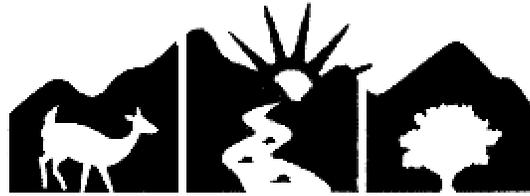


# NEWS RELEASE



## MOUNTAINS RECREATION AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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For Immediate Release  
February 2, 2008

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### **Outdoor Education Camp to Begin at King Gillette Ranch this Monday**

*Every Fifth Grader in Las Virgenes Unified School District Will  
Receive Week-long Outdoor Experience*

Calabasas—On Monday February 4, 2008 eighty-eight fifth grade students from Chaparral Elementary School in Calabasas will be the first class to attend a new week-long outdoor educational camp at Historic King Gillette Ranch in the heart of the Santa Monica Mountains, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) announced today. Over a period of eight weeks, every fifth grader in the Las Virgenes Unified School District (LVUSD)--866 students from nine schools--will attend the program. MRCA naturalists will teach the program accompanied by counselors from Calabasas and Agoura High Schools.

The MRCA Outdoor Education Program combines the best of residential outdoor education—campfires, wilderness survival, night hikes, team building, and leadership development—with a hands-on, environmental science-based curriculum tied to State standards. Courses taught during the five-day, four-night camp include ecology, indigenous culture, watersheds, astronomy, natural systems, adaptation, and weather.

King Gillette Ranch, acquired by the MRCA from Soka University with a consortium of partners, notably California State Parks, the National Park Service, and the Santa

(-More-)

Monica Mountains Conservancy, and opened to the public last summer, is one of the most stunning locales in the Santa Monica Mountains. The 588-acre park provides the ideal location for the camp. Situated in the heart of the Malibu Creek Watershed by the confluence of five major tributaries and adjacent to Malibu Creek State Park, its broad meadows and low ridgelines serve as a wildlife movement corridor or hub in the geographic center of the range. Raptors and other birds forage and nest among the plant communities of valley and coast live oak savannah, grassland, coastal sage scrub, chaparral, riparian woodland, and southern willow riparian vegetation. Students will enjoy a rare unspoiled view of California's rich archeological, cultural and historic resources, including a Chumash settlement. A former Claretian seminary, the ranch has comfortable dormitory facilities that can sleep up to 180 students.

"What better way to introduce the recreational and learning opportunities at King Gillette Ranch than to let hundreds of energetic and curious fifth graders explore its wonders," said LVUSD fifth grade parent, and Calabasas Mayor Pro Tem Mary Sue Maurer. "I applaud the creative collaboration between the MRCA and LVUSD staff who without delay developed a partnership to bring this extraordinary outdoor education camp to children throughout the greater Los Angeles region."

The MRCA has operated residential outdoor education programs for public schools including Los Angeles Unified School District, and Glendale Unified School District for more than ten years. In addition to King Gillette Ranch, MRCA outdoor education camps are located at Temescal Gateway Park in Pacific Palisades and Camp Max Strauss in the Verdugo Hills.

"We are excited to be working with the local school district at our first camp program at King Gillette Ranch," said Amy Lethbridge, Deputy Executive Officer of the MRCA. "Our

incredible naturalist staff, and the expertise of the MRCA will give the fifth graders of the Las Virgenes school district an experience they will never forget.”

In years past, the LVUSD sent their fifth grade students to a weeklong outdoor education program at nearby Cottontail Ranch, which was sold last year. King Gillette Ranch resident ranger Dave Updike attended the outdoor education program as a fifth grader at Yerba Buena elementary school, then served as a counselor for the program while a student at Agoura High School. “Outdoor education camp taught me leadership and gave me an appreciation of the outdoors and nature that has been a guiding force in my life,” said Senior Ranger Updike who currently directs the wildland firefighting efforts of the MRCA and is the president of the Park Rangers Association of California. Ranger Updike will teach fire ecology for the King Gillette Outdoor Education Camp.

King Gillette outdoor education camp will be offered to other school districts throughout the year. A long term planning process currently being conducted by the MRCA, California State Parks, the National Park Service, and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy will dictate the final management and use of the King Gillette Ranch. All agree outdoor education is a top priority.

The MRCA is a public agency of the state of California established in 1985 pursuant to the Joint Powers Act between the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the Conejo Recreation and Park District, and the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. The MRCA is dedicated to the preservation and management of local open space and parkland, watershed lands, trails, and wildlife habitat. The MRCA manages and provides ranger services, including fire protection, for over 60,000 acres of public parkland.

Las Virgenes School District  
Environmental Camp to Begin  
Feb 1, 2008  
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