



### At a Glance:

- Located east of Los Angeles, California
- **Total Acres:** 154,000
  - **US Forest Service:** 71,000 acres
  - **Bureau of Land Management (BLM):** 83,000 acres
  - Approximately 101,000 acres are managed as Wilderness by the Forest Service and BLM
- Co-managed by the Forest Service and BLM

### What is a national monument?

The Antiquities Act of 1906 grants the President the authority to designate national monuments on federal land to protect objects of historic or scientific interest. The Sand to Snow National Monument is the 11<sup>th</sup> national monument managed by the Forest Service; it is the fourth to be managed jointly by the Forest Service and BLM.

### Who supported the national monument designation of the Sand to Snow area?

The President's proclamation was the culmination of decades of effort by residents, land managers, and local, state and federal officials to provide permanent protection of this unique and biologically important area.

In 2009, 2011 and 2015, Senator Dianne Feinstein introduced legislation to designate the Sand to Snow area as a national monument. In October 2015, the Senator hosted a public meeting in Palm Springs that attracted over 600 people; the crowd overwhelmingly supported the area's designation as a national monument. Stakeholders speaking in favor included local business owners, representatives from the California travel and tourism industry, recreationists, sporting enthusiasts, academics, and representatives of local faith-based groups. Prior to the public meeting, the Administration hosted a meeting of local tribal leaders all of whom spoke in favor of protection for the area.

### Do the Forest Service and BLM have experience jointly managing national monuments?

The Forest Service and the BLM have shared management of the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto

Mountains National Monument in Southern California since 2000, as well as the newly designated Browns Canyon National Monument in Colorado and the Berryessa Snow Mountain National Monument in northern California.

### How will the two federal agencies manage the national monument together?

The Forest Service and BLM will jointly prepare a national monument management plan that will address the actions necessary to protect the resources identified in the proclamation. The plan will be developed with maximum public involvement, including tribal, local and State governments, permit holders, and other stake-holders. National monument management plans typically address many important priorities, including:

- Promoting cooperative conservation and management opportunities
- Enhancing recreational opportunities
- Managing invasive nonnative species
- Protecting important cultural resources
- Restoring fish and wildlife habitat and preserving migration corridors



*Photo courtesy of Tom McIntosh*





In fact, the headwaters of the Whitewater and Santa Ana rivers lie within the national monument boundaries, and the designation could provide additional protections for these critical water sources.

### **Does the national monument designation affect private property rights inside or outside of the proposed national monument boundary?**

The national monument designation will not impact the rights of private landowners within or adjacent to the national monument, including existing access within the national monument boundary.

In addition to the 154,000 acres of Federal lands, the Sand to Snow National Monument boundary encompasses approximately 2,000 acres of land owned by the State of California and 18,000 acres owned by private landowners — much of it by the nonprofit Wildlands Conservancy and other local conservation organizations. The non-Federal lands within the national monument boundary would not be part of the national monument unless subsequently and voluntarily acquired by the Federal Government.

### **Are there recreation opportunities in this area?**

The San Geronio Mountain region serves as an important recreational hub for 24 million people living within a two-hour drive of the area. The Sand to Snow National Monument includes 30 miles of the 2,600-mile Pacific Crest Trail. Local hikers on a shorter itinerary flock to San Geronio Peak, the tallest in Southern California. Cross-country skiers enjoy the San Geronio Mountains in the winter.



A series of preserves owned by the Wildlands Conservancy are managed for public access and serve as entry points from the north, south, and east of the national monument. Visitors enjoy camping, hiking, backpacking, climbing, horse packing, bird watching, hunting, fishing, stargazing, mountain biking, and extraordinary opportunities for solitude.

### **Does the national monument designation affect existing rights-of-way or commercial activities?**

The national monument designation does not alter or affect valid existing rights of any party. Most existing public and commercial activities will continue, as long as they are consistent with the care and management of the objects or resources identified in the national monument proclamation.

### **Are existing Special Use Permits impacted by national monument designation?**

Each agency will continue to apply the laws, regulations and policies currently used in issuing and administering permits on public lands in the national monument so long as they are consistent with the proper care and management of the objects or resources identified by the national monument designation.

