

September 14, 2021
Via Email

Dear California Citizens Redistricting Commission:

My name is Azeneth Martinez. I am a long-time Pacoima resident. Over the years I have seen how my neighborhood is deprived of essential access to nature benefits. The lack of parks, adequate transit and access to our beautiful San Gabriel Mountains should be alarming to all.

As a passionate urban planner, I'm writing to you with recommendations on how the Angeles National Forest and the highly populated cities to its south should be united into congressional districts. How public lands are incorporated into congressional districts is often an afterthought. We cannot let this be the case with the San Gabriel Mountains and the Angeles National Forest. They are uniquely located adjacent to millions of people who are united in their concern about the welfare of the mountains and ever intensifying climate change and drought-driven wildfire. According to Forest Service visitor user data, residents of these communities are the most frequent forest visitors. These forest-adjacent communities will only have clout about how the forest is managed if they live in the same congressional district as the public lands. To be empowered you need to be a constituent of a member of Congress who has influence with the federal agency that manages the land, the Forest Service, and with Congress to gain more resources or to comment on forest policy issues.

We recommend that congressional districts that include the San Gabriel Mountains start at the northern national forest boundary as do the current 27th and 28th districts. Congressional districts anchored by the San Gabriel Mountains would proceed south to include the Foothill Cities Community of Interest that runs east from Sylmar to Claremont, which needs to be divided into the fewest number of districts possible. The districts should continue south from the foothill communities until they are fully populated. We are especially concerned about these communities since they are more likely to be park poor and need the mountains and San Gabriel River as a recreational outlet. San Gabriel Mountains National Monument gateway city Azusa (and Gold Line transit stop that provides access to it) and Duarte need to be in these congressional districts, too.

The foothill cities form a powerful community of interest based on their shared traits and their relationship with the San Gabriel Mountains. This community of interest needs to be in the same congressional districts as the object of this interest: the San Gabriel Mountains. The foothill communities from Sylmar to Claremont share many common concerns about the management of their federal public lands: Fire and fuels management and wildfire suppression; sections of high severity fire zones; zoning and fire safe structures; tourism; watershed management and flood control; recreational quality and availability; parking near trailheads, high forest visitation, forest access. They are united by common traits, including historic ties, homes adjacent or near the forests, ecology (chaparral ecosystems), steepening slope, wildlife management, a major visual feature/ scenic backdrop, and more.

We ask the commission to recognize the importance of placing as many of the people who live south of the Angeles National Forest in the same congressional districts as the forests themselves to enhance community power to influence the future of their federal public lands

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Azeneth M" followed by a small heart symbol.

Azeneth Martinez

Bcc: John Monsen