

# MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

## Impact Report 2021





## From Our Executive Director

As I reflect on 2021, I am humbled. I ended my first year at Nature for All feeling proud to be part of a team that consistently rises to challenges and never loses sight of our mission.

Through in-person and virtual platforms, Nature for All facilitated our Leadership Development programs in a way that increased connections and relationships with community members, coalition partners, and collaborators.

We were encouraged to see high participation in our programs and activities throughout Los Angeles County! Our next step is to leverage the interest and passion to scale up our impact and create access programming to nature, especially for park-poor communities. We believe we have laid the groundwork for an even more impactful year ahead and we thank you for your participation and support!



Belén Bernal

## Our Staff

Belén Bernal, Executive Director  
 Azeneth Martinez, Coalition Coordinator  
 Omar Gomez, Program Manager  
 Araceli Hernandez, Program Manager  
 Bryan Matsumoto, Program Manager  
 Anakaren Ramirez, Communications Coordinator

## Our Supporters

We are grateful for the support of:

- Accelerate Resilience L.A., a sponsored project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors
- Anonymous and individual donors
- Angeles Conservation Foundation
- Best Start San Fernando Valley
- California State Coastal Conservancy
- Charities Aid Foundation of America
- City of Duarte
- Community Nature Connection
- Congresswoman Judy Chu, 27th Congressional District Community Project Funding
- El Nido Family Centers
- First 5 Los Angeles
- Garfield Foundation
- Hispanic Access Foundation
- Justice Outside
- Pacific Premier Bank
- Parks California
- Resources Legacy Fund
- Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI) Co-op
- Rose Foundation for Communities and the Environment
- San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC)
- San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District
- Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
- Sierra Club
- Trailmixer
- The Pew Charitable Trusts
- The Wilderness Society
- Water Foundation
- Watershed Conservation Authority

## From Our Board of Directors Chair

We have learned during the last two years how vulnerable we—and our global systems—are. At the same time, the pandemic has revealed how great humanity can be when we come together and support each other to prioritize our physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

This impact report is a testament to our collective community. We hope you'll take a moment to read about our successes in 2021 while we worked with community.

Nature for All is stronger because of you and your support. Your belief in our vision—that every person has the right to experience and access meaningful connections in the outdoors—will continue to shape how Angelenos relate to, recreate, and protect nature as they learn more through our programs and activities. Thank you for allowing us to partner with each of you in this journey!



Thomas Wong

## Our Board of Directors

Vanessa Aramayo, Alliance for a Better Community  
 Casey Schreiner, Modern Hiker  
 Charles Thomas, Outward Bound Adventures  
 Thomas Wong, San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District





## From Our Coalition Chair

In 2021, as communities slowly recovered and we saw light at the end of the pandemic tunnel, we were determined to continue our work. It became even more clear how vital it is to create opportunities to ensure equitable access—for all Angelenos—to the wide range of benefits nature can provide. Through our All Aboard for Nature program and with outings for youth and families into the San Gabriel Mountains, we have thrived in the face of adversity.

Embracing the resiliency and continued strength of our communities, we continue to grow as a coalition and strengthen our collective commitment to connecting diverse low-income communities to nature and environmental stewardship opportunities.

For our San Gabriel Mountains campaign, we saw the impact of our grassroots community base-building by getting newly appointed Senator Alex Padilla to make the passing of the San Gabriel Mountains Foothills and Rivers Protection Act one of his priorities. We believe that the San Gabriel Mountains deserve to have an Urban National Recreation Area along the San Gabriel and Rio Hondo Corridors, which would serve one of the most diverse communities in the country.

The work of seeing this vision a reality will continue through our policy and leadership development work, which will ensure that we are building the next generation of environmental leaders for our San Gabriel Mountains and for the planet.



Roberto Morales

Nature for All acknowledges that our work takes place on the ancestral homelands of the Tongva, Gabrielino, Kizh, Chumash, Tataviam, Kitanemuk, and Serrano—the original stewards of what is now Los Angeles County.

We are committed to uplifting and respecting the names of these lands and the voices and untold stories of communities we learn and work with.



## Our Mission and Focus

Nature for All's mission is to build a diverse base of support to ensure that everyone in the Los Angeles area has equitable access to the wide range of benefits that nature provides. We're committed to building support to protect and create access to our forests, rivers, and parks, and developing a new diverse generation of environmental leaders and stewards who connect to, and care for, our public lands.

