



Thirteen Compelling Reasons for Congress to Work Together

Kati Schmidt

Buffalo Soldiers, Harriet Tubman, Saber-tooth cats, Pullman porters, the Manhattan Project. While seemingly unrelated, these people, animals and places are among those connected to 13 pieces of legislation, backed by bipartisan Congressional support, which would enhance our National Park System. These proposals also enjoy diverse and ever-growing support in communities across the country.



Proposals include creating new urban national parks in fossil-rich lands just outside of Las Vegas and in history-seeped areas within Chicago's city limits.

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Above: Tule Springs ©Mark Hallett Paleont, Science Source

Preserving Los Angeles' Last Great Wilderness

Dennis Arguelles

The San Gabriel Mountains and Angeles National Forest form an iconic backdrop to the Los Angeles basin, with towering alpine peaks, pristine rivers and streams, and an ecosystem that includes desert, chaparral, oak woodland, and riparian habitats. Home to 16 threatened and endangered species, the area is an important source of open space and outdoor recreation, supplies up to a third of Los Angeles County's drinking water, and harbors cultural and historic sites dating back as far as 7,000 years. The area is now poised for greater protection and represents one of the region's most significant conservation opportunities in a generation.

The 600,000 acres in the San Gabriel Mountains are within a one-hour drive of almost 17 million residents in Los Angeles and surrounding counties. Many residents lack parks in their neighborhood, so the San Gabriels are their primary access to the outdoors. More than 3.5 million people visit these mountains each year, and this heavy use has led to calls for greater protection, better management and improved access.

In 2003, then Congresswoman Hilda Solis answered the call and launched the San Gabriel Watershed and Mountains Special Resource Study, which the National Park

Service completed in 2013. Today, Pasadena-area Congresswoman Judy Chu is leading the charge. In March, her office drafted three bills: one establishes a new National Recreation Area (NRA) and unit of the National Park Service, a second assigns Wild and Scenic River designation to important parts of the watershed, and a third creates new Wilderness Area status within the range.

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NPCA is working with Congresswoman Chu's office to build support for the proposed legislation and recently joined the San Gabriel Mountains Forever (SGMF) coalition. The leading proponent of the San Gabriel NRA, SGMF is a diverse coalition of conservation organizations, urban park and open space advocates, outdoor education and recreation groups, and representatives of ethnic and immigrant communities.

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Top: San Gabriel Mountain Wilderness ©Rennett Stowe

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King of the Forest... or Not

When Bert Lahr appeared as the Cowardly Lion in the 1939 film version of *The Wizard of Oz*, he talked and sang about his desire to be the “king of the forest.” Ultimately he was the king in that film fantasy, but here in real life—in present-day urban and suburban California—our remaining lions are not kings. The article inside about the Griffith Park Lion (with the unimaginative name of P-22), illustrates one problem faced by California’s mountain lions. NPCA is doing something about it. Because wildlife, including mountain lions, are losing their natural habitat to development, a growing number of animals die as a result of human interference. The Griffith Park mountain lion migrated out of Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and then crossed super freeways in search of a mate. He ate small mammals, including rats, along the way. The chemically laced bait (rodenticide) that homeowners place in their yards to kill rats can also



harm—and in some instances—kill mountain lions.

What can be done to help this iconic species? Dennis Arguelles, NPCA’s Program Manager in Los Angeles, is working to pass legislation that would address the problem of secondary poisoning of wildlife like P-22 and other large mammals such as bobcats. We hope that Dennis’

program of action, which he describes in his article, will correct this problem. NPCA will be calling on our members and activists to email, write letters and make phone calls to your elected officials to help get this important legislation through the California Legislature.

California mountain lions deserve to stay poison free and live long lives—truly becoming “kings of the forest” in and near our national parks. With your help, we can do this!

