



Urban Parks and Los Angeles' Heritage

The Rim of the Valley (ROTV) traces its roots back almost 90 years to what many refer to as the "Olmsted Plan," which envisioned a comprehensive network of parks, mountains, beaches, and forests to ensure the health and vitality of the Los Angeles region. Today, the ROTV refers to a plan to link some of the last open space, wildlife habitat, and cultural resources surrounding the San Fernando Valley and reaching into downtown Los Angeles. It received a significant boost in 2008 when legislation introduced by Representative Adam Schiff (D-Burbank) authorized the National Park Service to conduct the Rim of the Valley Corridor Special Resource Study.

The NPS completed its preliminary study in 2012 and found a wealth of nationally significant natural and cultural resources throughout the study area. The findings support the idea of expanding the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA). Two themes also emerged from the study: 1) the importance of protecting wildlife corridors, restoring habitat connectivity, and promoting the health and resiliency of the regional ecosystem, and 2) the importance of reaching out to and

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Mammoth Victory

Nevada's Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument

New legislation has created seven new national park units, expanded nine current national park sites, funded more than a dozen studies for additional parks, and continued the operation of several National Heritage Areas, amounting to the largest expansion of the National Park System since 1978.

Passed in December's waning days of Congress, the legislative success has been lauded as an enormous achievement, the result of an immense amount of community organizing and work with Congressional members over many years. In Nevada, we're calling the victory *mammoth*.

Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument—America's 405th national park unit—was created to protect 22,650 acres on the northern edge of the Las Vegas Valley. The badlands-like landscape is rich with the fossils of Columbian mammoths, American lions, bison, dire wolves, saber tooth cats and some of the most unusual species to ever walk this continent. The new national monument tells the story of survival, adaptation, evolution, and extinction. Notably, the fossils represent nearly 200,000 years in time, allowing scientists to compare the fossils of Columbian mammoths that died 16,000 years ago to fossils from a mammoth that succumbed 116,000 years

ago, which can provide important clues about warming and cooling periods.

Discovered in the early 1900s and selected by the National Science Foundation in the early 1960s for a "big dig" project, Tule Springs once welcomed camps of scientists and inspired dozens of scientific reports. Decades later, Las Vegas developers eyed the land and planned to build as many as 40,000 new homes.

When NPCA came on the scene, the desert landscape had been carved with the tracks



Above: Sharing fossil education with the next generation © Protectors of Tule Springs **Top:** Recent excavations at Tule Springs have unearthed the remains of top-tier predators like the dire wolf and saber-tooth tiger. © Mark Hallett Paleoint | Science Source

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FIELD REPORT

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Letter from the Senior Regional Director

This winter has been a very productive time. First up, a new national park unit right on the border of Las Vegas. As reported by our Nevada Senior Program Manager, Lynn Davis, legislation creating the Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument was passed by Congress and signed by the President in December. That victory, a very sweet one, has been a long time coming. Lynn and various ally groups began the campaign to designate this incredible fossil-rich area as a national park site six years ago. Persistence pays off!

The second major development, part of the same bill, is the Buffalo Soldiers in the National Parks Study Act. This study will take a detailed look at the historic role Buffalo Soldiers played in protecting Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks before the National Park Service had been created. We hope that the study will result in legislation to create a national historic trail that follows the route that the Buffalo Soldiers took from the Presidio in San Francisco to Yosemite and Sequoia.



Finally, just this past week, a third major development was the President's action creating a new national monument in Hawaii. The Honouliuli National Monument will increase public awareness and understanding of one of the most challenging chapters in American history. The Honouliuli internment camp, on the Island of Oahu, opened in 1943 and was the largest of

five internment camps in Hawaii. During WWII, the camp was used to hold Japanese-Americans, European Americans, and resident immigrants whose race and ethnicity were believed to be evidence of disloyalty to the U.S. government.

These three victories are sweet, but we still have more projects on our plate and more victories to come, including a major expansion of Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

Ron Sundergill

Protecting Wildlife in Los Angeles

Last year we reported on the plight of mountain lions and other carnivores in and around the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation (SMMNRA). Many of these carnivores were falling victim to anti-coagulant rodenticides, more commonly known as rat poisons, which enter the food chain because of their use by nearby home owners, businesses, schools, and parks. Over two decades, 88 percent of carnivores tested by the National Park Service showed exposure to such compounds, often leading to their deaths.

Due in part to NPCA's work to engage members of the California State Legislature, the future of these carnivores is looking brighter. In September, Governor Brown

signed into law AB 2657, which banned the use of these poisons near wildlife habitats. This is predicted to lead to a decline in poison use in and around the SMMNRA, where the mountain lions are already struggling with habitat fragmentation, motorists, and other challenges.

