

HACIENDA HEIGHTS IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION
COMMITTEE REPORT
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
JEFF YANN, CHAIR

MEETING DATE: September 15, 2014

NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

Joan Licari and I attended the meeting to discuss possible implementation of a San Gabriel National Monument held in Baldwin Park on August 26. The meeting was conducted by the US national Forest Service and included both political figures involved with the proposed San Gabriel National Recreation Area as well as technical experts who could provide background information pertinent to formation of a National Monument. Congresswoman Judy Chu introduced the topic and stated that she continues to pursue both options and that the NRA legislation remains an active bill in Congress. Since the National Monument would only include federal land—largely those portions of Angeles National Forest and San Bernardino National Forest within the current NRA boundaries—it would have no bearing on the Puente Hills. Its implementation would be beneficial to recreation in the San Gabriel Valley as it would more appropriately focus attention and funding on use of the mountains for recreational and outdoor educational purposes consistent with the predominant use of these forests. Although the area would likely continue to be managed by the Forest Service, the National Park Service would play an important role in recreational and interpretive facilities as well as resource protection.

This is a highly workable concept used prominently by President Bill Clinton during his term of office. In fact, the concept goes back to Teddy Roosevelt who used this option to establish initial protection for the Grand Canyon and the magnificent archeological treasures of Chaco Canyon.. Of those established by President Clinton, I have visited Grand Staircase-Escalante, Ironwood Tree NM, Carrizo Plains NM, Sonoran Desert NM, Canyon of the Ancients NM, Vermilion Cliffs NM, Agua Prieta NM and Giant Sequoia NM. Although less spectacular than the granite cliffs of Yosemite or thermal features of Yellowstone, many preserve unique archeological, biological, or geological features. More importantly, many national monuments have been elevated to National Park status, with California's Pinnacles National Monument being the latest. Furthermore, many have been expanded to include other federal or private lands which have been deeded over to them.

The meeting was attended by more than 600 people. It was conducted as an informational meeting and not a public hearing. It was clear that residents of San Bernardino County were not familiar with the concept as the initial Park Service study only included Angeles National Forest. Forest Service management expressed an open interest in continued study and consideration of the concept and there is apparent interest as well on the part of the Administration.

SOLID WASTE ALTERNATIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Senate Bill 498, introduced by Senator Richard Lara has passed both legislative houses and is awaiting signature. The bill establishes conversion technologies as a potential means of solid waste processing but is largely limited to biomass materials rather than municipal solid waste. County Public Works is encouraged to have gotten this far but recognizes that this is just a first step toward getting conversion technologies formally recognized as a significant concept to relieve dependence on landfills.