Ron Sundergill

Preserving Los Angeles' Last Great Wilderness



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“The San Gabriel Mountains include some of the most diverse habitats and ecosystems found in North America,” says Chu. “This draft legislation will ensure additional resources, more stakeholder control, and a sound balance between recreational opportunities and critical water management.” While promoting the NRA, both SGMF and Chu are also pursuing a National Monument

declaration and have petitioned President Obama for administrative action under the Antiquities Act.

For more information about the proposed San Gabriel NRA: www.sangabrielmountains.org.

Above: Devil’s Punchbowl in San Gabriel Mountains ©Ken Wolter

More Camping, Less Traffic at Yosemite?

Neal Desai

Long-awaited change is coming to Yosemite Valley, following the release of a new blueprint for restoring the Merced Wild and Scenic River and enhancing opportunities for public enjoyment in the park's famed valley. Earlier this year—after more than a decade of lawsuits—the Park Service released its final Merced River Plan that aims to fix problems ranging from traffic jams to cluttered commercial development.

Anyone who has visited Yosemite Valley during the busy summer season is aware of the long lines of idling cars in an area John Muir famously and accurately described as “the grandest of all the special temples of Nature.” The Merced River Plan calls for redesigned roads, pathways, and parking,

expanded access to free hybrid shuttles, and continued bike rental operations, which will result in less congestion and confusion in the park.

The Park Service will improve the resiliency of the Merced River by beginning work this year on restoring 189 acres of meadows and parkland near the river while removing 6,048 linear feet of riprap to restore the river's natural flow. The plan will increase camping opportunities by 37 percent in East Yosemite Valley, while reducing the number of commercial and administrative buildings near the river.

But these improvements almost did not happen, as members of Congress pressured the Park Service to maintain the status quo. With the help of our members and supporters,

NPCA developed the public and political support to stop these misguided efforts. While NPCA was meeting with elected officials in Washington, DC and California to build support for improving Yosemite, thousands of our members wrote to the Park Service, demanding that the park visitor's experience be improved.

As Yosemite National Park celebrates its 150th anniversary this year, plans to restore both the Merced River and the Mariposa Grove will ensure that the park's most beloved treasures—from the smooth granite walls to towering waterfalls to ancient sequoia trees—invite and inspire all Americans for generations to come.

Below: The Merced River flowing through Yosemite National Park at sunrise ©Kateleigh, Dreamstime.com



Clearing the Air at Joshua Tree

In spring 2014, NPCA sent Peter and Melissa Spurr, who live in Joshua Tree, California, to meet with officials from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) to express their concern that poor air quality in Joshua Tree National Park could harm the local economy. Smog blown in from the Port of Los Angeles, Inland Empire industrial zones, and car-centric suburbs earn the park's skies the dubious distinction of being among the most polluted in the national park system. In fact, airborne nitrogen pollution has altered the wildfire cycle in Joshua Tree National Park and threatens the health of populations of the iconic Joshua tree.



In the EPA and DOI meetings, Peter, a Joshua Tree real estate broker, remarked that his clients buy homes in the area after falling in love with the park's natural wonders and hundred-mile views. “Many of us in the business community revere the national

park, both for its timeless beauty and also for its ability to deliver economic stability to the region.”

Melissa, an artist and photographer, asserted that if air pollution scares away tourists or mars the park's scenic vistas, it could harm the vibrant, local creative community, which seeks inspiration in the park.

NPCA is grateful for the Spurr's work to improve the air quality of Joshua Tree National Park and protect the local economy of California's Morongo Basin.

Peter and Melissa Spurr visit Washington to advocate for better air quality in Joshua Tree National Park.

Hiker's Shuttle at Joshua Tree National Park?

Seth Shteir

Over the past year, NPCA's California Desert Field Office enlisted the help of undergraduate students from the University of California at Irvine's Department of Transportation and the university's chapter of the Institute of Transportation Engineers to write a transit feasibility study for a hiker's shuttle at Joshua Tree National Park. The report, which drew heavily on the expertise of Joshua Tree staff, research reports and visitor use surveys, describes various

alternatives for an optional, public shuttle that could help reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality in the park.

