

COMMUNITY NEWS

Monumental Step for the San Gabriels and Open Space Preservation



Congressman
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As Californians, we're used to Presidents of both parties coming to town—especially Los Angeles—to raise campaign funds, but

rarely do they make large policy announcements. They save those for the coveted swing states.

But something special happened this month. President Obama came to town, and used the authority granted to him by Congress through the Antiquities Act of 1906 to designate a large portion of the San Gabriel Mountains as a National Monument.

That relatively-unknown Act of Congress was designed to give the President power to designate certain areas of historically significant land as worthy of special protection when the Congress lacked the will to act. Frustrated by a lack of progress made by Congress, President Theodore Roosevelt signed the legislation and quickly designated eighteen areas as national monuments, establishing that President's reputation as the Father of Conservation.

Roosevelt got it right when he said that he recognized the "right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us."

There's no question this Congress has moved too slowly on the preservation of open space, and many of our national and local priorities. As a result of the President's declaration this week, however, the Forest Service will be better equipped to protect the 346,000 acres of national forest land that make up the San Gabriels and better serve the surrounding communities.

For more than a decade now, I have been working to protect and conserve open space in the San Gabriel mountains and the Rim of the Valley, and I am pleased that this monument designation is such a strong step towards achieving this goal—but there is so much more to be done.

In 2008, President Bush signed into law a bill I wrote called the "Rim of the Valley Corridor Study Act," which authorized the National Park Service (NPS) to study the possibility of providing federal protection to the Rim of the Valley, an area stretching from the existing Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA) through the Simi Hills and Santa Susannas, the Verdugos, and on to the San Gabriel Mountains.

Last year, as a result of the National Park Service study, the NPS released its four preliminary "Alternatives," or suggestions on how to best utilize the land in the Rim of the Valley study area.

I joined several members of the Los Angeles delegation in recommending that when the NPS issues

its final report to Congress on the Rim of the Valley, it propose boundaries of a National Recreation Area that would both include critical habitat and biodiversity protection, as well as increase access to the recreation area for urban communities. I believe that it is important to ensure that future generations of Southern Californians are able to make recreational use of our region's beautiful Mediterranean landscape, obtaining an understanding of the rich tableau of animals and plants that populate the area, and preserving rare ecosystems and wildlife corridors.

This Fall, the Park Service is expected to release its draft report to Congress, which will incorporate feedback it has received from the community and stakeholders. When this is published, I encourage my constituents to review the draft report, and share their thoughts and comments. Extensive input from the public will be the key to drafting the legislation that would create the best National Recreation Area possible for all to enjoy.

While the National Park Service has been leading the charge to determine what is feasible, it will ultimately be up to Congress to enact legislation to protect the open space in the region and to achieve the shared vision that was the inspiration for our legislation more than a decade ago.

I hope you will help me in crafting that legislation, and offer your insights. Phone 818-450-2900 / website: schiff.house.gov