

9 Management Options & Opportunities



Vernal pool reflection, Elizabeth Painter photo

Management Options and Opportunities

Introduction

The following section describes:

- management options considered in the draft study report,
- other management options previously considered,
- resource protection measures that emerged during the study process that the Army could pursue to support and enhance protection of the nationally significant cultural and natural resources at Fort Hunter Liggett, and
- possible future management opportunities, if land becomes available for transfer.

NPS *Management Policies* specify that alternatives for management by the NPS will only be developed for study areas that are found to be nationally significant, suitable, and feasible for addition to the national park system, and when direct NPS management of the study area is identified as “clearly superior” to management by other public agencies, private conservation organizations, or individuals (NPS *Management Policies*, 2001, Section I.3.4).

The NPS recognizes that many other organizations successfully manage important natural and cultural resources. The NPS applauds these accomplishments, and actively encourages the expansion of conservation activities by state, local and private entities, and by other federal agencies. Areas managed by these diverse conservation interests constitute a “nationwide system of parks,” not just a “national park system.”

Because of the recent change in status and policy regarding excess property at Fort Hunter Liggett, no property is currently considered excess to the Army’s needs, and the Army will continue to manage the unique resources of Fort Hunter Liggett.

Management Options Considered in the Draft Study Report

In the *Draft Fort Hunter Liggett Special Resource Study* report, the NPS considered a no-action alternative, plus one other management option that addressed the areas determined through the BRAC realignment process to be excess to the Army’s needs. These alternatives were presented in greater detail in the “Alternatives” chapter of the draft study report, and their environmental and socioeconomic consequences were analyzed in the draft *Environmental Assessment*.

Because the properties at Fort Hunter Liggett that were the subject of these alternatives are no longer considered excess to the Army’s needs, these alternatives are no longer viable. A “No Action” scenario would now include continued Army management, with the authority to invest funds in the maintenance and operation of these areas. Transfer to other agencies, as envisioned in Alternative B is not feasible because there is no longer any property available for transfer. Therefore these Alternatives are no longer included in this study report.

FORMER DRAFT ALTERNATIVE A: NO ACTION

This alternative was based on an assumption that the Army needed to dispose of the BRAC excess property, and could no longer spend Army funds on the maintenance or operations of these areas.

Under this alternative, the Army would have retained the excess property in interim use status for an indefinite period, during which minimal or no maintenance activities would be conducted. No change in use was expected for any of the excess property during this interim period. The Army would continue to manage the remainder of the Fort Hunter Liggett installation. The NPS would have no involvement in the ownership or management of any Fort Hunter Liggett structures or properties. At some future time, it was assumed that the Army would pursue one of the options outlined in the Army’s *Environmental Assessment for the Disposal and Reuse of the BRAC Property at Fort Hunter Liggett* or would take other action, at their discretion.

FORMER DRAFT ALTERNATIVE B: ADDITION TO HEARST SAN SIMEON STATE HISTORICAL MONUMENT AND DESIGNATION AS AN AFFILIATED AREA OF THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM

This alternative was based on an assumption that several historic and other properties were available for transfer to the NPS or other agencies through the BRAC excess property process.

Under this alternative, legislation would have authorized direct transfer of the Milpitas Hacienda complex and the ranch bungalows to California State Parks to be managed as an addition to Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument (Hearst Castle®) and as an affiliated area of the national park system.

Legislation would have authorized direct transfer of the Gil Adobe and the one acre of land under and adjacent to the Tidball Store to California State Parks or Monterey County Parks Department. An agreement with a nonprofit organization was suggested in order to provide for management of these sites at little or no cost to the public agency.

This alternative included an option for the Javelin Court area, including 41 housing units, to be transferred to California State Parks to be operated as rental housing. The revenue from managing the housing area would have been available to partially offset operating costs of the Milpitas Hacienda complex and the ranch bungalows.



