



Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation, Inc.

Post Office Box 353, Agoura Hills, California 91301



"The voice and conscience of the Santa Monica Mountains since 1968"

May 4th, 2011

Citizens Redistricting Commission
1130 K Street, Suite 101
Sacramento, CA, 95814

Re: Assembly and Senate District Boundaries Los Angeles County

Dear Honorable Commissioners:

The Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation writes this letter on behalf of its more than 25 homeowner associations and more than 6,000 homeowners within the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA). The Federation is the largest and oldest homeowner coalition in the SMMNRA with members throughout Calabasas, Agoura Hills, unincorporated Los Angeles County, and Westhills. The Federation is non-partisan with a strong, active, and very successful 44 year history and track record dedicated to bringing residents, government agencies and stakeholders together to improve the quality of life in the Santa Monica Mountains and to preserving our shared common interests in our canyons and coast.

We respectfully request that the Commission consider our recommendations regarding the redistricting of the Las Virgenes Region and Los Angeles County and **return voting districts to lines similar to those drawn in 1991** for the reasons stated below.

In the 1991 Senate boundary map (attached) the Santa Monica Mountains are rightfully the backbone of our district, along with our other natural boundaries – our watersheds and coastline - uniting and defining our communities of common interest and our district. These natural environmental factors define and contribute to our quality of life and economy.

I. Historical Representation

For over 20 years elected officials that have been committed to the quality of life in the Santa Monica Mountains have represented our region. This commitment has been responsible for a dream turning into reality in the form of the **Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area** (SMMNRA) for all of the residents of California. The local, state and federal elected officials have been sensitive to the unique issues related to San Fernando Valley, Santa Monica Mountains and the Pacific Ocean.

II. Senate and Assembly Districts are Contiguous and Compact

The former 2001 Senate district is completely contained within Los Angeles County with the two Assembly districts nested into the single Senate district. We support a return to the shared goals of this district. The western border is the Los Angeles County line with Ventura County. The southern border is the Pacific Ocean. The northern border is the 101-freeway corridor and the eastern border is from Universal City south to include the city of West Hollywood and the Wilshire corridor to the City of Santa Monica. We support these districts that are almost identical to the districts drawn by three retired appellate judges appointed by the Supreme Court in 1991 when the legislature and the governor were not able to agree on a redistricting plan.

The senate and assembly districts are united by three adjacent, interlocking communities of interest: the greater Westside, the San Fernando Valley and the Las Virgenes region. **These three areas are bound together by the Santa Monica Mountains which run from the eastern edge of the district to the Pacific Ocean in Malibu and the Ventura County line.**

Together, they form a cohesive, coherent unit, which should be preserved.

III. Communities of Interest

A. Geography: The Las Virgenes Valley/Upper Malibu Creek Watershed Area. A Santa Monica Mountains/Santa Monica Bay Watershed.

The Las Virgenes Valley/Upper Malibu Creek Watershed area is a community of interest surrounded by the Santa Monica Mountains, starting in West Hills, then spanning down into the cities of Calabasas, Agoura Hills, Westlake Village, Hidden Hills, and contiguous unincorporated communities in the County of Los Angeles. These cities are all County “contract cities” and are served as a unit by the same Lost Hills Sheriff’s Station in Calabasas, Fire Stations in Westlake Village, Agoura Hills, and Calabasas, and Animal Care & Control located in Agoura Hills. Together, with Malibu, they have formed a Council of Government (COG). The so-named Las

Virgenes/Malibu COG, likewise, is supporting a return to the 1991 districting plan which would keep this community of interest intact.

The Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Preserve was created in 2003 when the SMMC completed the purchase of the 2,983-acre Ahmanson Ranch. This huge parkland is part of a critical ecological linkage and wildlife corridor between the Santa Monica Mountains, the ranges to the north and the canyon networks to the south. Mountain Lions have been monitored leaving the upper reaches of the Preserve, crossing under the I-101, and traversing east along the Santa Monica Mountains as far as Topanga State Park above Encino. The Preserve encompasses the headwaters of Malibu Creek which flows through the Santa Monica Mountains to Santa Monica Bay in Malibu, and supports one of the few populations of Southern Steelhead Trout. Historical reports indicate the fish may have traveled unimpeded upstream to streams on the former Ahmanson Ranch.

