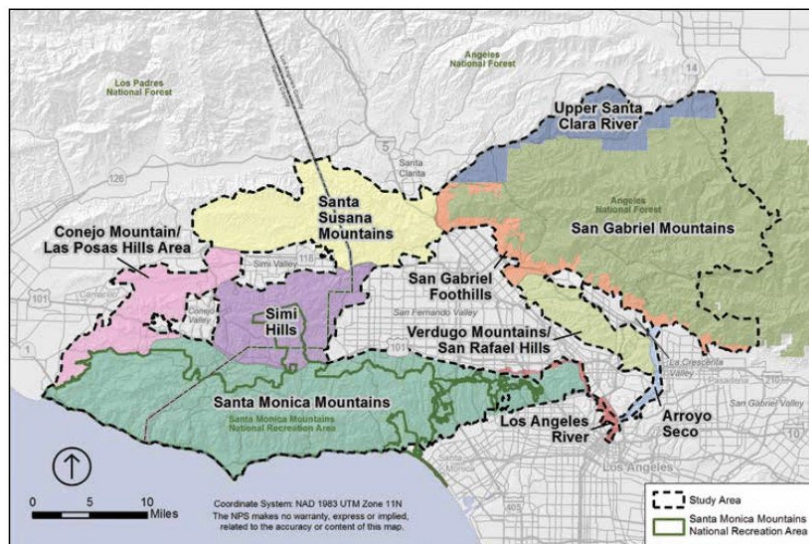


Los Angeles Equine Advisory Committee

Request Community Impact Statements
supporting City Council File 24-0002-S14
supporting federal legislation for
RIM OF THE VALLEY CORRIDOR PRESERVATION ACT.



LA Times Article by Jaclyn Cosgrove for “The Wild” October 31, 2024
I toured LA’s Rim of the Valley by plane. Here’s why we need to protect It.

As our small plane flew over the San Fernando Valley, I was in awe of just how remarkable and diverse the region’s wild lands are.

I smiled remembering all the hikes I’ve taken in this area, also known as the Rim of the Valley Corridor. I’ve huffed and puffed up the steep Verdugo Mountains on the eastern side of the Valley, playing on

boulders in the Simi Hills and Santa Susana Mountains. I've stood in awe of ocean views from high above in the Santa Monica Mountains.

But the biggest take away from that flight – hosted by nonprofits National Parks Conservation Association and EcoFlight – was just how developed the area *around* the Rim of the Valley is. When I joined the group for a tour of the region on October 22, I saw thousands of homes (including a mansion with a Lakers-themed basketball court) and businesses drawing ever nearer to the foothills of our local ranges. It was witnessing that creeping urban sprawl from thousands of feet up that helped me see and understand why advocates are urging legislators to protect it.

For decades environmental activists and elected officials have tried to pass legislation that would add thousands of acres of the Rim of the Valley Corridor to the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

The concept was originally imagined by Marge Feinberg in the mid 1970's when she proposed a green-belt in her CSUN Master's thesis. Feinberg wanted to see a trail system that connected the entire valley allowing you to hike 200 miles around the area

Rim of the Valley Corridor is generally said to include the mountains that encircle the San Fernando, La Crescenta, Santa Clarita, Simi and Conejo valleys. It includes the L.A. River and Arroyo Seco as well as existing parks, including Griffith Park and its Hollywood Sign.

In 1990, Republican Governor George Deukmejian green-lighted the completion of a master plan for Rim of the Valley trail corridor, but that didn't result in widespread action.

During the George W. Bush administration, Congress financed a study of Rim of the Valley, which the National Park Service completed in 2016 after holding several meetings and receiving dozens of comments. Bills introduced to create the Rim of the Valley Corridor Preservation Act have been introduced but never passed by both the House and Senate.

The latest effort, primarily driven by a Senate Bill would protect 118,000 acres of the Rim of the Valley's native grasslands, coastal sage scrub, forests and more.

Local parks, including Ernest E. Debs Regional Park, Griffith Park and El Pueblo de Los Angeles, likely would be included and serve as hubs of the Rim of the Valley park area.

Any land that was zoned residential or commercial, or that was already developed for those purposes, was removed from the proposal.

“Really, what's left is open space already protected at the local level,” said Dennis Arguelles, a senior program manager in the National Parks Conservation Assn.'s L. A. field office.

So, then what's the point of federal legislation?

Adding the rim of the Valley corridor to the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area would allow the National Parks Service to offer its resources to local government agencies. If a local Park within the Rim of the Valley land wanted to restore native habitat, its staff could consult with biologists, botanists and other experts who work for the National Park Service at no cost.

The National Park Service also could invest in ongoing restoration projects of local wetlands, watersheds and coastline, including the L.A. River, Arroyo Seco and Tujunga Wash.

The proposed bill also would enable the National Park Service to spend money on trail maintenance. With that ability, the National Park Service could offer its support (and muscle) to work with counties and cities to create an interconnected 200-mile trail system, making the late Feinberg's dream a reality. Once

completed, it could be designated as a national recreation trail – a remarkable thing to have in the heart of L.A. County, especially for outdoor explorers like us Wilders.

Connecting the land could help us protect wildlife. The National Park Service could coordinate with local and state government agencies and non-profit groups to ensure mountain lions, bears and other local critters can safely move among mountain ranges.

The National Park Service could hire local transportation agencies to improve access to parks. Many areas of L.A. remain “park poor,” activists say and millions of residents don’t have parks within a half-mile of their homes.

The Rim of the Valley land also includes areas that are culturally significant to local tribes and other historic sites, but overall its land is not well documented. The National Park Service would work with researchers to identify and protect these places.

If the law is passed the National Park Service would be able to buy land that’s a priority to conserve from willing sellers. So, this wouldn’t be some sort of eminent domain situation.

And, in terms of public land included in the Rim of the Valley corridor, current land managers – whether that be the City of L.A., the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority or other local agencies or cities – would continue to operate and manage their land, facilities, rivers and other bodies of water. The National Park Service’s role would be to establish management agreements with these agencies and jurisdictions to share its staff, facilities and money, which would make it easier to collaborate. (No one wants the environmental equivalent of a college group project where just one person makes the slideshow.)

In its current iteration, the Rim of the Valley bill is supported by several groups, including the nonpartisan National Parks Conservation Association., Las Virgines Homeowners Federation, multiple Audubon Society and Sierra Club local chapters and the Chinese American Citizens Alliance (Los Angeles). Several local jurisdictions whose land would be included in the Rim of the Valley corridor – including L.A. and Ventura County, Santa Clarita and Glendale – support current efforts to develop the corridor.

Advocates hope that the Senate bill will be attached as an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act, which has worked for other causes.

Whether it passes in the lame-duck session of Congress will depend, like all the times before, on whether there is finally political will to get this done. Lawmakers have said they’d like to move quickly to push through the defense act, a must-pass piece of legislation by the end of November.

To lend your support to the Rim of the Valley Corridor, contact your Representatives in Congress and request their support for Senate Bill 1466 and House Bills 5881 and 2887, which all apply to Rim of the Valley. You can learn more about getting involved at npca.org.