

NEWS RELEASE



SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

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Landmark Southern California Conservation Acquisition Announced
**588-Acre Soka University of America, Calabasas Campus Purchased by Public
Parkland Agencies**

Calabasas—At a press conference held today in one of the most stunning locales in the Santa Monica Mountains, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), California State Parks, and the National Park Service announced today that the property known variously in the last 75 years as King Gillette Ranch, Claretville, and Camelot—but most recently as Soka University of America, Calabasas Campus—has finally been acquired as public parkland.

Escrow closed yesterday after over 30 years and at least three previous attempts by public agencies to preserve the biologically rich and diverse property in the heart of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Adjacent to Malibu Creek State Park, it is located on Mulholland Highway near its intersection with Las Virgenes Road.

“We stand here today to say to you,” said Joseph T. Edmiston, Executive Director of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, “that this land, this, earth belongs to people of the State of California. For more than twenty-five years, state, federal and local park agencies have been systematically acquiring open space to bring a critical mass and permanent ecological viability to the Santa Monica National Recreation Area. We have acquired the property that more than other fulfils this nationally significant vision.”

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The MRCA conducted the \$35 million purchase with funds from eleven different funding sources from an almost unprecedented partnership of federal, State, and local government, and private donors. The majority of the funds came from State bond funds approved by the voters. Of the 588 acres, State Parks will receive 102 acres in fee title, the Santa Monica National Recreation Area will receive 80 acres in fee title, and MRCA will own the remaining approximately 406 acres.

The university has a three-year leaseback to phase out their operation, during which time the agencies will conduct planning and environmental work to determine resource management of the property. The campus portion of the property will not be open for public use during the three-year transition. However, Soka's Native Plant Demonstration Garden will be open to the public.

Located in the heart of the Malibu Creek, this scenic property boasts unsurpassed biological resources as well as stunning 360-degree vistas. At the same time, the rolling estate offers a rare unspoiled glimpse of California's rich archeological, cultural and historical resources, including Chumash settlements, and nationally significant structures originally designed for razor magnate King C. Gillette in the 1920's by Wallace Neff, architect of California's Golden Age.

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Funding Breakdown

State of California:

Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy	\$10,000,000
California State Parks	\$7,150,000
State Coastal Conservancy	\$5,500,000
Wildlife Conservation Board	\$5,000,000
Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission	\$2,500,000

Federal

National Parks Service	\$2,500,000
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Local governments

Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District	\$2,050,000
Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority	\$1,233,000
City of Calabasas	\$250,000
City of Agoura Hills	\$250,000

Private fundraising

Committee to Save Soka/King Gillette Ranch (over 120 private donors)	\$90,440
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The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy was established by the California State Legislature in 1980. Since that time, it has helped to preserve over 55,000 acres of parkland in both wilderness and urban settings, and has improved more than 114 public recreational facilities throughout Southern California.

The MRCA is a local government public entity 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 works in cooperation with the Conservancy and other local government partners to acquire parkland, participate in vital planning processes, and complete major park improvement projects.

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