

**STATEMENT OF WILLIAM D. SHADDOX, ACTING ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR  
FOR PARK PLANNING, FACILITIES, AND LANDS, NATIONAL PARK  
SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS  
OF THE HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE, CONCERNING H.R.  
1835, A BILL TO PROVIDE FOR A RESOURCE STUDY OF THE AREA  
KNOWN AS THE RIM OF THE VALLEY CORRIDOR IN THE STATE OF  
CALIFORNIA TO EVALUATE ALTERNATIVES FOR PROTECTING  
RESOURCES OF THE CORRIDOR**

**JUNE 14, 2007**

---

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 1835, a bill to provide for a resource study of the area known as the Rim of the Valley Corridor in the State of California to evaluate alternatives for protecting resources of the corridor.

The Department supports H.R. 1835 with amendments described later in the statement. The proposed study would explore ways to involve a wide range of Federal, state, local, and private entities to protect and interpret important natural and cultural resources, and to provide more access to outdoor recreational opportunities for the diverse urban communities in the Greater Los Angeles Metropolitan Area. However, we believe that funding priority should be given to the 36 previously authorized studies for potential units of the National Park System, potential new National Heritage Areas, and potential additions to the National Trails System and National Wild and Scenic River System that have not yet been transmitted to the Congress.

H.R. 1835 directs the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a resource study of the Rim of the Valley Corridor, which consists of mountainous areas surrounding the San Fernando, La Crescenta, Santa Clarita, Simi, and Conejo Valleys, to evaluate a range of alternatives for protecting resources of the corridor. The area includes a portion of the Angeles National Forest and connectors to the Los Padres and San Bernardino National Forests. In conducting the study, the Secretary would be required to seek to achieve the following objectives:

(1) Protect wildlife habitat and linkages between major areas of open space, where there are 26 distinct plant communities and more than 400 vertebrate species.

(2) Complete the Rim of the Valley Trail System, including developing the major feeder trails necessary to connect adjoining communities and regional transit to the trail system which, when completed, will serve eight million residents in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties with accessible outdoor recreation trails.

(3) Preserve recreational opportunities and facilitate access to open space for a variety of recreational users.

(4) Protect rare, threatened, or endangered species and rare or unusual plant communities and habitat.

(5) Respect the needs of communities within, or in the vicinity of, the Rim of the Valley Corridor.

The areas that would be studied are adjacent to or in the general vicinity of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, which provides recreational opportunities for approximately 530,000 visitors annually. In a unit where only about 15 percent of the

land base is owned by the Federal government, and only about half of the land is in any kind of public ownership, this national recreation area has become a model of collaboration among the different levels of government as well as the many private property owners – all working together as stewards of the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreational resources that lie within the unit’s boundaries. We would expect the uniqueness of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, with its success in preserving open space as well as its management challenges, will be considered as part of resource study of the study area.

One alternative that the study would look at is the possibility of adding some or all of the land within the Rim of the Valley Corridor to the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. However, recognizing the limitation of Federal resources for acquiring and managing additional lands, the study would examine other alternatives for protecting significant areas of open space in the Rim of the Valley Corridor, including those that involve minimal cost to the Federal government. We anticipate that the study would emphasize public-private partnerships. Given the large size and the diversity of stakeholders in the area, the study would involve extensive outreach with members of the public, private landowners, and local governments. The National Park Service would look to the U.S. Forest Service’s lead on any recommendations related to Forest Service lands. The study would likely entail extended comment periods and extensive analysis, and would cost an estimated \$500,000.

H.R. 1835 requires the study to be conducted in accordance with the law applicable to studies of potential new units of the National Park System, which includes criteria for evaluating potential new areas and requires the consideration of alternatives to direct National Park Service management. Because of the inclusion of that provision, we believe it would be appropriate to refer to the study as a “special resource study” rather than a “resource study,” using the term that the National Park Service applies to these types of studies. We therefore recommend this change be made on lines 1 and 4 of page 2, and to the title of the bill.

In addition, we have concerns about two of the requirements in the bill: First, section 2(c) requires the study to discuss the concerns of private landowners within the existing boundaries of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. We believe instead that the Secretary should be required to consider the experiences, both positive and negative, of private landowners within the boundaries of Santa Monica National Recreation Area when seeking to achieve the study objective related to respecting the needs of communities within, or in the vicinity of, the Rim of the Valley Corridor.

Second, section 2(d) requires an estimate of the impact on staffing and other costs of each alternative considered not only for Federal agencies, but also for State and local agencies, and other organizations. Typically, National Park Service special resource studies include Federal cost estimates only, as we do not usually have access to the information needed to determine costs for non-Federal entities. We would like to work with the bill’s sponsor and the committee on revisions to both of these subsections.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I would be happy to respond to any questions you or other members of the subcommittee may have.