

**MOORPARK CITY COUNCIL  
AGENDA REPORT**

**TO:** Honorable City Council

**FROM:** David A. Bobardt, Community Development Director 

**DATE:** December 6, 2012 (CC Meeting of 12/19/2012)

**SUBJECT:** Consider National Park Service Rim of the Valley Corridor Special Resource Study Preliminary Findings and Alternative Concepts

**BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

On December 5, 2012, Councilmember Mikos requested an agenda item for this meeting to discuss the National Park Services Rim of the Valley Corridor Special Resource Study Preliminary Findings and Alternative Concepts, for which comments are due on January 7, 2013.

In 2008 Congress directed the National Park Service to conduct a special resource study of the area known as the Rim of the Valley Corridor, generally including the mountains encircling the San Fernando, La Crescenta, Santa Clarita, Simi and Conejo Valleys in California. The study area may ultimately include portions of Moorpark east of the 23, continuing to include Happy Camp Canyon Regional Park, depending upon which alternatives are selected for further study. The end product of this effort will be a report to Congress to determine whether any portion of the Rim of the Valley Corridor area is eligible to be designated as a unit of the National Park System or added to an existing National Park Unit such as the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA). The study will also explore other ways that private and governmental entities can protect resources and provide more outdoor recreation opportunities.

The Park Service has recently released its preliminary findings and alternative concepts for this study (attached) and has been conducting public workshops and soliciting comments on these findings and alternatives. The alternatives identified in this report are as follows:

Alternative A – Continuation of Current Management – (No Action)

Alternative B – Cooperative Conservation Partnership – (Partnership with Public and Private Landowners and Other Stakeholders)

Alternative C – Connecting Urban Parks (Expanding SMMNRA Boundary to Surround San Fernando Valley)

Alternative D – Connecting Natural Habitat (Expanding SMMNRA Boundary to surround Simi and Conejo Valleys to connect wildlife corridors between the Santa Monica and Sierra Madre Mountains)

National Park Service staff held a workshop at the Moorpark Community Center on November 29, 2012 from 7:00 PM to just after 9:00 PM as part of its outreach efforts. Approximately 32 people attended the meeting. Many questions and comments focused on concerns about impacts on property rights, government intrusion, cost in public funds, and eminent domain. About six comments favored expansion of the park boundary as described in Alt. D. There were also questions and comments favoring improving wildlife corridors by including connectivity to the Los Padres and Angeles National Forests.

On December 3, 2012, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy considered these findings and alternatives and authorized staff to submit a comment letter identifying an additional alternative for study that combines the areas in Alternatives C and D and adds an additional cooperative conservation partnership area. Reasons for this additional alternative are included in the attached comment letter.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Direct staff as deemed appropriate.

Attachments:

1. Preliminary Findings and Alternative Concepts
2. Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Draft Comment Letter



## Preliminary Findings & Alternative Concepts



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**San Gabriel Watershed and Mountains Study Update**

The NPS continues to make progress on completing the San Gabriel Watershed and Mountains Special Resource Study. The final study will be made available to the public when it has been transmitted to Congress. For more information about the completion of this study, please visit the study website: <http://www.nps.gov/pwro/sangabriel/>

*Dear Friends,*

We are happy to report our progress on the Rim of the Valley Corridor Special Resource Study and we invite your feedback on the preliminary ideas presented in this newsletter. Since you last heard from us, we have been evaluating the study area to determine whether it contains nationally significant resources that are suitable and feasible for inclusion in the national park system as a separate park unit or as an addition to Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA). We have completed our preliminary analysis and want to share our findings with you. Your feedback at this stage will help us complete our analysis and create a range of feasible alternatives for the draft study report.

You can find a summary of the preliminary study findings on pages 4-10 of this newsletter. Do you agree with our findings? Does the analysis adequately address the criteria for a new park unit and the criteria for a SMMNRA boundary adjustment summarized on page 10? Have we overlooked anything?

Based on our preliminary findings, we begin the public dialogue on the role of the NPS in protecting these resources

on pages 11-19. These preliminary alternative concepts introduce a range of possible management strategies and serve as a starting point for discussion. Which elements of each of these concepts do you like or dislike? Is there a better combination of management strategies that would cost-effectively enhance protection of the resources? Are there any new management strategies that you would like to see included in the draft study report?

Please join us at one of several public meetings to be held in the area this fall to discuss the preliminary findings and alternative concepts. We invite you to visit our website at [www.nps.gov/pwro/rimofthevalley](http://www.nps.gov/pwro/rimofthevalley) to learn about the different ways you can send us your comments. You may also contact us directly via phone, mail or e-mail using the information on the back of this newsletter. Please send us your comments by **January 7, 2013**.

We look forward to hearing from you!

**CC ATTACHMENT 1** *Sincerely,  
The Study Team*

# Study Process

View of downtown Los Angeles from Griffith Park Photo: NPS.

## Study Legislation

The Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-229 – May 2008) directed the National Park Service (NPS) to conduct a special resource study of the area known as the Rim of the Valley Corridor, generally including the mountains encircling the San Fernando, La Crescenta, Santa Clarita, Simi, and Conejo Valleys in California. The legislation also directed the NPS to determine whether any portion of the Rim of the Valley Corridor study area is eligible to be designated as a unit of the national park system or added to an existing national park unit (Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area); and to explore other ways that private and governmental entities can protect resources and provide more outdoor recreation opportunities.

## Start Up of Study

The NPS introduced the Rim of the Valley Corridor special resource study and boundary analysis in 2010 through a newsletter and meetings with organizations, agencies, elected officials, and the public. More than 400 people attended public workshops and the study team received more than 2000 written comments on the study approach, important resources that should be included in the study, the potential impacts of the study, the scope and size of the study area, and the range of possible study outcomes. A summary of these comments can be seen on the study website.

## Resource Analysis

Beginning with the resource information provided by the public and agency comments, the study team gathered existing documentation about potentially significant natural and cultural resources throughout the study area. These preliminary findings are summarized beginning on page 4 of this newsletter.

## Alternatives

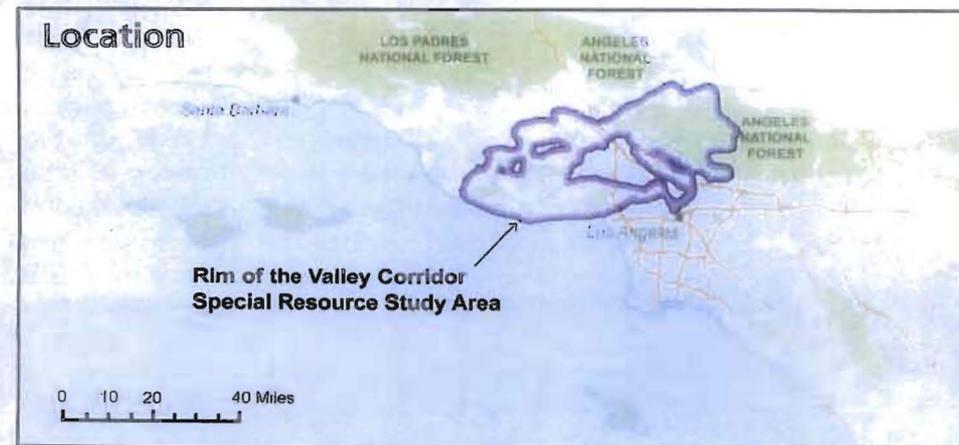
In a special resource study, “alternatives” are possible ways of managing resources within the study area. As part of the study process, all of the alternatives presented must be assessed for feasibility. Management by the NPS will be considered only if:

- 1) an area has adequate size and configuration to allow for resource protection and

- 2) can be administered at a reasonable cost; and
- 3) requires direct NPS management, instead of protection by other public agencies or the private sector. A range of “preliminary alternative concepts” for this study is presented in this newsletter beginning on page 11. The “preliminary alternative concepts” are initial ideas for the management of significant resources and public enjoyment opportunities in the study area. With your input, the planning team will refine and further develop these alternatives for evaluation in the draft study report.

## Next Steps

After analyzing the public comments on the preliminary study findings and alternatives, the team will develop more detailed alternatives and complete further feasibility and environmental analysis of the alternatives. Next, a draft study report that includes the alternatives and environmental analysis will be published and provided for public comment. Based on these comments, the report will be revised as appropriate. Added to the final report will be a determination of the alternative that in the professional judgment of the Director of the NPS would be most effective and efficient in protecting significant resources and providing for public enjoyment. The final step in the process is transmittal of the final report from the Secretary of the Interior to Congress, along with a recommendation regarding the Secretary’s preferred management option for the area.



