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{ REPORT
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RIM OF THE VALLEY CORRIDOR STUDY ACT

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FEBRUARY 23, 2005.—Ordered to be printed

Filed, under authority of the order of the Senate of February 17, 2005

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Mr. DOMENICI, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, submitted the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany S. 153]

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, to which was referred the bill (S. 153) to direct the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a resource study of the Rim of the Valley Corridor in the State of California to evaluate alternatives for protecting the resources of the Corridor, and for other purposes, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon without amendment and recommends that the bill do pass.

PURPOSE OF THE MEASURE

The purpose of S. 153 is to direct the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a joint resources study to evaluate the suitability and feasibility of establishing the Rim of the Valley Corridor as a unit of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

BACKGROUND AND NEED

S. 153 directs the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to study an area known as the, "Rim of the Valley Corridor," the escarpment of the San Gabriel Mountains in southern California primarily within the Angeles National Forest, for possible addition to the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. The Santa Monica Mountains N.R.A. is the largest urban unit of the National Park System, comprising more than 150,000 acres near Los Angeles.

The Rim of the Valley Corridor contains parts of an endangered habitat area, the Mediterranean chaparral ecosystem. Nearby mountains also provide notable recreation opportunities and a haven from the noise and commotion of the Los Angeles Basin. The State of California has adopted the Rim of the Valley Master Plan submitted by the Santa Monica Mountain Conservancy, but State and local efforts to protect the area have been hampered by a lack of financial resources and resource management expertise.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

S. 153 was introduced by Senator Feinstein on January 25, 2005.

During the 108th Congress, the Committee considered identical legislation, S. 347. S. 347 was introduced by Senator Feinstein on February 11, 2003. The Subcommittee on National Parks held a hearing on S. 347 on March 4, 2003 (S. Hrg. 108–14). At the business meeting on March 12, 2003, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources ordered S. 347, as amended, favorably reported (S. Rept. 108–25). S. 347 passed the Senate with an amendment and an amendment to the Title by unanimous consent on April 7, 2004. The House of Representatives did not consider the bill prior to the *sine die* adjournment of the 108th Congress.

Similar legislation, S. 2571, was also introduced by Senator Feinstein during the 107th Congress. The Subcommittee on National Parks held a hearing on S. 2571 on July 18, 2002 (S. Hrg. 207–829). At its business meeting on July 31, 2002, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources ordered S. 2571, as amended, favorably reported (S. Rept. 107–257).

At its business meeting on February 9, 2005, the Committee ordered S. 153 favorably reported.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, in open business session on February 9, 2005, by a unanimous vote of a quorum present recommends that the Senate pass S. 153.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Section 1 titles the bill the “Rim of the Valley Corridor Study Act.”

Section 2 directs the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a joint resource study, sets forth requirements and criteria for conducting the study and consultation with affected governmental entities.

Section 3 authorizes the appropriation of such sums as are necessary to carry out this Act.

COST AND BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

The following estimate of the cost of this measure has been provided by the Congressional Budget Office.

FEBRUARY 14, 2005.

Hon. PETE V. DOMINICI,
Chairman, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has prepared the enclosed cost estimate for S. 153, the Rim of the Valley Corridor Study Act.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contacts are Megan Carroll and Deborah Reis.

Sincerely,

DOUGLAS HOLTZ-EAKIN,
Director.

Enclosure.

S. 153—Rim of the Valley Corridor Study Act

S. 153 would direct the Secretary of the Interior to evaluate alternatives for protecting the area known as the Rim of the Valley Corridor in California, including the possibility of designating the area as a unit of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Based on information obtained from the Department of the Interior, CBO estimates that the proposed study would cost about \$500,000 over the next three years, assuming appropriation of the necessary amounts. Enacting S. 153 would not affect direct spending or revenues.

S. 153 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would impose no costs on State, local, or tribal governments.

The CBO staff contacts for this estimate are Megan Carroll and Deborah Reis. This estimate was approved by Peter H. Fontaine, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

REGULATORY IMPACT EVALUATION

In compliance with paragraph 11(b) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee makes the following evaluation of the regulatory impact which would be incurred in carrying out S. 153. The bill is not a regulatory measure in the sense of imposing Government-established standards or significant economic responsibilities on private individuals and businesses.

