-1998, the City experienced average annual rainfall of 35.07 inches, the highest ever recorded. It almost never snows. In the summer, temperatures average 59-77, and in the winter they average 43-66. Sea breezes are common and keep the City's air clean.¹⁶ Because Laguna Beach is surrounded by steep terrain, it has a more moderate microclimate that is markedly different from the areas just a short distance inland.

Figure 15A
**LAGUNA BEACH
OPEN SPACE AND PARKS**

