

# Arroyo Seco enhances the expanded National Monument

By Tim Brick

The Arroyo Seco, such a prominent feature of western Pasadena, is that great canyon and watershed that begins in the San Gabriel Mountains near Mount Wilson and extends all the way to downtown Los Angeles. A purple mountain majesty framing our region, an ever-present reminder of how close we are to nature.

When the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument was established 10 years ago, the Arroyo and other treasures of the western region of the San Gabriel Mountains were left out.

While the monument was a critical step toward permanently protecting our mountains, many local residents were disappointed that the Arroyo Seco canyon, a major tributary of the Los Angeles River, was not included, along with many of the best treasures of the Angeles National Forest.

Since then, community support has continued to grow for safeguarding the public lands in the western Angeles National Forest that were not included in the original monument designation, including our Arroyo Seco.

In May President Biden corrected that glaring omission by adding 109,000 acres to the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument. These lands are the western gateway to the Angeles National Forest and welcome millions of visitors each year. Ten miles of the mountain watershed of the Arroyo Seco

above Pasadena lies within the expansion territory.

The San Gabriel Mountains are the backyard for many urban and culturally diverse communities in and around Los Angeles. Over 18 million people live within a 90-mile radius of the expanded national monument. Protecting these public lands will help increase equitable access to nature, improve public health, conserve precious water supplies for local residents, and address the climate and biodiversity crisis.

As a member of the Community Collaborative that was established 10 years ago to support the National Monument, I have watched the benefits that have come from the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument designation.

It has been a difficult period, characterized by a long drought and several large fires, as well as a throng of enthusiastic new users of the forest who often have not been trained in the qualities of care and stewardship that nature deserves from those who use it.

The US Forest Service has focused on recovery from the devastating Station Fire, the Bobcat Fire, and other calamities. We are glad that the forgotten territory of the Angeles National Forest will now benefit from being added to the Monument and know that the expansion will greatly enhance the original Monument's value as well.

Along with many local communities and organizations, Vice President Kamala Harris, Sen. Alex Padilla and Rep. Judy Chu have championed this campaign and urged President Biden to expand the monument.

There is more good news about the future of the Arroyo Seco. County Supervisor Kathryn Barger has recently announced that LA County will renew the Arroyo

Seco Ecosystem Restoration Program that started two decades ago to improve conditions in the urban stretch of the Arroyo from Hahamongna down to the Los Angeles River. And Rep. Adam Schiff's proposed expansion of the Rim of the Valley Corridor would extend the Santa Monica National Recreation Area into the urban stretch of the Arroyo Seco for additional assistance and resources to protect Southern California's most celebrated canyon.

President Biden's declaration honors our treasured mountains, but we can't expect the federal government to solve all the challenges that face local nature in the era of climate change. The expansion is a call for reflection and for action. Southern California needs a renewed focus on restoring and enhancing the health of the forest and the natural resources it provides. That will take more than just a declaration.

*Tim Brick is the executive director of Stewards of the Arroyo Seco.*

## Briefly

**The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency** (EPA) finalized a rule to establish nationwide monitoring for 29 per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and lithium in drinking water. PFAS have been linked to increased risk of some types of cancer, low birth weights in infants, and high cholesterol. **[Editor's note: Pasadena Water and Power (PWP) has been voluntarily monitoring for PFAS since 2020. It has not detected any PFAS in the City's treated drinking water system, but continues to monitor for it. Although lithium has been detected at relatively low levels within PWP's system (average: 16 parts per billion), currently, there are no health advisory levels for lithium, however, PWP continues to monitor for it.]**