

DRAFT
King Gillette Ranch
Design Concept Plan Project Description
October 2008

The National Park Service, in coordination with the California Department of Parks and Recreation, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, is proposing a design concept plan for the 588 acre King Gillette Ranch property located in the Calabasas area of unincorporated Los Angeles County.

The primary management objectives for King Gillette Ranch (the Ranch) consist of conservation of core wildlife habitat and a significant portion of a key wildlife corridor; preservation and restoration of sensitive and declining plant communities; protection of sensitive species; protection of significant habitat within the watershed of Malibu Creek and Malibu Lagoon; protection of cultural resources and the cultural landscape; protection of a scenic resource; provision of public access for nature education and recreational uses; and establishment of an inter-agency gateway visitor center for the Santa Monica Mountains. Management objectives for the Ranch are similar to and complement management objectives at the adjacent Malibu Creek State Park and nearby Malibu Lagoon State Park, at the adjacent National Park site Diamond X Ranch and nearby National Park sites such as Paramount Ranch and Peter Strauss Ranch, and at Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority-managed lands in the area, including Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Preserve and the Las Virgenes View Trail.

Visitors currently have access to public trails within the Ranch and on the nearby publicly-owned land. In June 2007, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority received a coastal development permit waiver to transition the Ranch from the privately operated Soka University to public use, which included completing a number of immediate minor site improvements to provide public parking areas/kiosks, and to ensure that signage and restrooms were made available for public use. The proposed Design Concept Plan (DCP) is intended to formalize public access and recreational use of the property and to identify and implement site-specific improvements for a joint agency administrative, environmental and cultural education center and Santa Monica Mountains gateway visitor center.

Given the development history of the Ranch, the property contains a number of existing site improvements available to serve as support facilities for public access and recreation (parking, picnic areas, restrooms, etc.), public programs and associated administration and management offices. The National Park Service General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement for the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (July 2002) identified the Ranch as a future administrative, environmental, and cultural education center to be jointly operated by the National Park Service, California Department of Parks and Recreation, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority pursuant to a Cooperative Management Agreement between the agencies.

Project Description – See Attached Site Plans

The proposed King Gillette Ranch Design Concept Plan would formalize public access and recreational use of the property and would identify and implement the site-specific improvements for the joint agency administrative, environmental, and cultural education center envisioned in the adopted General Management Plan for the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation. The Ranch property consists of two primary components. The majority of the 588-acre Ranch property, approximately 322 acres, consists

of open space and will support habitat conservation and restoration, and passive recreation including hiking, picnicking, nature study programs, and other compatible uses. Active uses of the property, including organized public programs and events, an inter-agency visitor center, environmental education center and interagency science or operations center, would be primarily contained within the existing structures and landscape. This cultural core of the Ranch consists of approximately 59 acres (including 48 acres of ornamental landscaping and trees) located in the northwest corner of the property adjacent to the intersection of Las Virgenes Road and Mulholland Highway.

King Gillette Ranch has a number of existing structures and improvements, previously occupied by Soka University until 2007, including dorms, classrooms, administration, maintenance, and parking facilities. Soka University vacated the property in the summer of 2007, at which time the property transitioned to a public recreation area supporting public access, recreation and associated administrative uses. There are 21 structures on the property totaling approximately 109,000 sq. ft.

With the exception of the 21,519 sq. ft. Novitiate building, which may be adaptively re-used as an interagency Conservation Science Center (Option #1) or may be partially demolished and reconstructed as a National Park Service/ State Parks Operations Center (Option #2), and the Frisk House, proposed to be demolished, all existing structures on the property are proposed to be adaptively re-used.

Concepts for Adaptive Re-use of Existing Facilities include:

- Interagency Visitor Center – the 6900 s.f. historic stable building is envisioned to become the gateway visitor center for the Santa Monica Mountains and will include an information desk, exhibits, a book store, audio visual room, public restrooms and space for interpretive and educational programs, offices and storage.
- Environmental Education Center – the dormitory will remain as a dorm for outdoor environmental education and interpretation programs.
- Interagency Center*
 - One alternative proposed for the Novitiate (1960 Building) is adaptive reuse of the building as an Interagency Conservation Science Center focused on conservation and environmental issues relevant to the Santa Monica Mountains. The center would house scientific staff, including from park agencies and other institutions, and would provide resources for students, researchers, and the public to support research, science literacy, and resource stewardship. In this alternative the administrative offices for the remainder of state and federal personnel would be co-located in a new building at the administrative area of Malibu Creek State Park (per separate planning/permit process).
 - A second alternative proposed for the Novitiate is an Interagency Park Operations Center (administrative and operations) for the 126 State and National Park employees that work in the Santa Monica Mountains. This would be accomplished by removal of the Novitiate building and new construction on site, or through a combination of adaptive reuse of the Novitiate with some new construction adjacent to the Novitiate.
 - A third alternative proposed for the Novitiate is adaptive reuse of the building as an Interagency Conservation Science Center and Seminar/Conference Center.

