

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

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Senator Henry Stern, Assemblymember Richard Bloom Announce \$12 Million to Local Initiatives to Prevent Devastating Wildfires in 2021

AGOURA, CA (May 14, 2021) - At a press conference in Liberty Canyon, the hub of the historic 101 Fire Corridor, Senator Henry Stern and Assemblymember Richard Bloom announced that the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy will fund \$12 million in local initiatives to prepare for the upcoming 2021 wildfire season. The funds are available immediately.

Senator Stern and Assemblymember Bloom are Legislative Participants of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, which this week approved the fire resiliency grants to immediately implement coordinated efforts to prevent wildfires in the local mountains. Extensive preventative measures and management strategies will be put in place now before the Santa Ana winds begin.

"We finally succeeded in making the case to the Governor and the rest of California that our fire problems in this region are unique—that we must focus on home and community hardening, public land management, and restoring the power of native ecologies in our chaparral by removing invasive grasses," said Senator Stern. "While prescribed fire and dead tree clearance may work in the northern redwood forests, that's not going to prevent the next Woolsey Fire."

The Conservancy, which has helped preserve more than 75,000 acres of local open space and habitat, was allocated \$12 million as part of Governor Newsom's \$536 million statewide Wildfire Prevention Early Budget Action Funding Plan to proactively reduce the risk of wildfire, strengthen wildfire resilience, increase carbon sequestration, rally against the effects of climate change, and dedicate more resources to local community infrastructure.

"The Conservancy is leading a fire prevention strategy that utilizes strong partnerships with all levels of government, landowners, nonprofit, and community organizations," said Irma Muñoz, Chair of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. "Workforce development

organizations like the Los Angeles Conservation Corps, and volunteer organizations like Topanga Arson Watch are key to getting boots on the ground to prevent fires."

The announcement was made at the Liberty Canyon trailhead where the Simi Hills contact the north side of the 101 freeway with the Santa Monica Mountains in close view on the south side.

This is one of half a dozen locations in a four-mile-long stretch of land, known to firefighters for years as the 101 Freeway Fire corridor, where large Santa Ana wind-driven fires can jump the freeway and head to the coast. The 2018 Woolsey Fire burned the entire 101 Freeway Fire corridor, ultimately burning 96,949 acres of land and killing three people.

At the press conference, Senator Stern and Assemblymember Bloom planted coast live oak trees to add to a newly established oak grove situated to limit the movement of wildfires both by screening out flying embers and by not carrying fire through their shady understories. As part of the Conservancy's plan for the 101 Freeway Fire corridor, a dozen of these new groves will be paired with miles of select clearance of grasslands composed of undesired non-native species that carry fire exceptionally well. Desired native plant species will then be fostered in these fuel management areas. The Woolsey Fire demonstrated how oak trees-in even lightly-managed fuel breaks-both survive fire and limit its speed.

Since 2020, the Conservancy has been developing the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Plan to evaluate the diverse fire capacities within the region including differences in vegetation type and assess existing forest and biophysical resources.

The Conservancy is a long-time and active member of the Santa Monica Mountains Fire Safe Alliance, an umbrella group of government agencies and other affected groups convened by Los Angeles County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl to address environmental and community safety problems related to wildfire in the Santa Monica Mountains.

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy is a State Agency that was established by the Legislature in 1980. Since that time, it has helped preserve more than 75,000 acres of parkland in both wilderness and urban settings. The Conservancy's mission is to strategically buy back, preserve, protect, restore, and enhance treasured pieces of Southern California to form and interlinking system of urban, rural, and river parks, open space, trails, and wildlife habitat that are easily accessible to the public.

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