Study Schedule	
Planning Activity	Dates
1 <b>Public Start-up/Scoping</b> Determine the "scope" or overall approach to the study. Host public meetings. Collect and analyze public comments.	2010 - 2011
2 <b>Resource Analysis: Significance and Suitability</b> Identify nationally significant resources (outstanding examples of particular type of resource). The NPS considers a resource to be suitable for inclusion in the national park system if it: 1) is not already adequately represented in the national park system, or 2) is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by another land managing entity.  For boundary adjustments to existing NPS units, the NPS evaluates whether an adjustment to the boundary would protect significant resources or enhance opportunities for public enjoyment related to park purposes.	2011 - 2012
3-4 <b>Alternatives Development &amp; Feasibility Analysis</b> Identify feasible roles for the NPS and develop alternative concepts. You are invited to help refine and develop these concepts through written comments and participation in public meetings. All of the alternatives must be considered feasible for NPS management. For example they must be of adequate size and configuration to protect the resources, must be able to be administered at a reasonable cost, and must have public support.	2012 <b>We Are Here</b>
5 <b>Environmental Impact Analysis</b> Through a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, the NPS will analyze the potential for environmental and socioeconomic impacts of the alternatives.	2013
6 <b>Draft Report</b> The NPS will publish the findings of the study (analysis of resource significance, suitability, feasibility, relationship to purpose of the existing park, and need for NPS management), proposed alternatives, and environmental impact analysis.  The Draft Report will contain a more detailed description and analysis of the area's resources and alternatives for the protection of significant resources and the enhancement of recreational opportunities. You will have an opportunity to comment on this draft before the report is finalized. The NPS will host public meetings and solicit public comments on the draft report.	2014
7 <b>Final Report/Transmittal to Congress</b> The final report includes a recommendation for a preferred management option for the area. If NPS involvement is recommended, implementation would require further Congressional action.	2014

## We Would Like to Hear from You!

As you read through this newsletter and consider the alternative concepts, think about which ideas you like the most and which would best improve recreational opportunities and protect natural and cultural resources. Your written comments are welcomed and encouraged. Please consider the questions below in addition to any other thoughts and ideas you wish to share. Receiving your input by **January 7, 2013** will allow us to learn from you and revise our approach as we develop the draft study report.

- Is there one alternative concept or idea presented that you think is most valuable in terms of improving recreational opportunities and protecting significant resources? Tell us why you think this idea is valuable.
- What suggestions do you have for strengthening or improving the alternative concepts? Do you have an entirely different vision of how the area should be managed? If so, please describe your vision.
- What concerns do you have about the alternative concepts?
- What are your thoughts or comments on the preliminary study findings?

Please share your thoughts and comments by attending a public meeting or by submitting your comments electronically by e-mail ([pwr\\_rimofthevalley@nps.gov](mailto:pwr_rimofthevalley@nps.gov)) or through the study web site ([www.nps.gov/pwrc/rimofthevalley](http://www.nps.gov/pwrc/rimofthevalley)). You can also mail your comments to the physical address on the back of this newsletter.

## How to Stay Involved

Learn about the special resource study process:

- Visit the study web site: <http://www.nps.gov/pwrc/rimofthevalley>
- Sign up for the study mailing list or e-mail list
- Participate in one of the public meetings listed on the back page of this newsletter

## Preliminary Study Findings



View of downtown Los Angeles and Elysian Park from the Verdugo Mountains Photo: NPS.

The study process includes two separate, parallel analyses, one that focuses on the potential creation of a new unit of the national park system; and a second that focuses on potential adjustment of the existing boundary of Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA). It should be noted that there is a certain amount of overlap between the criteria for a new park unit and the criteria for a boundary adjustment. Both sets of criteria require proposals to be feasible and demonstrate a need for direct NPS management over management by other entities.

### New Park Unit Evaluation

This special resource study evaluates the Rim of the Valley Corridor Study Area as a potential new unit of the national park system based on established criteria. A proposed addition to the national park system will receive a favorable recommendation from the NPS only if it meets all of the following four criteria for inclusion (NPS Management Policies 2006):

1. it possesses nationally significant natural or cultural resources;
2. it is a suitable addition to the system;
3. it is a feasible addition to the system; and
4. it requires direct NPS management, instead of alternative protection by other public agencies or the private sector.

### SMMNRA Boundary Evaluation

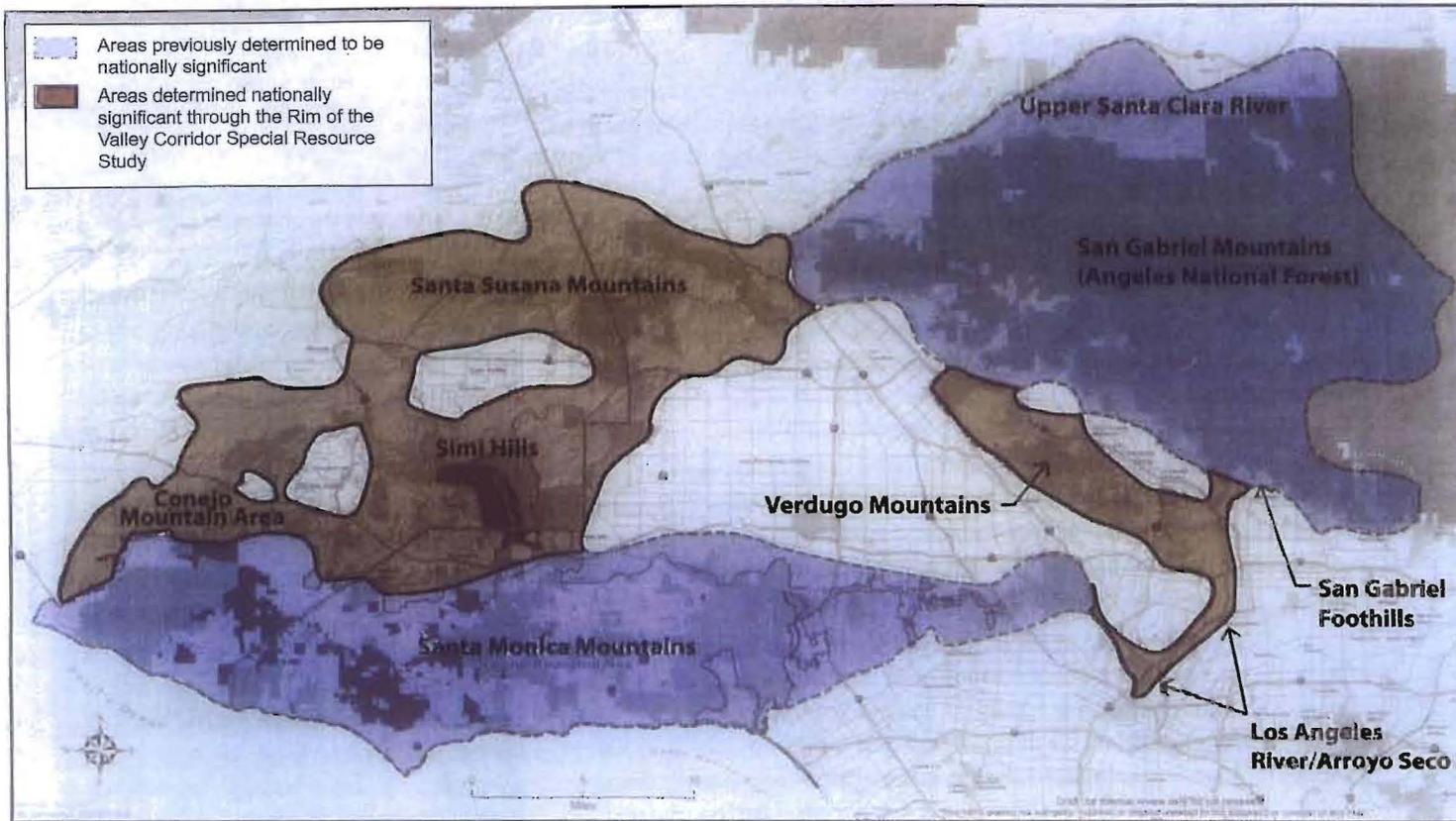
This study also evaluates the potential of including all or a portion of the study area as part of SMMNRA through an extension of the SMMNRA boundary.

For the Secretary of the Interior to recommend any portion of the Rim of the Valley Corridor study area as an addition to SMMNRA, the area must meet one of the following criteria (NPS Management Policies 2006):

- Protect significant resources and values or enhance opportunities for public enjoyment related to park purposes; or
- Address operational and management issues, such as the need for access or the need for boundaries to correspond to logical boundary delineations such as topographic or other natural features or roads; or
- Otherwise protect park resources that are critical to fulfilling park purposes.

The addition needs to:

- Be a feasible addition to the National Park System--the criteria is the same as the feasibility criteria for special resource studies listed above; and
- Require direct NPS management that cannot or will not be accomplished by another government entity or by the private sector.



Map to the left: Two geographic areas within the Rim of the Valley Corridor study area have previously been found by the NPS to contain nationally significant resources: the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and the San Gabriel Mountains.

## Special Resource Study Criteria Preliminary Findings (New Park Unit)

**National Significance** - Does the study area contain nationally significant resources?

Two geographic areas within the Rim of the Valley Corridor study area have previously been found by the NPS to contain nationally significant resources: Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA), and the San Gabriel Mountains.

The purpose and national significance of SMMNRA was established by Congress through its enabling legislation (Public Law 95-625). It recognizes the Santa Monica Mountains and adjacent coastline as an area of national significance because of its combination of natural, cultural, recreational, and aesthetic resources, and further states that, "... there is a national interest in protecting and preserving these

benefits." Through the San Gabriel Watershed and Mountains Special Resource Study process, the NPS has determined the San Gabriel Mountains to be of national significance for its geologic resources and high biodiversity. The Rim of the Valley Corridor study is not revisiting the significance of these two areas. However, the previously identified nationally significant resources are incorporated into the summary provided below.

The remaining portions of the Rim of the Valley Corridor study area are being evaluated through this study to determine the extent of nationally significant resources. The NPS preliminary findings indicate that the remainder of the study area contains nationally significant resources, including outstanding examples of geologic and paleontological resources, high biodiversity, as well as a culturally rich, long history of human use. The following summary describes how the study area resources, including the Santa Monica and San Gabriel Mountains, meet the national significance criteria.



