



United States Department of Agriculture

San Gabriel Mountains National Monument Management Plan

Draft Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact



Forest Service

Angeles National Forest

Los Angeles, California

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Introduction

On October 10, 2014, President Barack Obama signed the Proclamation designating 342,175 acres of existing Federal lands as the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument (Monument). The monument is continued to be managed by the Angeles National Forest (ANF) in the National Forest System. The Monument's designation was built on more than a decade of public support and advocacy to enhance the area's recreational opportunities, with broad support throughout business, tourism, environmental justice, conservation, and cultural preservation communities.

The Proclamation described the historical, natural, and cultural significance of the features within the proclaimed area that warrant a National Monument designation. The Proclamation directed that certain uses continue, including Tribal rights to utilize the lands in traditional manners. The Proclamation also acknowledged the continuation of valid existing rights and uses, such as utilities and water infrastructure. The Federal lands and interests in land within the boundaries of the Monument were withdrawn from location, entry, and patent under the mining laws, and from disposition under all laws relating to mineral and geothermal leasing, with the exception of valid existing mining rights. The Proclamation directed that the administration of these activities continue in a manner consistent with the protection of the unique features of the Monument

The Proclamation for the Monument mandated the preparation of a management plan, a transportation plan, and further, that the management framework needed to be developed in a collaborative manner. An environmental assessment (EA) analyzes the effects of the Monument management plan.

The Monument is within the administrative boundary of the Angeles National Forest (Forest). The Forest is proposing to amend the existing Angeles National Forest Land Management Plan (ANF LMP, USDA Forest Service 2005a) with the Monument Management Plan (Monument Plan). The changes associated with the Monument Plan will apply only to the Monument area.

Purpose and Need for Action

The Presidential Proclamation required the Forest to prepare a management plan for the Monument. I carefully compared the Proclamation with the existing land management plan to identify whether changes were needed. Based on my review, I found that much of the proper care and management of the Monument's heritage and ecosystems' features will be achieved with the existing protections in the ANF LMP, which balances the need for recreational uses and commodity production with protection of ecosystems.

The Proclamation withdrew lands within the Monument from mineral and energy resources exploration and development, except valid existing rights present at the time of Monument designation. Because of this withdrawal, my decision needs to adjust the existing ANF LMP direction for the Monument area to bring it into conformance with the Proclamation.

I determined that only a limited amount of new direction was needed in the Monument Plan, so that an amendment to the ANF LMP is sufficient. These changes were originally identified and described in a preliminary "Need to Change" document. Identifying a need to change the plan is the first step of the process under the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR Part 219), which sets forth requirements for developing, amending, and revising land management plans for national forests.

Based on the Proclamation mandates, the Forest's initial review and further refined by incorporating public comments throughout the process, I identified the following resource areas in need of additional or changed direction in the Monument Plan.

Transportation and Access

The Proclamation requires that the Forest Service prepare a transportation plan for the Monument. Transportation planning for the entire Forest is primarily accomplished through the travel management process as required by the 2005 Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212). To avoid duplication, the Monument transportation plan provides a summary of the current transportation system. I identified, and describe below, some limited areas where additional management direction is needed to comply with the Proclamation.

There is a need to develop plan direction that:

- Recognizes the need to collaborate with local communities and partners when planning new trailheads, facilities, and other types of access to the Monument;
- Improves road and trail conditions to protect resources; and
- Addresses traffic congestion and parking capacity, especially within concentrated use areas.

Sustainable Recreation

The ANF LMP provides plan direction for various aspects of recreation management. The plan components in the existing ANF LMP include desired conditions for recreational sites and standards, strategies, and tactics to manage recreation in the Forest. I identified some limited areas where additional management direction is needed to comply with the Proclamation.

There is a need to develop plan direction that:

- Provides sustainable and diverse recreation opportunities to existing and new users that consider changes in population demographics, reflect desires of local communities, avoid user conflicts, and minimize resource damage;
- Supports partnerships to accomplish sustainable recreation goals; and
- Enhances protection of the resources and qualities of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCT) and user experiences of the trail.

Heritage Resources

The ANF LMP provides comprehensive direction to manage heritage resources in addition to existing laws, regulations, and policy. I identified some limited areas where additional management direction is needed to comply with the Proclamation.

There is a need to develop plan direction that:

- Emphasizes protections for heritage resources, particularly when impacted by fire or other ground-disturbing activities;
- Ensures Tribal, cultural, and traditional practices are preserved and recognized; and
- Supports partnerships to accomplish goals in managing heritage resources.

