

Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act

Sponsors: Rep. Adam Schiff and Sen. Barbara Boxer

Background

In 2008, Congress passed the Rim of the Valley Corridor Study Act, introduced by Congressman Adam Schiff. This bill directed the National Park Service (NPS) to conduct a special resource study of the Rim of the Valley Corridor, which generally includes the mountains encircling the San Fernando, La Crescenta, Santa Clarita, Simi, and Conejo Valleys. The study sought to determine the suitability and feasibility of designating all or a portion of the Rim of the Valley Corridor as a unit of the existing Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA), and how these areas could be protected and utilized by the local communities.

The National Park Service began the study in 2010 and transmitted its final report to Congress and the public in February 2016. In this report, the NPS recommended more than doubling the size of the existing recreation area to include a very significant portion of the Rim of the Valley study area. Throughout the process, both NPS and Congressman Schiff solicited and considered comments from the public.

What does the bill do?

The bill expands the SMMNRA to include many, but not all, of the lands included in the study. The lands included within the expansion will be known as the Rim of the Valley Unit. The bill will enable NPS and the local community to better protect natural resources and habitats, and provide members of the community with improved access to nature for recreational and educational purposes.

It will provide NPS with the authority to:

- Implement capital improvements (i.e. trails, roads, facilities for public enjoyment)
- Monitor and study wildlife and ecosystems
- Participate in cooperative conservation and recreation planning
- Coordinate jointly-managed programs with non-federal land management partners
- Provide technical assistance for resource protection and recreation planning
- Contribute financially to projects that protect important natural resources
- Acquire land through donation, exchange, or purchase from willing sellers
- Directly manage NPS-owned lands

The expansion of the SMMNRA boundaries respects private property rights and existing local land use authorities. It will not require a land owner to participate in any conservation or recreation activities, and it will not put any additional restrictions on property owners. The bill does not allow for land acquisition through eminent domain.

Quick Facts

- The existing SMMNRA is approximately 153,000 acres
- The Rim of the Valley Unit would add approximately 193,000 acres to the SMMNRA
- Much of Los Angeles County is considered to be park-poor, with 51% of residents living more than a half mile from the nearest park, many of which are difficult to access or in disrepair
- 47% of Californians (6% of U.S.) live within 2 hours of the study area
- The expansion does not include any lands within the Angeles National Forest administrative boundary
- The expansion excludes oil and gas activities
- The Rim of the Valley Unit would include habitat for iconic wildlife such as the mountain lion, bobcat, fox, badger, coyote and deer, as well as endangered species such as the California red-legged frog
- The LA River, a historic waterway within the expansion, has the potential to transform urban life in Los Angeles by significantly expanding access to parks and open space in some of the most densely populated areas of the region
- El Pueblo de Los Angeles, the birthplace of the City and one of the significant cultural treasures in the region, is also included
- In 2015, SMMNRA served over 13,200 students from schools throughout LA and Ventura County through its “Parks as Classrooms” programs. An expanded recreation area could reach a larger population of students.