



April 30, 2014

The Honorable Judy Chu
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
Via e-mail SGRec@mail.house.gov

Re: Support San Gabriel National Recreation Area Legislation

Dear Congresswoman Chu:

We support your work with the community and diverse allies to diversify access to and support for the San Gabriel Mountains and Watershed. Your draft legislation to create a National Recreation Area, along with new Wilderness and Wild and Scenic river designations, is a significant step toward permanently safeguarding this area for current and future generations, and to promote health and environmental justice for all.

The proposed national recreation area would serve 17 million people within an hour's drive of the mountains. The San Gabriels provide over 70% of L.A. County's open space and host over 3 million visitors a year. These mountains provide outdoor spaces to promote public health and environmental justice in the most park-poor region in the United States. Lack of recreational opportunities 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. Furthermore, parks in nearby urban areas lack the resources to adequately provide opportunities for residents and to walk, jog, bike, picnic, or enjoy other outdoor recreation. The national recreation area will promote economic value and resources. Numerous studies have shown that recreational spaces increase property value and increase revenues for local businesses.

According to the National Park Service, economically disadvantaged populations in the study area lack access and the ability to partake of existing opportunities due to lack of close-to-home open space, lack of effective transportation, lack of culturally advantageous facilities or opportunities, and lack of knowledge about recreation and natural resources. Environmental justice must be considered in every major federal action by assessing environmental factors that negatively or disproportionately affect minority populations. Work and stewardship programs for at risk youth, and Transit to Trails programs to take urban residents to mountain, beach, and river trips, help address these concerns.¹

The draft legislation will ensure additional resources, more stakeholder control, and balanced resource management, and promote the diverse values at stake. This includes human health, economic vitality, conservation, culture and history, and Native American values. The legislation provides for a diverse public advisory council, a comprehensive management plan and visitor access plan, and a partnership among federal, state, tribal, and local authorities and the private sector. The public advisory council would include environmental justice representation to help ensure the area serves the needs of all people, including people of color and low-income people.

With all due respect, we believe that the legislation can be strengthened in the following ways: include proposed legislative findings based on your San Gabriel FAQs and the National Park

¹ See San Gabriel National Recreation Area Proposal Frequently Asked Questions, <http://chu.house.gov/content/san-gabriel-national-recreation-area-proposal-faq>; San Gabriel National Recreation Proposal, <http://chu.house.gov/san-gabriel-national-recreation-area-proposal>; National Park Service, *San Gabriel Watershed and Mountains Special Resource Study & Environmental Assessment* (Newsletter #5, Nov. 2011) (*San Gabriel Study*), p. 219, 231.



Service study, include representative for health, civil rights, renters, and urban park interests on the advisory council, and include tribal authorities in the partnership and not only on the advisory committee.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,

Betty Avila

Board Chair, Multicultural Communities for Mobility