Biological Resources

The ANF LMP provides comprehensive direction that protects species and habitat in addition to existing laws, regulations, and policy. This includes protections for endangered, threatened, and sensitive species, including those listed in the Proclamation. I identified some limited areas where additional management direction is needed to comply with the Proclamation.

There is a need to develop plan direction that:

- Enhances protections of habitat (including newly identified locations) for sensitive, threatened, and endangered species, particularly Santa Ana sucker, California red-legged frog, and other riparian-dependent species.

Mineral Resources

Mineral and energy resources exploration and development of any kind are not suitable within the Monument, except where valid existing rights were present at the time of Monument designation.

There is a need to develop plan direction that:

- Incorporates Proclamation withdrawal of mineral and energy resources exploration and development of any kind within the Monument, except where valid existing rights at the time of Monument designation were present.

Decision and Rationale for Decision

San Gabriel Mountains National Monument presents a unique and exceptional opportunity for the Forest Service to: (1) demonstrate how resilient forest landscapes and healthy ecosystems can thrive side-by-side with major infrastructure; (2) cultivate connections between a diverse urban population and nature in a county with low densities of open space; and (3) employ collaboration and partnerships to improve access, conservation education, and visitor services. This Plan reflects my belief that this Monument is a valuable investment in the health and well-being of local communities and the people of Southern California for generations to come.

This Monument represents a respite for millions of Americans, located within the most urban national forest in the nation's most populous county. The Monument offers exceptional vistas, biological diversity, many cultural and historic features, with accompanying interpretation and educational opportunities. This Monument can elevate understanding of the region's natural resources and cultural heritage, while fostering new generations of environmental stewards. One of the Monument's unique features is the presence of infrastructure that sustains the surrounding metropolis, including flood control and water storage, hydropower, utilities, and telecommunication sites. The mix of natural wonders and infrastructure sets this Monument apart.

People in local communities, recreation groups, businesses, and foundations are excited about the added visibility brought about by the Monument designation, generating private sector investment, new partners, and expanded volunteer involvement. The Forest and Monument are poised to showcase what can happen when we make a sustained commitment to building a lasting partnership connecting the people of southern California to their lands and waters, a model for all urban areas.

I have reviewed the Final Environmental Assessment (Final EA); comments from Federal, State and local governments, Indian tribes, and the public; and supporting documents, and have

selected Alternative 3 as the Monument Plan. This alternative includes additional plan components to benefit transportation and access, sustainable recreation, and heritage and biological resources to enhance protection of Monument resources while balancing use and enjoyment by a diverse visiting public.

This alternative best meets the purpose and need, addresses associated issues identified during scoping, and is most responsive to the public's valuable input expressed during the comment period. Among the key differences between Alternatives 2 and 3 that reflect the public's input are: the need for a clear vision for the Monument; greater coordination in transportation planning; providing quality sustainable recreation opportunities; an increased focus on visitor services, interpretation, and education for culturally diverse groups; and protection of unique Monument resources. Specifically, Alternative 3 meets these needs by:

- Adding plan components that address public safety concerns, access points, parking capacity, connectivity (including alternative transportation), and provides sustainable recreation opportunities to different user groups. In addition, Alternative 3 emphasizes collaboration with local governments, communities, and organizations to successfully achieve a collective vision for access to and within the Monument.
- Including new plan components to address public concerns about providing quality recreational settings to diverse user groups while balancing resource protection needs.
- Adding a new objective to develop and implement the Master Visitor Reception, Interpretation, and Education Plan with an emphasis on conservation education and outreach to diverse youth.
- Supplementing plan components related to heritage resources to prioritize evaluation, monitoring, and protection of Monument heritage resources (including Priority Heritage Assets) through enhanced partnerships with local Tribes, archaeological organizations, and academia.
- Enhancing biological resource protection to achieve stable or improved habitat conditions for species.
 1. Modifying the Critical Biological Land Use Zone (CBLUZ) in the East Fork San Gabriel River related to safety features on the bridge and changes to enhance recreational development compatible with riparian habitat protection.
 2. Expanding the West Fork San Gabriel CBLUZ which contains suitable habitat. Low-impact recreational uses will continue through this expanded area.
 3. Establishing a multi-pronged approach to mineral resources management to improve resource conditions impacted by unauthorized mining activities through partnerships with local law enforcement agencies and volunteers, as well as greater focus on environmental education programs associated with mining impacts.

