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The National Chaparral Recreation Plan

Time for a Change

Dear Friends of the Chaparral,

This issue of The Chaparralian is dedicated to introducing the National Chaparral Recreation Plan. If implemented, this plan will create a lasting legacy that will enrich the lives of all Californians and may help initiate change in how Americans connect with the natural environment around them.

Due to the significant changes that have occurred in Southern California over the past 100 years, it is crucial that steps are taken now to insure that



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Forests? Time for a name and management change.

Global Warming, Politics, and Science

By Richard W. Halsey

I have encountered an unusual and disturbing trend in conversations I've had over the past year or so. Science is no longer being seen as a source of knowledge and trusted council, but rather as just another political interest group with an agenda to push. As a scientist I find this extremely frustrating. As a human being, it scares the hell out of me.

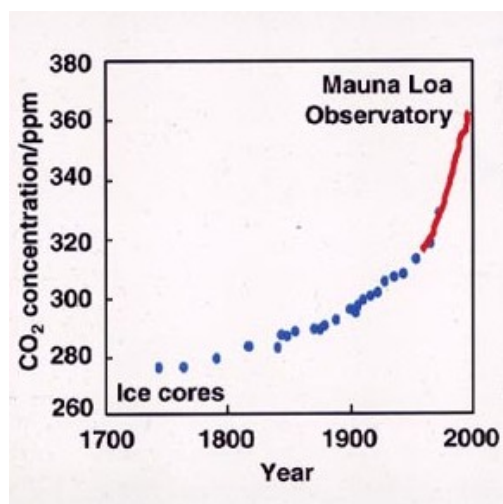
The use of contrived data from biased research has long been used by economic interests to try and defeat any attempt to regulate industry. Automobile companies spent millions of dollars telling the American public that seat belts actually caused more injuries and deaths. Eventually they were forced to install them in, but the number of lives lost while the companies brought "expert" witnesses to

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Global Warming from pg. 1

Congress and confused the public with bogus research is staggering. The record of the tobacco companies in this regard illustrates an even worse example of callousness and deceit.

This decade's seat belt-cigarette controversy has become global warming. But it's distinctly different this time. Rather than just producing misinformation, those who would like to confuse the discussion on global warming are attacking science itself.



There has been a 35% change in CO₂ concentration since pre-industrial times.

On several occasions I have been asked, “You mean you believe in global warming?” When I try to explain *belief* has nothing to do with it because science forms conclusions based on verifiable data, I have been showered with accusations of being duped by liberal special interest groups with anti-business agendas. I’m wondering if these same folks would have been willing to confront the late Dr. Roger Revelle and accuse him of being biased. Revelle was one of the first to recognize that rising carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere were impacting global temperatures and is recognized as one of the world’s most respected scientists. Actually, I just think they might.

When I have mentioned there is consensus in the

scientific community on two issues,

A) global temperatures are increasing and
B) that human activity has had a significant impact on increasing those temperatures,

I’m told scientists are blinded by a *global warming religion* and will label anyone who dares to question their group-think as a heretic.

It has become clear to me that those who believe global warming is a hoax must also believe the entire scientific community is engaged in a grand conspiracy on an international scale. It’s a perspective quite similar to how biological evolution is seen by some segments of society. The Center for Creation Research has produced dozens of publications “proving” evolution is a lie and that human beings existed along side dinosaurs. They can also produce creation “experts” who can be called on to give testimony portraying themselves as righteous forces of truth in a sea of misinformed and biased scientists. Fortunately these folks have

This decade's seat belt - cigarette controversy has become global warming.

not been able to take control of NASA, the Center for Disease Control, or public universities, yet.

I’m not exactly sure how we got here and why discussions about global warming frequently turn into personal attacks, but it is likely connected to the segregation of information and how it is delivered. There is now a wide array of media sources that are specifically tailored to particular viewpoints. By finding the right source, individuals can restrict what they hear or read to those viewpoints that confirm what they already believe. The vitriol in which these

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Global Warming cont.'

opinions are delivered borders on hysteria. An honest debate is very difficult to find.

I had the misfortune of tuning into a popular AM radio talk show recently and heard many of the same points being shouted at me by the show's host that I have heard in personal discussions, almost word for word. Respected scientists were demeaned, facts I was very familiar with were misrepresented, and anyone with a different opinion was labeled as stupid, ignorant, or (what appeared to be the ultimate insult) a liberal. Something is terribly wrong when the public is comfortable labeling the scientific community as favoring one political viewpoint over another because of the conclusions it derives from objective research.

Personally knowing many of the scientists who have done the research that has confirmed the role human beings have played in changing the world's climate and having read dozens of papers on the subject, there is no question in my mind that we are in for some tough times if current trends continue. The question is how do we get past the daily brainwashing that occurs with AM talk radio and well written, but misinformed monologues by people like Michael Crichton? The only approach I can take is the same one I use when trying to help others respect the sacredness

We are seeing radical changes in just about every aspect of weather related phenomena on earth.

of nature; sharing the beauty of the subject and my own enthusiasm for it in a way that hopefully inspires a second look.

