



July 9, 2019

Senator Kamala Harris
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Rep. Judy Chu
2423 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act (S.1109 / H.R. 2215)

Dear Senator Harris and Representative Chu,

On behalf of the outdoor recreation community, we write to share our support for increased land protections surrounding the San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers.

Right on the edge of Los Angeles in the Angeles National Forest, the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument represents 70 percent of the open space in the Los Angeles metropolitan region and provides 30 percent of the region's drinking water. Adding lasting protections to the San Gabriel Mountains is important for the health and well-being of all Angelenos and can help sustain the health of local businesses and the broader outdoor recreation economy. In California, outdoor recreation generates \$92 billion in consumer spending and supports 691,000 jobs, \$30.4 billion in wages and salaries, and \$6.2 billion in state and local tax revenue. The San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act is an investment in our economic future.

We especially appreciate the various designations included in the bill that allow for multiple recreational uses. The San Gabriel foothills represent an important urban/wild buffer zone and are the gateway to the mountains for many millions of Angelenos who otherwise have limited access to open space and outdoor recreation. The establishment of a 51,000-acre National Recreation Area along the foothills and San Gabriel River corridor and Puente Hills will not only help improve

that access, but will also ensure that these highly-popular and heavily-impacted areas receive the resources they need to be managed and maintained in a sustainable manner for the safety and enjoyment of all.

The bill would increase opportunities for Angelenos to enjoy the outdoors by expanding the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument by nearly 110,000 acres to include the western portions of the Angeles National Forest. The bill would establish an 8,417-acre Condor Peak Wilderness and a 6,774 acre Yerba Buena Wilderness. Additionally, the San Gabriel Wilderness would be expanded by 2,000 acres, and the Sheep Mountain by nearly 14,000 acres. The proposed Sheep Mountain Wilderness additions include a segment of the famous Pacific Crest Trail and the popular East Fork Trail. This area is famous for its rare mountain yellow-legged frog, the California spotted owl, and the many incredible trout streams perfect for fishing.

We believe that a small change to the bill to rectify an historic mapping error could further increase the efficacy of the bill for providing access to the outdoors.

When the Sheep Mountain Wilderness area was designated in 1984, a portion of its eastern boundary north of Mt. Baldy was set to follow the Mt. Baldy Trail. Unfortunately, due to inaccurate map data, the Wilderness boundary slightly overlaps the trail for a small segment as it follows the ridge line where the trail and boundary are co-located. Because Wilderness designations preclude bicycle access, this boundary issue effectively makes a significantly longer, potentially valuable mountain biking route unrideable.

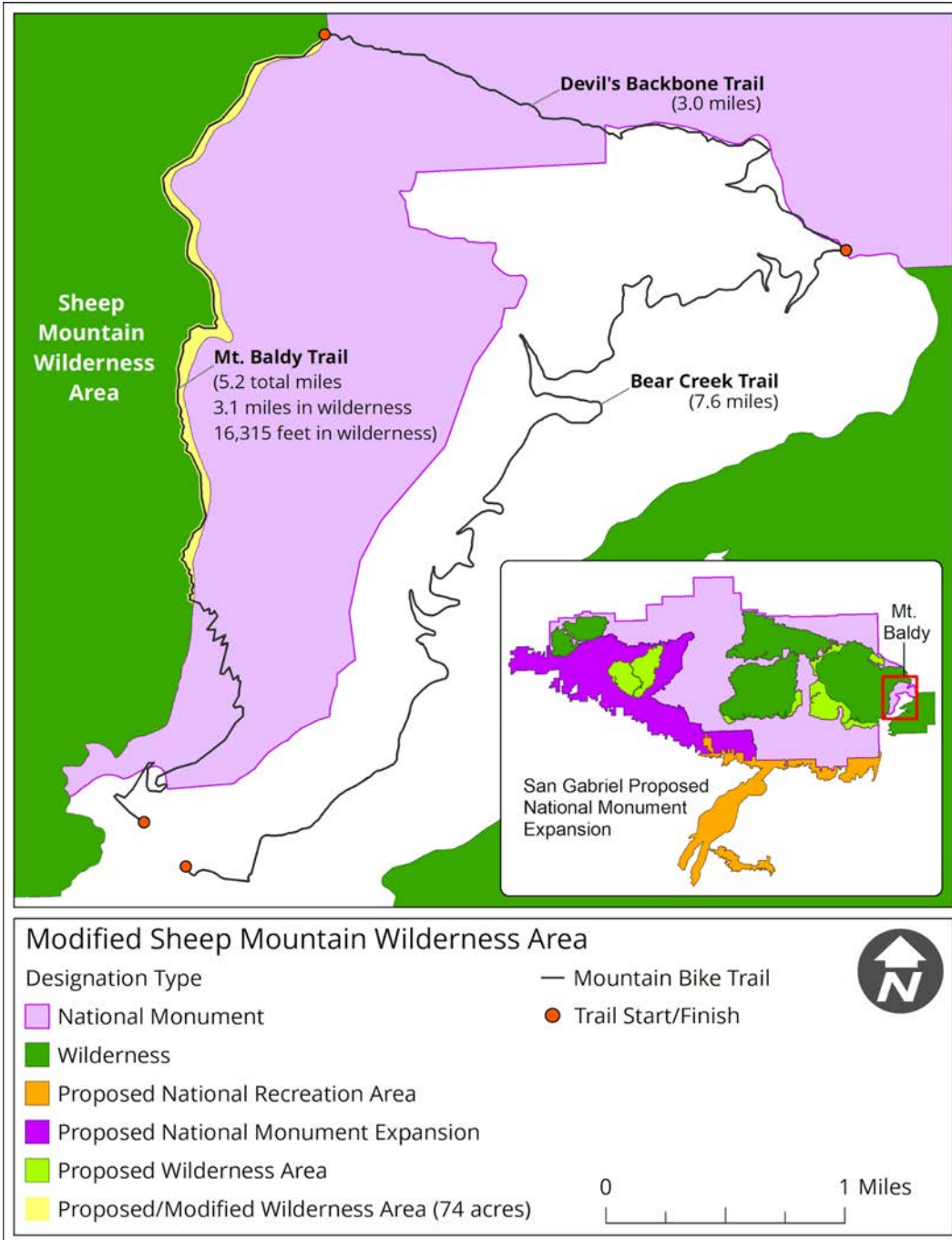
We respectfully request that the San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act be amended to correct this boundary so that the Mt. Baldy trail forms the new Wilderness Boundary. With the addition of this correction, we are confident the bill can garner greater support from the recreation community and Congress and set the stage for future protections of adjacent lands.