The Milpitas Hacienda, NPS photo

Other Management Options Previously Considered

The National Park Service developed and considered a number of options involving various approaches to NPS management, before determining that such options were not feasible. The following management options were considered, and then rejected when it was determined that they were not feasible.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE OWNERSHIP OF BRAC PROPERTY

The National Park Service considered taking title to all BRAC excess property proposed for NPS reuse, including the Milpitas Hacienda and related grounds and outbuildings, the five ranch bungalows, the Gil Adobe, the one acre of land under and adjacent to the Tidball Store, and the Javelin Court housing area. The National Park Service considered direct management of these areas, as well as management in cooperation with California State Parks or other agencies. This option was rejected when it was determined that establishment of a new national park unit involving NPS ownership and management was not financially feasible in the near term, and that many of the BRAC excess properties were not nationally significant.

VISITOR PROGRAMS ON FORT HUNTER LIGGETT LANDS

The National Park Service considered proposing a partnership program with Fort Hunter Liggett to allow for controlled public recreational and educational use of the extensive resources of Fort Hunter Liggett, without diverting Army resources or impacting the training mission and activities. Under this option, the NPS would have provided additional visitor services, including guided tours and other educational and interpretive services, as compatible with Army training activities, security requirements and resource protection. This option was rejected due to concerns about safety (including unexploded ordnance), security, and potential impacts on training activities.

DIRECT TRANSFER AUTHORITY FOR FUTURE EXCESS LAND

The National Park Service considered seeking legislation to authorize Fort Hunter Liggett lands to be directly transferred to the NPS or the US Forest Service, if Fort Hunter Liggett were ever declared excess to military needs. The purpose of this legislation would have been to ensure long-term resource protection and public access and use of the rich and diverse lands that today make up Fort Hunter Liggett, in the event that the Department of Defense no longer had need for the area. This option was rejected because these areas are in active use and are expected to be retained by Fort Hunter Liggett for the indefinite future, and because of the need for clean-up of unexploded ordnance and other hazardous materials. In October 2004, a law was passed offering to the US Forest Service the right of first refusal on any future excess lands at Fort Hunter Liggett. This law also requires the Army to remove unexploded ordnance and perform environmental cleanup before transferring any future excess property to the US Forest Service.

Potential Resource Management Opportunities for the Army

Fort Hunter Liggett contains nationally significant cultural and natural resources that warrant special protection, and areas that are of interest to scientists, historians, and the American people. The NPS encourages the Army to continue to protect these areas, and to manage the natural and cultural resources in a manner that retains their national significance.

Numerous federal laws currently guide Fort Hunter Liggett's management of natural and cultural resources, including the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Sikes Improvement Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Antiquities Act, the National Historic Sites Act, the Archeological Resources Protection Act, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, and others.

The lands and structures of Fort Hunter Liggett have been under the management of the US Army since 1940. The Army has developed plans that include specific management actions for these areas, including the Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan and Historic Preservation Plan. These plans include guidelines and prescriptions for resource management, as well as opportunities for partnerships with other agencies and organizations.

The following section describes resource protection measures that emerged during the study process as ways that the Army could pursue to support and enhance protection of nationally significant natural and cultural resources of Fort Hunter Liggett. In addition, there may be ways to enhance and expand visitor opportunities at the Milpitas Hacienda and beyond the cantonment area under existing Army programs and authorities. Many of these initiatives could be assisted or supported through partnerships with federal, state and local agencies and organizations.

CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- An analysis of the feasibility of continued use of the Hacienda suggested that renovations or additional restoration of the Hacienda could be financed by an increase in room rates.
- The Army could pursue an agreement with California State Parks to manage the Milpitas Hacienda in connection with Hearst Castle®. This collaboration could make the expertise of historians and architects at Hearst Castle available to help protect the architectural integrity of the Milpitas Hacienda. It could also allow California State Parks to provide visitor services and educational opportunities focused on the Hearst / Morgan collaboration on the Milpitas Hacienda.
- The Army could request the NPS to evaluate the potential addition of the Milpitas Hacienda to the Hearst San Simeon Estate National Historic Landmark (Hearst Castle®). Designation as part of a National Historic

Landmark would provide additional recognition, and make the Milpitas Hacienda eligible for NPS technical assistance in historic preservation and management.

