

**Errata and Response to Public Comments
Anthony C. Beilenson Visitor Center at King Gillette Ranch
Environmental Assessment**

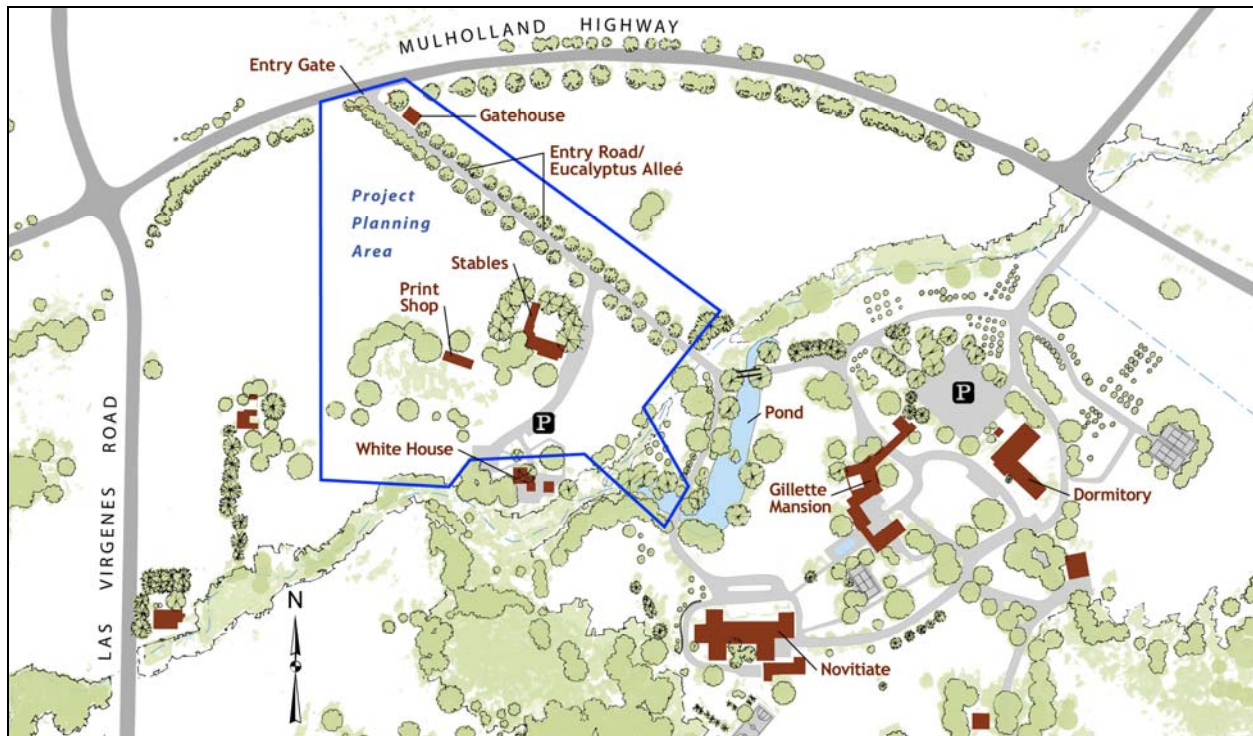
**Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
March 2010**

The following errata and response to public comments together with the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and the EA describe the final decision of the National Park Service for the Anthony C. Beilenson Visitor Center at King Gillette Ranch.

I. ERRATA

These errata should be attached to the *Anthony C. Beilenson Visitor Center at King Gillette Ranch Environmental Assessment* dated February, 2010. They are intended to correct or clarify statements in the EA other than typographical and minor editorial errors and to address substantive comments on these documents received during the public review period.

- A. Section 2.1, Alternative A: No Action, Figure 5, Pg. 19. Figure 5 does not illustrate the correct project planning area boundary. Replace Figure 5 with the following map.



- B. Table 5, Cultural Resources, CR-1, pg. 68. Replace current text with revised text:

Current text: Prior to finalizing the project design, a Phase II archaeological survey should be carried out to determine the boundaries for CA-LAN-229 and CA-LAN-44 within the project planning area. The survey should be performed by a qualified archaeologist that meets the U.S. Secretary of Interior's Standards and Guidelines for professional qualifications. (See http://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/arch_stnds_9.htm).

Revised text: Prior to finalizing the project design, Phase II archaeological testing should be carried out to determine the boundaries for CA-LAN-229 and CA-LAN-44 within the project planning area. Depending on Phase II findings, Phase III data recovery may be required. Archaeological testing should be performed by a qualified archaeologist that meets the U.S. Secretary of Interior's Standards and Guidelines for professional qualifications. (See http://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/arch_stnds_9.htm).

- C. Table 5, Cultural Resources, CR-5, pg. 69. Replace current text with revised text:

Current text: Archaeological sites present at King Gillette Ranch should be assessed every five years by a qualified archaeologist, and the condition of the sites should then be updated the NPS Archaeological Site Management Information System.

Revised text: Archaeological sites present at King Gillette Ranch should be assessed every five years by a qualified archaeologist, and the condition of the sites should then be updated in the NPS Archaeological Site Management Information System.