In addition, personal use collection of rocks, paleontological specimens, and minerals will not continue within the Monument.

- Adding plan components (including suitability of lands) for the PCT to protect the nature and purpose of the trail by providing direction to minimize conflicting uses and impacts.

Members of the public expressed concerns about direction or additional details that they felt were missing from the Monument Plan. Many public comments suggested the Forest Service work on project-level improvements in transportation and sustainable recreation programs. Declining budgets and high staff turnover have resulted in a backlog of needed improvements on the Forest. We understand this need and are prioritizing efforts in these areas.

Through this decision, I envision facilitating activities that enhance access for visitors and recreational experiences. The Monument Plan does not include these implementation details, but rather focuses on providing strategic-level direction, unlike a master plan for a county or an action plan that many have suggested. I intend to work with partners on projects and strategies for tangible outcomes after completing the Monument Plan. This includes, but is not limited to, working cooperatively with interested parties and surrounding communities to identify steps to improve public access to the Monument through alternative transportation.

Other Alternatives Considered

In addition to the selected alternative (alternative 3), I considered two other alternatives.

Alternative 1: No Action

Current management would continue in accordance with the 2005 ANF LMP. No changes would be made, aside from the mineral withdrawal mandated by the Proclamation. Continuing current management would include the use of standard operating procedures and best management practices from the ANF LMP for management of lands within the Monument.

Alternative 2

Additional management direction was added to the ANF LMP to capture new direction developed as part of the Monument Plan. This included management direction related to transportation, sustainable recreation, heritage resources, biological resources, mineral resources, designated areas, and suitability of lands. Similar to Alternative 3, the majority of the ANF LMP would still apply to the Monument under Alternative 2. Some direction from the existing ANF LMP would no longer apply. See the Final EA for further details.

Public Involvement

The ANF developed a Public Involvement Plan in early 2015, to outline key opportunities for public engagement throughout the planning process, including identifying phases for required public involvement periods and value-added engagement opportunities. Throughout the process of developing our management plan and during comment periods, we also contacted other governmental entities for their concerns and review of documents, including congressional staff, local government officials, and Tribes.

Outside of the official comment periods, Forest Service staff continuously engaged with the public through email, phone, and in-person conversations. Forest Service staff regularly attended monthly meetings of the San Gabriel Mountains Community Collaborative and provided informational presentations when requested. Formed in 2015, this collaborative group includes 45 representatives from the general public, non-profit and private organizations, and elected officials.

Forest Service staff also attended meetings held by other organizations at the request of interested community groups. These groups included organizations focused on social justice and underserved communities, such as the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON), San Gabriel Mountains Forever, and The City Project.

Scoping

To initiate the scoping process, a Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental assessment was published in the Federal Register on June 12, 2015. A press release was sent to local news media outlets. The planning project first appeared on the ANF's Schedule of Proposed Actions in July 2015. A scoping letter describing the "Need to Change" and proposed action was sent via regular mail or email to approximately 3,200 interested groups, individuals, and agencies on June 15, 2015, with comments requested to be returned by July 27, 2015. A map, fact sheet, and frequently asked questions document were also provided. The information could also be found on the ANF's public website. The Forest Supervisor granted the 15-day extension the public requested, extending the scoping period to August 11, 2015.

We received and considered comments from 917 interested groups, individuals, and agencies in letters, emails, and website submissions that contained over 1,545 unique comments and concerns. Taking public scoping comments into consideration, we developed a draft Monument Plan and draft EA, which included some modifications to the original needs identified in the "Need to Change" document. After comparing the existing direction in the 2005 ANF LMP, we developed Alternative 2 with specific plan components to address the key issues identified during scoping. A full description of Alternative 2 is found in Chapter 2 of the Final EA. For more information on the process for consideration of public comments, see the Scoping Outcome Summary available in the project record.

Draft EA Opportunity for Public Comment

The Forest Service released an early draft of Chapters 1 and 2 of the Draft Environmental Assessment on the ANF's website in May 2016, to allow the public additional time to review before the official comment period for the Draft EA.

