

Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL

DATE: November 23, 2009

THROUGH: LEGISLATIVE POLICY COMMITTEE (November 18, 2009)

FROM: CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: RESOLUTION SUPPORTING WILDERNESS AND WILD RIVER DESIGNATIONS FOR THE SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council adopt a resolution supporting wilderness and wild river designations for the San Gabriel Mountains.

RECREATION AND PARKS COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

At their regular meeting on September 15, 2009, the Recreation and Parks Commission voted to recommend the City Council adopt a resolution supporting congressional designation of additional wilderness areas in the San Gabriel Mountains (attachment).

BACKGROUND:

The Wilderness Act of 1964 defines that "a wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." (Public Law 88-577, 1964).

Only the United States Congress can add lands to the National Wilderness Preservation System. While land management agencies can make recommendations, Congress and the President have the final say on wilderness designations. Administrative action cannot designate new wilderness. Once land is designated as wilderness, it is given a specific boundary which may not be changed without another act of congress.

Prior to 2009, the Angeles National Forest contained three nationally-designated wilderness areas: the Cucamonga Wilderness (13,000 acres), the San Gabriel Wilderness (36,118 acres), and the Sheep Mountain Wilderness (44,000 acres). Two more areas, the Magic Mountain Wilderness (12,282 acres) and the Pleasant View Ridge Wilderness (26,757 acres) were added in March 2009 increasing the total wilderness designation for the Angeles National Forest to 132,000 acres.

The U.S. Forest service has been working since 2004 on a Land Management Plan recommending an additional 21, 414 acres in the Angeles Crest and San Bernardino National Forests be designated as wilderness. In addition, "San Gabriel Mountains Forever", a collection of local conservation and community groups, intends to ask Congress to designate an additional 9,100 acres as wilderness (attached map).

Most of the additional areas being recommended by the San Gabriel Mountains Forever group are currently designated by the Forest Service as "Back Country Non-Motorized." The Forest Service definition of this area is: Largely undeveloped, natural or natural appearing areas. The intensity of human use is low with the expectation for more user challenge and solitude. Motorized use is not allowed. Facilities, if any, are primitive. It is very similar to a wilderness area.

The uses allowed in wilderness areas, according to the San Gabriel Mountains Forever Group are: *"Any form of non-mechanized use is generally permitted, and motorized travel is allowed in cases of emergency. Wilderness areas are open to hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, outfitting and guiding, kayaking, canoeing, rafting, swimming, backpacking, horseback riding, pack trips, wheelchairs (including motorized wheelchairs), skiing, snow-shoeing, bird-watching, scientific research and nature study, control of fire and insect and debris outbreaks, livestock grazing, mining on pre-existing claims, and continued use, with reasonable access, of tracts of private or state land that may be within the boundaries of some wilderness areas.*

The uses not allowed are: *"road building, oil and gas drilling, logging, mechanical vehicles such as dirt bikes, off-road vehicles, mountain bikes, and snowmobiles (certain motorized wheelchairs are allowed), new mining claims, new reservoirs, power lines, pipelines."* Most of these prohibited uses are already prohibited by the Forest Service in the Back Country Non-motorized areas now. Therefore, the Forest Service would not manage the area substantially differently with the new designation, and the use by the public would not alter substantially with the new designations.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE:

This item is consistent with intent of the City's Urban Environmental Accord that calls for the Habitat Protection UEA 12.

FISCAL IMPACT:

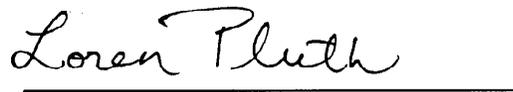
There is no fiscal impact for this resolution.

Respectfully Submitted,



MICHAEL J. BECK
City Manager

Prepared by:



Loren Pluth, Project Manager

Approved by:



Martin Pastucha, Director
Department of Public Works

Resolution No: _____

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PASADENA
SUPPORTING WILDERNESS AND WILD RIVER DESIGNATIONS FOR THE
SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS**

WHEREAS, it is in the interest of the City of Pasadena to seek preservation of nearby open space and wilderness areas outside the boundaries of the City for the protection of the region's mountain vistas, air quality, water quality, places for solitude, and vast recreation opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the Wilderness Society and the "San Gabriel Mountains Forever," an alliance of community groups, faith leaders, conservation groups, local businesses, and individuals, seeks to increase wilderness areas and improve recreational opportunities in the San Gabriel Mountains; and

WHEREAS, "wilderness" designations have shown by many studies to increase property values and attract new residents, thereby generating substantial economic benefits for nearby communities through local employment and tax revenue; and

WHEREAS, "wilderness" and "wild rivers" designations would protect areas that encompass steep mountains, winding canyons, free flowing rivers, and rugged desert landscapes, including the proposed Sheep Mountain, Cucamonga, and San Gabriel wilderness additions and eligible wild and scenic rivers; and

WHEREAS, protected public lands would provide local residents and visitors with opportunities for many recreational activities including hiking, horseback riding, rock climbing, photography, camping, orienteering, wildlife viewing, scientific research, and nature study.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City Council of Pasadena respectfully requests that Congress designate new "wilderness" and "wild and scenic rivers" areas in the San Gabriel Mountains and provide for the expansion of recreational opportunities to promote public health and to achieve other benefits to the public as set forth in this Resolution.

Adopted at the regular meeting of the City Council on the ____ day of _____, 20____, by the following vote:

Ayes _____

Noes _____

Absent _____

Abstain _____

Mark Jomsky, CMC

Approved as to form:



Nicholas George Rodriguez
Assistant City Attorney