

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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**RECORD PACKET COPY****M 9b****PROPOSED FINDINGS****ON CONSISTENCY DETERMINATION**

Consistency Determination No. **CD-025-02**
Staff: KS-SF
File Date: 3/26/2002
45th Day: 5/10/2002
60th Day: 5/25/2002
Commission Meeting: 5/10/2002
Hearing on Findings: 6/10/2002

FEDERAL AGENCY: National Park Service

PROJECT LOCATION: The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (Exhibits 1-3)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Draft General Management Plan for the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA)

PREVAILING COMMISSIONERS: Desser, Dettloff, Hart, Nava, Potter, Woolley, and Chairman Wan

SUBSTANTIVE FILE DOCUMENTS: See page 14.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Park Service has submitted a consistency determination for a Draft General Management Plan for the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. The purpose of the management plan is to provide guidance in managing the 150,000 acres of the Santa Monica Mountain region, and some 69,099 acres of protected parkland. The Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Planning Act (enacted in 1978) mandated that a comprehensive plan be created for the preservation and management of the recreation area. Through a collaborative effort of the

National Park Service, California State Parks, and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the first management plan was released in 1982.

The National Parks and Recreation Act further stipulated that the plan should be updated every 15 to 20 years. The GMP represents the ultimate vision of these three agencies, which they would accomplish over time. The enabling legislation for the SMMNRA envisioned a cooperative effort among state, local governments, and the Park Service, to preserve the significant scenic, recreational, educational, scientific, natural and cultural benefits of the Santa Monica Mountains and the adjacent coastline.

The Plan is not a specific plan, but a framework for management and implementation. The Park Service could undertake some actions over a period of ten years following the finalization of the EIS. Although the California State Parks intends to use the GMP, it would act as an advisory document and would not replace current or future state park individual and general plans, which will continue to be the primary long-range planning documents for individual State park units in the Santa Monica Mountains.

The proposed Draft General Management Plan is consistent with the Coastal Act mandate to protect environmentally sensitive habitat areas, marine resources, wetlands, and other coastal waters. The proposal is consistent with the public access and recreation policies of the Coastal Act (Sections 30210-30214), because the Park Service will manage the habitat areas in a manner balancing public access and recreation needs with the need to protect sensitive wildlife resources. Finally, the Plan would support other Coastal Act goals, including protecting scenic public views, cultural resources, and water quality. Therefore, the proposal is consistent with Sections 30210-30214, 30230, 30231, 30240, 30244, and 30251 of the Coastal Act.

STAFF SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

I. Project Description. The National Park Service submitted a consistency determination for the Draft General Management Plan (GMP) for the SMMNRA. The Santa Monica Mountain region in southern California includes some 150,050 acres, 69,099 acres are protected parkland (Exhibits 1-3). Ninety percent of the area within the SMMNRA is not developed. The recreation area extends from the Hollywood Bowl on the east, 46 miles west to Point Mugu, and averages seven miles in width. To the north, the recreation area is bordered by Simi Valley, the San Fernando Valley.

The Pacific Coast Highway crosses the recreation area to the south and includes Topanga, Malibu and Pacific Palisades. In the east the area begins just north of Hollywood with small undeveloped canyons. To the west, in Topanga State Park, the mountains reach a width of 8 miles, most of which is within the city limits of Los Angeles. Further to the west, the area is less developed, ending at Point Mugu State Park, the area's only designated wilderness. The Santa Monica Mountain Zone (SMMZ), comprising an additional 75,000 acres, was established through 1978 legislation, and extends beyond the boundaries of the national recreation area to include the entire Santa Monica Mountain Range.

The purpose of the GMP is to update the previous management plan, which was released in 1982. Fifteen years of additional population growth, a greater knowledge of the area's resources, and evolving land use patterns have created a need for a new management plan to protect the resources of the SMMNRA, while addressing new obstacles and opportunities. The plan seeks to define why a park was established, and what resource conditions and visitor experiences should be achieved and maintained over time to conserve that original purpose. The plan considers various approaches to park use, management and development.

Congress established the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in 1978 as a cooperative effort to preserve the scenic, natural, and historic, as well as public health values of the Santa Monica Mountains. The area is nationally significant in that it is one of the greatest mainland Mediterranean ecosystems in the National Park System. The area is home to 26 distinct natural communities, including freshwater aquatic habitats, and two of the last salt marshes on the Pacific Coast. Within the SMMNRA exists habitat for more than 450 animal species, and more than 50 threatened or endangered plants and animals, representing one of the highest concentrations of such rare species in the United States.

**Land Ownership Within the
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area Boundary¹**

Ownership/Geographic Area	Total Acreage	% of SMMNRA
Private Land	76,017	54
State of California Parkland	33,271	22
National Park Service	21,832	14
Los Angeles County Land (non-parkland)	3,258	3
Mountain Resources Conservation Authority/ Santa Mountains Conservancy	7,392	4
City of Los Angeles Land (non-parkland)	2,009	2
Miscellaneous Public Land	1,463	.83
COSCA Open Space	96	.66
Federal Lands (non-parkland)	936	.63
Mountain Restoration Trust	1,292	.61
Los Angeles County Parkland	968	.56
City of Los Angeles Parkland	447	.31
Other State Lands (non-parkland)	328	.21

More than 1000 archeological sites exist within the park's boundaries reflecting human habitation in the mountains dating back to 10,000 years. Seventy-three sites of significance are potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Native American Indians have a long and deeply spiritual history of interaction with the Santa Monica Mountains, and they value many parts of the park especially as places to seek spiritual renewal, conduct traditional ceremonies, and to gather plants for traditional purposes.

¹ Draft General Management Plan/EIS, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, U.S. Department of the Interior – National Park Service (2002)

National Park Service

The National Park Service oversees the SMMNRA, and has direct responsibility for about 15 percent of the land within the boundary. The NPS is a partner, sharing stewardship with the public, other agencies and private landowners. NPS units of the SMMNRA include: the Zumas-Trancas Canyon, Paramount Ranch, Rancho Sierra Vista/Satwiwa, Arroyo Sequit, Circle X Ranch, Rocky Oaks, Castro Crest, Cheeseboro Canyon and Simi Hills, Solstice Canyon and the Peter Strauss Ranch.

California State Parks

The California Department of Parks and Recreation manages 33,271 acres within the recreation area including: Point Mugu State Park, Leo Carrillo State Beach, Point Dume State Beach, Malibu Creek State Park, Malibu Lagoon State Beach, Topanga State Park and Will Rogers State Historical Park.

Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC)

Created in 1979, the primary responsibility of the SMMC is to acquire land and turn it over to the appropriate land management agencies. The SMMC is not a park management agency, although it has acquired some 5,200 acres of key park and recreation parcels in the mountains. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) is the land management agency of the SMMC, created under a Joint Powers Agreement in cooperation with several local park agencies. The MRCA operates the following SMMC lands within the recreation area: Coldwater Canyon, Corral Canyon, Cross-Mountain Parks, Franklin Canyon Ranch, Fryman Canyon, Mission Canyon, Red Rock Canyon, San Vicente Mountain Park and Temescal Canyon Gateway Park.

Management Alternatives

The National Park Service, California State Parks and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy have developed several management alternatives in the Draft GMP. All of the alternatives consider five separate and distinct management areas (low-moderate-high intensity development and use, and scenic corridor and community landscape) as well as resource management, visitor experience and development and public agency management activities.

Preferred Alternative

Although individual alternatives were evaluated in the GMP, the NPS states that some actions would occur regardless of the selected preferred alternative. The concept of the *Preferred Alternative* incorporates a designated low intensity use for some 80% of the parkland, with moderate intensity areas acting as buffers around urban areas and scenic corridors. Smaller pockets of high intensity activities would be located in non-sensitive or previously developed areas.

