



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Angeles National Forest | December 2023

Angeles National Forest

VISITOR RECEPTION, INTERPRETATION & EDUCATION PLAN



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The Angeles National Forest is the ancestral and traditional homelands of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians (Tataviam), Ventureño Chumash (Chumash), Gabrielino Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians (Tongva), Gabrielino Kizh (Kizh), Tejon Indian Tribe (Kitanemuk), and Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation (formerly San Manuel Band of Mission Indians). These Tribes have maintained and continue their connection and relationship with these lands to this day.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Angeles National Forest and San Gabriel Mountains National Monument provide fresh water, flood protection, wildlife habitat and biodiversity for many species. They offer an escape from busy urban life by providing much-needed open space and a wide variety of recreation opportunities. They serve as an outdoor classroom, a ‘living laboratory,’ for learning about our natural and cultural heritage and the importance of conservation. While the Forest and Monument are one of the most visited areas in the national forest system, resources and support for visitors to learn about and enjoy this place are lacking.

The 2018 San Gabriel Mountains National Monument Management Plan identified a need to improve visitor experiences and information. The Monument Plan included an objective to “develop and implement the Master Visitor Reception, Interpretation, and Education Plan with an emphasis on outreaching to diverse youth within three years. The plan will focus on engagement of youth in outdoor recreation and conservation opportunities, educate them about Monument resources, help foster the next generation of public land stewards, and work toward achieving the Desired Conditions.”

A work group of Angeles National Forest staff and members of organizations involved in the San Gabriel Mountains Community Collaborative developed this Visitor Reception, Interpretation, and Education Plan to fulfill the objective outlined in the Monument Plan. The work group expanded the scope to include the entire Angeles National Forest to ensure a consistent approach to visitor information, education, outreach, and engagement. Most importantly, the work group served as a model for plan implementation by working collaboratively and seeking perspectives and input from underrepresented stakeholders and communities.

The purpose of this Visitor Reception, Interpretation, and Education Plan is to provide desired outcomes, goals, and strategies for helping visitors find, experience, and learn about the San Gabriel Mountains. This Plan provides a roadmap for ANF staff, volunteers, and partners to work together to create opportunities for equitable and inclusive visitor use and enjoyment. This plan’s success is dependent on the ANF’s ability to increase current capacity through strategic partnerships, funding, and volunteer support.



Introduction

The peaks and canyons of the San Gabriel Mountains provide a striking backdrop to over 20 million people who call the greater Los Angeles area home. While the Angeles National Forest (ANF) manages much of the land of the San Gabriel Mountains, people know this area by many names including mountains of Asuksa, San Gabriel Canyon, Mountains of North, and simply home. Many Angelenos have yet to or may never experience the towering trees, trails for hiking, mountain biking or OHVing, or even the chance to barbeque with friends and family by the river because they don't know the mountains are a place for them to enjoy as public lands.

This document provides a bold vision to prepare and educate visitors and those who even wonder about recreating in the San Gabriels about how to access and enjoy the ANF and San Gabriel Mountains National Monument while also ensuring the outstanding ecological and cultural values of these lands are preserved for present and future generations. People visit from foothill and north slope communities as well as urban centers in greater Los Angeles. Increased efforts to promote awareness, access, and representation and provide equitable, comprehensive education opportunities that meets people in their communities are necessary so this backyard national forest can truly be a place for all who wish to enjoy the outdoors.

The purpose of this Visitor Reception, Interpretation, and Education Plan (Plan) is to provide desired outcomes, goals, and strategies for helping visitors find, experience, and learn about the San Gabriel Mountains and national forest mission. The plan area encompasses those lands managed by the ANF, although certain plan components include information and activities that would happen before someone arrives to the forest, both online and in adjacent communities. The Plan aligns with the **2005 Angeles National Forest Land Management Plan** (Forest Plan), including any amendments, and the **2018 San Gabriel Mountain National Monument Plan** (Monument Plan).



ANF Forest Plan Public Use & Enjoyment

Public Use & Enjoyment in the Angeles National Forest includes all activities related to providing visitors with a safe and educational experience. The functional area includes all interpretive services, visitor center management, interpretive media, in-forest concessions management, fee collection, community outreach, visitor safety and law enforcement services.

The overall mission of the interpretive services, visitor centers and education program is to forge intellectual and emotional connections between people and their natural and cultural heritage. The primary focus of the Interpretive Services and Education Program is on public service communication. The Angeles National Forest uses a variety of media to deliver information on recreation opportunities, on stewardship responsibilities such as heritage and wilderness protection, and on in-depth topics of public interest.

This Plan provides a roadmap for ANF staff, volunteers, and partners to work together to create opportunities for visitor use and enjoyment. This plan is aspirational in nature and its success is dependent on the ANF's ability to increase current capacity through strategic partnerships, funding, and volunteer support. Focusing on site-specific implementation needs. A key component of Plan implementation is an annual work plan that identifies ANF, volunteer, and partner tasks, activities, commitments, and schedules. The work plan process will also provide a touchstone for adaptive management based on accomplishments, successes, and lessons learned. See Chapter 5 for more information.

San Gabriel Mountains National Monument

On October 10, 2014, President Barack Obama signed the Proclamation designating 346,177 acres of existing Federal lands as the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument (Monument). The Proclamation described the historical, natural, and cultural significance of the features within the proclaimed area that warranted the special designation of a national monument. The Proclamation also directed that certain uses continue, including Tribal rights to utilize the lands in traditional manners. The Proclamation acknowledges the continuation of valid existing rights and uses, such as utilities and water infrastructure. The Proclamation directed that the administration of these activities to continue but in a manner consistent with the intent of the Proclamation. The Monument Plan was developed according to the 2012 Forest Service Planning Rule and was completed in April of 2018.

The Monument Plan (pp. 10-11) explicitly directs the Forest Service to develop a Visitor Reception, Interpretation, and Education Plan as shown below:

Visitor Experience, Information & Environmental Education

Desired Conditions

1. The Forest Service provides visitors with culturally relevant and easily accessible information to guide and enrich their experience.

Goals

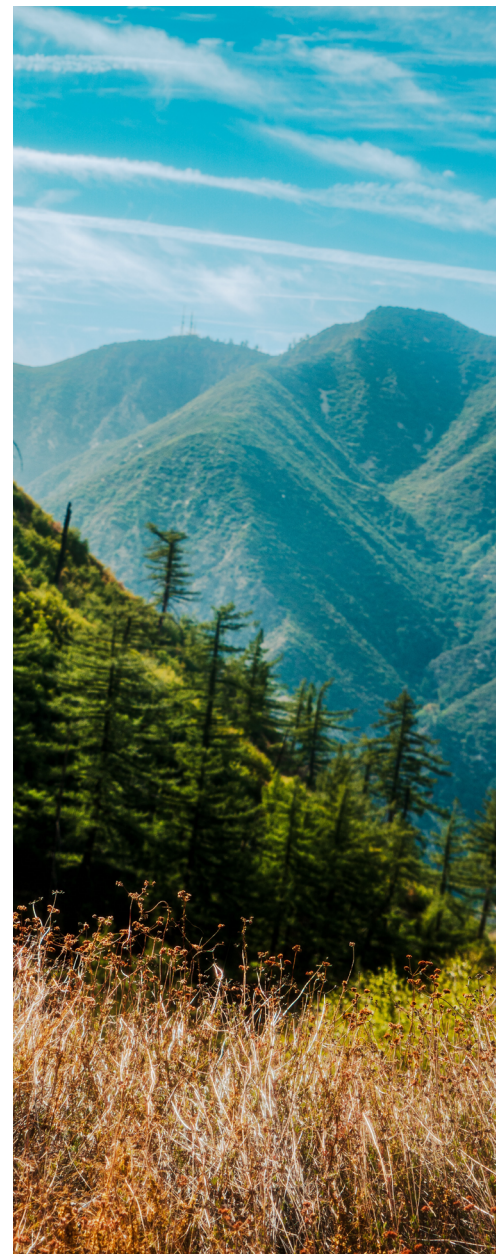
1. Maintain or increase the number of conservation education programs or events per year within the Monument.

Objective

1. Develop and implement the Master Visitor Reception, Interpretation, and Education Plan with an emphasis on outreaching to diverse youth within three years. The plan will focus on engagement of youth in outdoor recreation and conservation opportunities, educate them about Monument resources, help foster the next generation of public land stewards, and work toward achieving the Desired Conditions.

Management Approaches

1. Interpretation materials capture the rich cultural and natural history that shaped the area. Cultural history of groups including Native Americans, Spanish missionaries and colonialists, Mexican rancheros, Euro-Americans and Asian settlers and prospectors. Interpretation of geological, botanical, wildlife, and aquatic features to be presented.
2. Public outreach and education uses contemporary social media, new technology, and culturally relevant media outlets. Engage schools, communities, universities, museums, and other educational institutions invested in elevating public awareness of the environment, conservation, and outdoor recreation. Engagement presents exceptional opportunities to re-imagine Angelenos' connections to their surrounding forests and open spaces.
3. Expand the use of multilingual information in outreach.



Purpose & Guidelines for This Plan

The purpose of the Visitor Reception, Interpretation, and Education Plan is to serve as a roadmap for the ANF, San Gabriel Mountains Community Collaborative, and other partners to welcome visitors to the national forest and provide opportunities for high-quality interpretation and education to visitors while they are in the ANF. The focus of the plan is a set of desired conditions, goals, and strategies for how people find out about opportunities to experience and learn about the ANF. While the Monument Plan directed the development of this plan, the information contained herein applies to all lands administered by the ANF (Figure 1) to ensure consistency in how visitors find out about and experience recreation and education opportunities across the entire ANF.