So here I am, bewildered and saddened by the politicization of science over a vitally important issue, global warming and climate change. I don't know if the extensive die off of chaparral shrubs in Southern California I've observed over the past year, the record low fuel moistures we are seeing

throughout the state, the 10-year-plus drought much of the West has experienced, or the extremes in fire behavior we've witnessed over the past few years are the result of global warming. But I do know we are seeing some radical changes in just about every aspect of weather related phenomena on earth. We'll just have to wait to see if the "liberally biased" scientific community is right or if this is just a natural, "don't blame the humans," climate shift.

In the mean time I implore you to actually read the data and make an informed decision. Be honest with yourself. Are your opinions really based on objective analysis, or have you gathered all you know about global warming from selected public media outlets?

In the event you want to take me up on the challenge and judge the facts for themselves, this is a good place to start:

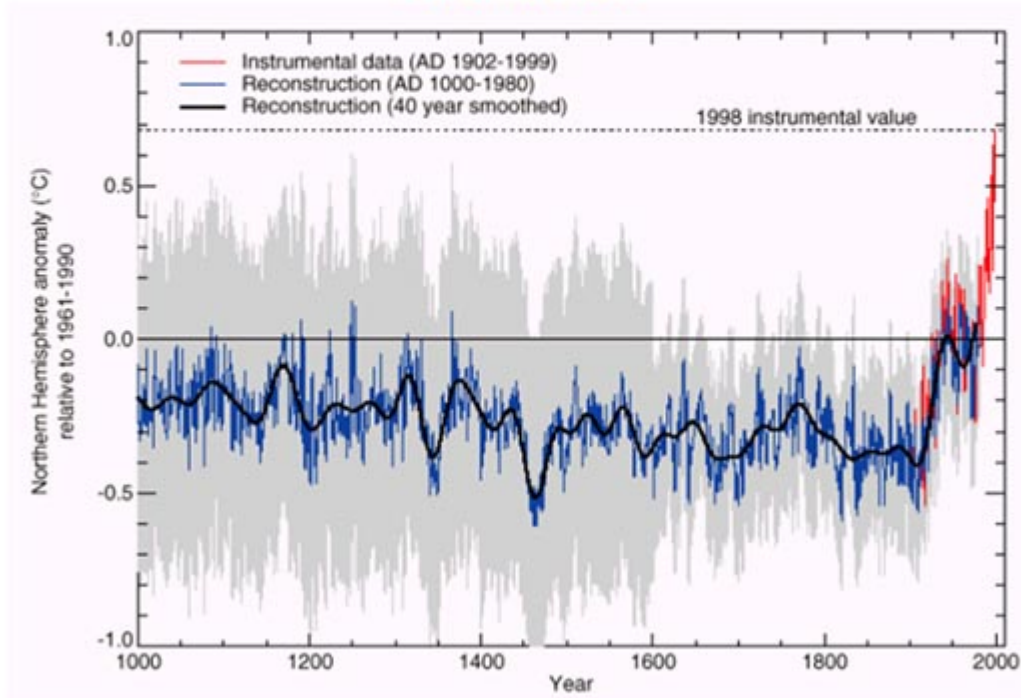
<http://ipcc-wg1.ucar.edu/wg1/wg1-report.html>

This is an up to date report written by the foremost scientists in the field. And yes, I know a few of them and they are actually quite intelligent, outstanding researchers who base their reputations on being objective. Chapter 1 and 9 would be the most helpful to help you understand the science of climate change and why we have concluded humankind is the primary force driving global warming. Download both from the link above. If you don't want to do that, just send me a note and I will be happy to send the files to you via email.

During my brief experiences in wildland firefighting, I have learned that unless you've lived a career fighting fires, you really have no business having an opinion on the matter unless you've checked it first with a few seasoned firefighters. The same goes for global warming. Check with respected scientists who actually do climate research, not just those who can spin a convincing argument.



Figure 1: Millennial Northern Hemisphere (NH) Temperature Reconstruction (blue) and Instrumental Data (red) from AD 1000-1999



Source: Mann et al. 1999.

A quote from Historic Overview of Climate Change Science, Chapt. 1 in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change publication, “The Physical Science Basis of Climate Change.” 2007.

Science may be stimulated by argument and debate, but it generally advances through formulating hypotheses clearly and testing them objectively. This testing is the key to science. In fact, one philosopher of science insisted that to be genuinely scientific, a statement must be susceptible to testing that could potentially show it to be false (Popper, 1934). In practice, contemporary scientists usually submit their research findings to the scrutiny of their peers, which includes disclosing the methods that they use, so their results can be checked through replication by other scientists. The insights and research results of individual scientists, even scientists of unquestioned genius, are thus confirmed or rejected in the peer-reviewed literature by the combined efforts of many other scientists. It is not the belief or opinion of the scientists that is important, but rather the results of this testing. Indeed, when Albert Einstein was informed of the publication of a book entitled *100 Authors Against Einstein*, he is said to have remarked, ‘If I were wrong, then one would have been enough!’ (Hawking, 1988); however, that one opposing scientist would have needed proof in the form of testable results.

Thus science is inherently self-correcting; incorrect or incomplete scientific concepts ultimately do not survive repeated testing against observations of nature. Scientific theories are ways of explaining phenomena and providing insights that can be evaluated by comparison with physical reality. Each successful prediction adds to the weight of evidence supporting the theory...

For more, please download the report mentioned on page 3.

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current and future generations will be able to enjoy the treasure set aside for them over a century ago: the Cleveland, San Bernardino, Angeles, and Los Padres National Forests. The best way to do so is to change the classification and management of these public land trusts in a way that is consistent with the needs of an increasingly diverse and rapidly growing population.