- The Army could maintain or enhance the quality of the cultural landscape surrounding the Milpitas Hacienda. For example, the fencing around Hacienda Hill could be modified to blend more with the landscape; surrounding structures such as the tin barn that were modified from their historic appearance could be restored. This effort would enhance the visitor experience of the Hearst ranch story at Fort Hunter Liggett.
- Local Salinan organizations have expressed interest in forming partnerships to care for their sacred sites at Fort Hunter Liggett. Fort Hunter Liggett could establish a program to work in partnership with Salinan organizations to allow access to and stewardship of sacred sites and to provide public education and awareness on the importance of protecting such sites. Vandenberg AFB cultural resources management programs provide an example of a successful partnership program between the military and Native Americans. This program allows members of the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash access for plant gathering and hunting and allows the Chumash to rebury Native American human remains in designated areas.
- The Army could partner with Monterey County, local nonprofit groups, or Salinan groups to find economically viable uses for the Tidball Store and the Gil Adobe (listed on the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance) and other structures related to the town of Jolon. These structures have remained boarded up and unused for years. Such a partnership could provide an opportunity to interpret the gold rush-era homesteading and mining boom in Jolon and the Salinan culture. The Ventana Conservation and Land Trust and Monterey County Parks Department have discussed the potential for collaborative management of these sites to interpret the

history of the town of Jolon. Salinan groups have also expressed interest in management of these sites. Army funding for restoration or maintenance in conjunction with other public or private investments and stewardship efforts would help to prevent further deterioration.

- Fort Hunter Liggett could support additional cultural resources and Native American/ archeological resources preservation efforts through the Department of Defense Legacy Resource Management Program. The program funds projects that enhance the department's ability to access, evaluate, and use existing inventory data; use research and development to support resource management on military installations; develop new historic context studies and improve management of cultural resources; and use new approaches and creative partnerships to promote cultural resource management.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- The Army could coordinate with scientists from universities and non-profit organizations to inventory natural resources and to conduct scientific research, including botanical surveys. This coordination could help to reinforce the Army's ongoing resource protection efforts. There is interest within the scientific community in conducting research and inventory work at Fort Hunter Liggett.
- The Army could request NPS assistance to evaluate the oak woodlands and savanna and Burro Mountain area for possible designation as National Natural Landmarks. Designation would provide additional recognition, and make the area eligible for NPS technical assistance.
- The Wagon Caves area in Los Padres National Forest, adjacent to the northwest corner of the installation, contains high quality valley oak habitat similar to that found on Fort Hunter Liggett. This area was selected and nominated as a research natural area by the Los Padres

National Forest in 1986. Research Natural Areas are selected to preserve a spectrum of pristine areas that represent important natural ecosystems with scientific importance and to provide opportunities for onsite and extension educational activities. An agreement between Fort Hunter Liggett and the Los Padres National Forest could establish a joint Research Natural Area or some other collaborative effort to protect the high quality oak habitat that occurs on both Fort Hunter Liggett and Los Padres National Forest. Together, these areas represent some of the best remaining, relatively pristine habitat of this type.

- Fort Hunter Liggett could support additional natural resources preservation efforts through the Department of Defense Legacy Resource Management Program. The program funds natural resource projects such as those that implement integrated natural resources management, regional ecosystem management initiatives, invasive species control, and use new approaches and creative partnerships to promote natural resource management.



Mature oak trees, NPS photo

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC ENJOYMENT

- The Army could expand and enhance current recreation opportunities, while taking into account safety and security concerns. Section 103 of the Sikes Act allows for a program for public outdoor recreation in accordance with an integrated natural resources management

plan. These opportunities include “fishing, hunting, trapping, wildlife viewing, boating, and camping.” Currently, the Army manages hunting and fishing activities under a permit system, but does not allow additional “non - consumptive” uses. The Army could explore ways to provide additional visitor opportunities such as bird- watching and other wildlife viewing opportunities and possibly allow for the use of the existing developed campground in the cantonment area. The NPS could provide assistance in the development of a recreation plan for the installation.