Top photo: Diverse geologic formations create scenic vistas throughout the Rim of the Valley Corridor. Center photo: SMMNRA contains one of the most extensive and diverse assemblages of fossil material known in the national park system. Bottom photo: The San Fernando Valley spineflower, once believed extinct, occurs in the study area. All photos NPS.

## NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT NATURAL RESOURCES

The Rim of the Valley Corridor study area provides outstanding examples of geologic history including the evolution of the Transverse Ranges Province and a diversity of both marine and terrestrial, well-preserved, paleontological resources. The study area contains a high level of biodiversity including outstanding examples of native grasslands, coastal sage scrub, chaparral, dry coniferous forests, and alluvial fan sage scrub.

### Mountain Building and Diverse Geology Associated with the Transverse Ranges Province

- Volcanic and dolomite formations in the Santa Monica Mountains, Conejo Mountain area and the Simi Hills were used in the historically significant paleo-magnetic testing that confirmed the 90 degree rotation of the Transverse Ranges Province.
- The San Gabriel Mountains are among the fastest growing mountains in the world - as much as 2 inches a year - thus serving as an excellent location to learn about mountain building. The Santa Susana Mountains, one the youngest mountain systems on the west coast, further contribute to understanding active mountain building in the region.
- One of the most geologically diverse mountain ranges in southern California, the San Gabriel Mountains are comprised of rocks representing every major geologic era, including some of the oldest rocks (over 1 billion years old) on the west coast of the United States.

### Paleontology

- SMMNRA contains one of the most extensive and diverse assemblages of fossil material known in the national park system. There are at least 2,300 known fossil localities, representing over a dozen fossiliferous geologic formations.
- The Simi Hills, Santa Susana Mountains, and the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains also contain significant fossiliferous formations, some of which are not currently represented in the Santa Monica Mountains.

### High Levels of Biodiversity

- SMMNRA protects for the American people the greatest expanse of mainland Mediterranean ecosystems (biomes in the national park system. With high concentrations of rare, sensitive, and endemic species, it is among the world's rarest and most endangered land types, one that occurs in only five locations throughout the world.
- The topographically and geologically diverse San Gabriel Mountains contain high levels of biodiversity. Outstanding examples of rare southern California communities in the western San Gabriel Mountains and foothills include: alluvial fan sage scrub, big-cone Douglas fir, coastal sage scrub, and riparian areas.
- The Simi Hills and Santa Susana Mountains contain outstanding examples of native southern California habitat which support a number of special status species considered rare, threatened or endangered.
  - One of the most outstanding examples of native grasslands in southern California occurs at Laskey Mesa in the Simi Hills. The unique loamy soil hosts native bunchgrasses and habitat for the rare San Fernando Valley spineflower.
  - The Santa Susana Mountains contain outstanding examples of oak woodlands and savannas and a relic Pleistocene big-cone Douglas fir forest.
- The Verdugo Mountains function as an island refuge providing an important link between nationally significant plant and animal populations in the San Gabriel and Santa Monica Mountains. The genetic interchange of species between these two mountain ranges provides significant opportunities for scientific study.
- The Upper Santa Clara River contains some of the highest quality, least disturbed and biotically intact acreage of big-cone Douglas fir-canyon oak forest, riparian forest and woodland, coastal sage scrub, and alluvial fan sage scrub. Invertebrate species diversity is very high, with over 2,500 species.

## NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT CULTURAL RESOURCES

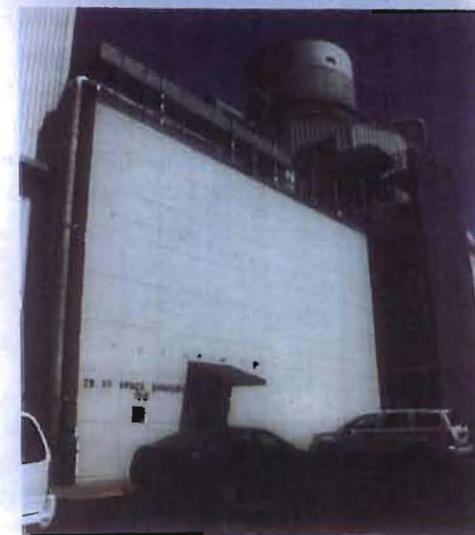
The Rim of the Valley Corridor study area contains nationally significant cultural resources including archeological sites and national historic landmarks related to cultural themes such as expanding science and technology, expressing cultural values, and development of the American economy.

- The collection of prehistoric and historic archeological sites related to over 10,000 years of human habitation is significant. More than 1000 known archeological sites exist within SMMNRA. Outside of SMMNRA over 500 sites have been evaluated. The potential for scientific identification and study of additional sites in the study area is high.
- Excellent examples of Chumash rock art are found within SMMNRA. The Saddle Rock Ranch Pictograph Site (NHL eligible), also known as the "Cave of the Four Horsemen," is a Native American rock art and settlement site located in the Santa Monica Mountains. It includes the only depictions in Chumash art of human figures in profile and of mounted horsemen.
- National historic landmarks (NHLs) within the study area have contributed major advances in science and technology including:
  - The Mount Wilson Observatory in the Angeles National Forest (NHL eligible) includes five historically significant telescopes which laid the technological foundation for all large modern telescopes.
  - The Space Flight Operations Facility (NHL) associated with the Jet Propulsion Laboratory near Pasadena has served as the primary NASA center for the unmanned exploration of the planets.
  - The Twenty five foot Simulator (NHL), also located on the campus of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, is the only NASA facility capable of producing high-quality space simulation for testing spacecraft under conditions of extreme cold; high vacuum; and intense, highly uniform, solar radiation.

- Well No. 4, Pico Canyon Oil Field (NHL) in the Santa Susana Mountains, was the first commercially successful oil well in California.
- Continued use of the Santa Monica Mountains for film production preserves a 75-year tradition that continues to hold the world's fascination. Paramount Ranch is held by some historians to be the nation's best remaining example of a film production facility from Hollywood's 'Golden Era' of Motion Pictures.
- The study area reflects a wide range of properties associated with significant examples of architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design. The Eames House (NHL) in Pacific Palisades is one of the few architectural works attributed to Charles Eames, and embodies many of the distinguishing characteristics and ideals of postwar Modernism in the United States. The Gamble House (NHL) is the most complete and best preserved example of the work of the architects Greene & Greene and embodies the highest level of the California Bungalow style associated with the Arts and Crafts movement of the early 20th century.
- The Pasadena Rose Bowl (NHL) is of outstanding significance in the field of recreation as the site of the oldest and most renowned post-season college football "bowl" game, held annually every New Year's in the Rose Bowl since the structure's completion in 1922.

### Potential National Significance – Additional Research and Analysis Needed

In addition to the nationally significant resources described above, there are cultural resources that may be nationally significant, but require more research and analysis beyond the scope of this study. Those resources include Chumash rock art and archeological sites outside of SMMNRA, Santa Susana Field Laboratory historic districts and properties, and the four-level interchange associated with the completion of the Arroyo Seco Parkway. The Butterfield Overland Trail also traverses the study area and is currently being evaluated through another NPS study which will determine its significance.



Top photo: The Space Flight Operations Facility (NHL) at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory continues to be used as the primary NASA center for unmanned space exploration. Bottom photo: The Twenty five foot Simulator (NHL) at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory is the only NASA facility capable of producing high quality space simulation for testing spacecraft. All photos NPS.



Top photo: Study area natural resources include some not represented in SMMNRA, such as native grasslands and oak woodland savanna. Bottom photo: Well No. 4, Pico Canyon Oil Field (NHL) was the first commercially successful oil well in California and represents a resource not currently represented in SMMNRA. Pictured is the two-story hotel erected in 1880 for use by the oil men. All photos NPS.

### **Suitability Findings - Could the area help fill a crucial gap in the national park system?**

An area is considered suitable for addition to the national park system if it represents a natural or cultural resource type that is not already adequately represented in the national park system, or is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by other federal agencies; tribal, state, or local governments; or the private sector.

Based upon evaluation of the study area resources and their relative quality, character, and rarity, the study area primarily contains nationally significant resources already represented in SMMNRA including geologic features used in the studies that confirmed the 90 degree rotation of the Transverse Ranges Province, paleontological resources, and habitat essential for wildlife movement. Conservation of these resources would expand and enhance the significance of SMMNRA and provide new opportunities for scientific study.

The study area also contains nationally significant natural and cultural resources that are not currently represented in SMMNRA or the broader national park system. In the San Gabriel Mountains this includes geologic diversity and excellent examples of alluvial fan sage scrub habitat. In the Simi Hills and Santa Susana Mountains examples of native grasslands, oak woodlands and savannas and national historic landmarks related to advancements in astronomy and space exploration, and the first commercially successful oil well in the west are not currently represented in the national park system.

### **Feasibility and Need for NPS Management Findings - Could the area be efficiently and effectively managed by the National Park Service?**

To be feasible as a new unit of the national park system, an area must be (1) of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure sustainable resource protection and visitor enjoyment (taking into account current and potential impacts from sources beyond proposed park boundaries), and (2) capable of efficient administration by the National Park Service (NPS) at a reasonable cost.

The NPS finds that the creation of a new national park unit is not feasible due to cost and operational efficiencies. Many of the significant resources within the study area expand on the national significance of SMMNRA and provide habitat connectivity essential for the long-term productivity of the significant resources within the Santa Monica Mountains thus warranting physical connection to the SMMNRA boundary and a seamless management approach. A separate unit would also be more costly than expanding existing park operations. The feasibility of a boundary adjustment to SMMNRA is discussed on the next page.

