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National Park Service Releases Final Study Recommendations for San Gabriel Watershed and Mountains Special Resource Study

SAN FRANCISCO – The National Park Service today released the final recommendations for the [San Gabriel Watershed and Mountains Special Resource Study](#), which includes a recommendation for designation of a San Gabriel unit of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. The purpose of the congressionally-authorized study was to determine whether all or part of the study area in the Los Angeles metropolitan region was eligible for inclusion within the National Park System and to make a recommendation to Congress on the most effective and efficient means of protecting nationally significant resources and providing for visitor enjoyment.

"I am pleased to recommend to Congress the designation of a San Gabriel unit of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area," said Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. "The addition of this urban area to the National Park System would provide Los Angeles County – the most populous county in the country – with increased access to the significant natural and cultural resources of the San Gabriel Valley while strengthening our partnership with local agencies."

The study area included approximately 700,000 acres of land in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan region, including urban communities, local and regional parks and open space, and 415,000 acres of the Angeles National Forest. The study explored a range of alternatives to protect significant resources, enhance habitat connectivity, and improve recreational opportunities for communities in the Los Angeles metropolitan region. The National Park Service worked closely with

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the U.S. Forest Service and considered input from many agencies, organizations and the general public.

The National Park Service's final study recommendation (selected alternative) is primarily a combination of management concepts presented in alternatives from the draft special resource study (2011). The selected alternative leverages existing National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service presence in the Los Angeles area, while directing the two organizations to expand their scope to the San Gabriel Valley, the foothills, and the Puente Hills. It encourages collaborative programs and shared staffing while reducing overlap and redundancy. It also takes advantage of the newly established Service First authority, which allows the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service to work together in new ways.

The selected alternative is a recommendation to Congress; implementation would require Congressional legislation. The selected alternative would not establish additional regulatory or land use controls, and it would not transfer any land to the National Park Service.

The selected alternative includes four interrelated components:

1. **Designation of a San Gabriel unit of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.** The new unit would include areas of the San Gabriel Mountain foothills, portions of the San Gabriel and Rio Hondo river corridors, and the western Puente Hills. The NPS would work primarily through partnerships with existing landowners in areas of mutual interest such as resource protection, ecological restoration and interpretation and education programs.
2. **Additional federal recognition, tools, and support to the Angeles National Forest to steward watershed resources and ecosystems and improve recreational opportunities,** including mechanisms to reaffirm the importance of the Angeles National Forest in preserving the watershed and natural resources while continuing to provide for multiple use management; prioritize funding for resource protection, recreation and education; and to increase public and private funding opportunities (e.g., fee retention, partnerships and donations).
3. **Direction for the U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service to collaborate through the Service First Authority** and other mechanisms to protect the significant resources of the San Gabriel Mountains and watershed, provide high quality recreation and educational opportunities.
4. **NPS technical assistance** to work regionally with communities, agencies, and organizations to protect wildlife corridors, provide close-to-home recreational opportunities, and to provide an array of seamless outdoor experiences in the San Gabriel watershed and mountains.

"The selected alternative would strengthen the partnership between the National Park Service and the Angeles National Forest. It is an economical and efficient way to preserve the San Gabriel

watershed and mountains and improve access to public lands for urban Los Angeles,” said Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area Superintendent David Szymanski. “We are thrilled about the opportunity to serve new visitors and provide meaningful experiences within the San Gabriel region.”

“Implementation of this alternative would be beneficial to the Angeles National Forest and the people of the Los Angeles basin,” said Angeles National Forest Supervisor Tom Contreras. “We are excited about the opportunities to work collaboratively with the National Park Service through Service First.”

An overview of the final study recommendations and the final study documents are posted on the study website at <http://www.nps.gov/pwro/sangabriel>. In addition, the National Park Service will host public webinars to present the final study recommendations and answer questions. Details on how to participate in the webinars can be found on the study website. A recording of the webinar presentation is also available on the website for those unable to participate in the scheduled presentations.

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About the National Park Service. More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America’s 401 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities. Learn more at www.nps.gov.