- D. Table 5, Wildlife, pg. 80. Add new condition after WLD-4:

WLD-5	<p>If agency staff or contractors come into contact with the Stokes Creek stream channel, whether wet or dry, the following measures shall be taken to protect against the spread of the invasive non-native New Zealand mudsnail.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine that shoes, waders, pants, or other articles of clothing are free from mudsnails from other infested waters prior to entering the stream channel. After coming into contact with water or the sandy substrate in Stokes Creek, freeze shoes, socks, waders, and other articles of clothing for no less than 36 hours. A freezer will be available for NPS staff and Visitor Center contractors at the Diamond X Ranch. NPS staff will advise on the freezer's location. 	Construction and Operation	Construction Contractor NPS and MRCA Staff
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- E. Section 3.2.8, Public Health and Safety—Environmental Consequences—Preferred Alternative—Impact Analysis—Effects of Wildfire, pg. 113. Replace current text with revised text:

Current text: "For the safety of visitors and staff in the Stable building, an emergency sprinkler system would be included in building modifications to meet public safety standards and reduce the building's susceptibility to ignition from lodged firebrands."

Revised text: "For the safety of visitors and staff in the Stable building, an emergency sprinkler system would be included in building modifications to meet public safety standards. "Modifications to the Stable building would include incorporation of fire-safe design features to reduce the building's susceptibility to ignition from lodged firebrands."

- F. Section 3.2.12, Vegetation—No Action Alternative—Cumulative Effects, pg. 136. Replace current text with revised text:

Current text: "Other recently completed and foreseeable projects could affect local soils at negligible to minor levels over the short- and long-term. The proposed action would contribute to the adverse effects of these other projects at a negligible level. The overall cumulative effect on vegetation would be localized

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adverse negligible impact over short-term. These *Eucalyptus* species are, however, known to be tolerant of disturbance and capable of adjusting to minor disturbance.”

Revised text: “To evaluate cumulative impacts vegetation, the impacts of the Project were considered in conjunction with the impacts of past, current, and foreseeable future suburban and rural estate development projects in SMMNRA, as summarized under cumulative impact contributors in Section 3.1.1. Combined past actions have had moderate, long-term localized adverse impacts on native vegetation due to an increase in the amount of impervious surface, decreased infiltration, soil compaction, vegetation removal—including oak woodlands, and concentrated human use throughout SMMNRA. Oak tree mitigation assigned to private development projects in the vicinity of the Ranch and throughout SMMNRA, along with revegetation and other restoration projects, has contributed negligible beneficial impacts that have not offset the overall adverse impacts on native habitat. Alternative A, in combination with past, present, and foreseeable projects, would have adverse, moderate, long-term, and regional (SMMNRA-wide) impacts on vegetation.”

- G. Section 3.2.15, Wildlife, and Threatened, Endangered, and Other Sensitive Species—Affected Environment—Wildlife—King Gillette Ranch, pg. 148. Insert new paragraph addressing issue of invasive non-native New Zealand mudsnail after paragraph beginning with “Stokes Creek” and ending with “planning area”:

“In 2009, the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission performed stream surveys throughout the national recreation area. Stokes Creek was surveyed within Malibu Creek State Park approximately 3,500 feet downstream from the Visitor Center project planning area. The invasive New Zealand mudsnail was observed at this survey point. No surveys for the mudsnail have been performed at King Gillette Ranch or at points in the creek above the Ranch, although the snail may be present throughout Stokes Creek. As yet, no effects on native flora and fauna in the Santa Monica Mountains have been observed. However, studies in Australia and other parts of the western United States indicate the snail’s ability to exist in extremely high densities, consume food sources for native fauna, compete with native invertebrates, to negatively influence higher levels of life, and to alter the nitrogen and carbon cycle in rivers (Levri, et al.). The sand grain-sized snail can easily be transported on shoes and clothing to other streams and water bodies, owing to its ability to survive without water for days. Therefore, the National Park Service and other resource management agencies with jurisdiction in the Santa Monica Mountains are taking steps to prevent the spread of the snail. Steps include freezing for 36 hours any articles of clothing that may have come into contact with water infested with the snail during park resource management activities; and educating the public to avoid contact with water during recreational trail activities via trail signage, brochures, and internet postings.

- H. Section 3.2.15, Wildlife, and Threatened, Endangered, and Other Sensitive Species—Affected Environment—Threatened, Endangered, or Other Sensitive Species of Concern—King Gillette Ranch, pg. 150. Replace current text with revised text:

Current text: “• On listed bird species, ..., have the potential to be present.”

Revised text: “• One listed bird species, ..., has the potential to be present.”

- I. Section 3.2.15, Wildlife, and Threatened, Endangered, and Other Sensitive Species—Environmental Consequences—No Action Alternative—Impact Analysis, pg. 151. Add new sentence to end of first (only) paragraph:

“Agency efforts to prevent the spread of the invasive non-native New Zealand mudsnail would continue, including posting of educational signage warning people to avoid contact with water in the creek or adjacent pond at the Ranch and continued educational programs, internet postings, and other means of informing the public of the threats posed by the mudsnail.”

- J. Section 3.2.15, Wildlife, and Threatened, Endangered, and Other Sensitive Species—Environmental Consequences—Preferred Alternative—Impact Analysis, pg. 152. Add new sentence at the end of first paragraph (begins with “Alternative B”, ends in “building materials”):

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“Construction work for the geothermal loop water conveyance pipeline and the drainage structure would occur outside the stream channel, although workers have the potential to stand in or cross the channel while installing the geothermal pipeline along the existing water lines above the creek.”

- K. Section 3.2.15, Wildlife, and Threatened, Endangered, and Other Sensitive Species—Environmental Consequences—Preferred Alternative—Impact Analysis—Construction-related Impacts on Wildlife, pg. 153. Add new paragraph after second paragraph (begins with “A number of” and ends with “(Table 5)”):

“Construction work for the geothermal loop conveyance pipeline across Stokes Creek has the potential to bring construction workers or agency staff into contact with the creek channel where mudsnails may be present. A resource protection measures has been assigned in Table 5 to require pre-entry examination of articles of clothing for mudsnails and/or post-exposure treatment of clothing, using the accepted method of freezing clothing, shoes, etc., for at least 36 hours.”

