

## **California Latino Congreso 2014**

### **Support the proposed San Gabriels National Recreation Area for environmental justice and health**

March 20-22, 2014, <http://california.latinocongreso.org/resolutions/006.php>

WHEREAS: The San Gabriel Mountains represent almost 70% of the open space in Los Angeles County and provide one third of the drinking water for local communities.

WHEREAS: 17 million people live within an hour drive of these mountains, which provide opportunities for recreation and physical activity, as well as education, spirituality, and an escape from the stresses of urban life.

WHEREAS: Communities of color and low-income communities do not enjoy equal access to the region's recreation and open space resources, and suffer corresponding health disparities.

WHEREAS: Congresswoman Judy Chu emphasizes public health and environmental justice as two main reasons why the Los Angeles region needs a national recreation area in the San Gabriels. "Los Angeles is the most park-poor region in the United States. . . . Lack of recreational opportunities – large or small – has severe impacts on urban populations struggling with obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and chronic illness. Opportunities to enjoy outdoor activity are vital for public health and the well being of people of all ages and walks of life."

WHEREAS: The National Park Service highlights environmental justice and health in its study recommending the National Recreation Area. Los Angeles County is one of the most disadvantaged counties in terms of access to parks and open space for children of color and people of color. County averages mask dramatic disparities in access to green space within the county, according to NPS, citing The City Project's publications. Non-Hispanic whites currently have disproportionately greater access to parks and open space, compared to Latinos and African-Americans. These groups are 12-15 times more likely to have less park acreage per capita when compared to non Hispanic whites. The communities with the least amount of access to parks and open space tend to have higher rates of childhood diseases related to obesity such as diabetes. NPS recognizes park agencies have an obligation to address these disparities, citing Executive Order 12898 on environmental justice and health. NPS also cites Transit to Trails as a best practice for taking inner residents on fun, educational, and healthy mountain, beach, and river trips.

WHEREAS: According to the NPS report Healthy Parks, Healthy People U.S., people of color and low income populations still face disparities in park access. These disparities adversely impact human health. For example, regarding obesity, 36% of black and 35% of Hispanic high school students nationwide are overweight or obese, while 24% of non-Hispanic white high school students suffer from these conditions. NPS relies on the World Health Organization definition of health, which includes promoting a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely alleviating chronic diseases such as obesity and diabetes. NPS's Healthy Parks, Healthy People Science Plan compiles extensive evidence-based social science research documenting relationships between socio-economic status and green space and outdoor recreation. For example, health disparities are influenced by socio-economic status. Green space and parks can promote good health, and play an important role in alleviating socioeconomic health disparities.

WHEREAS: According to the California Council of Land Trends, by 2050, the people of California will be larger, more urban, more diverse, older, poorer, and obese, and less healthy. The population will grow by 35%. 47% will be Latinos. 23% will live in poverty. Poverty by race and ethnicity will be 35% African American, 33% Latino, 19% other, and 13% non-Hispanic white. Different groups also relate to the outdoors in different ways.

WHEREAS, the NPS study and planning process for the San Gabriels is a best practice example for voluntary compliance with civil rights laws. The compliance process includes: (1) Describe what is planned, (2) Analyze the burdens and benefits for all communities, (3) Analyze alternatives, (4) Include

people of color and low-income people in the decision making process, (5) Implement a plan to distribute the benefits and burdens of the national recreation area fairly.

WHEREAS: The San Gabriel Mountains Forever Campaign Communication Committee agrees as follows:

- San Gabriel Mountains Forever applauds Rep. Chu's dedicated work with stakeholders to develop a bill that meets the needs and wishes of all community members. Her work caps years of public input and outreach by NPS and the US Forest Service.
- San Gabriel Mountains Forever thanks Rep. Chu for this draft legislation to permanently protect our San Gabriel Mountains, rivers and parks with access for all.
- We support a National Recreation Area, Wilderness, and Wild and Scenic River protections for the San Gabriel Mountains, rivers and parks. We should use all tools to preserve these important resources.
- The San Gabriel Mountains benefits the recreation and health of millions of urban Southern California residents, protects water supplies, boosts the local economy and jobs, and preserves important cultural and historic heritage.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the organizations represented by the delegates of the 2014 Latino Congreso agree the process for planning and creating the National Recreation Area in the San Gabriels must continue to meet the goals of healthy green land use, equitable development, and planning by and for the community.

FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED that the organizations represented by the delegates of the 2014 Latino Congreso agree with The San Gabriel Mountains Forever Campaign Communication Committee.

FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED that the organizations represented by the delegates of the 2014 Latino Congreso agree that the process for planning and creating the National Recreation Area in the San Gabriels must meet the following goals.

- (1) Serve diverse needs and the full range of values at stake through a fully-funded, balanced alternative that includes multi-benefit park and green space projects that promote: human development, healthy living, and active and passive recreation; conservation values of clean water, land, and air, habitat protection, and climate justice; cultural values; and economic vitality for all.
- (2) Implement a compliance and equity plan that ensures equal access to the National Recreation Area and its benefits for all communities, including communities of color and low-income communities. This includes compliance by NPS, by other federal agencies, and by recipients of federal funding with equal protection laws and principles.
- (3) Conduct a health impact assessment for the National Recreation Area.
- (4) Promote economic vitality through green jobs, apprenticeship programs, and contracts for diverse organizations. These items can be implemented immediately. Economic vitality includes implementing policies and programs to avoid gentrification and displacement around the National Recreation Area.
- (5) Implement Transit to Trails to take inner city children on fun, educational, and healthy outings to mountains, beaches, and rivers in the San Gabriels. This program can be implemented immediately.
- (6) Study, celebrate, and preserve cultural, heritage, public art, and Native American resources to reflect the diversity of the region and the nation.
- (7) Provide transportation alternatives to the National Recreation Area, including bike trails, complete green streets, safe routes to school, and Transit to Trails.
- (8) Ensure full and fair participation by all communities in the planning and decision making process.
- (9) The proposed National Recreation Area offers important opportunities to coordinate with other agencies and initiatives, including the California Parks Forward Commission, California Department of Parks and Recreation, the greening of the Los Angeles River, the proposed expansion of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, the Rim of the Valley study, and pending state park and water bond ballot measures.