This plan does not provide site-specific design or recommendations. Rather, it is a guide for collaborative action aligned with the desired conditions for visitor reception, interpretation,

The **San Gabriel Mountains Community Collaborative** (SGMCC) includes over 50 members from a variety of organizations, including government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and individuals of the public at large. The SGMCC's purpose is to integrate diverse perspectives into the planning and management of the ANF and SGMNM. While the SGMCC does not develop or deliver visitor information and education, many of its members are community-based organizations that do create or share visitor information and have important roles in visitor reception, interpretation, and education.

and education (see Chapter 2). Chapter 5 includes implementation priorities over the next three years. However, a critical success factor of this plan is a minimum of an annual review of the action plan that includes successes, lessons learned, and adjustments needed based on capacity, findings, and other factors.

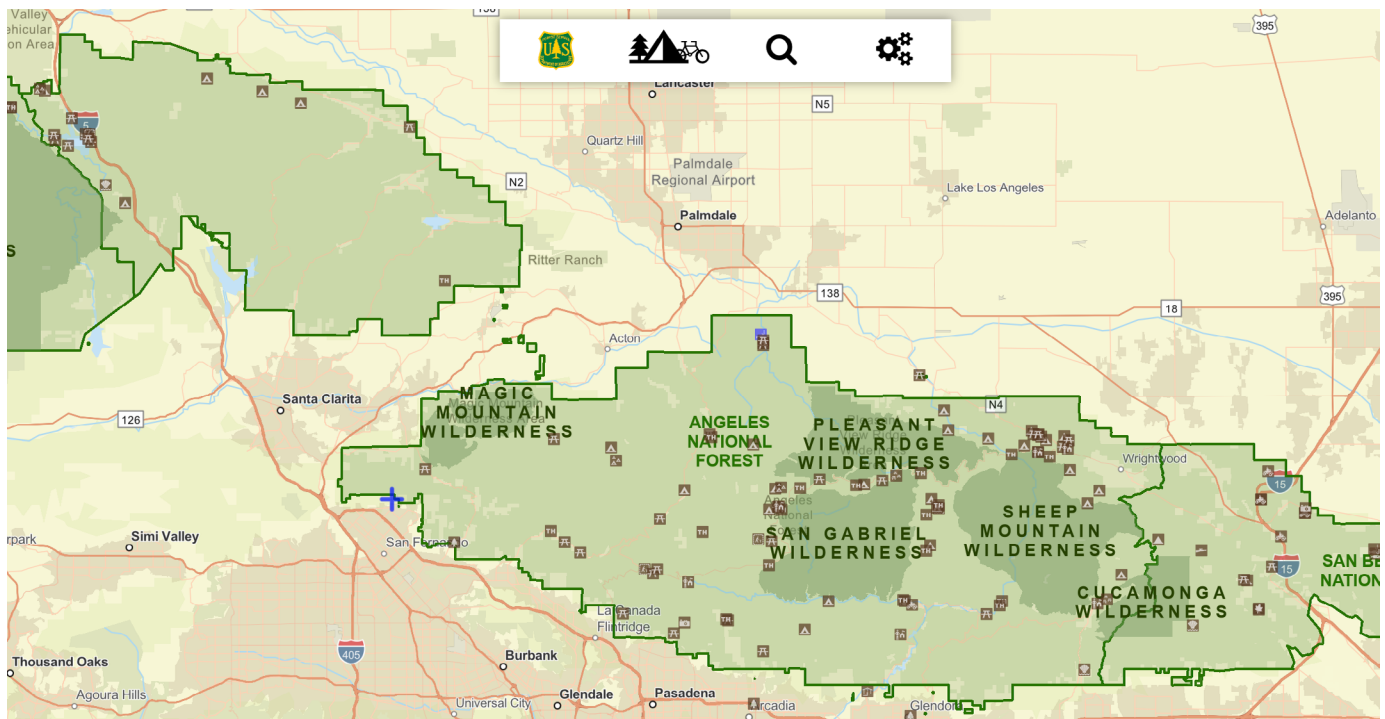


Figure 1. Angeles National Forest

Anchoring Principles

Equity & Inclusion

A commitment to equity and inclusion is a foundation for this plan. Both the ANF and the SGMCC believe that diverse voices, perspectives, and stakeholders will help improve how people learn about recreation and education opportunities and create experiences where all people feel welcomed to forest. The United States Forest Service (USFS) **Equity Action Plan** outlines nine actions designed to shift the agency to an equity-centered organization (figure 2). As stated in the plan (p. 3):

Being an equity-centered organization simply means that we are sharing information in a way that everyone can understand as well as allocating resources and delivering programs in differentiated and targeted ways to achieve fair outcomes and opportunities for all. Working together to find best practices that ensure our neighboring national forest communities, Tribes, and marginalized communities feel heard, accepted, and supported is critical in the work to achieve racial equity, and social and environmental justice.

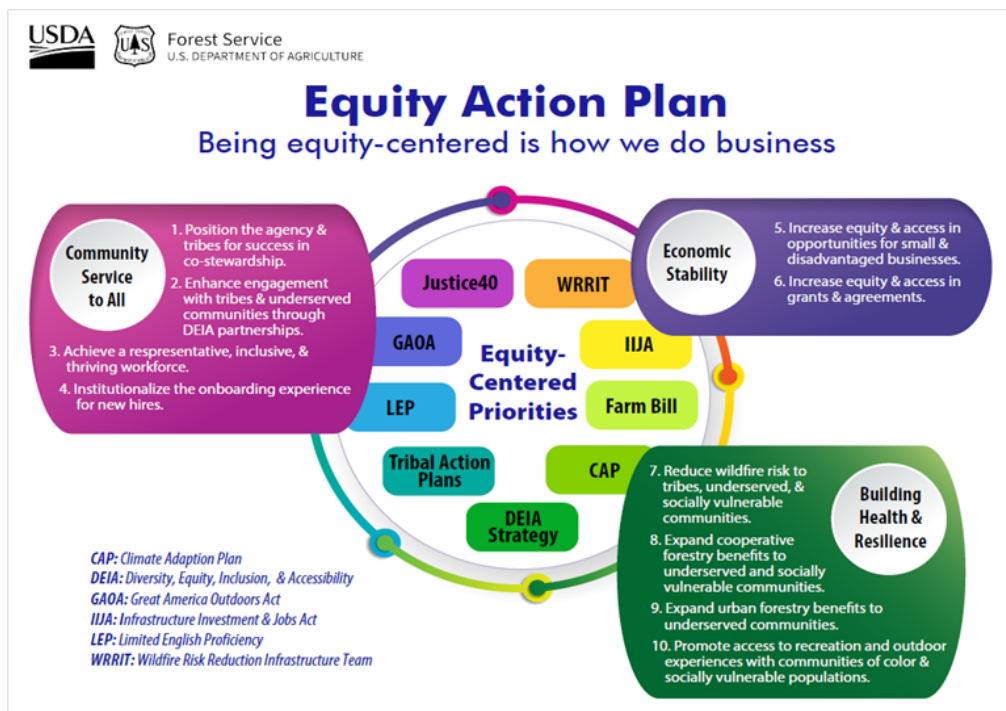


Figure 2. USFS Equity Action Plan

Plan development and implementation is centered is anchored by the six philosophies of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) including terminology and definitions (see Appendix A). Guidance for the plan and its implementation emphasizes relationship-based approaches to understanding diverse and underrepresented stakeholders' perspectives and a long-term engagement strategy focused on experiences and connections to the land. Welcoming people to the ANF “must include the public’s definition of success in service of how they wish to recreate while stewarding our national forest” (Charles Thomas and Hop Hopkins, 2023).

Collaborative Approach

The success of this plan is founded in a collaborative, mutually beneficial approach that recognizes and values the strengths, resources, and networks of both the ANF and its volunteers and partners. To achieve the desired conditions outlined in Chapter 2, many organizations will have to work together in both formal and informal partnerships with the ANF and with each other. While collaboration and partnerships have long been an emphasis for the USFS, there is an opportunity to make both cultural and structural/process shifts to expand capacity and help visitors and non-users feel welcome to the forest.

Sustainable Recreation

In 2010, the USFS published A Framework for Sustainable Recreation to guide the agency’s work in providing and managing outdoor recreation opportunities that consider ecological, social, and economic factors. The 2012 Forest Planning Rule codified the description of sustainable recreation opportunities in plan components for new or revised forest plans. More recently, the 2020 Research Strategy for Enhancing Sustainable Recreation and Tourism on Public Lands defined sustainable recreation for public lands, including USFS-managed lands, and described both research and management needs for enhancing sustainable recreation.

The USFS is finalizing an updated approach and action plan, called **Reimagine Recreation**, for outdoor recreation planning and management across Forest Service lands. Reimagine Recreation calls for an integrated and holistic approach to prioritizing, planning, and providing sustainable recreation. It builds on the Framework for Sustainable Recreation with a partner-focused approach for engaging and inviting people to enjoy and steward public lands.

Additionally, the Forest Service’s Pacific Southwest Region which includes all national forests in California identified recreation as one of the three priorities for the region:

Visitor Experiences and Public Access: Ensuring that all those who set foot on National Forest System lands feel welcomed and have broad opportunities to recreate in sustainable ways.

Sustainable Recreation

Sustainable recreation is the provision of desirable outdoor opportunities for all people, in a way that supports ecosystems, contributes to healthy communities, promotes equitable economies, respects culture and traditions, and develops stewardship values now and for future generations.

A Research Strategy for Enhancing Sustainable Recreation and Tourism on Public Lands, 2020



Plan Development Process

In early 2022, the ANF designated a committee to develop a Visitor Reception, Interpretation, and Education Plan per the Monument Plan Objective. At the same time, the SGMCC established a Conservation Education work group to support the Plan development. By the fall of 2022, the ANF committee and SGMCC work group began working together to collaboratively develop the Plan with an emphasis on environmental justice and inclusive stakeholder engagement.

The work group met regularly for over a year, including focused time with inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) expert consultants who helped the work group understand foundation principles for equitable and inclusive stakeholder engagement (see Appendix A). The work group identified two key stakeholder groups (Table 1). Group 1 stakeholders included those who have an interest (stake) in the outcome but whose voices and perspectives are not currently centered in the Visitor Reception, Interpretation, and Education Plan. Group 1 stakeholders were invited to participate in a virtual orientation session and an in-person workshop. They also had an opportunity to provide input via a Google form or one-on-one interviews if they were unable to attend the in-person workshop. Group 1 stakeholders were compensated for their participation in the virtual and/or in-person workshop.