NPCA and Joshua Tree staff gave the students a tour of the park, which included a hike at Barker Dam, a talk about historical resources at Key's Ranch, and a lecture about the natural and cultural wonders of southern California's premiere national park. The project has benefitted both the engineering students and the park. "This study for Joshua Tree has been a great experience," reported one

student. "If it weren't for this project, I would not have visited Joshua Tree and realized how awesome it is! It was also great being able to work on a real world project and being part of something that might actually be implemented."

NPCA feels strongly that transit feasibility studies, like the one conducted by the UC Irvine students, are a first step in helping reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, and addressing climate change.



Eco-Divers & Bubble-Spotters: NPCA Sponsors a Colorado River Clean-Up

Lynn Davis

On March 22, in conjunction with World Water Day, NPCA's Nevada Field Office sponsored a successful clean-up on a stretch of the Colorado River. The clean-up was supported through a generous donation to NPCA.

■ **The location:** Willow Beach, a popular put-in and take-out spot for kayakers and canoeists, rafting

companies, and small motor boat operators, located 13 miles below Hoover dam.

■ **The goal:** Gathering debris on the beach, under the marina docks, and along hard-to-access riverbanks by dispatching land, water and underwater teams.

■ **Unique aspects of the clean-up:** Three dozen eco-divers—certified scuba

divers who specialize in deep water retrieval—and safety monitors, known as bubble-spotters, to watch over the divers.

■ **The haul:** Hundreds of pounds of trash, including a large piece of carpeting, a couple of barbecue grills, and more than a dozen cell phones.

Above: Two members of the Colorado River Clean-Up Crew ©Alan O'Neill

EVENTS: PAST & UPCOMING

Preserving Precious Water

In early May, NPCA presented California Congressman Paul Cook an award honoring his work and position against the Cadiz water project. This project would draw down 50,000-70,000 acre feet of water per year and irreversibly harm Mojave National Preserve's precious water resources. It would also adversely impact local businesses and rural communities.



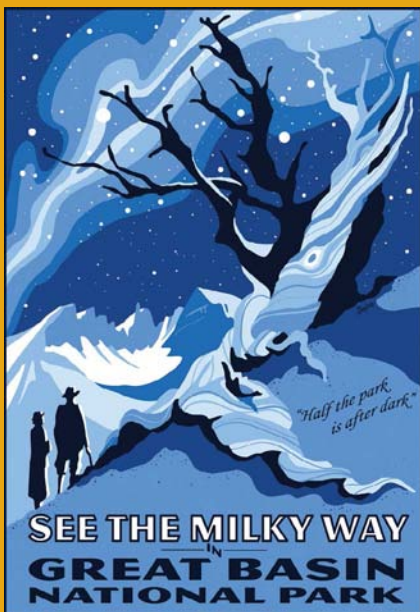
Community leaders from the Chemehuevi tribe; Needles, California; the Morongo Basin; and the Victor Valley attended the event to recognize Cook's

actions and to thank him for his first-term support of our national parks as well as the local tourism economy.

Twinkling Stars: Great Basin Astronomy Festival

September 18-20, 2014

Great Basin National Park presents its annual three-day Astronomy Festival September 18-20, 2014. The park's night skies—often called the darkest in the lower 48 states—attract dozens of professional and amateur astronomers to this annual event, which features 30 to 40 telescopes set up for public use. The daytime line-up includes astronomy-themed presentations,



tours through the park's famed Lehman Caves, and hikes through bristlecone pines to alpine forests. As the sky darkens on the first night of the festival, park employees plan to perform astronomy-themed music, readings, and skits at the popular and entertaining ranger talent show. On the following night, a keynote speaker is scheduled to address attendees. (At press time, the speaker had not yet been announced.) For more information, visit: <http://www.nps.gov/grba/planyourvisit/greatbasinastronomyfestival.htm>

Happy 50th Birthday, Lake Mead

October 8, 2014

Lake Mead National Recreation Area is the fifth most visited destination in the national park system with 6.3 million visitors; it also provides 90 percent of the Las Vegas water supply. This year Lake Mead adds another impressive number: a 50-year milestone.