Because a new park unit is found not to be feasible, the need for direct NPS management of a park designation need not be evaluated.

### **Special Resource Study Criteria (New Park Unit) Preliminary Conclusion**

The NPS finds that the Rim of the Valley Corridor Study Area contains nationally significant resources suitable for inclusion in the national park system. However, the study area is found not to be feasible as a new national park unit (separate from SMMNRA). Inclusion of study area resources in a boundary adjustment to SMMNRA would be more cost effective and provide for greater operational efficiency (see boundary adjustment analysis).

## Boundary Adjustment Criteria (Additions to SMMNRA)

### Criteria Analysis

The NPS finds that the Rim of the Valley Corridor study area contains nationally significant resources. Boundary adjustments within the Rim of the Valley Corridor study area would provide more opportunities to ensure long-term protection of nationally significant plants and wildlife associated with SMMNRA and would expand public enjoyment opportunities for the Los Angeles metropolitan region. Two boundary adjustment alternatives are described in this newsletter; one emphasizes a boundary adjustment focused on enhancing opportunities to reach a broad range of urban audiences; while the other emphasizes protection of ecological connectivity.

### Feasibility and Need for Direct NPS Management Findings

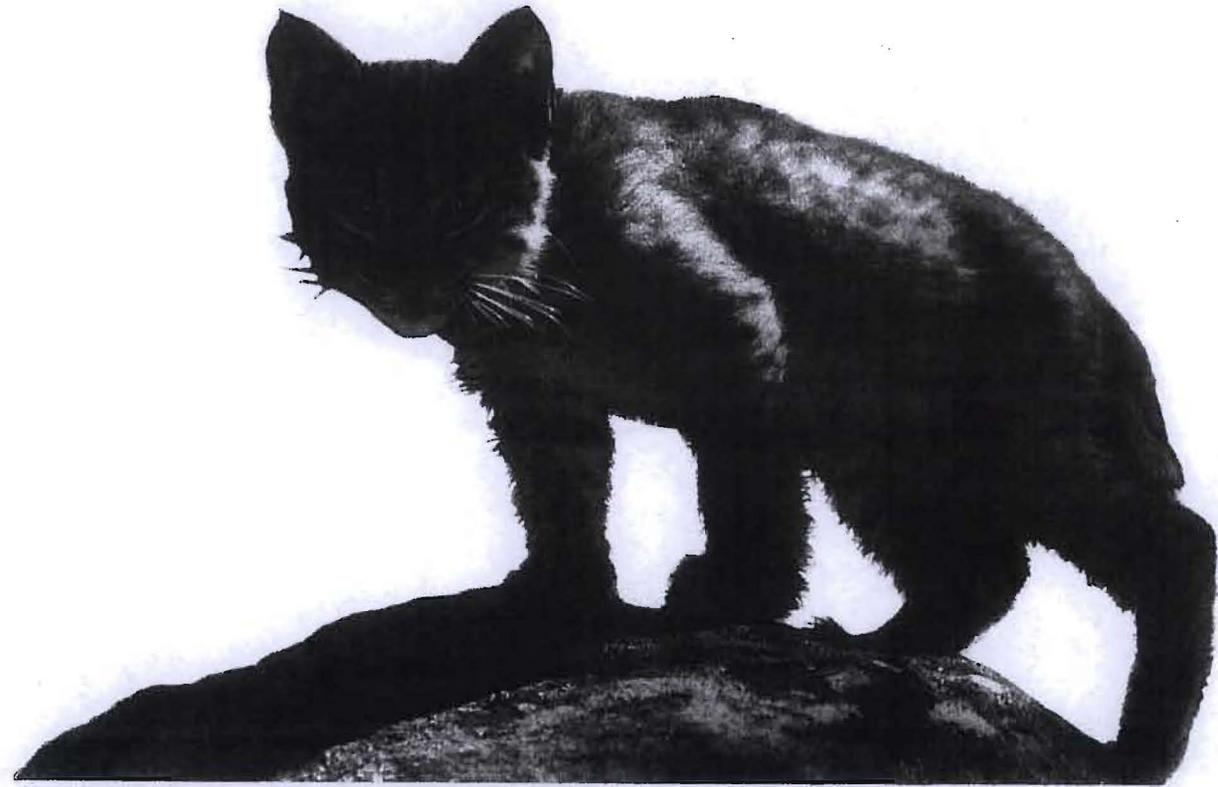
The NPS finds that an adjustment to the boundary of SMMNRA is feasible using the existing collaborative partnership-based park model exemplified by SMMNRA, which respects the complex mix of land use, ownership, and regulatory authorities. Through a boundary adjustment the NPS and partners would have enhanced opportunities for collaborative management with local, state and federal managers to protect natural and cultural resources, provide recreation, and offer interpretation and educational programs.

While some of the lands in the Rim of the Valley Corridor study area are protected for conservation and recreation by other land management agencies and conservation organizations, inclusion of additional areas in the SMMNRA boundary would provide the opportunity for interagency coordination to achieve recreation and conservation goals and provides the NPS with the authority to more fully invest in conservation, planning, and public enjoyment of the area. The NPS could enter into cooperative management agreements with existing agencies and seek funds for targeted land acquisition from willing sellers. The need for direct

NPS management is still being evaluated. Comments on the preliminary alternative concepts presented in this newsletter will help the NPS to make this determination.

### Boundary Adjustment Preliminary Conclusion

The NPS finds that the addition of lands in the study area to SMMNRA would contribute to protection of significant resources and expand opportunities for public enjoyment.



Boundary adjustments within the Rim of the Valley Corridor study area would provide more opportunities to ensure long-term protection of nationally significant plants and wildlife associated with the SMMNRA. Photo: NPS.

### Special Resource Study Preliminary Findings (New Park Unit)

<p><b>Significance:</b> Are there nationally significant resources in the study area?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The NPS determined that the remainder of the study area contains nationally significant resources, including outstanding examples of geologic resources, paleontological resources, biodiversity, as well as a culturally rich, long history of human use as evidenced by nationally significant cultural resources.</li> </ul>	Yes
<p><b>Suitability:</b> Could the area help fill a crucial gap in the national park system?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study area primarily contains nationally significant resources already represented in SMMNRA, a unit of the national park system</li> <li>Study area also contains suitable nationally significant resources (resources suitable for a new park unit) not currently represented in SMMNRA or the broader national park system.</li> </ul>	Partially
<p><b>Feasibility:</b> Could the area be efficiently and effectively managed by the National Park Service?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of a new national park unit is not feasible due to cost and operational efficiencies.</li> </ul>	No
<p><b>Need for Direct NPS Management:</b> Does the area require direct NPS management, instead of alternative protection by other public agencies or the private sector?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This criterion was not evaluated for consideration of a new park unit.</li> </ul>	Not applicable

### Boundary Adjustment Preliminary Findings (Additions to SMMNRA)

<p><b>Boundary Adjustment Evaluation:</b> Would portions of the Rim of the Valley Corridor study area protect significant resources, enhance opportunities for public enjoyment, address operation and management issues, or otherwise protect resources critical to fulfilling the purposes of SMMNRA?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boundary adjustments within the Rim of the Valley Corridor study area could: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provide more opportunities to ensure long-term protection of nationally significant resources associated with SMMNRA by expanding NPS opportunities to preserve ecological connectivity,</li> <li>provide an opportunity for the NPS to provide interpretation and education on natural and cultural themes not currently represented in the national park system, and</li> <li>expand recreational opportunities for Los Angeles area communities, some of which are currently deficient in access to parks and recreation.</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	Yes
<p><b>Feasibility:</b> Could portions of the study area be a feasible addition to SMMNRA?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consideration of a boundary adjustment to add portions of the study area to SMMNRA is feasible using the existing collaborative partnership-based park model exemplified by SMMNRA, which respects the complex mix of land use, ownership, and regulatory authority.</li> </ul>	Yes
<p><b>Need for Direct NPS Management:</b> Does the area require direct NPS management, instead of alternative protection by other public agencies or the private sector?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The need for direct NPS management is still being evaluated. Comments on the preliminary alternative concepts presented in this newsletter will help the NPS make this determination</li> </ul>	TBD

\* To be determined



# Introduction to the Preliminary Alternative Concepts

Coastal sage scrub and woodlands in the Santa Susana Mountains. Photo: NPS.

The preliminary alternative concepts presented in this newsletter were developed in cooperation with multiple land management agencies after an analysis of public comments, natural and cultural resource issues, and resource significance. These preliminary concepts illustrate different ways of providing protection and public enjoyment of resources that have been identified as potentially nationally significant through our draft analysis summarized on pages 5-10. The common focus of the preliminary alternatives is an emphasis on cooperative management of existing public lands. Based on the preliminary feasibility findings of the study, none of these alternative concepts includes a recommendation for a new national park unit. Each preliminary alternative concept could stand independently or components of different alternatives could be combined into new ideas. The concepts presented in this newsletter demonstrate a wide variety of solutions and serve as a starting point for discussion and public input.

Four different preliminary alternative concepts are included, the first of which is a “no action” alternative. In addition, three “action alternatives” present different approaches for management including boundary adjustments to SMMNRA and new partnership initiatives. Each of the action alternatives seeks to enhance the capabilities of existing agencies by leveraging resources, sharing information, and cooperative planning.