Group 2 stakeholders included those who have information (context) and high interest in the outcome and are already engaged ANF operations. Most Group 2 stakeholders provided input via a Google form. However, ANF staff work group members also facilitated group discussions with staff and volunteers to ensure their perspectives were captured during the plan development process. Appendix B includes a list of organizations and individuals that contributed to the Plan.

A stakeholder is an individual or group that can make a claim on your project's attention, resources, or output, or is affected by your work or activities. It is essential to identify stakeholders across the full spectrum of diversity that are relevant to a particular effort, even if you don't yet know how to engage them.

Source: [Caroll, Franck & Associates](#)

PROCESS MILESTONES

October 2022

Work Group Plan Development Workshop

January-March 2023

Education and recommendations for inclusive stakeholder engagement from IDEA consultants

May-June 2023

Virtual and in-person stakeholder engagement

July-September 2023

Additional stakeholder engagement via input form and one-on-one interview

October-December 2023

Plan development and refinement

TBD

Plan adoption by ANF Leadership Team and San Gabriel Mountains Community Collaborative



Group 1 Stakeholder	Group 2 Stakeholders
Groups with differing abilities (e.g., physical limitations, sight limitations, cognitive limitations)	Visitor Center volunteer organizations
Title 1 schools	Natural and cultural resource volunteer groups
Family groups	Trail and recreation volunteer groups
Youth organizations	Angeles National Forest staff
Asian-American outdoor organizations	San Bernardino National Forest staff
Latinx outdoor organizations	Other agencies
African-American outdoor organizations	
Healthcare advocates	
Communities bordering the forest	
Colleges/universities	
LGBTQ outdoor organizations	
Veterans community	

Table 1. Group 1 and Group 2 Stakeholders



In addition to stakeholder engagement, the work group identified a need to invite tribal members to participate and share their perspectives on the Plan¹. The work group identified tribal members and families who have a connection to the San Gabriel Mountains, Indigenous organizations, and tribal representatives already engaged with the SGMCC (Table 2). The ANF worked with the forest tribal liaison to create a tribal outreach list. Tribal members that participated in plan development are listed in Appendix B.

Tribal Outreach	
Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians	Gabrielino-Tongva
Haramokngna American Indian Cultural Center	Gabrieleno Band of Mission Indians - Kizh Nation
Gabrielino Shoshone Nation	Tongva Taraxat Paxaavxa Land Conservancy
Anahuacalmecac Uni Prep High School	Pukuu
Arroyo Foothills Conservancy	Chumash
Tongva-Gabrieleno	Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians
San Fernando Band of Mission Indians	San Manuel Band of Mission Indians
Santa Ynez Band of Mission Indians	Tejon Indian Tribe
Kern Valley Indian Council	Tongva Ancestral Territorial Tribal Nation
LA City/County Native American Indian Commission	Kitanemuk & Yowlumne Tejon Indians

Table 2. Tribes and Indigenous Organizations

Roles & Resources

A critical success factor of this plan is clearly articulating roles, strengths, and needs and opportunities from the ANF, SGMCC partners, and other current and potential partners as outlined in Table 3. This will support commitments to the three-year action plan and annual work planning efforts for individual organizations.

¹ Since the Plan is not a decision document, formal consultation was not initiated.

Organization	Role	Strengths	Needs & Opportunities
Angeles National Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan implementation leadership and coordination Facilitator and convener of partners and volunteers Ensure alignment with laws and policies Site and facility operation and maintenance Law enforcement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated staff; have added capacity with public affairs and conservation education staff Funded partnership agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership buy-in and support to prioritize work and leverage resources Transparency around agency capacity Welcoming visitors from around the world for the 2028 Olympics
San Gabriel Mountains Community Collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and coordination for plan implementation and progress reporting Hold agencies and partners accountable for steady progress on milestones & implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consensus building among variety of diverse stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership for plan implementation and reporting Leverage impact among partners
Tribes and Indigenous Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advise and guide educational and interpretive content across the ANF Stewardship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional ecological knowledge and authority of the resource spanning many generations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for co-stewardship agreements Grow the role of tribal conservation corps in stewardship and education
Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frontline presence at visitor centers, trailheads and trails, and stewardship projects Communicating opportunities and activities to broader audiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local knowledge and connection to the ANF and willingness to share time and expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More organized volunteer engagement and coordination from entry-level and youth service to older/retired Contribute to consistent training development and delivery
Nature for All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce people to the outdoors/ANF, starting point for stewardship Project development and management to connect people to the outdoors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal relationships in communities Coalition that can be expanded to increase impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce development and training Communications and messaging that resonate with communities they serve Fundraising for project development and implementation
Amigos de los Rios	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene partners and organizations such as schools to improve access to the outdoors Project planning and implementation using a systematic approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable recreation planning and design, coalition building Large volunteer network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership development and capacity building Fundraising for project development and implementation
National Forest Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support ANF stewardship and visitor use and enjoyment through program and project facilitation and coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene and facilitate community-based partners Fundraising for project development and implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand youth engagement and workforce development

Table 3. Roles and Resources of Partner Organizations

Angeles National Forest Program Areas

Public use and enjoyment in the Angeles National Forest includes all activities related to providing visitors with a safe and educational experience. The functional area includes all interpretive services, visitor center management, interpretive media, in-forest concessions management, fee collection, community outreach, visitor safety and law enforcement services.



Partnerships & Volunteers: Facilitating partnership agreements to support programs and projects that are mutually beneficial to the ANF and the partner organization. These are typically funded agreements that include a Forest service and partner contribution. Coordinating with groups to identify and implement volunteer opportunities for resource management and public use and education. Partnership Staff Officer that supervises a forest-wide Volunteer Program Coordinator and forest-wide Conservation Education Program Coordinator.



Public Affairs: Creating and sharing information about the forest. Connecting with communities and individuals to increase awareness about the forest and opportunities to visit and learn. Includes community engagement and conservation education activities. Public Affairs Staff Officer that supervises a Public Affairs Specialist.



Outdoor Recreation: Planning and management of outdoor recreation opportunities. Development and maintenance of infrastructure and facilities such as trails, restrooms, campgrounds, picnic areas, and wilderness areas. Administration of recreation special use permits for outfitter-guides and events. Forest Recreation Program Manager, district and monument recreation leads, special uses coordinators and permit administrators, wilderness rangers, and field technicians.



Desired conditions are statements of aspiration that describe visitor experiences and opportunities, and facilities and services that an agency strives to achieve and maintain in a particular area². Desired condition statements serve as the anchor for outcomes and specific strategies and actions. In other words, management choices align back to the desired condition statements and answer the question, “Are we moving toward or achieving desired conditions?”

As stated above, the Monument Plan includes a desired condition for Visitor Experience, Information, and Environmental Education:

The Forest Service provides visitors with culturally relevant and easily accessible information to guide and enrich their experience.

The following desired conditions statements align with and further elaborate the desired condition from the Monument Plan and guidance in the Forest Plan.

Overall Visitor Experience

The ANF is the backyard to over 20 million people and has outstanding cultural and resource significance. The ANF is known as a place to connect to the outdoors, to escape the heat in the cool mountains and streams, and to learn about and give back to the land.

Online information such as websites and social media help visitors easily understand what types of recreation and education opportunities are available, whether they have an hour or multiple days to explore the forest. Visitors understand where they can and can't go based on safety considerations, resource management activities, and how accessible a site or area is to people with differing abilities. Visitors have options for where to go and what to do based on the type of experience they are seeking, from quiet contemplation and solitude in remote areas to gathering with family and friends by the water. Visitor experience information is user-friendly, available in multiple languages, and easy to find online and at visitor contact areas such as visitor centers, high use recreation sites, and in adjacent communities.



Visitor Reception

Visitors to the Angeles National Forest are welcomed with user-friendly information and resources before arriving and during their visit. Pre-arrival information is available on the ANF and partner websites, and orients visitors of varying backgrounds, ages, and abilities to recreation and educational opportunities, facilities and roads, and programs and services available in the forest including where recreation fees are required. Information and resources are available in adjacent communities and USFS visitor centers, are visually-appealing and available in multiple languages. Safety considerations, responsible recreation, and resource stewardship are shared online, at visitor centers and in communities, and at recreation facilities. ANF staff and volunteers have the resources and training to create a welcoming environment for visitors of varying backgrounds. Partner and youth-led programs support on-site visitor reception and orientation.

² Interagency Visitor Use Management Framework



Interpretation

Visitors are engaged with the many uses of the ANF including sustainable recreation opportunities, the rich cultural history, and the forest's influence on millions of people in the LA Basin. Information and interpretive materials, ANF staff, and volunteers and partners highlight the cultural resources, recreational and scenic features, scientific features, diverse wildlife and aquatic species, plants, and facilities and services. Information and interpretive materials are available in multiple languages, are found online and at frequently visited sites, and are easily updated or replaced. On and off-site programs emphasize past and present stories of the forest, responsible recreation, and traditional (indigenous) and modern stewardship of the San Gabriel Mountains.



Education

Visitors learn about recreation opportunities, conservation and stewardship practices, safety, and natural resource management from the Angeles National Forest and its partners with an emphasis on youth outreach, engagement, and connection. USFS programs and resources support on-site education activities including visitor centers, trailhead and wayside exhibits, and a focus on fostering connections to the landscape in a way that facilitates an increased sense of stewardship. Partners provide on-site education through facilitated (e.g. guided, volunteer-led, partner organization led) activities at USFS-managed facilities and resources (visitor centers, trails, rivers, heritage sites) as well as off-site education in schools, after-school programs, outdoor education camps, programs that focus on underrepresented or traditionally marginalized communities, and other community-based programs.

Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes provide a framework for the development of messages and outreach by capturing the essence of the most important concepts to be conveyed to visitors. They focus communications, interpretation, and education efforts and link together stories in meaningful and memorable ways. A theme should answer the question “So what? Why should I care?” Themes begin with the scientific and historic objects identified in the 2014 Presidential Proclamation (referred to as the “objects of the Monument”) and reiterated in the San Gabriel Monument Management Plan.

- **Renewal & Recreation**

In a vast expanding urban area, the open space of the Angeles National Forest provides an oasis for inspiration and renewal, a place to challenge oneself and care for personal physical and mental health, a location to find wonder in nature and history, and more!

- **Access to Stewardship**

The Angeles National Forest is a place to help people find personal relevance to caring for the land and fostering long-term support for sustainable management of national forests. The forest – and the unique qualities of the Monument – support direct experience with nature and the outdoors.

- **Human Use/Cultures**

For over 10,000 years, people have shaped this land, just as the land has shaped the people. This symbiotic relationship continues today.

- **Ecosystems & Public Benefits**

In a growing urban environment, the Angeles National Forest manages a substantial portion of the rare Mediterranean biome (ecosystem), a rapidly diminishing resource that exists in only five places in the world. Changes to the climate such as drought and flooding impact the availability of water for both communities and recreation experiences.

- **Fire Management**

Wildfires and prescribed fires, both large and small, shape forest landscapes, affect plants and animals, and determine available recreational experiences of visitors in the Angeles National Forest.

San Gabriel Mountain National Monument Presidential Proclamation, October 10, 2014

...provide for protection and interpretation of the scientific and historic objects identified above and for continued public access to those objects, consistent with their protection.

The scientific and historic objects identified in the Proclamation include cultural resources, recreational and scenic features, scientific features, diverse wildlife and aquatic species, vegetative communities, and infrastructure

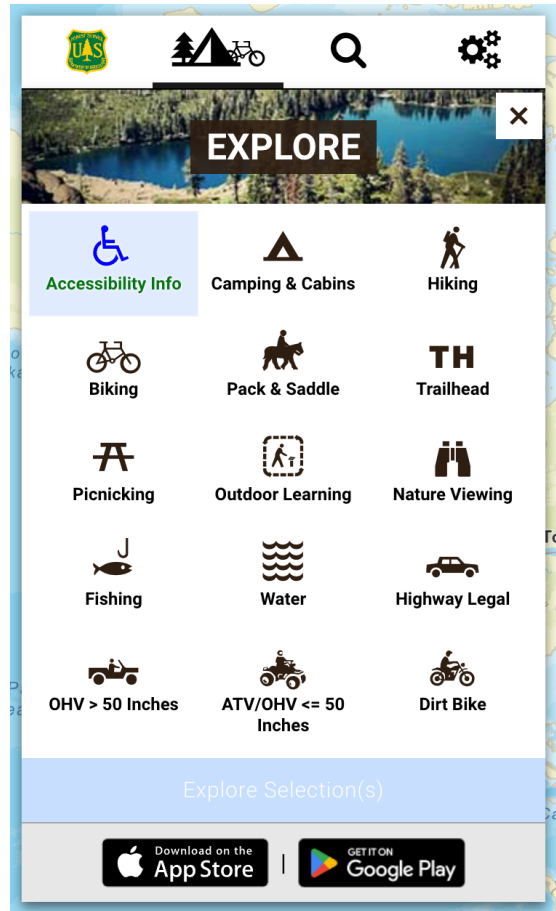


Visitor Reception & Information

Visitor reception and information is currently spread across both the ANF and in adjacent communities (figure 3). The ANF has four visitor centers (including one closed to public access) and one information station (closed to public access). The Gateway District Office, San Gabriel Mountains National Monument headquarters, and Forest Supervisor’s Office also provide limited visitor services and information. There are several interpretive sites across the forest, although many are permanently or temporarily closed. The San Gabriel Environmental Education center is also closed.

Volunteer groups including the San Gabriel Mountains History Association, Angeles Volunteer Association, Volunteers of the ANF, and Fisheries Resource Volunteer Corps staff and manage all of the ANF visitor centers. USFS employees provide visitor contact and site maintenance at recreation sites such as trailheads, river access sites, and OHV areas. Youth-focused programs with partners including Generation Green, Field Ranger Program, Pacoima Beautiful, and the Los Angeles Conservation Corps work on stewardship and outdoor recreation projects throughout the ANF. Additionally, there are multiple volunteer groups that work with ANF to support trail and recreation information, outreach, and maintenance, watershed conservation, fish and wildlife habitat improvements, and more.

The ANF website includes ‘Visit Us’ and ‘Learn’ sections where people can search by recreation activity and find information about passes and permits, outdoor safety and ethics, and maps and publications. There is a link to the agency-wide interactive visitor map that lets people explore recreation and education opportunities in any forest in the country from a computer or the app. The recreation page also includes a ‘Current Recreation Conditions’ section that indicates if an area is open or closed. Many recreation sites are temporarily closed due to road conditions along Highway 2. Links under the ‘Learn’ section mostly point to agency-wide resources for youth and families with no forest-specific information about conservation education.



Information about hiking, biking, OHV-riding, equestrian and other trail-based activities can be found at the volunteer-managed trailangeles.org. This site also includes volunteer events and a list of ANF volunteer organizations. The free National Forest Explorer app as well as fee-based apps and websites such as All Trails, OnX, and others also provide information on activities and trail conditions.

Several organizations also provide visitor reception, interpretation, and education related to opportunities on the ANF and other public lands. The **Gateway to Nature** is located within El Pueblo Historical Monument in downtown Los Angeles and invites visitors to engage with history, nature, wildlife, and the public lands in the LA area. The Watershed Conservation Authority manages the **Azusa River Wilderness Park** which currently has an information kiosk with plans to develop on-site programs and orientation for the San Gabriel Canyon. The **Haramokngna American Indian Cultural Center** sits

in the middle of the Gabrielino National Recreation Trail within the ANF and provides forest and trail information. The **Mt. Wilson Observatory** is a world-renowned astronomy center that provides tours and education at 5,710-foot Mt. Wilson at the end of the Angeles Crest Highway (Hwy. 2).

Other organizations connect youth, families, and underserved and historically excluded communities to the ANF. These groups such as the San Gabriel Mountains History Association, Nature for All Coalition, Amigos de los Rios, Outward Bound Adventures, and Kid City Hope Place use experiential learning both in urban areas and on public lands to foster connection to nature and taking care of these places. They also share information about trails, recreation, and education opportunities on public lands, including the ANF. They use social media to provide information about programs and events happening in the forest.

Visitor Use & Demographics

The ANF participates in the Forest Service’s National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) program. The NVUM program provides reliable information about recreation visitors to national forest system managed lands at the national, regional, and forest level. For the ANF, this means visitation and demographics are for the entire forest but the results are not reliable for specific recreation areas or sites in the forest. The most recent NVUM report for the ANF is from data collected in 2016.

Visitation was estimated at 2.88 million people in 2016. Nearly 95% of people visited for recreation (figure 4).

As seen in Figure 5, the majority of visitors identified as White and 33% also identified as part of the Hispanic/Latino ethnic group (regardless of race). Nearly 25% of respondents identified their race as Asian while over 7% said their race was Black or African-American.

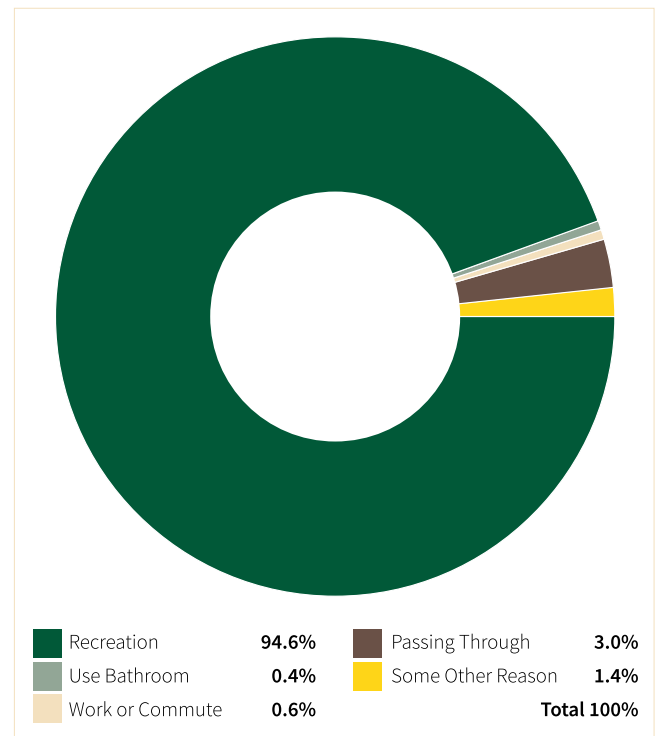


Figure 4. Visitation Data NVUM 2016

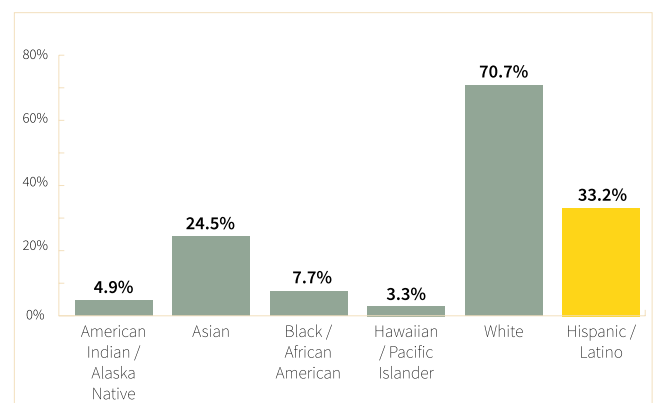


Figure 5. Visitation Demographics Data NVUM 2016

Race and Hispanic Origin	
White alone	70.0%
Black or African American alone	9.0%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	1.5%
Asian alone	15.8%
Natice Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0.4%
Two or More Races	3.4%
Hispanic or Latino	49.0%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	25.2%

Table 4. Race and Hispanic Origin

Race / Ethnicity*	National Forest Visits (Percent)	Wilderness Visits (Percent)
American Indian / Alaska Native	1.8	1.8
Asian	3.2	4.3
Black / African American	1.3	0.9
Native Hawaaian or Other Pacific Islander	0.6	0.6
White	95.2	94.4
Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino	6.7	6.0

Table 5. National Forest Visits

The demographic profile for LA County from census.gov shows a similar racial and ethnic make-up across the county (table 4).