Low Intensity

Under the preferred alternative approximately 80% of the park would be designated low intensity, and facilities would be maintained in a relatively primitive manner. Watersheds and coastal resources would be protected and preserved through coordinated watershed management, and lagoons, coastal wetlands and marine interface areas would receive protection and management. Steelhead trout re-introduction would be initiated in Solstice Canyon, and habitat enhancement would take place in Malibu Creek and Arroyo Sequit watersheds.

Moderate Intensity

The preferred alternative states that 15% of the area within the park boundary would be designated as moderate intensity. This portion of the alternative includes boundary adjustment studies for Las Virgenes Reservoir, Ladyface, Marvin Braude Mulholland Gateway Park, and Stone Canyon to protect critical open space and preserve wildlife corridors. A nomination package would also be submitted to the National Register of Historic Places to designate and archeological district with the park.

High Intensity

The remaining 5% of the area within the park boundary would be developed under the high intensity option and would include the following facilities and actions:

- (1) The Mugu Lagoon Visitor Education Center will be located at the western most end of the park off the Pacific Coast Highway. A proposed education center would be constructed in an already disturbed area, and a boardwalk around the lagoon would expand visitor access to the lagoon.
- (2) Circle X Ranch would become a primitive overnight camp with expanded facilities for group camping. The upper levels of the camp would be redesigned and developed, and the facilities would offer improved access to backcountry recreation trails.
- (3) Leo Carrillo State Beach Campground would be rehabilitated to integrate the campground with the natural riparian process. Interpretive information describing the riparian setting would be included as part of a public education program at the campground.
- (4) Paramount Ranch would include facilities for a film history and education center, and museum.
- (5) White Oak Farm at the intersection of Mulholland Highway and Las Virgenes Canyon Road would offer interpretive and educational programs.
- (6) The barn at Rancho Sierra vista would be adaptively reused for environmental education.
- (7) A Scenic Coastal Boat Tour would offer visitors options to view the coastline and mountain scenery looking landward. Access would be located at the Santa Monica and Malibu Pier.
- (8) A Visitor Education Center is planned for Malibu Bluffs, which would serve as a staging area and orientation for park facilities such as Adamson House, Malibu Lagoon and Malibu Pier.
- (9) A jointly operated Administration, Environmental and Education Center located at the Gillette Ranch site would house the NPS and State Parks operations, curatorial and management functions. Existing buildings would be adapted for classroom use.

(10) The Marion Davies Home near the Santa Monica Pier would function as a visitor orientation and eastern gateway to the SMMNRA, where interpretive exhibits depicting the evolution of the southern California coastal culture, and the history of the Pacific Coast Highway and Historic Route 66 would be displayed.

(11) A Visitor information Site at Los Angeles International Airport would provide information on the Santa Monica Mountains NRA and serve as a retail outlet for park merchandise.

While the purpose of the General Management Plan is to provide guidance in the management of the SMMNRA, the planning process considers the overall goals and vision of the park in relation to its national, historic and communal settings.

The mission of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is to protect and enhance, on a sustainable basis, one of the world's last remaining examples of a Mediterranean ecosystem and to maintain the area's unique natural, cultural and scenic resources, unimpaired for future generations. The SMMNRA is to provide an inter-linking system of parklands and open spaces that offer compatible recreation and education opportunities that are accessible to a diverse public. This is accomplished by an innovative federal, state, local, and private partnership that enhances the region's quality of life and provides a model for other parks challenged by urbanization.

A further discussion of the Park Service's interim goals and summary of alternatives can be found in the General Management Plan's summary of alternatives, which more fully describes the environmental consequences and proposed mitigation measures for five alternatives considered in the EIS.

The interim goals of the SMMNRA General Management Plan include:

Resource Protection and Habitat Enhancement

To protect and enhance species, habitat diversity and natural processes within the SMMNRA; restore native plant species and plant communities such as coastal sage scrub, coastal live oak woodland, and valley oak savannas; enact programs to remove and control the encroachment of exotic flora and fauna into natural ecosystems; maintain and improve water quality through the management of riparian communities, estuaries and coastal waters; minimize development of open space and cultural landscapes within the recreation area and to promote and perpetuate biological diversity through development density strategies.

Land Use and Ownership

Apply sustainable designs to minimize impacts; use resource conservation, recycling, energy efficient and ecologically responsible materials and techniques for construction; and discourage the use of public funds for reconstructing facilities destroyed by natural processes in zones of high hazard such as floods, fires, earthquakes and geologic hazards.

Visitor Experience

Manage trails and scenic corridors to provide non-motorized access to diverse points of opportunity for recreation, interpretation, and appreciation involving natural and cultural resources; enhance the visitor experience to provide a safe and conflict free environment among competing recreational uses; and make facilities, programs and services of the recreation area reasonably accessible to all people, including those with disabilities.

Education and Interpretation

Provide an educational outreach program developed in partnership with the local educational system; place interpretive information at appropriate locations through out the recreation area describing the area's cultural and natural features, visitor facilities, activities and services; and provide an educational outreach program describing the functions, opportunities and values of the SMMNRA ecosystem.

Access and Transportation

Promote the development of efficient transportation systems to the SMMNRA from locations through out southern California and within the park; limit expansion of existing roadways within the SMMNRA; protect park resources by reducing the number of vehicles on roads within the NRA; and De-emphasize the use of private vehicles by providing alternate transportation modes; explore the feasibility of a shuttle system within the park.

Scenic Corridors

Support lower speed limits and the development of additional scenic pullouts an routes designated as scenic corridors; evaluate the options of a greenway trail system that connects vehicle pullouts, and promotes pedestrian and bicycle use; and support the removal of street lighting and overhead power lines where feasible.

II. Procedures. As currently submitted the General Management Plan includes proposals at varying levels of specificity. This consistency determination evaluates all these in as much detail as is presently available. Future site-specific implementation planning on SMMNRA lands within coastal zone boundaries or affecting the coastal zone will be accompanied as needed by consistency or negative determinations that provide additional details for each proposal.

Such a procedure is encouraged by the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), which requires "phased federal consistency review" in cases where federal decisions to implement an activity are also made in phases. Section 930.36 (d) of the CZMA implementing regulations provides:

(d) Phased consistency determinations. ... In cases where federal decisions related to a proposed development project or other activity will be made in phases based upon developing information that was not available at the time of the original consistency determination, with each subsequent phase subject to Federal agency discretion to implement alternative decisions based upon such information (e.g., planning, siting, and design decisions), a consistency determination will be required for each major decision. [15 CFR Section 930.36(d)]

Thus, the National Park Service's consistency determination is for a document generally describing the overall management goals for the recreation area. Because many of the activities identified in the management plan are still at the conceptual stage, additional Commission consistency review may be required after completion of final management plans, and/or area- or project-specific plans.

Historically, when the Commission has reviewed these types of conceptual or management plans, the Commission's usual practice has been to review the plan at a general level, noting potential problem areas and projects or activities which would be likely to affect the coastal zone if implemented. The benefits of this type of phased review are that: (1) it provides the Park Service, in advance of specific project or plan implementation, notice of what issues are likely to arise under the CCMP; and (2) it provides the Commission with an overall planning context within which to review specific plans or projects subsequently proposed. The Commission can also ease its administrative burden by identifying at the more general planning stage those projects or activities that do not affect the coastal zone, or where effects are sufficiently minor to allow authorization through the negative determination procedure.

At this time, the Commission is not aware of future acquisitions, proposals, or activities that would definitely trigger the need for further consistency determinations. Rather, in this instance, the Commission is requesting that the Park Service continue to coordinate the implementation of its management plan with the Commission, to enable further Commission review of specific plans and activities. To ease in the administrative burdens, the proposals/specific plans may be consolidated into a single (or groups of) consistency determination(s). Also, some of these proposals/specific plans may pose only minor issues may be reviewed administratively through the negative determination process. The Park Service should continue to consult with the Commission staff on the most appropriate form for review.