- **A: Continuation of Current Management:** This “no action” alternative focuses on existing management and authorities.
- **B: Cooperative Conservation Partnership:** This action alternative concentrates on partnership development to foster cooperative planning and funding tools to meet the demands of a growing urban population while meeting common resource protection goals.
- **C: Connecting Urban Communities: SMMNRA Boundary Adjustment:** This action alternative recommends a boundary adjustment for SMMNRA to provide more recreation opportunities and ecological connections with an

emphasis on creating better connections for a broad range of urban audiences including many who are under-represented in national parks and underserved by state and local parks.

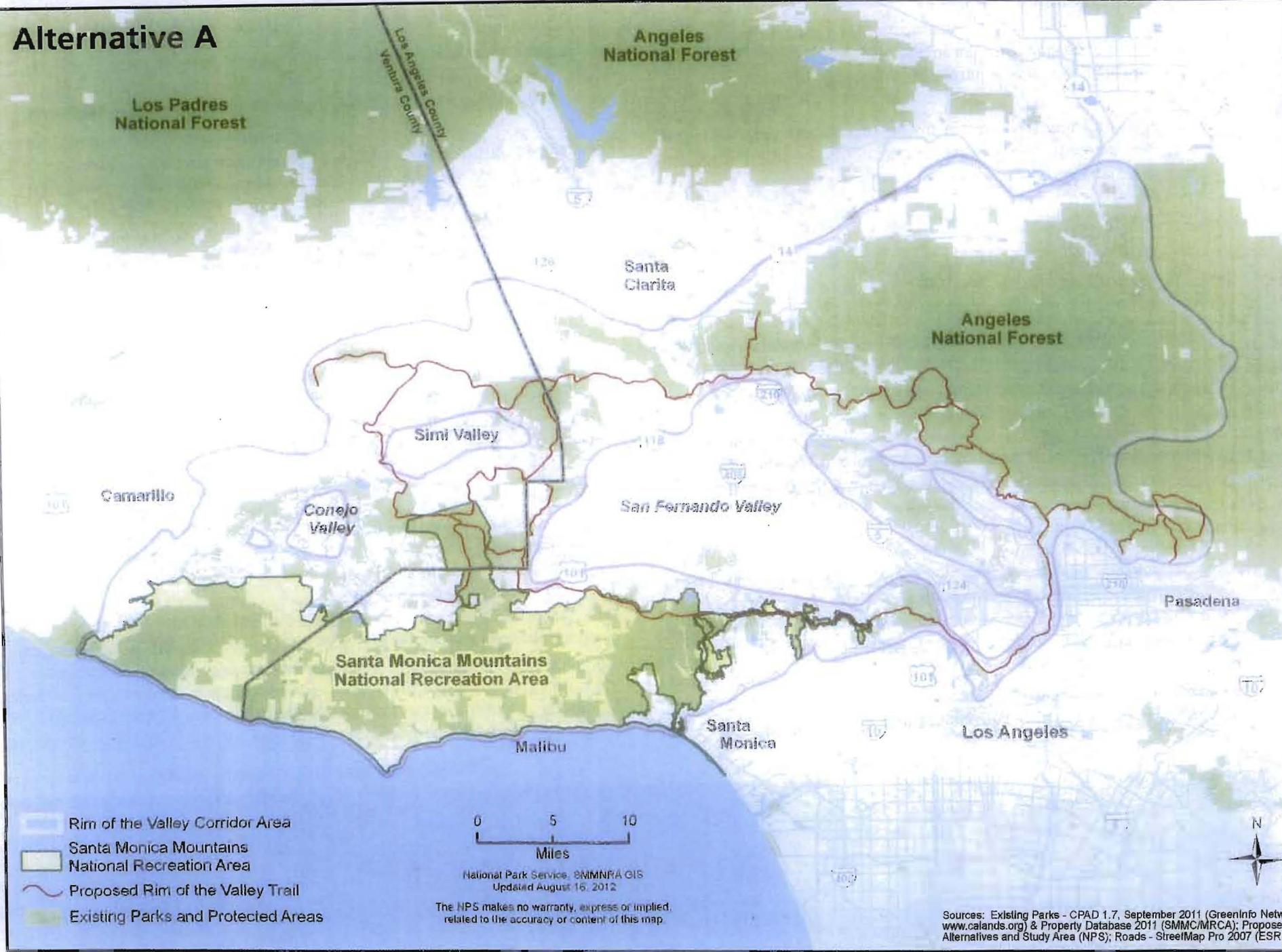
- **D: Connecting Natural Habitat: SMMNRA Boundary Adjustment:** This action alternative recommends a boundary adjustment for SMMNRA to encompass key land linkages and core habitats between SMMNRA, the Los Padres National Forest, the Angeles National Forest, and state and local habitat areas to promote long term resiliency of the natural resources within the existing SMMNRA boundary.

## Items Common to All Preliminary Action Alternatives

The preliminary alternative concepts include several actions that are common to all of them, including the following:

- The Angeles National Forest would continue to be managed by the USFS.
- NPS and the USFS would work cooperatively through the Service First authority on initiatives to protect resources and conduct public outreach.
- Boundary additions to SMMNRA would not establish additional regulatory authority or land use authorities over local governments included. NPS land management policies would only apply to lands that the NPS acquires.
- The NPS would support completion of the Rim of the Valley Trail through partnerships and technical assistance.
- SMMNRA would work with partners to develop a collaborative geographic database to support decision making in this area. Universities and other partners would be engaged to assist in building scientific knowledge to support decision-making.
- Once established, the Rim of the Valley Trail would be eligible for designation as a National Recreation Trail, through the existing application process, which is voluntary and initiated by trail managers.

# Alternative A



# Alternative A: Continuation of Current Management (No Action)

## Concept

The “no action” alternative is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to provide a baseline from which to compare alternatives. Under the no action alternative, the NPS would have no role in the study area beyond existing national park units (i.e. SMMNRA, Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail [NHT]) and existing financial and technical assistance programs such as Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant program, the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA), and the National Historic Landmark (NHL) program. This alternative assumes that the current programs and policies of existing federal, state, local and non-profit organizations would continue at existing levels and current conditions and trends would continue.

## Management

SMMNRA would continue to be managed according to its authorized purpose to protect and preserve the significant scenic, recreational, educational, scientific, natural, archeological, and public health benefits provided by the Santa Monica Mountains and adjacent coastline area for the residents of and visitors to the area. There would be no new NPS role in the Rim of the Valley Corridor area. Any NPS management activities in areas beyond the current park boundary would be limited to projects that further SMMNRA’s defined purpose. Otherwise, management of areas beyond the current park boundary would continue to be conducted by existing landowners and managers.

## Resource Management

The NPS would continue its existing resource management activities, partnering with stakeholders within the existing authorities of SMMNRA. State and local stakeholders would continue to have access to existing financial and technical assis-

tance programs such as Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant program, the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA), and the National Historic Landmark (NHL) program within the existing authorities and policies of these programs.

Resources would continue to be managed by existing federal, state, and local agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private property owners. Coordination among agencies to protect wildlife habitat and corridors would continue to occur on a case-by-case basis.

## Public Enjoyment

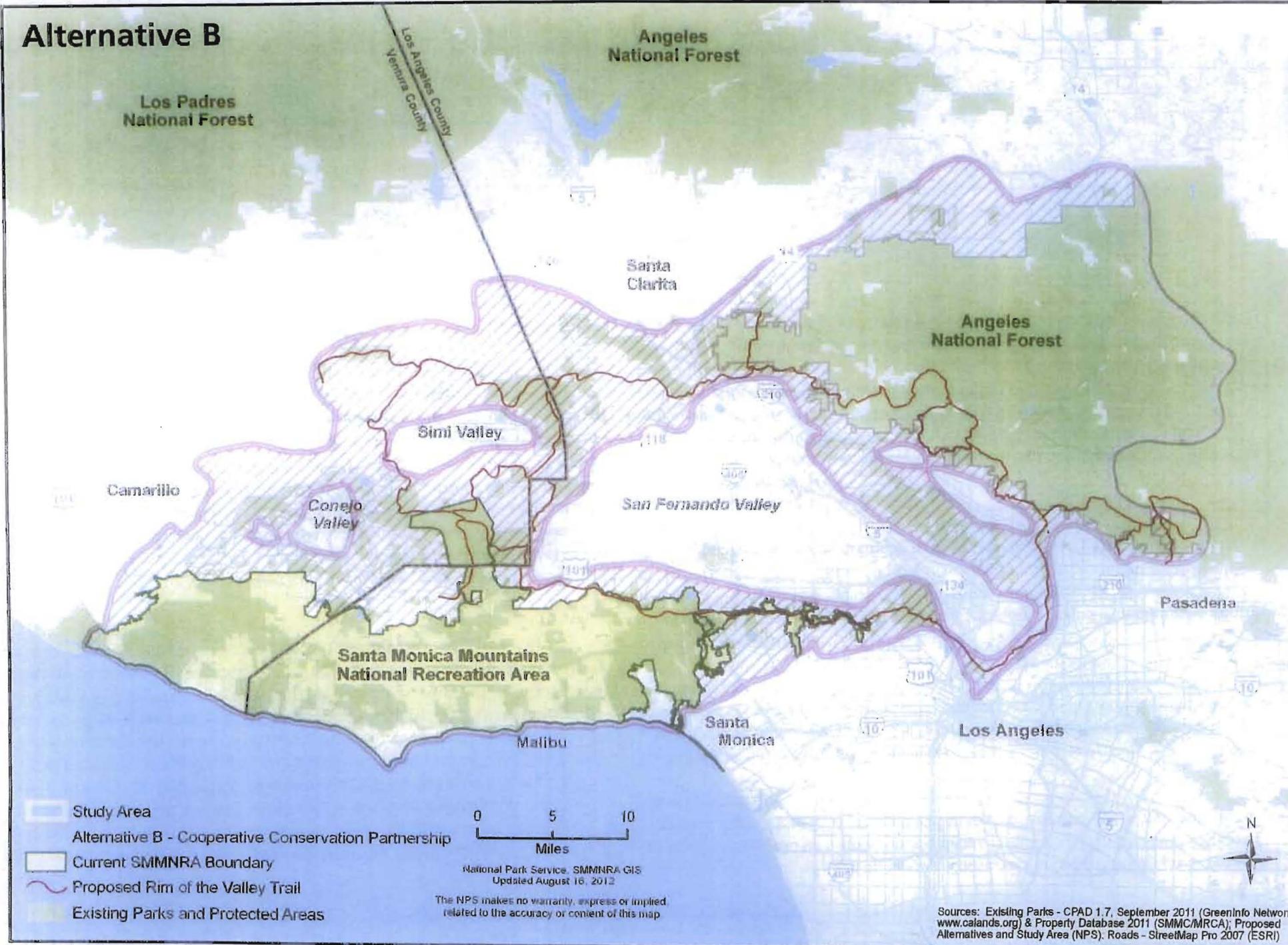
The NPS would continue current outreach and other related programmatic efforts to engage urban communities in the Rim of the Valley area. Existing agencies and organizations would continue to provide recreational opportunities for the public. Recreational access would continue to be limited for some portions of the study area.