These four Forests need to be viewed and managed for what they are, urban parks that provide citizens opportunities to renew their enthusiasm for life and land preserves that protect the valuable natural resources that permit citizens to do so. By continuing the current Department of Agriculture's forest management model of *multiple-use* there is a significant danger these lands will be lost by *multiple-degradation* as they are exploited for a wide range of consumptive uses.

Future generations will be forever grateful if we act now to manage the four National Forests in Southern California in a manner which will preserve and enhance their scenic, natural, and historical qualities. This plan offers a way to do so.

Richard W. Halsey
The California Chaparral Institute

Executive Summary

In a remarkable display of foresight and political courage, President Theodore Roosevelt withdrew millions of acres of federal land from unregulated commercial development and protected them for future citizens. Roosevelt's Forest Reserve system demonstrated a rejection of the old model of resource exploitation without long-term vision and created instead the world's largest public land protectorate to be held in trust for every single American.

Referring to this land trust, Jack Ward Thomas, Chief Emeritus of the US Forest Service, wrote, "These forests were all different but, in one critical sense, they were all the same. They belonged to me, to my children, and to all the American people for today, tomorrow, and forever – unless somehow, we allow this incredible birthright to be stolen or frittered away."

There is a distinct possibility that this birthright may indeed be frittered away in the four National Forests of Southern California (the Cleveland, San Bernardino, Angeles, and Los Padres) because of improper management and planning by the Department of Agriculture. These four federal land trusts are different from all the others in the National Forest system because they are almost exclusively used for recreation by a growing population. In addition, **these lands are not typically covered by forests at all but rather unique shrubland ecosystems, especially chaparral.**

Since the passing of the Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960, the guiding principle behind National Forest policy has been "to achieve quality land management under the sustainable *multiple-use* management concept to meet the diverse needs of people." This includes grazing, timber production, hydroelectric dams, landfills, utility corridors, and other invasive activities. While the multiple-use doctrine may be a workable management strategy in some National Forests far from

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major cities, it is becoming an increasingly unsuccessful and contentious model for the four National Forests in Southern California, all heavily impacted by a rapidly growing population.

It is time to reclassify National Forest land in Southern California as special National Chaparral Recreation Areas so our families will always have a place to enjoy nature and the value of quiet, natural open space. In order to do so, the following steps need to be taken:

1. Return the land within the Cleveland, San Bernardino, Angeles, and Los Padres National Forests to the **US Department of the Interior under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service**.
2. Designate the Cleveland, Angeles, San Bernardino, and Los Padres National Forests as **National Chaparral Recreation Areas (NCRA)**.
3. Develop a comprehensive plan to **preserve the natural character** of the four NCRAs, **prevent further type-conversion** of native plant communities, and to **protect old-growth stands of chaparral** (75 years and older).
4. Create **ecologically-based fire management plans** that consider the total fire environment in order to protect firefighters, natural resources, and surrounding human communities.
5. Create **Natural History Education/Recreation Districts** connected to each of the four new National Chaparral/Forest Recreation Areas.

Rationale for Change

I. Not Forests

Unlike other forests in the National Forest system, the Cleveland, San Bernardino, Angeles, and Los Padres National Forests were originally set aside to protect watershed values, not regulate timber production. Although some areas do contain some remarkable assemblages of conifers, **shrubland systems, especially chaparral**, dominate the landscape (Fig. 1).

Chaparral is a semi-arid, shrub dominated association of sclerophyllous woody plants shaped by summer drought, mild, wet winters, and fires recurring every 30 to 150 years plus. Due to its protection within the National Forest system, California chaparral is the most pristine example of a Mediterranean-type shrubland ecosystem on the planet.

Many of the conifers such as knobcone pine, big-cone Douglas fir, and endemic populations of various cypress species, are especially adapted to the chaparral's natural fire regime. The dominance of chaparral over timber makes the four National Forests truly distinct from any other forest unit in the federal system.

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National Forest	Total acres	Acres in chaparral and other shrubland	Percent shrubland
Los Padres	1,774,520	1,149,277	64%
Angeles	662,409	474,506	71%
San Bernardino	664,830	346,940	52%
Cleveland	420,245	370,654	88%

Figure 1: Percentage of Shrubland in southern California National Forests. Climatic change may lead to an increase of shrublands at the expense of conifers. Data source USFS.

However, the institutional bias toward trees and the fact that chaparral does not have value as a commodity, the federal bureaucracy has had a difficult time treating shrublands as an important natural resource and appreciating their value as nature preserves for local communities. Consequently, chaparral is seen more as a fuel than a native plant community worthy of study and detailed resource management planning. This perspective has frustrated many Southern California Forest Service employees who have come to appreciate shrubland systems and must contend with federal policies designed to deal primarily with forests and trees. California's unique chaparral ecosystems are not forests and do not fit well within prevailing USFS land management perspectives.

Placing an emphasis on properly managing and recognizing chaparral is crucial because it represents California's priceless natural heritage like no other native plant community. And more importantly, chaparral is the closest natural environment most Southern Californians have the opportunity to experience; it surrounds nearly every community within the region (Fig. 2). Chaparral holds our best chance to help Californians connect with nature in its pure, native form, a rejuvenating activity that is becoming increasingly difficult to enjoy in a rapidly growing state.

