

# HILLS FOR EVERYONE

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Southern California comes  
together at the Puente - Chino Hills



Los Angeles County  
Orange County  
Riverside County  
San Bernardino County

November 16, 2009

Martha Crusius, Project Manager  
National Park Service  
San Gabriel Special Resource Study  
Park Planning and Environmental Compliance  
1111 Jackson Street, Suite 700  
Oakland, CA 94607

Via email [PWR\\_sangabriel@nps.gov](mailto:PWR_sangabriel@nps.gov)

## Comments on Preliminary Alternative Concepts for the San Gabriel Watershed and Mountains Study Area

Dear Ms. Crusius,

Hills For Everyone is a 32 year old non profit organization working to protect the biologically rich, accessible and threatened landscape in the Puente-Chino Hills. This still functioning ecosystem lies at the juncture of southern California's four most populous counties: Orange, Los Angeles, Riverside and San Bernardino. Though our earliest goal was creation and completion of Chino Hills State Park, we have since widened our vision. With our increased understanding of the principles of conservation biology we now recognize the need to save and connect large habitats to preserve the region's rich biodiversity within a sustainable ecosystem. We work with elected officials, community leaders, partner organizations, agencies and citizens across the 31 miles of the Puente-Chino Hills Wildlife Corridor. To date, nearly 4,000 acres have been protected in the western side of the hills and another 14,000 acres have been protected on the eastern side of the hills. The hillside system itself is connected to the Santa Ana Mountains and the Cleveland National Forest through Coal Canyon Biological Corridor. See Attachment A.

**First, we concur with your findings of national significance, suitability and feasibility.** With regard to "Nationally Significant Resources," we would like to add one more piece to the story of this region. The Puente-Chino Hills in particular offer yet another interesting aspect to the history that has defined the development of this entire region - namely the discovery of oil, black gold. From its geologic origins as it relates

to the Whittier- Elsinore Earthquake fault, to its uses by Native Americans, to its impact on the environment and the development of oil drilling technology, oil has helped define how we grow, how we travel, how we live, and the quality of the air we breathe. This piece of our history is worth understanding and interpreting. For further information we suggest Esther Cramer's 1992 book *Brea, City of Oil, Oranges and Opportunity*. Numerous oil derricks still dot the hills of Brea Canyon.

**Second, Hills For Everyone (HFE) strongly supports the establishment of a National Recreation Area (NRA) in this region of eastern Los Angeles County and not simply a "Network" of parks and open space.** We have reviewed the three alternatives presented in Newsletter No. 4 of the Special Resource Study. While each provides different benefits, we believe that a better alternative might be developed that merges those strengths into a Alternative "D"

**Third, we suggest that the area to be included in the NRA encompass all areas in the study area.** Specifically, we believe all of the San Gabriel Mountains (including the North Slope), the San Gabriel Watershed, and the Puente-Chino Hills as pictured in Alternative B. As your study has noted, these hills maintain a high degree of biological diversity. The gift of time without glaciation has allowed a great diversification of species. They are also designated critical habitat by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the endangered California gnatcatcher that lives in the rare and disappearing coastal sage scrub community. This great diversity has been aided by the rare Mediterranean climate and the calliope of movement and frequent change in topography due to earthquakes.

**Fourth, we urge acceptance of the management envisioned in Alternative C as this will allow a more comprehensive approach to the complex and varied entities, uses and biology of the area.** This more robust presence of the National Park Service would be a welcome addition in terms of funding opportunities and expertise.

We are look forward to working with you to enact this wonderful, hopeful vision for our region that would provide recreational and educational opportunities for such a large park poor population.

Thank you for allowing us to comment on this important study.

Respectfully,

*Claire W. Schlotterbeck*

Claire Schlotterbeck  
Executive Director  
Hills For Everyone

# ATTACHMENT A