We advocate for policies, projects and programs to:

**Protect** the mountains and rivers in our area, to conserve habitat and water resources, and to be more climate-resilient.

**Create** more natural spaces, such as parks and bike paths, in our historically underserved neighborhoods.

**Connect** people to public lands through transit access programs and improved recreation facilities, which will lead to better public health.

## Honoring Leadership

We would like to offer a special thank-you to Belinda Faustinos, who played an integral role in our development and growth during the many years she worked with our coalition and when she served as our first Executive Director. Her dedicated efforts were celebrated this year when she received a commendation from the County of Los Angeles.



## Coalition Members





## Leadership Academy

Nature for All's Leadership Academy is a long-term training program, established in 2011, that aims to develop LA's next generation of environmental leaders with a curriculum that teaches organizing and advocacy skills, civic engagement, and supports local community projects. Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, we were thrilled to continue the program virtually and mark its 10th anniversary! We are so proud of our staff and coalition for this milestone and their contributions to help educate, train and develop community leaders to become environmental stewards and join us in our mission. It has been inspiring to see more than 220 graduates continue to support our mission by completing projects they proposed while in the program, and in their jobs and volunteer efforts.

“One of the goals of the Academy is to diversify the environmental field. I am so proud to see our graduates feel empowered to apply and land amazing jobs in roles they may not have seen themselves in before!”

—Program Manager  
Araceli Hernandez

### Our Future Leaders

77% Participants identified as low-income

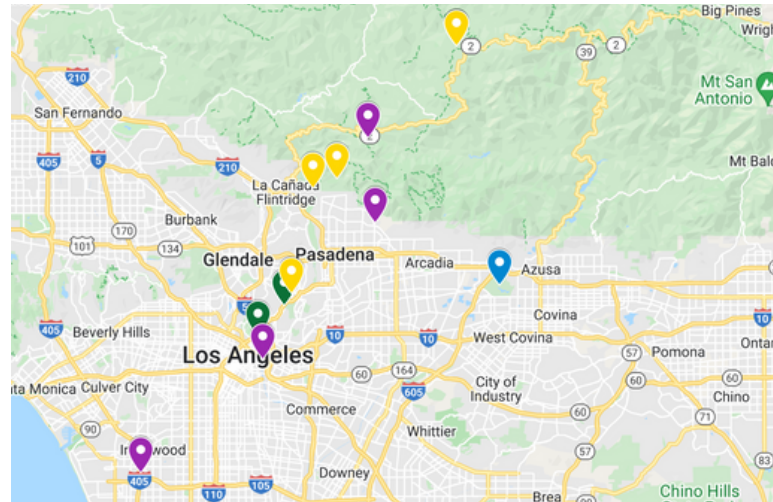
68% Participants identified as women

57% Participants identified as Latinx

90% Participants identified as BIPOC  
(Black, Indigenous, people of color)

### Congratulations to 2021 Graduates!

Alondra Reynoso	Kathryn Melendez
Ana Cobarrubias	Montserrat Plascencia-Bernal
Evellyn Rosas	Nadia Sadeghpour
Amy Quintanilla	Nicole Greco
Anakaren Andrade	Oscar Monge
Jacqueline Arevalo	Rosa L. Maldonado
Jaice Mendoza-Macias	Shabnaz Marzkina Khandoker
Kris Fortin	Samantha Avitia
Krystle Yu	Valeree Catangay
Maura Palacios Mejia	Robert Aceves



Leadership Academy graduates have completed projects across Los Angeles. More: [www.lanatureforall.org/academy](http://www.lanatureforall.org/academy)

### 2021 Leadership Academy Highlights

- Evellyn Rosas and Krystle Yu worked with Nature for All and Arlington Garden in Pasadena to lead Nature Relations, a multilingual (English, Spanish, and Mandarin) in-person guided audio tour for youth and their families that included a nature journal.
- Ana C. launched her project, Environmentalists of South Central LA, to bring environmental education to South Central LA Youth.
- Sam Tayag and guests presented family-friendly virtual workshops in partnership with the LA County Natural History Museum.
- Maura Palacios presented "Watering Our Future" workshops with Pacoima Beautiful.
- Josh Andujo shared Tongva history and stories relating to the plants and land during an event organized by Community Nature Connection.