III. Status of Local Coastal Program. The standard of review for federal consistency determinations is the policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act, and not the Local Coastal Program (LCP) of the affected area. If the LCP has been certified by the Commission and incorporated into the CCMP, it can provide guidance in applying Chapter 3 policies in light of local circumstances. If the LCP has not been incorporated into the CCMP, it cannot be used to guide the Commission's decision, but it can be used as background information.

The SMMNRA falls under the jurisdiction of three LCPs. The Ventura County LCP has been certified by the Commission, but it has not been incorporated into the CCMP. In 1987, the Commission certified the 1986 Land Use Plan (LUP) component for Los Angeles County. The LUP covered the portions of the Santa Monica Mountains within Los Angeles County. The LCP for Los Angeles County was never completed. Los Angeles County is preparing a new LCP for the remaining unincorporated area of the Santa Monica Mountains. The Coastal Commission is in the process of drafting the LCP for the City of Malibu. Neither of these LCPs have been certified.

IV. Federal Agency's Consistency Determination. The National Park Service has determined the project consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the California Coastal Management Program.

V. **Commission Decision.** On May 10, 2002, the Commission passed a motion to concur with the National Park Service's consistency determination CD-025-02 and in doing so adopted the following resolution:

Concurrence

The Commission hereby **concurs** with Consistency Determination CD-025-02 that the project described therein is consistent with the enforceable policies of the California Coastal Management Program.

VI. **Staff Recommendation.** The staff recommends that the Commission pass the following motion in support of its action:

MOTION: I move that the Commission **adopt** the following findings in support of its concurrence in the National Park Service's consistency determination CD-25-02.

Staff recommends a **YES** vote on this motion. Pursuant to Section 30315.1 of the Coastal Act, adoption of findings requires a majority vote of the members of the prevailing side present at the May 10, 2002, hearing, with at least three of the prevailing members voting. Only those Commissioners on the prevailing side of the Commission's action on the consistency determination are eligible to vote. A majority vote by the prevailing Commissioners listed on Page 1 of this report will result in adoption of the findings set forth in section I-III and VII of this document.

VII. **Findings and Declarations:**

The Commission finds and declares as follows:

1. **Environmentally Sensitive Habitat and Coastal Waters.** The Coastal Act provides:

30240 (a) Environmentally sensitive habitat areas shall be protected against any significant disruption of habitat values, and only uses dependent on those resources shall be allowed within those areas.

(b) Development in areas adjacent to environmentally sensitive habitat areas and parks and recreation areas shall be sited and designed to prevent impacts which would significantly degrade those areas, and shall be compatible with the continuance of those habitat and recreation areas.

30230: Marine resources shall be maintained, enhanced, and where feasible, restored. Special protection shall be given to areas and species of special biological or economic significance. Uses of the marine environment shall be carried out in a manner that will sustain the biological productivity of coastal waters and that will maintain healthy

populations of all species of marine organisms adequate for long-term commercial, recreational, scientific, and educational purposes.

30231: The biological productivity and the quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes appropriate to maintain optimum populations of marine organisms and for the protection of human health shall be maintained and, where feasible, restored through, among other means, minimizing adverse effects of waste water discharges and entrainment, controlling runoff, preventing depletion of ground water supplies and substantial interference with surface water flow, encouraging waste water reclamation, maintaining natural vegetation buffer areas that protect riparian habitats, and minimizing alteration of natural streams.

The goals of the SMMNRA General Management Plan are consistent with the provisions of Sections 30240(a), 30230, 30231 and 30233 of the Coastal Act. The Park Service states that:

The preferred alternative includes the provision of proposed boundary changes and future studies to create additional resource protection along the north-central borders of the park, and to determine recommended boundary adjustments north of Cheeseboro and Palo Comado Canyons.

Undisturbed vegetation and wetlands would be avoided, and new development would be sited in previously disturbed areas to minimize potential impacts. New developments would be excluded from existing wildlife corridors, and degraded habitats within conserved linkage areas would be restored. The feasibility of retrofitting wildlife underpasses, where primary roads intersect with wildlife movement areas within the park will be considered in the NEPA/CEQA environmental documents that will address habit linkages within their sphere of influence.

Under the preferred alternative approximately 80% of the park would be designated low intensity, and facilities would be maintained in a relatively primitive manner. Watersheds and coastal resources would be protected and preserved through coordinated watershed management, and lagoons, coastal wetlands and marine interface areas would receive protection and management. Steelhead trout re-introduction would be initiated in Solstice Canyon, and habitat enhancement would take place in Malibu Creek and Arroyo Sequit watersheds.

Impact Analysis

The Park Service states that planned facility development would have a negligible to minor impact on some wildlife species, and there is minimal potential for decreases in the habitat available for endangered, threatened, rare or sensitive species of wildlife under the preferred alternative. In the same analysis of potential impacts, the Service states that visitor uses, such as hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking would have direct and indirect, adverse effects on all classes of wildlife and wetlands, and that the impacts and mitigation measures identified for biological and wetland resources in the Draft General Management Plan are of a generalized nature. Specific impacts and mitigation measures would be identified in NEPA and federal consistency documents for particular

projects within the SMMNRA when those projects are brought forward for consideration. The Park Service has further committed to working closely with the Commission staff and incorporating into its analyses Commission-established ESHA and wetland definitions and policies. These will be elaborated on below.

Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA)

Section 30107.5 of the Coastal Act defines ESHAs as areas in which plant or animal life or their habitats are either rare or especially valuable because of their special nature or role in an ecosystem and which could be easily disturbed or degraded by human activities and developments. ESHA types in the Santa Monica Mountains include riparian areas, streams, native woodlands, native grasslands/savannas, chaparral, coastal sage scrub, dunes, bluffs, and wetlands, as defined by section 30121 of the Coastal Act and by section 13577(b) of the Commission's administrative regulations. (Note: Exceptions to these ESHA designations may be where native trees, coastal sage scrub, or chaparral exist in isolated patches and will not maintain long term viability as habitat due to existing development, including fuel modification.)

ESHA determinations focus on both habitat function and type, where maintaining and preserving habitat connectivity and quality is the highest priority. Good quality contiguous coastal sage scrub and chaparral are required to maintain habitat connectivity and provide the range of habitats needed to support healthy wildlife populations. In the Santa Monica Mountains, chaparral habitat is considered an ESHA because it is the habitat matrix within which the other ESHAs are imbedded and provides vital interconnections, in addition to being vital to the functioning of the system on a landscape scale, in which the location of the ecosystem is just as important as those habitats that are present.

In addition, watersheds in the Santa Monica Mountains contain a variety of complex systems of plant and animal habitats ranging from riparian areas in and near streams, to chaparral, coastal sage scrub, grasslands, savannas, woodlands and wetlands. Watershed areas containing exceptional undisturbed habitats and recognized as important in contributing to the integrity of these habitat systems (as well as the integrity of offshore kelp beds) are designated as ESHA. These include: San Nicholas Canyon, Los Alisos Canyon, Lachusa Canyon, Encinal Canyon, Trancas Canyon, Zuma Canyon (Upper Portion), Escondido Canyon (Upper Portion), Solstice Canyon, Corral Canyon, Malibu Canyon, Carbon Canyon (Upper Portion), and Tuna/Pena Canyons.

All Areas of Special Biological Significance, Marine Protected Areas (as designated by the California Department of Fish and Game), and designated blue-line streams are also considered ESHA and shall be accorded all protection as a designated ESHA. In the Final General Management Plan the Park Service will prepare an appropriate analysis to identify all lands within the coastal zone that qualify for ESHA designation. Based on this analysis, protective measures will be implemented to avoid ESHA designated habitat and resources, and 100 foot buffers will be established to protect ESHAs.

