

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 8, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Kamala D. Harris
Vice President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Brenda Mallory
Chair
Council on Environmental Quality
730 Jackson Place, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear President Biden, Vice President Harris, Secretary Vilsack, and Chair Mallory:

We write to request that you expand the boundary of California's San Gabriel Mountains National Monument by issuing a presidential proclamation under the *Antiquities Act of 1906*.

We have introduced the "San Gabriel Mountains Protection Act" (H.R. 3681) and the "Protecting Unique and Beautiful Landscapes by Investing in California (PUBLIC) Lands Act" (S. 1776) to include adjacent federally owned land within the boundary. We request that you make this designation to protect the 109,167 acres included in the map entitled "Proposed San Gabriel Mountains National Monument Expansion" and dated June 26, 2019¹. We also request that you visit the proposed designation and would be happy to host you for the visit.

Our legislation enjoys broad support from federal, state, and local officials, and was crafted in close coordination with affected communities and key stakeholders. The bill is the result of years of grassroots advocacy to bring greater protections and recreation opportunities to public lands adjacent to one of the largest population centers in the country, and it incorporates extensive feedback from local stakeholders, including the San Gabriel Valley Water Association, to ensure the designations do not impact water rights, utility infrastructure, or maintenance of facilities. The bill has also received support from over 30 local governments and elected officials, including the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, dozens of local businesses and organizations, and over 25 conservation and outdoor recreation organizations.

In February 2020 and February 2021, our bill passed the House of Representatives with bipartisan support as part of the Protecting America's Wilderness Act. The bill again passed the House three separate times, in July 2020, September 2021, and July 2022, as amendments to the National Defense Authorization Acts. And in October 2021, the bill received a hearing in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. To date, we are not aware of any organized opposition to our

¹ USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region Geospatial Services. "Proposed San Gabriel Mountains National Monument Expansion" (June 26, 2019).

proposed national monument expansion. We would expect any *Antiquities Act* designation to enjoy equally broad support.


Los Angeles County is one of the most park-poor and pollution burdened regions in the United States. However, more than 15 million people live within a 90-minute drive of the San Gabriel Mountains, which provide Los Angeles residents 70 percent of their available open space and 30 percent of their drinking water.² The San Gabriel Mountains also contain rich cultural, historical, and geological resources, and provide critical habitat for threatened and endangered species including the California condor, Nelson's bighorn sheep, and the Santa Ana sucker. For many residents of this dense urban area, the San Gabriel Mountains provide a unique opportunity—particularly for minority and low-income families—to access the physical, mental, and educational benefits of nearby public lands.


In recognition of the San Gabriel Mountains' significant natural, cultural, and recreational resources, President Barack Obama exercised his authority under the *Antiquities Act* in 2014 to protect approximately 346,177 acres of National Forest System land as the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument.³ In addition to providing permanent protections for the area's unique natural and cultural resources, the monument designation has helped raise awareness of local recreational opportunities, promoted improved access, and encouraged greater availability of management resources, including enabling the U.S. Forest Service to leverage private-public partnerships to support the stewardship of the monument. However, this 2014 national monument designation omitted most of the western area of the Angeles National Forest.

Our legislation would build off more than two decades of grassroots work, recommendations from the National Park Service, and President Obama's national monument proclamation by expanding the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument by 109,167 acres, in addition to also designating approximately 31,000 acres as new or expanded wilderness areas and adding 45.5 miles to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. These protections would increase public lands access and protect clean drinking water supplies for Los Angeles County, as well as enhance conservation of the area's rich cultural resources, unique geological features, critical wildlife habitat, and threatened and endangered wildlife. Expanding the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument would contribute to the Administration's goal under Executive Order 14008 of permanently conserving 30 percent of the United States by 2030, as well as the Administration's *America the Beautiful* initiative, which is intended to address the three interlocking crises of nature loss, climate change, and inequitable access to the outdoors.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration of our request. We look forward to working with you to permanently protect the San Gabriel Mountains and to hosting you for an in-person visit to the San Gabriels.

Sincerely,


Judy Chu
Member of Congress


Alex Padilla
United States Senator

² U.S. Forest Service, San Gabriel Mountains National Monument (n.d.), <https://www.fs.usda.gov/visit/san-gabriel-mountains-national-monument>.

³ Proclamation No. 9194, 3 C.F.R. 9194 (2014)