

Statement of Robert García
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Before the House Committees on Natural Resources, Veterans' Affairs, and Small Business
Forum on
The Implications of President Trump's Executive Order on National Monuments

June 8, 2017

Ranking Members Grijalva, Velasquez, Waltz, and Members of the Committees Natural Resources, Veterans' Affairs, and Small Business. Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today. I am a civil rights attorney and Founding Director-Counsel of The City Project, a non-profit legal and policy advocacy team based in Los Angeles, California. The City Project is proud to work with the Next 100 Coalition to diversify access to and support for public lands and waters; GreenLatinos, a national network of conservation and environmental justice advocates; and San Gabriel Mountains Forever Coalition to support national monuments and the Antiquities Act. I serve on the official Community Collaborative regarding the forthcoming U.S. Forest Service Management Plan for the San Gabriels Mountain National Monument.

Withdraw Monument Review

After the administration's executive order calling for a review of national monuments designated since 1996, the Department of the Interior released a list of 27 national monuments that could be scaled back or even eliminated. While this entire process stands on shaky legal ground, the list targets seven monuments in California: the San Gabriel Mountains, Sand to Snow, Mojave Trails, Berryessa Snow Mountain, Giant Sequoia, Carrizo Plain and Cascade Siskiyou National Monuments. This administration is using false rhetoric, attempting to drive a wedge between people across the country, using a tool that is much better suited to uniting us – our shared public lands and cultural monuments. The executive order is a monumental mistake and all of our national monuments should be preserved and protected. The executive order should be withdrawn and the Department of Interior should cease and desist from the review.

Support the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the greater Los Angeles area and the foothills of the beautiful San Gabriel Mountains. We heard the familiar rhetoric about “overreach” and “land grabs by the federal government” just before the designation of the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument. The truth is, the San Gabriel Mountains Forever coalition has worked for more than a decade to earn local support for the national monument. Following that designation, the official Community Collaborative has worked with the U.S. Forest Service for three years developing the monument's management plan. There has been no lack of outreach or communication with local communities on this monument designation and their needs have been considered from the start and in the continuing management plan process.

“We were able to come up with a document that we can all support, which is the first time this has been done when a national monument has been designated to serve the recreational needs of

such a large, urban population,” said Liz Reilly, City of Duarte councilwoman, and a member of the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments.

The National Monument serves 15 million residents in the Los Angeles basin, the nation’s second largest urban center. The Monument includes 346,177 acres of the Angeles National Forest, and 4,030 acres of neighboring San Bernardino National Forest. Monument designation calls for protecting Native American rock art and other cultural and historical objects, public access, public engagement, transportation and education programs including for example Transit to Trails and Every Kid in a Park, and natural resource protection. The Monument holds evidence of more than 8,000 years of human history, including more than 600 archeological sites. The area, boasting more than 4 million visits per year, hosts year-round recreational activities, including hiking, cross-country skiing, nature viewing, picnicking, water activities, camping, horseback riding and hunting. The San Gabriel Mountains also are working lands that provide Angeleños 70 percent of their available open space and 30 percent of their drinking water.

Los Angeles County is park poor, especially for low income children and children of color. This contributes to related health inequities, including obesity, diabetes, asthma, stress, and other disorders. The Monument promotes equal access to parks, waters, recreation, climate justice, health equity, quality jobs, and education.

Diverse allies oppose this review of the Monument. This includes civil rights groups, public health and social justice advocates, Native Americans, youth leaders, conservation groups, local governments, gun owners, hunters, hikers, cabin owners, off-road vehicle users, and businesses support the Monument. These diverse stakeholders and local communities are united in their support for the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument based on shared values that bring us together as a nation.

Celebrate the Values at Stake

President Barack Obama listened to the people when he dedicated the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument in 2014. The President recognized the need for a place where everyone — especially children of color and low-income people — can engage in healthy active recreation, learn about diverse cultures and the environment, and experience wildlife, rivers, streams, and forests that provide us with clean air, water, and habitat protection. The San Gabriels National Monument is a win for fun, healthy, educational recreation; social justice; jobs and economic vitality including youth apprenticeships and careers as stewards of the earth and her people, and contracts for women, minority, and business enterprises; and environmental justice, including climate justice.