Wetlands

In order to make a determination of the impacts the proposed project has on Coastal Act wetlands, a delineation depicting wetlands, environmentally sensitive habitat areas, riparian corridors, wetland

vegetation, and associated buffer zones will be required. The delineation should indicate the affected area, the square footage of the wetland and relevant buffer zones, type of vegetation, and the nature of the impact. It appears that the analysis in the Draft EIS/EIR was done in accordance with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers definition of wetlands under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. However, wetlands defined under the Coastal Act differ from those of the Corps, and may include larger and more diverse areas. The Park Service has agreed to provide delineations based on the Coastal Act definition of wetlands.

Buffer Zones

The Commission, unlike the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, usually requests an analysis of buffer zones for undeveloped lands surrounding wetlands. Buffer zones act to minimize the disturbance to the wetland, control the effects of erosion, sedimentation and pollution, and provide habitat for species residing in the transitional zone between wetlands and uplands. These buffer zones typically have a minimum width of 100 feet, and where development poses increased hazards to a wetland or a wetland species larger buffer zones may be required.

Erosion Controls

Finally, the Park Service has committed that erosion control measures such as sediment retention basins, silt fencing, and slope stabilization techniques would be implemented. A construction storm water management plan would be prepared for all activities affecting one or more acres to minimize soil disturbance. Additionally, a qualified geologist would conduct geo-technical and geologic hazard investigations prior to construction.

Conclusion

Based on the above considerations and discussion, the Commission finds that under the General Management Plan the Park Service may propose actions that could potentially affect Coastal Act wetlands and sensitive habitat areas that are not fully evaluated in this preliminary environmental document. In consideration of the general nature of the assessment of impacts and proposed mitigation, further review of individual projects included in the management plan will be required. The Commission will be afforded the opportunity for further consistency review for specific implementation proposals. The Commission concludes that the proposed Draft General Management Plan is consistent with Sections 30230, 30231, and 30240 of the Coastal Act.

2. Public Access and Recreation. Sections 30210-30212 of the Coastal Act provide for the maximization of public access and recreation opportunities, acknowledging that such access needs to be managed in a manner taking into account natural resource protection needs. Section 30212.5 provides that where appropriate and feasible, public facilities, including parking areas or facilities, "shall be distributed throughout an area so as to mitigate against the impacts, social and otherwise, of overcrowding or overuse by the public of any single area." Section 30213 provides for the protection of lower cost visitor and recreational facilities. Section 30214 provides that:

(a) The public access policies of this article shall be implemented in a manner that takes into account the need to regulate the time, place, and manner of public access depending on the facts and circumstances in each case including, but not limited to, the following:

(1) Topographic and geologic site characteristics.

(2) The capacity of the site to sustain use and at what level of intensity.

(3) The appropriateness of limiting public access to the right to pass and repass depending on such factors as the fragility of the natural resources in the area and the proximity of the access area to adjacent residential uses.

(4) The need to provide for the management of access areas so as to protect the privacy of adjacent property owners and to protect the aesthetic values of the area by providing for the collection of litter.

(c) In carrying out the public access policies of this article, the commission and any other responsible public agency shall consider and encourage the utilization of innovative access management techniques, including, but not limited to, agreements with private organizations which would minimize management costs and encourage the use of volunteer programs.

Access to the coastal zone within the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is provided through a network of recreational trails, and vertical and lateral access to public beaches and the coastline. The proposed Mugu Lagoon Visitor Center would be located on federal military land adjacent to the Pacific Coast Highway. Public access to the shoreline would be extended to the maximum extent possible given the security constraints of military activities, and all of the facility development projects in the GMP adjacent to the shoreline will provide public access, with consideration given to resource protection.

Existing parking areas at trailheads and visitor facilities are dispersed throughout the recreation area, and tend to be small to moderate in size. Compounding this problem is the lack of transportation alternatives available to visitors, and the inability of the recreation area to

accommodate large transit vehicles. The major routes through and near the SMMNRA are currently operating at or near capacity, and the majority of visitors to the area use private vehicles. The preferred alternative would include public transit options such as a shuttle service, which would pick up visitors at designated lots and take them to various park destinations.

In conclusion, the Commission agrees with the Park Service that the proposed management plan protects and supports coastal public access and recreation, in a manner balancing conflicts between competing recreational uses and protecting environmentally sensitive habitat and other coastal resources. In this way, the Park Service will implement the management measures proscribed in Section 30214 of the Coastal Act. Finally, the Park Service will continue to coordinate the implementation of these management measures to enable the Commission to further review specific proposals. The Commission concludes that the proposed plan is consistent with the public access and recreation policies (Sections 30210-30214 and 30220-30222) of the Coastal Act.

VIII. SUBSTANTIVE FILE DOCUMENTS:

1. Draft General Management Plan/EIS, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, U.S. Department of the Interior-National Park Service (2002).

ADDITIONAL EXHIBITS:

Exhibit 4: National Park Service Letter to Commissioners Re: conceptual nature of Draft General Management Plan, Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHA), Wetland Delineation and management practices to avoid, protect, restore and mitigate impacts to ESHAs (May 8, 2002).

