



# San Gabriel Watershed and Mountains Special Resource Study

Newsletter 1 ■ February 2005

Dear Friends,

The National Park Service (NPS) is conducting a “special resource study” of portions of the San Gabriel River watershed and mountains. The U.S. Congress directed us to carry out this study because of the importance of the resources in the study area.

Rivers and creeks in the region provide continuous open space corridors that serve as habitat for migrating birds and mammals. The rugged mountains contain distinctive rock outcroppings and native vegetation. Other areas are important to the history of California and our nation. The natural areas and rivers supply drinking water for the region, aid in flood protection, and offer opportunities for recreation and enjoyment.

Many people, organizations and agencies are working to conserve resources in this area to provide recreational opportunities, habitat restoration, watershed improvement, and flood protection. We will be working in partnership with the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC), the County of Los Angeles, the Angeles National Forest, and many others. We hope that this study will build on, and complement the many efforts underway.

The initial comment period for this study has started, and will extend through April 19, 2005. We hope you'll take the time to let us know your thoughts and ideas. There will also be other opportunities for public input throughout the study process, as described in this newsletter.

We look forward to hearing from you!

— the study team

## ***About the National Park Service***

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The NPS cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

The national park system is comprised of many types of park units. Administration of park units occurs in many ways, from traditional units which are federally managed, to non-traditional units, which rely on partnerships and may have little, if any, federal landownership. The park names are created in the Congressional legislation authorizing the sites or by presidential proclamation.

This newsletter provides an introduction to the special resource study, including:

- ▣▣▣▣ What is a special resource study?
- ▣▣▣▣ Why the NPS is conducting this special resource study?
- ▣▣▣▣ Frequently asked questions.
- ▣▣▣▣ Study area map and description.
- ▣▣▣▣ Study process description.
- ▣▣▣▣ How you can participate.
- ▣▣▣▣ Comment Form.
- ▣▣▣▣ Public meeting schedule.

## What is a Special Resource Study?

The purpose of a special resource study is to determine whether an area is eligible to be designated as a unit of the national park system. These studies are completed by the National Park Service (NPS) when directed by Congress.

A special resource study (1) assesses resources in a given study area to determine whether they meet the criteria for addition to the national park system, and (2) offers recommendations for resource protection and public use and enjoyment (see pages 4 & 5 for a description of the criteria and study process). The study report provides recommendations to Congress on whether an area should be added to the national park system. It may make other recommendations for local, state, federal, or private actions to conserve resources or provide for public enjoyment. Recommendations may consider the entire study area or only portions of it.

The study process provides an opportunity for the NPS and a local community to think creatively about how to care for the resources that they value in their community, how to tell the stories of the important events that occurred there, how to protect significant natural and cultural resources while providing for a high quality of life, and how to highlight the uniqueness and vitality of a given area.

## Why is the National Park Service Conducting this Special Resource Study?

The San Gabriel River Watershed Study Act (P.L. 108-042 - July 2003) directed the NPS to conduct a Special Resource Study of (1) the San Gabriel River and its tributaries north of and including the city of Santa Fe Springs, and (2) the San Gabriel Mountains within the territory of the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) (See Map, page 3).

The Act also directs the NPS to consult with the RMC and other appropriate federal, state and local government entities, and to consider regional flood control and drainage needs and publicly owned infrastructure such as wastewater treatment facilities.

Congresswoman Solis sponsored the legislation authorizing this study in order to improve upon environmental and recreational opportunities in the region. "I see a future where our community will have less health problems, kids will breathe easier, our water will be cleaner, and our community will have a better overall quality of life," said Congresswoman Solis when the bill was signed into law.

The Act was co-sponsored by twenty Congressional representatives including southern California's Xavier Becerra, Juanita Millender-McDonald, Brad Sherman, Howard Berman, Henry A. Waxman, David Dreier, Grace Napolitano, Linda Sanchez, Adam Schiff, and Lucille Roybal-Allard.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### ***How does this study relate to existing community efforts?***

There are many local efforts underway to protect resources in the study area, provide recreational opportunities, and balance the many competing desires for resources. This is a separate study, but it will build on and complement these efforts wherever possible. We will be working closely with many of the organizations who are active in this area, including the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, the County of Los Angeles, and the Angeles National Forest.

