



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, D.C. 20240

March 5, 2004

Honorable Richard Pombo  
Chairman, Committee on Resources  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am pleased to transmit the enclosed Gaviota Coast Feasibility Study, Environmental Assessment, and a Public Comment and Response Document related to the study. The study was authorized by Congress in 1999 (P.L 106-113) and addresses a 76-mile segment of coastal watersheds in Santa Barbara County between Coal Oil Point in Isla Vista to Point Sal at the northern boundary of Vandenberg Air Force Base. The National Park Service (NPS) prepared this study in order to determine whether all or part of the Gaviota Coast study area meets established criteria for designation as a unit of the National Park System and to evaluate what would be the most effective and efficient protection strategy for this area.

As required by statute, the study evaluated the area for its significance, suitability and feasibility. The study determined the area contains nationally significant natural and cultural resources, and is suitable but not feasible for inclusion in the National Park System. The area is not a feasible addition to the System for several reasons: sufficient land is not currently available to NPS; strong opposition from study area landowners makes it unlikely that effective NPS management could occur; and NPS is not able to undertake new acquisition or management responsibilities of this cost and magnitude, given competing priorities in existing units and the need to concentrate on addressing the backlog of deferred maintenance.

The final study evaluated only two alternatives, neither of which includes NPS management. Alternative 1 was no action or the continuation of current policies and Alternative 2, a derivative of the no action alternative, called for a continuation of current policies but provided a menu of additional local options that built upon the strong history of protection in Santa Barbara County without further Federal involvement.

One of the most important parts of the study revealed that the citizens and local governments of Santa Barbara County are already engaged in a wide array of local land protection efforts that have set a fine example for other parts of the country. These efforts have produced an outstanding record of locally based environmental protection by private individuals, organizations and local public agencies. In the professional opinion of NPS, the most effective and efficient means of protecting these significant resources and for providing public enjoyment along the Gaviota Coast is for these types of local protection strategies to continue and grow without further NPS involvement. Therefore, there is no new Federal action envisioned or recommended and no action is required by Congress.

Honorable Richard Pombo

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An identical letter is being sent to the Honorable Pete V. Domenici, Chairman, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, United States Senate.

Sincerely,



Assistant Secretary for  
Fish and Wildlife and Parks

Enclosures

cc: Honorable Nick J. Rahall  
Ranking Minority Member  
Committee on Resources  
House of Representatives

Honorable Barbara Boxer  
United States Senate

Honorable Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senate

Honorable Lois Capps  
House of Representatives

Honorable Elton Gallegly  
House of Representatives