The official comment period started on August 19, 2016, providing a 60-day public comment period to October 17, 2016. In response to requests by the public, the comment period was extended for an additional 14 days to November 1, 2016. Copies of the Draft Environmental Assessment were available at the ANF Supervisor's Office and on the ANF's website. During the comment period, the ANF hosted a webinar, four public meetings with Spanish translators available, and one public presentation conducted in Spanish. The webinar was posted on our website, subtitled in Spanish. Additional presentations were given at the invitation of our Community Collaborative and at meetings with Chinese and Korean translation.

We received and considered comments from 283 interested groups, individuals, and agencies in the form of letters, emails, and website submissions that contained over 1,000 individual unique comments and concerns. After considering the comments, we fully developed Alternative 3 by modifying Alternative 2. Some other concerns the public brought up during the comment period did not lead to changes in Alternative 3, these include: enumerating, quantifying, and defining the geographic area of the objects of interest; identifying more specifics of the transportation plan; omitted direction; continuing and adding utilities operations, and project-level site-specific suggestions.

Tribal Consultation

Tribal consultation associated with the Monument Plan was formally initiated with federally recognized Tribes following the official designation of the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument in October 2014. When scoping was initiated in June 2015, with release of the Need to Change document, letters were sent to the three federally recognized Tribes with potential cultural ties to lands within the Monument, including the San Manuel Band of Serrano Mission

Indians on July 23, 2015; the Santa Ynez Band of Mission Indians on July 28, 2015; and the Tejon Indian Tribe on July 28, 2015. At the same time, the Need to Change document was provided to non-federally recognized Tribes with a request for comments on the initial monument plan development strategy.

During Tribal forums in January 2016, October 2016, and March 2017, the Monument Plan was the main agenda topic. The Forest Service provided an update on the Monument Plan during these forums. When requested, we arranged separate follow-up meetings to receive input on the Monument Plan. Following the final public comment period, participating federally recognized and non-federally recognized tribes were formally consulted in June 2017, on the revised Monument Plan and EA before the public release. Concerns expressed at these meetings and throughout our formal consultation efforts led to changes in the Monument Plan, including clarification of the Forest's management of cultural resources, new approaches and emphasis on Tribal collaboration within the Monument, particularly in relation to traditional Tribal resources and gathering activities, restoration of and access to significant cultural resource sites for ceremonial purposes, and preservation of significant or at-risk cultural resources.

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

The term “significance,” as used in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), requires consideration of the environmental effects in terms of context and intensity.

Context

The “context” means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. We designed the Monument Plan to minimize environmental effects by applying additional plan components on uses of the Monument. The local context of the proposed action is limited to the eastern portion of the ANF, within the Monument boundary. Alternative 3 would pose no significant short-term or long-term effects.

Intensity

We considered the following 10 factors to evaluate intensity:

1) Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effects will be beneficial.

Effects determinations are discussed in the final EA and supporting analysis. Both beneficial and adverse effects have been taken into consideration. Beneficial effects are anticipated for biological, cultural, and other resources, as described in chapter 3 of the EA. There are no potential significant adverse effects as a result of implementing alternative 3.

2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

An increased focus from new plan components relating to the protection of Monument resources, increased public use, recreational opportunities, and environmental education and partnerships are not anticipated to cause adverse impacts to public health or safety. Alternative 3 would improve public safety, specifically in relation to transportation (see Final EA Transportation section). Thus, the effects of alternative 3 are anticipated to be beneficial to public health or safety.

Managing for sustainable recreation requires attention to the three spheres of sustainability: social, environmental, and economic conditions. The important contributions to public health

through recreation on Forest lands are essential additions to social sustainability. Attending to the equitable distribution and quality of these dimensions of sustainability in a diverse and highly urbanized region further contributes to the region's vitality and role of the Forest Service as a public land management agency. The Monument Plan will continue to support connections to the land, community, and culture for an increasingly diverse recreating public. Where recreation access to the Monument provides physical, mental, cultural, and social benefits to communities with little open space or parks in their neighborhoods, there is also an economic value in aiding the health and well-being of these communities. Economic components of sustainable recreation would be supported through ongoing emphasis on partnerships. A focus on opportunities to improve access to the Monument would be developed through coordination of alternative transportation options with other agencies and gateway communities. Emphasis is also placed on providing a good balance of road- and trail-related recreational opportunities for users.

Communities adjacent to the Monument value uncrowded conditions within the Monument and access. They are concerned with potential crowding that could result from the Monument designation and implementation of a management plan. Plan components focus on opportunities to improve access to the Monument, while also addressing concerns related to vehicle congestion, parking capacity, and public safety, especially in the surrounding communities. A general desired condition is to decrease the number automobiles over time, which would help to address visitor capacity and vehicle congestion. However, with expected increases in visitation over time, adjacent communities that value uncrowded conditions and public safety could be negatively affected.