No personal information would be collected in administering the program. Therefore, there would be no impact on personal privacy.

Little, if any, additional paperwork would result from the enactment of S. 153, as ordered reported.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

During the 108th Congress, the Committee considered identical legislation (S. 347). The testimony provided by the National Park Service at the Subcommittee hearing on S. 347 follows:

STATEMENT OF DETEEL PATTERSON TILLER, ACTING ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR CULTURAL RESOURCES, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department's views on S. 347, a bill to direct the Sec-

retaries of Interior and Agriculture to conduct a joint special resources study to evaluate the suitability and feasibility of establishing the Rim of the Valley Corridor, in the Los Angeles region, as a unit of Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

The Department supports this bill with the minor clarification provided in this testimony. We believe that this study will provide a good opportunity to explore partnerships with a wide range of state, local, private, and other federal entities for the purpose of protecting and interpreting important natural and cultural resources.

On July 18, 2002, the Department testified on S. 2571, a similar bill that would have directed the Secretary of the Interior to study the Rim of the Valley for addition to Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. In our testimony, we recommended that the bill be amended to make the study a joint study between the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture and we suggested that the provision that established a 17-member advisory commission was unnecessary. At the committee markup, S. 2571 was amended incorporating the department's suggestions. S. 347 is identical to S. 2571 as it was amended in the 107th Congress.

S. 347 directs the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture to conduct a joint Special Resource Study of the Rim of the Valley Corridor in Southern California. S. 347 further requires that the study evaluate the suitability and feasibility of establishing the area as a unit of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. The Secretaries are directed to use the criteria for study of areas for inclusion in the National Park System and to consult with appropriate State, county, and local governments. The study is estimated to cost approximately \$500,000.

The National Park Service generally conducts special resource studies to evaluate the suitability and feasibility of an area to become a new unit of the National Park System. We understand that the intent of this bill is not to establish a new park, but rather to study the Rim of the Valley as a potential addition for Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. As such, we suggest that 'Special Resource Study' be replaced with 'resource study' in all places where it appears in the bill. We would be happy to work with the subcommittee staff to develop any additional clarifying language that may be required.

The study would assess habitat quality, access to urban open space, low-impact recreation and educational uses, wildlife and habitat restoration and protection and watershed improvements along the Rim of the Valley corridor surrounding the San Fernando and La Crescenta Valleys. This corridor consists of portions of the Santa Monica Mountains, Santa Susanna Mountains, San Gabriel Mountains, Verdugo Mountains, San Rafael Hills and the connector to Los Padres, Angeles, and San Bernardino National Forests, which provide notable recreation opportunities close to the Los Angeles basin.

In addition to natural and recreational opportunities, the area also includes properties found on the National Register of Historic Places. Old stagecoach stops and images of the Wild West still exist. Amtrak's Coast Starlight line travels past many of these rich cultural and natural motifs. The area supports a diverse system of plants and animals, including 26 distinct plant communities and more than 400 vertebrate species.

As the largest urban park area in the National Park System, the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area includes 153,750 acres and provides recreational opportunities for approximately 530,000 visitors annually. During the 25 years since the national recreation area was authorized by Congress, this unit has become a model of collaboration of many local, state, and federal public land managers, as well as many private property owners—all working together as stewards of the scenic, natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

Recognizing the limitation of federal resources for acquiring and managing additional lands, the study would have to examine a number of alternatives for protecting significant areas of open space in the Rim of the Valley Corridor, including those that involve minimal cost to the federal government. With the study area encompassing 491,518 acres, the study would emphasize public-private partnerships. Given the large size and the diversity of stakeholders in the area, the study undertaken by the National Park Service would involve extensive outreach with members of the public, private landowners, and local governments. It would likely entail extended comment periods, and extensive analysis.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you or any members of the subcommittee may have.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

In compliance with paragraph 12 of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee notes that no changes in existing law are made by the bill S. 153, as ordered reported.

