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Supervisors OK Glen Helen plan

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A plan to bring order to development alongside the freeways at the bottom of Cajon Pass was approved Tuesday by the county Board of Supervisors.

The roughly 3,400 acres south of the junction of Interstate 15 and Interstate 215 included in the Glen Helen Specific Plan are envisioned as an attractive gateway to the San Bernardino Valley for those on their way down I-15.

Some residents and environmentalists opposed the idea, arguing the plan doesn't do enough to protect rare species or the pristine waters of Cajon and Lytle creeks.

After the meeting, Ileene Anderson, an ecologist with the Center for Biological Diversity, agreed the proposals for using the land are less intensive than under previous rules but still didn't adequately include ways to protect rare animals.

"It's moving in the right direction, but they just haven't moved far enough," she said.

The plan includes 185 acres to be set aside as habitat preserve, plus another 476 acres for low-impact recreation, such as hiking.

Part of the reason the plan has been six years in the making was due to concerns raised about protecting rare plants and animals.

The California Department of Fish and Game also said in a letter the plan doesn't ensure enough land will be set aside for protection.

In response to those concerns, the county created a "resource management plan" meant to identify those species and outline specific measures to protect them.

County Supervisor Paul Biane, whose 2nd District includes the area, defended the plan, saying it allows reasonable development while improving protection for the environment.

"More than half the land is being preserved as open space," he said.

The plan calls for light-industrial development along the freeways, with Glen Helen Regional Park and Hyundai Pavilion at Glen Helen as major attractions.

Some areas would be set aside for businesses that cater to travelers.

An official with the Fontana Water Co. was worried that the new sewage-treatment plant being built near the sheriff's training facility in Devore will degrade the underground water supply replenished by Cajon and Lytle creeks.

The plant will also serve the huge Lytle Creek North housing project just to the south, which could be under construction next year.

County officials said any negative effects on water quality should be minimal.