## Community Base-Building and Community Leadership

With education and training, our Community Base-Building program is empowering community members and providing them with skills and knowledge. As Community Ambassadors, they are helping us increase the equitable distribution of public funds to communities in need of parks, access to public lands, and water and climate resiliency.

“We are supporting environmental justice ambassadors in the communities that need the most help. This program develops leaders and builds community knowledge, community support, community engagement, and community power to bring about necessary change. This knowledge means power for our communities who use these much-needed tools and skills that go beyond Nature For All programs.”

—Senior Program Manager  
Omar Gomez

### 2021 Highlights

- Extended our reach beyond the San Gabriel Valley to the San Fernando Valley and Southeast Los Angeles.
- Recruited, developed and trained 23 new Community Ambassadors from all across LA County to provide community presentations and offer outreach by tabling at events.
- Provided a Leadership Development training to 41 of our Community Base-Building graduates, who learned about public speaking, community organizing, leadership and power, and civics.
- Offered 26 workshop series of Community Base-Building classes on local park needs, water resiliency, protection of public lands, civics, and opportunities to increase park equity in underserved communities.
- Hosted a Water Warriors workshop series, in partnership with the San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District, to educate community members on the history of water in LA County, where our water comes from, and how families and communities can become more water-resilient.
- Led community members for first-time visits to Lewis Falls, the North Fork of the San Gabriel River, Switzer Falls, East Fork, Eaton Canyon and Glendale Narrows, and other locations for our Mountains and Parks Watershed Tours.



443

Attendees at our classes, courses and workshops

100+

Participants at our hikes, events and projects

### Nature for All Stewards

Our Nature for All Stewards club, made up of Leadership Academy graduates and other volunteer supporters, continued to organize events, including virtual #WildLABookClub events and an in-person gathering to help community members swap outdoor gear and resources. A special note of gratitude to Stewards Machiko Yasuda and Max Ogden for their hours volunteering to build the Trail Angeles website, a partnership sponsored by REI: [www.trailangeles.org](http://www.trailangeles.org)



### Community Ambassadors Spotlight

- Community Ambassador Miriam Lagos led a Sun Valley training with 23 residents, which included a tour of the Sun Valley Park Drain and Infiltration system to learn about nature-based solutions and parks.
- Rossana Palencia and Ulmira Loza held a virtual event on nature and mental health, "Naturaleza y la Salud Mental."





## Making Connections: Creating Access to Nature

The pandemic has made clear how the mental and physical health of those in our communities is tied to having access to the outdoors, and has widened the divide between those who have access to nature and those who do not. To correct this environmental injustice, we must work to connect our investments in public transportation—the Metro Gold Line, bus and active transit system—to our public lands, the San Gabriel Mountains.

“Nature-deficit disorder is a serious urban issue with rippling societal effects. Poor health and low interest in environmental issues are the result of environmental injustice and disinvestment in underserved communities’ access to nature. Transit to Trails programs are powerful, multi-benefit investments that yield great returns—planting the seeds for urban children to keep exploring and become emotionally and physically healthy, curious citizens of the world.”

—Program Manager  
Bryan Matsumoto

### 2021 Highlights

- Our vision for public transportation shuttles to the San Gabriel Mountains received a major win with Congressman Judy Chu's inclusion of \$995,000 for funding through the House Appropriations Committee.
- Worked with Congressman Jimmy Gomez on the Transit to Trails Act, which was introduced with Senator Cory Booker in the House and Senate, to promote equitable access to parks, green spaces, and public lands and waters.
- Organized a tour into the San Gabriel Mountains for the California Natural Resources Agency, with Secretary Wade Crowfoot and Deputy Secretary of External Affairs Andrea Ambriz, which showcased the amazing work by San Gabriel Valley partners and included a bike ride on the Emerald Necklace. Many coalition members shared their stories and highlighted regional needs for state investment in community access programming—transit-to-trails, urban greening, and green workforce opportunities.



Our tour for the California Natural Resources Agency.

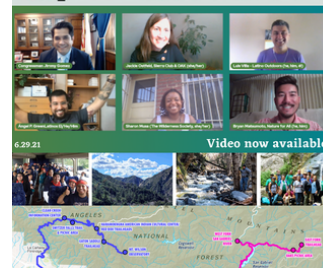


"This is my first hike ever!," said a community member after one of our Community Education courses.

