



SAN BERNARDINO MOUNTAINS LAND TRUST

PRESS RELEASE

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Land Trust helps National Forest reclaim missing piece

A 186-acre parcel of private property in the middle of the Santa Ana Mountains got returned to the Cleveland National Forest after 100 years thanks to Senator Dianne Feinstein and the San Bernardino Mountains Land Trust (SBMLT).

The transfer is part of a larger conservation effort to replace missing pieces in all three National Forests that encircle the greater Southern California metropolitan area of Orange County, LA and the Inland Empire.

The parcel known as Yaeger Mesa was an old mining claim filed at the end of the nineteenth century. Returning it to the National Forest was the culmination of a seven year effort on the part of several organizations.

“This has been a team effort between the Land Trust, Senator Feinstein’s office, the Wildlands Conservancy, the Trust for Public Land and the Forest Service,” said Peter Jorris, the executive director of SBMLT. “We have also had excellent support from the Santa Ana Mountains Task Force and other recreational groups.”

Senator Feinstein drew upon the Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), a 45-year-old congressional conservation program, so that the Forest Service could acquire the property. It is the first time that an appropriation from the LWCF has been used in the Santa Ana Mountains.

Yaeger Mesa sits above Trabuco Canyon in one of the most scenic and popular areas of the Santa Ana Mountains. “The mesa is an idyllic fern-covered meadow surrounded by a thick stand of conifer forest, a unique and scenic spot in these popular mountains,” explains Debra Clarke, Trails Manager for the local Forest Service.

Attributes of the property (as identified by the Forest Service) include:

- Within one of the last remaining Inventoried Roadless Areas of the Santa Ana Mountains.
- Within the headwaters for the Trabuco Canyon watershed and contains riparian habitats.
- Contains some of the last remaining stands of large Big Cone Douglas Fir trees near their southern most range.
- Protects significant habitat for several key rare species of the forest.
- Has recreational access via the popular West Horsethief Trail.
- Improves local day-use recreation opportunities for hiking, mountain biking, backpacking, horseback riding, wildlife observation, photography, and hunting for the public.