

PRESS RELEASE



SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY MOUNTAINS RECREATION AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

For Immediate Release
June 11, 2009

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California Coastal Commission Unanimously Supports Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Plan to Increase Public Access to Coastal Parks in Malibu

Malibu—After a more than 10 hour public hearing in Marina del Rey Wednesday, the California Coastal Commission approved—in a 12-0 vote—the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) request for an amendment to the Malibu Local Coastal Plan which will allow increased public access to coastal parks in Malibu. At the same time, the Commission unanimously denied a request by the City of Malibu that included some of the features of the Conservancy plan, but specifically outlawed camping in the City of Malibu. “The LCP Amendment (submitted by Malibu) is fundamentally flawed,” said Coastal Commissioner Patrick Kruer, in casting his vote for denial of Malibu’s proposal.

“This is a major victory for the people of California who purchased these parklands,” said Joseph T. Edmiston, Executive Director of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. “This decision clearly telegraphs the Coastal Commission's support of our proposals for trails, camping, parking, ADA facilities, and appropriate uses at Ramirez Canyon Park, Escondido Canyon Park, and Corral Canyon Park.”

The Conservancy’s goal is to add six miles to the regionally significant Coastal Slope Trail, and connect five coastal parks owned by the Conservancy, the MRCA, and the National Park Service. In addition, the plan will add 3.5 miles of other new canyon trails

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and trail connections, identify public access, recreation, and program improvements, and expand parking, restrooms, and ADA-accessible facilities for Ramirez Canyon Park, Escondido Canyon Park, and Corral Canyon Park. The plan also allows for 29 regular and ADA-accessible “cold” campsites without campfires in the three parks.

Almost one hundred individuals including activists, hikers, mountain bikers, students, and others from organizations ranging from Coastwalk, the Sierra Club, Latino Urban Forum, and the Riverside Conservancy testified in support of the Conservancy plan to create more public access. “Because we know the therapeutic value of engaging kids in nature,” said Charles Thomas, Executive Director of Outward Bound Los Angeles, “It becomes a social justice issue, a civil rights issue, a moral obligation to provide urban kids access to nature.”

A group of Malibu homeowners have vehemently opposed the Conservancy’s proposal to increase public use of its coastal parklands, and have filed lawsuits to try to block the plan. Although no known major wildfire has ever been started by a camper in a supervised campground in California, residents cited the fear of fire as the reason to ban camping in their city altogether and prevent additional use of the public parks.

The next step in the procedure will be to submit a Public Works Plan to the Coastal Commission. This will include fire safety management planning already submitted by the Conservancy, and even more measures to promote safety within the coastal canyons of Malibu that will be worked out with local fire authorities. “Everyone will be better off because of this plan,” said Coastal Commissioner Ross Mirkarimi.

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy was established by the California State Legislature in 1980. Since that time, it has helped to preserve over 60,000 acres of parkland in both wilderness and urban settings, and has improved more than 114 public recreational facilities throughout Southern California.

The MRCA is a Joint Powers Agency of the State of California which includes the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District, and the Conejo Recreation and Park District. The MRCA provides natural resources and scientific expertise, critical regional planning services, park construction services, park operations, fire prevention, ranger services, educational and leadership programs for thousands of youth each year, and is one of the lead agencies providing for the revitalization of the Los Angeles River.

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