### **Does national monument designation affect the ability to suppress and manage wildfires in the proposed national monument area?**

The national monument designation will not change current tactics or impact the suppression of wildfires. All future management will continue to focus first on public and firefighter safety while taking actions to protect valuable resources. Tools like prescribed fire may be used in the national monument to address the risk of wildfire, insect infestation or disease that would imperil public safety or endanger the objects or resources protected by the national monument designation.

### **Does national monument designation impact water delivery, especially in this period of historic drought?**

Drought is an unpredictable, frequent and formidable visitor to California. In the past 100 years, California has experienced seven periods of drought. California's forests are exhibiting signs of stress from the most recent drought and the effects of climate change.

The national monument designation will not affect normal water delivery to agricultural, rural or urban communities.

## What is unique about the Sand to Snow Mountain Area?

### ***Geologic Drama: Long Shadows on the Desert Floor***

The focal point of the Sand to Snow National Monument is the 11,500-foot San Gorgonio Mountain, which rises sharply from the Sonoran Desert floor and is the highest peak in California south of the Sierra Nevada. This mountain is one of eleven peaks that are over 10,000 feet in elevation in the southeast portion of the San Bernardino Mountains. The area has some of the most rugged topography in Southern California, with steep slopes culminating in a granite ridge over seven miles long and two miles high.

Along the remarkable topographic gradient between the sharp rise of the flat desert lowlands to the soaring mountain peaks lies an unusually wide range of ecosystems, from lowland Mojave and Colorado deserts to scrub and woodlands, and Mediterranean chaparral to subalpine and alpine conifer forests.



### ***Habitat Linkages — an Ecological Social Network***

The San Gorgonio Wilderness within the Sand to Snow National Monument contains large unfragmented habitat areas with no roads, and serves as an important habitat linkage area between the San Bernardino and San Jacinto mountain ranges.

Twelve federally listed threatened and endangered animal species live in this dramatic landscape, which is also famous for its oases frequented by over 240 species of birds. The area is home to the southern-most stand of Quaking Aspen trees and habitat for the California spotted owl. There are also two research natural areas, one with relatively undisturbed vegetation that provides excellent wildlife habitat including one of the highest densities of black bear habitats in Southern California.

The Sand to Snow National Monument is an incredibly diverse protected area with a wide range of ecosystems ranging from lowland deserts, fresh water marshes, and Mojave riparian forests, to creosote bush scrub ecosystems and alpine peaks. Hundreds of springs rise to the surface at



South Fork Meadows, the origin of the South Fork of the Santa Ana River. The Sand to Snow area has been important to biological and ecological research, as well as studies of climate and land use change, and the impact of fire and invasive species management. The area has a remarkable species richness that makes it one of the most biodiverse areas in Southern California.

### ***Strong Heritage — Links to the Past***

The human history of the Sand to Snow area extends back thousands of years. People now identified as part of the Takic subset of the large Uto-Aztecan group of Native Americans arrived in the region approximately 2,500 years ago. Native tribes depended on a wide variety of plants from both the mountains and the Mojave Desert, such as honey mesquite, oak, piñon, cactus fruits, yucca roots and tubers as well as grasses, seeds, and berries. The San Gorgonio Pass served as a major trade route that led from Arizona to the California coast.

Black Lava Butte, topped by distinctive basaltic lava flows, is sacred to the Serrano Tribe and home to a substantial number of archaeological sites, including evidence of habitation, rock art, and possible ritual activities. Black Lava Butte contains an estimated 1,700 distinct petroglyphs, most of which have not yet been studied and may provide insight into the history of the Serrano and other tribes in the region.

After the 1860 gold rush, ranchers used the area for grazing sheep, horses, and cattle. Old driveways, watering holes, and campsites remain a part of the landscape today. Although not particularly successful, many miners prospected in the southeastern portions of the San Bernardino Mountains. Evidence still remains in the form of old cabins, mine shafts and prospecting pits.

By the mid-1920s, drastic changes had occurred, and the area began attracting 75,000 to 100,000 people to the San Bernardino Mountains for recreation and outdoor enjoyment. It was during this time that the movement to protect this unique area began.