Alternative 3 would not result in significant effects on public health and safety.

3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area as a result of the changes identified in Alternative 3. The effects to unique characteristics of cultural resources will be beneficial (see Final EA, Chapter 3 Heritage Resources section). No ground-disturbing activities are authorized in the Monument Plan, resulting in no effects to park lands, prime farmlands, and wetlands. Wild and scenic rivers management in the Monument remains unchanged. Several ecologically critical areas are delineated to become Critical Biological Land Use Zones in an additional approximately 1,100 acres of the Monument, resulting in beneficial effects to threatened and endangered species (see Final EA Chapter 3 Aquatic Wildlife Species, Terrestrial Wildlife Species, and Botanical Resources sections).

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial as a result of the changes identified in alternative 3. Impacts to resources identified within the Final EA were summarized based upon interdisciplinary team resource specialists' scientific expertise. There is no known scientific controversy over the impacts of the implementation of alternative 3.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The analysis shows that the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk. The interdisciplinary team incorporated their expertise and knowledge into the effects analysis of the Final EA.

Environmental justice is a public concern because underserved communities found in Los Angeles County have limited access to public green open spaces that are safe for recreational purposes. Access, multilingual outreach, and cultural understanding are very important to the community that could be affected by the management of the Monument. Several commenters were concerned that disproportionate impacts on underrepresented populations may occur. The Monument Plan may result in beneficial effects to these low-income and minority populations over time, through efforts to increase access to the Monument via partnering to improve public transportation, provide information to diverse groups, and engage underserved populations (see the Final EA Chapter 3 Environmental Justice section).

6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The Monument is the United States' eighth designated national monument managed by the Forest Service. It is the first Monument using the 2012 Forest Planning Rule to develop a Monument management plan as a forest plan amendment, possibly contributing to the streamlining of environmental analysis for such plans. The Monument Plan is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects because the analyses of this plan did not conclude significant effects.

7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

Cumulative impacts resulting from the changes identified in alternative 3 will not be significant.

Recreation visitation to the analysis area is affected by changes in recreation opportunities and demand outside of the planning area. Other adjacent lands continue to emphasize the provision of recreation opportunities in their land and resource management plans. The cumulative effects of the action alternatives would likely be similar, with potential increases in visitor use within the Monument. This could negatively affect individuals who value the untouched outdoors and uncongested recreation opportunities.

The cumulative effect of growth and development trends, plus beneficial effects of the action alternatives, however, could result in a small and net beneficial condition to some local communities, as a result of improved land protection and economic benefits from recreation. Overall, cumulative effects would continue to be dependent on regional economic conditions and population increases, rather than the implementation of the Monument Plan.

If Congress approves the recommended Rim of the Valley addition to the neighboring Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, this would cumulatively add to the higher national profile of the public lands surrounding Los Angeles. As noted above, another designation may lead to increased national interest and visitation. However, this additional designation would also likely result in increased opportunities for partnerships and capacity building. The Rim of the Valley study noted needs similar to those of the Monument, including outreach to urban populations and youth, and alternative transportation and public access (see USDI National Park Service 2016).

8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant cultural or historical resources.

No ground-disturbing activities are proposed in this plan amendment. Alternative 3 will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Additional plan components address resources of concern unique to Native American communities. The Monument Plan includes a plan component that Native American heritage resources eligible for the National Register of Historic Places are protected and preserved.

9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act.

Plan components in alternative 3 will not adversely affect threatened and endangered species or their critical habitat. The actions proposed for this Monument Plan are expected to be a net positive impact for federally listed species within the Monument. The following determination applies to all federally listed species present within the analysis area and their critical habitat (where applicable): “May affect, not likely to adversely affect.” See the Final EA Aquatic Wildlife Species, Terrestrial Wildlife Species, and Botanical Resources Environmental Consequences sections for further detail.

This Monument Plan is consistent with the Ongoing Activities Biological Opinion (USDI Fish and Wildlife Service 2013) and the Biological Assessment (and related Biological Opinion) for the Revised Management Plans (see USDA Forest Service 2012). The Monument Plan does not change the determinations or constitute new information that results in effects beyond what was considered in previous consultations.

10) Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The action will not violate Federal, State, or local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Other Federal, State, and local laws were considered within the effects analysis, with each resource and the plan components designed to ensure compliance with all laws.

Conclusion

After considering the environmental effects described in the Final EA, I have concluded that alternative 3 will not have significant effects on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement (EIS) will not be prepared.

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

National Forest Management Act

The 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR Part 219) sets out the planning requirements for amending land management plans for national forests, as required by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. 1600 et seq.). The Monument Plan is an amendment to the existing ANF LMP. Plan amendments do not need to meet all of the requirements set forth in the 2012 Planning Rule.

This section clarifies how the amendment meets the procedural requirements of the Rule (36 CFR Part 219.13(b)), as well as the applicable substantive requirements (36 CFR 219.8 through 219.11).

Compliance with the 2012 Planning Rule's Procedural Provisions

Using the best scientific information to inform the planning process (§ 219.3)

The planning process used the best available scientific information to develop plan components that address the purpose and need of this plan amendment. This decision used the best available scientific information to support its analyses and determination as put forth in the Final EA (Literature Cited, References, and multiple specialist input). The ANF engaged with the public on the Draft EA through a 75-day public comment period and no scientific controversy regarding scientific information used by the EA was identified. The analysis was updated to include the most applicable and up-to-date scientific studies to support the analysis in the Final EA in response to issues and concerns raised during the public scoping period, Draft EA public comment period, and rigorous internal review by multiple specialists within the Angeles National Forest, Pacific Southwest Region, and Pacific Southwest Research Station.

Providing opportunities for public participation (§ 219.4) and providing public notice (§ 219.16; § 219.13(b)(2))

The Forest Service developed a Public Involvement Plan in 2015 to outline the key opportunities for public engagement throughout the planning process, including identifying timing for required public involvement periods and value-added engagement opportunities, interested parties to reach out to, and approaches for maximizing public involvement. See Final EA public involvement section.

Format for plan components (§ 219.13 (b)(4); § 219.7 (e))

The plan components include new desired conditions, goals, standards, guidelines, objectives, and suitability statements, as outlined in Section 219.7 (e) of the 2012 Forest Service Planning Rule. The plan also identifies management approaches. All changes identified in the plan amendment are formatted to comply with the plan component definitions outlined within Section 219.7 (e) and Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 - Land Management Planning.

The plan amendment process (§ 219.13)

The ANF developed a draft Need to Change document in 2015, to identify direction within the LMP that would need to be changed to comply with the provisions set out in the Proclamation. This draft Need to Change document was provided for public comment during scoping and adjusted throughout the development of the proposed action, which included new plan components to abide by the direction within the Proclamation. See Final Environmental Assessment Chapter 1.

Objection opportunity (§§ 219.50 through 219.62)

See the Administrative Review section.

Effective date (§ 219.17(a)(2))

The Monument Plan will be effective immediately upon signature of the final decision notice.

Compliance with the 2012 Planning Rule's Applicable Substantive Provisions

The planning rule requires that those substantive rule provisions within 36 CFR 219.8 through 219.11 that are directly related to the amendment are applicable to this amendment. The applicable substantive provisions apply only within the scope and scale of the amendment (36 CFR 219.13(b)(5)).

As explained in the discussion that follows, both the purpose and the effects of the amendment are such that the certain aspects of § 219.8 Sustainability, § 219.9 Diversity of plant and animal communities, and § 219.10 Multiple use are directly related to the amendment. I have applied those provisions within the scope and scale of the amendment. The other provisions of 36 CFR 219.8 through 219.11 are not directly related to the amendment, as they are not found within the narrow scope of this amendment.

Scope and scale of the amendment

Under the National Forest Management Act and its implementing regulations at 36 CFR 219 (2012 Planning Rule), a forest land management plan may be amended at any time. Plan amendments may be broad or narrow, depending on the purpose for the amendment. The responsible official has the discretion to determine whether and how to amend the ANF LMP and to determine the scope and scale of any amendment.

As noted in the Purpose and Need for Action section, a limited amount of new direction was needed as part of this plan amendment. The Forest Service considered the existing ANF LMP to assess what would need to be changed to meet the goals outlined in the Monument Proclamation. The Forest Service also considered public comments and the applicability of the comments to plan level direction, which is strategic in nature. Land Management Plans guide project-level decisions, but do not authorize projects and activities. As a result, the Forest Service identified the following resource areas in need of additional or changed plan direction: Transportation and Access, Sustainable Recreation, Heritage Resources, Biological Resources, and Mineral Resources. The limited change needed is the basis of the final Monument Plan.

