

**Subject: electronic copy of comment letter and map**

**Date:** Friday, May 6, 2011 5:44 PM

**From:** Clark Stevens [REDACTED]

**To:** <votersfirstact@crc.ca.gov>

**Conversation:** electronic copy of comment letter and map

dear members of the redistricting commission:

please find attached, for your convenience, a letter i submitted on behalf of the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains (as speaker #108) in hard copy at the April 28 public input hearing at Los Angeles City Hall. you will also find attached for your convenience a map (with community of interest outlined in red) and google earth file describing the area covered by the letter in detail.

thank you for your consideration of this community of interest material.

sincerely,

clark stevens

CLARK STEVENS

Executive Officer

RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
OF THE  
SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS

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Clark Stevens

April 28, 2011

Via Electronic Mail to:

Citizen's Redistricting Commission  
1130 K Street Suite 101  
Sacramento, CA 95815

**RE: Redistricting of Senate and Assembly Districts**

Dear Members of the Citizens Redistricting Commission:

For 50 years, the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains (RCDSMM), a legal subdivision of the State of California, has been a non-regulatory reviewing and resource agency in the Santa Monica Mountains and Upper Los Angeles River watersheds. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input related to the proposed re-districting of the State of California, and have over the last half-century identified a number of important "Communities of Interest" that bind the Santa Monica Mountains Watersheds in a single, local community of interest. We ask that the communities of the Santa Monica Mountains, those in both Los Angeles and Ventura County and their watersheds flowing into the Santa Monica Bay and Pacific Ocean, as well as the adjacent watersheds of the Simi Hills and upper Los Angeles River system, be represented to the greatest extent possible in unified representational districts.

The Santa Monica Mountains local community of interest is bounded by:

- The Conejo Grade/Thousand Oaks of Ventura County in the northwest
- Point Mugu of Ventura County in the southwest
- The Pacific and Santa Monica Bay coastline, Malibu and Santa Monica in the south-southeast
- The Upper Los Angeles River watershed side of the Santa Susanna Pass, Chatsworth and Bell Canyon Communities in the north, and
- Extends along the spine of Mulholland Drive, north to the 101 Freeway, as far to the east as Runyon Canyon, West Hollywood.

The municipalities and wholly contained unincorporated communities of the Santa Monica Mountains include: Thousand Oaks, Hidden Valley, and Deer Creek, Yerba Buena and Bell Canyons (all of Ventura county); and Westlake Village, Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, West Hills, Woodland Hills, Encino, Sherman Oaks, Monte Nido, Cornell, Malibou Lake, Malibu, Topanga, Pacific Palisades, Santa Monica, Bel



Air, Beverly Glen, Westwood, and the Canyon Areas of Beverly Hills and West Hollywood in Los Angeles County. All of these communities of interest link natural and human communities with one another in a manner unique to mountain watersheds, and have multiple common resource interests, including:

**Watersheds-** Watershed boundaries are real geographic features that directly impact the movement of water and wildlife, and inform the underpinning of local ecology. Watersheds in this way create the underlying community of interest for both human and non-human residents. Municipal jurisdictional boundaries that misalign with watershed boundaries set the stage for numerous management conflicts that can be avoided by keeping watersheds as intact as possible within the political process.

**Water Quality-** From a practical and watershed perspective, what happens upstream affects what happens downstream. From a regulatory framework, the impacts of inter-mountain communities and their responsibility for both point and non-point pollution is shared throughout watersheds. Water quality is a tremendous concern in the Santa Monica Mountains, as it is throughout the state. Providing political entities that are responsible for the whole of a river or creek system, rather than fragmenting it, is both practical and positive.

**Urban Wildland Interface Wildfire Management-** The Santa Monica Mountains define the edge of dense urban development in the San Fernando Valley and along the coast, and include numerous communities and neighborhoods within the mountains themselves. Many municipalities, such as Malibu and Calabasas in Los Angeles County, Westlake Village (with contiguous development straddling both Los Angeles and Ventura Counties) and Thousand Oaks of Ventura County, cover both wildland in the upper reaches of their watersheds, and adjacent valley areas in the lower reaches. The interface with natural areas defines a number of shared interests, foremost among them wildfire management. For communities residing within the mountains, balancing the management of seasonal wildfire threat with the conservation of scenic, recreational, and wildlife values is a common concern.

