

**SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY**

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For Immediate Release

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**SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY ELECTS NEW OFFICERS**

LOS ANGELES, CA (January 25, 2022)—The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy announced today the election of its new officers for 2022. The Honorable Linda Parks, Ventura County Supervisor from the Second District, was elected Chairperson. Rudy Ortega Jr., Tribal President, Fernandeno Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, was elected Vice Chairperson. Ortega is the public member appointed by the Governor. Supervisor Parks has been the appointee of the Ventura County Board of Supervisors since 2003. The Chairperson and the Vice Chairperson are selected by the voting members of the Conservancy for a one-year term.

Supervisor Parks is a past Mayor of the City of Thousand Oaks and a leader in open space preservation having helped to preserve thousands of acres of open space including the more than 5,600-acre [Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Preserve \(formerly Ahmanson Ranch\)](#) in the Simi Hills at the western edge of the San Fernando Valley. She created laws protecting open space and farmland by vote of the people (SOAR and “Parks Initiative”). Parks is also a mental health advocate and started a nonprofit native plant nursery (Growing Works) that provides horticultural therapy and job training for people with mental health challenges. Parks developed a first-of-its-kind wildlife corridor zone to protect wildlife in Ventura County and has been a strong, visionary advocate for the Liberty Canyon Wildlife Bridge, which is scheduled to break ground early this year.

Rudy Ortega, Jr. is the Tribal President of the Fernandeno Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, a native sovereign nation of northern Los Angeles County. As the elected leader of his Tribe, Ortega Jr. oversees the governmental body and manages affairs pertaining to the rights of all Fernandeno Tataviam tarahat (people). Ortega Jr. is a member of *Siutcabit*, the lineage of present-day Encino, CA. His ancestors come from the villages that originated in the geographical areas of Santa Clarita Valley, Simi Valley, and San Fernando Valley. His great-grandfather Antonio Maria Ortega, from whom he receives his traditional role as *tomiar* or leader, fought in Los Angeles Superior Court in the 19th century to preserve traditional lands and protect Native title to Mexican land grants from encroaching settlers. His father, the late Rudy Ortega Sr., served as the previous leader of the Tribe for over fifty years.

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The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy is composed of nine voting members and three ex officio members. The nine voting members represent local, state, and federal government including the Superintendent of the Santa Monica Mountains Recreation Area, a member appointed by the Mayor of the City of Los Angeles, a public member appointed by the Governor, a public member appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules, one public member appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly, a member appointed by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, a member appointed by the Ventura County Board of Supervisors, the designee of the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency of California, and the Superintendent of the Angeles District of California State Parks. Ex Officio Members include the Supervisor of the Angeles National Forest and appointees of the California Coastal Conservancy and the California Coastal Commission.

A 26-member Advisory Committee consisting of representatives of local jurisdictions and members appointed by the Governor, the Senate Rules Committee, and the Speaker of the Assembly advise the Conservancy. Donald J. Robinson, Representative of the City of Westlake Village was elected Chairperson. Hon. Illece Buckley Weber, Representative of the City of Agoura Hills was elected Vice Chairperson.

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

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