We are also pleased to report that Los Angeles' famous mountain lion, P-22, is showing signs of recovery from exposure to these same poisons. When the Griffith Park resident was tranquilized, tested, and treated in the spring, he appeared weak and full of mange. In the fall, however, camera trap images revealed a much healthier and robust animal. "He looks healthy and has a full belly," said NPS biologist Jeff Sikich.



©NPS

Los Angeles' famous mountain lion, P-22, is showing signs of recovery from exposure to anti-coagulant rodenticide, more commonly known as rat poisons.

TWO THEMES EMERGED FROM THE STUDY:

1) the importance of protecting wildlife corridors, restoring habitat connectivity, and promoting the health and resiliency of the regional ecosystem

2) the importance of reaching out to and engaging a broad range of audiences, including residents in urban neighborhoods, communities of color, and other populations not traditionally connected to the national park system.



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engaging a broad range of audiences, including residents in urban neighborhoods, communities of color, and other populations not traditionally connected to the national park system.

These themes address some of the most urgent conservation and environmental justice challenges facing the LA area. Rampant urban development has resulted in extensive habitat fragmentation, leading the SMMNRA to become increasingly isolated from other large natural areas, such as the Los Padres and Angeles National Forests. This, in turn, has led to genetic isolation and in-breeding in many species, threatening their long-term survival. Additionally, LA is one of the most park-poor regions of the country, lagging far behind other major cities in the accessibility of open space and outdoor recreation. With over 17 million residents within a two hour drive of the SMMNRA, the problem is particularly acute in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color, where lack of access to open space contributes to a wide range of educational, economic, and public health disparities.

The ROTV addresses these issues by facilitating NPS collaboration with local jurisdictions and other public land managers. It builds on the highly successful track record and best practice of the SMMNRA and expands its boundaries into LA's urban core, bringing potential NPS resources and expertise to iconic city parks, critical urban water sheds, and invaluable cultural and historic sites. It also enhances the NPS' ability to engage urban populations, develop educational programs, and formulate access strategies for underserved communities.

The NPS is scheduled to release its final recommendations in the spring of 2015. Schiff, whose district covers much of the ROTV study area, has confirmed his plans to introduce legislation after a thorough public comment period.

Since late 2014, NPCA's Los Angeles Field Office has been actively reaching out to constituents throughout the ROTV study area to build support and momentum for



the initiative. In January, it launched the ROTV Coalition, a diverse network of open-space advocates, environmental justice advocates, historic preservation groups, and other community-based organizations. For more information about the Rim of the Valley campaign, contact NPCA's Los Angeles Field Office or visit the campaign Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Rim-of-the-Valley-Campaign/336116289893321?ref=hl>.

Above: Sage Ranch, a critical wildlife corridor connecting the Santa Monica Mountains to other natural habitat. ©Tom Gamache

Silurian Valley Victory!

What is one of the most remote, historic, biodiverse, and scenic places in the California desert? The answer is the Silurian Valley, located just north of Baker, California, and a gateway to Death Valley National Park. Anybody who has seen this beautiful valley, its wildlife and the surrounding mountains would know that this is a place that should be protected, but until recently, it was threatened by a large, utility-scale solar development that would have sprawled across thousands of acres of pristine land. NPCA mobilized conservation groups, local advocates, communities, business owners, recreational users, Native American Tribes, and scientists

to speak out against the project and make sure that the Silurian Valley is protected for future generations. The California Bureau of Land Management, which manages the area, heard our voices and rejected the solar development proposal, preserving golden eagles, a critical tortoise migration corridor, migrating birds, bats, the historic Old Spanish Trail, and an expeditionary off-road vehicle route that winds its way through this remote country. This victory took tenacity and persistence, but threats remain including an appeal for the solar project and a wind proposal by the same project proponent. NPCA and its allies will continue to fight to protect this special landscape.



Above: Silurian Valley ©Michael Gordon

Join the Conversation

Senator Feinstein recently introduced **S414, the California Desert Conservation and Recreation Act** into the U.S. Congress. This visionary bill would protect the heart of the California desert, add land to our national parks, create two new national monuments, and designate wild and scenic river segments and new wilderness areas. The legislation, which attempts to balance recreation with conservation, would also preserve in perpetuity five existing off-road vehicle areas so recreationists have legal places to ride.

Please see <https://www.facebook.com/CalDesert?fref=nf> for more details on this important legislation!



