

Central Coast Heritage Protection Act, H.R. 4685

Lands and Rivers Proposed for Conservation

Black Mountain Proposed Scenic Area

This is one of the few roadless areas in the region that includes oak savannah habitat, a once ubiquitous mixture of grasslands and oaks that is being rapidly destroyed by development throughout the state. Due to its habitat diversity, it may host the elusive San Joaquin kit fox and the San Joaquin pocket mouse, and it offers a refuge for mountain lion, badger, California condor, and a herd of wild horses. Three sensitive plant species are known to call the area home, and nine more species may exist there. The proposed scenic area encompasses the headwaters of the Salinas River, which is an extremely important source of water for local communities, agriculture, and wildlife. On clear days, visitors are treated to views of the far-off Sierra Nevada.



Carrizo Plain National Monument Proposed Wilderness



This area contains the largest and most undisturbed remnant of the great Central Valley prairie ecosystem that once dominated the heart of the state. The San Andreas Fault slices dramatically through the area and is quite visible even on the surface of the prairie. The new monument's grasslands, oak woodlands, vernal pools, and other ecosystems host many endangered species of animals and plants such as the San Joaquin kit fox, blunt-nosed leopard lizard, San Joaquin antelope squirrel, giant kangaroo rat, California jewelflower, Hoover's woolly-star, and San Joaquin woollythreads. In addition, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service considers the Carrizo Plain National Monument "critical habitat" for the continued survival of the California condor. Other species, including pronghorn antelope, Tule elk (the world's smallest elk), mountain lion, burrowing owl, sandhill crane, prairie falcon, golden eagle, and mountain plovers also call the area home.

Chumash Proposed Wilderness Additions

Known as the "Bryce Canyon of California" because of its narrow, multicolored sandstone canyons, this area is home to pronghorn antelope, Tule elk, San Joaquin kit fox, black bear, southern spotted owl, and California condor. The proposed additions serve as a critical wildlife corridor between the Wind Wolves Preserve and the Chumash Wilderness. According to the Forest Service some portions of the badlands are known for their "considerable paleontological finds."



Condor Ridge Proposed Scenic Area

As its name implies, Condor Ridge is historic habitat for the California condor. The south-flowing perennial streams in the area provide habitat for the endangered southern steelhead trout, while the perennial streams flowing both north and south are designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as "critical habitat" for the threatened California red-legged frog. Habitat for the southern spotted owl is provided by forests gracing the area's north-facing slopes. Visitors to the area are greeted by outstanding views in all directions, including the Pacific Ocean and the Coast Range.

Diablo Caliente Proposed Wilderness

The streams in Diablo Canyon and Agua Caliente Canyon contain regionally important riparian forests, many deep pools, and several scenic waterfalls. The Santa Ynez River, Big Caliente Creek, and Rock Creek are federally designated and occupied critical habitat for the California red-legged frog, a federally designated threatened species. In all, the area includes habitat for eight sensitive plant and animal species including arroyo toad, southwestern willow flycatcher, least Bell's vireo, umbrella larkspur, and California condor among others.

Dick Smith Proposed Wilderness Additions

The upper reaches of Buckhorn Creek flow year-round and host a healthy rainbow trout fishery. The area contains large, beautiful sandstone outcrops. The Mono Creek drainage offers towering canyon walls at a site called the Narrows, as well as deep pools of water and striking limestone outcrops. California spotted owls are suspected to nest in the area, and California red-legged frogs, southwestern willow flycatchers and one of the largest populations of southwestern pond turtles on the Los Padres National Forest are also known to dwell there.

Garcia Proposed Wilderness Additions

Beautiful oak woodlands and grasslands serve as important foraging habitat for raptors. The headwaters of the Salinas and Huasna Rivers originate along the flanks of Garcia Mountain. Many seasonal tributaries of the Salinas River have shady streamside groves of hardwoods. The area already serves as a condor foraging site, and its numerous erosion-caused caves, cavities, and ledges may once again serve as a nesting ground for the majestic bird. Golden eagles already nest there.



Machesna Mountain Proposed and Potential Wilderness Additions

Striking red outcrops of rock, oak woodlands, seasonal wetlands, and small, shallow valleys make up this area. Groves of pine and fir grow in the higher elevations and many seasonal tributaries of the Salinas River have shady streamside woodlands. Condors forage in the area, and it is adjacent to a condor release site.

Matilija Proposed Wilderness Additions

White Ledge Peak is a very distinctive local landmark. Its bare-rock face is visible to visitors throughout the region. This beautiful white rock formation rises in stunning contrast to evergreen chaparral. The California condor forages in the area, and it may begin nesting soon. The area contains the Dry Lakes Ridge Botanical Area, where seasonal ponds provide habitat for a diverse array of unique plant life including species that do not occur anywhere else in the region. Over 16 sensitive animal and plant species are found in the area.



