



# SANTA SUSANA MOUNTAIN PARK ASSOCIATION

*Dedicated to the Preservation of the Santa Susana Mountains and Simi Hills*

A Non-Profit 501(c)(4) Organization  
Incorporated November 30, 1971

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January 7, 2013

**Comments of Santa Susana Mountain Park Association on  
“Rim of the Valley Corridor Special Resource Study; Preliminary Findings & Alternative Concepts,”  
presented by National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior**

Dear ROV Study Members and National Park Service Administrators,

Key recommendations

1. The Santa Susana Mountain Park Association (SSMPA) staunchly supports extension of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area into the areas shown under Alternative C.
2. We also staunchly support habitat linkage, however that linkage may best be accomplished, between the northern border of the study area and the Los Padres National Forest (as shown in your Alternative D).

Supporting Comments

Simi Hills

SSMPA is especially troubled about ongoing intense development pressure in the Simi Hills. The Simi Hills occupy the high ground between the San Fernando Valley and Simi Valley. Several large parcels of land are presently available, or will be available in the near future, that could provide contiguous open space between the Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Preserve (formerly Ahmanson Ranch), to the Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park (which is contiguous to Corriganville operated by the MRCA, which in turn accommodates the wildlife corridor tunnel under the 118 freeway to open space north of the 118 freeway, just west of the Rocky Peak off-ramp).

Chatsworth Nature Preserve

The Chatsworth Nature Preserve sits in a unique and important area of this habitat linkage. It is 1200 acres of open space that borders with Woolsey Canyon and the Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL) to the south and west, and through private open land to Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park on the North. It serves as an alternate corridor for wildlife below the ridge lines. We vigorously urge inclusion of the Chatsworth Nature Preserve in your final ROV Corridor report and we would like to see it incorporated into any future NPS area.

Santa Susana Field Lab (SSFL)

The large Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL) property is in this critical linkage area, occupying the ridgeline between the Simi Valley and the San Fernando Valley. The property's crucial location and its diversity of plants and wildlife make it, in our opinion, a very attractive prospective addition to the future ROV corridor within an expanded SMMNRA. Because of the historic significance, high elevation, and tremendous natural beauty of the entire SSFL, as well the fact it is contiguous to the

Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Preserve, we strongly recommend extension of the SMMNRA to encompass all SSFL properties.

#### SSFL: Boeing

Boeing owns 2,200 acres of SSFL land. Boeing has indicated willingness to help their property ultimately become part of a public park. It appears likely Boeing would simply transfer the land after it is cleaned up by the work they will do with the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) over the next few years.

#### SSFL: NASA

NASA owns a 400-acre parcel within the SSFL. The NASA site is in the center area of the high mesa, and includes a remarkable, well-preserved Native American pictograph site, registered with the National Register of Historic Places (#76000539 *NRIS*). The NASA site also harbors a very significant Native American archaeological district with many artifacts that attest that the area was heavily used by Native Americans.

#### NPS Acquisition of SSFL: NASA

The NASA property is presently undergoing a government-required formal disposition process. We urge the National Park Service to formally indicate an interest in the NASA parcel. We encourage NPS to pursue acquisition of the NASA parcel, and to coordinate management of the Native American sites by local Native American descendants, with appropriate agreements in place to ensure controlled public access to the sites and appropriate management of the sites.

We believe the NPS is the only entity with the expertise to preserve this land in perpetuity. Some of the SSFL land is particularly suited to accommodate a public museum commemorating our nation's rocketry achievements, and the rest of the land is critical habitat linking the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, the Santa Susana Mountains and Los Padres National Forest.

Although we recommend that NPS step forward now to indicate interest in the NASA parcel, actual transfer of management should not occur until this parcel has been cleaned up by NASA under the supervision of DTSC. Under the federal government process for disposal of excess property, the ownership transfer must happen in the near future. However, such transfer would include a binding obligation of NASA to clean up the parcel to appropriate standards prior to transfer of the management of the property. NPS, however, must step forward now, if this key parcel is to be preserved for public use in the future.

#### Federal Ownership and Private Partnerships

Your alternatives included possible partnerships with private individuals. We encourage such partnerships, yet we believe that unrestrained development would likely occur if NPS has no management input. Therefore, we prefer a plan that encourages federal ownership of key parcels to provide for core trails for the ROV and essential space for a viable wildlife corridor. We also encourage NPS to work with owners of private parcels to establish conservation easements and other tax incentives that would take critical properties out of danger of development. We encourage use of such protective measures as well as deed restrictions and covenants that would limit future uses of these properties to open space and parkland.

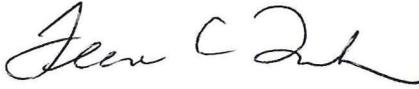
#### Administration of East Valley Rim

We heard a suggestion at a meeting which may make sense. Namely, if the Verdugo Mountains are brought into the ROV management area (in whatever form it may take), management and responsibility of that parcel and other similarly sited parcels in that general area, could be placed under the Angeles

National Forest. Operational efficiencies may be gained by having management closer to the parcel. This arrangement seems to make budget sense, as well as allows faster emergency response from staff when necessary.

We look forward to seeing future alternatives as you gather more information from potential users in the community. If we can assist your work in any way, please let us know how we can help.

Sincerely,



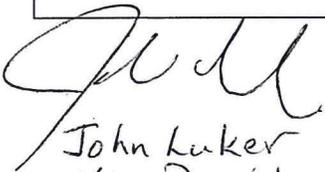
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**About Santa Susana Mountain Park Association:**

Santa Susana Mountain Park Association is a 41 year-old non-profit organization based in Chatsworth, Los Angeles, California.

We represent approximately 400 members and concerned citizens, and we partner with many organizations to promote ecological and recreational quality in Southern California.

SSMPA's mission is to preserve and protect habitats for plants and animals native to our area, preserve unique geological formations, and sites of ethnological, archaeological, and historic interest, particularly in the Simi Hills and Santa Susana Mountains. We also seek to provide passive recreational and environmental education opportunities, support the acquisition of new public parks, and open space and conservation easements, expand existing natural parks, and to participate in the planning of park infrastructure and programs.



John Luker  
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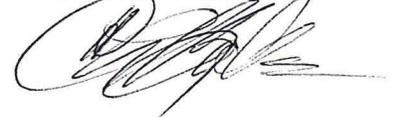


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