* Note that each potential alternative use for the Interagency Center includes use of a portion of the facility for Education Provider support facilities (existing kitchen and dining hall) except the demo-rebuild option for the Interagency Park Operations Center.

Passive Recreation

Approximately 4.8 miles of trails currently exist on the property (1.1 miles official trail, 3.7 miles unofficial trail) with support facilities, parking and restrooms, providing public access for nature observers, hikers, and picnickers. The current trail inventory includes the Gillette Ranch Loop Trail and several connector trails to adjacent properties and trails including Malibu Creek State Park. The proposed project includes a multi-use trail along the perimeter of the Ranch adjacent to Las Virgenes Road and Mulholland Highway, which would include planting native vegetation buffers along the street frontages, and includes construction of the Las Virgenes Valley Overlook and the Stokes Ridge Trails in the northeast reaches of the Ranch property. The project also includes additional amenities intended to support passive recreation for trail users. These facilities will be located at the new visitor center (stable) and will include parking for hikers, bike racks, site and trail orientation kiosks, signs, picnic amenities and restrooms.

Ranch Management Areas

The Design Concept Plan for the Ranch also includes establishing management areas on the property identified as low intensity, moderate intensity, and high intensity use areas. The management area approach for the Ranch is consistent with the management efforts identified for the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area General Management Plan. The General Management Plan identifies the Ranch as an administration, environmental and education center for the National Park Service and State Parks, and in May 2002 the Coastal Commission concurred with the National Park Service that the General Management Plan protects and supports coastal public access and recreation in a manner that balances conflicts between competing recreational uses and protecting environmentally sensitive habitat areas and other coastal resources.

The Ranch presently contains significant stands of native habitat including 1) Coastal Sage Scrub, 2) Chaparral, 3) Valley Oak Woodland, 4) Southern Coast Live Oak Woodland, 5) Sycamore Alluvial Woodland, and 6) Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest. In addition, the property provides substantial opportunities for habitat restoration and enhancement. Much of the property has experienced significant disturbance from historic agricultural activities dating to the 19th century and directly associated with the original development of the Ranch. Historic documentation indicates that Gillette used approximately 320 acres of the estate in the north and western portions of the property as a working ranch and for agricultural purposes including growing hay, grazing livestock, fruit production and orchards. Agricultural activities continued on the Ranch until the mid-1950s. The proposed project will take advantage of many of these historically disturbed areas to implement native habitat revegetation efforts, and to accommodate outdoor education, recreation and training programs adjacent to the Visitor Services, Education and Public Program Facilities in conjunction with native habitat revegetation efforts. The historic and current disking and irrigation practices on portions of the property will be permanently abandoned and replaced with specific low and moderate intensity use management areas as identified in the project description and on the project site plans.

Low Intensity Use Areas

Low intensity use management areas are intended to preserve, protect, and where feasible restore natural and cultural resources from potential impacts associated with visitor use and facility development. Low intensity use areas are managed for quiet enjoyment of natural sights and sounds by allowing only passive

recreational uses such as hiking (including guided walks), educational research and study, and habitat restoration activities. On the Ranch property, no new development other than trails and associated signs are included in the existing and proposed low intensity use areas.

The majority of the property will be managed as low intensity use areas and protected as public wildland. All existing natural areas will continue to be managed for low intensity and passive education and recreation activities. The existing Stokes Canyon stream corridor will be restored to enhance habitat value and educational opportunities of the riparian corridor that traverses the cultural core of the Ranch. In addition, a portion of the northeast quadrant of the Ranch south of Mulholland Highway will be restored to reintroduce native habitat within this critical wildlife corridor. These restoration areas will have restoration of ecological function as their primary purpose. These areas will be managed to increase natural recovery and facilitate active restoration projects. Activities that will impede recovery or disrupt restoration projects will not occur in these areas. After these areas have recovered (greater than 80% cover of native species), they will be managed as low intensity use areas.

In selecting appropriate native plant community targets for ecological restoration several factors will be considered. First, project leads will consult historic data concerning prior vegetation on the site. Historic photos, VTM maps, and other records may provide useful information on what the natural condition was of these areas prior to disturbance by people. In addition, project leads will consult soil maps, vegetation maps, and other data to identify undisturbed reference sites with similar soils, topography, and other features if at all possible. This information will be combined with practical knowledge concerning native species that compete well and species that have been successful in similar restoration projects throughout the Santa Monica Mountains in order to select plant palettes and restoration targets for individual restoration projects. Communities of particular interest for restoration due to their scarcity and ecological importance include native grassland, oak woodland, riparian, and coastal sage scrub types. All restoration projects will use native plant materials from within the Santa Monica Mountains.