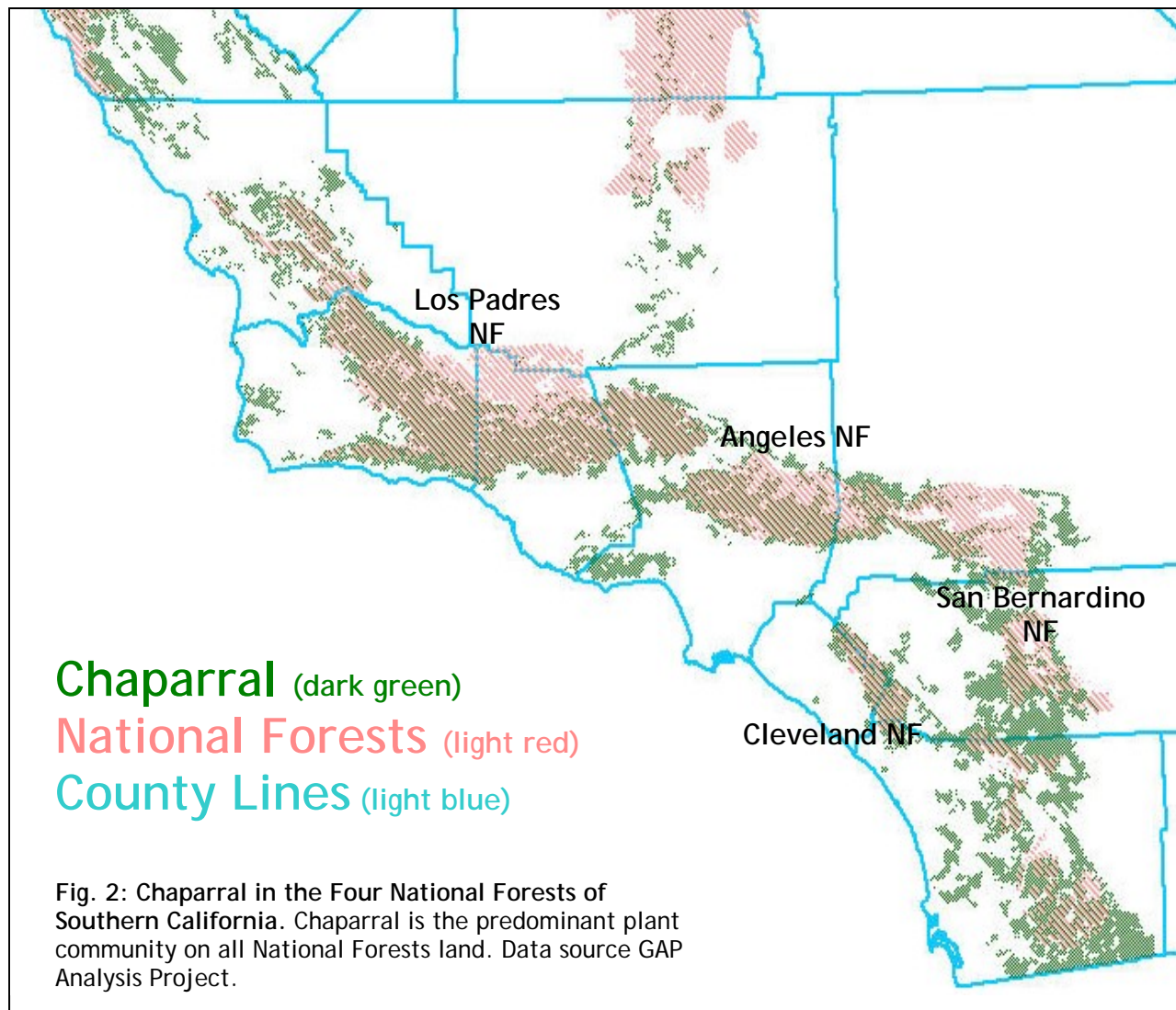
Establishing a special emphasis on chaparral is also important because it remains, for most Californians, an unknown wilderness; a serious lapse in awareness that will have significant consequences in the future. Without a recognizable identity, individuals, places, and hidden treasures have a way of vanishing before anyone fully appreciates their value.

II. Changing Use

The Cleveland, San Bernardino, Angeles, and Los Padres National Forests have become urban parks. Citizens in surrounding communities, especially those near the Angeles and the San Bernardino National Forests, use (and increasingly abuse) these landscapes as they attempt to escape from urban pressures. A tremendous amount of Forest Service staff time is being consumed by permitting issues relating to the multiple-use doctrine, rather than focusing on natural resource management.

III. Growing Threats

Quality open space is disappearing throughout the region. National Forest land is being increasingly seen as the default space for community infrastructure projects. Increasing fire frequency has resulted in the



conversion of chaparral covered lands to non-native grasslands (Fig. 3). Past logging/land practices and decreased fire frequency on some pine forested land has led to overstocked conditions. Forest management plans do not adequately address these problems because the multiple-use doctrine within the USDA does not place an emphasis on long-term preservation. Instead, managers are continually forced to focus on immediate demands such as support of infrastructure development for surrounding communities, accepting the use of Forest Service land for destructive uses by large commercial entities, and mitigating fire risk for poorly designed communities adjacent to or within the Forest.