These percentages represent a significant difference from many other national forest visitor demographics as reported in the 2022 NVUM National Summary Report which includes data collected between fiscal years 2017 and 2021 (table 5).

Approximately 62% of ANF visitors were male while 38% were female (the NVUM does not provide a non-binary option). In LA County, males are 49.5% of the population while females are 50.5% of the population. The majority of visitors (80%) lived

within 50 miles of the forest although just over 5% of survey respondents reported being from a foreign country.

Nearly 56% of respondents said that hiking/walking was their main activity while visiting the ANF. Table 6 shows the top 10 activities by the percent of visitors who participated.

Some visitors also indicated their use of special facilities or areas as shown in Table 7. Survey respondents could select as many or as few special facilities or areas as appropriate. Over 360,000 visitors used a visitor center or museum, scenic byway, information site, and/or interpretive display.

Activity	% Participation	% Main Activity	Average Hours Doing Main Activity
Hiking/Walking	65.6	55.6	3.1
Viewing Natural Features	37.2	4.4	1.9
Relaxing	36.5	2.6	9.5
Viewing Wildlife	30.9	0.5	2.0
Picnicking	15.2	4.6	4.8
Some Other Activity	10.6	6.2	3.3
Downhill Skiing	9.5	9.3	5.2
Driving for Pleasure	8.5	1.3	2.4
Developed Camping	5.3	3.1	29.1
Nature Study	4.2	0.1	5.8

Table 6. ANF Recreation Activity Participation

Finally, the NVUM Report includes information about visitor satisfaction with facilities and access. About one-third of survey respondents were asked to answer questions about satisfaction. Overall satisfaction across the ANF is good with over 90% saying they were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied. Table 8 shows a percent satisfied index score by satisfaction element. Across the forest, satisfaction at developed facilities is consistently lower than other elements.

It is important to note, however, that the majority of respondents (70%) were White and from the dominant culture. Survey instruments and methods like NVUM tend to favor dominant culture responses and are likely not representative of the experiences of respondents from other race/ethnicity backgrounds.

The survey also asked about the importance and adequacy of signs. Over 90% of respondents said that signage is somewhat or very important and approximately 10% were somewhat or very dissatisfied with signage.

Providing barrier-free facilities for recreation visitors is an important part of facility and service planning and development. One question asked if anyone in their group had a disability. If so, the visitor was then asked if the facilities at the sites they visited were accessible for this person (table 9).

Special Facility or Area	% of National Forest Visit
Developed Swimming Site	0.7
Scenic Byway	4.2
Visitor Center or Museum	5.0
Designated ORV Area	5.1
Forest Roads	1.7
Interpretive Displays	0.3
Information Sites	3.2
Developed Fishing Site	1.6
Motorized Single Track Trails	2.1
Motorized Dual Track Trails	2.2
None of these Facilities	84.6

Table 7. Special Facility Use

Satisfaction Element	Satisfied Survey Respondents (%)		
	Developed Sites†	Undeveloped Areas (GFAs)	Designated Wilderness
Developed Facilities	72.5	68.9	67.3
Access	93.2	83.3	85.1
Services	84.2	74.5	78.7
Feeling of Safety	95.1	91.0	93.9

† This is a composite rating. It is the proportion of satisfaction ratings scored by visitors as good (4) or very good (5). Computed as the percentage of all ratings for the elements within the sub grouping that are at or above the target level, and indicated the percent of all visitors that are reasonably well satisfied with agency performance.

‡ This category includes both Day Use and Overnight Use Developed Sites.

Table 8. Satisfaction Survey Responses

Item	Percent
% of visits that include a group member with a disability	3.2
Of this group, percent who said facilities at site visited were accessible	82.8

Table 9. Accessible Facilities Survey

Visitor Experience

Current visitor experience was assessed through input from the work group and stakeholders including a stakeholder workshop, one-on-one interviews, and an input form. Stakeholders were asked about how they currently use or experience the ANF, or not; where they find visitor information and education opportunities; and what prevents people from visiting the forest.

Many stakeholders expressed a strong connection to the ANF, or the terms they use for this area including San Gabriel Mountains, backyard, homelands, and simply the mountains. They find solace, respite, relaxation, and joy in being close to nature. They seek connection to the land, waters, sky, plants and animals. They talked about cultural ties for indigenous people including the Gabrielino-Tongva, Gabrielino Band of Mission Indians, and Gabrielino Shoshone, among many other tribes and indigenous communities who have ancestral and current connections to this place.

People enjoy a wide variety of recreation opportunities such as hiking, mountain biking, hunting, skiing, snow play, and relaxing by water. Education opportunities are both formal and informal. Formal education mostly happens with organized groups such as nature walks, school or church outings, and field-based programs to observe or collect data on wildlife, fish, rivers and streams, or habitat changes. Informal education occurs when people stop at visitor centers to get recommendations for activities or learn about plants and animals and even before they visit from information on the ANF website or social media channels.

Stakeholders indicated that most people find out about recreation and education opportunities through friends and family and word of mouth. The forest website and social media channels, partner and volunteer websites and social media channels, and programs and events are also ways to get information about how to visit and learn about the forest.

They do not find information from the USFS. Instead from general Google searches, blogs, social media, etc which cannot be as reliable. They often have a family member or two that is knowledgeable or knows someone that is knowledgeable that takes them to places they know or have heard of. Very few people know how to navigate the ANF website for information to help them plan their trip. Most people don't know what who the management agency is and just refer to them at the "mountains".

-Stakeholder Input

There are many notable barriers for the broader community to experience and learn about the forest. Visitor information is difficult to find, not user-friendly, and often out-of-date or inaccurate. For example, several stakeholders said the ANF website is not visitor-oriented and only available in English. The information that is available is hard to find and not well-organized.

On-site signage is also only in English and is often not available in key locations. Many people rely on a trusted friend or family member to take them to the mountains and people do not visit when they are uncertain if they will feel like they belong. Another barrier is feeling overwhelmed about where and how to visit. For example, some people think they need a lot of special equipment or a permit to visit the forest. Uniforms and regulatory presence make some people feel unwelcome or fear they will be arrested. Stakeholders also noted that the cost of camping, lack of transportation, and fear of animals/wildlife are barriers. There is little information about accessible trails and areas that comply with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Universal Access Guidelines.

Hispanics/Latinos go to the beach more because they know exactly what they're going to get when they get there. It's been advertised – this community led by media/news/radio, they don't have time to go online, receive publications.

-Stakeholder Workshop Participant

Gap Between Current & Desired Conditions

The Monument Plan identified a need to better address visitor experience, interpretation, and education. The need has only been amplified with increased visitation during and after the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent interest in connecting more Angelenos to the mental, physical, spiritual, and societal benefits of spending time outdoors. As stated above, the scope of this plan includes the entire ANF because it is the ‘wild’ backyard to over 20 million people who call the greater Los Angeles area home: a space for retreat, respite and recreation for visitors and residents of the densely populated urban center(s) that surround it.

As the anchor for the Visitor Reception, Interpretation, and Education Plan, it is important to acknowledge the vision for welcoming people to the Monument. The first two sentences of the Monument Plan explicitly identify recreation, education and interpretation as key elements for Monument management:

The San Gabriel Mountains National Monument reflects a unique recreational and educational gateway to America’s most urban national forest in the nation’s most populous county. The Monument offers exceptional interpretation and educational opportunities that can elevate understanding of the region’s natural and cultural heritage, while fostering new generations of environmental stewards.

The **2005 ANF Forest Plan Strategy** also recognizes the importance of education and interpretation (p. 26): The overall mission of the interpretive services, visitor centers and education program is to forge intellectual and emotional connections between people and their natural and cultural heritage. Specific program strategies and tactics for recreation and conservation education include (p.111):

- **REC 3 – Recreation Participation:** Offer a wide range of high quality, environmentally sustainable developed and dispersed recreation opportunities to a rapidly growing and culturally diverse visitor population, with minimal visitor conflicts and effects to other resources:
 - › Develop new, environmentally sustainable recreation opportunities, areas and infrastructure to relieve concentrated demand within existing high-use areas and to accommodate future growth and new uses elsewhere.
 - › Improve, remove or replace aging developed recreation infrastructure to better meet current needs and future demand. Replacing opportunities lost to closures will be a high priority.
 - › Inventory and analyze existing and potential dispersed use, including, but not limited to, hiking, motorized recreation, day-use, recreational target shooting, waterplay, snowplay and camping opportunities. Identify areas where that use is consistent with resource protection and public safety and mitigate or eliminate problems over time.
 - › Implement adaptive management processes at recreation facilities to proactively respond to persons with disabilities, contemporary urban visitors, aging populations, diverse ethnic groups, and day-use emphasis (see Appendix C, Monitoring Requirements).



- **REC 4 – Conservation Education:** Visitors have a greater understanding about the significance and importance of forest ecosystems, heritage resources, and the interrelationship between people and the natural environment:
 - › The Forest Service plays a leadership role in environmental stewardship and conservation education partnerships with non-profits, volunteer groups, communities, governments, organization camps and private entities, emphasizing and enhancing the capability of field program and project delivery, especially to underserved populations. Coordination between national forests is promoted for maximum results and cost efficiencies of programs and projects.