### ***How will this study affect local land use, property rights or water rights?***

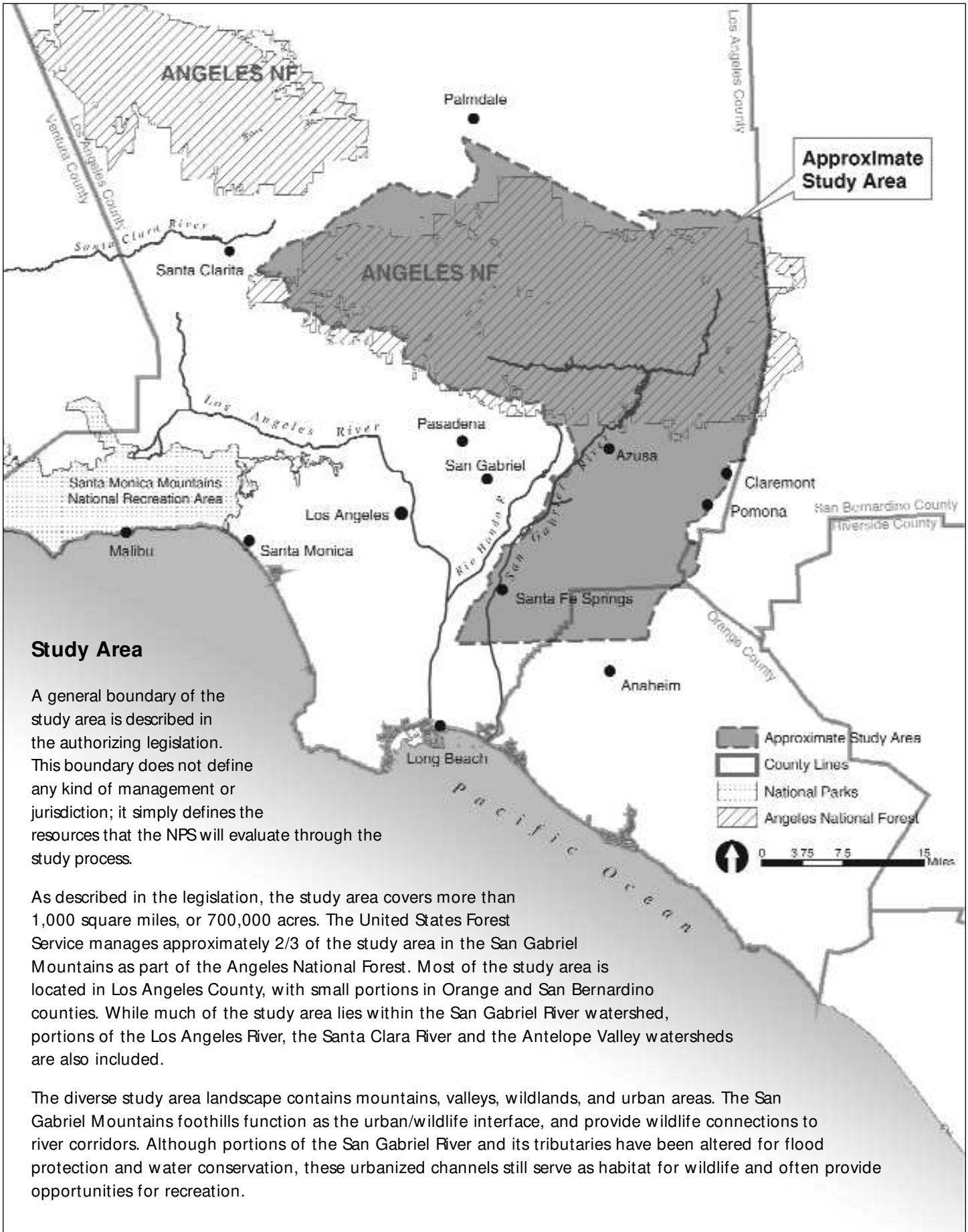
The NPS is well aware that this study area includes the homes, schools, and workplaces of millions of people. In conducting this study, the National Park Service will explore new opportunities for resource protection and public use and enjoyment while respecting existing land uses, current land management efforts, property rights, and water rights.