- L. Section 3.2.15, Wildlife, and Threatened, Endangered, and Other Sensitive Species—Environmental Consequences—Preferred Alternative—Impact Analysis—Operation-related Impacts on Wildlife, pg. 153. Add new sentence to the end of paragraph beginning with “Stokes Creek” and ending with “operation”:

“During Visitor Center operation, the NPS’s current public education for avoiding mudsnail spread would continue (trail signage, brochures, ranger contacts, environmental education programs, internet postings).”

- M. Section 4.3, List of Recipients, pg. 159. Add Westlake Village to the list of local libraries that received the EA.

- N. Section 5.0, References and Acronyms, pg. 162. Add the following reference after “Las Virgenes Municipal Water District, 2009b” reference:

“Levri, E.P., Dermott, R.M., Lunnen, S.J., Kelly, A.A., and Ladson, T., 2008. ‘The distribution of the invasive New Zealand mud snail (*Potamopyrgus antipodarum*) in Lake Ontario.’ *Aquatic Ecosystem Health & Management*, 11(4):412-421, 2008.”

- O. Appendix C, Cultural Documentation, Map of Area of Potential Effect. The current Area of Potential Effect (APE) map does not correctly illustrate the APE or the project planning area. Replace the map illustrating the APE with the following map that was submitted with the SHPO Section 106 consultation package. (See next page).



II. RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS

The EA was released for public review from February 12, 2010, through March 15, 2010. Over 400 members of the public and various agencies were notified of the EA's availability. The EA was made available in hardcopy, CD, and digital format. Forty-three hardcopies were mailed to the public and other agencies, 109 notifications were mailed via U.S. Postal Service, and 261 notifications were sent via e-mail. The EA was also made available at public libraries in Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Malibu, Santa Monica, Thousand Oaks, and Westlake Village.

In response to the EA, 18 written comments were received from the public. Twelve individuals commented. Six organizations commented, including Thousand Oaks Plain Air Watercolorists, Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation, Viewridge Owners Involved in the Community and Environment (VOICE), Monte Nido Valley Community Association, ETI Corral #36, and the City Project. No letters were received from public agencies, including any regulatory agencies. All comments received will be maintained in the project administrative record.

Many comments addressed issues already adequately covered in the EA. Other comments addressed design elements that will be covered in the final design phase of the project. Yet other comments addressed issues that will be covered in the forthcoming environmental review document for the King Gillette Ranch Design Concept Plan (DCP). No comments warranted development of an additional alternative or reconsideration of alternatives that were considered, but dismissed. No new substantive issues were presented. No comments brought into question the adequacy of the Environmental Consequences assessment. Therefore, the alternatives remain as described in the EA, and no changes were made in the assessment of environmental consequences other than minor word-processing edits and corrections to sentences or graphics in response to National Park Service staff review comments, as presented in the Errata Sheet.

The public comments and responses are summarized as follows.

Establishment of Visitor Center at King Gillette Ranch

Comments

I. Compatibility of Site

- Configuration will provide an aesthetic and functional visitor interface for orientation and activity staging.
- Commenter expresses support for establishing the Visitor Center at King Gillette Ranch and provides reasons supporting the setting of KGR as ideal for establishing the Visitor Center at this location (adjacent to one of world's great metropolitan complexes, easy access, buildings suitable for overnight dorms for schoolchildren, large acreage of gentle topography with some woodlands and evidence of wildlife: easy access for school groups, seniors, and people with disabilities.
- The site is not an appropriate location for equestrian recreational facilities, which would primarily serve local residents, who already have good access to recreational facilities of SMMNRA and could not be considered a "recreationally disadvantaged" group.
- Option 2 [Preferred Alternative] is the better choice in spite of some contradictions in stated goals and objectives of the GMP and KGR Vision Statement and the facility's operation funding plans.

2. Visual Aesthetics

- Using old stables for Visitor Center would greatly impact people who live across the road from the ranch, and proposed facilities for Visitor Center would vastly change the aesthetic value of the neighbors' views. More consideration should be given to using another building clustered together further from the main road. Otherwise, commenter supports having a visitor center at King Gillette Ranch.
- Development of the site for the Visitor Center would impact the historical views of the ranch as viewed from the Mulholland Highway scenic corridor. The current ability to see the historic stable sitting amongst the undisturbed fields and trees is precisely what should be preserved. More construction and disruption of the natural ranch setting is not in line with SMMNRA goals and must be reconsidered.

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- Even in its state of disrepair, Stable building remains a beautiful site as viewed from Mulholland Highway, a “scenic corridor.” EA ignored California ranching culture, which included horse stables, arenas, and corrals, and are the resources most in need of protection.
- Commenter disagrees with Section 1.7.5, analyzing historical structures and cultural landscapes on the KGR property and dismissing the structures as historic. Just because structures don’t meet National Register technical standards doesn’t mean the structure’s original purposes should be obliterated and/or ignored.

3. Use of Another Building at the Ranch for Visitor Center

- Other buildings at the ranch could easily serve visitor center function. Parkland at King Gillette Ranch must reflect multiple purposes that our children and future generations of Californians desire.

4. Inconsistency with Park Objectives for King Gillette Ranch

- Preferred Alternative is inconsistent with the NPS’s objectives to preserve the cultural history of the Santa Monica Mountains, as stated in the SMMNRA General Management Plan and King Gillette Ranch Vision Statement.