For example, the 2004 Forest Plan rejection for designating Morrell Canyon in the Cleveland National Forest as wilderness was based on allowing the development of a proposed hydroelectric plant on the site. In the 1990s a solid waste management facility was proposed for Elsmere Canyon in the Angeles National Forest. Expecting Forest Service managers to accommodate the needs of narrow economic interests instead of protecting the public's land trust is a violation of the Forest Service's own guiding principle of using an "ecological approach to the multiple-use management of the National Forests."

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Without guidance from a clear resource management plan, chaparral is subject to questionable landscape-scale fuel modification projects that can seriously compromise the system's health. Although there has not been sufficient scientific research demonstrating the efficacy of such projects, they are frequently proposed. For example, more than 158 miles of fuel breaks are planned in the Los Padres National Forest. Some of these breaks within the Ojai Community Defense Zone project are planned to be up to 2,000 feet wide. Vegetation removal 1,000 feet around dwellings is also proposed. Such enormous amounts of habitat destruction are unjustified (Fig. 4).

Shifting the fire management focus to the wildland/urban interface with smaller, strategic fuel modifications as suggested by the California Fire Plan is a more effective strategy. If a thorough analysis of the true costs of various fuel modification treatments is performed it will become clear that **concentrating efforts directly where loss of life and property can occur will produce the greatest and most effective benefits.**



Fig. 3: Replacing native systems with alien grass, the "creeping band of yellow felt" is moving up into the San Bernardino National Forest.



Figure 4: Type Conversion

Chaparral being type-converted to weeds on a fire break along the ridge of the Santa Ana Mountains in the Cleveland National Forest.

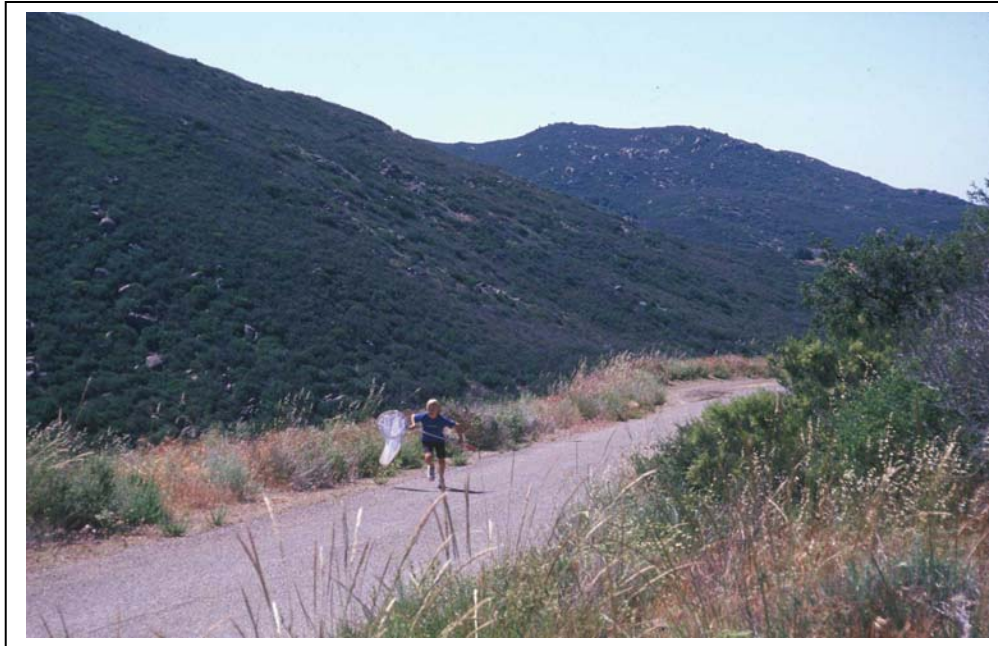


Figure 5: Chaparral is the ideal place for children to reconnect with nature. Photo taken in the Cleveland National Forest.

Enabling Legislation

In order to better protect Southern California's National Forest lands, insure the integrity of their native ecosystems, and create a proper identity for and interest in California's chaparral dominated landscapes for the benefit of current and future generations, we are proposing legislative action that will implement the following five changes:

1. Transfer land within the four Southern California National Forests from the US Department of Agriculture to the National Park Service within the US Department of the Interior.

The current mission of the USFS of sustaining "the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations" is not particularly relevant to Southern California. In addition, the USFS *multiple-use* doctrine sets forth too many conflicting demands that guarantee confusion and litigation in an attempt to please every special interest. It also ensures that consumptive land use has the same priority as preservation. This is no longer an acceptable policy for the lands within the four Southern California National Forests.

Think of how much change has occurred over the past 100 years in the communities surrounding the National Forests in Southern California. Now consider what may happen over the next 100 years without focusing on protecting the region's scenic and natural heritage for future generations. While the concept of multiple-use may have merit in areas managed for timber production, it will ultimately lead to *multiple-degradation* in Southern California.

An excellent example of multiple-degradation creep was the failure by the 2004 Forest Plan to classify as wilderness the small, triangular segment adjoining the northern boundary of the San Mateo Canyon Wilderness Area (SMCWA) known as Morrell Canyon in the Cleveland National Forest. This small area is a logical extension of a region that has priceless wilderness values and contains remarkable old-growth oak woodland and chaparral plant communities. It was originally recommended by local Forest Service staff to be added to the SMCWA. Unfortunately, due to political pressure, the final Forest Plan recommended the Back Country Motorized Use Restricted designation instead. This opens up the small parcel to the development of “renewable energy resources” which is an accommodation to a particular economic interest. Based on future demands for open space, Californians can not afford to lose any more protected federal land in this manner.