### ***How will the study affect me?***

This study may identify new ideas or lend support to ongoing efforts; it may recommend some involvement by the NPS in some part of the study area. At this point it is too early to tell what alternatives or ideas might be considered in the study. Any alternative considered in this study would be only a first step in a longer implementation process that would require local, state, or Congressional action. Participating in this study process will allow you to offer your views on what you think is needed or appropriate.

### ***How will the NPS be involved in the study area?***

The NPS will be carrying out this study process over several years. The study process will determine whether any further NPS involvement in the area will be appropriate or feasible. Over the last 20 years, only about 20-25% of special resource studies have found that the area under study is eligible for inclusion in the national park system. Many studies determine that existing management, technical or financial assistance, or local, state or private initiatives are preferable to the establishment of a new national park unit.



**Study Area**

A general boundary of the study area is described in the authorizing legislation. This boundary does not define any kind of management or jurisdiction; it simply defines the resources that the NPS will evaluate through the study process.

As described in the legislation, the study area covers more than 1,000 square miles, or 700,000 acres. The United States Forest Service manages approximately 2/3 of the study area in the San Gabriel Mountains as part of the Angeles National Forest. Most of the study area is located in Los Angeles County, with small portions in Orange and San Bernardino counties. While much of the study area lies within the San Gabriel River watershed, portions of the Los Angeles River, the Santa Clara River and the Antelope Valley watersheds are also included.

The diverse study area landscape contains mountains, valleys, wildlands, and urban areas. The San Gabriel Mountains foothills function as the urban/wildlife interface, and provide wildlife connections to river corridors. Although portions of the San Gabriel River and its tributaries have been altered for flood protection and water conservation, these urbanized channels still serve as habitat for wildlife and often provide opportunities for recreation.

## Study Process

Under the NPS process for special resource studies, the study team evaluates an area based on criteria established by Congress. The following section explains these criteria and the study process. Through this process, we look at a broad range of management alternatives, and evaluate the environmental, social, and economic impacts of each. Public involvement is a key component of any study.

### National Park Service Special Resource Study Criteria

For the NPS to recommend a new national park unit, an area must:

- (a) contain nationally significant natural or cultural resources
- (b) be a suitable addition to the national park system
- (c) be a feasible addition to the national park system
- (d) require direct NPS management, instead of alternative protection by others.

### 1 Public Start-up of the Study Process

This stage of the study process is your opportunity to tell us your ideas, ask questions, and help us shape the overall study process. It's also an opportunity for us to tell you about what happens during a special resource study, and for us to learn about the community and the study area.

*Sometimes this phase of the study process is called "scoping," because with your input, we are determining the "scope" or overall approach to the study.*

The official public comment period for this stage of the study process started when a notice was published in the Federal Register on January 19, 2005, and extends for 90 days, through April 19, 2005. During this time you can send us your comments (via mail, e-mail, or the project web site), or attend any of the public meetings that we will be holding.

We will publish a summary of your comments in a newsletter so that you can see the full range of comments we've received.

### 2 Resource Analysis: Significance and Suitability

During this stage of the study process, we evaluate the natural and cultural resources of the study area, and determine whether there are resources that are nationally significant and suitable for inclusion in the national park system. We will research and evaluate these resources based on existing data, and will work with scientists, historians, local researchers, community members, and others who know the area's resources. We will present these findings in a newsletter.

**Significance:** The NPS considers a resource to be nationally significant if it is an outstanding example of a particular type of resource, it possesses exceptional value or quality illustrating or interpreting the natural or cultural themes of the nation's heritage, it offers superlative opportunities for public enjoyment or for scientific study, and it retains a high degree of integrity as a true, accurate and relatively unspoiled example of a resource.

*This means that a nationally significant area contains the best example of a resource type, that is related to larger national themes, and could be available for recreation, education or scientific study.*

**Suitability:** The NPS considers a resource to be suitable for inclusion in the national park system if it 1) is not already adequately represented in the national park system or 2) is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by another land managing entity.