The USFS has congressional granted authorities to work with volunteers and partners in order to increase public services in the area of interpretive services, visitor information, forest health, restoration, and public engagement. These authorities must be used to the fullest extent to achieve the vision, goals and program strategies identified in the Forest and Monument plans and further articulated in the desired conditions for visitor reception, interpretation, and education (see Chapter 2). While the ANF has been constrained by staff capacity and budget in recent years, the emphasis on partnerships and volunteers, public affairs, and recreation management for both the ANF and the USFS have allowed the forest to bring on additional staff. However, the ANF will never have the staff capacity to achieve desired conditions on its own and relies on the support from volunteers and partners in the delivery of recreation and education programs. Management direction for the forest – and for the agency – clearly emphasizes a community-centric approach that includes diverse perspectives in identifying and implementing ways to engage and connect people to recreation and education opportunities.

The primary gaps between existing and desired conditions include:

- **Availability of Visitor Information & Staff Presence** – Visitor information does not meet the needs of current and potential visitors. Online and printed materials are difficult to find, out-of-date, and not accessible due to language barriers. There are very few ANF staff and volunteers to welcome and orient visitors to the forest. Visitor centers and other visitor information physical locations have limited staff and hours of operation and are not always located in areas convenient to the public such as adjacent communities.
- **Awareness & Access** – While the ANF is a highly visited national forest (top 5 in the national forest system), it is adjacent to the largest urban population in the country and there is a general lack of awareness about visiting or accessing the forest. The mountains serve as a spectacular backdrop to the great Los Angeles area, yet many Angelenos do not know it is a place for them to visit. Some issues such as transportation and fees are beyond the scope of this plan. But improving awareness of recreation and education opportunities through partners, community connections, and other resources is a key component to achieving desired conditions. Similarly, access to information as well as access to opportunities must consider people with disabilities (physical, learning, mental, etc.).
- **Welcoming & Belonging** – People from underserved communities generally rely on friends and family to introduce them to the forest. Without that introduction, they are unsure of how they can visit or if they will be welcomed when they do come. While improving with existing programs like Generation Green and Urban Field Rangers, there is still a gap in field presence from Hispanic/Latinx, Black/African-American, Asian-American/Pacific Islander, and multilingual rangers and volunteers. On-site signage is only available in English and uniformed law enforcement presence makes some visitors feel uncomfortable and even scared.

Inclusion must come with respect for disabled individuals, and the ability to listen to their concerns, validate and address them in a nuanced fashion. Lastly, equity is such an important aspect of inclusion in the U.S. Disabled people have the right to be at an equal level as their non-disabled peers.

-Julia Ihly, Disability Advocate and Student

Goals describe the overall intent for achieving Desired Conditions for Visitor Reception, Interpretation, and Education across the ANF.

Outcomes describe the kinds of results the ANF and partners can expect from their investment in visitor reception, interpretation, and education. They articulate the short or long-term positive impacts to visitors, staff, resources, and how the ANF and partners work together.

Management Strategies document shared approaches for the ANF, volunteers, and partners to move toward desired conditions.

Management Actions are specific ways to implement management strategies.



Goal 1: Expand Partnerships & Management Capacity

Anticipated Outcomes:

- The ANF, volunteers, and partners have a clear organizational structure that supports collaboration and partnerships to achieve desired conditions for visitor reception, interpretation, and education.
- There is an efficient and well-managed system in place for the ANF, volunteers, and partners to coordinate with each other to provide high-quality recreation and education opportunities at high use sites.
- Adjacent communities and high use recreation areas have minimum staffing to ensure visitors are welcomed and are aware of recreational and educational opportunities and understand how to safely and responsibly access and participate in outdoor recreation activities.

Management Strategies & Actions:

1. Identify and establish equity-focused strategic partnerships to enhance visitor services and experiences.
 - a. Identify collaborative lead(s) for VRIE implementation.
 - b. Determine feasibility of partner organization supporting the ANF, e.g. interpretive association, natural history association.
2. Enhance the capacity of new and non-traditional partners to support and deliver inclusive and accessible recreation and education opportunities.
 - a. Use cooperative agreements and other USFS partnership authorities to enhance partner capacity (e.g., Coop. Funds and Deposits Act, Interpretive Association, Public Land Corps Act/YCC, etc).
 - b. Build on the successful field ranger model to increase presence and number of field rangers at high use recreation sites.
 - c. Identify partner lead(s) for identifying, developing and delivering educational programming across the ANF.
 - d. Develop and implement a centrally-managed system for identifying and assigning field-based recreation and education presence to include visitor center and priority recreation site staffing and operations.

3. Ensure frontline and field-based personnel (ANF staff, volunteers, field rangers, etc.) have the skills, tools, and resources necessary to create a welcoming environment for all visitors.
 - a. Develop and deliver an annual visitor reception training and resources for ANF staff, volunteers, community stewards, and partners (tiered to communications plan). that are available in multiple languages and emphasize inclusion, accessibility, and belonging.
 - b. Invest in youth and career development to create a pathway for local students and community members, particularly those from underrepresented communities, to work in the outdoors.

Goal 2: Enhance Awareness & Inclusive Engagement

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Visitors have the information they need to safely access and explore the forest. They have easy access to user-friendly trip planning and on-site information about recreation and educational opportunities.
- Visitors understand and appreciate the diverse landscape of the ANF including multiple-use management, stewardship and responsible recreation, and long history of human use and experiences in what is now known as the Angeles National Forest (see Interpretive Themes on page 13).
- At ANF trailheads, campgrounds, and other recreation sites, visitors will find informative trail and safety information, wayfinding/directional trail markers, and, in some locations, interpretive signage.
- There is consistent messaging about recreation and education opportunities among the ANF, volunteers, and partners.
- The ANF is known as place for all Angelenos – and visitors from other areas – to experience and enjoy. Visitors experience awe and a sense of wonder in the Angeles National Forest and are inspired to form long-lasting relationship with public lands.

Management Strategies & Actions:

1. Develop and distribute clear and user-friendly messages for visitor information and education to be used by ANF, volunteers, and partners that are simple, visual, and available in multiple languages.
 - a. Collaboratively create an annual communications plan including messages and products that are adopted and implemented by the ANF, volunteers, and partners. Ensure messages emphasize stewardship, responsible recreation, and safety.
 - b. Develop culturally relevant messaging to promote stewardship and responsible recreation among visitors.
 - i. Collaborate with federally-recognized tribes and other indigenous organizations to promote awareness and understanding of traditional land stewardship and cultural practices in the ANF where appropriate.
 - ii. Use existing resources such as Leave No Trace, Recreate Responsibly, and Tread Lightly! to deliver enhanced education services and programs that encourage visitors to form a reciprocal relationship with national forests and other public lands.
 - c. Conduct an inventory and gap analysis of existing and needed information and education products and services (e.g., signs, flyers, posters, wayfinding, stewards).
 - d. Update printed and digital recreation and trail opportunity guides.
 - e. Provide information on recreation opportunities for people of all abilities including sites that meet ADA guidelines and/or Universal Access principles.

2. Establish a digital media working group made up of ANF staff and partners to expand web-based and social media presence, coordination, and collaboration.
 - a. Conduct an inventory and gap analysis of existing and needed digital media (e.g., forest and partner websites and social media channels).
 - b. Based on gap analysis, develop and implement a digital media approach with a focus on centralized communication channels (such as an online “one stop shop”).
3. Use community connectors and hubs to ensure people are aware of opportunities to experience the ANF.
 - a. Identify existing places where people gather in communities (e.g., community centers, places of worship, boys and girls clubs) and ensure information about recreation and education opportunities is available and culturally relevant.
 - b. Identify opportunities to “meet people where they are” through programs and events.

Goal 3: Improve Prioritization & Focus

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Clear identification of which recreation and visitor reception infrastructure to focus on first to improve visitor experience and safety and reduce vandalism and impacts to natural and cultural resources such as water, fish and wildlife and their habitats, and Native American sacred sites.
- Ability to identify and seek funding for supporting access to the ANF strategically and collaboratively.
- Increased flexibility and adaptability to changes in demand and visitor use patterns How visitors currently based on seasons/time of year.
- Visitors have a better understanding of the types and locations of recreation opportunities and supporting facilities to meet their expectations.

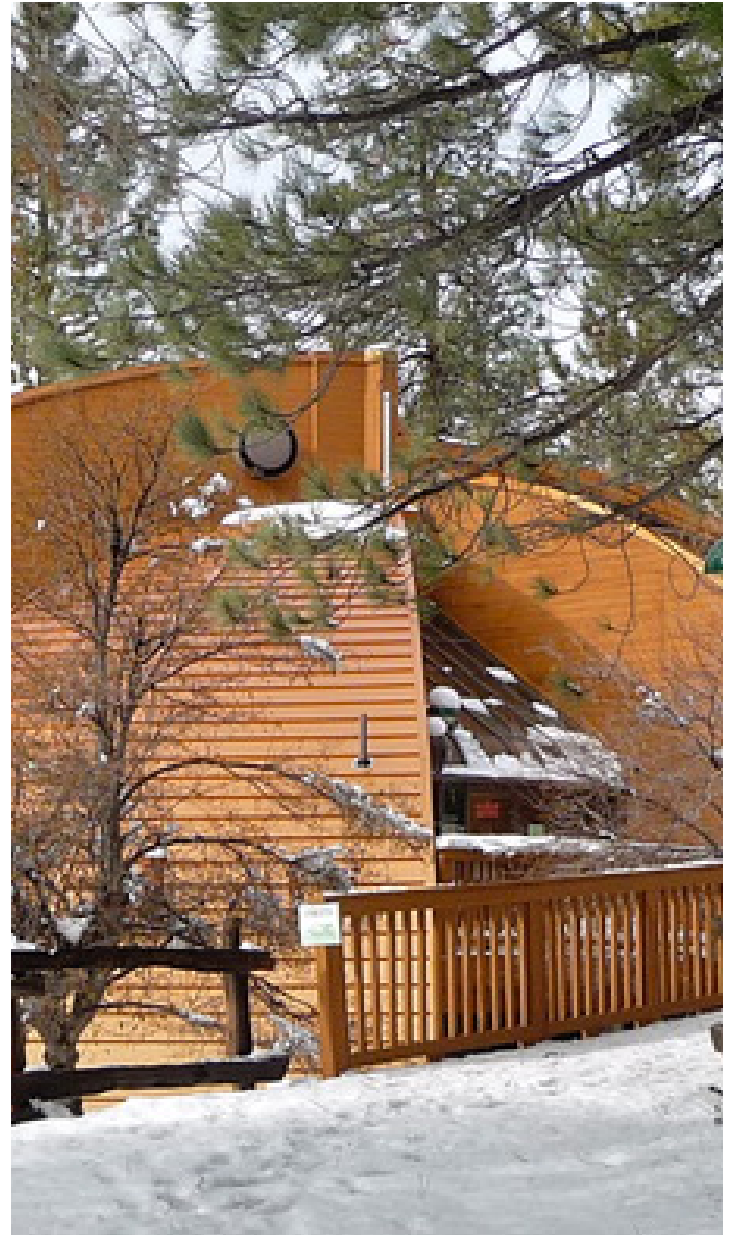
Management Strategies & Actions:

1. Use rapid assessment tools to rank and prioritize areas for further site investment based on desired conditions for visitor reception, interpretation, and education.
 - a. Assess and prioritize all recreation, education, and visitor reception sites across the ANF and adjacent communities.
 - b. Identify high use areas for additional visitor use management planning/strategies to improve visitor experiences and reduce impacts to natural and cultural resources.
 - c. Determine needs for additional visitor reception investment and development, e.g., adjacent communities, forest and partner visitor centers, digital and social media.
 - d. Determine priority locations and times of the year for on-site presence and staffing. Provide minimum staffing and presence using a centralized approach.
2. Adopt equitable community and stakeholder engagement to avoid displacing or further reducing access to underserved and historically excluded communities.
 - a. Build relationships with underserved and historically excluded communities and partners to increase awareness and access to the ANF.

This plan provides a roadmap for the ANF, volunteers, and partners to move toward a place where people of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities can connect to the outdoors. While the plan provides a strong foundation, ongoing coordination and continuous support and investment for a collaborative approach to inviting and welcoming visitors to the ANF is required. It will also take saying no to some things that do not move us toward the visitor experiences we want to create as outlined in the desired conditions. Success factors for this plan include:

- Alignment of VRIE priorities among ANF and partners
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities among ANF and partners
- Minimum staff, volunteer, and partner workforce at priority sites and areas
- Metrics to evaluate and measure progress
- Milestones for implementation
- Regularly scheduled check-ins and adjustments with ANF and partner groups to include identification of new and existing partner organizations, community groups, and others to support implementation

The initial implementation priorities outlined in Table 10 represent the short and mid-term actions for the ANF, SGMCC, and others to start moving toward desired conditions.



Near-term: 2024 - 2025	Mid-term: 2026 - 2028
<p>Identify lead(s) for VRIE implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire a VRIE Implementation project manager • Develop work plan and project management framework with metrics, milestones, and roles and responsibilities for VRIE Implementation Team 	<p>Develop interpretive and education messaging and training for field staff (ANF, volunteers, and partners)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use/implement existing data resources for messaging • Offer interpretive training to frontline staff (ANF, volunteers, partners)
<p>Build on the successful field ranger model to increase presence and number of field rangers at high use recreation sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Public Land Corps authority to promote transition from intern to perm. rec employee • Coordinate training of youth field ranger programs 	<p>Begin work on feasibility of partner organization supporting the ANF, e.g. interpretive association, natural history association</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support consistent messaging in visitor centers across the forest
<p>Improve signs and wayfinding at recreation sites, implement needed shuttle infrastructure, and establish operations protocols with partners in advance of Mt. Wilson Express implementation (Spring 2025)</p>	<p>Use community connectors to share USFS messages (sustainable rec, interp, heritage, etc.) to relevant, new and diverse audiences</p>
<p>Establish collaborative communications team and begin work on multilingual, multicultural communications plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and share culturally relevant, Recreate Responsibly messaging (physical, in-person & online) 	<p>Develop staffing plan/approach for VRIE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish sustainable backend support for volunteer recruitment and management, e.g. Trailangeles.org volunteer recruitment website
<p>Annual check-in/review of work plan priorities and accomplishments</p>	<p>Annual check-in/review of work plan priorities and accomplishments</p>

Table 10. Implementation Priorities

The ANF and SGMCC commit to at least an annual review of the actions, accomplishments, and identification of adjustments needed. The ANF and other partners commit to developing annual agency or organizational work plans for visitor reception, interpretation, and education aligned with the action plan priorities (including any adjustments) and available funding. Implementation partners also

commit to collaborating when new opportunities arise that may call for reprioritizing actions. The ANF and implementation partners recognize that unexpected challenges will arise and will require adjustment of these priorities. Therefore, timelines are based on the information and resources available at the time of plan adoption and will be updated at least annually.

As part of the development of this plan, the SGMCC work group, through the National Forest Foundation, worked with Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility experts Charles Thomas and Hop Hopkins for coaching and guidance on equitable and inclusive stakeholder engagement and plan implementation. Their work is based on more than 30 years each of empirical data, research, and personal experience in fostering more equitable access to the outdoors.

IDEA Principles

Inclusion, Equity, Diversity, and Accessibility (IDEA) is based on six distinct but interconnected philosophies:

1. Social Justice

Equitable distribution of the fruits of economic growth. [United Nations Definition] Distribution of Wealth, Opportunities and privileges within a society. [Oxford English Dict.]

- a. **What is it - in terms of DEI work?**
Equal Rights, Equal Access, Equal Treatment.
- b. **Why is social Justice important?**
Acknowledges and works to right the wrongs of the past that gave certain demographic groups an unearned advantage while systematically marginalized and oppressed others
- c. **How is Social Justice applied?**
Focus on collective vs. individual needs, provides equal access, promotes equality and assures equal treatment.
- d. **Challenges**
Calls into question many people's beliefs, narratives and biases especially those who have benefited from having an unfair advantage

Conversations can retraumatize those in minority groups

Pushback from those concerned about losing power and position

2. Valuing Differences

Centers around exploring divergent experiences, perspectives and beliefs and is rooted in the notion that just as a mono typical forest becomes more resilient as it becomes more diverse - so does society. Our differences make us stronger.

- a. **What is it - in terms of DEI work?**
Makes multiple dimensions of identity that makes each of us unique a priority.
- b. **Why is it important?**
Makes space and honors each person's unique experience, talent and story and creates access to the organizational culture by not emphasizing or promoting a shared experience.
- c. **How is it applied?**
Through "creative abrasion" [Linda Hill, Collective Genius, HBR] where individuals learn to discuss and challenge themselves and others about their beliefs and standards as to what constitutes "a good fit" when looking for new program opportunities and staff.
- d. **Challenges?**
Can overemphasize the value of differences at the expense of building community.

3. Compliance

Follows the regulations, policies and practices that keep organizations from practicing discriminatory practices based on race, skin color, age, sex religion, ability, national origin and or genetic information.

- a. **What is it - in terms of DEI work?**
Follow the rules and regulations and equity will happen
- b. **Why is it important?**
Provides a foundation of enforceable guidelines that tells us what behaviors and practices are permitted.
- c. **How is it applied?**
Federal EEOC, state and municipal regulations provide guidance for employers on how to act
- d. **Challenges?**
Check the box and we did what we were required to do.

No discrimination complaints - no problems.

Does not promote further DEI work and does not create a culture of belonging.



4. Business Case

Focuses on profit and productivity, organizations that value and promote DEI, are more innovative, are able to hire and retain top talent, have teams capable of complex problem solving and have higher financial performance.

- a. **What is it - in terms of DEI work?**
Organizations are moved to DEI action because research demonstrates diverse organizations tend to have higher financial yields.
- b. **Why is it important?**
Does Not create much resistance because it does not require deeply personal work .
- c. **How is it applied?**
Client brand - is your brand inclusive?

Services – do you serve the needs of an increasingly diverse market-place?

Client engagement- does Open Sky effectively build relationships with diverse clients?
- d. **Challenges?**
Does not always yield true attitude and behavior change.

Reduces people to assets to assist in achieving the bottomline

Marginalized people may feel this approach to DEI is void of meaningful change.

Will not work if the organization is not inclusive and or does not know how to deal with the tension and differences

5. Oneness & Unity

Rooted in the notion that our common bond as humans binds us together and what one does impacts all others.

- a. **What is it - in terms of DEI work?**
Eliminates the environment that allows “insider/outsider” dynamics and creates space for all voices to be honored and heard.
- b. **Why is it important?**
Removes us vs. them barriers and promotes a sense of interdependence.
- c. **How is it applied?**
Consensus, group goal setting, supporting basic human needs over differences
- d. **Challenges?**
Minimizes the differences that define one’s identity.

Promotes the “I don’t see color” and “I treat everyone the same” fallacies

Can lead to groupthink and a lack of divergent perspectives.



6. Advocacy & Allyship

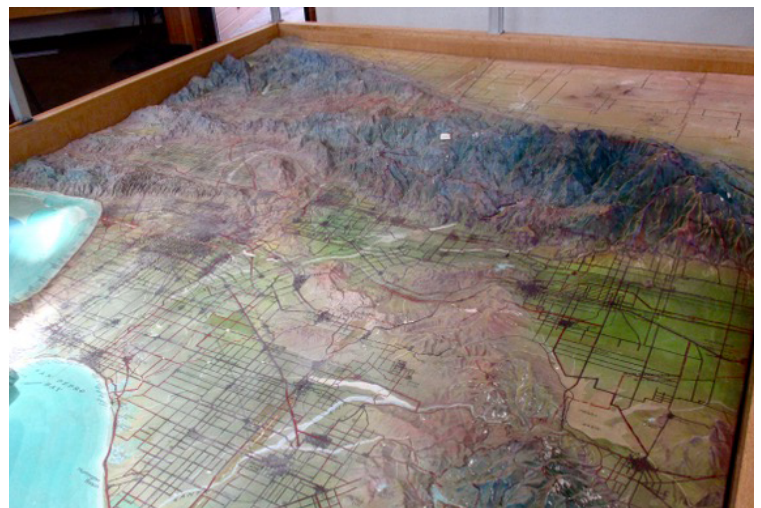
This philosophy promotes that every individual is responsible for being a vocal proponent of DEI work and must challenge existing structures that impede DEI progress.