## Rim of the Valley Trail

Various agencies and organizations would continue to develop proposed segments of the Rim of the Valley Trail. Accordingly, the NPS would continue to plan and implement portions of the trail that traverse park boundaries as funds become available. NPS technical assistance in completion of the full trail would be limited to existing technical assistance and grant programs. Once established, the Rim of the Valley Trail would be eligible for designation as a National Recreation Trail, through the existing application process, which is voluntary and initiated by trail managers.



# Alternative B



## Alternative B: Cooperative Conservation Partnership

### Concept

Congress would authorize SMMNRA to lead a partnership of public and private landowners, organizations, and institutions to protect and expand regional open spaces in the Rim of the Valley Corridor area. The geographic focus of the partnership would generally include the Rim of the Valley study area and wildlife corridors important for protection of SMMNRA's significant resources. The partnership would explore collaborative means for establishing an interconnected system of parks, habitats, and open spaces, connecting urban neighborhoods and surrounding mountains. The partnership would also collaborate to provide coordinated education and interpretation focused on connecting people to the special resources and stories in the Rim of the Valley Corridor area. There would be no new national park unit or boundary adjustment to SMMNRA.

### Management

Congressional authorization would specifically direct SMMNRA to take a lead effort in the development of a cooperative conservation plan for the Rim of the Valley Corridor area. The plan would identify mechanisms and strategies for the partnership to implement common goals and objectives. These would be executed by state and local government and private entities within the parameters of existing NPS authorities. The NPS would provide initial planning and administrative assistance for a specified term for completion of this coordinated management plan.

Following completion of the plan, SMMNRA would provide continuing technical assistance to the partnership on a more limited scale, including the development of interpretive and educational materials. Implementation of the plan would largely be completed by other agencies. The NPS would have no authority to acquire or manage lands outside of the existing SMMNRA boundary.

### Resource Management

The focus of natural resource protection would be protecting and enhancing habitat and connectivity between parks, habitat areas and open spaces. The partnership would also explore and make recommendations related to cultural resource protection and interpretation and would engage key educational and research institutions.

### Public Enjoyment

Engagement of citizens in resource protection through interpretation and citizen science would also be explored.

### Rim of the Valley Trail

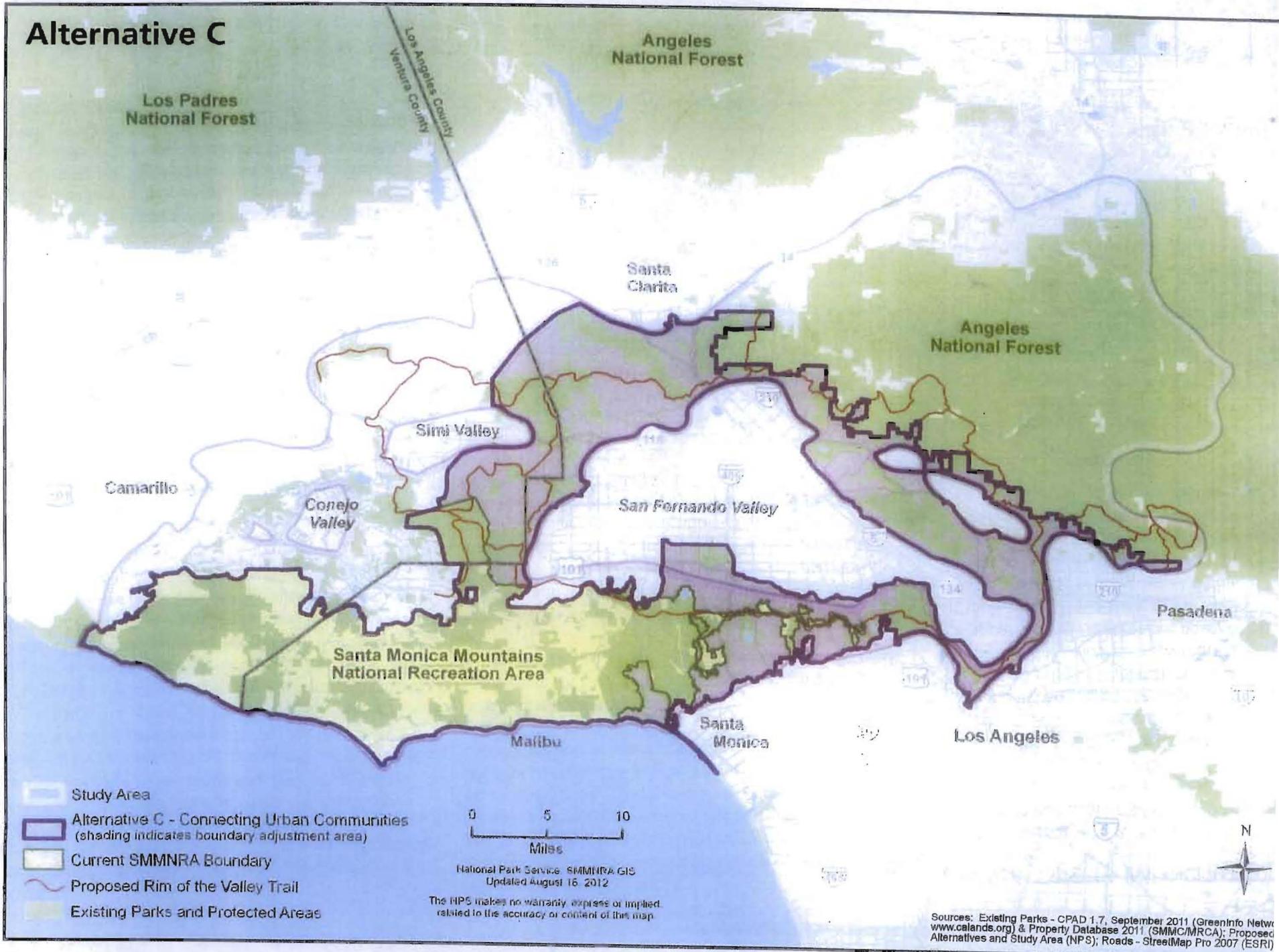
Planning and implementation of the trail would be supported by the NPS through technical assistance and partnership development. The trail would be owned and managed by partner agencies and organizations. The NPS would only own or manage segments of the Rim of the Valley Trail within the existing national recreation area.

### WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

This alternative would extend the current ability of SMMNRA and NPS to partner and coordinate with other land managers, landowners, and other stakeholders to establish an interconnected system of parks, habitats, and open spaces, connecting urban neighborhoods and surrounding mountains, without expanding the current boundary of SMMNRA. The organizations would also collaborate to provide coordinated education and interpretation focused on connecting people to the special resources and stories in the Rim of the Valley Corridor area.



# Alternative C



# Alternative C: Connecting Urban Parks - SMMNRA Boundary Adjustment

## Concept

This alternative recommends a boundary adjustment for SMMNRA to provide more recreational opportunities for a broad range of urban audiences, including many who are under-represented in national parks and underserved by state and local parks. SMMNRA would have the authority to manage the new area in the same manner as the existing NRA, in partnership with existing land management agencies and organizations. The boundary adjustment includes portions of the study area bordering the most populous areas of the Los Angeles region, including the mountains surrounding the San Fernando and La Crescenta Valleys, and the Los Angeles River and Arroyo Seco corridors. The boundary adjustment also includes Hansen Dam, Sepulveda Basin, Los Encinos State Park, Debs Park, and El Pueblo de Los Angeles City Monument, which would serve as major portals into the Rim of the Valley Corridor area for urban populations.

## Management

NPS management of the new area would emphasize expanded partnership efforts with California State Parks and other organizations focused on connecting people to the national recreation area through new recreational opportunities, outreach, educational and interpretive programs.