*This means that a suitable area doesn't duplicate other areas that are already protected and available for public enjoyment, research, or education.*

### 3 Develop Alternatives

In a special resource study, "alternatives" are possible ways of managing resources within the study area. During this stage of the study process, we will work with you to develop a range of options to protect resources and provide for public enjoyment. Different alternatives might have different goals, or they might be different ways to achieve the same goals. Alternatives may focus on a part of the study area, or may relate to the entire study area.

Examples of different alternatives might include:

- New management initiatives or funding sources for existing land and resource management organizations
- Establishment of new "designations" or protected areas, such as state or local parks, national historic landmarks, wild and scenic rivers, recreational trails, etc.
- Cooperative management among several organizations.
- New units of the national park system may be explored only if the NPS criteria for significance, suitability and feasibility are met. A new national park unit can only be established by a law passed by Congress, or by Presidential proclamation (for existing federal lands).

Alternatives will be presented in a newsletter so that you can tell us what you think about them and help us shape them.

### 4 Feasibility Analysis

In this stage of the study process, we determine whether the alternatives under consideration are feasible.

National Park Service management can only be included in the alternatives if the NPS considers it to be feasible. NPS management will be considered feasible only if the area has adequate size and configuration to allow for

## Study Process continued



resource protection and visitor enjoyment, and can be administered at a reasonable cost. Other considerations will include land ownership, access, threats to the resource, staffing and development requirements, and public support.

### 5 Analyze Environmental Impacts

During this stage, the NPS will analyze the environmental and socioeconomic impacts of all feasible alternatives, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The current environmental and socioeconomic conditions will be described, and each alternative will be evaluated against this baseline.

### 6 Draft Report

The findings of the special resources study (analysis of resource significance, suitability, proposed alternatives, feasibility of alternatives, and environmental impact analysis) will be published in a draft study report for public review and comment. This report will include an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Environmental Assessment (EA). There will be public meetings and a public comment period.

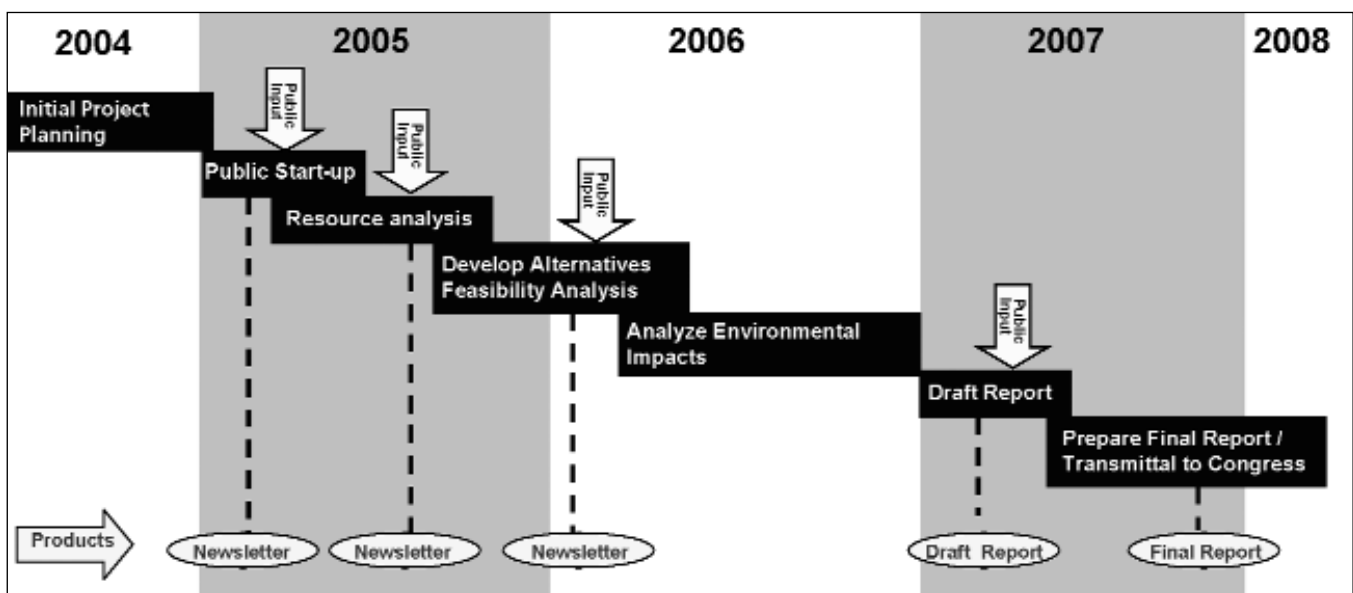
### 7 Final Report / Transmittal to Congress