Created by the construction of Hoover Dam in 1935, Lake Mead was officially made part of the National Park Service on October 8, 1964. Legislation established this area as the first national recreation area in the country and protects the lake, which is situated within 1.5 million acres of stunning geology.

Visitors to the park marvel at the spectacular array of burgundy and copper-colored sandstone, dark volcanic rock, and smooth granite, and enjoy exploring Lake Mead's nine wilderness areas. But it is the lake's beaches and water sports that draw crowds. On holidays (specifically Memorial Day, the 4th of July, and Labor Day weekends), NPS employees manage the safety and security issues of more than a quarter million visitors while protecting the area's natural and cultural resources.

In May, Lake Mead NRA kicked off several months of special anniversary events including a clever "Selfie Scavenger Hunt." For information on Lake Mead NRA, anniversary plans, and the scavenger hunt, visit www.nps.gov/lake

Top: National Parks Conservation Association's David Lamfrom presents an award to Congressman Paul Cook for protecting the Mojave Desert's precious water resources.

©Hi Desert Star **Left:** Poster by Tyler Nordgren

California School Kids Share What They Love about National Parks

Kati Schmidt

"Who do the national parks belong to?"

My colleague Kari Kiser, Pacific Regional Council Chairman Michael Malaga, and I posed this question to hundreds of Bay Area schoolchildren last month at the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) in San Francisco. Whenever children replied, "all of us," we showered them with high-fives and praise for getting the correct answer!



We represented NPCA alongside more than 30 other educational organizations as part of the 2014 BioBlitz, a partnership between the National Park Service and National Geographic to inventory and discover national park species and promote outdoor learning. To highlight the National Park Service's upcoming centennial celebration, we presented the children with a birthday cake drawing to color and a fill-in-the-blank message: "I want my national parks fully funded by their 100th birthday so I can _____."

We were most impressed by the children's understanding that our national parks house rich ecosystems and are home to a wide range of animals they want to protect. Some said that they wanted the parks to be funded for future children to enjoy. One child—apparently impacted by the 2013 across-the-board spending cuts (the "sequestration")—filled in "use the bathroom." (His mother recalled closed restrooms at a national park visit last summer.) Aspiring national park rangers were also in our midst, and not surprisingly, "play" was a common theme for people of all ages. We couldn't agree more!

While inventory teams found more than 2,300 species within the expansive GGNRA, including 80 species new to the park, I was delighted to uncover hundreds of youthful national park supporters as well!

Above: Michael Malaga, Chair of NPCA's Pacific Regional Council, joins staffer Kari Kiser at the Bio Blitz ©Kati Schmidt

Preserve Manzanar's History



Dennis Arguelles

Located amidst the stark beauty of the Owens Valley, the Manzanar War Relocation Center served as a prison camp for Japanese Americans between 1942 and 1945. In 1992, Manzanar was declared a National Historic Site as a reminder of the unconstitutional incarceration of more than 110,000 American citizens and legal residents as a result of wartime hysteria and racism.

Today, the area remains isolated and wild, characteristics that help the Park Service interpret the camp experience. Unfortunately, this isolation is threatened by a proposed Los Angeles Department of Water and Power project. The South Owens Valley Solar Ranch (SOVSR) will be located 3.5 miles to the east, across the flat valley floor. It will include one million photovoltaic panels on 1,200 acres, not only marring Manzanar's historic view shed, but also threatening pristine open space and fragile vegetation and wildlife.

NPCA is working with several organizations and citizens' groups to build opposition to the project. In May, the groups were encouraged when the Inyo County Board of Supervisors amended its Renewable Energy General Plan and removed Owens Valley from consideration for large-scale, industrial solar projects. While the action did not end the threat of the SOVRS, it demonstrated the impact of the growing coalition on local policy-makers.