5. King Gillette Ranch History and Equestrian History in the Santa Monica Mountains

- Use of the Stable building as a visitor center would erase the historical use of the Stables.
- King Gillette RANCH is in an area with 8,000 horses. Horses and equestrians have been relegated to second class visitor status. This position cheats general public of culture and heritage of KGR, as well as of the region. Burying the historical roots and cultural history severely damages the integrity of the KGR vision and goals.
- Equestrian use would not dominate the site if horses become a vital part of the experience of city folk visiting the ranch. It is part of the history of the ranch and life in the mountains.
- EA fails to respect historic equestrian uses of the property. EA ignored California ranching culture, which included horse stables, arenas, and corrals, and are the resources most in need of protection. Park agencies’ desire for a visitor center should be subordinate to resource protection.

Response

1. Compatibility of Site. Comments regarding configuration, reasons why King Gillette Ranch is good setting for the Visitor Center are consistent with findings in the EA.
2. Visual Aesthetics. As noted in Section 2.4.1 of the EA (pg. 32), the Stable building was selected in part because it is near the entrance to King Gillette Ranch. Clustering of the visitor center with other structures further from the entrance was considered, but dismissed for the reasons noted in Section 2.4.1 (Locate Visitor Center in one of the pother existing buildings on site). The Visitor Center and the adjacent proposed Visitor Center Services Area have been designed to maximally avoid visual changes that would be seen from Las Virgenes Road and Mulholland Highway. As discussed in the EA (Section 2.4.3, pg. 33), the planning team specifically avoided parking to the north of the Stable building to maintain the current undeveloped view from these roads. The Visitor Center Services Area and parking area will be south of the Stable building, screened from view by the existing Stable building and topography and vegetation. The existing architectural style of the building would be maintained. The EA notes that, with rehabilitation of the Stable building in its original architectural style and with appropriate landscaping, there would be a visual improvement to views of the Stable as seen from adjacent scenic highways or public recreational trails (Pg. 87, Operation-related Effects on Aesthetics).

The National Park Service and partner agencies agree that the original ambience of the Gillette estate should be protected for the aesthetic enjoyment of visitors and to preserve the opportunity to interpret the history of the ranch for the visiting public. Thus, as reflected throughout the EA, conditions have been set to preserve existing buildings of the Gillette-Brown era and to restore the Stable building to the original Spanish Colonial Revival architectural theme. Furthermore, the open fields around the Visitor Center are slated to remain vacant in order to protect original views across the agricultural fields toward the Stable building and the ranch, in general. The EA in Section 1.7.5 has adequately disclosed the site’s historic resources and their

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ineligibility for the National Register according to technical requirements. Independent of technical historic findings, however, the EA expresses the agencies' efforts to preserve the original appearance of buildings and the surrounding landscape.

3. Use of Another Building at the Ranch for Visitor Center. As noted in the EA in Section 2.4.1, the planning team considered other buildings for the Visitor Center, but determined the Stable building offered the best setting, aesthetic value, best access, and service to the widest constituency.
4. Inconsistency with Park Objectives for King Gillette Ranch. The park planning team reviewed the collective body of public scoping comments. In addition, the suggested uses for the Stable building and within the project planning area were methodically evaluated in the EA for their value and detractions based on the SMMNRA General Management Plan goals (Section 1.5.1), the King Gillette Ranch Vision Statement (Section 1.5.2), project objectives (Section 1.6) and the criteria stated on Page 31 (Section 2.4). The EA analysis indicates the project is consistent with goals and objectives in the SMMNRA General Management Plan and the King Gillette Ranch Vision Statement.
5. King Gillette Ranch History and Equestrian History in the Santa Monica Mountains. The National Park Service recognizes ranching, including the utility of horses in ranch operations, as part of the cultural history of the Santa Monica Mountains. We also recognize there are many dedicated equestrians residing in the mountains. However, based on the long-running public record of support for a joint administrative, environmental, and cultural education at King Gillette Ranch, including a visitor center that would serve the 17 million residents of the greater Los Angeles region, we continue to maintain that the highest and best use for the Stable building would be as a full-service visitor center. The project has been designed to preserve the original architectural style of the Stable building and the views across the fields towards the Stable, thus enabling better interpretation of the former Gillette estate and its "working ranch" setting. We believe the use of the Stable building as a visitor center would increase public awareness of the ranching history in the Santa Monica Mountains, contrary to burying the site's historical roots and cultural history. We will continue to plan programs and exhibits at the Visitor Center that feature the ranching and equestrian history of the Santa Monica Mountains. We will also continue to inform the public of horseback riding concessionaires and other equestrian-oriented recreational venues.

Stable Building — Restoration of Original Stable or Shared Stable Use with Visitor Center

Comments

1. By accommodating, at least in part, the original use of the Stable building in the project design, equestrians as an important user group would be acknowledged and appreciated for their strong efforts to help secure KGR for the public, along with their continued service to the park through the Mounted Volunteer Patrol.
2. The historic use of the Visitor Center as a stable is important to interpreting the entire KGR site. NPS might consider incorporating equestrian uses and facilities into the design and operation of the Visitor Center to obtain the best of both worlds: historic and current uses, visitor education and entertainment, while learning about the history of the park.
3. The suggested equestrian facilities were presented as the most offensive possibility, without rational or comparative view that all development has downsides. The position was taken that all equestrian uses are negative. Comments in the EA were unsupported and prejudiced, resulting in an arbitrary, biased, and unreasonable analysis.
4. Stable building should be restored for people to water and rest their horses while enjoying social interactions with other equestrians and non-equestrians.

Response

1. The contribution of equestrians in securing KGR for the public is much appreciated and has been discussed during planning efforts for King Gillette Ranch and the Visitor Center. The Mounted Volunteer Patrol will contribute at KGR, as they do currently, to opportunities for the public to meet equestrians and their horses on the trails around the ranch and future Visitor Center.