During this stage of the study process, we will revise the report, as needed. Added to the final report will be a recommendation from the Director of the National Park Service. Each final special resource study is required to identify the alternative(s) that in the NPS Director's professional judgment would be most effective and efficient in protecting significant resources and providing for public enjoyment. In making this judgment, the NPS Director will consider all of the factors presented in the special resource study report, as well as the public and agency comments received throughout the study process.

The final step in the special resource study process is transmittal of the final report from the Secretary of the Interior to Congress, along with a recommendation regarding the Secretary's preferred management option for the area.

Implementation of any of the recommendations in the report is a separate process, whether by private, local, state or federal actions, or some combination.

## Project Timeline



## Get Involved!

This special resource study depends on input from local residents, organizations, agencies, and environmental, business, community and political leaders. There will be several opportunities throughout the study process to provide comments, information, and opinions. Your ideas will be combined with resource analysis and NPS criteria to develop the study's findings. We will send out newsletters to report back to you on what we learn from your input and from research and analysis throughout the study process.

### Tell Us What You Think

We are now at the first stage of the study process, public start-up or "scoping." The goal of this stage is public outreach and information gathering. The NPS will introduce the study, explain the process and inform the public and interested parties on how to participate. A notice of scoping was published in the Federal Register on January 19, 2005, initiating a 90-day public comment period for the study, ending on April 19, 2005. Public meetings will be held throughout the study area. See the back page of the newsletter for dates, times, and locations.

Information that you provide to the NPS at this stage will help to guide and inform the study. You can now send us comments by mail or by e-mail. We have provided a comment form on page 7 that you may use.



### Learn about the special resource study process:

- ▣ visit the study web site:  
[www.nps.gov/pwro/sangabriel](http://www.nps.gov/pwro/sangabriel)
- ▣ sign up for the study mailing list or e-mail list
- ▣ attend public meetings

### Share ideas and information:

- ▣ attend public meetings to share information, discuss issues, concerns, and potential outcomes.
- ▣ send us your thoughts, comments, and information by letter, e-mail, or through our web site.



## Comment Form and Mailing List Sign-up

Feel free to use this form to send us your comments or to sign up for the mailing list or e-mail list. You may also send us your own comment letter by mail or by e-mail.

Name (*required*): \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

(Please check one of the following):  I prefer to receive information by e-mail.  
 I prefer to receive information by mail sent to the above address.  
 I do not wish to receive further information.

*The following types of information would be most helpful to us at this stage:*

What information or sources do you have that will help to inform this study? For example, important natural and cultural resource values, recreational opportunities, or current management efforts and priorities.

What ideas or concerns do you have that the NPS should be aware of and/or address in the study process?

What ideas and concerns do you have about the scope of the study, (e.g. types of resources included, interpretation of the study area boundary, level of detail, etc)?

What do you hope this study process will accomplish?

What individuals, resource experts, or organizations do you believe we should contact about the study?

Is there anything else that you would like to share with us?

Please keep in mind that your comments are public information. If individuals submitting comments request that their names and/or addresses be withheld from public disclosure, this will be honored to the extent allowable by law. Such requests must be stated prominently at the beginning of correspondence and comments. As always, NPS will make available to public inspection all submissions from organizations or businesses and from persons identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations and businesses. Anonymous comments may not be considered.



## San Gabriel Watershed and Mountains Special Resource Study

National Park Service

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### Public Meeting Schedule