Rule requirements that are directly related to the amendment

The rule requires that substantive rule provisions (§ 219.8 through 219.11) directly related to the amendment must be applied to the amendment. A determination that a rule provision is directly related to the amendment is based on any one or more of the following criteria:

1. The purpose of the amendment (§ 219.13(b)(5)(i));
2. Beneficial effects of the amendment (§ 219.13(b)(5)(i));
3. Substantial adverse effects associated with a rule requirement (§ 219.13(b)(5)(ii)(A)); when an EA or CE is the NEPA documentation for the amendment, there is a rebuttable presumption that there is no substantial adverse effect, and thus no direct relationship between the rule and the amendment based on adverse effects (§ 219.13(b)(5)(ii)(B)).
4. Substantial lessening of protections for a specific resource or use (§ 219.13(b)(5)(ii)(A)).
5. Substantial impacts to a species or substantially lessening protections for a species (36 CFR 219.13(b)(6)).

The purpose of this amendment is to develop additional or modified plan direction necessary to provide for protection and interpretation of the scientific and historic objects identified in the

Proclamation. This new plan direction is captured in the Monument Plan and focuses on five resources: Transportation and Access, Sustainable Recreation, Heritage Resources, Biological Resources, and Mineral Resources within the Monument. NEPA analysis also indicated that the amendment would have beneficial effects on these resources. The following substantive requirements are directly related to this amendment, and apply within the scope and scale of the amendment.

The amended plan has been prepared in compliance with the Forest Service's 2012 Land Management Planning Rule at 36 CFR Part 219. The amendment meets the specific Rule requirements at 36 CFR 219.8 – 219.11 as follows:

219.8 (b) *Social and economic sustainability.* The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to guide the plan area's contribution to social and economic sustainability, taking into account:

- **(1) Social, cultural, and economic conditions relevant to the area influenced by the plan;**
- **(2) Sustainable recreation; including recreation settings, opportunities, and access; and scenic character.**

The amendment aims to provide for sustainable and diverse recreation opportunities for a changing demographic of visitors; reflect the desires of local communities; avoid user conflicts; minimize resource damage; support partnerships in accomplishing sustainable recreation goals; and enhance protection of resources, qualities, and user experience of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCT). In addition, it aims to improve road and trail conditions, improve access working together with local communities and partners, and address traffic congestion and parking issues. The plan components meet these requirements, contributing to socioeconomic sustainability by taking into account socioeconomic conditions, sustainable recreation, and scenic character.

- **(5) Cultural and historic resources and uses.**

The amendment aims to emphasize protections for heritage resources, ensure traditional tribal practices are preserved and recognized, and support partnerships in achieving goals for managing heritage resources. The Heritage Resources section of the Monument Plan includes plan components and other plan content to meet these purposes, contributing to socioeconomic sustainability by taking into account cultural and historic resources and uses.

- **(6) Opportunities to connect people with nature.**

The amendment aims to provide strengthened conservation education and interpretation programs and recreation opportunities to connect a growing and diverse population with nature. In addition, it aims to improve access to and within the Monument. The Transportation; Sustainable Recreation; and Visitor Experience, Information, and Environmental Education sections of the Monument Plan include plan components and other plan content to meet these purposes, contribute to socioeconomic sustainability by taking into account opportunities to connect people with nature.

219.9 (a) *Ecosystem plan components.* (2) *Ecosystem diversity.* The plan must include plan components, including standards or guidelines, to maintain or restore the diversity of ecosystems and habitat types throughout the plan area. In doing so, the plan must include plan components to maintain or restore:

- **(ii) Rare aquatic and terrestrial plant and animal communities.**

The amendment aims to enhance protections of habitat for sensitive, threatened and endangered species, particularly within aquatic ecosystems. The Biological Resources and Land Use Zones sections of the Monument Plan include plan components to meet

this substantive requirement, maintaining or restoring habitat, particularly rare aquatic and terrestrial plant and animal communities.

