

## Parts of Newport Beach included in proposed national monument



Buck Gully Reserve in Newport Beach is part of a bill expected to be introduced in Congress that would designate more than 100,000 acres of Orange County as a national monument.

(File photo)

<http://www.latimes.com/socal/daily-pilot/news/tn-dpt-me-monument-20160823-story.html>

**Hannah Fry**

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More than 100,000 acres of Orange County, including sections of Newport Beach, could be designated as a national monument under a proposal heading to Congress next month.

U.S. Rep. Ed Royce (R-Fullerton) is expected to introduce a bill that, if passed by Congress, would establish the Santa Ana Mountains to Sea National Monument.

The area would encompass about 101,500 acres of open space, including Crystal Cove State Park, Upper Newport Bay and Buck Gully Reserve, which consists of about 300 acres near San Joaquin Hills Road.

The monument also would include about 45,700 acres in the Cleveland National Forest, Bommer Canyon in Irvine and Laguna Coast Wilderness Park in Laguna Beach, according to a presentation by Newport Beach city staff during a City Council study session this month.

The national monument would be the 17th in California and the 123rd in the United States. The Statue of Liberty and Castle Clinton in New York are among the most recognized and visited national monuments.

If the bill is approved, a local advisory committee would be created and tasked with submitting a plan for the monument to the federal government. The process would take about three years.

Representatives of Royce's office did not respond to a request for comment Tuesday.

Laura Detweiler, Newport Beach's recreation and senior services director, said the designation would bring the area more national significance and could provide some federal resources for managing the land. It also would likely increase tourism in the area, she said.

The proposal would not require federal funding and could enhance collaboration among state, federal and public landowners that make up the monument area, Detweiler said.

"One thing that it allows us to do is work on regional level issues that transcend our boundaries, like fire prevention, recreation, trails, invasive species and, most importantly, how we all tie in together with the water quality of our bay," she said.

However, Newport Beach Councilman Scott Peotter raised concerns about the potential for increased federal regulation of the land as a result of national monument status. He suggested the city ask Royce not to include Buck Gully in the bill.

"This is a prestige thing," Peotter said. "There's a potential carrot out there for more money, but there's also a hammer out there for more regulations."

Council members Keith Curry and Tony Petros praised the proposal's effort to maintain open space in Orange County.

"This area will be preserved as open space for future generations of Californians, and I am so proud that we have a small part of this," Curry said.

The city is expected to ask a member of Royce's staff to make a presentation to the City Council in coming weeks to discuss the bill. If the council favors it, city staff would draft a letter of support to be signed by the council.

Orange County Supervisor Todd Spitzer sent a letter to Royce in June indicating his support for the monument.

"The Santa Ana Mountains to Sea National Monument will provide critically important world-class conservation and recreation experiences in the middle of one of the most urban regions in the country," Spitzer wrote. "Designation of these lands as a monument ensures that these special natural and cultural resources, geological features, trails and other visitor facilities will all be managed and cared for in a manner fitting with their national importance."

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***For the Record:*** This story originally stated that Ed Royce is from Garden Grove. He lives in Fullerton.

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