- The Army could collaborate with staff of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, Mission San Antonio de Padua and local nonprofit groups to mark the route of this historic trail, mark important sites along the trail, provide opportunities for limited, guided visitor access to the trail, and/or interpret the trail and campsites through living history programs. Fort Hunter Liggett’s oak savanna landscape surrounding the Mission San Antonio de Padua remains one of the most historically intact landscape settings of the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail. The landscape provides a setting similar to that experienced by Juan Bautista de Anza when he camped in the area in 1776.
- The Army could collaborate with California State Parks to enhance visitor opportunities at the Milpitas Hacienda. Currently, visitor services are limited to those provided by the Milpitas Hacienda concessioner – a restaurant and overnight accommodations. California State Parks offers a wide range of visitor services and programs including tours at Hearst Castle® and could offer similar visitor services at the Milpitas Hacienda in connection with Hearst Castle.® The Milpitas Hacienda provides an opportunity for experiential interpretation of Hearst’s estate. This would be a unique and rare opportunity to offer the visitor a more comprehensive view of Hearst’s extensive estate and would expand the public’s

awareness of the historical significance of the historic properties that have been protected at Fort Hunter Liggett.

- Renovations to the Hacienda, financed by overnight accommodation rate increases, would contribute to improved concession - based lodging and food service.

Possible Future Management Opportunities, if Land Becomes Available for Transfer

The Army expects to retain Fort Hunter Liggett as a training facility for the indefinite future. However, if any substantial portion of the installation is determined to be excess to the Army's needs at some point in the future, the nationally significant resources warrant continued protection and management by an organization with a commitment to conservation. Two possible scenarios are:

MANAGEMENT AS A HISTORIC SITE

If the Milpitas Hacienda is declared excess to the Army's needs, it could be transferred to another agency or organization and managed as a historic site. Possible management organizations include the US Forest Service (which by recent legislation has right of first refusal on any future excess property at Fort Hunter Liggett), the National Park Service, California State Parks, Monterey County, Salinan organizations, or a non-profit organization. Partnerships among two or more of these organizations could spread the costs and responsibilities and allow each organization to contribute according to its strengths and areas of expertise. Addition of the Milpitas Hacienda to Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument and designation as an affiliated area of the national park system are among the options that could be considered. Lodging and restaurant facilities could continue to be operated by a concessioner or other public/private arrangement. Further analysis will be necessary if the property becomes available in order to determine feasibility, interest, and appropriate roles.

MANAGEMENT AS A PARK OR FOREST AREA

If a substantial portion of Fort Hunter Liggett's natural landscape is declared excess to the Army's needs, it could be transferred to another agency or organization and managed as a park or forest area. Possible management organizations include the US Forest Service (which by recent legislation has right of first refusal on any future excess property at Fort Hunter Liggett), the National Park Service, California State Parks, Monterey County, Salinan organizations, or a non-profit organization. Partnerships among two or more of these organizations could spread the costs and responsibilities and allow each organization to contribute according to its strengths and areas of expertise. Further analysis will be necessary if the property becomes available in order to determine the feasibility of park management, the interests and capabilities of various potential management organizations, and whether unexploded ordnance and other hazardous materials have been removed or otherwise remediated.

Summary

The NPS considered a wide range of options for the management, protection, and public enjoyment of nationally significant cultural and natural resources at Fort Hunter Liggett. Because of the change in status and policy regarding excess property at Fort Hunter Liggett, the Army will continue to manage these resources. The protection measures presented in this section would enhance the Army's efforts to maintain the condition and integrity of the natural and cultural resources of Fort Hunter Liggett, and to ensure that they retain their national significance.



Mission San Antonio de Padua, Richard Crusius photo



The Milpitas Hacienda, Richard Crusius photo