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2. The planning team discussed the suggestion to share stable and visitor center uses within the Stable building. However, the spatial needs for a full-service visitor center would not be met if a portion of the Stable building were set aside for horse keeping purposes. Section 2.4.1 in the EA discusses the issues found with locating the Visitor Center in another building or developing a reduced-scale visitor center in one of the other buildings. While the Stable building is not slated for restoration of horse keeping facilities, the Visitor Center project is designed to preserve the original appearance of the Stable building and the setting of the surrounding open fields to the north and west. The original use of the Stable building and the early “working ranch” use of the property can then be interpreted to the broad public during future field programs at King Gillette Ranch.
3. The EA reflects the full body of public scoping and goals and objectives for a joint administrative, environmental, and cultural education center at King Gillette Ranch, including a full-service visitor center that would serve the widest constituency present in the greater Los Angeles region. The purpose and need for the proposed Visitor Center are stated on Pg. 6 of the EA and substantiated in goals and objectives stated throughout Chapter I (Pgs. 1-17). Equestrian uses within the Stable building and development for equestrian events of the grounds within the Project Planning Area were evaluated alongside project goals and objectives. The proposed equestrian uses were also assessed for consistency or inconsistency with National Park Service’s five criteria for keeping or dismissing alternatives (Section 2.4, Pg. 31). As documented in Section 2.4.5, Alternatives Considered but Dismissed, the equestrian uses were dismissed.
4. The Visitor Center EA only addressed construction and operation of a proposed visitor center at King Gillette Ranch within the illustrated project planning area (Figure 4). The forthcoming environmental review document for the King Gillette Ranch Design Concept Plan (DCP) will address the full 588-acre ranch, including trails and associated recreational facilities and social interaction opportunities for equestrians and other user groups.

Permitted Special Events

Comments

1. Public Access Prioritization

- Would special permitted events at the Visitor Center prohibit regular visitors’ access. How would public visitor access and private access be balanced.
- Filming industry overly influences event planning and public use at King Gillette Ranch. The stated goal of public use should have priority in agreements and contracts.
- King Gillette Ranch should not become a Streisand-Ramirez Canyon facility, accessible to those who can afford sizeable fees.
- Nothing should be “written in stone” during these difficult economic times regarding funding and use of the ranch. When economic crisis passes, diminish filming and permitted special events and return to community and educational purposes.
- This is a PUBLIC park; do not let community efforts to save this “jewel” to have been in vain.

2. Nighttime Permitted Events- Light and Noise

- Concerns about special events held at night and associated noise and artificial lighting impacts on wildlife, as well as on park neighbors. Recommendations were included to limit the frequency of programs and permitted events, such as prohibiting after-dark events, and the use of amplified music.
- Dark skies should not be lit up on a regular basis for filming and special events.
- Concerns about the ability to judge how far sound may travel and to institute restrictions.
- Current commercial use, particularly at night, should not set a precedent for future use of the ranch.

3. Facilities

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- What changes might be made to the courtyard to accommodate 200-person special events, and could catering needs be added to the new restroom building.
- Consider providing sound system for permittees.

Response

1. Public Access Prioritization. Permitted events, as stated in the EA, must be compatible with visitor experience and natural resource protection. As such, events during routine visitor center hours of operation will not prohibit access by public visitors. Balance between public access and private events at the Visitor Center would be indicated by maintenance of free-flowing public access when the Visitor Center is open, including no disruption of visitors' ability to reach the parking area and find parking at the Visitor Center, or to otherwise reach the Visitor Center on horseback, foot, or bicycle. During any occasional daytime event, noise or visual obstructions associated with the permitted event would not hinder the visitors' enjoyment of the sites and sounds of programs within the Visitor Center or outside sounds of the natural environment.

Concerns about the influence of the filming industry have been noted. The National Park Service will be responsible for issuing special use permits for use of the Visitor Center, including requests to film. Our current protocol is to prioritize public access over private needs and to protect park cultural and natural resources. We place limits on nighttime events involving noise and lighting, and we schedule events during low public use timeframes when possible. For events during higher use hours, we make sure the public is not blocked from accessing the park or parking at trailheads. We plan to continue prioritizing public access when permits are requested for use of the Visitor Center. The EA's coverage of permitted special events was prepared based on SMMNRA-wide visitor experience needs and wildlife protection measures. The EA is specific to the Visitor Center and its project planning area (Figure 4). The forthcoming environmental review document for the King Gillette Ranch Design Concept Plan (DCP), covering the full 588-acre ranch, will address special permitted events on the ranch other than at the Visitor Center. The DCP planning team will consider the economy as a factor in the impact analysis for filming and other income-generating permitted activities, both on a short-term and long-term scale.

2. Nighttime Permitted Events. The National Park Service shares the commenter's concerns about noise and lighting impacts on wildlife and neighbors, as reflected in the conditions prescribed in the EA. The EA includes not only a project-based requirement that permitted events must not impact the visitor experience and wildlife, there are also resource protection measures addressing noise and artificial lighting. Specificity on the number of programs and permitted events was not included in the EA owing to the wide variation in the characteristics of programs and permitted events. We concur that the distance sound may travel in the topographic setting of King Gillette Ranch can vary and should be considered in regulating off-site sound travel. The National Park Service will be responsible for permits requesting use of the Visitor Center and courtyard. We will assess any issues arising from events, including noise and lighting, and will appropriately adjust the permitting parameters as we routinely do for permitted events at other park sites in the national recreation area. Part of the assessment will be receiving feedback from surrounding neighbors if issues with the programs or permitted events arise.

