

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

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Ms. Anne Dove, Project Manager
National Park Service
Rim of the Valley Corridor Special Resource Study
570 West Avenue 26, Suite 175
Los Angeles, California 90065

**Rim of the Valley Corridor Draft Special Resource Study and Environmental Assessment
Comments**

Dear Ms. Dove:

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy appreciates this opportunity to further comment on the National Park Service (NPS) Rim of the Valley Corridor Draft Special Resource Study and Environmental Assessment. (<http://www.nps.gov/pwro/rimofthevalley>). The NPS Rim of the Valley Special Resource Study is a long awaited mechanism designed to incorporate and synthesize many years of land conservation efforts in the Los Angeles area by local, state, and federal agencies and community groups, and if adopted will result in a blueprint for the National Park Service to assist and enhance preservation of wildlife linkages, recreational opportunities, and public programs beyond the current Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area boundaries.

Background

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy's statutory jurisdiction includes the Santa Monica Mountains Zone and the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor. The ROV Trail Corridor was first established by the State Legislature beginning in 1983 with a bill that provided that the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor would be a system of recreational trails connecting parks and open space lands around the San Fernando and La Crescenta Valleys. A map was prepared by the Conservancy in compliance with Section 33105.5 of Division 23 of the state Public Resources Code, and filed with the Secretary of State in June 1984.

The Legislature also called for a trail route between Griffith Park and El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Historic Park. Between 1984 and 2009, the State Legislature periodically authorized the Conservancy to further expand the ROV Trail Corridor. The Santa Clarita Woodlands were included in 1989, and the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor Master Plan was adopted in June 1990, which called for preservation of wildlife habitat linkages, and recreational trail connections in a larger geographic area between the Santa Monica Mountains

and the ranges to the north: the Simi Hills, Santa Susana Mountains, Verdugo Mountains, San Rafael Hills, and portions of the San Gabriel Mountains. In 2002 the ROV Corridor was enlarged after study by the Conservancy to include the Upper Santa Clara River Watershed and all of Upper Los Angeles River Watershed in the San Gabriel Mountains and Angeles National Forest. Subsequent legislation allowed for Elsmere Canyon between Santa Clarita and Sylmar to be included in the Conservancy's ROV Trail Corridor boundary.

Recommended Alternatives

The NPS Draft Special Resources Study names Preferred Alternative C for a Rim of the Valley Boundary Adjustment. This alternative does incorporate a portion of the Conservancy's previous recommendations that the Los Angeles River corridor be included, and it surrounds the San Fernando and La Crescenta Valleys along with urban connections along the Arroyo Seco to the Verdugos. However, Alternative C does fall considerably short of overlapping the Conservancy's current Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor jurisdiction and thus leaves out critical identified habitat linkages in the western Santa Susanas, the Simi Hills, and Conejo Valley to Calleguas Creek.

In contrast, Alternative D does include these important geographic areas, and additionally addresses our previous recommendations for:

Connecting north-south linkages across the Santa Clara River between the Santa Susana Mountains and Los Padres National Forest, as identified in the South Coast Wildlands Missing Linkages study. By at least pushing a potential boundary adjustment west and northerly to Happy Camp Canyon in Moorpark, the proposed Cooperative Conservation Areas may be more feasible, and help NPS, private landowners, and other agencies in ensuring the continued viability of wildlife movement corridors between the Santa Monica Mountains and the other ranges, and Los Padres National Forest.

Opportunities in the Calleguas Creek Watershed for watershed protection, wildlife movement, restoration, trail and recreational access that link existing local, state, and federal parklands.

Connections between the two segments of Angeles National Forest via the Pacific Crest Trail and the Upper Santa Clara River, also as part of a Cooperative Conservation Area, not necessarily part of a boundary adjustment.

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We therefore recommend Alternative D as it incorporates the optimal plan for long-term natural resource resiliency, and recreational opportunities for public access to natural area parklands, especially from urban neighborhoods.

Since its inception in 1980 the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy has been a partner with the National Park Service in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, and we will continue that partnership role in the Rim of the Valley Corridor, whichever form of boundary adjustment may be adopted and ultimately established by Congress. If you have any questions or if our staff can be of further service, please call Rorie Skei, Chief Deputy Director, at (310) 589-3200, extension 112, or Paul Edelman, Deputy Director for Natural Resources and Planning, at extension 128.

Sincerely,

Linda Parks
Chairperson