Agencies and partner groups involved in managing Gillette Ranch will seek funds to begin needed restoration projects. These groups will work together and will engage the public in volunteer restoration opportunities.

Moderate Intensity Use Areas

Moderate intensity use areas are intended to protect natural and cultural resources from potential impacts associated with visitor use and facility development while providing essential visitor service and educational facilities and associated infrastructure including public parking, picnic areas, and program staging areas. As described previously, much of the property has experienced significant disturbance from historic agricultural activities dating to the 19th century. In addition to native habitat enhancement efforts in many disturbed areas, the proposed project will take advantage of many of these historically disturbed areas to accommodate more active outdoor education, recreation and training programs adjacent to the Visitor Services, Education and Public Program Facilities in conjunction with native habitat revegetation programs.

The moderate intensity use areas identified for the Ranch are limited to existing and historically disturbed areas and would experience moderate levels and intensity of use to support education and public programs, events and filming activities. Large scale events will be held no more than two times per year. These use areas might serve as overflow parking for such events. Moderate intensity use areas will be managed to replace exotic grasses with hardy native grasses as budget and work force (volunteer crews) allow. While native revegetation efforts are a management component for moderate intensity use areas, the primary function of these areas is to support the Ranch's Visitor Services, Education and Public Programs.

High Intensity Use Areas

High intensity use areas are intended to protect resources from potential impacts associated with visitor use and facility development with a higher degree of infrastructure and facility development. High intensity use areas are expected to experience frequent (daily) visits and activities associated with Ranch visitors, recreationists, agency personnel, and program and event participants. Development and land use would be implemented and managed in harmony with the natural and cultural setting.

The high intensity use areas identified for the Ranch are limited to existing developed areas including all existing structures, the primary circulation system, and adjacent landscaped and disturbed areas within and near the cultural core of the Ranch, Holiday Camp, the DeCinces House, and Diamond X Ranch. The high intensity use areas reflect current facilities and operational areas of the National Park Service (Diamond X Ranch) and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (Holiday Camp and the DeCinces House), and the proposed Visitor Services, Education and Public Program, and Interagency Center facilities of the Design Concept Plan. The high intensity use areas are expected to accommodate increased visitation and active uses in the cultural core of the Ranch and immediately surrounding areas as the more structured Visitor Center, Education and Public Program, and Interagency Center components of the Plan are fully implemented. These high intensity use areas would also provide the primary staging and support facilities for recreational access and use of the 588 acre Ranch property.

Public Programs

The cultural core of the property, consisting primarily of the original structures, landscape, and working ranch components of the Gillette Estate, contains a number of unique and intriguing structures, designed landscape, and disturbed areas providing a range of opportunities to support environmental, cultural, and educational programs for both passive and active recreation activities. In addition, the developed nature of this portion of the park and associated infrastructure lends itself well to function as a place for special, pre-arranged activities, events, and functions to be carried out for the benefit of the community, visitors and resource agencies.

Programs provided at the Ranch include interpretive programs open to the public, offered on both weekday evenings and during the day on weekends. These programs include interpretive hikes on a variety of natural and cultural history topics, family campfires and programs designed specifically for children. Programs are led by agency interpreters. These programs will be expanded in 2009 with the development of a volunteer program supervised by agency staff. The following is a list of example programs currently offered at the Ranch:

- Walking Tours: Tour of the Historic King Gillette Ranch.
- Family Nature Hikes: Naturalist led programs for families. 1 ½ hours
- Family Fun Night: Evening with story-telling, songs, a nature program, and a campfire (weather permitting). 1 ½ hours
- Night Hikes: Full moon and astronomy programs. 2 hours
- Morning Bird Hikes: All year round, 1-mile walk. 2 hours

In addition to public interpretive programs, the MRCA also offers standards-based education programs through the Las Virgenes and Los Angeles Unified School Districts (LAUSD). Students visit the Ranch with their classroom teachers for half-day, full-day or overnight outdoor education programs, most of which are

5-day, 4-night experiences. These programs meet state science standards as well as the new California environmental education initiative. Targeted outreach ensures that the Ranch serves as both a local educational resource as well as a regional facility for children from all parts of Los Angeles. A scholarship fund ensures that LAUSD Title I schools participate free of charge. Students use the existing Ranch trail system and the undercrossing between the Ranch and Malibu Creek State Park and would benefit greatly from their proposed expansion and repair. Large group nature games are an important component of the education program as is night-time programming and the campfire program.

