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### **South Coast Missing Linkages Project Announces Strategy for Wildlands Network**

*New report maps out plan to maintain connections between southern California's vast wild areas*

Los Angeles – A landmark conservation plan to preserve wildland linkages from the southern Sierra Nevada to Baja California was announced today in the report, “South Coast Missing Linkages Project: A Wildland Network for the South Coast Ecoregion”. Produced by South Coast Wildlands, a science-based conservation planning organization, the report lays out an innovative conservation strategy designed to maintain landscape connectivity and provide southern California’s irreplaceable plant and animal life the essential habitat it needs for survival. Partners in this highly collaborative regional conservation effort include National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, California State Parks, The Wildlands Conservancy, Conservation Biology Institute and The Nature Conservancy, among others.

According to Ray Sauvajot, Ph.D. and Chief of Planning, Science and Resource Management for the National Park Service, “Without linkages between existing parks, National Forests and other public lands, many native species could be threatened or disappear entirely. This is especially true for animals that disperse widely or have small populations such as mountain lions, badgers, bobcats, desert tortoises and bighorn sheep.”

South Coast Missing Linkages aims to conserve existing connections that are essential travel routes for wildlife, and key to protecting fundamental biological and ecological processes in the South Coast Ecoregion. This region is considered to be one of the 25 most important “hotspots” of biological diversity on earth, and the threat to connectivity is especially severe in this home to 400 threatened and endangered plant and animal species - from bighorn sheep to foxes and butterflies. The South Coast Wildland Network is designed to keep plant and animal populations viable by preserving existing connections among vast wildlands where they can thrive in their natural habitat, with enough room to roam to seek food, find mates and escape natural and unnatural disasters such as flood, fire and global climate change.

“In 2001, land managers, scientists and conservation ecologists identified 232 habitat linkages in the state, 69 of which are associated with the South Coast Ecoregion. Fifteen of these are landscape linkages that are so important that if even one fails, the biological integrity of the entire region would be compromised,” said Kristeen Penrod, South Coast Wildlands Conservation Director.

These regionally important linkages are detailed in the report, available at:  
<http://www.scwildlands.org/>.

Pete Dangermond, Executive Director of Riverside Land Conservancy, stated “Our existing national forests, state parks and land preserves are a treasure for all southern Californians to enjoy. The economic value of these lands is in the billions, but their emotional value to southern Californians is priceless.”