



April 10, 2019

The Honorable Rep. Raul M. Grijalva, Chairman  
House Committee on Natural Resources  
1324 Longworth Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Budget Hearings for US Forest Service & San Gabriel Mountains National Monument

Dear Chairman Grijalva:

Nature for All is a coalition of 11 organizations working to build a diverse base of support for ensuring that everyone in the Los Angeles area – no matter where they live – has equitable access to the wide range of benefits that nature can provide. Nature for All is best known as the leading community group that built support for the designation of the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument in 2014. For more than a decade, Nature for All has been advocating for policies and programs to protect the mountains, rivers and parks in our area, create more natural spaces, and connect people to public lands. We bring together local, state and national organizations to develop ethnically diverse leaders who advocate for policies and programs to positively impact our historically-underserved communities.

Our coalition has been working on improving the conditions in the San Gabriel Mountains for over 10 years. Leading up to the designation of a portion of the Mountains as a National Monument we mobilized over ten thousand advocates for improvements to visitor services. Since the designation we have worked to secure private philanthropy investments in this unit of the Forest Services in the millions. Further, through the efforts of countless volunteers we have contributed thousands of volunteer hours to trash clean ups, transit to trails programs, restoration and beautification projects. We understand that there are limitations to what government can do when it comes to budgeting for our public lands and have worked diligently to secure matching funds and resources. However, when the local staff is so stretched that it cannot even keep up with the requests to provide volunteer services or work on local and state grants to make improvements to the forest, there is a serious problem.

We are writing to request funding for the US Forest Service 2019-2020 budget to meet the high priority needs identified in the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument (SGMNM) and the Amended Angeles National Forest (ANF) Forest Management Plan which will be released in the near future. After more than three years of work, the Amended Forest Management Plan provides the framework by which the USFS protects and promotes the unique resources present in the Monument. Nature for All participated throughout the preparation of the plan and was instrumental in bringing forward the perspectives of current and future forest visitors and the vast numbers of communities of color who have yet to experience the beauty and majesty of the San Gabriel Mountains.


The attached pictures depict some of the challenges experienced in the Forest. *We commend the work of dedicated Angeles Forest staff*, however with limited resources to adequately serve the vast numbers of current users they are overwhelmed. Visitation to the San Gabriel Mountains surpasses the annual visitation to Yosemite National Park with a **vast** and more appropriate differential in the number of staff providing visitor services and protecting natural resources. Adequate funding levels are essential to completing specific projects that implement the vision of the Monument Management Plan to deliver real value to the Forest and neighboring communities. Natural resource management has historically been underfunded at the federal, state and local level. However, we are convinced that investments in basic park visitor services mitigates other costs by providing places where people can improve both mental and physical health thereby reducing health care costs. Investments in even a slight increase in natural resource management that reduce negative impacts to habitat and ecosystem services have been proven to result in a more resilient forest which can help decrease the impacts of climate change.

Therefore, we urge your consideration of an increase in the recommended funding for the Angeles National Forest which constitutes 70% of the open space in Los Angeles County and serves more than 17 Million people who live in the greater Los Angeles region where at least 40% of the population is considered to be “disadvantaged”. Thank you for your consideration and Nature for All remains committed to working with our federal partners to improve the quality of visitor experiences and protection of natural resources in our local forest.

Sincerely,



Belinda Faustinos, Executive Director



Roberto Morales, Chair

## Angeles National Forest / San Gabriel Mountains National Monument

*"America's most urban national forest in the nation's most populous county," yet "budget cuts have forced the Forest Service to cut back on recreation and maintenance" - [Los Angeles Times](#), April 19, 2018*



The East Fork of the San Gabriel River on a typical weekend. With little budget, the Forest Service is unable to keep up with overflowing trash cans, vehicles, unsafe access points, and constructed rock pools which impact wildlife.