The NPS would also work collaboratively with public and private partners to protect significant resources. NPS land acquisition would continue to be completed in partnership with other agencies and organizations. NPS land acquisition would be small and targeted to significant resources and key recreational connections. The NPS would only consider purchase of land from willing sellers. In addition, the NPS would work cooperatively with conservation organizations and private landowners to undertake cooperative conservation efforts (easements, technical assistance, etc.) that do not require federal land acquisition.

## Resource Management

The resource protection focus for this alternative would be cultural resources and the Los Angeles River and its tributaries within urban areas. The NPS would facilitate the development of a network of cultural resource stakeholders including historical societies, institutions, and other organizations. This network would explore and make recommendations related to cultural resource protection and interpretation. Natural resource management would emphasize restoration and enhancement. The NPS would partner with stakeholders to develop a collaborative land protection program that includes cooperative planning tools and strategic land acquisition.

## Public Enjoyment

Interpretive themes would focus on interactions between human culture and the natural environment, including relationships between urban communities and the Rim of the Valley Corridor areas. With the Los Angeles River and its tributaries providing close-to-home physical, recreational connections, watershed interpretive themes would be emphasized. With a focus on engaging urban populations, the NPS would create a network of natural and cultural resource partners that would develop resource management programs to engage the public through citizen science, volunteer programs and interpretation. A major focus would be partnership development with existing nature centers and recreation facilities to facilitate access to the Rim of the Valley Corridor.

## Rim of the Valley Trail

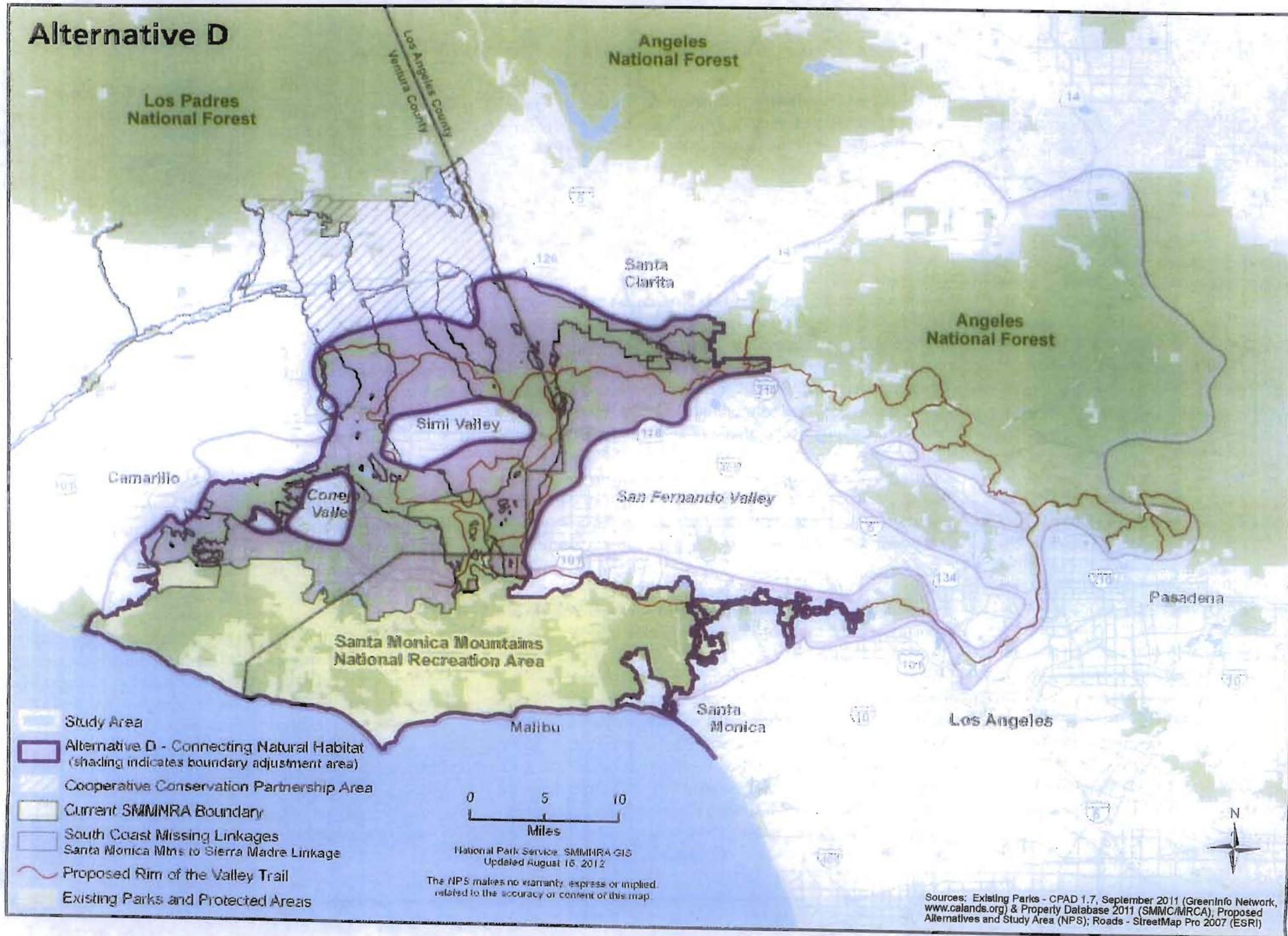
Planning and implementation of the entire Rim of the Valley Trail would be supported by the NPS through technical assistance and partnership development. The NPS could own or manage new segments of the Rim of the Valley Trail within the national recreation area. Outside of the national recreation area, the trail would be owned and managed by partner agencies and organizations.

## WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

The focus of this boundary adjustment would be providing more recreation opportunities with an emphasis on creating better connections and access for a broad range of urban audiences, including many who are under-represented in national parks and underserved by state and local parks. To best accomplish this, the alternative would focus on the portions of the study area that border the most populous areas of the Los Angeles region. With the second largest population in the US, the Los Angeles metropolitan region is home to approximately 17 million people. This alternative would provide more close-to-home opportunities for recreation and enjoyment of the study area's resources, while providing portals to national park experiences.



# Alternative D



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# Alternative D: Connecting Natural Habitat - SMMNRA Boundary Adjustment

## Concept

This alternative would adjust the boundary of SMMNRA to encompass key landscape linkages and core habitat areas that connect the large natural areas of SMMNRA, the Los Padres National Forest, the Angeles National Forest, and state and local habitat areas to promote long term resiliency of the natural resources within SMMNRA. SMMNRA would have the authority to manage the new area in the same manner as the existing NRA, in partnership with existing land management agencies and organizations.

These linkages would include habitat connections north of the Santa Susana Mountains to the southern boundary of the Los Padres National Forest and the connection from the eastern Santa Susana Mountains to the western boundary of the San Gabriel Mountains portion of the Angeles National Forest.

## Management

NPS management of the new area would emphasize collaborative partnerships focused on habitat connectivity. The NPS would work collaboratively with public and private partners to protect significant resources, expand public enjoyment opportunities, and provide interpretation and education about the area's resources.

NPS land acquisition would continue to be completed in partnership with other agencies and organizations. NPS land acquisition would be small and targeted to significant resources and ecological connectivity. The NPS would only consider purchase of land from willing sellers. The NPS would also work cooperatively with conservation organizations and private landowners to undertake cooperative conservation efforts that do not require federal land acquisition (easements, grants, technical assistance for best management practices, etc.). Universities and other partners would be engaged to

assist in building scientific knowledge to support decision-making.

To facilitate habitat connectivity between the Los Padres National Forest and the Rim of the Valley Corridor, the NPS would be authorized to engage in cooperative conservation partnerships with public and private landowners, organizations, and institutions to the north of the study area. Authorities would not include land acquisition or management.

## Resource Management

The primary focus of resource protection in this alternative would be natural resource protection and connectivity to promote long term resiliency of biological resources in the Rim of the Valley Corridor. Preserving connections between large habitat areas would help protect existing natural resources in SMMNRA by providing flexibility for migration and adaptation in response to periodic disturbance, such as large scale fire, and longer term environmental changes. While the emphasis would be on natural resources, a number of significant cultural resources would be included and protected within the boundary and would provide opportunities for interpretation and education around cultural resource themes.

## Public Enjoyment

The interpretive focus in this alternative would be the interaction between human culture and the natural environment, focusing on themes related to biodiversity. The NPS would provide technical assistance and other partnership and programmatic related roles to support trail and recreation efforts through existing authorities. The NPS would continue current outreach and other related programmatic efforts to engage urban communities in the Rim of the Valley area.

## Rim of the Valley Trail

Same as Alternative C.

