



# MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Los Angeles River Center and Gardens  
570 West Avenue 26, Suite 100  
Los Angeles, California 90065  
Phone (323) 221-9944 Fax (323) 221-9933

## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Officer

DATE: June 7, 2017

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item X: Consideration of resolution authorizing (a) opposition to eliminating, shrinking, or removing protections for San Gabriel Mountains National Monument, (b) support for San Gabriel Mountains Forever, and (c) support to advocate and seek legislation that protects the existing San Gabriel Mountains National Monument from being eliminated.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing (a) opposition to eliminating, shrinking, or removing protections for San Gabriel Mountains National Monument, (b) support for San Gabriel Mountains Forever, and (c) support to advocate and seek legislation that protects the existing San Gabriel Mountains National Monument from being eliminated.

Background: On Oct. 10, 2014, President Barack Obama designated 346,177 acres of existing federal lands as the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument, the eighth national monument under Forest Service management.<sup>1</sup> The National Monument covers 342,177 acres of the Angeles National Forest and 4,002 acres of neighboring San Bernardino National Forest. The area is within 90 minutes of 15 million people in the Los Angeles Basin. According to the United States Forest Service (USFS) website, the San Gabriel Mountains contains some of the greatest biodiversity in the country, including four wilderness areas, and unique geological features. According to the USFS website:

- The rivers of the San Gabriel Mountains not only provide drinking water but are vital in the support of native fish, animals and plants and provide critical habitat for threatened or endangered species such as the California condor, mountain yellow-legged frog, arroyo chub fish and Nelson's bighorn sheep.
- The chaparral and oak woodland are just some of the vegetation that represent a portion of the rare Mediterranean ecosystem. The area also

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.fs.fed.us/visit/san-gabriel-mountains-national-monument>

provides suitable habitat for 53 Forest Service Sensitive Plants and as many as 300 California-endemic species that only grow in the San Gabriel Range.

With respect to the human dimension, the USFS website includes the following highlights:

- The area, which boasts more than 4 million visits, is host to a variety of year-round recreational activities, including hiking, cross-country skiing, hunting, nature viewing, picnicking, water activities and horseback riding and camping.
- Mount Baldy Center adjacent to the monument helps to educate 8,000 students and teachers each year in environmental education and includes a 1920s schoolhouse, reproductions of a gold-mining camp and a Native-American (Tongva-Gabrielino) village.

The U.S. Department of the Interior is conducting a review of certain National Monuments designated or expanded since 1996 under the Antiquities Act of 1906 in order to implement Executive Order 13792 of April 26, 2017.<sup>2</sup> The Secretary of the Interior will use the review to determine whether each designation or expansion conforms to the policy stated in the Executive Order and to formulate recommendations for Presidential actions, legislative proposals, or other appropriate actions to carry out that policy. The Notice identifies twenty-seven National Monuments under review. San Gabriel Mountains National Monument is included on the list of National Monuments Being Initially Reviewed Pursuant to Criteria in Executive Order 13792. Comments are due July 10, 2017.

At its May 2, 2017 meeting, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors took the following action as submitted by Supervisor Hilda L. Solis:

Direct the Chief Executive Officer, in coordination with the County's Legislative Advocates in Washington, D.C., to send a five-signature letter to the Los Angeles County Congressional Delegation requesting their support to advocate and seek legislation that protects the existing National Monuments from ending, including the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument declared in October 2014.

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=DOI-2017-0002-0001>

The mission of San Gabriel Mountains Forever is:

To permanently protect the San Gabriel Mountains: to build support for protection of, and increased access to, our forests, rivers, and parks; and develop a new, diverse generation of environmental stewards to care for our public lands.<sup>3</sup>

According to its website, the San Gabriel Mountains Forever coalition is made up of the following organizations: Amigos de los Rios, BikeSGV (Bike San Gabriel Valley), California Wilderness Coalition, The City Project, Climate Resolve, COFEM (Consejo de Federaciones Mexicanas), Community Hiking Club, Friends of the River, National Parks Conservation Association, Sierra Club, Trout Unlimited, and The Wilderness Society. The San Gabriel Mountains Forever posted an action alert on their website to: "Join us in urging the Interior Department to protect the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument."

The following text is the form letter from the website of San Gabriel Mountains Forever. If the MRCA Board authorizes support for San Gabriel Mountains Forever, this would mean MRCA supports the following text:

*Dear Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke,*

*We are fortunate to have the San Gabriel Mountains as our backyard. It is one of California's most treasured landscapes, and it provides Angelenos with healthy, sustainable, recreational and educational opportunities. The Angeles National Forest in the San Gabriel Mountains is the largest urban forest in the country. We need to protect our watersheds and water quality and enhance air quality. We need to protect its forests, wilderness areas, wild and scenic rivers, and wildlife. We need to support local businesses and our local economy. We need to give children and families living in park-poor neighborhoods a nearby place to enjoy weekend recreation in the wilderness. We need to provide opportunities for healthy outdoor recreation in nature for more than three million Angelenos and visitors.*

*In short, we need the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument for our communities. I urge you to do everything you can to maintain our country's network of national monuments, including our cherished San Gabriel Mountains National Monument.*

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<sup>3</sup><https://sangabrielmountains.org/>