This is why the Department of the Interior’s mission “to protect and provide access to our Nation’s natural and cultural heritage” is much more applicable to the current and future management challenges for the wildlands contained within the four Southern California National Forests. This will facilitate movement away from the traditional multiple use/commodity model to one that more accurately reflects the future recreational, educational, and inspirational needs of surrounding urban populations. The National Park Service’s mission to preserve “unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations,” is exactly what the largest remaining wildlands in Southern California need.

2. Designate the four Southern California National Forests as National Chaparral Recreation Areas (NCRA).

When considering the reasons for changing the land management philosophy and classification of the four National Forests in Southern California, any new designation should emphasize four basic components: preservation, recreation, natural history education, and ecologically based fire management. Designating these four federally held lands as **National Chaparral Recreation Areas (NCRA)** can help accomplish this. The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, established by Congress on November 10, 1978 (PL 95-625), provides an excellent example. Recognizing the value of natural open space for the surrounding urban population, Congress gave the following direction:

The Secretary (of the Interior) shall manage the recreation area in a manner which will **preserve and enhance its scenic, natural, and historical setting and its public health value as an airshed for the Southern California metropolitan area while providing for the recreational and educational need of the visiting public.**

In 1997 the National Park Service adopted a mission statement for the recreation area emphasizing the intention of Congress by stating that:

The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area exists to conserve for the Nation its best remaining example of an ever-rarer Mediterranean ecosystem, as well as its associated natural, cultural, scenic and historic resources, and to provide a quality National Park experience for the diverse peoples of Southern California. The park is a cooperative experiment in resource protection and environmental education with non-federal partners, **whose successes**

shall enhance the region’s quality of life and provide lessons learned to other national park units increasingly challenged by the forces of urbanization.

The American people have recognized the value of National Recreation Areas near rapidly growing urban communities because, “urban parks combine scarce open spaces with the preservation of significant historic resources and important natural areas in a location that can provide outdoor recreation for large numbers of people” (NPS).

By looking forward and taking into consideration the long-term needs of a growing population, it is clear we need to change the way we view and manage the lands now classified as National Forests in Southern California. By refocusing on the recreational needs of the people and the preservation of nature for the surrounding urban community, the Chaparral National Recreation Area designation will help to ensure current and future generations will always have the opportunity to let nature enrich their lives.

How these new recreation areas are named is vitally important. The impact of misnaming these lands as “forests” in the past has fostered unfortunate misconceptions. Any label that obscures the true character of a particular group diminishes its value and meaning. In spite of the fact that chaparral is California’s most extensive plant community, it remains unrecognized in part because the largest stands of chaparral in the country are called “National Forests.” Hence the confusion when visitors are met with signs welcoming them to “the forest” when in fact there are no trees in sight. These lands are dominated by chaparral and their names should reflect that fact (Fig. 6).



Figure 6: What forest? Properly identifying the future National Chaparral National Recreation Areas is critical to helping the public understand and better appreciate their local ecosystems.

Using **chaparral** will not only raise the public's awareness of the region's characteristic wildland, but will go a long way in fostering an appreciation for shrubland systems. At present, chaparral and coastal sage scrub are frequently viewed pejoratively as "brush", a holdover from a time when it was government policy to eliminate shrublands in favor of non-native grasslands for grazing. This is why the four new recreation areas need to include "**chaparral**" in their names.

Another way to increase the public's awareness of the lands protected for them is by including the name of the appropriate plant community in the names of Wilderness and other specially designated areas such as the Cuesta Ridge *Sergeant Cypress* Botanical Area in the Los Padres NCRA and the Hauser *Chaparral* Wilderness in the Cleveland NCRA. Sections of highways or roads that travel through or nearby distinctive vegetation communities of one type or another could also be so labeled. Lockwood Valley Road on the outskirts of the Los Padres NCRA could be designated as an official "California *Pinyon Pine* Byway." Highway 74 in the Cleveland NCRA could become an official "California *Chaparral* Byway." This effort could easily partner with the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Scenic Byways Program.

3. Develop a comprehensive plan to preserve the natural character of the four NCRAs, prevent further type-conversion of native plant communities, and to protect old-growth stands of chaparral (75 years and older).

Because of its inherent flammability and lack of direct economic value, chaparral and sage scrub is often seen more as a fuel than an important group of dynamic ecosystems. This perspective may have been partially responsible for the failure of the 2004 Southern California National Forest Plan to develop comprehensive management policies for chaparral as required by Title 36 CFR 219.15: "*The vegetation management practices chosen for each vegetation type and circumstance shall be defined in the forest plan...*"

This potentially fatal flaw in the 2004 Forest Plan is linked to both historical perceptions of what National Forests are and the generally unrecognized unique nature of Southern California ecosystems. USFS tradition and the economic/commodity based view of forests have biased the system toward trees. Consequently, shrublands are marginalized. Reflecting this bias, the Forest Plan carefully distinguishes various forest types, offering management strategies for each. Chaparral types are generally ignored.