219.10 (a) *Integrated resource management for multiple use.* The plan must include plan components, including standards and guidelines, for integrated resource management to provide for ecosystem services and multiple uses in the plan area. When developing plan components for integrated resource management, to the extent relevant to the plan area and the public participation process and the requirements of §§ 219.7, 219.8, 219.9, and 219.11, the responsible official shall consider:

- **(1) Aesthetic values, air quality, cultural and heritage resources, ecosystem services, fish and wildlife species, forage, geologic features, grazing and rangelands, habitat and habitat connectivity, recreation settings and opportunities, riparian areas, scenery, soil, surface and subsurface water quality, timber, trails, vegetation, viewsheds, wilderness, and other relevant resources and uses.**

The amendment aims to provide integrated plan direction across several resource areas.

The plan components and other plan content in the Monument Plan were developed to meet this substantive requirement, providing for ecosystem services and multiple uses by considering and integrating relevant resources and uses.

- **(4) Opportunities to coordinate with neighboring landowners to link open spaces and take into account joint management objectives where feasible and appropriate.**

The amendment aims to provide for greater coordination, specifically recognizing the need to collaborate with local communities and partners when planning new trailheads and facilities, and other types of access to the Monument, as well as to support partnerships to accomplish sustainable recreation and heritage resources goals. The plan components and other plan content in the Monument Plan were developed to meet this substantive requirement for ecosystem services and multiple uses by considering opportunities to coordinate with neighbors and pursue joint management objectives where possible.

- **(6) Land status and ownership, use, and access patterns relevant to the plan area.**

The amendment clarifies that mineral and energy resources exploration and development are not suitable within the Monument (except where valid existing rights were present at the time of Monument designation) and aims to provide enhanced protection of aquatic habitat through restricted uses in Critical Biological Land Use Zones. The plan components in the Monument Plan were developed to meet these purposes, providing for ecosystem services and multiple uses by considering land use within the plan area.

- **(10) Opportunities to connect people with nature.**

The amendment aims to provide strengthened conservation education and interpretation programs and recreation opportunities to connect a growing and diverse population with nature. In addition, it aims to improve access to and within the Monument. The Transportation; Sustainable Recreation; and Visitor Experience, Information, and Environmental Education sections of the Monument Plan include plan components and other plan content to meet this substantive requirement.

Applying the 2012 Planning Rule substantive requirements to the proposed amendment, I find that the Monument Plan as proposed would meet those requirements.

Project and Activity Consistency with the Plan

The Monument Plan is an amendment to the existing ANF LMP. All future projects and activities must be consistent with the amended plan. The 2012 Planning Rule consistency provisions at 36 CFR 219.15(d) apply only to the plan components added or modified under the 2012 Planning

Rule. With respect to determinations of project consistency with other plan provisions, the Forest Service's prior interpretation of consistency (that the consistency requirement applies only to plan standards and guidelines) applies. (FSH 1909.12, ch. 20, sec. 21.33.)

Endangered Species Act

Informal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service satisfies requirements under Endangered Species Act Section 7(a) (1) and 7(a) (2). The Monument Plan consultation concurrence letter received on November 17, 2017, is an amendment to the Angeles National Forest Land Management Plan Biological Opinion issued to the ANF.

Administrative Review

This decision is subject to objection pursuant to 36 CFR 219 and must meet all of the requirements of 36 CFR 219.54. A written objection, including attachments, must be postmarked or received within 45 days after the date that notice of this draft decision is published in the *Los Angeles Times*.

Objections will be accepted only from those who have previously submitted substantive formal comments specific to the proposed plan amendment during any public comment period. Objections must meet content requirements of 36 CFR §219.54(c), including: objector's name, address, email/phone number; signature/verification of authorship upon request; identification of lead objector; name of the plan amendment; name and title of responsible official; part of plan to which objection applies; explanation of objection; suggestions to improve the plan; explanation of how plan amendment is inconsistent with law/regulation/policy, if applicable; and link between prior comments from the objector and current objection or statement that the issue arose after the opportunities for formal comment.

Written objections must be postmarked or received within 45 days of the date of publication of this legal notice in the newspaper-of-record, the *Los Angeles Times*, which is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection. Submit electronic objections (.doc, .docx, .rtf, .pdf, or .txt format) with subject: San Gabriel Mountains National Monument Objections to: objections-pacificsouthwest-regional-office@fs.fed.us; fax to (707) 562-9229; send to Bernie Gyant, 1323 Club Dr., Vallejo, CA 94592; or hand-deliver during normal business hours to the address above (8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays).

Contact

For further information, contact Rachel Smith at (626) 574-5212 during normal business hours.

Rachel Smith	Date
Acting Forest Supervisor	
Angeles National Forest and San Gabriel Mountains National Monument	