



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/108-29, 108-44)

April 20, 2007

Dan Klemann, Senior Planner
Ventura County Resource Management Agency, Planning Division
800 South Victoria Avenue, L#1740
Ventura, CA 93009

SMMC
Attachment
4-30-07
Item No. 11(b)

Dear Mr. Klemann:

The National Park Service has received the Notice of Proposed Project within the Santa Monica Mountains for Project No. LU06-0088, located at 11300 Yerba Buena Road approximately one-half mile north of Pacific Coast Highway. The applicant proposes to construct a 4,310 square foot single family dwelling. Ancillary structures include a garage, pool, decks, and patios. A 2,200-foot driveway would provide access from Yerba Buena Road.

The National Park Service appreciates the opportunity to participate in the public review process for projects in Ventura County. We provide comments on the effects of private and public land development in the Santa Monica Mountains at the invitation of state and local units of government with authority to prevent or minimize adverse uses. We respect the rights of land owners to develop their properties consistent with federal, state, and local laws. In providing comments, we assume a neutral position and do not support or oppose land development. To this end, we offer the following comments on the proposed single family residence. The Notice of Proposed Project requests answers to the following two questions.

1. Is the subject property suitable for public recreational use?

Yes. The subject property is north of Pacific Coast Highway (PCH), a state-designated scenic route; west of the National Park Service's "Yellow Hill" parkland and Leo Carrillo State Park; and east of Camp Hess Kramer, a private outdoor recreation provider serving the general public. We are concerned about impacts to views from planned and existing recreational trails, to native habitat that composes the scenic views, and to the overall quality of visitor experience in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

The subject property is located within the future alignment corridor of the Coastal Slope Trail, a long-envisioned regional trail conceptualized to provide continuous views toward the Pacific Ocean coastline along the Santa Monica Mountains and to provide an alternate route to the California Coastal Trail during high tide. The trail also has been envisioned as one of

the main east-west trunks of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area trail system. The Coastal Slope Trail is referenced in trail planning documents dating back to at least the mid-1970s. Thereafter, the Coastal Slope Trail has been included in virtually all coastal-oriented planning documents with a trail planning component. At minimum, the residence would be visible from the proposed regional trail. The residence would also be visible from other scenic parkland and coastal viewsheds.

Construction on the ridge has the potential to significantly obstruct views toward the ocean or from PCH toward parkland. The diagrams for the proposed residence indicate cut slopes up to 25 feet to accommodate the two-story home on the ridgeline. The diagrams also show considerable grading associated with the driveway. Again, the cut/fill slopes would negatively impact views and thereby degrade the visitor experience.

The above-mentioned land ownerships provide resource-dependent recreational opportunities, and protecting the natural landscape is critical to a quality outdoor recreation visitor experience. The current high quality viewshed toward the subject property is created in large part by the intact coastal sage scrub habitat that blankets the unobstructed ridgeline. Coastal sage scrub is a diverse and globally rare habitat type occurring in coastal terraces and foothills, and is designated in the Ventura Local Coastal Program (LCP) as Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area. Grading associated with the driveway and residence would destroy several acres of coastal sage scrub habitat.

In conclusion, the project's potential impacts to viewshed and ESHA need to be minimized. We ask the County to implement conditions and mitigation measures that would improve project consistency with LCP policies for scenic and visual quality and for ESHA protection. We suggest the residence be designed to reduce the driveway length, to present a lower profile from views in the public interest, and to blend into the existing landscape.

2. Is your agency planning to acquire the property, or any portion of the property that would be affected by the proposed development, and will you have the funding for such purchase within the next calendar year?

The 1984 Land Protection Plan for Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area designates the subject property as proposed "NPS Easement Acquisition." The designation means, if funding were available, the National Park Service would purchase a less-than-fee interest in the land in exchange for permanent development conditions to reduce impacts on park resources. Congress has not provided funding to the National Park Service to acquire the subject property either in fee or for a less-than-fee easement. The enabling legislation for the national recreation area states the "State of California and its local units of government have authority to prevent or minimize adverse uses of the Santa Monica Mountains and adjacent coastline area and can, to a great extent, protect the health, safety, and general welfare by the use of such authority" (P.L. 95-625, Section 507(a)(3)). In the absence of funding to acquire an interest in the subject property, we depend on the cooperation of the County and the private landowner to protect the site's scenic and natural resources that provide a quality recreational experience.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have questions, please call Melanie Beck at (805)370-2346.

Sincerely,



Woody Smeck
Superintendent

cc: Honorable Linda Parks, Ventura County Supervisor, Second District
Joe Edmiston, Executive Director, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
Ron Schafer, Superintendent, Angeles District, State Department of Parks and Recreation
Dan Preece, District Manager, Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains

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