

**REPRESENTATIVE ADAM B. SCHIFF  
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF H.R. 1835  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS &  
PUBLIC LANDS  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES  
JUNE 14, 2007**

Good morning, Chairman Grijalva and members of the Subcommittee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today in support of H.R. 1835, the Rim of the Valley Corridor Study Act.

H.R. 1835 directs the Secretary of the Interior to study alternatives for protecting the mountains and canyons in Southern California that are part of the Rim of the Valley Corridor, as designated by the State of California Rim of the Valley.

This environmentally sensitive area is located in one of the most densely populated areas in the United States. The greater Southern California metropolitan region has the nation's second-largest urban concentration; about one in every ten Americans lives in this region. At the same time, this area has one of the lowest ratios of park-and-recreation-lands per thousand-population of any area in the country. So this rapidly growing urban region is extremely

underserved in terms of open space needs. Unless action is taken soon, this situation will only worsen as the region continues to grow.

The Rim of the Valley Corridor is an ecologically significant, contiguous region that consists of parts of the Santa Monica Mountains, Santa Susanna Mountains, San Gabriel Mountains, Verdugo Mountains, San Rafael Hills, and adjacent connector areas to the Los Padres and San Bernadino National Forests. This corridor system is an example of the world's most endangered habitat area, the Mediterranean chaparral ecosystem.

There are 645,268 total acres contained within the Rim of the Valley Corridor. This includes 153,750 acres of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and 190,112 acres of the Angeles National Forest.

Parts of the Rim of the Valley Corridor are already managed within the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and the Angeles National Forest. Yet, with increasing development and population pressures, the future of the Corridor is threatened. It is in danger of becoming reduced to isolated pockets of open space, irreversibly destroying its connectivity. The contiguous

nature of these open spaces is potentially critical to help preserve the integrity of its ecosystems.

The State of California has adopted the Rim of the Valley Master Plan, and local governments within the Rim of the Valley Corridor have made significant progress toward protecting the unique natural and recreational resources of the area. However, these efforts have been hampered by a lack of financial resources, technical assistance, and resource management expertise that can be provided by the Federal Government.

Since Congress set aside the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Areas in 1978, federal, state and local authorities have worked in remarkable cooperation to manage what is the world's largest urban park. Now, nearly three decades later and in the face of tremendous projected population growth and development pressures, Congress, by passing this bill, again will have the opportunity to study ways to help safeguard and supplement the existing state and local parks, open space and recreational opportunities in Southern California.

The study mandated in the Rim of the Valley Corridor Study Act will explore ways to:

- (1) Protect wildlife populations in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area by preserving habitat linkages and wildlife movement corridors between large blocks of habitat in adjoining regional open space;
- (2) Establish connections along the State-designated Rim of the Valley Trail System, with the aim of creating a single contiguous Rim of the Valley Trail and encompassing major feeder trails connecting adjoining communities and regional transit to the trail system;
- (3) Preserve recreational opportunities and facilitating access to open space for a variety of recreational users;
- (4) Protect rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species, and rare or unusual plant communities and habitats;
- (5) Protect historically significant landscapes, districts, sites, and structures;
- (6) Respect the needs of communities within, or in the vicinity of, the Rim of the Valley Corridor.

Mr. Chairman, the text of bill that you have before you is the product of protracted negotiations in 2004 between my office and Rob Howarth, the former Staff Director for this subcommittee and Rick Healy, the current Staff Director of the Subcommittee.

These negotiations centered on then Chairman Richard Pombo's desire that the bill include specific language concerning privately owned land. The talks resulted in bill language directing the Interior Department to analyze the impact on privately held land of incorporating all or part of the Rim of the Valley Corridor as a unit of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

Chairman Pombo also asked that any study of the Rim of the Valley incorporate the concerns of private landowners within the existing boundaries of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and that the precise area to be studied not be defined precisely, as it was in earlier versions of the legislation that I introduced.

I agreed to amendments to the bill to include these provisions to address the concerns of private landowners and the Senate version of the bill, which had already passed in the other body, was amended by this committee and reported by unanimous consent on

September 22, 2004. The bill before the committee today is identical to that which was reported out in 2004 with the support of the then Republican majority.

I hope that the Congress will seize the opportunity to order the Department of Interior to study of alternatives for protecting some of the most beautiful land in southern California for future generations of Americans to enjoy. The Rim of the Valley is a special place and we owe it to our children to develop a long-range plan that will balance preservation, recreation and the needs of those living in and around the area to be studied.

I thank you for your attention, and ask for your support for the Rim of the Valley Corridor Study Act.