Special Events and Uses

In general, special events and uses will be allowed year-round in such a way as to not interrupt visits from the general public to the Ranch grounds. Activity fees will be charged per a published fee schedule and will be approved on a case-by-case basis. These events could include weddings, retreats, workshops, conferences, commercial photo shoots, filming, or company picnics. There is no local or state funding presently dedicated to operate King Gillette Ranch. As such, revenues generated by special events and uses are necessary to support maintenance of the property and educational programming. These funds are used to keep the Ranch self-sustaining.

The following is a list of example event opportunities/venues potentially available at the Ranch:

- *Main Lawn:* The rolling main lawn in front of the Gillette Mansion will accommodate up to 400 seated or standing guests.
- *Gillette Mansion Fountain Courtyard:* This distinguished tiled courtyard overlooks the main lawn and tranquil pond. It can accommodate up to 100 seated or standing guests.
- *Gillette Mansion Entry Courtyard:* This was the original motor court for the Gillette Mansion. The courtyard can accommodate 200 seated or standing guests.
- *Tennis Courts:* A shady area adjacent to the Mansion can accommodate 200 seated or standing guests.
- *The Dormitory:* Primarily, the dormitory will remain as a dorm for outdoor environmental and interpretation programs. This building could be used for retreats, meetings, conferences, and special events. Overnight dorm style rooms can accommodate up to 180 guests, 4 to a room. One large meeting room will hold up to 150 seated guests. The auditorium has a full stage and a drop down screen. It can hold up to 350 seated guests in theatre-style seats.

**King Gillette Ranch
Gillette Estate Existing/Proposed Facilities & Uses**

Existing Facilities & Uses	Proposed Facilities and Uses
Visitor Services Area - located within northwest corner of the property adjacent to the intersection of Las Virgenes Road and Mulholland Highway.	
Stable 6,900 sq. ft.	Rehabilitate for Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area Visitor Center <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interagency Gateway Visitor Center, Exhibits, Bookstore, Restrooms and Interpretive Program Space • Bookstore/Visitor Center Offices and Storage
Print Shop - 2,400 sq. ft. White House – 1,000 sq. ft. White House Garage – 400 sq. ft.	Adaptive Re-Use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Service/Concession • Office/Shop for Botanist/Staff • Possibly Remove Print Shop – use for visitor center parking
Native Plant Garden & Nursery Public Parking Public Restrooms Outdoor Program Area	To Remain Provide new Picnic Area and Trailhead Provide Additional Public Parking Area Improve Pedestrian Undercrossing Under Las Virgenes Road
Brandt House/Garage – 2,400 sq. ft.	Restore as Staff Housing
Frisk House –1,991 sq. ft.	Demolish & Install Interpretative Display
Education and Public Program Facilities/Areas – located within northwest corner of the property adjacent to & south of Mulholland Highway.	
Gillette Mansion – 26,610 sq. ft. Dormitory – 24,448 sq. ft.	Education and public programs, community meetings, agency programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overnight education programs/staff housing • Classrooms • Education Institute Office Space • Agency Training and Conferences • Special Events
Public Parking/Restrooms Tennis Courts Outdoor Program Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To Remain • Tennis Courts to be used for Maintenance Storage/Parking-Possibly Construct New Storage Building
Interagency Center - located within northwest corner of the property south of Visitor Services & Education/Public Program Facilities Areas.	
Novitiate – 21,519 sq. ft.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option #1 Adaptively re-use as Conservation Science Center • Option #2 Demolish and Construct 25,000 sq. ft. LEED Certified-equivalent NPS/State Park Operations Center to Accommodate 126 NPS/State Parks Staff & Include Staff Parking, or adaptive reuse with addition for NPS/State Park Operations Center • Option #3 Adaptive reuse of the building as an Interagency

	Conservation Science Center and Seminar/Conference Center
Cook's House- 1,845 sq. ft. Garage - 3,150 sq. ft.	Staff/Intern Housing
Outdoor Amphitheatre Basketball Courts Parking	Trailhead/Staging Area for Hiking Programs

**King Gillette Ranch
Outlying Structures Existing/Proposed Facilities & Uses**

Existing Facilities & Uses	Proposed Facilities and Uses
Guard House - 611 sq. ft.	Adaptive Re-Use as Park Entry Kiosk/Offices
DeCinces House - 4,939 sq. ft. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRCA Offices & Meetings Facilities 	To Remain
Holiday Camp <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holiday Camp Residence - 1,500 sq. ft. • Holiday Camp Storage Shed - 800 sq. ft. • Holiday Camp Residence - 1,500 sq. ft. • Holiday Camp Pool House - 1,000 sq. ft. • Holiday Camp Garage - 1,250 sq. ft. • Holiday Camp Residence - 2,000 sq. ft. 	To Remain Staff Housing Staff Training Facility Provide new Trailhead
Diamond X Ranch - 2,986 sq. ft.	To Remain NPS Maintenance Facility New 2,500 s.f. Student Intern Housing (per separate planning/permit)