REGIONAL LOCATION MAP

CD-025-02

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

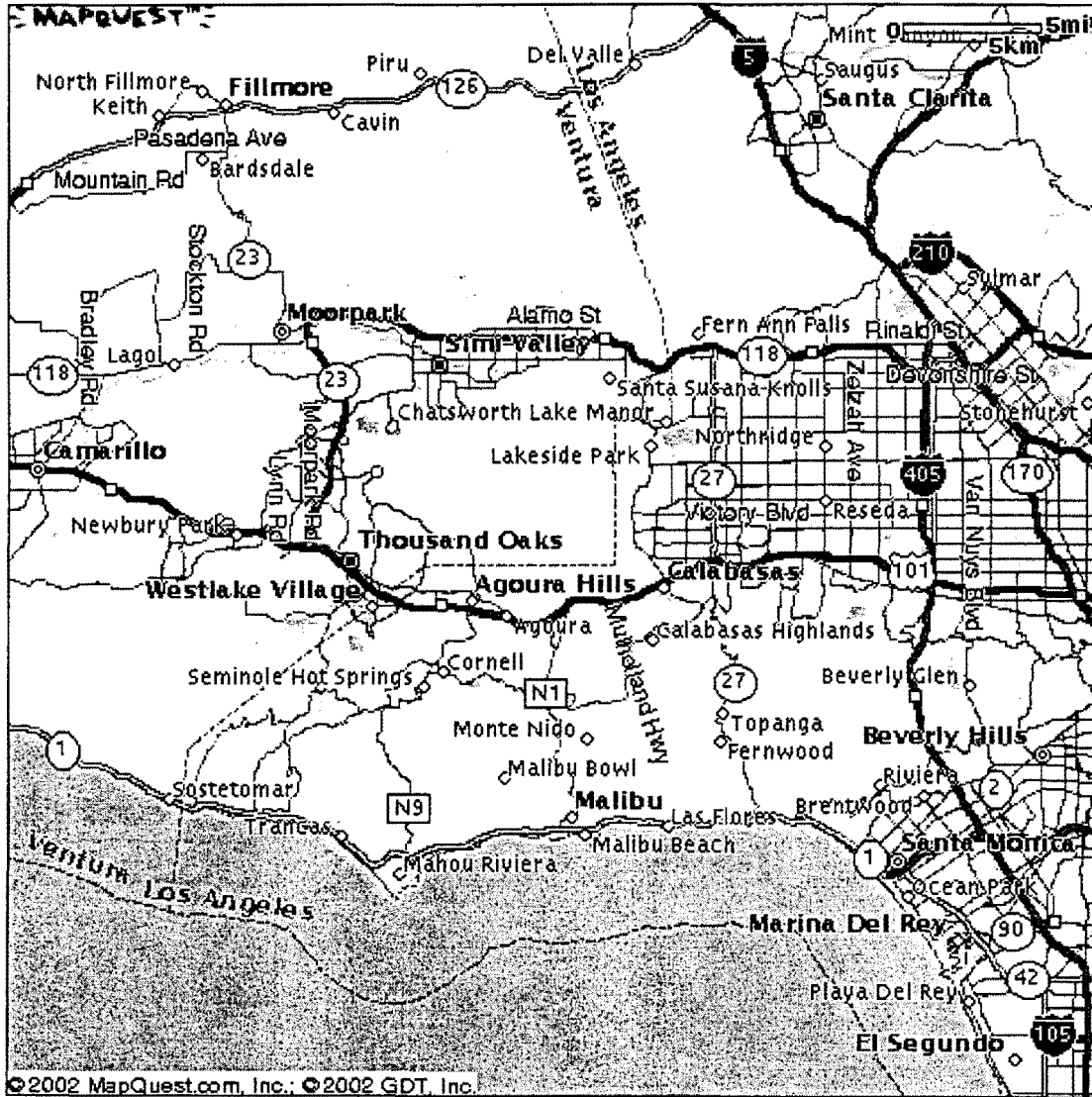
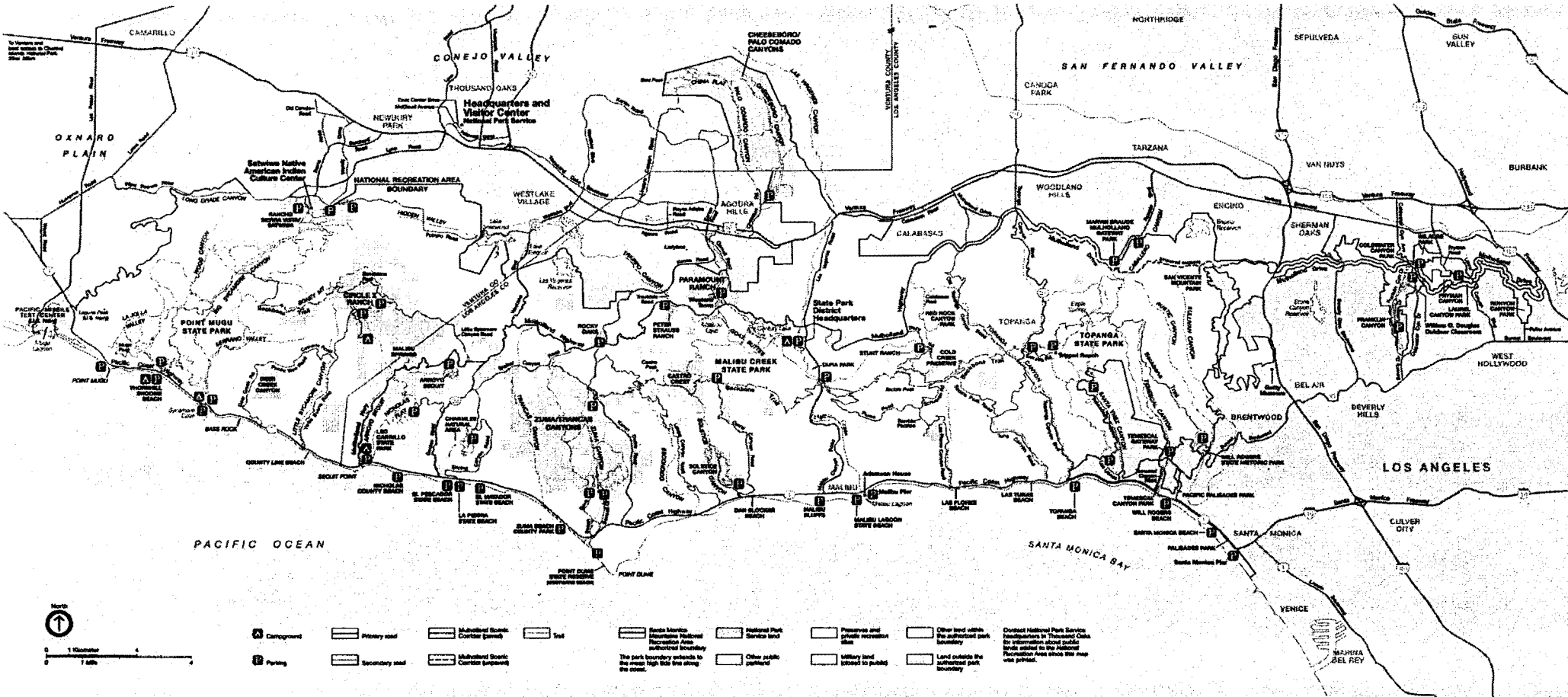
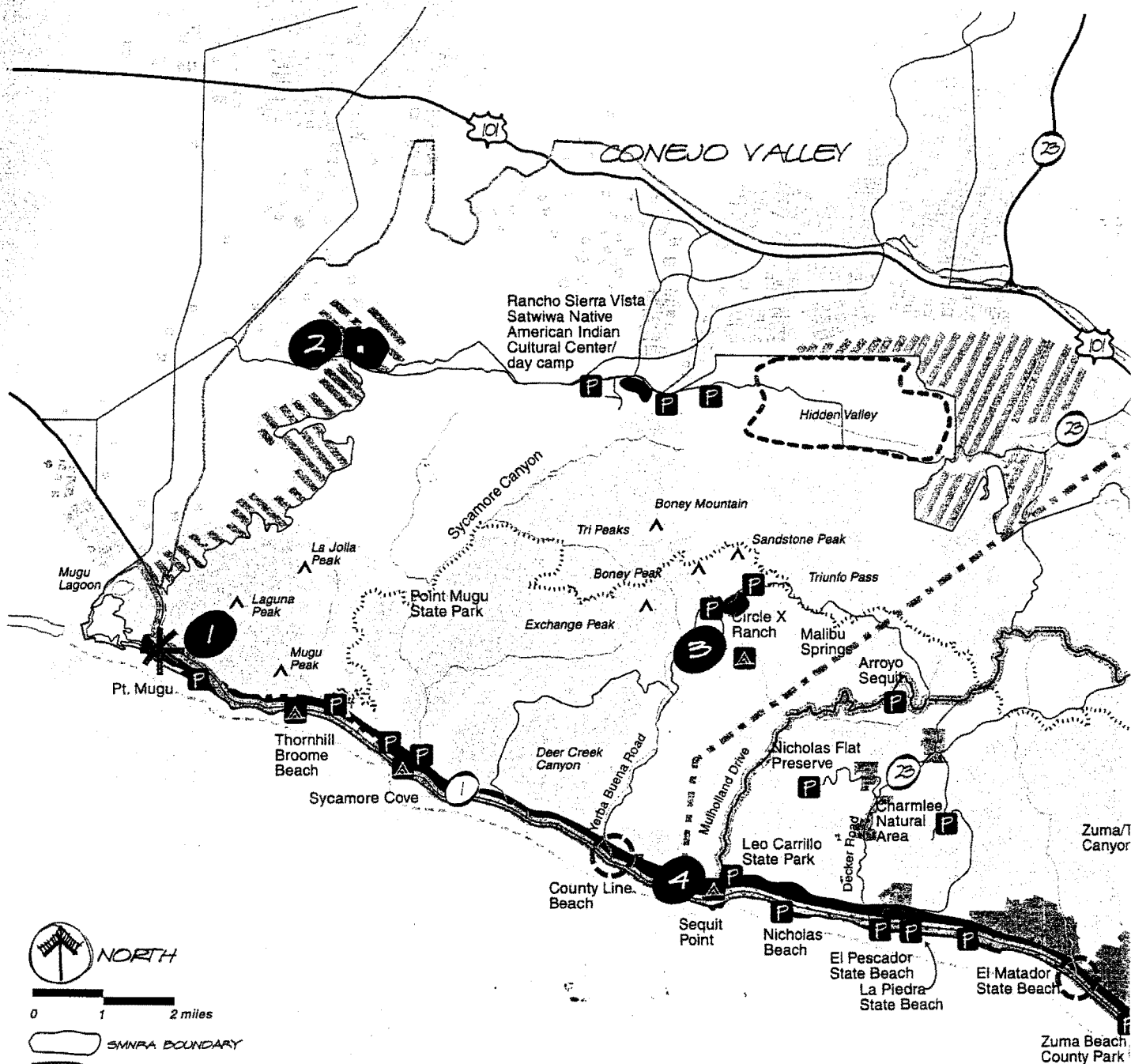