3. Facilities. The courtyard would be modified to provide for visitor access on a routine basis as part of the visitor experience at the Visitor Center, featuring exhibits, sitting areas, and access across the courtyard through the gate to the parking area. However, such features would be movable in order to temporarily accommodate the needs of permitted events. Catering needs, such as hot water or refrigeration, have been discussed by the planning team, and such facilities may be incorporated into the design of either the proposed restroom building or the future multi-purpose building.

The suggestion to provide a sound system to permittees is, unfortunately, not practical for agencies. It would be difficult to maintain the system for predictable performance for permittees, and to design outdoor facilities with a built-in sound system. Alternatively, we specify decibel limits and event beginning/ending timeframes in each permit. We will continue to do so for events at the Visitor Center.

Visitor Experience and Recreational Opportunities

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Comments

I. Visitor Center in Conjunction with Other Recreational Opportunities at King Gillette Ranch

- Opening of Visitor Center should be in conjunction with availability of other recreational opportunities at the ranch. A variety of facilities were suggested: picnicking areas; outdoor stage for small concerts and outdoor movies; better interface with native garden facility; paved biking loop throughout grounds suitable for families with young children, including drinking fountains along the way; self-guided ranch tour pamphlet; formalization of loop up to observation peak with directional signage; staging area for equestrian loading/unloading and trailer parking; formalized trails to other parks, including pedestrian underpass to Malibu Creek State Park; public shuttle stop if service returns; make interior of Gillette Mansion accessible to public and use for display of local arts and historical photos of greater park; sale of cold drinks and snacks; storage lockers for rent..
- White House and Botanic Garden should be included in project planning area for Visitor Center.
- Add more actual use activities and less administrative facilities. This one-of-a-kind asset should be skewed to the growth of today's use: outdoor living, hiking, riding, biking, nature walks should be the primary focus, while other features of "B" should be added at a more realistic time and pace.
- Trails in KGR are critical and already connect to several adjacent park sites.
- Include a trail connection to Malibu Creek State Park.

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Response

I. Visitor Center in Conjunction with Other Recreational Opportunities at King Gillette Ranch

The EA was specific to the construction and operation of a structural facility: the proposed Visitor Center. Thus, there was an emphasis on structural features and recognition of recreational activities that would be associated with future Visitor Center operation. A picnicking area, the small outdoor amphitheatre, and the opportunity to purchase beverages and snacks are proposed in the EA as part of the visitor center project. The Visitor Center project has been designed to incorporate a walkway to the White House area. The Preferred Alternative plans parking for up to four oversized vehicles, including horse trailers, while their owners come to the Visitor Center. The parking area is also designed to accommodate a drop-off/pick-up area for future public transportation. Within the perennial constraints of funding, the National Park Service and park partners will strive to have ranch-wide recreational opportunities available at the time the Visitor Center opens.

Other recreational facilities commented on by the public, including the trail network, trailheads, a trail connection to Malibu Creek State Park, tours of the Gillette Mansion, bicycle paths around the ranch, and the White House and Botanic Garden, would all contribute to the visitor experience at the future Visitor Center within the context of the greater 588-acre King Gillette Ranch. These other recreational facilities are good suggestions that will be addressed in the forthcoming environmental review document for the King Gillette Ranch Design Concept Plan (DCP) that will cover the full 588-acre ranch.

Visitor Experience — Access and Outreach to Traditionally Underserved Communities of Color and Low Income.

Comments

1. The proposed Visitor Center presents an historic opportunity for SMMNRA to establish outreach, recreational, and educational programs that serve as model best practices for maximizing the access to SMMNRA of traditionally underserved minority and low income urban communities. To fulfill the goal of increasing diversity, SMMNRA should design outreach programs to be culturally appropriate, including use of bilingual materials and resources, and based on understanding of and sensitivity toward difference in recreation patterns of culturally diverse groups.
2. Educational and recreational programs at King Gillette Ranch should promote youth development through physical activity and healthy eating.
3. SMMNRA should develop Transit to Trails standards to measure progress and equity and hold public officials accountable, including counts of children served by the program for trips and overnight camping stays, the quality of educational material, cultural history, active recreation, and healthy eating distributed as part of the program.
4. Green jobs for inner city youth. NPS and SMMNRA should incorporate similar employment goals and programs as part of the strategic plan to create local green jobs through CCC-type programs, including jobs for youth of color and low income youth that would improve the nation's parks and recreation. NPS and SMMNRA should set standards to measure progress and equity and to hold public officials accountable. Funding for King Gillette and all other NPS programs in southern California should include funding for community groups including The City Project among others.
5. NPS and SMMNRA should implement standards to measure progress and equity to proactively comply with equal justice laws.

Response

- I-5. Comments regarding the potential for the Visitor Center to maximize access to SMMNRA by traditionally underserved minority and low income urban communities are consistent with findings in the EA. The recommendations offered by the commenter concerning the content and presentation of educational/interpretational materials, resources, and programs; and program and agency accountability have

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been noted for incorporation into programs and management practices for the Visitor Center. Additionally, the King Gillette Ranch Design Concept Plan (DCP) will address the commenter's recommendations as applicable to envisioned environmental education and recreational programs involving the full 588-acre King Gillette Ranch.

Equestrian Facilities and Recreational Opportunities

Comments

1. Equestrian Facilities

- Provide ample horse trailer parking with a clear turnaround route.
- Do not allow movie truck parking in horse trailer parking spaces.
- Provide a turnout area for horses traveling with visiting equestrians. The turnout area could also serve as a staging area during wildfire or other emergencies.
- Provide tie rails for horses and a picnic area with nearby hitching rails and watering troughs or spigots.
- Provide safe footing for loading/unloading horses. Is the proposed "natural paving" safe for unloading horses.
- Provide different trails for mountain biking, or at least adjacent to non-mountain biking trails; provide signs so equestrians can easily find equestrian-designated loops and trails.
- Include a representative from our corral in the planning process, if possible.

