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Grace F. Napolitano

**Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
32nd District of California**

July 10, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
US Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

Seeing the success of the more-than-a-decade-long process to create the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument right outside of my district, I am writing you today to set the record straight on a number of claims mentioned by President Trump during the signing ceremony for his executive order titled “Review of Designations under the Antiquities Act.”

We first owe a special thank you to the San Gabriel Valley stakeholders who spent more than a decade exploring greater protection for the San Gabriel Mountains. In the early 2000s a local chapter of the Sierra Club’s Southern California Forest Campaign sought further protections of our beloved mountains. These efforts eventually produced today’s San Gabriel Mountains Forever group, made up of local residents, business owners, and faith and community leaders.

In 2003, then U.S. Representative Hilda Solis introduced legislation requiring the National Park Service to determine whether a National Recreation Area would benefit the mountains. It generated over 10,000 comments and received the backing of water agencies and the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments. Years later, bipartisan legislation was introduced to further protect the mountains by former Republican Congressman David Dreier in 2011 and by Democratic Congresswoman Judy Chu in 2014. President Obama then designated 350,000 acres of the Angeles National Forest as a national monument in October 2014. The monument designation now works to preserve miles of streams and hiking trails for millions of visitors in the park poor Los Angeles region.

The designation of the San Gabriel Mountains as a national monument was not a federal “land grab” but rather gave local communities a voice in how to manage our federal lands. Prior to the designation, the San Gabriel Mountains were already part of the federally managed Angeles National Forest. With the 2014 monument designation, the San Gabriel Mountains Community Collaborative was launched to maintain an open line of communication and partnership with our U.S. Forest Service. This collaborative includes water companies, local elected officials, county



officials, recreation groups, and residents and is something that could not have been executed prior to the 2014 designation.

Rescinding the monument designation would have a devastating impact on local communities. The designation has helped San Gabriel Valley communities leverage additional federal dollars for critically needed recreation, trail maintenance, trash collection and fire prevention services, and the monument has raised over \$5 million in donations through the San Gabriel Mountains Fund. These private donations help restore our deteriorating forest health, which has suffered as a result of three recent major fires: the 2009 Station Fire, the 2014 Colby Fire, and the 2015 Cabin Fire. Just last month, the U.S. Forest Service increased the fire danger level in the Angeles National Forest to “very high.” If the monument loses funding because of this review, how does the Interior Department expect our region to continue to combat the serious threat forest fires pose to public safety?

It is a real shame that discussion of our natural treasures, like the San Gabriel Mountains, has now devolved into political bickering. I hope the Trump Administration changes its course and starts working with Congress and local communities on securing more funding to maintain our federal lands instead of using existing limited funds to re-hash listening sessions for a few of the already designated monuments.

As the comment period closes today, I once again urge you to meet with our local stakeholders about the successes of the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument. I am submitting the enclosed local support letters for your review.

Sincerely,


GRACE F. NAPOLITANO
Member of Congress