Find Your Voice

Los Angeles will serve as the location for the West Coast launch of NPCA's Find Your Voice campaign, which seeks to engage a new generation of national park advocates and stewards to coincide with the National Park Service (NPS) Centennial in 2016. LA's selection also coincides with the Rim of the Valley campaign, an effort to significantly expand the nearby Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area for the benefit of over 17 million residents (see story on page one).

Working with a variety of local partners and allies, NPCA will sponsor two LA area Find Your Voice events in 2015. The first, scheduled for April 18th, will take place at Ernest Debs Park, an urban park providing much-needed open space to area residents. In conjunction with Audubon California, NPS, and other partners, NPCA is organizing a diverse cohort of volunteers to build a native plant nursery. The nursery will grow seedlings for re-planting in the park and other areas to help restore native habitat. The second event will take place on July 18th at the City's birthplace, El Pueblo de Los Angeles, a historic settlement in the heart of downtown LA. NPCA is working with the site's management, history students from a local university, and others to revitalize a desert garden, paint a mural, and conduct other restoration activities.

Both sites are included in the NPS' Rim of the Valley Corridor Special Resource Study and will help bring attention to that campaign. But they also provide an opportunity for NPCA to engage a diverse group of volunteers, introducing them to these treasured sites and empowering the next generation of park enthusiasts to find their collective and individual voices for park advocacy.

Above: Mariachi performers on Olvera Street, the birthplace of Los Angeles and one of the historic resources in the Rim of the Valley corridor. ©Tom Gamache

Kaloko-Honokohau: Protecting Hawaii's Legacy



NPCA is working with local allies and the National Park Service to protect the water quality and quantity essential to the park while having a sustainable framework for the community to thrive.

preserve and protect Kaloko-Honokōhau. It is this ground water that feeds the pools, fish ponds, and wetlands that the park was created to protect. Over the years, the adjacent city of Kona has continued to grow. Increased groundwater withdrawals from new development threaten natural ecosystems and cultural resources in the park and surrounding areas. This is why NPCA is working with local allies and the National Park Service to protect the water quality and quantity essential to the park while having a sustainable framework for the community to thrive.

On the Big Island of Hawaii, Kaloko-Honokohau National Historical Park preserves the history, native culture, and the natural resources of Hawaii. Thirty-five years ago, the people of Hawaii asked

the United States government to recognize this important place and to help Hawaiians protect it. Generations of Hawaiians knew that fresh water flowing underground from mauka (upland) areas was necessary to

Left: Outrigger Canoe at Kaloko-Honokohau ©NPS **Below:** Buffalo Soldiers at Mariposa Grove ©1905, H.C. White Co. | NPS

**Save
the
Date**



Join us for a conversation about using stories to tell our nation's history and our plan to inspire more Americans to visit and protect their national parks.

Tuesday, May 19
San Francisco-Downtown

Wednesday, May 20
Los Angeles-Venice

SPEAKERS

Craig Obey
Senior Vice President
Government Affairs

Alan Spears
Cultural Resources Director

For more information, please visit
www.npca.org/speaker



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Mammoth Victory

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of off-road motorcycles and trucks, and littered with an astonishing array of trash—everything from massive aquariums to washer-dryer sets and old rolls of carpeting. Undoubtedly, many surface fossils were crushed as people raced and revved their vehicles, and as people dumped their trash.

Over a six-year campaign, NPCA built a strong and diverse coalition which included the Nevada Governor and state parks leaders,

state legislators and Clark County commissioners, the cities of Las Vegas and North Las Vegas, the U.S. Air Force, Las Vegas Paiute tribe, neighborhood and friends groups, educators, tourism industry leaders, and conservation organizations.

Nevada’s entire Congressional delegation—three Democrats and three Republicans—co-sponsored the legislation to make Tule Springs a monument. Senator Harry Reid, then Senate Majority Leader, and his staff

played a key role—in moving the legislation forward and building a package of national parks bills that were passed with the National Defense Authorization Act in December.

As a result of the designation, the National Park Service immediately set up an interim management team, created a Facebook page and website: www.nps.gov/tusk. And NPS Chief Paleontologist Vince Santucci has accepted a temporary assignment to guide the new team forward as they make plans for protecting priceless fossil resources.

Left: Field trip to the fossilized remains of a Columbian mammoth ©Protectors of Tule Springs



NPCA continues to work with coalition leaders in initiating discussions on how to build a model urban national monument. The hope is that the unit’s proximity to nearby residential areas can be used to build stewardship, and that the River Trails Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program and other key stakeholders can work together to integrate city and federal trails.



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