2. Equestrian Recreational Opportunities

- Visitors receive enjoyment from seeing horses ridden on the trails and as feature in the natural, rural setting of the Santa Monica Mountains. Many children have never seen a horse and need the opportunity to do so, including the opportunity to touch the horse.
- Section 2.2.6 of the EA does not acknowledge any equestrian use of the KGR Visitor Center area, while other categories are recognized. Are equestrians included within list of visitors and TRAIL USERS. Equestrian comments regarding the Visitor Center at King Gillette Ranch have been ignored.
- There is no mention of equestrian use at the ranch, where to park horse trailers, and how to take advantage of public trails within the ranch.
- Horseback riding is a recreational activity and should be incorporated into the main education process. Consider improvements that would benefit all equestrians and would demonstrate to the public what a rider can accomplish with a horse.

Response

- 1. Equestrian Facilities.** The Visitor Center parking area would provide four spaces for oversized vehicles, including trucks pulling horse trailers, with a circulation pattern designed for easy pull through via a turnaround loop at the western end.

The EA specifies that permitted uses, such as filming, must be compatible with visitor experience and not impact wildlife (Table 1, Pg. 37). Parking of movie trucks in the oversized spaces would not be compatible with the visitor experience and would not be allowed.

The National Park Service appreciates the comfort traveling equestrians could provide for their horses in a turnout area. However, natural, cultural, and visual resource constraints limit the placement of a turnout in the vicinity of the Visitor Center and parking area. Therefore, a turnout has not been incorporated into the project design. The suggestion has been noted and will be shared with Visitor Center staff in an effort to provide suggestions for traveling equestrians on where they can turnout their horses at existing facilities in the vicinity of King Gillette Ranch.

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The Visitor Center is a “Design-Build” project, meaning that design refinements are required prior to finalizing construction plans. The location of the hitching rails noted in the project description will be finalized during the design phase, with consideration also given to picnicking areas supportive of visiting equestrians and the need for water for their horses.

The proposed parking area surfacing, “Natural Pave,” is named for its look, rather than its feel; the surface would be hard. See Response 1-2 below.

The offer for equestrian participation in planning for the Visitor Center and the ranch is appreciated, and will be considered if public advisory committees for King Gillette Ranch-related planning are convened in the future.

2. Equestrian Recreational Opportunities. The National Park Services recognizes horseback riding as an important recreational activity at parks throughout the National Park System. The National Park Service understands the enjoyment people have in seeing horses and the importance of having venues for such a visitor-serving activity. Horseback riding is a welcomed recreational activity in SMMNRA. For example, we support private horseback riding concessionaires where possible and provide access to and maintenance of park trails for their use.

The statement in Section 2.2.6 references “Trail users, artists, birders and picnickers...” Equestrians are included in the EA as visitors to the Visitor Center and as trail users. Please note that recreational trail users have not been specifically called out in the EA’s project description (Chapter II, Alternatives), whether hikers, equestrians, or mountain bikers.

- I-2. The Visitor Center EA was specific to construction and operation of a visitor center at King Gillette Ranch within the project planning area (Figure 4). The forthcoming environmental review document for the King Gillette Ranch Design Concept Plan (DCP) will explore the recreational facilities noted in the comments: trail connections to other parks, trail use designation, signage; additional parking within the ranch’s developed areas, including horse trailer parking, with consideration given to surfaces safe for unloading and loading horses; and equestrian-related improvements and recreational/educational programs.

Visitor Center Facilities

Comments

1. What would be the appearance of the inside of the Visitor Center, including future layout and type of exhibits, and explanation of the partner agencies and how they interact.
2. Commenter recommends Visitor Center be named the “Milt McAuley Visitor Center.”
3. Concerns were expressed about the age of the Stable and its structural soundness in an earthquake.

Response

1. The Visitor Center is a “Design-Build” project, meaning design refinements are yet to be incorporated before construction plans are finalized. Therefore, details on the exhibits were not addressed in the EA. Detail on the exhibits is still in the design phase. Commenter’s suggestions for rotating exhibits of photos, videos, art, paintings of the area, and scientific and cultural exhibits will be conveyed to the exhibit design team, along with the suggestion to explain the various partner agencies’ roles and interactions.
2. Milt McAuley contributed greatly to the public’s enjoyment of the national recreation area. He is being honored with the installation of a bench along the Backbone Trail on State Parkland that will state his name and memorialize his contributions. Congressional legislation for SMMNRA (16 USC 460kk) requires the primary visitor center be named in honor of former Congressman Anthony C. Beilenson. Without his support, we would not have the national recreation area. The name is being transferred from the current Anthony C. Beilenson Visitor Center in Thousand Oaks, which will close when the new Visitor Center opens.

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3. We share the commenter's concerns about the seismic safety of the Stable building. As noted previously, the Visitor Center is a "Design-Build" project. Resource protection measures in the EA require the building be retrofitted to meet earthquake safety codes (Table 5, PS-1, Pg. 70). Additionally, a condition (Table 5, PS-2, Pg. 71) is prescribed to perform more studies upon which to base a finalized grading plan that would protect structures from potential damage from soil settlement of compressive/expansive soils and from earthquake-related liquefaction.

Circulation Options

Comments

1. Entrance Gate off Mulholland

- Do not widen the entrance gate in order to keep rural feel and reduce visual impacts on scenic highways; reconsider the discarded one-way exit option.
- A well-designed exit driveway leading east from the allée might be more acceptable from a circulation standpoint; it's worth revisiting.
- An exit driveway out to Las Virgenes Road opposite Malibu Creek State Park would create serious traffic congestion and hazards.

