

Wait! Aren't We Part of the San Gabriel Mountains?

A very strange and mysterious thing happened on Friday, October 10, 2014, when President Obama announced the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument. Suddenly a gaping hole was cut into the Angeles National Forest, and areas like the Arroyo Seco, Tujunga, and the mountain watershed of the Los Angeles River were excised from the map delineating the new national monument.

Until the final announcement, the Arroyo Seco and the other stretches of the front range of the San Gabriel Mountains in the southwest corner of the Angeles National Forest all the way from Azusa to Sylmar in the San Fernando Valley were included in the advance maps and description of the monument. This is the portion of the Angeles National Forest that is closest to dense urban populations and is heavily-used. It has also been the site just five years ago of the worst fire in Los Angeles County history, compounded by a major flood the next year. For this area, long-neglected by the

Map published in San Gabriel Valley newspapers prior to dedication ceremony

Map: Proposed San Gabriel Mountains national monument area

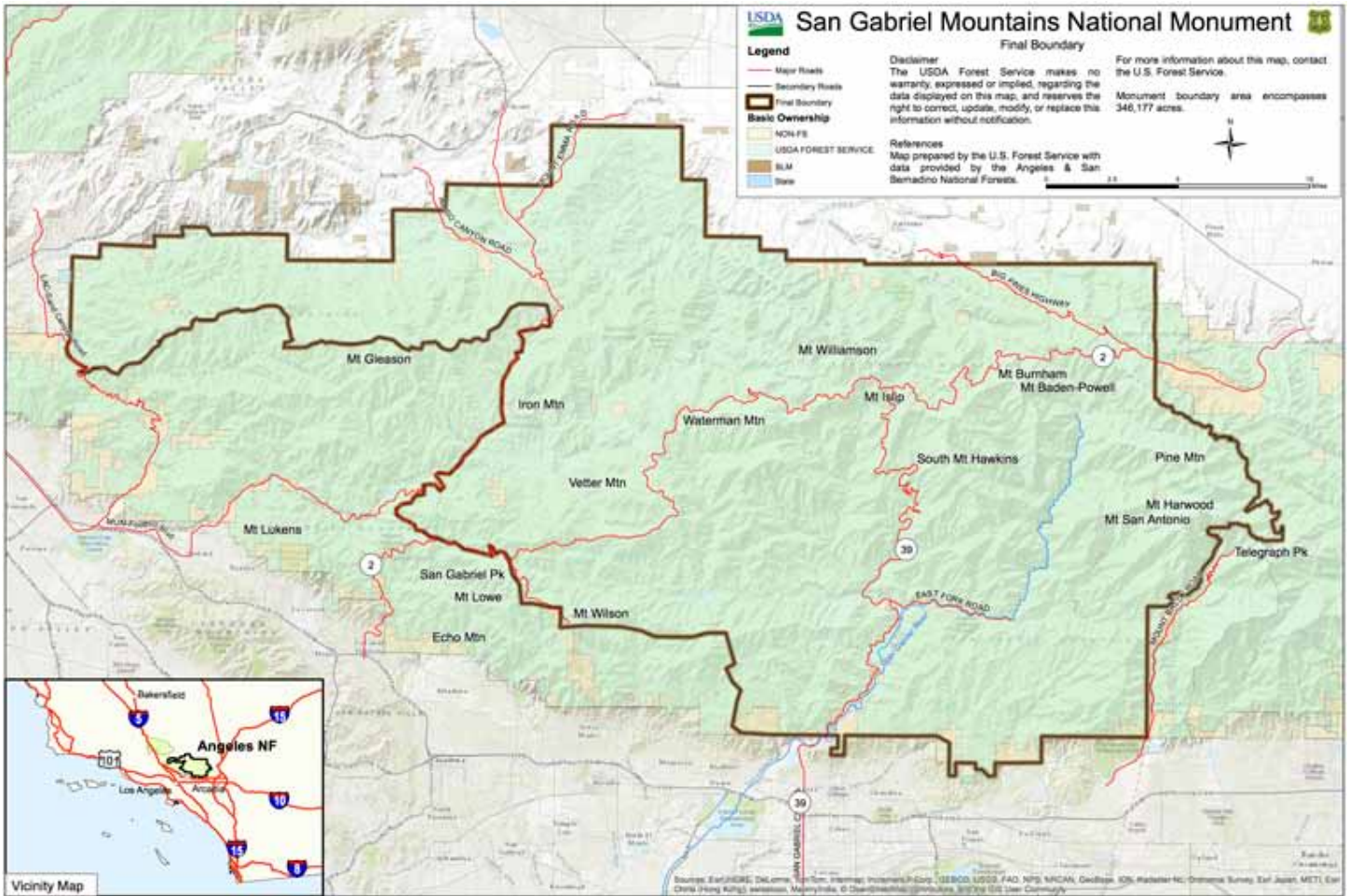


US Forest Service, the map of the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument certainly does not represent the “geography of hope” that President Obama promised on Friday.

