

WILDLIFE CORRIDOR CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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May 23, 2014

The Honorable Judy Chu
Congresswoman - 27th Congressional District
1520 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

San Gabriel Mountains Wilderness & Wild and Scenic Rivers Legislation Proposal Comments

Dear Congresswoman Chu:

The Wildlife Corridor Conservation Authority (WCCA) strongly supports the establishment of the proposed San Gabriel Mountains Wilderness & Wild and Scenic Rivers and the draft legislation in concept. Surrounded by more than 17 million Southern Californians, the San Gabriel Mountains are the recreation backyard for Los Angeles. This rugged range stretches through two national forests and the Angeles National forest alone gets more than 3.5 million visitors a year. The San Gabriel Mountains provides Los Angeles County with more than one-third of the city's supply of drinking water, over 70% of its open space, and generates clean air for a smoggy region. Its location, visitorship, water resources, and high biodiversity make the San Gabriel Mountains nationally significant and warrant Wilderness and Wild & Scenic River protection.

The five proposed areas: Sheep Mountain Wilderness Additions, Cucamonga Wilderness Additions, San Gabriel Wilderness Additions, Condor Peak Wilderness Additions, and Castaic Wilderness, are all topographically and geologically unique sections of the San Gabriel Mountains which contain exceptional examples of rare southern California ecological communities such as: alluvial fan sage scrub, bigcone Douglas-fir, coastal sage scrub, relict juniper communities, riparian areas, and sub-alpine habitat. These ecological communities are high biodiversity hotspots in the San Gabriel Mountain range which provide habitat for 67 plant species and 105 wildlife species considered to sensitive, rare, threatened, or endangered.

In addition, the San Gabriel Mountains contain outstanding natural examples of dynamic free-flowing waterways and riparian areas which are eligible for National Wild and Scenic River segments. The Free-flowing section of the North, East, and West forks of the San Gabriel River retain high levels of integrity and are "Areas of High Ecological Significance" because they support sensitive species including the endangered Santa Ana Sucker. These unobstructed sections also provide clean water to downstream residents and drain the San Gabriel River watershed, the

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largest watershed in the mountain range. Upper segments of Little Rock Creek support an important population of endangered mountain yellow-legged frog while the lower segment supports one of three known populations of the endangered arroyo toad on the Los Angeles Forest. These creeks along with San Antonio Creek, Cooper Canyon Creek, and Middle Fork Lylte Creek are prime examples of some of the richest areas for freshwater fishes in southern California.

The proposal for additional Wilderness designations, as well as the proposal for Wild and Scenic River designations in the upper reaches of the mountains would add to the amount of protected core habitat available for rare and endangered species like the mountain yellow-legged frog, Nelson bighorn sheep, California Spotted Owl and many others. These designations will also preserve certain areas in the San Gabriel Mountains that are still pristine, allowing them to stay that way for current and future generations to enjoy in their most natural state. Protecting these wild places and rivers will also preserve the quality of our drinking water while providing important foothill community amenities that benefit public health and increase property values. We ask that you provide leadership in the 113th Congress to substantially expand existing areas and designate eligible areas as Wilderness & Wild and Scenic Rivers.

We appreciate your consideration of these comments. If you have any questions, please contact Judi Tamasi of our staff by phone at (310) 589-3230, ext. 121, or by email at judi.tamasi@mrca.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Glenn Parker
Chairperson