San Rafael Proposed Wilderness Additions

Oak woodlands and grasslands offer critical foraging areas for deer, California condor and a plethora of other species. The Painted Rock area has a highly scenic waterfall. The proposed additions serve as an ecological staircase connecting valley grasslands with mid-elevation chaparral. Each step in the staircase contains an amazing diversity of plant communities, including occasional groves of pine and fir. The area's many caves provide condor habitat and some of them are important archaeological sites. Some of these sites are included in the National Register of Historic Places. Native Americans continue to use the area for traditional cultural practices.

Sespe Proposed Wilderness Additions

This addition contains a startling variety of plant communities including forests of pine and fir, streamside forests of sycamore, willow and cottonwood, oak woodlands, and chaparral. Santa Paula Canyon, which is adjacent to the area, is a popular hiking and swimming destination. Bluff Creek is known for its majestic cliffs. Topatopa Bluff is a tremendous scenic escarpment that can be seen for miles from the Ojai, Santa Clara, and Simi Valleys.



Santa Lucia Proposed Wilderness Additions

The area contains very fine oak woodlands and meadows that are being quickly developed elsewhere in the region. The area was a condor release site in the past and is foraging habitat for the condor today. The popular Rinconada trail traverses the area, providing great views of the surrounding mountains and valleys. Year-round streams flow through the area and visitors are treated to spectacular waterfalls.

Piru Creek Proposed Wild and Scenic River Addition

Piru Creek offers rare opportunities to recreate along a year-round free flowing stream in southern California. The stream provides a wide variety of recreational opportunities, including wilderness hiking and backpacking, off highway vehicle travel, gold panning, camping, angling, family picnicking, and even whitewater kayaking, all within a river corridor with diverse and outstanding scenery. The entire creek flows through unique geological formations that provide important clues to tectonic forces that shape California. Identified by scientists as an area of high ecological significance, Piru Creek provides an important biological refuge for the endangered arroyo toad, California red-legged frog, least Bell's vireo and southwestern willow flycatcher.



Upper Sespe Creek Proposed Wild and Scenic River

Upper Sespe Creek flows along scenic Highway 33, which provides access for popular day use recreation activities, including swimming, wading, picnicking, day hiking, horseback riding, and rock climbing in the spectacular Sespe Gorge. Dominated by the Piedra Blanca sandstone rock outcrops on the slopes above, the creek's riparian vegetation offers dramatic spring and fall colors in contrast with rocky cliffs and dark green big cone Douglas firs. Identified by scientists as an area of high ecological significance, this free flowing stream is one of the best remaining low elevation and relatively intact aquatic ecosystems in the central and southern California region. The creek supports one of the few populations of endangered steelhead trout in southern California and one of the largest populations of endangered arroyo toad.

Matilija Creek Proposed Wild and Scenic River

Matilija Creek and its North Fork provide outstanding opportunities for hiking, backpacking, swimming, wildlife viewing, fishing, and photography in a distinctive and scenic setting. A large waterfall on the main stem is a popular destination for day hikers and the North Fork Trail offers an outstanding overnight wilderness experience. The creek supports resident rainbow trout descended from migrating steelhead. Once federal, state, and local agencies complete the removal of the obsolete Matilija Dam downstream, the creek will once again provide more than 14 miles of critical habitat for these endangered fish.

Mono and Indian Creeks Proposed Wild and Scenic Rivers

Mono and Indian Creeks were identified by scientists as an area of high ecological significance. Both creeks provide nearly pristine refuges for a unique assemblage of native wildlife, including the largest population of endangered arroyo toad on the Los Padres National Forest, as well as the endangered California red-legged frog, least Bell's vireo, and sensitive southwest pond turtle. Mono Creek flows through a distinctive narrow gorge with dramatic sandstone and shale formations and large boulders, waterfalls, and deep pools. Those willing to explore this rugged and remote stream must be willing to wade and swim some segments where water fills the canyon from wall to wall. Trails follow other segments of Mono Creek and much of Indian Creek, providing access for anglers, hikers, and backpackers.



Manzana Creek & Tributaries Proposed Wild and Scenic Rivers

Manzana Creek is a major tributary of the Sisquoc Wild & Scenic River, which was protected by Congress in 1992. Because it is free flowing and undiverted, Manzana Creek and its tributaries (including Davy Brown Creek, Munch Creek, Fish Creek and its East Fork), as well as the South Fork Sisquoc River, are critical spawning and rearing streams for endangered southern steelhead as well as a refuge for larger steelhead in the Sisquoc River watershed, which is considered by biologists to possess the most abundant high quality habitat for steelhead in southern California. Manzana Creek and its tributaries also offer a wide variety of recreational opportunities, including camping, hiking, and wildlife viewing.