**Transportation Corridors-** While some see the Santa Monica Mountains as a division between the San Fernando Valley and the coast, in fact, the through-mountain roads, as well as the creeks and rivers, provide critical connections that create a community of interest on both sides of the mountains. Thousands of daily commuters rely upon the 101 and 10 freeways, Kanan Rd, Malibu Canyon Rd, and Topanga Canyon Blvd, in the west, as well as the 405, Sepulveda, Laurel Canyon and Coldwater Canyon Roads in the central portion of the mountains to get to and from their homes and work. In addition, these corridors also provide wildlife linkages used by everything from fish to mountain lions. Incorporating these transportation corridors into a single political unit facilitates and focuses scarce resources most effectively.

**Scenic and Recreational Resources-** As the hub of recreation for a densely populated



urban area, the Santa Monica Mountains are a critical resource for a region that expands well beyond its immediate boundaries. Millions of visitors from near and far utilize the Mountains and its watersheds from the Upper Los Angeles River watersheds on the north and east, to the Pacific and Santa Monica Bay watersheds on the south and west. From a recreational perspective, the flow of people whose quality of life is sustained by the mountains and beaches follows its watersheds.

**Wildlife Habitat-** The Santa Monica Mountains is home to numerous rare flora and fauna that both benefit and are threatened by watershed-based influences. Invasive species must be managed from a whole-watershed perspective, as weeds in particular will reseed downstream if sources upstream are not managed. Connectivity at the regional scale is also critical. The Mountains' apex predator, the Mountain Lion, relies entirely on linked and fragile watershed connections from the Santa Monica Bay and Pacific Ocean on the south, through the upper Los Angeles watersheds of the Simi Hills to source populations in the Los Padres National Forest. If this community of interest- which includes human residents who value such complete ecosystems- were not maintained, the genetic health of this animal would not be sustainable within the Santa Monica Mountains

Again, such vital and life-sustaining linkages do not limit themselves to County and municipal boundaries. Shared interests in this region have led to the creation of numerous cooperative agreements and administrative overlays, including the Malibu-Las Virgenes Council of Governments, and most notably, the critical open space network of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, managed by the National Park Service in cooperation with California Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy/Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority. The RCDSMM is the fourth element of this regional natural resource community of interest that stretches from Ventura County's Point Mugu in the west and Santa Susanna Pass in the north, to Los Angeles County's Santa Monica in the south and Runyon Canyon in the east, and is uniquely chartered to work with private owners within these watersheds on a voluntary basis. In recognition of this two-county community of interest, the RCDSMM was recently funded by a three-year grant from the State Department of Conservation to organize the Santa Monica Mountains Watersheds Council.

To date, the collection of watersheds that define the communities of interest described above and shown in the attached map has benefited by a relatively un-fragmented overlay of state-level representation. Currently, the Santa Monica Mountains area of interest described herein is represented primarily by State Senate districts 23 and Assembly district 41, but also includes portions of Senate Districts 17, 19, 20, and 21, and Assembly Districts 37, 40, and 42. Future redistricting should seek to keep the communities of the greater Santa Monica Mountains area and their associated watersheds whole within single representational districts to the greatest extent possible. Adhering to the following principles when defining representative districts



would maintain or enhance the connectivity of interests that is critical to the health and vitality of our communities:

1. Emphasize continuity of watershed form and habitat linkages. The mountainous portions of the westernmost and southernmost upper Los Angeles River watershed- the so-called "Rim of the Valley" areas- should be grouped in a single community of interest with the coastal areas that drain from the Santa Monica Mountains. The Pacific coastal canyons of southeast Ventura County, for instance, have more in common with those of Malibu in Los Angeles County than the adjacent, largely agricultural, Oxnard Plain or the west-draining and more arid Simi Valley.
2. Identify and work with existing land management overlays so that the communities of interest they represent are kept intact. The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area represents such an administrative overlay.
3. Understand and respect that large and connected areas of open space, although not in and of themselves sources of significant populations, bind significant adjacent populations in a strong community of interest, and so fragmentation of these areas and communities should be avoided.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our comments in this early stage of the redistricting process. We look forward to participating as the work progresses. Should you have any questions regarding the content of this letter, or would like to more directly engage the RCDSMM, please feel free to contact me or our Senior Conservation Biologist, Rosi Dagit, using the contact information provided on this letter.