NPCA continues to monitor the project and encourages individuals to sign the Manzanar Committee's online petition opposing it at Change.org.

Above: Bruce Embrey of the Manzanar Committee delivers an impassioned speech during the 2014 Manzanar Pilgrimage calling for LADWP to abandon its plans for a nearby solar ranch. ©Dennis Arguelles

Mountain Lions at Risk

Dennis Arguelles

A CLOSER LOOK

A mountain lion named P-22 has become somewhat of a celebrity in Southern California, having travelled from the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area to make his home in Los Angeles' iconic Griffith Park, a trip that required him to cross several major freeways and other dangerous barriers.

After being tranquilized and tested by the National Park Service in March, he was unfortunately found to be suffering from exposure to anti-coagulant rodenticides, more commonly known as rat poison, compounds that likely contributed to his mangy and weakened condition. Such substances are used to control rodent populations but quickly make their way into the food chain.

According to the National Park Service, two decades of research in and around the Santa Monica Mountains has revealed widespread exposure to common household poisons in carnivores, sometimes leading to death. Of 140 bobcats, coyotes, and mountain lions evaluated, 88 percent tested positive for one or more anti-coagulant compounds. P-22 was treated and released, but his future remains uncertain.

The State of California recently took steps to limit the sale of such rodenticides to only licensed specialists. NPCA is now working with Assembly member Richard Bloom to pass AB 2657, which would ban their use in and around environmentally sensitive areas, including wetlands, animal sanctuaries and state and national parks. Additionally, NPCA's Los Angeles office is working with local advocates to encourage the city to end the use of rodenticides in parks and other facilities.

Despite dealing with a recent outbreak of hantavirus, which is carried by rodents, Yosemite National Park has been highly successful in preventing additional human exposure by simply making visitor facilities more rodent-proof, managing trash properly, and using traps rather than poisons. NPCA hopes to encourage practices like this, so that iconic predators like mountain lions will continue to be part of the landscape of our national parks.



Above: P-22, a mountain lion residing in Los Angeles' Griffith Park, was found to be suffering from exposure to rat poison. ©NPS Photo

Thirteen Compelling Reasons for Congress to Work Together

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Congress also has the ability this year to provide boundary enhancements to Gettysburg National Military Park and Oregon Caves National Monument, among others. Consideration is underway for the National Park Service to study several significant sites that could include areas between the Presidio of San Francisco and Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, where the Buffalo Soldiers, who were among our first national park guardians, marched and patrolled.



NPCA recently launched a new website, *Telling America's Stories*, to provide information and support these proposals as they move through Congress. We encourage you to visit the site, <http://tellingourstory.es/> to send a Twitter message to the bills' authors or share images and information on these proposals with your friends, family, and social media networks.

As we look toward the National Park Service's centennial in 2016—and to its next 100 years—NPCA has placed a high priority on protecting current national park sites, as well as providing enhancements that will safeguard our cultural and historic legacy and connect to new audiences. In addition to the website, NPCA created a special postcard package of the 13 proposals for our recent board week and lobby day on Capitol Hill.

This new campaign takes us a step closer to this goal, and we will continue to provide you with updates on our progress!

Above: Buffalo Soldiers ©1905, H.C. White Co., NPS



Seth Shteir

NPCA is opposing the proposed location of Bechtel's Soda Mountain Solar Project. The project would include over 4,000 acres of photovoltaic panels and infrastructure, and it would be located less than a quarter-mile from the boundary of the Mojave National Preserve, the third largest national park unit in the contiguous 48 states. In addition to threatening air quality, the proposed Soda Mountain project threatens bighorn sheep migration corridors, migratory birds, seeps and springs in the Mojave National Preserve, scenic vistas, tortoise habitat, and the federally-endangered fish, the tui chub.

NPCA's California desert field offices have played a pivotal role on this issue. NPCA secured the help of five retired desert national park superintendents to draft and sign a letter urging the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to relocate the project to lands that don't have sensitive ecological, archaeological or community resources.