Developing a proper vegetation management plan for chaparral and sage scrub is critical because improper management techniques, such as cool season prescribed burning and attempting to create landscaped level mixed aged "mosaics," can eliminate the systems through type-conversion (where one plant community is changed into another). Proper planning will help preserve what is left. The mission of the National Park Service serves this objective well.

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4. Create ecologically-based fire management plans that consider the total fire environment in order to protect natural resources, firefighters, and surrounding human communities.

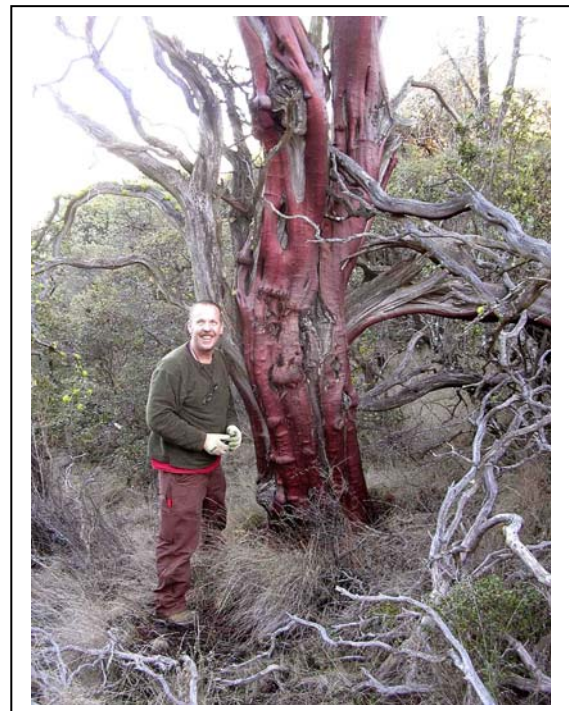
The predominant view of fire management in California is that any amount of chaparral is fuel that needs to be abated. This is no longer consistent with the future needs of a growing population for natural open space. A much more sustainable and productive approach can be found in the National Park Service's General Management Plan for the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area from 2003:

It is the policy of Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area to manage natural areas in a manner that maintains and enhances ecological values while at the same time assuring public safety. **The goal is to implement a fire management program that helps to maintain a fire regime that sustains natural biotic associations and ecosystem functions while providing effective and strategic defenses against wildfire.** The park's prescribed burning program would be revised to reflect an increased understanding of the potential ecological impacts of prescribed burning, a new understanding of extreme-weather fire behavior, and recognition of the limited capacity of government agencies to implement prescribed burning. To this end, ecological management zones would be defined and established where vegetation is managed for ecological values, and dynamic fuel management zones for hazard reduction at the wildland urban interface.

Chaparral is distinct from forest and requires unique wildfire management procedures. For example, the current focus on "fuel reduction" by the federal (Healthy) Forest Restoration Act is not appropriate for California shrubland systems, reinforces pejorative viewpoints of the region's dominant plant community, and is not supported by the most recent scientific research on Southern California wildfires.

One of the most critical fire management decisions facing wildland fire agencies in Southern California today involves how to prevent the gradual degradation and possible elimination of chaparral by type-conversion to non-native, weedy grassland induced through increased fire frequency. Immediate action must be taken **to protect the remaining stands of old-growth chaparral**, a beautiful, national treasure that is quickly vanishing from the state. Once the domain of the California grizzly bear, old-growth chaparral stands that haven't seen fire in centuries contain magnificent specimens of manzanita twenty feet tall with

Figure 7: Ancient manzanita. Beautiful, old-growth chaparral stands were once common in California. Very few now exist due to increased fire frequency. Photo by Paul Furman at www.edgehill.net.



polished red trunks two feet across. Very few of these stands exist anymore in Southern California.

This is why the use of fire suppression strategies and pre-fire treatments to create fuel breaks need to be examined more closely than is currently the case. Although protection of lives will always take precedence in wildfire management, it is important that the preservation of both natural and cultural resources plays a greater role in pre-fire planning and fire suppression efforts. Because natural resources in Southern California are becoming increasingly compromised, and hence more valuable, it is time to re-evaluate our wildfire management objectives.

A critical component to ecologically-based fire management is examining the *total* fire environment. This includes firefighter safety and the fire-safe construction and placement of structures. Firefighters often find themselves in harms way defending unsafe homes that should have never been built in the first place. Homes and communities within and adjacent to NCRAs need to be fire adapted themselves rather than depending on firefighters and natural areas to bare the brunt of fire risk mitigation.

5. Create Natural History Education/Recreation Districts within each of the four new National Chaparral Recreation Areas.

In rethinking the National Parks for the 21st century the National Parks Service wrote in 1999:

Beyond national parks, the National Park Service helps communities across America preserve and enhance important local heritage and close-to-home recreational opportunities. Grants and assistance are offered to register, record and save historic places; create community parks and local recreation facilities; conserve rivers and streams, and develop trails and greenways.

This is exactly the perspective needed to manage the new National Chaparral Recreation Areas in Southern California. With the National Park Service's guidance, **Natural History Education/Recreation Districts** could be established within each of the four Recreation Areas that would include adjacent communities and schools for the purpose of connecting local citizens, especially children, to their local, native ecosystems.

To a person uninstructed in natural history, his country or seaside stroll is a walk through a gallery filled with wonderful works of art, nine-tenths of which have their faces turned to the wall. - Thomas Huxley

Nature provides an outstanding learning environment. For the most part it is free. Nature offers primary learning experiences in which children (and adults) can directly touch, see, smell, and hear for themselves the subjects of their studies. Nearly every part of the standard curriculum can be enhanced and expanded by contact with nature.