Respectfully submitted,

Clark Stevens  
Executive Officer

cc: Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Director, Santa Monica Mountains  
Conservancy  
Woody Smeck, Superintendent, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation  
Area

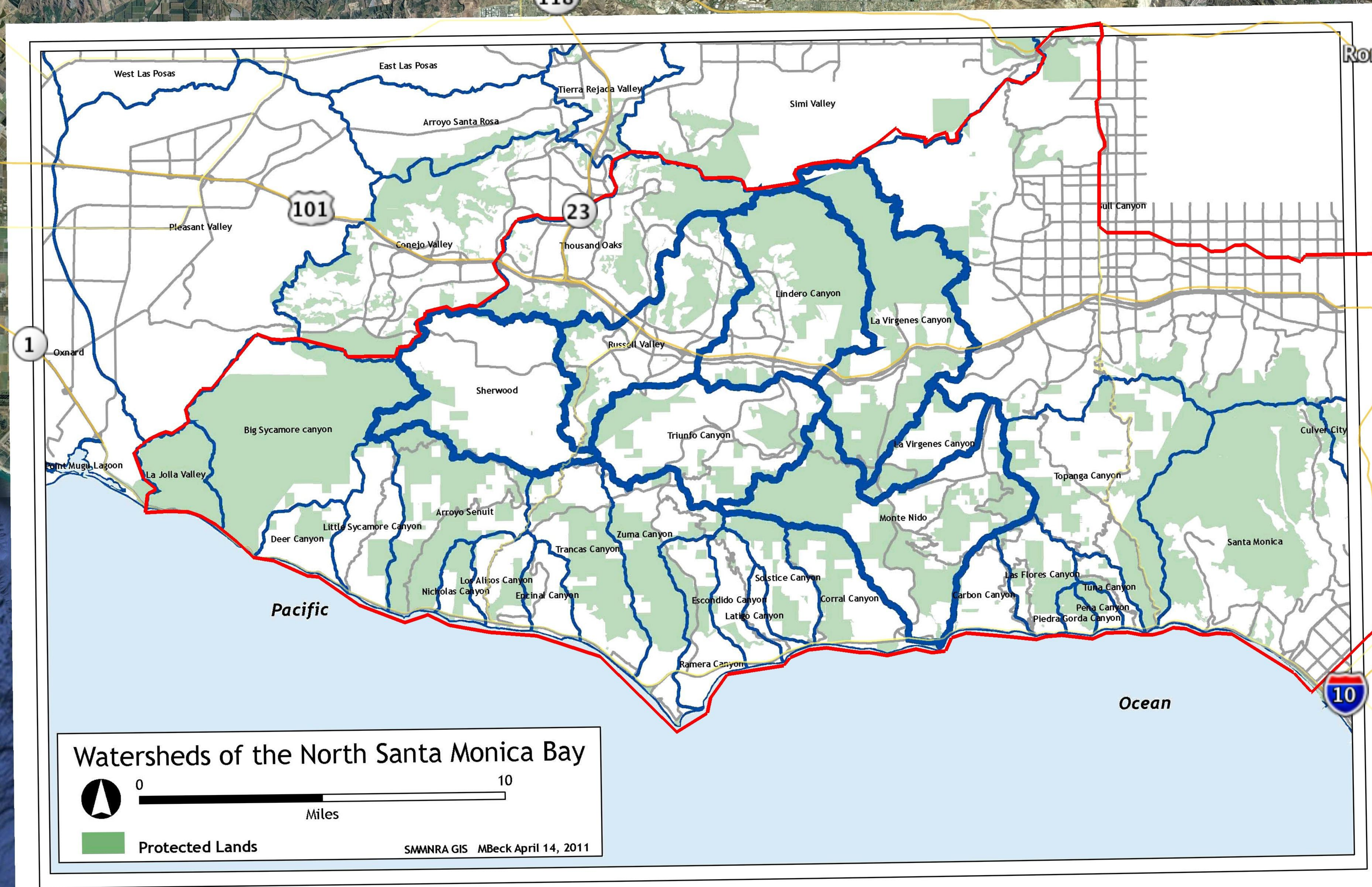


Image U.S. Geological Survey  
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