EXHIBIT NO. 1

APPLICATION NO. CD-025-02





0 1 2 miles

SMNRA BOUNDARY
SMNZ BOUNDARY

LAND OF EXCEPTIONAL VALUE TO OVERALL RECREATION AREA THAT WOULD PROTECT HABITAT AND OPEN SPACE

LAND ADJACENT TO PARK BOUNDARIES TO BE ADDED

LAND RECOMMENDED FOR BOUNDARY STUDY
PRESERVE AREAS

P PARKING AREA

BACKBONE TRAIL

TOMOL SEA KAYAK TRAIL

* VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER

HIGH FIRE AND LANDSLIDE FREQUENCY ZONE

PROTECTION / RESTORATION OF WATERSHED & MARINE INTERFACE ZONES

MANAGEMENT AREAS:

LOW INTENSITY AREA

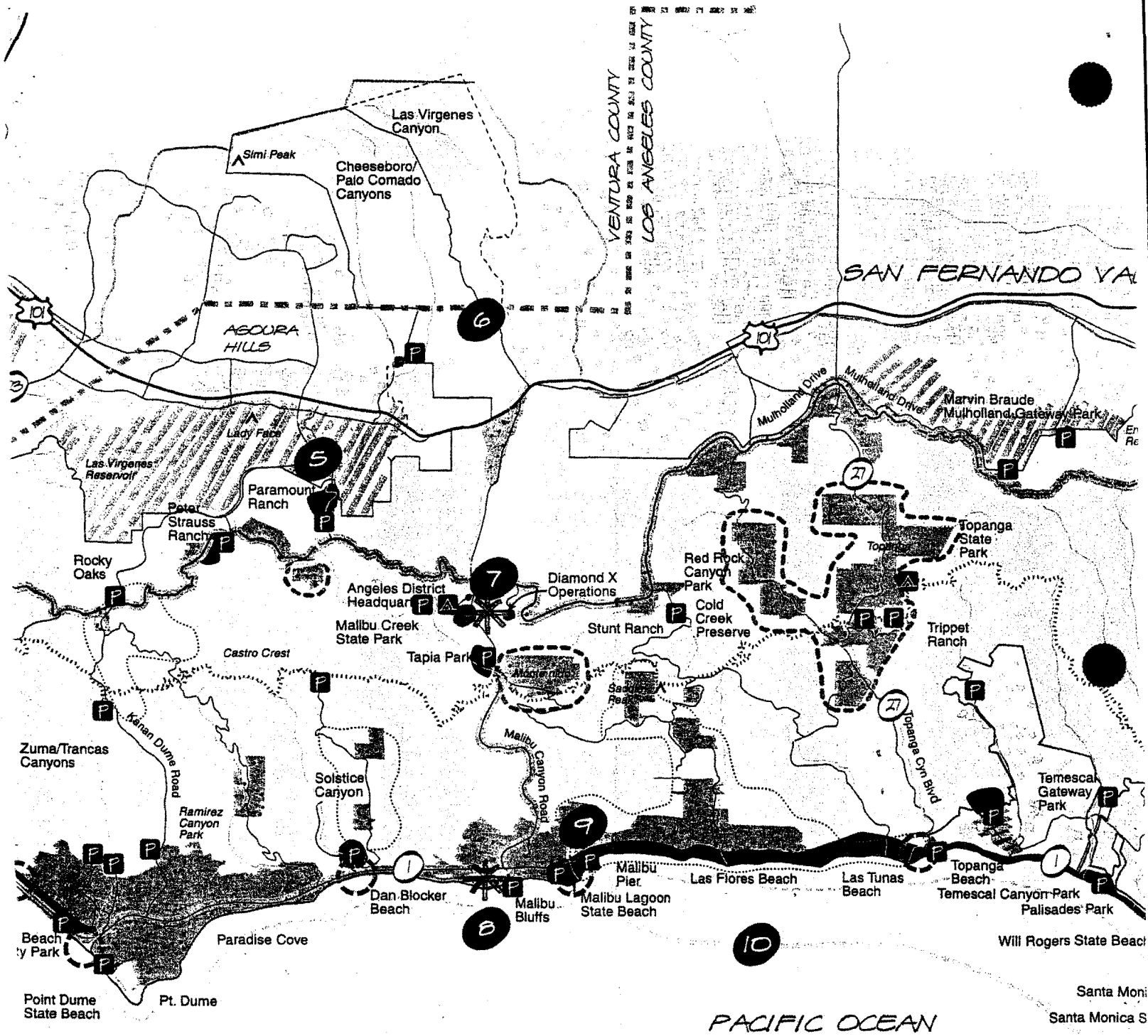
Emphasis would be on natural and cultural resource preservation and a sense of being immersed in a natural and wild landscape away from the comforts and conveniences of "civilization." The sights and sounds of nature in this area would be more prevalent than that of humans. There would be no overnight uses. Hiking, biking, and horseback riding would only be on designated trails.

MODERATE INTENSITY AREA

Emphasis would be predominant on natural resource preservation and a sense of being immersed in a natural and wild landscape. There would also be a sense of convenience of "civilization." Sustainable development as des harmonize with the natural setting. Acceptable activities include hiking, biking, and horseback riding. Impact camping, and self-guided would be acceptable activities. Insulating buffer around urban de

EXHIBIT NO. 3

APPLICATION NO. CD-025-02



URBAN AREA

Emphasis would be on the natural environment, but use of being near the familiarity, comforts, and convenience. Facility development would be based on the principles of scenic setting and be based on the principles of scenic setting and be based on the principles of scenic setting and be based on the principles of scenic setting.

