

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 26, 2014

The Honorable Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

Thank you for considering our request for an outcomes-based approach to establishing a San Gabriel Mountains national monument. We sent a letter on August 19 urging you to direct the U.S. Forest Service to prioritize critical goals for protecting the many values present in the mountains, and enhancing the experience of resident and visitors to the area. In particular, we underscored that the U.S. Forest Service must be prepared to make tangible improvements to persistent challenges, such as graffiti and trash, and engage urban communities and stakeholders in a robust manner.

As a result, Undersecretary Robert Bonnie has expressed a strong commitment to realizing these goals. In addition, the U.S. Forest Service has been working with communities and stakeholders in the San Gabriel Valley and surrounding areas to address outstanding concerns and gather public input. We are informed that meetings have taken place with homeowners associations, off-highway vehicle groups, several meetings with representatives from the water community and Southern California Edison, and meetings with elected officials from the local cities and counties. We appreciate these efforts and encourage the U.S. Forest Service to continue its outreach throughout the region.

We also urge the U.S. Forest Service to carefully consider the concerns of the wide range of stakeholders that we represent, and use language from the San Gabriel National Recreation Area Act (H.R. 4858) as a blueprint for monument proclamation language. This language was carefully coordinated to protect and preserve rights, land uses, and other critical priorities for all stakeholders. These same assurances are needed in a national monument proclamation to strike a balance between conservation and access. Specifically, we would like to request that proclamation language include protections for – but not limited to – the following:

- Protection of public and private water rights, infrastructure, facilities, and operations.
- Protection of agreements with any public agencies' rights, infrastructure, facilities, and operations.
- Protection of fire management capabilities, infrastructure, facilities, and operations.
- Protection of private property rights and land use agreements, permits, regulations, plans, and laws, especially for homeowners and businesses in the San Gabriel Mountains.

- Protection of agreements with cabin owners in the San Gabriel Mountains, such as recreational residence programs.
- Protection of utilities' rights of way.
- Protection of existing recreational opportunities, access, and future enhancements for off-highway vehicle use.
- Protection of existing recreational opportunities, access, and future enhancements for bicycle use, rock climbing, winter recreation including skiing and snowboarding, hang gliding and paragliding, hiking, equestrian activities, camping, hunting, fishing, and all other forms of recreation available and feasible in the San Gabriel Mountains.
- Protection of sanitation rights, infrastructure, facilities, and operations.
- Protection of tribal rights, access agreements, artifacts, and cultural heritage.
- Establishment of Public Advisory Council with robust local representation.

We believe these protections help to advance the goals we previously shared with you, which should be at the heart of any potential designation for the San Gabriel Mountains. Therefore, again, we urge that you take these vital protections, and others that you hear from the affected communities, into careful consideration, and include them as appropriate in a monument designation. While we must act quickly to protect all the invaluable resources in the San Gabriel Mountains, these protections will help give the public the opportunity to experience these mountains in the most sustainable, empowering, and fulfilling way.

Sincerely,

JUDY CHU
Member of Congress

ADAM SCHIFF
Member of Congress

TONY CARDENAS
Member of Congress

GRACE F. NAPOLITANO
Member of Congress

LINDA SANCHEZ
Member of Congress