To address this change, we recommend the following amendment text:

Sheep Mountain Wilderness Boundary Adjustment.—Section 101 (a) (29.) of the California Wilderness Act of 1984 (Public Law 98-425; 98 Stat. 1619; 16 U.S.C. 1132 note) is amended as generally depicted on the San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection map, by—

- (1) striking "forty-three thousand acres" and inserting "forty-three thousand three hundred and two acres"; and
- (2) striking ", dated July 1984" and inserting "and dated ___".

The map below indicates the location and the extent of the proposed adjustment.



Legislatively adjusting this boundary so that it follows the trail with a standard 50-foot buffer from centerline would result in 74 acres being removed from Wilderness. This is accounted for in the recommended legislative amendment language above by removing the 74 acres from the current and official acreage total of 41,376 (rather than the original estimated acreage of 43,000 acres) for a final total of 41,302.

The Mt. Baldy trail is part of a 16-mile trail loop made up of three trails (Mt. Baldy Trail (5.2 miles), Devil's Backbone Trail (3 miles) and Bear Creek Trail (7.6 miles)). Technically, with the exception of a 3-mile section of trail that dips into and enters Wilderness along the eastern boundary of the Sheep Mountain Wilderness Area, the entire loop is open to bikes. Legislatively adjusting this boundary so that it follows the trail with a standard 50-foot buffer from centerline would restore a 16-mile loop ride. That adjustment would bring a valuable benefit to the mountain biking community and help build substantial enthusiasm for the bill in the mountain biking and recreation community.

The 74 acres of adjustment to the Sheep Mtn. Wilderness area (represented by the sliver of yellow shown on the main map image) would be offset by the San Gabriel bill adding 31,069 acres of new Wilderness (light green), 109,503 acres of expanded National Monument (dark pink), and 49,200 acres of new National Recreation Area (Orange). The map inset above provides a perspective of how the adjustment (yellow) fits into the bigger picture of the bill.

* * *

The outdoor recreation community greatly appreciates your attention to conservation and recreation values in the greater Los Angeles area, and we appreciate your consideration of the boundary adjustment issue raised above. We look forward to working with you in support of the San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Act, and thank you for your leadership in ensuring our special wild lands and rivers remain protected for future generations.