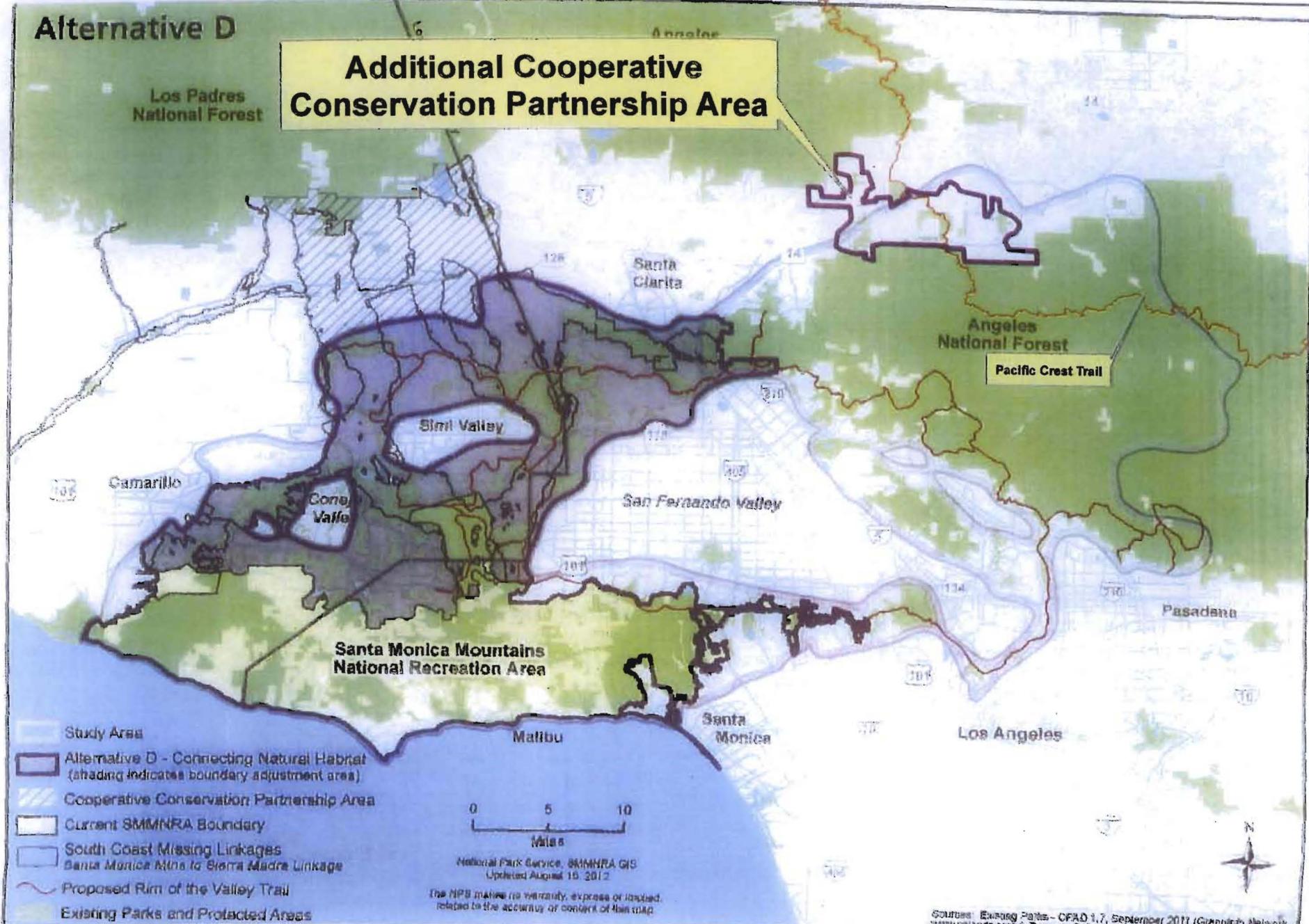
## WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

The focus of this boundary adjustment would be on including key landscape linkages and core habitat areas that connect the large natural areas of SMMNRA, the Los Padres National Forest, the Angeles National Forest, and state and local habitat areas. With ongoing habitat loss and fragmentation in the region, as well as the threats associated with disturbances such as large scale fire, these key linkages are critical for the long term survival of the natural resources within the existing SMMNRA boundary. Without functional landscape connections for migration, dispersal, and other ecological functions, some native species in the Santa Monica Mountains may cease to exist there in the future.



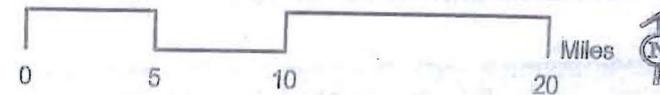
# Alternative D

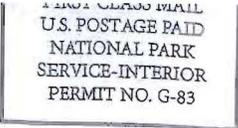
## Additional Cooperative Conservation Partnership Area



Agenda Item 12

SMMC  
12/3/12





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## Public Meeting Schedule

Check the study website for a full list of public meetings in the area as well as ways to engage in the study online. To receive up-to-date information about public meetings, please join our e-mail list by visiting: [www.nps.gov/pwro/rimofthevalley](http://www.nps.gov/pwro/rimofthevalley)

### Wednesday, November 7, 2012, 7 - 9 p.m.

Conejo Recreation and Parks District  
Community Room  
403 Hillcrest Dr.  
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360

### Thursday, November 8, 2012, 7 - 9 p.m.

George A. Carvalho Santa Clarita Sports Complex  
Activities Center Building  
20880 Centre Pointe Parkway  
Santa Clarita, CA 91350

### \*Tuesday, November 13, 2012, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Pacific Community Center  
501 S. Pacific Ave.  
Glendale, CA 91204

### Thursday, November 15, 2012, 7 - 9 p.m.

Mason Recreation Center  
10500 Mason Ave.  
Chatsworth, CA 91311

### Tuesday, November 27, 2012, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Encino Community Center - Women's Club  
4935 Balboa Blvd.  
Encino, CA 91316

### \*Thursday, November 29, 2012, 7 - 9 p.m.

Moorpark Community Center  
799 Moorpark Ave.  
Moorpark, CA 93021

### Saturday, December 1, 2012, 10 a.m. - noon

Eaton Canyon Nature Center  
1750 North Altadena Dr.  
Pasadena, CA 91107

*\*Habrá un traductor disponible para estas reuniones públicas.*



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

### Contact Information

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Los Angeles, CA 90065

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**Website:**  
<http://www.nps.gov/pwro/rimofthevalley>

**SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY**

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5750 RAMIREZ CANYON ROAD  
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PHONE (310) 589-3200  
FAX (310) 589-3207



December 3, 2012

Ann Dove, Project Manager  
National Park Service, RTCA  
570 West Avenue 26, Suite 175  
Los Angeles, California 90065

**Rim of the Valley Corridor Special Resources Study  
Comments on Preliminary Findings and Alternative Concepts**

Dear Ms. Dove:

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy offers the following comments on the recently released Preliminary Findings and Alternative Concepts for the National Park Service's Rim of the Valley Corridor Special Resources Study. The Conservancy concurs with the Study's broad depiction of new areas determined to be nationally significant because of unique cultural and natural resources that they contain.

The Conservancy's legislative boundary currently mirrors the Rim of the Valley Corridor Area shown in the Study's Alternative A. This agency's extensive experience in that area continues to support the importance of these new areas determined to be of national significance by your team.

The synergy allowed by the near-total overlap of the Conservancy's boundary with the existing Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area boundary has produced unprecedented levels of resource protection. Agency boundary overlap is a prerequisite to adequate resource protection in complex areas both adjacent to and within a metropolis. This level of success would clearly be duplicated within any, and all areas where the boundary of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA) is expanded. In addition, this level of resource protection can only be achieved with the option for National Park Service (NPS) property acquisition and management. Study Alternative B - Cooperative Conservation Partnership has merit but is inadequate without potential NPS property acquisition at a minimum.

The above proven synergy of agency boundary overlap works throughout the existing Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor Zone. Study Alternative C - also has strong merit but is inadequate because a vital resource protection partner (NPS) is eliminated from key areas in the western Santa Monica Mountains, the Simi Hills, Santa Susana Mountains, and San

**CC ATTACHMENT 2**

Rim of the Valley Corridor Special Resources Study  
Preliminary Findings and Alternative Concepts Comments  
December 5, 2012  
Page 2

Gabriel Mountains. The boundary of Alternative C artificially cuts off entire hill systems and halves of mountain ranges that are ecologically vital the existing SMMNRA. This alternative also eliminates all portions of the Rim of the Valley Corridor which contain the nationally significant Pacific Crest Trail.

Study Alternative D accomplishes much of what Alternative C does not provide in regards to preservation of whole geomorphological units and maintaining habitat connectivity. However, pulling a key potential agency partner out of the Verdugo Mountains, San Rafael Hills, Los Angeles River, San Gabriel Mountains, and Santa Clara River leaves scores of square miles of nationally significant area without an adequate agency team for resource protection.

Alternative D includes a vital element by encompassing a special Cooperative Conservation Partnership Area extending from the northern Rim of the Valley Corridor boundary in the Santa Susana Mountains to the Los Padres National Forest. This proposed partnership area not only completes connectivity between federal jurisdictions, it completes the critical Sierra Madre to Santa Susana inter-mountain range habitat linkage.

The only alternative that can provide adequate resource protection to all of the preliminarily determined areas of national significance is a new alternative that fully combines the area covered in Alternative D and in Alternative C. The Cooperative Conservation Partnership Area in Alternative D is fundamental to this new alternative. The attached Conservancy figure (super-imposed on Alternative D) also shows another vital Cooperative Conservation Partnership Area that should be added to the new alternative to connect the two portions of the Angeles National Forest in the Santa Clara River watershed. This addition would create seamless federal jurisdiction and complete the regional significant Angeles linkage inter-mountain range habitat linkage.

The quality, abundance, and broad distribution of nationally significant resources compiled by your team to date, all proximate to seven million people, warrant nothing less than the creation of this new geographically complete Study alternative described directly above.

Please address any future correspondence to Paul Edelman of our staff at the above address and by phone at (310) 589-3200 ext. 128.

Sincerely,

ELIZABETH A. CHEADLE

Chairperson