



Foundation Document Overview

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

California



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Contact Information

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Purpose



SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS NATIONAL RECREATION AREA is a collaborative partnership that protects a mosaic of natural resources, cultural heritage, and scenery within North America's Mediterranean biome, and provides public enjoyment opportunities, including connections to wild places in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area.

Significance

Significance statements express why Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- **High Biodiversity / Mediterranean Ecosystem** – Influenced by the mild climate and complex geologic setting, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area contains high concentrations of rare, sensitive, and endemic species, and represents one of the best remaining examples of the Mediterranean biome in North America. Mediterranean ecosystems are among the world's rarest and most endangered land types, occurring in only five locations throughout the world.
- **Recreational Opportunities / National Park Gateway** – The coastal and mountainous terrain of Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area offers an abundance of recreational, health, and educational benefits and contributes clean air and water for the Los Angeles Region. Its proximity to one of the most densely populated regions of the United States provides a gateway to experience national park sites and other public parklands.



Significance

- **Scientific Understanding** – The Santa Monica Mountains provide an opportunity for understanding how to protect high biodiversity in a vast urban area. Additionally, the rich concentration of resources, which include an extensive range of native vegetation communities, archeological sites, and geologic and paleontological features, are all in close proximity to numerous research institutions, providing exceptional opportunities for scientific study.
- **Archeology** – Native American occupation in the Santa Monica Mountains spans more than 10,000 years, as reflected in a diversity of well-preserved archeological sites. American Indian groups, including the Chumash and Tongva, continue to have cultural ties to these resources and their associated landscapes.
- **Scenic Resources** – Extending from Point Mugu to downtown Los Angeles, the rugged landscape and geologic features of the Santa Monica Mountains serve as an urban refuge and offer a variety of exceptional vistas from expansive ocean and mountain views and urban skylines to secluded canyons and miles of seashore.
- **Film-Making History** – Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area's varied coastal and mountain landscapes, in close proximity to Hollywood, played a significant role in the film industry's transition from studio production to on-location filming, as represented by Paramount Ranch, one of the best remaining examples of an early movie ranch. These landscapes continue to provide backdrops for film production today.



Fundamental Resources and Values



Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Fully Functioning Native Habitats with High Native Diversity**
- **Science-Informed Stewardship / Learning Laboratory**
- **Habitat Connectivity**
- **Access to Year-Round Recreation and Exploration Opportunities**
- **Coastal and Mountain Landscapes**
- **Native American Archeology**
- **Filming Sites and Settings**

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Sites and Landscapes Representative of Southern California History**
- **Ethnographic Resources**
- **Paleontological Resources**

Description

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, the nation's largest urban national park, comprises a vast and varied California landscape, including 21 miles of marine shoreline, in and around the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area. Totalling 153,250 acres of rugged mountains, narrow canyons, chaparral, and ocean surf, the Santa Monica Mountains embody coastal southern California. The mild climate allows visitors to enjoy its scenic, natural, and cultural resources throughout the year.

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area features some of the best remaining examples of the Mediterranean biome, a land type that is among the rarest on earth. The mild and pleasant climate makes this biome ideal for human occupation, a significant reason why only 20% of the world's Mediterranean biomes remain intact. With one of the highest concentrations of rare species in the United States, the Santa Monica Mountains' ecosystems provide habitat for hundreds of species of plants and wildlife.

Rich and diverse cultural resources are represented in the Santa Monica Mountains. Some 1,000 archeological sites provide insight into more than 10,000 years of Native American history. Settlers, ranchers, and other more recent arrivals, drawn to the resources of the Santa Monica Mountains, have changed and continue to change the ecology of the landscape. The national recreation area includes a portion of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail. The national historic trail recognizes the first successful overland route facilitating Spanish colonization of Alta California with the

founding of the presidio and community of San Francisco. The metropolitan region surrounding Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area has influenced the world with its innovative contemporary architecture, literature, performing arts, music, and recreational pursuits. The important role the Santa Monica Mountains played in the development of the film industry is notable, serving as a primary destination for on-location filming.

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is located in one of the nation's fastest growing and diverse urban areas. More than 18 million people live within an hour's drive of Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. The mountains rise out of the heart of Los Angeles and follow the Pacific coast some 50 miles west to Point Mugu in Ventura County. The national recreation area is at once an integral part of the city and a world apart.

The U.S. Congress created Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in 1978 and granted the National Park Service the authority to promote a level of shared management of the national recreation area. Today, it is a cooperative effort that joins federal, state, and local park agencies with nonprofit organizations and private landowners to protect the area's resources and provide public enjoyment opportunities. Roughly 84,000 acres of land within the 153,250-acre Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is preserved for resource protection and/or public enjoyment. The National Park Service itself has direct responsibility for 15% of the land (23,500 acres).