- a. **What is it - in terms of DEI work?**
Requires that individuals in dominant and non-dominant groups not only advocate for their needs but also for the needs for others who are being treated disparately.
- b. **Why is it important?**
Counter balance to the compliance philosophy

Creates a strong culture of esprit de corps and unity
- c. **How is it applied?**
Engages individuals to take a stand for others, so the burden is not solely on the marginalized to always advocate for their own needs.
- d. **Challenges?**
It requires individuals to be willing to sacrifice their status or their relationships in their own identity groups, that may have more power and privilege.

It can be emotionally taxing on individuals and retard productivity.

Can disrupt the commonly held norms and practices in an organizational culture.



Implementation Best Practices

Inclusion principles require that program planning and implementation be based on issue resolution and not calendars. It is not just about setting aspirational goals, rather it is being very clear about priorities and putting a system in place to track and measure progress and impact at various stages and making sure the plan has a feedback loop that allows for constant adjustment for continual improvement.

- **Relationships & Trust:** The saying goes that “trust moves at the speed of relationships.” Fostering relationships and building trust takes time, patience, and showing up differently.
- **Community-based planning:** Engage and include communities of place and communities of interest in recreation and visitor use planning.
- **Strategic partnerships & funding:** Appropriated funding to the USFS alone is not enough to achieve the desired conditions and goals for recreation and education in the ANF. There is a need to embrace a strategic approach that amplifies public funding with private/nonprofit funding sources.
- **Engage non-users:** People who already visit and recreate on the ANF need less support. There is a need to deliberately outreach and educate non-users. Figure 6 and the Five Hypothesis and Barriers (used with permission from Charles Thomas) for non-users should guide this work.

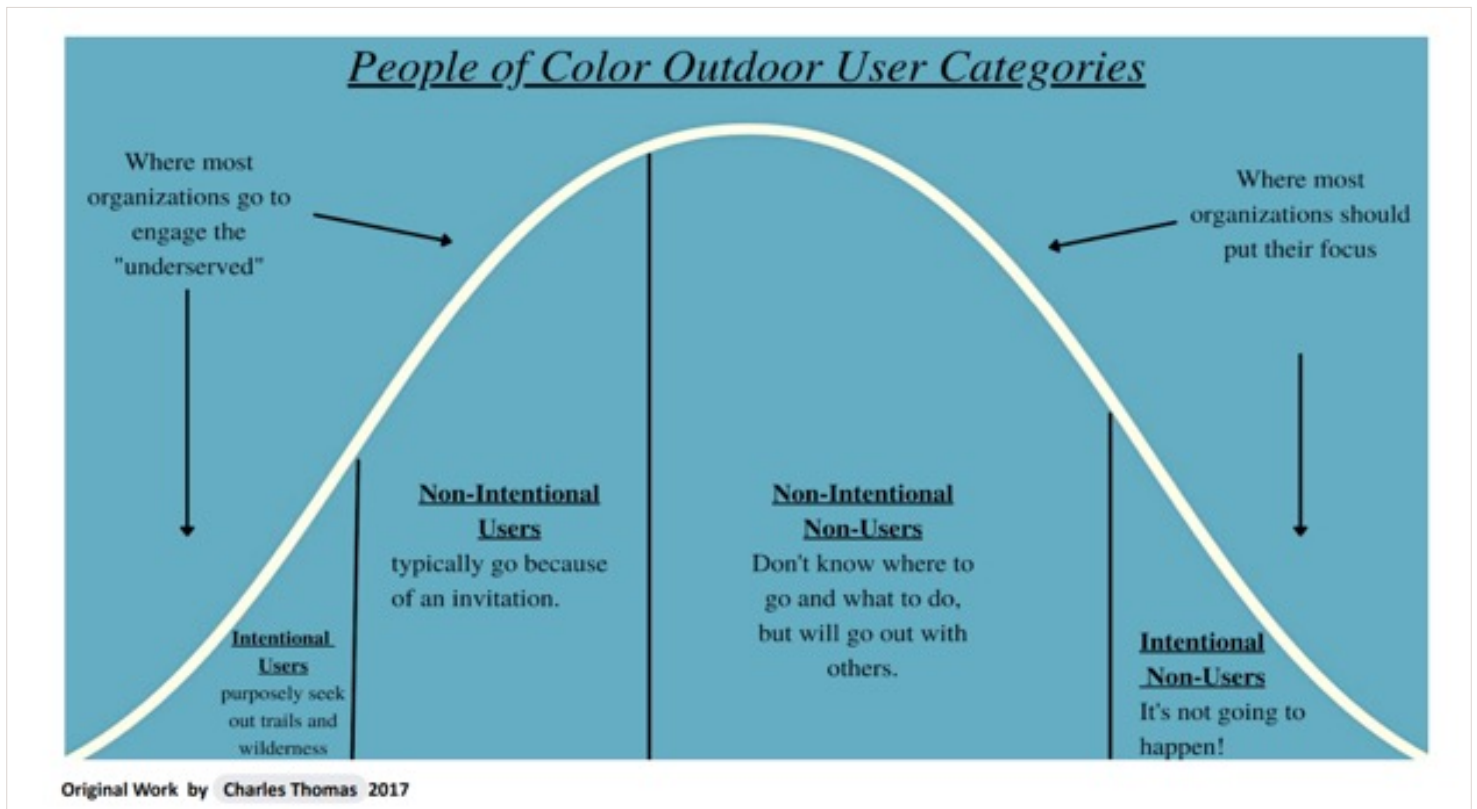


Figure 6. People of Color Outdoor User Categories

Five Hypothesis & Barriers

(multiple research sources, not cited) - empirical data, personal experience: Hop Hopkins, Charles Thomas, 2023.

The 5 Hypothesis are:

- 1. Opportunity:** The opportunity hypothesis examines the relationship between the residential location of minority populations and proximity to, trail heads and recreational sites, and recreation preferences.
- 2. Marginality:** The marginality hypothesis attributes differences in racial/ethnic minority representation to socioeconomic factors or measures of social class, such as
 - limited financial resources,
 - lower levels of education, and
 - limited employment opportunities caused by historical discrimination
- 3. Subculture/Ethnicity:** The subculture/ethnicity hypothesis Acknowledges the influence of Marginality on outdoor recreation patterns but claims other cultural values are shaping outdoor visitation practices. Other values such as:
 - Social organizations that they can go with
 - Types of activities they are familiar with
 - The desire to travel in a larger group size
 - The desire to be around structural amenities -
 - > bathrooms
 - > picnic areas
 - > Visitor Centers, pavilions
- 4. Discrimination:** The discrimination hypothesis places importance on contemporary, post civil rights discrimination that occurs from interpersonal contact with other visitors or agency personnel or through institutional policies like the requirement to have previous experience or a college degree in an area that an inordinate number of urban based minorities don't even know exists.
- 5. Acculturation:** The acculturation hypothesis examines the relationship between cultural assimilation into the majority culture and recreational choices. According to this hypothesis, as a minority culture assimilates into the majority culture, they begin to take on the recreational patterns of the majority culture.



Name	Organization
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Matthew Bokach	San Gabriel Mountains National Monument Manager
John Cho	ANF Volunteer Coordinator
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Claire Robinson	Amigos de los Rios
Bryan Matsumoto	Nature for All
Brenda Kyle	Nature for All
Belen Bernal	Nature for All
Daniel Rossman	The Wilderness Society
Sharon Musa	The Wilderness Society
Roberto Morales	Sierra Club
Liz Reilly	Community at large
Dania Gutierrez	National Forest Foundation
Sarah DiVittorio	National Forest Foundation
Christina Mondy	National Forest Foundation
Other Participants	
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Paloma Avila	Nature of All
Joseph Burton	Hearts For Sight Foundation
Martin Martinez	Hispanic Access/por la creación
Scott Scoggins	Tziacatl CDC
Nathan Nunez	Gabrieleno
Leidy Vasquez	Kid City Hope Place
Kimberly Fabian	Kid City Hope Place
Anne Hawthorne	Kid City Hope Place
Kevin Nunez	Gabrieleno

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Jonar Rodrigo	ANF
Greg Herrera	ANF
Araceli Hernandez	Nature for All
Dave Baumgartner	FRVC
William Vazquez	We Explore Earth
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Ben White	San Gabriel Mountains Trailbuilders
Nel Graham	Chilao Visitor Center
Michelle Daneri	Pacific Crest Trail Association
Rob Pettersen	Lowelifes Respectable Citizens' Club
Linh Diep	Nature for All
Joel Glen	East Forks Golden Preservation
Kim Orbe	Nature for All Stewards
Lionel Mares	Nature for All Stewards
Topher Mathers	Active San Gabriel Valley
Clarissa Choi	Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement (APIFM)
Noemi Navar	Los Angeles Parks & Recreation - Natural Areas

Tools & Resources

- Developed Site Rapid Assessment – USFS Enterprise Program
- Sustainable Trails Assessment Tool (STAT) – USFS Region 6 and Region 8
- **USFS R2 Center for Design and Interpretation**
- Conservation Finance –
 - › **Quantified Ventures**
 - › **Conservation Investment** (agreement with R5, already working on the ANF)
- **Universal Access Design Principles**
- **Access Board Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas**
- **Outdoor Recreation and Trail Accessibility Guidelines**
- **City of Boulder OSMP Accessible Trail Guide**
- **Visitor Use Management Framework**
- **USFS Region 6 “Because you Matter” campaign**
- **SMARTIE Goals**

Publications

- **Research Strategy for Enhancing Sustainable Recreation and Tourism on Public Lands**
- **Nonprofits and park equity in Los Angeles: a promising way forward for environmental justice**
- **Parks and Park Funding in Los Angeles: An Equity-Mapping Analysis**
- **USFS Equity Action Plan**



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