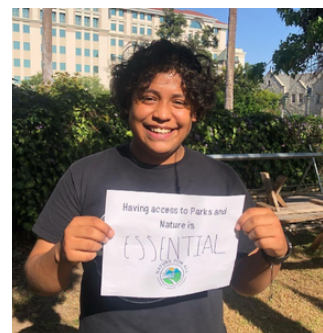


Community Education course members enjoyed our San Gabriel Mountains, River and Parks Watershed tour.

### Closing the Nature Equity Gap with Public Transit



Coalition member Sierra Club's event with Program Manager Bryan Matsumoto.



Coalition member organization Day One asked youth advocates to share why we need access to parks.

51% of Los Angeles residents do not have a public park or open space within walking distance of their home.





## Protecting Nature: Our Public Lands and Water

Working to ensure that all of our community members have equitable access to nature comes with the responsibility to care for our public lands, including our beloved San Gabriel Mountains and rivers.

“Nature can nurture our hearts, minds, and bodies, and inspire community members to cherish it and become the environmental stewards needed to help us protect it.”

—Executive Director  
Belén Bernal

### 2021 Highlights

- Joined Senator Alex Padilla, Congress members Judy Chu, Adam Schiff, Salud Carbajal, and Jared Huffman for a press event to support the final House vote on The Protecting America’s Wilderness and Public Lands Act package of bills to protect one million acres of public land and more than 500 miles of rivers in California.
- Continued our leadership in the Our Water LA (OWLA) coalition, by providing input on project prioritization for Round 2 of the Safe Clean Water Program (Measure W) funds, and facilitating a meeting with Mayor Garcetti to urge his support of OWLA principles and advance efforts to fund 10x10 (10 projects in 10 years for LA County).
- Our coalition engaged more than 9,000 community members to sign our petition to protect public lands through our well-coordinated outreach, at orientations, tabling events, virtual events, hikes, and leadership trainings.

70% of LA County’s open space is in the Angeles National Forest/San Gabriel Mountains National Monument and 80% of water provided to San Gabriel Valley residents comes from our San Gabriel Mountains.



Senator Alex Padilla with Nature for All staff and other community members and supporters at our PUBLIC Lands Act press event.



Group hike led with community staff and community ambassadors.



Executive Director Belén Bernal, LA County Supervisor Hilda Solis and former Executive Director Belinda Faustinos

### Supporting Policies

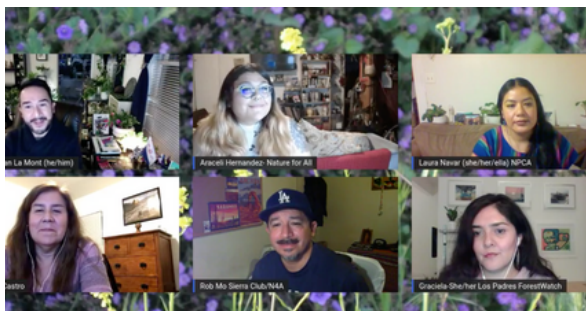
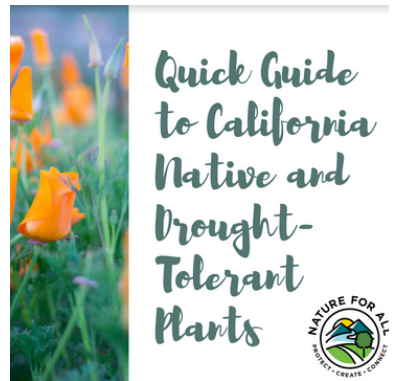
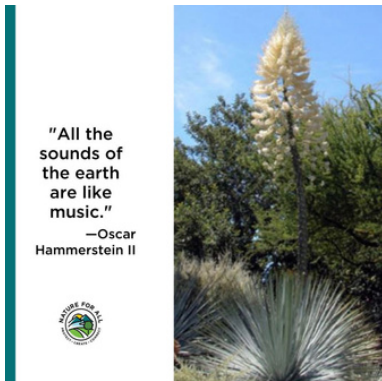
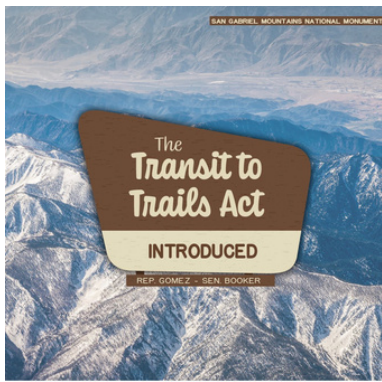
Reached thousands by participating with our coalition in communications efforts to engage public support for vital legislation and policies:

- Protecting America’s Wilderness and Public Lands Act
- America the Beautiful Plan (Biden-Harris) to conserve and restore lands, waters, and wildlife; increase equitable access for outdoor recreation; create local parks, especially in cities and nature-deprived communities; protect 30% of lands and waters by 2030 to address the climate crisis and ensure that future generations can enjoy nature.
- Protecting Unique and Beautiful Landscapes by Investing in California (PUBLIC) Lands Act (Senators Alex Padilla and Dianne Feinstein) to expand protections for more than one million acres of California’s public lands, including our San Gabriel Mountains and rivers.





# Engaging Communities: Connecting Virtually and In Nature



Coalition members and staff in the short Latino Outdoors documentary, "Yo Cuento: Nurturing Grassroots Advocacy for Conservation."



Latino Conservation Week event with staff, coalition and community members, held at Audubon Center at Debs Park. Thank you to Audubon!







## Our Story Continues

2021 • Organized press conference to celebrate Senator Alex Padilla's introduction of the PUBLIC Lands Act, with Tongva leader Chief Anthony Morales, LA County Supervisor Hilda Solis, Congresswomen Judy Chu and Grace Napolitano, California Natural Resources Agency Secretary Wade Crowfoot, and other environmental and community leaders

2020 • Developed program vision to provide transit access to the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument/Angeles National Forest for diverse, underserved communities

2019 • Launched our Leadership Development Program by adding a San Gabriel Valley component; assumed fiscal responsibility for the Leadership Academy; provided input on Prop 68 Access Programs, and Measure A, M & W implementation policies (parks, water, transportation)

2018 • Worked to cultivate grasstops and grassroots support for a potential Harris Senate companion bill; supported local and state measures for water and parks, including a leadership role in the OurWaterLA coalition

2017 • SGMF re-branded as Nature for All (N4A), as we reflected on our expanded campaign plan to include policy objectives for parks equity, access, and water resilience

2016 • Leadership and engagement by San Gabriel Mountains Forever (SGMF) contributed to policy successes in the development of two major funding measures for parks and transportation (that passed in 2017)

2015 • A3PCON, Amigos de los Rios, COFEM, the Wilderness Society, Community Hiking Club, the Sierra Club and SGMF were affirmed as members of the San Gabriel Mountains Community Collaborative

2014 • Introduction of San Gabriel Mountains National Recreation Area bill by Congresswoman Judy Chu; proclamation by President Obama establishing San Gabriel Mountains National Monument

2013 • Supported the recommendations in the study by water agencies, the San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments and a host of elected officials

2012 • 10,000+ comments generated for the San Gabriel Mountains and Watershed Special Resource Study by the National Park Service

2011 • Introduction of a Wilderness bill by Congressman Dreier

2010 • David Dreier Wilderness Legislation organizing efforts expanded

2009 • SGMF mission continued to be refined in planning meetings to reflect social justice, resource protection, and legacy objectives

2008 • San Gabriel Mountains Forever launched a planning meeting including the Old-Timers Foundation, COFEM, the Project Amiga, LA Voice, the City Project, Sierra Club, TWS, FOR, Campaign for Americas Wilderness, Progressive Christians Uniting, and the California Wilderness Coalition



### Our Focus in 2022

- Increase access and connect more people to our public lands and open spaces via our transit-to-trails All Aboard for Nature program and shuttle project concept-design work
- Continue to advocate for the protection of our public lands and natural spaces to fight climate change for this and future generations
- Train more community members and youth throughout the county and empower them to become environmental stewards and leaders
- Support local, state, and federal legislation to help our communities thrive and be represented in the process





# NATURE FOR ALL

PROTECT • CREATE • CONNECT

Together, we can achieve environmental justice, increase equity, and provide more access to nature for our diverse communities. Thank you for following our progress and supporting our work!

[www.lanatureforall.org](http://www.lanatureforall.org)

Follow us on social media

@LANatureForAll



Sign our petition

Help us protect public lands!

[www.lanatureforall.org/take-action](http://www.lanatureforall.org/take-action)



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Stay informed about our work and events!

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Donate!

Your gift of any amount can help us continue to increase access to nature and help us develop the next generation of environmental leaders!

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