

KEEP OUR FORESTS GREAT!

AN ACTION PLAN TO
PROTECT & DEFEND PUBLIC LANDS
ALONG CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL COAST



February 2017

LOS PADRES FORESTWATCH · PO BOX 831 · SANTA BARBARA CA 93102
805.617.4610 · WWW.LPFW.ORG · INFO@LPFW.ORG

It is horrifying that we have to fight our own government to save the environment.

ANSEL ADAMS

Our region is defined by the iconic landscapes of the Los Padres National Forest, the Carrizo Plain National Monument, the Channel Islands National Park, and other natural treasures. These public lands comprise more than one-quarter of the land base along California's central coast, defining the character of our communities and providing us with clean water, scenic views, wildlife habitat, and exciting outdoor recreation opportunities. They boost our local economy with tourism dollars, contribute towards the mental and physical well-being of our communities, and they are accessible to everyone.

The fate of these lands lies with our elected officials and agencies in Washington DC. They decide how much (or how little) protection is afforded to the vast network of public lands across the country. No matter what political party is in charge, there is constant pressure to develop and exploit our parks, forests, and monuments – and a constant need for the public to keep a watchful eye on politicians and federal land managers.

But in 2017, change is afoot. The political winds are rapidly shifting in Washington DC as President Trump and a new Congress take the reins of our federal government, and a decidedly anti-public-lands agenda takes hold. Our public lands are now facing threats like we've never seen before, such as:

- **Privatization of Public Lands:** One of the top priorities of the new Congress is to “immediately” pass legislation requiring federal agencies to give away our public lands to states, where they would be more vulnerable to development interests.
- **Weakening of Bedrock Environmental Laws:** Legislation is already pending in Congress to dismantle our nation's longstanding environmental laws that protect clean air and water, safeguard wildlife, and secure open space for all of us to enjoy.
- **A Return to the Wild West:** Legislation has been introduced to eliminate the authority of federal law enforcement officers to patrol national forests and monuments, leaving these lands even more vulnerable to vandalism, graffiti, dumping, fires, and lawlessness.
- **Attack on Science:** The Trump administration has issued gag orders to agency scientists, removed critical information from official websites, and employed other intimidation tactics to silence independent scientists charged with protecting our environment.

- **Can You Spare a Dime?:** The Trump administration is threatening to slash the funding of land management agencies, jeopardizing basic services like campgrounds and trail maintenance. A hiring freeze leaves the agency unable to fill critical staff positions.
- **Appointment of Anti-Environmental Extremists:** The President's nominees to lead various land management agencies are raising eyebrows for their anti-lands rhetoric. The new EPA head has sued the agency 14 times to overturn environmental protections.
- **Rollback of Environmental Regulations:** Congress is attempting to permanently revoke several environmental regulations pertaining to stream protection, land management planning, and methane leakage from oil drilling facilities on public lands.

For 13 years, Los Padres ForestWatch – a nonprofit organization that works to protect the Los Padres National Forest along California's treasured central coast – has kept a watchful eye on how decisions made in Washington DC affect the vast network of public lands right here in our own backyard.

We are uniquely positioned to respond to these unprecedented threats at the local level. Our strong track record – combined with our steadfast determination and widespread community support – have given us the tools we need to rise to this epic challenge.

To prepare for this unprecedented attack on our public lands, our Board and staff have developed this comprehensive strategy that incorporates advocacy, collaboration, education, and legal defense, along with simple steps to remind ourselves of the beauty of our region's public lands and that together, we're in good company and will persevere.

And ultimately, prevail.

Thank you for joining with us to ensure that our region's public lands remain protected for current and future generations to enjoy.

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful,
committed citizens can change the world;
indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*

MARGARET MEAD

ADVOCACY

We must show our elected officials that communities along the Central Coast value our public lands and want to see them protected. To do so, we will carefully track appointees to top posts in federal land management agencies, monitor regulatory and legislative threats to our public lands, and demand improvements – not rollbacks – to how our parks and forests are protected.