HIGH INTENSITY AREA

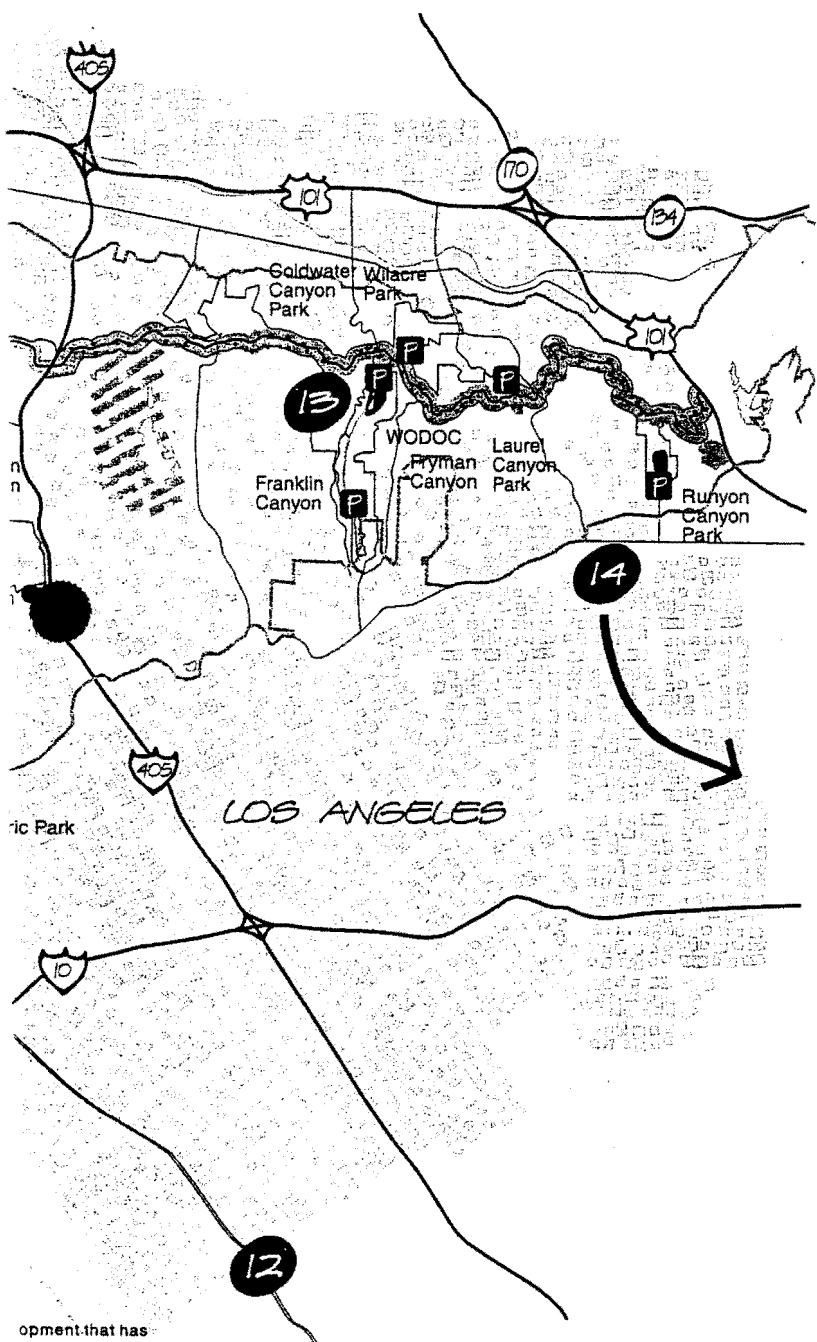
Emphasis would be on facility development that harmonizes with natural and cultural settings. There would be a sense of being surrounded by the scenic landscape and cultural resources of a unit of the national park system. The sights and sounds of people and development within and outside the area would be readily apparent. There would be frequent encounters with vehicles, other types of visitors, and park staff. Activities would include hiking, biking and horseback riding on designated trails, self-guided trails, visitor orientation, camping, educational activities and study programs, picnicking, interpretive walks, events and festivals, day camps, and community activities.

SCENIC CORRIDOR

Emphasis would be on roads through scenic landscapes and cultural resources of the park. People would experience the park by driving on scenic roads. During some seasons, days, and times of day there would be extensive interaction with other vehicles. Surrounding new development would harmonize with the scenic quality of the landscapes and be based on the principles of sustainable development. Environmental impacts from road development, management, and visitor use would be mitigated. Activities such as picnicking, self-guided tours, viewing the park by car, motorcycle, or bus, bikes, and hiking along segregated trails or lanes would be encouraged.

COMMUNITY LAND

Emphasis would be on unique character and scenic resources. Development should be based on the principles of scenic setting and be based on the principles of scenic setting.



- 1 MUGU LAGOON VISITOR EDUCATION CENTER
- 2 CSUCI RESEARCH & INFO. FACILITY
- 3 CIRCLE X RANCH CAMP
- 4 REDESIGN LEO CARRILLO CAMPGROUND TO BE ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE
- 5 PARAMOUNT RANCH FILM HISTORY CENTER
- 6 LOS VIRGENES ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER
- 7 GILLETTE RANCH JOINT ADMINISTRATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER
- 8 MALIBU BLUFF VISITOR CENTER
- 9 MALIBU PIER VISITOR CONTACT STATION
- 10 SCENIC COASTAL TOUR
- 11 415 PCH SANTA MONICA / PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY VISITOR INFORMATION SITE
- 12 LAX VISITOR CONTACT SITE
- 13 FRANKLIN CANYON EXPANDED EDUCATION DAY CAMP
- 14 OLVERA ST. VISITOR CONTACT STATION

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

EMPHASIS WOULD BE ON INCORPORATING ELEMENTS OF ALL THREE ALTERNATIVES USING RESOURCE PRESERVATION AS THE DRIVING FORCE.

EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES THAT DO NOT COMPROMISE RESOURCE PRESERVATION AND SERVE A DIVERSE PUBLIC WOULD BE PROVIDED. DEVELOPMENT WOULD TAKE PLACE ONLY IN PREVIOUSLY DISTURBED AREAS.

APPROXIMATELY 80% OF AREA WOULD BE DESIGNATED 'LOW INTENSITY'; THEREFORE, VISITOR ACCESS TO SENSITIVE RESOURCES WOULD NOT BE FACILITATED OR ENCOURAGED. MODERATE USE AREAS WOULD ACT AS A BUFFER FOR THE PRESERVATION AREA.

Figure 6
PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAIN NATIONAL RECREATION AREA CALIFORNIA

INCLUDES UNITS OF NPS, CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS AND THE SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY
 United States Department of the Interior • National Park Service
 DSC • September 2000 • 638 • 2007

development that has
 landscape and that
 ver, the designation
 element other than



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
401 West Hillcrest Drive
Thousand Oaks, California 91360-4207

In reply refer to:
L76 (SAMO)

May 8, 2002

Ms. Sara Wan, Chair
California Coastal Commission
45 Fremont Street, Suite 2000
San Francisco, CA 94105-2219

Dear Chairperson Wan and Commissioners:

In March this year, the National Park Service (NPS) submitted to the Coastal Commission a consistency determination for our draft General Management Plan (GMP) for the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, pursuant to Section 930.34 *et seq.* of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Federal Consistency Regulations (Title 15 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 930). Coastal Commission staff recently apprised our office of the need to provide additional information for the consistency determination and of the need to make revisions to the draft GMP. The staff requested we submit information documenting the National Park Service's commitment to consistency with policies of the Coastal Act as stated in Chapter 3. We ask the Commission to consider this letter our commitment toward the goals of the Coastal Act, and toward incorporating into the GMP recommended changes to the satisfaction of the Commission. We will also revise our consistency determination to reflect required changes.

The Coastal Commission staff's concerns include the generalized conceptual nature of the draft GMP; absence of attention to the Coastal Act's "environmentally sensitive habitat area" (ESHA) designation; inadequate delineation and quantification of wetlands as defined by the Coastal Act instead of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers's provisions; and finally, inadequate discussion of management practices to avoid, protect, restore and mitigate impacts to ESHA-designated lands.

Conceptual Nature of the Draft GMP

An overarching concern was the conceptual format of the draft GMP that resulted in an undetailed environmental impact analysis of proposed projects. The National Park Service's planning process is governed by NPS Director's Order 2: Park Planning (DO-2). Under DO-2, the GMP/EIS is intended to be part of a larger and tiered planning process: general management planning, park strategic planning, implementation planning, and annual performance planning. The purpose of the GMP is to ensure that each park has a clearly defined direction of resource preservation and visitor use. The GMP is the first phase of planning and decision making and has a "shelf-life" of ten to 15 years. As such, it takes the

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long-term view and considers the park in its full ecological and cultural context and as part of the surrounding region. GMP approval does not create any on-the-ground environmental changes, and it does not dictate that any particular site-specific action must occur. The purpose of the GMP/EIS is to provide a framework from which site-specific projects and implementation plans may be developed in the future. For some projects, the general nature of the GMP may preclude a complete analysis at this time of all possible effects to sensitive habitats and species that could occur upon project implementation.

Consequently, the level of project-specific environmental analysis that Commission staff may have anticipated is neither included nor analyzed in the EIS for the GMP. In most cases, specific data have not been and will not be amassed until the third tier of the planning process, the implementation plans. Implementation plans are generally deferred until the activity or project under consideration has sufficient priority to indicate that action will be taken within the next two to five years.

