



Investments in San Gabriel Mountains National Monument



The Los Angeles skyline in front of the San Gabriel Mountains.
USDA Forest Service photo.

On May 2, 2024, President Biden signed a proclamation expanding the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument near Los Angeles, CA. President Biden's proclamation adds 105,919 acres of lands managed by the Forest Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, to the existing 346,177-acre national monument, which was originally designated by President Obama in 2014. The expansion of the San Gabriel Mountains will protect cultural, scientific, and historic objects while expanding access to outdoor recreation on our shared public lands for generations to come.

The San Gabriel Mountains National Monument, a part of the Angeles National Forest, is an important recreational setting for millions of residents in Los Angeles County and surrounding areas. In 2021, the national forest received 4.59 million recreation-based visits. This intense level of use, especially on peak days, can create management challenges that include excess trash, inadequate bathroom capacity, overflow parking that impairs emergency access, and adverse impacts to fragile water ecosystems. The Forest Service, in collaboration with dozens of partners, is addressing these challenges to support safe, fun, and accessible visitor experiences and protect fragile and unique resources.

Adding Educational Staff and Conservation Corps Capacity on the Ground

Field staff support visitor and resource needs through education. Conservation corps programs create meaningful career and training opportunities for diverse and aspiring environmental professionals. Several programs will continue or be initiated in 2024:

- In 2024, the Angeles National Forest will add eight new field staff for the summer season to increase Forest Service presence in high-traffic recreation areas. Many of the field rangers will be bilingual (English/Spanish) to support communication with the diverse population.

- With \$2 million from the California Conservation Corps, the Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians' Tiuvac'aa'i' (Healthy Lands) Tribal Conservation Corps is funding 6 positions, with hope for an additional 12 future positions.
- Los Angeles County is providing \$1 million to the nonprofit Nature for All, which is funding 6 positions, with hope for 12 future positions to support interpretation and visitor engagement.
- Additional opportunities are under development in cooperation with the Hispanic Access Foundation, Pacoima Beautiful, American Conservation Experience, MobilizeGreen, LA Conservation Corps, San Gabriel Valley Conservation Corps, Conservation Corps of Long Beach, and the Student Conservation Corps.

Supporting Accessibility for All

- The Angeles National Forest, City of Pasadena, Nature for All, and others will establish a Mt. Wilson Express Transit to Trails shuttle. This shuttle will support access to the national monument, especially for underserved and disadvantaged communities of the Los Angeles Basin. The initial \$2.75 million in funding for this initiative comes from Metro Transit to Parks, Community Project Funding grants, and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.

Investing in Natural Resource Projects

- The California State Water Resources Control Board will fund efforts to reduce trash and other pollution on the East Fork of the San Gabriel River, providing a healthier watershed for all.
- The East Fork of the San Gabriel River is one of the most popular recreation areas on the Angeles National Forest.

Through a partnership with the State of California Watershed Conservation Authority and with an initial funding allocation of \$2.5 million from the River & Mountains Conservancy, the Cattle Canyon project will break ground in 2024 and, when completed, will provide improved parking, resource protection, river access, and day-use facilities along a 2.5-mile section of the East Fork of the San Gabriel River.

- The Angeles National Forest will continue planning and implementing Wildfire Crisis Strategy projects, including postfire restoration, water quality improvement, and hazardous fuels treatment. This work will be accomplished with funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Inflation Reduction Act, regular appropriations, and grants.
- In 2024–2025, the Angeles National Forest will continue to address the deferred maintenance for facilities that are essential to creating a welcoming recreation environment for visitors.
- With assistance from Congresswoman Chu and other elected officials, the forest will collaborate with the California Department of Transportation, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office, the City of Azusa, and other partners to coordinate efforts to manage public use and safety considerations within San Gabriel Canyon.

Investing in Community Collaboration

- Building on the monument expansion, leading philanthropies and businesses are supporting the San Gabriel Mountains Community Collaborative to continue to promote equitable access to and sustainable recreation within the monument.
- REI Co-op, Resources Legacy Fund, the Rivian Foundation, Western Conservation Foundation, The Wilderness Society, the Wyss Foundation, and the California Natural Resource Agency's Rivers & Mountains Conservancy are supporting the collaborative to respond to community priorities and work with the Forest Service in the restoration and stewardship of the expanded national monument. Collectively, they have pledged over \$1 million to this effort.
- The San Gabriel Mountains Collaborative formed after the 2014 designation of the San Gabriel Mountains. It brings together over 50 members representing government agencies, nonprofit organizations, Tribal representatives, and residents, including the National Forest Foundation, Watershed Conservation Authority, the California Natural Resource Agency's Rivers & Mountains Conservancy, and Nature for All.
- The collaborative's engagement includes the San Fernando Valley, close to the expansion area, which has a majority Latino population and need for parks and outdoor spaces in Los Angeles County. The collaborative will partner with the Forest Service, government agencies, volunteer groups, Tribal representatives, and community members in the region to ensure a healthy and well-managed monument into the future.

Solving Visitor Use Challenges

- The Forest Service will develop management practices in 2024 to address parking challenges in the San Gabriel Canyon. Parking areas will be defined in the busiest areas along the North and East Forks of the San Gabriel River. In the San Antonio Canyon/Mt. Baldy area, the Forest Service will address public safety concerns, the high rate of search and rescue operations, and overcrowding.
- Working in partnership with State, county, and local agencies, the Angeles National Forest will better manage visitor use on peak days. The intent is to manage access to align with resource protection, current visitor capacity limitations, and public safety needs.

Enhancing Staffing and Recruitment Opportunities

- The high cost of living in the Los Angeles region is a barrier to entry for job applicants. In 2024, the Angeles National Forest will receive an investment of \$2.3 million in Great American Outdoors Act funding to rehabilitate barracks that provide housing for Angeles National Forest staff. Providing modern, accessible housing will help recruit and retain much needed staff to support the forest's recreation program.

In addition, local projects are underway in the foothill communities surrounding the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument. These include the Follows Camp Ecological Design and Implementation Project led by the City of Industry; a \$10 million investment from the Rivers & Mountains Conservancy and the State of California Department of Natural Resources for the Azusa Wilderness Park initiative, which will include traffic redesign, infrastructure improvement, and public engagement opportunities; the City of Duarte Fish Canyon Trail restoration project; and thousands of hours of volunteer cleanup and resource projects—led by Canyon City Environmental Project, Nature for All, Azusa Beautiful, East Fork's Golden Preservation, and Upper San Gabriel Valley Water District—that improve the area for all users.



Hikers on the Angeles National Forest in the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument. Photo courtesy of Bob Wick.