Teachers can use the natural world as a fundamental part of their education program. Lessons do not need to be limited to subjects directly related to natural history. Students can find inspiration for

creative writing in nature, improve their physical and mental health by investigating natural environments, and develop critical thinking skills by learning how to observe and respond to the natural environment around them. Nature trails students build to experience the natural world will allow them to not only participate in a positive community project, but also give them an opportunity to share their knowledge with others during our yearly nature education outreach efforts.

There are currently dozens of community groups that utilize current National Forest land and surrounding wild areas as sources of inspiration and education. In order to expand participation in such experiences, local communities themselves need to feel more connected to the natural landscape around them. The most logical step to facilitate such a goal is for the new Chaparral Recreation Areas to form Natural History Education/Recreation Districts, organized in a collaborative manner by the National Park Service and local conservation and education entities. These districts would help local schools adopt portions of National Chaparral Recreation Areas or state wildlands for the purpose of incorporating primary experiences in nature for the surrounding community, creating a sense of ownership for public lands, and developing an understanding of and greater appreciation for the natural world.

Why are such things important? Public wildlands have been established to protect scarce natural resources for all Americans. If citizens do not know of or experience these places they will never develop the commitment necessary to preserve them for future generations. They will forget they exist. Natural resources without watchful constituencies have a tendency to disappear.

Over the past fifty years there has been a gradual shift by families to move their children away from unstructured play and primary learning experiences in favor of more supervised activities. Opportunities for children to explore nature firsthand have decreased dramatically. A common topic of conversation among parents these days is how different their childhood was compared to their own children's. Whereas they used to wander and play alone or with friends in nearby natural areas, their own children rarely experience the same. Parents often express regret over this situation. Creating Natural History Education/Recreation Districts will provide a social network that will allow children (and their parents) to once again connect with the natural world.

An excellent model to examine for developing the foundation of a Natural History Education District is *Orange County Wild*, a the coalition of wildland land managers including the Trabuco Ranger District of the current Cleveland National Forest, California State Parks and Department of Fish and Game, nature conservancies and local municipalities. Docents from these groups already lead and coordinate educational programs. It would be relatively simple to add a mechanism in which participating Orange County public and private schools could adopt a portion of a nearby wildland within their local Natural History Education/Recreation District. Organizations like BayKeeper and Riverkeeper already have citizen watch groups that monitor water quality in local waterways. Student *Chaparralkeepers* could volunteer to keep an eye on their own patch of California wild.

This concept goes beyond chaparral ecosystems and can be adopted by any community that has a natural area nearby.

Cont. next pg.

The Future

The impacts that consumptive use of natural resources have on the landscape are not conducive to the creation of the kinds of positive, long lasting legacies most would wish to be remembered. Unselfishly acting to limit indefinitely financial gain and the loss of unspoiled landscapes for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations truly represents a universal value: concern for those who do not yet have a voice. Theodore Roosevelt's establishment of the National Forests and numerous National Parks helped to establish him as one of America's great leaders. Millions of people today enjoy the benefits of his vision from over a century ago.

We are asking all Americans to consider a similar path.

The overriding concern for state and federal wildlands is their condition **100 years from now** so everyone will still be able to enjoy them. As is clearly stated in the 2004 USFS Forest Management Plan's Environmental Impact Report,

Projected human population growth throughout all of southern California is expected to bring major increases in pressure upon National Forest resources, including requests to develop and use resources to support community growth (such as water, energy and transportation)." And further, "As the resident population continues to increase, so too will the desire to conserve these remaining vestiges of regional open space and scenic heritage in a natural-appearing intact condition."

While it may be difficult to make decisions that restrict current usage of natural open space in order to protect it into the future, especially when trying to balance competing interests, a fundamental fact needs to be constantly remembered: once disturbed, the pristine value of a natural resource is gone forever. With the prospect of future development and exploding population growth clearly in our minds, it is critical we permanently secure more wild, natural space than we currently feel is needed today. This is the vision that drove Theodore Roosevelt to establish the National Forests and is even more relevant today. This is the vision that inspires us to re-evaluate how we view the unique chaparral wildlands currently held within the four current National Forests in Southern California.

Non-recreational uses of protected federal land in Southern California can no longer be justified. This perspective is reflected in Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's recent decision to appeal the 2004 USFS management plan for the four Southern California National Forests. "California's roadless areas are few and far between, but they are extremely important for the health and well-being of our state," said Mike Chrisman, secretary of the state Resources Agency.

The time has come to shift our focus from serving immediate self interests to protecting our children's inheritance and what's left of California's chaparral wildlands.





Figure 8: The beauty of old-growth chaparral. Now rare due to increased fire frequency, old-growth chaparral is the home of unique, natural treasures. For example, many lichen species are dependent on old-growth chaparral formations. The photo of Guatay Mountain shows an eight foot high carpet of old-growth chaparral with multi-stemmed oaks punching up through the canopy. The upper right photo is of the same manzanita shown on page 14 of this document (photo by Paul Furman, all others by R. Halsey).



Figure 9: Ceanothus chaparral in the future Cleveland Chaparral National Recreation Area.

The chaparral, favored habitat of...



the California Grizzly Bear.

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