Sincerely,



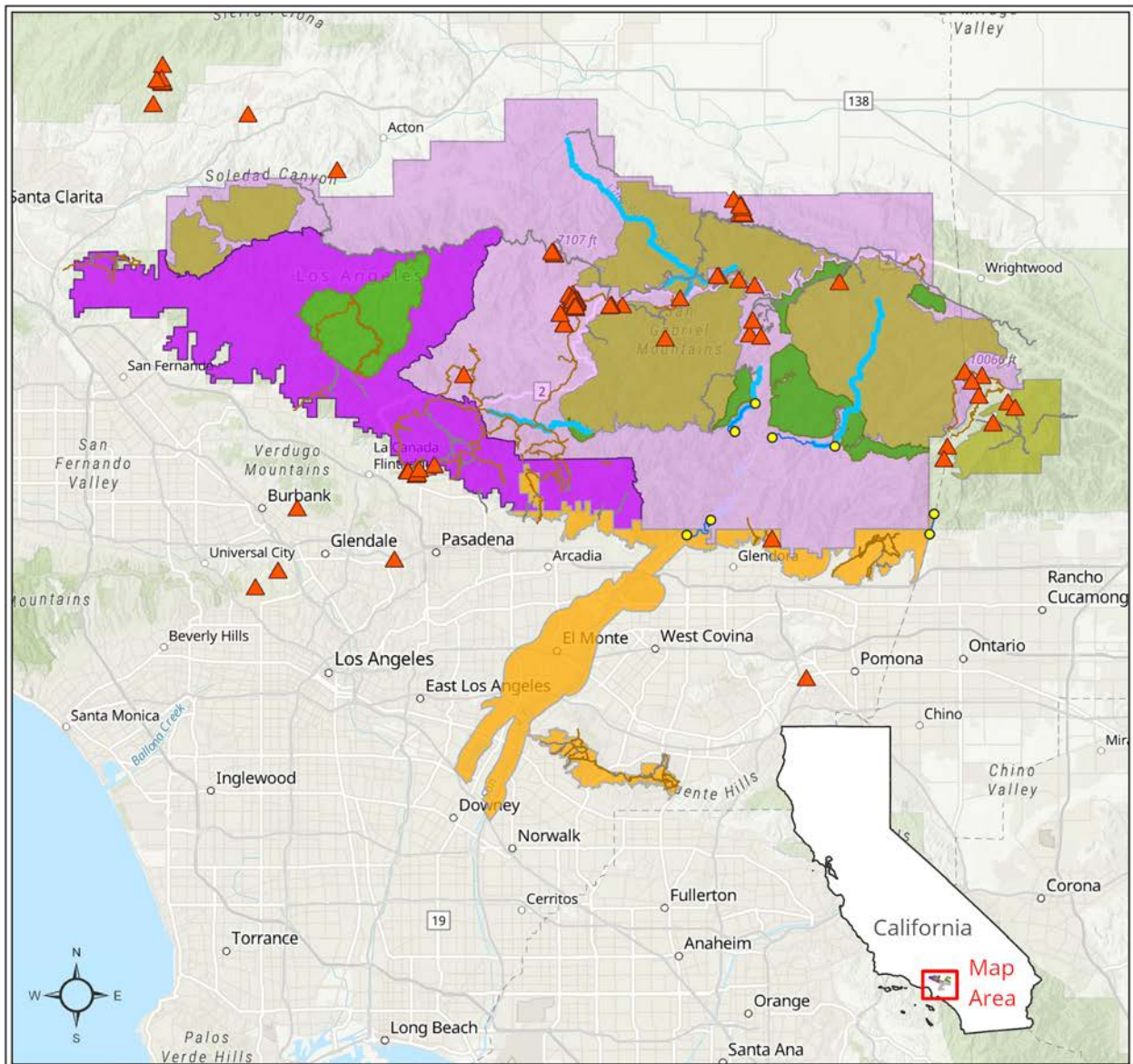
Kirsten Blackburn
Advocacy Manager
The Conservation Alliance



Louis Geltman
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Outdoor Alliance



Patricia Rojas-Ungar
Vice President, Government Affairs
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San Gabriel Mountains, Foothills, and Rivers Protection Act

Proposed Designations

- Proposed Wild & Scenic River
- National Monument Expansion
- National Recreation Area
- Proposed Wilderness

Designated Areas

- National Monument
- Wilderness Area

Recreation Resources

- ▲ Rock Climbing
- River Access
- Whitewater Paddling
- Mountain Biking Trail
- Hiking Trail



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Our Organizations

Outdoor Alliance

Outdoor Alliance is a coalition of ten member-based organizations representing the human powered outdoor recreation community. The coalition includes Access Fund, American Canoe Association, American Whitewater, International Mountain Bicycling Association, Winter Wildlands Alliance, The Mountaineers, the American Alpine Club, the Mazamas, Colorado Mountain Club, and Surfrider Foundation and represents the interests of the millions of Americans who climb, paddle, mountain bike, backcountry ski and snowshoe, and enjoy coastal recreation on our nation's public lands, waters, and snowscapes.

The Conservation Alliance

The Conservation Alliance is an organization of like-minded businesses whose collective contributions support grassroots environmental organizations and their efforts to protect wild places where outdoor enthusiasts recreate. Alliance funds have played a key role in protecting rivers, trails, wildlands and climbing areas. Membership in the Alliance is open to all companies who care about protecting our most threatened wild places for habitat and outdoor recreation. Since its inception in 1989, The Conservation Alliance has contributed more than \$21 million, helped to protect more than 51 million acres of wildlands; protect 3,107 miles of rivers; stop or remove 34 dams; designate five marine reserves; and purchase 14 climbing areas. For complete information on The Conservation Alliance, see www.conservationalliance.com.

Outdoor Industry Association

Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) is the national trade association for the outdoor industry and is the title sponsor of Outdoor Retailer, the largest outdoor products tradeshow in North America. OIA serves over 1,300 manufacturers, suppliers, and retailers through a focus on international trade and public lands and recreation policy, sustainable business innovation and outdoor participation.