- 1. Track key appointments to leadership positions in the U.S. Forest Service and other public lands and environmental agencies.**
- 2. Oppose all efforts to transfer, sell, or give away public lands.**
- 3. Stop expansion of oil drilling and fracking on public lands throughout our region.**
- 4. Monitor and stop attempts to roll back the public's right to participate in public lands management.**
- 5. Prevent the weakening of our nation's bedrock environmental protection laws like the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Water Act, the National Forest Management Act, and the Endangered Species Act.**
- 6. Stand up for local Forest Service employees and whistleblowers.**
- 7. Demand adequate funding for land management agencies so that they can provide basic services like campground and trail maintenance, natural resource protection, research and data collection, and law enforcement.**
- 8. Gather support from local mayors, city councils, county supervisors, and other local elected officials and business leaders to demonstrate strong support for public lands.**
- 9. Hire a new Public Lands Advocate to coordinate our enhanced advocacy efforts.**

LEGAL DEFENSE

As the saying goes, sometimes the best defense is a good offense. If our leaders fail to listen to the voice of the people who care for our public lands, then when all else fails, we'll see them in

court. Our nation's judicial system has always served as an independent arbiter of the actions of the President and Congress, and we will not hesitate to ask the courts to uphold the law when the new administration fails to do so.

- 1. Build a litigation war chest so that we can rapidly defend the Los Padres National Forest at a moment's notice.**
- 2. Have a core group of volunteer attorneys and scientific experts poised and ready to craft sound legal strategy based on sound science.**
- 3. Put our boots on the ground, serve as an extra set of eyes and ears, and investigate lawless activity in the forest, and report violations to the proper authorities to hold criminals accountable.**

EDUCATION

Our public lands are only managed as well as the public demands them to be. But the management of our natural resources has become so complex and technical that it is often difficult for members of the public to figure out what's being proposed or how they can participate. We will track new changes coming out of Washington DC and make it easy for the public to understand what's at stake and how our voices can be heard.

- 1. Mobilize letter-writing and phone calls to elected officials in Washington DC.**
- 2. Increase news releases, online and print advertisements, and PSAs to shed light on how decisions at the national level affect public lands in our own backyard.**
- 3. Expand our use of social media like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to spread the word and reach new audiences.**
- 4. Organize town hall meetings in key cities and towns around the forest to educate, inform, and engage the public about what's at stake and how to get involved.**
- 5. Upgrade our website to include interactive features to easily send messages to decision-makers.**
- 6. Inspire our youth to get involved and become the next generation of forest advocates.**

COLLABORATION

The stakes are so high that we simply cannot do this alone. We're a small nonprofit organization with limited resources. But with the support of the community by our side, we can reach out and collaborate with groups at the local, state-wide, and national levels to unify our voices and truly make a difference. As the only organization on the Central Coast focused solely on protecting our region's public lands, we're uniquely positioned to take a leadership role in bringing like-minded organizations together for the long haul.

- 1. Combine forces with more than 200 small, local, place-based groups across the country to speak and act with a unified voice.**
- 2. Organize regular meetings of representatives from local conservation organizations to share strategies, unify our message, and help us all achieve more success.**

RENEW. RELAX. INSPIRE.

Reality check! Let's face it, there's much work to be done, and we can't let ourselves become overwhelmed and demoralized. To move closer to victory with a clear head, fresh mind, and renewed spirit, sometimes we need to step away, get outside, and experience and enjoy those very things which we are working to protect. Equally as important is to recognize and appreciate like-minded individuals and businesses who share our appreciation for the natural world, and to find our own personally-fulfilling ways to make the world a better place.

- 1. Get out and enjoy public lands.**
- 2. Remind ourselves that we will persist – and even prevail – against all odds.**
- 3. Continually thank our supporters for being with us every step of the way.**
- 4. Increase opportunities for gathering our members together, celebrating our victories, and planning for the challenges that lie ahead.**
- 5. Buy local and only support businesses that support the conservation of public lands and the environment.**
- 6. Find small but meaningful ways to tread a little more lightly on this planet.**