For purposes of integrated watershed resource management planning, the Santa Monica Bay Watersheds are grouped into three major units: the North Santa Monica Bay (NSMB), the South Santa Monica Bay (SSMB), and Marina/Del Rey Watersheds. The NSMB includes the Malibu Creek Watershed, Topanga Creek Watershed, and other surrounding rural Santa Monica Mountains/Bay Watersheds. The NSMB coastal watersheds include all or parts of the Cities of Westlake Village, Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, Malibu, and unincorporated Los Angeles County areas like Topanga. At 109 square miles, the Malibu Creek Watershed is the second largest coastal watershed of all the Santa Monica Mountains/Bay Watersheds; Ballona is the largest. Malibu Creek and its tributaries wind through the Las Virgenes Valley (five cities and unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County), and into the Santa Monica Bay in Malibu ---90,000 human residents and countless animal and plants species call it home. Hiking/biking/riding trails and spectacular scenery span the watershed tying this area together from the mountains to the sea.

Over 20 years ago, under the umbrella of the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains (RCDSMM), the Malibu Creek Watershed Advisory Council was formed to protect and preserve the health of the Malibu Creek Watershed and its adjoining watersheds. The Advisory Council is made up of a long list of stakeholders and representatives, including the Cities of Calabasas, Agoura Hills, Westlake Village and Malibu, who helped create the 1995 Natural Resources Plan, which serves as a planning guide for overall watershed health. This Natural Resources Plan outlined 44 Action Items which was later distilled to the Top Ten Watershed Restoration Priorities in the 2001 Making Progress: Restoration of the Malibu Creek Watershed Report. The priorities include protecting the beneficial uses of the watershed, developing and setting water quality objectives, protecting recreation, swimming, surfing, and fishing, protecting the ecosystem and endangered species, reducing and eliminating sources

of harmful pathogens, toxic chemicals, sediments and nutrients, among their objectives.

Through collaboration, community and stakeholder involvement, stakeholder groups like the Malibu Creek Watershed Council have played a significant role in educating the public and partnering with other groups and agencies to promote best management practices that will improve water quality throughout the Santa Monica Mountains/Bay Watersheds. These strong associations will continue to flourish for the benefit of the whole if they are allowed to continue to work as a united community of interest within the Santa Monica Mountains/Bay Watersheds.

The 1991 district lines can guide the Commissioners on how to keep whole and integrated the Santa Monica Mountains/Bay Watersheds from Venice and the City of Santa Monica, north along the Santa Monica Bay to the Ventura County line. This alignment of common interest in integrated watershed resource management for the protection of the Santa Monica Mountains, its watersheds, and the Santa Monica Bay is cohesive and long-lived.

B. Fire Protection

The Santa Monica Mountains Fire Safe Alliance is a collaboration of the related public agencies, departments and communities to prevent fires and to fight fires in the Santa Monica Mountains.

C. Transportation

Our area depends on the 101 Corridor, Malibu Canyon, Kanan Road, Topanga Canyon and PCH from Santa Monica to Malibu to the Ventura County line.

Operation Safe Canyons (OSC) is a community of interest that works to promote public safety. While its primary focus is traffic safety on the 540 miles of Los Angeles County roads in the western Santa Monica Mountains south of the Ventura/Los Angeles County line, OSC also deals with safety issues connected to Pacific Coast Highway from the County line south and on cross-mountain canyon roads (Topanga Canyon Blvd., Malibu Canyon, Kanan) that lead from the I-101 Ventura Freeway to the Pacific Coast Highway and the coast.

D. National, State and Local Parks

Local city, county, state and federal officials have been committed to acquiring, managing and improving the open space and recreational areas in the Santa Monica Mountains. In 1978 Congress established the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area as part of the National Park System. Together, government agencies, landowners and the people who use this land are working to provide places for people to live, work and play while protecting the mountains and seashore for future generations.

E. Las Virgenes Unified School District (LVUSD)

The Las Virgenes Unified School District serves the Las Virgenes region. The LVUSD is one of the most highly respected school districts in the state. Schools in the district have won both state and national honors. Schools have been named California Distinguished School Awards as well as National Blue Ribbon Awards. The LVUSD has a foundation, which receives enormous public support for fundraising to maintain programs in the school district.

F. Las Virgenes Municipal Water District

The Las Virgenes Municipal Water District is the regional water and sewer district for our region. The district is recognized for the recycled water and composting programs that are implemented by the district.

IV. Requested Commission Findings

The Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation recommends that the integrity of the Los Angeles County line with Ventura County be kept intact. We support the districts drawn by the nonpartisan appellate judges in 1991. The southern border is the Pacific Ocean. The northern border is the 101-freeway corridor and the eastern border is from Universal City south to include the city of West Hollywood and the Wilshire corridor to the City of Santa Monica. Also the assembly districts should be nested in the senate district.

There is no better example of government working for the people than the non-partisan 1991 districting lines.