We acknowledge there are proposed projects in the GMP that would require individual consistency determinations. We also wish to point out that the staff report references the Coastal Zone Management Act's provision for the tiered planning process.

(d) Phased consistency determinations. ... In cases where federal decisions related to a proposed development project or other activity will be made in phases based upon developing information that was not available at the time of the original consistency determination, with each subsequent phase subject to Federal agency discretion to implement alternative decisions based upon such information (e.g., planning, siting, and design decisions), a consistency determination will be required for each major decision. [15 CFR Section 930.36(d)]

We ask the Commission to allow for our binding requirement to prepare the GMP in a generalized manner. We also wish to assure the Commission that we will file individual consistency determinations for proposed site-specific projects referenced in the GMP. The individual consistency determinations will reflect maximum detail on resource conditions and potential impacts, particularly to ESHA-designated resources and wetlands as defined by the Coastal Act. Furthermore, at the site-specific level we can outline preservation and mitigation measures that would be incorporated into the individual consistency determinations, especially regarding ESHAs and wetlands.

Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas (ESHAs)

A major concern of Commission staff is the GMP's absence of any reference to habitat types that fall within the Coastal Act's definition of ESHA. The omission is made more serious in the Commission staff's view because of the proposed Malibu Land Use Plan that designates coastal sage scrub and chaparral in Malibu as ESHA. The National Park Service is willing to revise the GMP to address ESHAs. We must inform the Commission, however, that the draft GMP was completed and presented for public review as of January, 2001, and public

comment on the draft GMP closed on May 30, 2001. The timeframe precluded knowledge of the Malibu LUP ESHA designation, since the draft LUP was not released until fall, 2001.

We understand from staff that the draft GMP's description of the Affected Environment adequately describes existing natural resource conditions, including sensitive habitat types and sensitive plant and animal species. The draft GMP, however, needs to be edited to address the sensitive habitats and species listed in the Affected Environment section in the context of the ESHA definition. We will work with Coastal Commission staff to accomplish the GMP edits.

The National Park Service recognizes the ecological significance of the Santa Monica Mountains as the National Park System's only example of the Mediterranean-type ecosystem—indeed, the park was established in large part to protect this significance. Consistent with our agency policies and mandates, we must recognize this significance and act to promote its understanding and protection. When other agencies, such as the Coastal Commission or other regulatory bodies, identify ecologically significant lands within the mountains, such as ESHAs, we ensure that our actions and policies are consistent with these designations, including for actions proposed within our General Management Plan.

In addition, we often provide information about the park and its resources to our agency partners so that they can more effectively evaluate and designate significant resources within their jurisdictions. The Coastal Commission has received considerable resource information, ranging from GIS data layers to letters describing the significance of coastal sage scrub.

For all site-specific projects proposed within the GMP, appropriate environmental analyses will be undertaken to ensure compliance with the resource protection requirements of the Coastal Commission. Federal parklands within the Coastal Zone include lands that would qualify for ESHA designation. All projects proposed in the GMP will be assessed at the time of implementation for their location relative to ESHA-designated habitat or resources. Based on the detailed locational analysis, appropriate protective measures will be implemented, including redesigning facilities to avoid the ESHA, maintaining a 100-foot buffer away from ESHA resources, and constructing the facilities in a manner that avoids long-term impacts to the ESHA.

Wetland Delineation

Coastal Commission staff found the GMP/EIS inadequately delineates and quantifies wetlands as defined by the Coastal Act. As mentioned earlier, the GMP is not intended to assess resource conditions to a project-specific level of detail. It is not appropriate to define in the GMP the wetlands potentially impacted by proposed projects; we do not yet know the specific design and development footprint of the conceptual projects. At the time a project becomes a priority and design and environmental review commences, the National Park Service would certainly commit to delineating potential wetlands in accordance with the Coastal Act's wetlands definition.

Management Practices to Avoid, Protect, Restore and Mitigate Impacts to ESHAs

The primary tool in the GMP to protect ESHAs is the Low Intensity designation applied to 80% of the full Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. The intent of the Low Intensity designation is the avoid impacts where possible and manage the land for maximum protection of resources. Development in Low Intensity-designated lands must be harmonious with the natural setting. Although this directive may sound broad, it implies that all existing and new facilities must be planned in accordance with the highest level of compliance with policies protecting sensitive areas, such as the Coastal Act policies that protect ESHAs. To this end, proposed projects in the GMP are located within previously disturbed areas as we discussed in the consistency determination. Additionally, for virtually any NPS-generated project, including those located within an ESHA, we would implement ESHA-protective measures as mentioned above, including proper facility design, location to minimize impact to ESHAs and to provide an adequate buffer away from the ESHA where possible, and construction best management practices to avoid erosion, wildlife disruption, or viewshed scenic impacts.

In addition to facility management practices, we have a sizable resource management program to identify and research natural and cultural resources of the national recreation area. Consistent with our goal of understanding and protecting the ecological values of the Santa Monica Mountains, the National Park Service has initiated a number of scientific and resource management projects and programs that concern the species and habitat types defined as ESHAs. For example, the National Park Service is funding inventory and monitoring efforts across the mountains to evaluate stream water quality conditions and potential urban-associated impacts. We are surveying watersheds for native amphibians and for potentially damaging exotic species. Our terrestrial ecology programs include reptile studies in natural habitats near developments. Our internationally recognized research on carnivores (including bobcats, coyotes, gray foxes, and mountain lions) is helping to identify habitat needs, conservation requirements, and important movement corridors for these species across the mountains. All of this information has proved useful to various agencies and organizations, including the Coastal Commission, in their efforts to identify and protect significant resources of the Santa Monica Mountains that would qualify under the Coastal Act's ESHA definition.

Resource management activities have included riparian restoration projects, wetland and lagoon restoration projects, and exotic species control in sensitive habitat areas (e.g. riparian areas). Our fire management program is now aggressively applying fire to restore important habitats and remove invasive exotic plants, while at the same time implementing fuel reduction efforts which provide public safety while protecting the environment. Other active management programs include the restoration of steelhead trout in park streams, including an ongoing effort to remove steelhead movement barriers and restore habitat in Solstice Creek. All of these efforts are linked to strong education and outreach programs linked to agencies and organizations across the Santa Monica Mountains and southern California.

The General Management Plan proposes to continue these activities and actually increase our resource stewardship and protection efforts (under the preferred alternative). We see these

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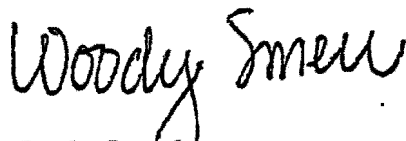
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actions as consistent with the Coastal Commission goals and are pleased that we have been able to assist the Commission staff with data and information about resources in the park. Of course, under the updated GMP, these actions would continue with our science, resource management, and restoration programs still providing support consistent with the ecological protection goals of the Coastal Commission and other agencies in the Santa Monica Mountains.

We hope we have provided clarification on the issues of concern to Coastal Commission staff and have given the Commission a summary of the commitment the National Park Service has toward protecting the park's resources according to the Coastal Act. We wish to remind the Commission that the 1916 National Park Service Organic Act mandates us to manage park resources in a manner that will leave those resources unimpaired for the enjoyment of the current and future generations of Americans. We view the Coastal Act as an important legal framework that is highly compatible with our own resource preservation and public access mandates. We will be glad to work with the staff to incorporate recommended changes into the draft GMP and to revise our GMP consistency determination to satisfy the Commission's mandate to uphold the Coastal Act.

Thank you for considering the National Park Service's input. If we can be of assistance, please call Melanie Beck, Outdoor Recreation Planner, at (805)370-2346.

Sincerely,



Woody Smeek
Acting Superintendent

cc: Joe Edmiston, Executive Director, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
Russ Guiney, Superintendent, Angeles District, State Department of Parks and Recreation