2. Parking Lot Setback from Stokes Creek

- The parking area should be kept outside the 100-foot setback from the outer edge of the riparian habitat along Stokes Creek (SMMLCP requirement).

Response

1. Entrance Gate off Mulholland

We appreciate the public's concerns about maintaining the rural character and reducing visual impacts on the scenic highways. Considerable debate was held on the option to have a one-way exit spur road that would preserve the current appearance of the entrance gate. As noted in the EA, however, the planning team concluded that the separate ingress and egress points onto Mulholland Highway would create potential severe operational and visitor experience impacts, as well as unsafe conditions resulting from one-way traffic flows. In response to concerns about the visual effects of widening the original entrance and modifying the gate, the EA includes a condition to require review by National Park Service cultural resource professionals of the final plans for modification to the entrance gate and other original structures of the Gillette-Brown ownership era.

2. Parking Lot Setback from Stokes Creek

The California Coastal Commission requires federal projects within SMMNRA to have a minimum 100-foot protected buffer around wetlands and Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHAs), as stated in the 2002 SMMNRA General Management Plan (Consultation with the California Coastal Commission, pg. 446). Stokes Creek is both a wetland and mapped as ESHA in the 1986 Malibu Land Use Plan. Accordingly, the 100-foot setback has been incorporated into the parking lot design.

Wildfire and Public Safety

Comments

1. How will the National Park Service address potential increased fire risk from additional visiting public and permitted special events, particularly at night.
2. How will the park's fire or emergency evacuation plan affect other communities' evacuation plans, or lack thereof.

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3. If new Visitor Center creates a demand for scheduled public transportation, how would it impact evacuation during wildfire or another emergency.

Response

1. The National Park Service and the park partner agencies would implement fire prevention-related management strategies at the Visitor Center at King Gillette Ranch as they do for numerous other parks throughout the national recreation area. Management strategies include enforcing federal and state laws concerning smoking, such as not allowing smoking on trails and closing trails and parks during high fire danger conditions. National Park Service includes language in special permit agreements to limit smoking to specified locations that are fire-safe, as well as reduce circulation of secondhand smoke among other event participants. Park law enforcement rangers also monitor special events for behavior presenting a fire hazard. No fires in the national recreation area have resulted from activities at National Park Service-permitted special events. Additionally, NPS provides community outreach and educational materials on wildfire preparedness, fire-safe residential landscaping and fuel modification, and fire-safe building construction. The future Visitor Center will also be an ideal educational base for ongoing public outreach regarding wildfire prevention and fire-safe practices, via exhibits, distribution of materials, and by orienting new visitors to park rules and fire-safe trail etiquette. The Visitor Center EA was specific to construction and operation of a visitor center at King Gillette Ranch within the project planning area (Figure 4). The forthcoming environmental review document for the King Gillette Ranch Design Concept Plan (DCP) will also consider the potential wildfire hazards and impact mitigation for proposed activities throughout the 588-acre ranch.
2. The proposed mitigation measure to develop a wildfire evacuation plan will be designed to consider integration of evacuation from the Visitor Center area with evacuation actions by surrounding residents, such as avoiding traffic jams at the Mulholland Highway/Las Virgenes Road intersection and would not preclude local evacuations being able to use King Gillette Ranch as a safe area when indicated by emergency responders. The forthcoming King Gillette Ranch Design Concept Plan (DCP) will also consider the potential wildfire hazards and evacuation needs for proposed activities throughout the 588-acre ranch. Consideration will be given to the interaction of park evacuation with local residential evacuation and will incorporate comment from local emergency services such as the sheriff and fire department.
3. The National Park Service's emergency evacuation plan, as required in the EA, would be revised in the future to accommodate evacuation of the public arriving by public transportation, if and when scheduled public transportation commences at King Gillette Ranch.

Traffic and Transportation

Comments

1. Commenter agrees with location of the Visitor Center at the Stable building because of easy access off Las Virgenes Road and that visitors can reach it without creating traffic through public use areas of the park.
2. EA traffic analysis is superior to that prepared for the Soka project. Las Virgenes Road is a critical cross-mountain route to mountain parks and beaches, with smoothest alignment because not affected by steep hills or tight curves. Local governments should avoid adding stop signs and stoplights to prevent congestion to the detriment of recreational access for the public.
3. Would traffic line up on Mulholland to enter King Gillette Ranch, and if so, how would it be mitigated.

Response

1. Comment is consistent with findings in the EA.
2. Commendation on the traffic study is appreciated. Comments on the congestive effects of additional traffic controls on Las Virgenes Road are noted. No new stop signs or stoplights are proposed as part of the Visitor Center project.
3. The traffic analysis provided for the EA did not indicate there would be a line up of traffic on Mulholland caused by vehicles waiting to enter the ranch; therefore, no mitigation was proposed.

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Funding

Comments

1. What will be the funding source for the Visitor Center: fees or state and federal taxes.
2. Strong support expressed for the Visitor Center providing that free parking is provided for all visitors. Paid parking is a tax and not all people have the money to pay for their visit. Donation box may be suitable.

Response

1. The Visitor Center will be in NPS ownership. Federal funding will be used to support construction and operation of the Visitor Center.
2. SMMNRA is legislated as a fee-free unit of the National Park System. Therefore, no fees are charged on federal parkland throughout SMMNRA. There are no plans to charge for parking at the future Visitor Center. However, there will be a reasonable time limit on parking to ensure all people have an opportunity to access the facility and programs.