



April 2, 2019

Congressmember Deb Haaland, Chair
Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
1324 Longworth House Office
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support the Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act (HR 1708)

Dear Honorable Deb Haaland and Members of the Committee,

We urge your committee to fully support the Rim of the Valley Corridor Protection Act (HR 1708). The bill would expand the boundary of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area ("SMMNRA") to encompass 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 region's natural resources

The bill establishes a framework for the National Park Service to work collaboratively with public and private partners to protect significant resources, expand outdoor recreation opportunities, provide interpretation and education about the area's resources, and further improve habitat within the boundary of the Rim of the Valley Corridor through land acquisition.

The boundary proposed by HR 1708 includes ecologically important federal lands managed by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service (the Los Padres National Forest), and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge). These lands have long been recognized as a key to securing habitat connectivity for our region. Most of the expansion area is in an area known as the Santa Monica-Sierra Madre Wildlife Linkage, one of the few coastal-to-inland linkages remaining in the South Coast.

The Valley Corridor Preservation Act would compound the potency and efficacy of the Habitat Connectivity and Wildlife Movement Corridor Ordinance passed by the Ventura County Supervisors on March 12, 2019, which protects wildlife corridors between the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and Los Padres and other important open space in Ventura County, received widespread support in the form of nearly 800 letters written by area residents, and letters signed by 15 local and national businesses and 40 environmental and conservation organizations.

Protecting habitat connectivity between the Los Padres National Forest, Angeles National Forest, and the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area will maintain and enhance the ecological health of all three areas, help guard against periodic disturbances such as large-scale wildfires that are characteristic of this area, as well as improve resiliency to climate change. These benefits are particularly critical for wide-ranging wildlife such as mountain lions and California condors, and may provide the only hope that these iconic species and others will survive to be wondered at by future generations of Americans.

The bill would also enhance ongoing and future conservation efforts for the Santa Clara River, which flows through the middle of the expansion area, one of only two natural river systems remaining in southern California.

Each of these resources would benefit tremendously from the supplemental oversight and coordination afforded by the Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act. We urge you to support this bill for the many benefits it provides to our region's wildlife and residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Kuyper". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jeff S. Kuyper, Executive Director
Los Padres ForestWatch
P.O. Box 831
Santa Barbara, CA 93103