Now, this administration is going back more than 20 years in search of ways to cut, shrink, or remove national monuments. This review denigrates the work that brought diverse people together in support of the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument. The story is repeated across the nation, with communities coming together to defend their natural and cultural resources. This review is politically motivated and an affront to the people, who have shown overwhelming support for national monuments, parks, recreation areas, and public waters.

Diverse communities were a force behind many of the monument designations targeted by the executive order, from those in urban neighborhoods seeking access to nature, to others working to protect their cultural identity. The recent designation of Mojave Trails, Sand to Snow, and Castle Mountains National Monuments in our Southern California desert helps protect and celebrate Native American history, values and culture. Their history is our common history. The first target of the monument review is likely to be Bears Ears in Utah, where 30 Native American tribes came together to support a monument designation celebrating the earth and her people, sacred sites, cultural sites, and ancient artifacts. We stand with our brothers and sisters at Bears Ears.

This attack on our national monuments puts oil drilling and mining interests, big business, and developers ahead of the needs of local communities. We the people are united in defending the health of our neighborhoods and the future of our children. We insist on more parks and greater access to healthy outdoor activity, along with protection for all of our public lands and waters — including national monuments.

Support the Antiquities Act

Protecting our natural and cultural treasures is not a partisan issue. The Antiquities Act has been used by 16 presidents, Republican and Democrat, since 1906 to preserve our nation's precious natural and cultural heritage through designation of 152 national monuments. The Antiquities Act, one of the nation's oldest and most successful laws to conserve our environment and cultural heritage, should be preserved, and not tinkered with or undermined.

Conclusion

An attack on any monument is an attack on all monuments. This administration is undermining the Antiquities Act, protections for national monuments, and ultimately the rule of law, democratic governance, and the will of the people. We urge you in the strongest possible terms to stand in solidarity and resistance with the people to support national monuments and the Antiquities Act. Thank you.

Honorable Members, this concludes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Resources

Robert García & Daniel Rossman, Defend Our National Monuments, Diversity, and Inclusion, NRPA Open Space Blog, May 2017, www.cityprojectca.org/blog/archives/44451.

Samuel David García, Latinos and Climate Change: Opinions, Impacts, and Responses (GreenLatinos and The City Project Policy Report 2016), www.cityprojectca.org/blog/archives/43303.

Next 100 Coalition, next100coalition.org.

San Gabriel Mountains Forever and Community Collaborative, Overwhelming Support for Civil Rights and Environmental Justice Compliance, The City Project Blog, Feb. 17, 2017, www.cityprojectca.org/blog/archives/44232.