Our staff organized a workshop and BLM community meeting where 50 local desert stakeholders voiced concerns about the project to decision-makers and agency staff. Finally, NPCA engaged the University of California, Irvine Environmental Law Clinic to provide assistance in drafting a detailed comment letter on the draft Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Impact Study (EIR/EIS). The final EIR/EIS is expected to be published in August.

In the coming months, NPCA will continue to work with communities, decision makers and agency staff to build the case that Bechtel's project would irrevocably harm the Mojave National Preserve. Other sites that don't jeopardize our national treasures should be identified.

Above: Site of the proposed Soda Mountain Solar project is 1/4 mile from the boundary of the Mojave National Preserve. ©2013 Michael E. Gordon

Making the Case in D.C.

Several young advocates from Los Angeles traveled to Washington, D.C. in April to participate in NPCA's annual Lobby Day. Most of the team had never been to the nation's capital, although all shared a love of the national parks and had experience as outdoor educators.

Prior to their D.C. visit, the group completed a one-day NPCA advocacy training that included how to lobby policy-makers. "We were a bit nervous at first," said Danny Teramae. "But the training helped us tell our personal stories when we met with Congressional leaders, and it prepared us to advocate for more funding for the national parks." The team's passion and poise as they discussed a wide range of national park funding, protection and expansion issues



impressed several Los Angeles-area legislators.

Above: Program Manager Dennis Arguelles (left) and a delegation of young advocates from Los Angeles including (L-R) Marlene Jimenez, Daniel Teramae, Ashley Jones, Roberto Morales

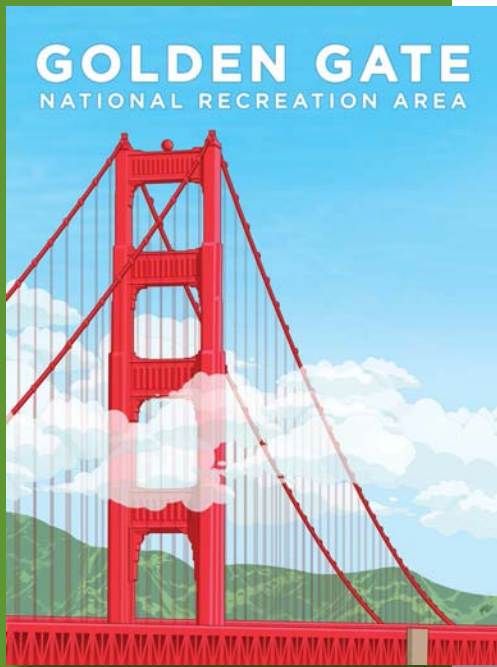


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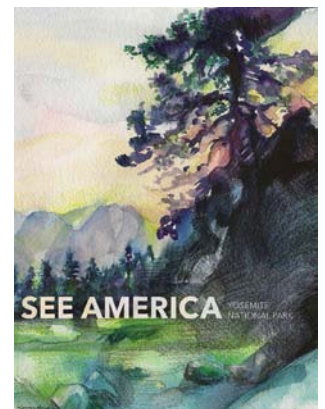


See America Without Leaving Home

More than 75 years after the government first commissioned posters to showcase the country's most stunning natural features under the banner *See America*, NPCA has partnered with the Creative Action Network to do it again. Together we have launched a new version of this iconic poster campaign enlisting artists from all 50 states to create a collection of artwork celebrating our national parks and other treasured sites.

With the centennial of the National Park Service approaching in 2016 and the continued threat of budget cuts, Creative Action Network put out a call to its world-wide community of artists and designers to create a new collection of *See America* posters for a new generation.

The posters of natural, cultural and historic sites across the country depict our shared history and encourage people to reconnect with these national parks and other special places. Check out the growing collection of "See America" posters online at SeeAmericaProject.com."



Left: Poster by David Hays **Right (top)** Poster by Monica Alisse **Right (bottom):** Poster by Shayna Roosevelt



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