On Thursday, October 9, just the day before the presidential announcement, this is the map that was published in San Gabriel Valley newspapers.

But the official map that was released on Friday is found on the next page.

The strange shape of the territory of the national monument becomes all the more bewildering



Official Boundaries of the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument

and egregious when a viewer reviews the map of the Station Fire in 2009, the largest fire in the history of Southern California.

No one seems to have an answer, or is willing to provide one, for the deletion of the southwestern area of the Angeles National Forest. At the celebration in El Monte, Congresswoman Judy Chu, the main local proponent for the monument, stated that she too was surprised that the Arroyo Seco and the other areas had been deleted from the map. She suggested that the “people from USDA” (US Department of Agriculture) might have an explanation. Indeed the final map posted on the White House website states: “Map prepared by the US Forest Service with information provided by the Angeles and San Bernardino National Forests.” (The Forest Service is part of the Department of Agriculture). Neither of the supervisors of the two national forests or USFS Regional Forester Randy Moore could offer any information about how or why the final designation was determined.

The southwest corner of the Angeles National Forest has tremendous deferred and neglected maintenance needs. The Station Fire in 2009 started in the Arroyo Seco, burnt off the entire upper mountain watershed there, and spread to other nearby sections of forest to destroy 160,000 acres. The next year a raging torrent of flood water tore through the area, clogging streams and washing out trails, but little if anything has been done by the US Forest Service to deal with the problems caused by those events.. The Gabrielino National Trail in the Arroyo Seco has now been closed for



Station Fire Burn Area, 2009

over five years. It is striking to note that much of the area excised from the final National Monument map coincides with the area destroyed by the Station Fire. Further west the upper watershed of the Los Angeles River in the San Fernando Valley has been eliminated.

This region represents the front range of the San Gabriel Mountains that is heavily used and closest to the dense urban population of Los Angeles County. It includes many of the most important historical, environmental and cultural resources of the Angeles National Forest and the San Gabriel Mountains. It is also the upper watershed of the Los Angeles River including the Arroyo Seco, Tujunga and the foothills of the San Fernando Valley. Excluding the upper LA River watershed from the National Monument is not consistent with the commitment that the Obama Administration and the federal government have made in the LA River Urban Waters Federal Partnership.

All of the reasons for designating the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument apply equally or even more to the excised territory.

It makes no sense to segment the Angeles National Forest and establish two levels of service and resources there. This is especially true because of the impacts of the Station Fire and the history of neglect. It is not right to expand the resources and care to the National Monument area at the expense of the neediest sections of the Angeles National Forest.



Elmer Smith Bridge in the Arroyo Seco Watershed

parts of the Angeles National Forest in this area remained closed by order of the USFS.

Plague of Invasives

Exotic, invasive species have spread through large areas of the fire-scarred forest threatening the very nature of the forest and the quality of habitat there, but nothing has been done in the historic Arroyo Seco Canyon. “It’s too difficult,” one forest service employee stated.

Abandoned Trails and Trashed Facilities

The Gabrielino Trail up the Arroyo Seco is a historic national trail, but it has been closed because the switchback section around Brown Canyon Dam washed out due to the fire and flood. That was five years ago, and the USFS has taken no steps to restore the trail. For the first time in history, it is not possible for hikers, equestrians or bicyclists to go up the canyon.

Visit www.arroyoseco.org/sgmnm for more information.

The Arroyo Seco Foundation is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to restoring and protecting the Arroyo Seco River and its watershed.

Visit us online at www.ArroyoSeco.org to learn more!

A Sad History of Neglect

Brown Canyon Dam

Built by USFS in 1942, this dangerous dam filled up with sediment decades ago. The Forest Service hasn’t even inspected it in ten years. Now they have removed it from the National Inventory of Dams, claiming that the 81-foot tall, 120-foot wide dam is only a “retaining wall.”

Station Fire

After an appalling slow response to the Station Fire in 2009, little has been done by the USFS to deal with the devastation it caused and the followup flood the next year. Large



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