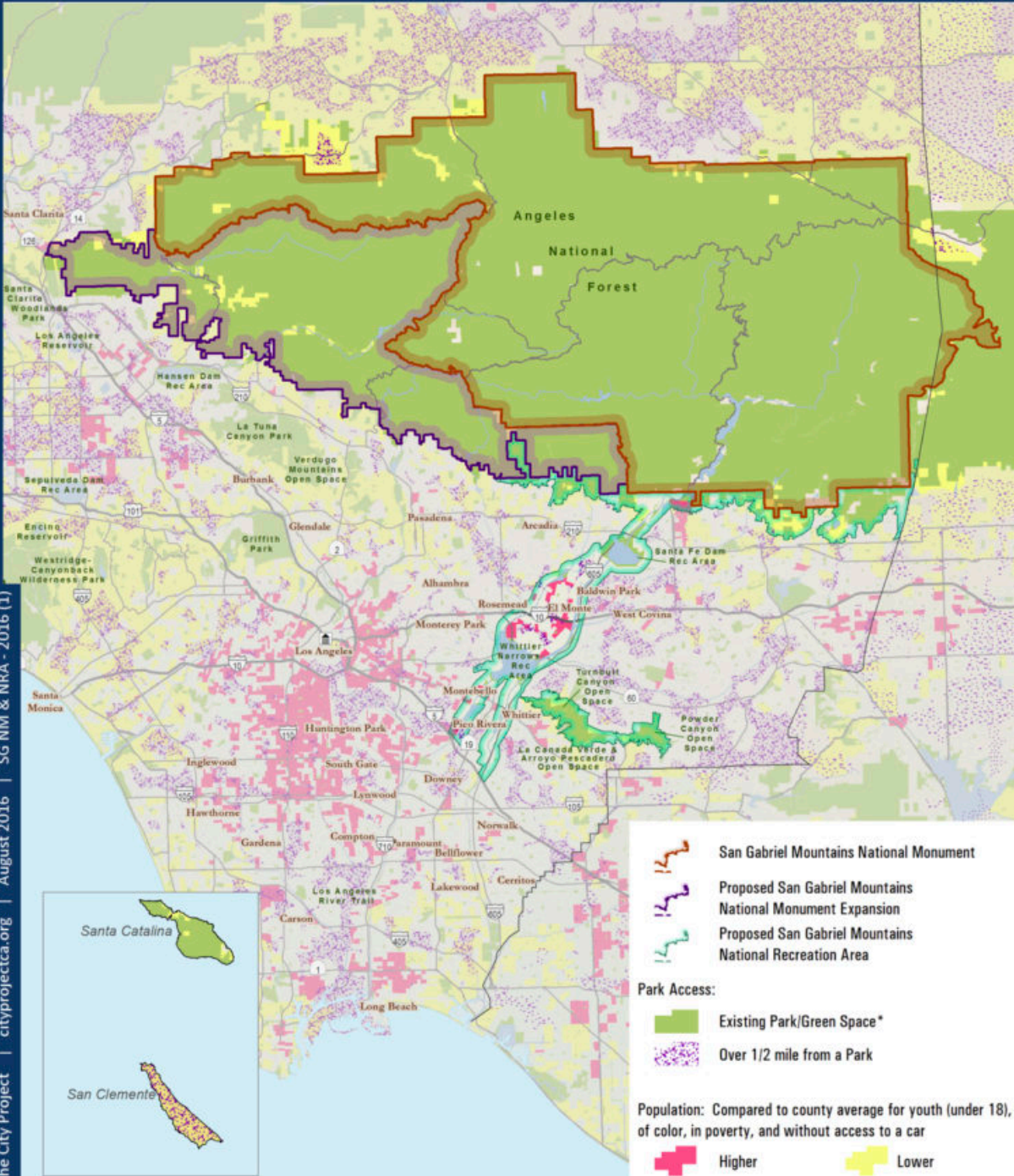
National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, Committee Report, Communities in Action: Pathways to Health Equity (2017) (social determinants of health includes access to healthy parks and recreation), www.nationalacademies.org/promotehealthequity.

Presidential Memorandum – Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in Our National Parks, National Forests, and other Public Lands and Waters (Jan. 12, 2017), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/12/presidential-memorandum-promoting-diversity-and-inclusion-our-national>.

Attachments

Attachment 1

Park Access for Children of Color Living in Poverty with No Access to a Car
San Gabriel Mountains



The City Project | cityprojectca.org | August 2016 | SG NM & NRA - 2016 (1)



Demographics - American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year blockgroup estimates 2010-2014, US Census Bureau census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/summary_file/
Existing Park/Green Space - California Protected Areas Database (CPAD2016a), GreenInfo Network calandis.org
Map and analyses by The City Project cityprojectca.org and GreenInfo Network greeninfo.org CC BY NC SA

*All parks/green space are shown, including forest service, bureau of land management and lands with no/restricted public access.





THE CITY PROJECT



**HOLY COW,
MR. PRESIDENT!**
WE CAN DO CIVIL RIGHTS, ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE, HEALTH, CLIMATE, JOBS,
DISPLACEMENT, CULTURE,
AND HAVE FUN,
ALL AT ONCE?!

THAT'S RIGHT!
ACCESS FOR ALL
MEANS YOUNG AND OLD, BLACK,
WHITE, LATINO, ASIAN, AND
NATIVE AMERICAN...

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA AND ROBERT GARCIA
TALK **GREEN JUSTICE** AT THE
SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS NATIONAL MONUMENT DEDICATION 2014...

TAKE ACTION COMICS: **THE CITY PROJECT**, BY SAMUEL GARCIA

Attachment 3
Children from Anahuak Youth Sports Association on
Transit to Trails to San Gabriel Mountains



Attachment 4
Big Horn Sheep San Gabriel Mountains

