

The Honorable Salud Carbajal
Representative for California's 24th Congressional District

Remarks/Testimony Prepared for the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forest and Public Lands
July 10, 2019

RE: H.R. 2199, the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act

Thank you Chair Grijalva, Chair Haaland, Ranking Member Bishop, and Ranking Member Young, for the opportunity to testify before this subcommittee in support of my legislation, H.R. 2199—the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act.

I also want to extend my gratitude to Graciela Cabello, who traveled from Santa Barbara, California to be here today to discuss the community's support for this measure.

I am humbled to represent the Central Coast of California—one of the most beautiful districts in the nation.

It encompasses the entirety of Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties as well as portions of Ventura County.

It includes hidden treasures like the Channel Islands National Park and Marine Sanctuary, the Los Padres

National Forest, and the Carrizo Plain National Monument.

They contain some of the most stunning and diverse ecosystems found anywhere in North America.

The Los Padres National Forest provides habitat for some 468 species of wildlife, including the endangered California condor and the southern steelhead.

The Carrizo Plain National Monument contains one of the highest concentrations of protected species in the lower 48 states and is home to incredible plant and animal life, such as the majestic Tule elk.

These public lands protect an invaluable watershed—providing much-needed water resources for nearby communities.

H.R. 2199, the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act would designate nearly 250,000 acres of public land within the Los Padres National Forest and the Carrizo Plain National Monument as wilderness areas.

It also creates a 400-mile long Condor National Recreation trail, stretching from Los Angeles to Monterey County.

As many of you know, a wilderness designation is one of the highest forms of protection we can provide, as policymakers, for public lands.

This would protect the ecological beauty, the abundant natural resources, and recreational activities available to communities in my district.

We know that our nation's public lands are a cherished aspect of our outdoor heritage.

They are an essential asset to our local tourism economy.

In California, the outdoor recreation economy is worth about \$92 billion dollars and employs over 650,000 individuals.

In 2017 the Carrizo Plain—often referred to as “California’s Serengeti”—made international headlines due to its spectacular super bloom.

The Bureau of Land Management logged a record number of 14,000 visitors in April 2017 due to this phenomenon.

Protecting our public lands and outdoor economy is especially important as the current Administration continues to take action to open up public lands and national monuments to oil interests.

Just last year, the Bureau of Land Management approved a new oil well and pipeline inside the Carrizo Plain National Monument.

Most recently, the Bureau of Land Management proposed a plan for increased oil and gas lease sales on 1.6 million acres of land within the area.

As policymakers, we have a responsibility to protect these special places for future generations.

Holding this hearing on the Central Coast Heritage Protection Act is a step in the right direction.

I will work with my colleagues and continue fighting to protect our open spaces.

We must push this measure across the finish line.

Thank you again for the opportunity to support my legislation, H.R. 2199.